

The Return of the Lord to this Earth with the Armies of Heaven

Revelation 19:11-21

Revelation 19:11-21 - *“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸ that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.” ¹⁹ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

Background Notes

In the first half of Revelation 19 we saw a heavenly scene that included four great heavenly “Alleluias,” and then the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. In commentaries on the book of Revelation we find that there’s some debate as to whether the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will take place in heaven or on this earth. In our Talk on Revelation 19:1-10, we took the position that it will take place in heaven. When the members of the Church come back to this earth with our Lord, we will return as His Bride. Not just as His fiancée -- we will return as His Bride!

The return of the Lord is found in the second half of Revelation 19. There’s no doubt who is pictured in verse 11, riding on a white horse out of heaven -- it is the Lord Himself! Who else could be called “faithful and true,” and “the Word of God” (v13), and the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (v16)?

Notice that this Rider on a white horse is **not** the rider on the white horse in Revelation 6, under the first Seal Judgment during the first part of the Tribulation period. We believe that “first horseman of the apocalypse” (Revelation 6) is the false world leader, the Roman beast with the number 666.

In Revelation 19:14, the armies of heaven who will follow the Lord on white horses are the saints. We know that angels also will accompany our Lord in His return, but it seems that the armies on white horses are the saints. Notice that they're clothed in fine linen, white and clean, just as we read of the Bride in the marriage supper of the Lamb (v8). So, if you're a believer, you will be part of the victorious procession coming from heaven with our Lord to this earth! Notice, by the way, that it doesn't say that we will be required to fight. The Lord will do the fighting!

The return of Christ to this earth brings the Tribulation Period to an end. The judgments of the Tribulation Period began in the second half of Revelation 4, and they will end with the return of the Lord in the second half of Revelation 19. In His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, the Lord spoke of His return as happening after the time of tribulation. Matthew 24:29-31: *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Matthew 24 and Revelation 19 teach us that the Lord will return to this earth in judgment. Before the glorious millennial kingdom of our Lord can be set up on this earth, there must be a judgment of the nations.

Doctrinal Points

1. When the Lord returns, the nations will be judged and ruled with a rod of iron.

Verse 15: *"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."*

The exact scenario and the precise sequencing of the details associated with our Lord's return are not easy to put together. There is room for discussion, because a number of Scriptures must be harmonized.

From Revelation 16 we know that, under demonic influence, the armies of this world will gather together in the extensive Jezreel Valley in Israel, near the Hill of Megiddo (thus the term "Battle of Armageddon" is used for this end-times war). The Plain of Jezreel is the staging area for the armies of the international coalition. The armies will gather together to conquer Jerusalem. In fact, God will allow them to be somewhat successful in their sinful strategy, but just when they think that they have defeated Jerusalem and Israel, the Lord will return!

Zechariah 14:2 - *"For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city."*

And Zechariah 14:12-15 - *“And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.*

It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. and the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be.”

In addition to these events, Matthew 25 mentions yet another of the events of the Lord's return: the judgment of the nations known as “the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats.”

When the Lord returns to this earth there will be a great and sudden slaughter of all those who dared to come against God's chosen people. Revelation 19:21 - *“And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”* “The rest” here means that the entire armies will be annihilated. The vultures and birds of prey will be invited to a feast, and Ezekiel tells us that for seven months the restored nation of Israel will be burying the dead from these end time battles. Ezekiel 39:12: *“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land.”*

So, there are quite a few details to be harmonized when mapping out the precise details for the ending of the Tribulation period and the beginning of the millennial kingdom of our Lord. And by the way, it's very hard to spiritualize all of these details, and it's very hard to deny that there will be a literal end time Jerusalem and literal end time Israel for God's chosen people, and the Lord will set up His earthly kingdom and reign over the nations with a rod of iron!

The Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ will be a wonderful reign, of peace because every nation will be held in check under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord returns, the nations will be judged and ruled with a rod of iron.

2. When the Lord returns, the Beast and the False Prophet will be thrown into hell.

Verse 20: *“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*

We have read about these anti-Christ figures before; the Beast here is the first beast of Revelation 13, who will be the head of the revived Roman Empire of the end times and will be identified with the number 666. This number is also associated with “the mark of this beast.” The False Prophet is the second beast of Revelation 13. He will direct worship to the image of the Roman Beast. These two godless world leaders will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. This is eternal hell!

Revelation 20:10 says that when Satan is consigned to this Lake of Fire a thousand years later, Beast and the False Prophet will still be there, and they will be conscious. Hell is not the cessation of existence; it is eternal punishment. When the Lord returns, the Beast and the False Prophet will be thrown into hell.

Practical Application

Remember to tell people that “God is holy,” as well as “God is love.”

Many people, including some Christians, have a hard time with the doctrine of hell. They feel that the idea of eternal punishment just can't be harmonized with the fact that God is love (1 John 4:8). But when they think this way, they are forgetting that God is not only a God of love -- He is a God of **holiness** as well! Evil and sin **must** be judged, because God is holy!

The righteousness and holiness of God will be vindicated forever when unrepentant people and evildoers are consigned to hell forever. Unbelievers need to hear this truth as part of the gospel. Believers need to understand this truth, so we don't make the big mistake of watering down the gospel! Remember to tell people that God is holy, as well as God is love.