

## Revelation Chapters 19-20

### An Interpretation

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### Revelation 19

(1) After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; (2) BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER."

Verses 1-2: While once-proud Babylon is silenced, the once-persecuted saints speak from heaven. God has prevailed over the great harlot and avenged **the blood** of the saints.

(3) And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER."

Verse 3: The victory is restated and emphasized a **second time**. Both sentences open with **Hallelujah**. Here, not only is the victory over Satan complete but it is **forever and ever**.

(4) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" (5) And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

Verse 4-5: Now the heavenly watchers chime in with a victory statement approving what has happened. The **twenty-four elders** and the **four living creatures** sing "Hallelujah".

Another **voice from the throne** called for **praise**, also.

(6) Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. (7) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

Verses 6-7: **The voices** of heaven now combine to praise God Almighty for this victory over the forces of Satan. This was a tremendous volume of **sound**.

**Discuss:** What were the loudest sounds that John would have heard on the Isle of Patmos?

The time for the great wedding feast is arriving and the church is **ready**.

**James Smith:** Wedding customs of John's day illuminate the passage. First came betrothal which was a binding, legal relationship. The two were considered as husband and wife, and fidelity was required on the part of both parties. At the betrothal ceremony, the groom paid the *mohar* or bride price as proof of his financial independence. During the separation time between the betrothal and marriage proper, the bride prepared for the great day. Finally the groom, with others, came to his bride's house to receive her, and take her to the home of the father of the groom for the wedding feast.

Similarly, the church has been espoused to Christ. He paid the price at the cross. While we await his coming, we gladly enter upon the work of purifying ourselves as he is pure. One day, he shall come to take us to the home of the Father for the great wedding feast.

The harlot astride the scarlet beast represented godless society, its beliefs and its institutions. The bride represents a heavenly society, i.e., the church.

**(8) It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."**

**Verses 8-9:** The wedding dress of the bride is ready and the invitations to the marriage supper have been distributed.

**James Smith:** Christ's bride will not be in a quandary about what to wear to her wedding. Two entire chapters were devoted to the gaudy magnificence of the harlot. The simple dress of Christ's bride is described in two verses. She will be clothed in clean

and white *linen*. The attire of the Lamb's bride *was given unto her*, i.e., it was not of her own doing, but provided by the groom.

The fine linen that the bride wears in *the righteous acts* of the saints. . . . It is credited to believers when they put on Christ in baptism. The deeds of the saints, marred as they are by imperfections, can only be declared righteous on the basis of the merits of Christ. All the saints must be included in the figure of the bride, for they all wear the bridal attire.

It should be noted that the guests and the bride are one and the same. The church collectively is the bride and individual Christians are the guests.

**(10) Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."**

Verse 10: John is about to **worship** the angel who was letting him see the future, but he was stopped and told to **worship God**.

- Angel **worship** is clearly forbidden as elsewhere in Scripture.
- **Your brethren** seems to be clarified when a similar event occurs later in Revelation 22:9. There it refers to prophets.
- *The New Living Translation* then says **"For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus."** This is more understandable. Jesus is the center of the message of the prophets.

**(11) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (12) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. (13) He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

Verses 11-13: John saw yet another scene. The living Word, the warrior, appeared on a **white horse**, the symbol of victory. He was crowned with many **diadems** and had a secret name. His **clothing** was a **robe** that had been **dipped in blood**.

**(14) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.**

Verse 14: The Faithful and True has won and the armies of heaven are following, **clothed** in **white**.

- In chapter 1 of Revelation, Christ stood alone. Events have developed and now Christ is followed by a heavenly army.
- They wear the same attire as the bride: **linen, white** and **clean**. Perhaps there are saints in this **army**.
- Their **white horses** point to victorious warfare.

**(15) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. (16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."**

Verses 15-16: That **sword**, the Word of God comes from His mouth. He conquered with it and now rules with it—the unbendable rod of iron. His laws do not change.

- Those who govern our nation are always changing the laws, but the Lord's laws remain the same. Like **iron**, they cannot be bent.
- He is now the **King of Kings** and the **Lord of Lords**. Satan has been defeated.
- Who is providing the energy for **the winepress** where the harlot and her followers are being punished? It is **the Lord of Lords**.

**(17) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, (18) so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."**

Verses 17-18: All enemies have been conquered and are part of the **great supper of God** (not the wedding feast), symbolically, of course.

This language is reminiscent of the fight between David and Goliath:

The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to **the birds of the sky** and the beasts of the field." (45) Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I

come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. (46) "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

1 Samuel 17:44-46

### James Smith:

At this great supper of God, the menu is the flesh of all those who oppose God. This includes the leaders of the opposition, their armies, and all those who support their cause whether free man of bond, insignificant or famous. For his battle against Christianity, the devil recruits from every walk of life. The picture is gruesome. It is meant to be. The following verses indicates that this gruesome banquet is simple another picture of the final showdown with evil.

**(19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (20) And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.**

Verses 19-20: In a look back, the collapse of the enemies of the Lord is described.

- The beast did not give up easily. The **armies** were assembled to make war on the heavenly **army**.
- But not only was the beast seized, but also the **false prophet**, and those with the mark of the beast, and those who worshiped the **image of the beast**.
- These enemies were punished while still alive. Their works did not taper down and vanish. They were still alive when punishment began.

**(21) And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.**

Verse 21: The earlier description of destruction for the enemies of God did not include everyone. Here is the destruction of the **rest** using the same figure of mealtime.

- The enemies were not subdued by the vast army on God's side, but by the sword that came from the mouth of **Him who sat on the horse**.

## Revelation 20

We are treating this chapter, not as something that happened next, but that John saw next. It is as a picture of the great struggle between Christ and Satan. John has just turned his attention to this magnificent picture. It is what Jesus was about:

. . . . **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.** 1 John 3:8b

The appearance of Jesus as a babe, growing to maturity and dying on the cross meets the requirements of the unfolding vision.

**Hinds:** The millennial passage is a recapitulation of things described in preceding chapters with different symbols.

In this chapter, we are deferring often to the comments of the highly regarded **Dr. Jack Cottrell**, one of the finest theologians of our time. He says it well.

**(1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.**

Verse 1: Like in other scenes, the picture is revealed by an **angel**. He had a figurative **key** which we take to mean that he had authority to open and close doors. In this case, he was going to shut Satan away as we see in verse 2. The imprisonment location is the **abyss**.

**Hinds:** —"Key" represents the angel's authority to open and close doors, but here must mean his right to force Satan to remain in his own place and be restrained from the unlimited use of his power which he had been exercising. . . . Being bound with a "great chain" signifies this restraint.

**(2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;**

Verse 2: John speaks six times in this chapter of a **thousand years**.

The subject has become a great battlefield among those explaining the book of Revelation. Because Revelation is a book of symbols, we do not take this **thousand years** as literal but as a long period of time.

**“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever”**  
(Rev. 11:15).

Any interpretation of Revelation 20 that limits the kingdom of Christ to one thousand literal years is simply not in harmony with the rest of Scripture.

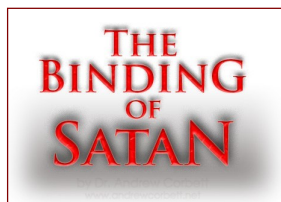
**Hinds:** This is the only place in the Bible where this period is mentioned. If a distinct age (is meant) in which Christ will reign personally on earth, it is remarkable that neither he nor any of the apostles in their plain teaching said anything about it. Why should so important a matter be mentioned only in a book of symbols and in a highly figurative passage?

**Jack Cottrell:** As we look more closely at this text, we must remember that the language of Revelation is mainly figurative or symbolic, e.g., "chain," "thousand years," "thrones." Also we must remember that the cyclical nature of the book places the events of 20:1-6 at the beginning of the church age, not at the end of history. Every event described here took place, or began to take place, as the result of Christ's earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension to God's right hand.

His thousand-year reign began at that point, and still continues today. *The Millennium is now!*

**(3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.**

**Jack Cottrell:** Jesus bound the devil when he came the first time. Many find it extremely difficult to accept this idea, mainly because they hear the words



"binding of Satan" and formulate their own idea of what this must mean before they examine the biblical data. If Satan is bound, they think, then there should not be any sin or even temptation on the earth. But sin obviously was not eliminated by Christ's first coming and is still abundant on the earth today. Would one not have to be blind to think that Satan is bound in times like these?

The key to understanding the binding of Satan is to pay close attention to what the Bible actually says about it, not only in Rev 20:1-3 but elsewhere in the NT as well. Regarding the latter we begin with the way Scripture describes the purpose of Christ's first coming. Among other things, it is specifically taught that Jesus came to deal with the devil.

First John 3:8 says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Among Satan's works are falsehood and death (John 8:44; Heb 2:14), but Jesus came "to testify to the truth" (John 18:37; see John 8:31-47). He has already "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Jesus came not only to destroy Satan's works but to "destroy" Satan himself. Hebrews 2:14 clearly states that Jesus came the first time "so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (NIV). The word rendered "destroy" by the NIV (*katargeo*) does not necessarily mean "to annihilate, to abolish completely." — *The Faith Once for All*, page 495.

**(4) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

Verse 4: John does not say the thrones were on earth but they were occupied. John also **saw the souls** of martyrs and they **reigned with Christ** for the 1,000 years. These martyrs were first identified in Revelation 6:9 and were under the altar. Now they were **reigning** for a long time.

**(5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.**

**Jack Cottrell:** The first resurrection, then, is a spiritual resurrection, not a bodily one. It is something that Christ made possible through his first coming, and it has been taking place from the beginning of the church age to this very day. It is the same thing the Bible calls being born again or being regenerated. Human beings are both body and spirit (soul), and death affects both. The spirit of a sinner is "dead in sin," and the sinner is also doomed to die physically without the hope of redemptive resurrection.

At conversion, though, he is raised from his state of spiritual death into spiritual life; this is the first resurrection. See John 5 :24; Rom 6:3-4; Eph 2:1,5,6; Col 2:12-13; 3:1; 1 John 3:14. That this occurs in baptism is specifically stated in Rom 6:3-4 and Col 2:12. Along with the rest of the human race, the saved person still awaits the second resurrection, the resurrection of the body.

The more important one, though, is the first resurrection; only those who receive this one will escape the second death of hell. Bodily resurrection is no guarantee against the second death, but the spiritual resurrection is. No wonder John says, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection"! It is a great blessing, and one that can be experienced now. ***The Millennium is now!***

**(6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

**Cottrell:** His kingdom is a spiritual reality; it is not of this world (John 18:36). He reigns now over those whose hearts are surrendered to him. But the point here is that not only does Christ now reign over us, but also, when we are in Christ, we reign with him over all our common enemies such as Satan, sin, and death. In our conversion, says Paul, when God raised us up from spiritual death, he also "seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6; see Col 3:1-4); i.e., even now we are seated on the spiritual thrones of which Revelation 20:4 speaks. Concerning the redeemed it is said, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Rev 5:10).

Thus "reigning with Christ" refers not just to some future heavenly glory but also to our Christian experience upon this earth. We already share Christ's victorious power over sin and death. We have spiritual victory, through Christ, over Satan.

Satan's power over us as Christians is limited (1 John 4:4; Eph 6:10-17; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Pet 2:9). The Christian no longer fears Satan's dreaded weapon, death (Heb 2:14-15); death has lost its terror (1 Cor 15:55-57), since we know that there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).

Satan does not have power over us; we have power over him. This is what it means to "reign with Christ." We are already doing it. ***The Millennium is now!***

### **Cottrell's Summary of Revelation 20:1-6:**

We have explained the binding of Satan, the first resurrection, and reigning with Christ in the context of Revelation as a whole. These are millennial blessings begun by Christ when he came the first time. Revelation 20:1-6 does not describe some future paradise on earth. It speaks of what is true now in the life of every Christian. It also speaks of what could be true for everyone else now. This depends on whether the church will take the gospel to all the world and share these millennial blessings with all mankind. Like Paul, through the gospel, we can "open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18).

To put it another way, Jesus spoke of binding the strong man, who is the devil. Then he spoke of plundering the strong man's house and carrying off his property. His property, his goods, are the captive souls still in his grip. The straightforward facts are these: Christ himself has bound the strong man; but it is the church's job to plunder his house and rescue those whom he still holds captive so that they also may share in the present blessings of Christ's millennial kingdom.

**(7) When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.**

**Verses 7-8:** Just at the end of time, **Satan** was released for a bit but was the same old devil. His way had not changed. One more battle ahead.

This may describe what is now happening in the world. There is news of the rise of direct devil worship. Extensive description of current forms of Satanism can be found in the Satanism article on Wikipedia.

(9) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

Verse 9: This time, God intervened directly and the wicked were scorched and torched. The beloved city is the church: “**But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels. . .**” Hebrews 12:22. **Fire** may be a figure of speech, but it is not as severe as the reality.

(10) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Verse 10: **The devil** was thrown into the lake of fire, while the **false prophet** and the **beast** were there already. Their fate is sealed forever. A continuous living cremation.

(11) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

Verse 11: This has been called by some “The **Great White Throne Judgment**,” for that it is. God is directly judging those from earth. The past structures of **heaven and earth** are gone. This is the end of time as we know it.

(12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Verse 12: The final hour of formal and final judgment has arrived. Each one being **judged** was measured against some **books** and one of them was the **book of life**. It is the registry of the redeemed.

**Are You Written  
In the Lamb's  
Book of Life**

(13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

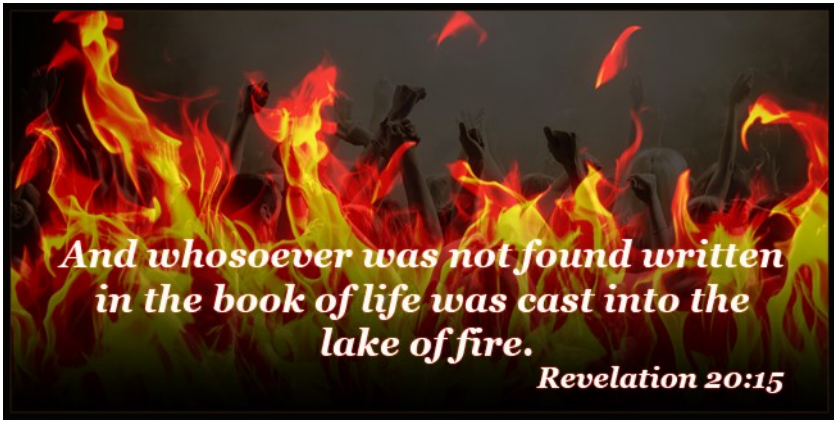
Verse 13: All places the dead could be located surrendered them.

(14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name

was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Verses 14-15: **Death** has been ended and **Hades**, the unseen state of the dead, is now useless.

**James Smith**: The second death is spiritual, eternal separation from God. Death is not the absence of being, but the absence of blessing.



In the next and final lesson, we get  
to the heart of the artichoke.