Great Supper of God — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 19:17–21 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 4, 2022 · *Hallelujah!*

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About being thankful— getting to get away on a vacation. That was nice, and I do appreciate y'all letting that happen. I also want to say thanks. Part of our policy handbook allows pastors and staff, full-time staff, to get paid time off, not for vacation but for work-related activities, and one of the things that I accepted was a trustee position for Lifeway Christian Resources, which is the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. Maybe you remember the Lifeway stores back in the day. They had them all over the place. They shut all the stores down, except for a couple.

But they still have an online presence and they still resource the church, specifically a lot of Southern Baptist churches with quarterlies and books and Bibles. The CSB Bible that I preach out of is published by Broadman and Holman, which is owned by Lifeway. I wasn't quite sure what I was getting into when I said I would be willing to serve on that board. And the first day was awesome. I got to go and tour the distribution center, which was like a huge Amazon warehouse. I've never seen anything like it. They had these paid pickers; they would go up and down aisles and pick books and box them, and they get kudo points for how fast they went and raises attached to how efficient they were.

Just a well-oiled machine, really pretty incredible. We had a cool free dinner. They gave us these perks of 20% discount on everything in the Lifeway store online for our church as well. So our church is going to get a nice little discount. And then they said that trustees, you get free copies of every book published through Lifeway for the next eight years because I'm going to be a trustee for eight years. So I was like, wow, free books for eight years. This is incredible. And the first day was like the best day ever.

And then the next day was like a business meeting from 8 a.m to 6 p.m. It was the worst day. I felt like I was back in school, spreadsheets, number reports. I just went from room to room. I never left the hotel, it was just room to room to room hearing all of these people give these talks, and I thought, that's about a fifty-fifty. Yeah, it's really, really cool, really great, and a lot of work. So I guess that's what trustees do. But I really am honored to get to serve.

And thankful for Pastor David. If you didn't listen to Pastor David's sermon last week, I really want to encourage you to go back and listen to it. It was a fantastic sermon on keeping the fire burning and keeping your walk with the Lord hot and it's such a pivotal important truth for Christians, no matter how long you've been a believer, how long you've been walking with the Lord, those reminders to fan into flame the work that God is doing through the Holy Spirit in your heart. And I just want to say thank— I know Pastor Dave is not here, but as a congregation, we are blessed to continue to have his presence in our church and his ministry.

I took the lead pastorate after he had served as the lead pastor for 38 years. I've been lead pastor now for right at 10 years, so he's going on 48, getting close to that 50-year mark of ministry, and we are just really tremendously blessed to continue to have his influence and his preaching ministry in our pulpit. And so even though he's not here, I want to honor him and pay tribute to him. And I hope you'll express your gratitude to him as well, especially those of you who've been here a long time and have benefited under his leadership.

I hope he'll stick around for many, many years to come. For those of you who are new to our church, if you're a guest today, we've been going through in our teaching times, we've been going through the book of Revelation. And we are getting to the end of the book of the Revelation. We're actually in Revelation chapter 19 this morning. So if you want to take your Bibles and turn there, we're going to look at the final few verses of Revelation chapter 19. And one of the things, if you're new, you don't know about our church is we preach through books of the Bible, line by line, verse by verse.

And sometimes that's really awesome because the Lord brings a text that meets a moment and you just know it's sovereign and by God's hand because it was just next in line, but it just perfectly suited what is going on and what we're going through. But in other times, when you preach expositionally through the scriptures, you're forced to tackle texts that you would have otherwise never touched with a 10-foot pole as a preacher. Because they're so hard to interpret or they're maybe just super gory and hard to bring application points out of.

And really you need to be reminded in those days that according to Second Timothy, all Scripture is inspired by God. It's God-breathed, and it's profitable, he says, for teaching and correcting and rebuking and training in righteousness, so that the man and woman of God may be equipped for every good work. So we're going to read a verse this morning in our

journey through Revelation which on the surface may seem striking, may seem like what in the world is that all about? I didn't even think that kind of stuff would be in the Bible.

But I'm hopeful, by God's grace, because of his promise, he will be faithful to equip us through our time in the Word this morning at the end of Revelation 19. If you like to take notes, and if you're new to the book of Revelation, essentially the book of the Revelation is about the triumph of Jesus over evil. It's ingrained into every human heart. We yearn for good to triumph over evil. It's the thesis behind every superhero movie. It's the thesis behind all good art: sacrificial love and leadership and a willingness to do whatever it takes to overcome evil and to overcome that evil with good.

And that's the message of the book of Revelation. That's the message of the Bible. In Revelation chapter 19 what we see is the particulars of how Jesus wins the battle for this world. And it is put in apocalyptic terms, apocalyptic imagery of a great battle or a great war. We know it popularly today as the battle or the war of Armageddon. But before we read about it, I want to remind you in chapter 19, we were introduced to Jesus descending out of heaven on a white horse,[1] and we were reminded that the way Jesus looks today is totally different than what most people think of when they think of what Jesus looks like.

He's not the baby in the manger, he's not the crucified Savior on the cross. He is risen, he is glorious, he looks like a superhero, and I want to remind us of that in Revelation chapter 19, if you go back to verse 12, it says that his eyes were a fiery flame. He had many crowns on his head. He had a name that no one knows except himself. And he had a robe dipped in blood. All of these are important descriptions of Jesus as you think about his second coming. The eyes of fire— you guys Lord of the Rings fans, anyone watched The Rings of Power yet?

I got like 30 minutes in, I couldn't finish it. But you remember Sauron, the glowing eye— not Sauron, who's the glowing eye? Mordor, what is it? It's Sauron, okay. The all-seeing eye. That's kind of what is being presented here in Revelation 19. Jesus' eyes see everything, they are penetrating, they know the secret intentions of the heart, nothing escapes his gaze. He has many crowns as opposed to the seven crowns of the dragon who is a representation of Satan in Revelation twelve. So Satan does have power, he does have authority in this world, but Jesus has greater authority and greater power.

His sovereignty is unlimited. He has a name that no one knows, meaning he's untouchable. He's no one's puppet; no one's mastering Jesus. He's the puppet master of all. And then he has a robe dipped in blood, which we said was not his own blood shed on the cross, but the blood of God's enemies that he brings violence to when he comes again. And that's really what our text this morning presents: the violence that Jesus brings when he comes back to the earth. Chapter 19, verse 14 presents this great army in heaven.

We didn't talk too much about this great army, but notice they're in heaven and they are also wearing white linens just like Jesus and riding white horses just like Jesus. So it is the believers of God, it is those who are in Christ who've received the victory. They have overcome evil in this world, and now they are with Jesus in that army watching him win the battle for this world. And that's the setup for our text today. Jesus is about to win the battle for the world. So chapter 19, verse 17: "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun"—it must have been hot—"and he called out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying high overhead, 'Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of military commanders, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of everyone, both free and slave, small and great.'" Sounds like The Walking Dead, yeah.

Really quite gruesome. "Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse"—who's Jesus—"and against his army"—the believers. "But the beast was taken prisoner, and along with it the false prophet, who had performed the signs in its presence. He"—the false prophet—"deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image with these signs. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds"— so you don't see that verse on a Mardel coffee mug, right?

That's not one of the picture frames—"ate their fill of their flesh." I think it'd be real good in our dining room, honey. No, you don't ever see that. This is a gruesome, gruesome passage. And for a lot of people shocking because you think Jesus is, you know, he's hanging out with the kids. Suffer not the children to come to me. He's compassionate. He's kind. He's healing the sick. He's liberating the prisoners, enriching the poor. He's not a warmonger, he's not a warrior messiah, and yet that's exactly how Revelation 19 presents Jesus.

This is the warrior messiah Jesus Christ making war against the enemies of God. Now we've already seen this battle in summary fashion earlier in the book of the Revelation, but it's the battle known as the battle of Armageddon. A lot of people debate where this Armageddon is. Is it a reference to the plains of Megiddo, just north of Israel, where all the great battles of the world have been fought if you go back throughout history? Many of the big, big, important wars were fought there. Or is this a symbolic reference to just a general war between good and evil, believers and unbelievers, or Satan and God, or is it something in between those two things?

Whatever the case may be, whatever the debates are, the battle is known as the battle of Armageddon. And because this text is so debated, it is so hotly debated, what I want us to do this morning, and it may feel a little bit boring, but hopefully if you stick with me, we'll get past the boring parts. I want to give you six descriptions of this battle before we make

application and draw it to a close. And I wanted to choose six descriptions because the person behind this battle, as we see, is the beast.

And those of you who've been with us in Revelation know that beast is a reference to this end-times antichrist person or government this entity that is satanically inspired and uses its power and authority on the earth to persecute Christians and to resist the biblical God, the God of the Bible. And so that is the force behind this battle and the number of the antichrist, the number of the beast we saw in Revelation 13, is the number of a man: 666. And so I didn't want to do five. I didn't want to do seven.

I wanted to do six truths about this battle, motivated by this figure, the antichrist. And these I think are truths that everyone would agree on regardless of your interpretive grid. People come at the book of Revelation from different perspectives. We've talked about that before. I think everybody can agree with these six things and then we'll talk about where the disagreements are and what application looks like. So the first thing to note is that this battle is announced by an angel. It's so interesting to me that in the book of the Revelation, when God does things on the earth, he does not often do them directly.

He uses means and agents. And those agents in the book of Revelation are often angelic. It was several angels who unleashed the trumpet judgments. They all blew their trumpet. It was the angel who came down and unlocked the abyss, unleashing the dragon. It's angels who do the seven bowls of wrath; you see angel after angel after angel. And so it's not surprising that you have an angel or a messenger be the thing that kicks off this battle. And it says the angel standing in the sun. I doubt he's standing in the sun, maybe like in the way of the sun.

And he's positioned there, theoretically, so that he can call all the birds that are flying in mid-air. King James calls it mid-heaven. It's just where the airplanes fly. He's calling all of those big scary birds to gather together for the feast of God. So it's announced by an angel, that's the first thing. The second thing, it's a feast for the birds. And not just any birds, okay? I'd call them birds of prey. Think buzzards, think eagles, crows, ravens, hawks. You've never seen a dove go down and pick out the flesh of a dead carcass, have you?

If you ever see a dove like that, don't eat it, right? That's a nasty bird. Birds of prey are birds that prey on other animals. They're carnivorous, they're flesh eaters. And that's the picture here is you've got a bunch of those kind of birds hovering around. Now again, people say, Is it literal, symbolic? That's kind of a secondary question. Just get the picture of these birds circling around this big mount of Megiddo, these big plains, and why would a bunch of birds of prey circle like that? They would circle like that because they see something they're about to eat.

They see death on the horizon. I'll never forget when I was a teenager, I was becoming a man. I remember it was my rite of passage into manhood. And in our family the rite of passage into manhood, at least at that time, was building fence with my dad all day long. You become a man when you go out and build fence. So my dad had taken me out to build fence and I remember being out there in the West Texas heat, miserable as all get out. Mesquite trees were poking me and the poison was all getting in my blood, and I was just miserable.

And I remember looking up and seeing this nasty, huge West Texas buzzard just circling around me. And I thought to myself, I'm going to die on the day I become a man. This is terrible. But of course, I don't think it was actually circling me. I think it was like a dead rabbit or a dead cow or something like that. But that's the picture. It's birds of prey feasting on death. And what is the death they're going to feast on? It's the death of these people. These armies, this coalition of evil that is partnered with this antichrist government to resist God and to persecute God's people.

Jesus actually mentions this in his Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. He talks about his second coming in Matthew 24 and 25. And he says in Matthew 24, verse 27, "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." In other words, it will be immediate. They won't see it coming. They're thinking they're going to destroy the people of God, and then bam, Jesus shows up. "Wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather." Whether it's Matthew 24 or Revelation chapter 19, all of that's pulling from Old Testament imagery about the end of days battle.

Ezekiel 38 and 39, which is the third thing, the third truth you need to know about this battle. This battle is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It's announced by an angel, it's a feast for the birds, and it's a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. So you can go back and read this on your own time, and people again disagree about the particulars. But in chapter 38 and 39 of Ezekiel, there's a prophecy about God's war against the antichrist. God's war against his great enemy. And he says to the son of man in Ezekiel 39, verse 17, "This is what the Lord God says: Tell every kind of bird and all the wild animals, 'Assemble and come!

Gather from all around to my sacrificial feast that I am slaughtering for you, a great feast on the mountains of Israel; you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the earth's princes: rams, lambs, male goats, and all the fattened bulls of Bashan. You will eat fat until you are satisfied and drink blood until you are drunk, at my sacrificial feast that I have prepared for you. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, of mighty men and all the warriors.' This is the declaration of the Lord God."

How many of y'all had that for your verse of the day in your Bible app? Yeah, I skipped over that one. Again, just gory and violent. And yet it's biblical truth. This prophecy is talking about the Messiah, the Christ, when he establishes the kingdom of God, as the Old Testament said that the Messiah would do. That kingdom is going to be resisted by those

who want nothing to do with God. In this day and age when people reject God, they reject God and go about their merry lives. But there's coming a day where the Lord will establish his kingdom on the earth, and those who don't wish to be a part of the kingdom will be removed from the earth through the judgment of the second coming of Jesus.

It's a picture of God cleansing the earth. He's using his creation to purify this world of everything unholy and defiled. This is what the first century disciples were hoping Jesus would do at his first coming. This is why they were asking him in Acts chapter 1, verse 6: Are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Is this the time you're going to do all that political violence? And Jesus says, no, not yet. But there's a day coming when that's going to take place. So it's a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The third or fourth thing I want to show you is that this judgment is indiscriminately applied. A lot of times you saw in this verse and in the Ezekiel passage the reference to a list of different types of individuals, kings, military commanders, mighty, horses and riders, everyone, free and slave, small and great. You see the same kind of language used earlier in Revelation chapter 6, when the sixth seal is broken and the cosmic signs and wonders show up in the heavens. And you see men and women of all different station in life cry out, protect me from the wrath of the lamb.

Let me show you that. Revelation chapter 6, verses 15 and 16: the kings of the earth, the nobles, generals, rich, powerful, every slave person and free person, they all hid in the caves. And so what is going on here, I think the point that John is trying to establish is that your earthly position, which maybe used to protect you from punishment or accusation, that will not work when Jesus comes again because his eyes see everything. His crown is above every earthly crown. And so the power and the privilege and the protection you used to enjoy while you were on this earth, you thought you were untouchable, you thought you could not be touched.

Those categories will disappear when Jesus comes in judgment. And it's really a reminder that all sin is equally offensive to a holy God. I think sometimes we like to kid ourselves that since there's degrees of God's punishment of sin, then there must be degrees of God's toleration of sin. Like there's some sins that really make him mad and other sins that don't make him all that offended. The biblical truth, I think, is that all sin is equally offensive to God. There may be degrees of punishment, but they're all equally intolerable.

And he doesn't care if you're the president of the United States or if you're some poor homeless person, there are no earthly categories that protect you from this judgment. The only thing that protects you is the blood of the lamb, which these people reject outright, and so they experience the judgment of God instead. When the wrath of the lamb falls, your nobility or earthly prestige will not protect you. Now why is God judging these people? He's

not just doing it to do it. He's got a reason, and the reason, the sixth thing I want to show you, the fifth thing, is that this battle is a campaign against the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is specifically a war against Jesus. We've heard about the war against terror, heard about the war in Afghanistan, you got the war in Ukraine. This is a war specifically targeted against the biblical God and against his people. And that's why Jesus comes in judgment on them. Look at chapter 19, verse 19 again. Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies— actually that's chapter 16. Chapter 19, verse 19: "Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and against his army."

I do want to show you this in chapter 16, the mention of the beast and the kings of the earth. Where's that coming from? That's coming from chapter 16. If you remember in chapter 16, this antichrist figure, which we've interpreted as an end times political force of some type, whether it's an individual or a government or an ideology. It's all debatable. But this end times political force basically influences other kings and nations to join with them in their campaign against the people of God and against Jesus Himself. That sounds outlandish?

Really? I don't think it's super outlandish. Even today you can kind of sense in secular government a distaste for particularly evangelical Christianity. Oh, you believe in traditional marriage. Oh, you believe in protecting the life of the unborn? You guys are the scum of the earth. You are the extremists. We need to be done with you. That kind of animus that you can already kind of sense in the world today that's going to grow and grow and grow during this end times season. And that centralization of that angst, that's the beast.

And that beast is going to negotiate and persuade the kings of the earth, particularly through this what's called a false prophet through signs and wonders. They're going to say, you know what, you need to join with us because if we all partner together, maybe we can finally rid the world of religion. Maybe we can finally rid the world of these Christians who follow this Messiah who is supposedly coming again. This is what you see in chapter 16: "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming from the dragon's mouth" —in other words, he's lying, deceiving the nations—"from the beast's mouth"—the antichrist—"and from the mouth of the false prophet."

So this unholy Trinity, spitting lies and deception, Join us. "For they are demonic spirits performing signs, who travel to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle on the great day of God, the Almighty." So get it: it's a political campaign to take out the Christians. It's a political campaign to rid the earth of any notion of the God of the Bible because they hate him. They want nothing to do with him. They want to rid the earth of his presence. That's why Jesus comes and takes it away.

He abolishes it with a spoken word. Now, people are going to read this and go, Man, I just can't get there. I can't see Jesus being the means by which someone's earthly life ends. I just can't see him like swinging a sword and taking a life. I don't even think Jesus is for the death penalty, much less doing something like that. And so a lot of people will interpret this symbolically, and they'll say maybe the idea is that the Lord confuses two enemy nations and causes them to war against one another.

And certainly you see that in Revelation 17, the beast and Babylon are partners together, and then they destroy one another. So some suggest this battle is a world war where all the evil nations of the world destroy each other in an effort to rid the world of Christianity, or of the God of the Bible. Others say no, Jesus is literally going to come back. He's going to have like a literal sword out of his mouth. He's going to literally cut people's heads off. That sounds a little bit far-fetched, but that's the idea.

There's some kind of literal judgment and people debate. Is it literal? Is it symbolic? You know, you really got to figure that out for yourself. I lean away— I get the temptation to not overly literalize the apocalyptic. We shouldn't overly literalize it. It is apocalyptic literature. But when you read those passages in 19 and in Ezekiel 39 and in chapter 16, it seems a little bit more than just a symbolic tug of war between good and evil. There does seem to be literal historical physical implications. Now, what those particulars are, I have no idea.

But it will be the judgment of God that falls on people, resulting in their physical deaths, when Jesus comes again at this great battle. What's going to be the consequence? Two things, and then we'll be done. Number one, evil's going to be imprisoned. When Christ comes again, he imprisons evil on the earth. Chapter 19, verse 20: "The beast was taken prisoner, and along with it the false prophet, who had performed the signs in its presence. He deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image with these signs.

Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur." Those who take the antichrist and the false prophet as ideologies basically say the word of God is going to overcome these lies and deception, and we're going to be done with communism, we're going to be done with authoritarianism, we're going to be done with evil government. Those who take these as individuals say, no, two individuals are going to be literally imprisoned into the lake of fire, thrown alive. You can take it either way. That's the beast and the false prophet.

Then you see the dragon himself imprisoned in chapter 20, verses 1 and 2. "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven[2] holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand," and look at this: "He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." Now in the coming weeks we're going to talk about this phrase a thousand years, that's what's called the millennium. You've maybe heard of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, that he has a thousand-year reign on the earth.

Some say it's not a literal thousand, it's just Jesus ruling and reigning on the earth for a definite period of time. Why is he able to restore the world? Why is he able to rebeautify the earth? Why is he able to wipe every tear from our eye? And no more sadness, no more crying, why does the lion lie down with the lamb? Why do they take weapons and beat them into plowshares? It's because evil is imprisoned. It's because it's no longer on the earth anymore. It's no longer jacking things up because Jesus has come and he's put it into chains.

Evil is imprisoned. And then the last thing, the unrepentant are destroyed. Verse 21: "The rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds ate their fill of their flesh." This is the same sword that was mentioned earlier in chapter 19 that came from Jesus' mouth. Some say this is a reference to the Word of God. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Some say no, it's not the Bible, it's not the preaching of the gospel. It's a means of violence, it's a tool of judgment that Jesus uses to end the lives of these wicked people.

Again, you decide whether it's more symbolic or more literal. So those are the six things. And I think whether you're interpreting it symbolically or literally from a futurist camp or a preterist idealist camp, everyone can get on board with these. It's a great battle that is announced by an angel, becomes a feast for the birds, fulfills Old Testament prophecy of God's indiscriminate judgment for a campaign against Christ that leaves evil imprisoned and the unrepentant destroyed. What's the takeaway for us? I think the takeaway for us, at least as I read this passage, it's just a reminder that God is holy.

The first half of the gospel is the bad news, right? The first half of the gospel is that God has created us. He's created us in his image. And when we sinned against God, we fell short of his glory, and so there is this separation between us as sinful human beings and a God of holiness. And the only way to bridge that gap is for our sin to be atoned for, to be washed away. But the only way for that to happen is through the blood of Jesus Christ. And so for those of us outside of Christ, it's a reminder that your sin is offensive to God.

And even for Christians, your sin is offensive to God. It's easy as a Christian because you think I'm saved, I'm going to go to heaven when I die. Jesus understands I can just keep living this immoral wicked life, it's no big deal. I'll get better. I'll clean up later down the road. It's a reminder that's offensive to the Lord. He will not indefinitely tolerate that sin in our lives. There will be a day coming of judgment where we'll stand before the Lord and we'll give an account for every idle word we've ever spoken.

On that day We will see things for what they really are. I remember when I was first getting serious about my Christian faith memorizing a verse in the book of Exodus about God's mercy and compassion, his faithful love. And so many people love to focus on those attributes of God. He is merciful, he's compassionate, he's full of faithful love. But that passage also follows that description of God's mercy and grace with he by no means clears

the guilty. And the truth is if you want to worship the God of the Bible, you've got to see both of those truths.

He is a God abounding in steadfast mercy. He is compassionate and gracious. He is slow to anger, abounding in faithful love and truth. "maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin." Certainly we love this. But He's also a God of justice. And he will not leave the guilty unpunished. Your guilt will be atoned for either by you atoning for your own guilt forever in a place called hell. Or by you receiving the gift of salvation, Jesus dying in your place for your sin, bearing the wrath of God on your behalf so that you could be treated with grace and mercy, and treated as though you don't deserve to be treated, because Jesus took your penalty for you.

But when you believe that, when you remind yourself that Jesus stood in my place for my sin, you look at your sin and you don't flirt with it. You don't say I can keep on doing this. It's no big deal. You say this is the sin for which Jesus died. This is the sin that caused Jesus to bear God's wrath on my behalf. I want to be done away with this sin in my life as quickly as possible. So the Lord is compassionate and merciful, but he by no means clears the guilty, and so we cannot and should not tolerate unrepentant sin in our life.

Doesn't mean you'll be perfect, doesn't mean you won't struggle. It just means there will be a yearning in you to be rid of that brokenness and that bondage in your life. Now we don't have time to major on all these disagreements, but I did want to draw out that there are people who interpret chapter 19 and chapter 20 in particular. They interpret it way, way differently. And so I want to expose you to this very quickly and then we're going to wrap it up. There are three basic camps for how people understand that thousand years that we mentioned at the very end of chapter 20, verse 2.

Satan is in prison for a thousand years. What does that look like on the earth? People disagree. There are three main camps, and those of you who have no care for this, just tune out. Those of you who love it, you can tune in. There's premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial. Premillennialism, basically, if you just look at the word, suggests that Jesus comes pre or before the thousand-year reign of Jesus on the earth. Postmillennialism says that Jesus will come post or after the thousand-year reign of Jesus. And then amillennialism: this is the Greek prefix a-, which means no.

So there's no millennium. And by that they don't mean that Jesus isn't ruling and reigning. They just mean that there's not a literal thousand years. We're in the millennium right now. Jesus is ruling and reigning right now. He's at the right hand of God. He's making every enemy a footstool. He's ruling and reigning in the hearts and lives of men and women. And there's also a sense in which there are people who reject and rebel against his sovereign authority, and so the world is getting better and better and better, and it's getting worse and worse and worse because we're in the millennium right now.

They're very popular, all have very good reasons for why they believe what they believe. And if you think to yourself, Well, everyone who's not premill is dumb-dumb and doesn't believe the Bible, you haven't read the arguments. Or if you think your way is the only way, you haven't read the arguments. And one of the things that burdens my heart as a pastor is there are churches who split over how to interpret one verse in the book of the Revelation, which is one of the most confusing books in the whole Bible.

So may that not be true of us. It is okay to disagree with me and my interpretation of the book of the Revelation because I disagree with myself. Every two or three months I'm switching positions because I can't figure out even what I believe, because there's so many good arguments for one or the other. Those who are premillennial basically believe the world is going to get worse and worse and worse before it gets better. It's going to get so bad that there's going to be a context that this evil government can rise to power and this false religion can gain traction.

And it can result in extreme persecution of Christians to the point that we're basically wiped off the planet. And then there are even those Christians who say it's going to get so bad God's just going to go bloop, take us up out of here. And we're not going to suffer the tribulation. Others say, no, we're going to be here for the whole time, suffer the wrath of the antichrist. That's their basic conviction. It's going to get worse and worse and worse. The postmills basically say, Ehh, you're wrong. It's getting better and better and better.

I mean just look at human history. Things have gotten progressively better. If you focus on the negatives, you won't ever see the positives. I mean we've got the printing press, we've got modern technology, we've got wealth and prosperity that is advancing quicker now than it ever has before. And they would basically say Christians, when we influence politics, when we influence government, when we influence the social order, when we take power in the cultural institutions of our day, we can establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

We have a cultural mandate to establish the rule and reign of Jesus. And when we do that like we're supposed to do that, we're paving the way, we're setting up the throne for Jesus to come and sit on it at the end of days. And so a lot of people take that approach. And then the amills basically say, You're both right. It is really, really bad, but it's also really, really good, and for those under the authority of King Jesus, their lives are getting better and better and better even as the world deteriorates and for those who are not under the authority of Jesus, it's getting worse and worse and worse.

But even in the bondage, even in the brokenness, we can have victory because our salvation is in Christ. Our hope is not in this world; it's in the world to come. And so, you know, you decide, and we'll talk more about these as the series moves on. I just want you to know whether you're premill, postmill, or amill. The point we all need to remember is Jesus wins

the battle for this world. And there are premill interpreters who are just Debbie Downers. And there are postmills and amills who are a little too— in my opinion, they're a little too fast and loose with the text.

They overly symbolize things that don't look too symbolic. But wherever you're at on that camp, everyone agrees Jesus wins the battle for this world. And because Jesus wins the battle for this world, we can have hope. That's our blessed hope. And we can have a reason for why we rid our lives of sin and why we keep walking faithfully in what Jesus has called us to do because we believe justice will be established, that righteousness will fall down like rain, and all I need to do is wait for that blessed day.

And if I have to live my whole life before Jesus comes again, I will live my whole life in faithful obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ because I know there's a day coming when the great sufferings that I've endured are going to be swallowed up with the glory that's going to be revealed. And so I'll endure based on eyes of faith, based on God's promise that He will establish His kingdom someday. And so if you're here this morning and you're discouraged, then I would encourage you to be reminded of the victory of Jesus for this world.

And if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, I would encourage you to repent and to put your faith in Jesus for salvation. Your sin has separated you from your Creator. You are guilty. What do you do with that guilt? Do you ask God, Give me a break, cut me some slack? That's not who God is. He's holy. He's righteous. He by no means clears the guilty. The only way for you to stand righteous before him is to put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because he paid your debt on the cross.

And so what it looks like for you is repentance and faith. Repenting saying, God, you're right, I'm wrong, you're holy, I'm not. I recognize my need for a savior. And then crying out in faith: Lord Jesus, would you save me? Would you save me from my sin? I believe you died on the cross. I believe you paid my debt. I believe God raised you from the dead. I believe you are Lord of lords and King of kings. So I surrender my life to you forever and ever. And if you've never done that this morning and the Holy Spirit's calling you to a decision to be saved, then I would encourage you to respond to that call while there's still time.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this morning and for this difficult text that reminds us that this is a difficult world and it's full of brokenness and evil. And it would be so easy to watch the news and to see reports of wars and rumors of wars and to get super discouraged and to check out and to maybe question whether or not you're good, or you're God, but we remind ourselves today that you saw this day coming. You warned us of those types of events. And you said to be faithful and endure and overcome, to look up, because your redemption draws nigh.

And so give us eyes of faith. Help us to look up and to see those truths even as we walk through challenging times. For those this morning who are suffering with a battle of sin in their life, they're torn, they are drawn to Christ, they're drawn to righteousness, and yet they're stuck in the same patterns of doing the same old things, the same old way, and they wonder, is there deliverance for me? And I pray that you would grant the gift of deliverance, that you would fill them with the Holy Spirit, that you would give them the ability to surrender completely and fully to you and to say, Your kingdom come and your will be done in my life today, right now as it is in heaven.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "descending out of heaven on a cloud"; in Revelation 19:11 heaven opens and Jesus comes riding a white horse. Source: Revelation 19:11 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "coming down from the abyss"; Revelation 20:1 reads "coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss." Source: Revelation 20:1 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩