

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

"The Glorious Return"

Revelation 19:11-21

The Return of Christ in Glory! (Revelation 19:1-21)

What John Heard: The Hallelujah Chorus {19:1-10}

Remember that God has judged the wicked and brought total destruction upon the Antichrist's kingdom. The result is a Hallelujah Chorus from heaven. There is rejoicing and praise in heaven because God's judgments display His power, because God's judgments are true and righteous, because God's judgments are permanent, because the Lord our God the Almighty reigns, and because the marriage of the Lamb has come. Remember that this passage serves as a transition from wrath and judgment to praise and blessing. God's wrath has been poured out and the stage has been set for the glorious return of Christ Jesus our Lord.

What John Saw: The Glorious Return {19:11-21}

The Second Coming of Christ is a major theme in the Scriptures. David Levy examines this by listing some astounding statistics in his commentary on Revelation:

- One-fifth of the Bible is prophecy. One-third of those prophecies relate in some way to Christ's Second Coming.
- There are at least 333 prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament. Only 109 were fulfilled in His first advent, leaving 224 more than twice as many to be fulfilled at His second advent.
- Of the 46 Old Testament prophets, less than ten speak of events in Christ's First Coming, while 36 speak of events connected with His Second Coming.
- There are 7,959 verses in the New Testament, 330 of which refer directly to the Second Coming.
- The Lord refers to His return 25 times.
- Throughout the New Testament, there are more than 50 exhortations for people to be ready for Christ's return.⁵⁰⁰

The Revelation of the King of Kings (vv. 11-16)

His Appearance {vv. 11-13}:

John's attention is now drawn to what he saw, rather than what he was hearing. John is now witnessing another vision. As he saw in Revelation 4:1, John once again sees *heaven opened*. In 4:1 he saw heaven opened in order to let him in. This time, however heaven is opened so that John may see who is coming out. The term *behold (idou)* is an interjection, which calls special attention to what is about to follow. John sees the Lord Jesus Christ coming out of heaven. "No longer is Jesus portrayed as He was in His humiliation, "humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9). Instead, He rides the traditional white horse ridden by victorious Roman

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generals in their triumphal processions through the streets of Rome. *White* also symbolizes the spotless, unblemished, absolutely holy character of the Rider."⁵⁰¹ "The white horse conveys the picture that the one who shares the throne with the almighty God is about to exert that authority actively."⁵⁰²

John goes on to identify the rider of the white horse as *He who...is called Faithful and True*. Clearly this is a description of Christ who is earlier called *faithful and true* in Revelation 3:14, the *faithful witness* in Revelation 1:5 and called *true* in Revelation 3:7. Christ is faithful in that He is trustworthy to keep His promises to believers (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20) and He is true in that He is the true and real Messiah. *True* (*althinós*) denotes that which is genuine, authentic, and real. John also refers to Christ as Him who is true in 1 John 5:20 where he says, "*And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*" Christ is not counterfeit, no shadowy outline of the truth, He is the real thing! He is the true God and King! "The description of Jesus as Faithful and True is in marked contrast with the unfaithfulness and lies of Satan (cf. 12:9) and Antichrist's evil empire (cf. 18:23)."⁵⁰³

John moves on in his description of Christ to make the statement, "*and in righteousness He judges and wages war.*" Here Christ's role is described. He comes as both Judge and Warrior King. Christ is not only faithful and true, but is righteous in character. Obviously His holy nature requires justice. The right response to the sin and rebellion of unbelievers upon the earth is that Christ come in righteousness to judge them and wage war against them (cf. Matthew 16:27; 25:31; John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:1). There is only one other instance in Scripture where Christ is said to wage war. This occurs in Revelation 2:16 in His message to the compromising, worldly church in Pergamum, where He says, "Repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." John Phillips in his commentary writes:

The Lord is a man of war! In righteousness He judges and makes war. The judging has been going on throughout the breaking of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the bowls. Now He makes war. He who for long centuries has endured patiently the scoffings, the insults, the bad manners of men; who for ages has contemplated Calvary and all that it displayed of human hatred and contempt; and who, through the millennia has made peace through the blood of that cross, now makes war over that blood.⁵⁰⁴

Christ will come as Judge and Executioner! He will come as a mighty Warrior King! John MacArthur offers in his commentary:

Jesus' adversaries this time will be the hardened sinners who have defied His judgments and scorned the gospel message during the Tribulation. Despite all the devastating judgments they will have experienced, and the powerful gospel preaching they will have heard, they will stubbornly refuse to repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11). Since neither judgment nor preaching moves them to repent, Jesus will return to destroy them and send them to hell...He will come in utter righteousness, in perfect holiness, and in strict accord with every holy interest. Heaven cannot be at peace with sin, for God's "eyes are too pure to approve evil, and He can not look on wickedness with favor" (Hab. 1:13). There is a limit to God's patience. Justice cannot always tolerate injustice; truth cannot forever tolerate lies; rebellion cannot be permitted to go on forever. Incurable, incurable,

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hardened sinners will face destruction; mercy abused and grace rejected will ultimately bring judgment.⁵⁰⁵

In righteousness, Christ will come judging and waging war against those, whom have rejected Him and refused to repent during the Tribulation Period. He will take the role of Judge and Warrior King.

John now turns His attention toward the personal appearance of the rider upon the white horse. John begins by saying, "*His eyes are a flame of fire.*" This is a repeated description of Christ in the book of Revelation. In John's initial vision of Christ in Revelation 1 he uses this phrase to describe Christ in 1:14. Remember the Old Testament source of this description is found in Daniel 10:6 where the messenger their had eyes *as lamps of fire*. The phrase as used in 1:14 is repeated again in Revelation 2:18 in the message to the church in Thyatira. His eyes as a flame of fire speak of the searching righteousness and divine judgment upon all that is impure. His searching, revealing infallible gaze penetrates to the very depths of mankind, revealing to Him with piercing clarity the reality of everything there is to know. The omniscient Lord Jesus Christ will not fail to recognize and deal with sin. "Nothing escapes the notice of His penetrating vision. He can see into the deepest recesses of the human heart, because, "all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13)." ⁵⁰⁶

John's attention is now drawn to Christ's head. John says, "*and on His head are many diadems.*" The word *diadem* (*diadema*) refers to a ruler's crown. "Christ will wear *many crowns* on His head, denoting His royalty and majestic position as sovereign King of kings over heaven and earth." ⁵⁰⁷ "Many indicates His collecting of all the rulers' crowns, signifying that He alone is the sovereign ruler of the earth. Collecting the crown of a vanquished king was customary in the ancient world (cf. 2 Samuel 12:30)." ⁵⁰⁸

John moves on to mention that *He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself*. The location of the name is likely on the head since that is the part of the body that has been described up to this point. John was able to see the name, but was not capable of comprehending it. It is pointless to try to understand the name or its meaning since no one knows it except for Christ Himself.

John now gives a description of Christ's clothing. He says, "*He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood.*" The rider's robe is dipped in blood. This is not the blood of Christ as He shed it on Calvary in view here. This also is not the blood of the saints represented here. It is the blood of His slaughtered enemies. This is a picture of judgment as is made clear by the context of the passage. This scene is proleptic in nature. It views Christ as if He has already tread the wine press of the fierce wrath of God. It looks forward to a coming action as if it were already completed. The imagery here is similar to Isaiah 63:1-6:

1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 "And I looked, and there was no one to help, And I

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was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me; And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "And I trod down the peoples in My anger, And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

As John concludes this section, he personally identifies the rider on the horse as "*The Word of God*." John unmistakably identifies this rider as the Lord Jesus Christ by using this title for Christ that he often uses elsewhere (cf. John 1:1; 1:14; 1 John 1:1).

His Armies {v. 14}:

After addressing the appearance of Christ, John goes on to describe those who come with Christ, those who make up the armies of Christ. Christ will not return alone, in fact He will be accompanied by *the armies which are in heaven*. These armies definitely include the raptured church, who are dressed in this way in verse 8. In fact this is the only element that can be identified with any certainty. It is true others wear similar garments such as Tribulation martyrs (Rev. 7:9), and the angels (cf. Matthew 28:3; Mark 16:5), but it is not clear that they are referred to here in this context. Christ does state in His Olivet Discourse that He will return with all the angels (Matthew 25:31). So it is possible that this heavenly army is made up of the raptured church and all the holy angels. It is unclear whether any others are involved at this point. Some have suggested that the Tribulation martyrs are raised into glorified bodies simultaneously and also accompany Christ, while others even include the resurrection of the Old Testament saints into glorified bodies and that they too accompany Christ at His return. However, this seems somewhat unlikely, especially since there is no clear indication in the text to their participation at this point. It seems best to see their resurrection into glorified bodies after the Second Coming, but prior to the Millennial Reign. So the armies of Christ are a special reference to the Church Saints who will accompany Christ back to the earth at His Second Coming. The angels also will accompany Christ back to the earth, but it is unclear whether they are included in the term *armies which are in heaven*. These armies are said to be *clothed in fine linen, white and clean*. It seems best to understand this clothing as the same as previously mentioned in 19:8. The members of these armies have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are purged from all sin and impurity and are arrayed in bright white radiant and pure garments. It seems awkward that an army would be dressed in such attire since Christ is coming as a Warrior King to battle the unbelievers of the earth at the War of Armageddon. However, these armies will not be armed in fact Christ alone will destroy His enemies. The saints are coming to reign with Christ not to fight a battle. John mentions that these armies also ride on white horses.

His Rule {vv. 15-16}:

John now gives us a graphic yet powerful description of Christ's rule. The apostle sees a sharp sword coming from Christ's mouth. This is the second vision, in which John witnesses this. Remember that this was the picture mentioned in 1:16, when John received a vision of Christ on the Island of Patmos. In 1:16 the sword is described as a sharp two edged sword. The picture here is on the judicial authority of Christ as He comes to judge and condemn His enemies. "That the sword comes out of His mouth symbolizes the deadly power of Christ's words."⁵⁰⁹ It is with this sword that He will smite the nations. This means that He will instantly slaughter those gathered for the battle of Armageddon. John goes on to say that *He will rule them with a rod of iron*. "His rule over the nations will be unyielding and in total authority, demanding that every nation conform to His righteous standards. Lawlessness will be handled swiftly and justly, insuring continued peace

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throughout the world. The word *rod* means *to shepherd*. The shepherd uses his rod to bring correction and comfort to sheep (Psalm 23:4). Here the rod is made of iron and will be used to conform the world to order and justice and to put down all manifestation of wickedness."⁵¹⁰

John goes on to describe the destruction of Christ's enemies with the statement, "*and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*" "That vivid symbol of God's wrath comes from the ancient practice of stomping on grapes as part of the wine-making process. The splattering of grape juice pictures the pouring out of the blood of Christ's enemies (cf. 14:18-20)."⁵¹¹

John concludes the revelation of the King of kings by mentioning a name written on Christ's robe and on His thigh. He says, "*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'*" This name was likely hanging diagonal across His chest and down on His upper leg as He rides. "This name given to Christ here expresses His sovereign triumph over all foes and His absolute rule in His soon to be established kingdom."⁵¹² "This title is a summation of His rightful claim to reign and rule over all of creation in absolute sovereignty."⁵¹³ He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!

The Victory of the King of Kings (19:17-21)

The Angelic Announcement {vv. 17-18}:

At this point John moves from describing the returning Christ to emphasizing the victory of the King of kings. First there is an angelic announcement. Angels continue to play a key role in the end time events described by John here in the book of Revelation. This angel invites the birds to come assemble for the great supper of God. Those who have gathered for war against Christ and His armies will be instantly slaughtered and left for the birds of the air to be filled with their flesh. Revelation 14:20 indicates that this carnage will extend for 200 miles. Ezekiel 39:17-20 gives a striking parallel account of this event:

17 "And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field,' Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. 18 "You shall eat the flesh of mighty men, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as [though they were] rams, lambs, goats, and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 "So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20 "And you will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war," declares the Lord God.

All those who had gathered for the Battle of Armageddon will be instantly slaughtered with the end result of being left as food for birds. This slaughter and subsequent feast will include the *kings*, mighty military *commanders* and the armies of the world, who are described as *both freemen and slaves, and small and great*. They will be left on the field of battle and the birds of the air will be filled with their flesh.

The Assembling for War {v. 19}:

John moves on to describe the assembling for war. The beast, who is none other than Antichrist (13:1-8), the kings of the earth, who are those in power under Antichrist (cf. 17:12-14) and their armies all gathered together to make war with Christ and His armies as He returns. The formidable

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world-wide army of Antichrist gathers to await the arrival of the King of Kings. But this final battle will be short-lived.

The Judgment of the Beast and False Prophet {v. 20}:

Before the battle could be waged it was all over for the beast and his false prophet. Christ seizes the two and tosses them into the lake of fire. The description of the false prophet as the one *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* is a direct reference to the beast from the earth in Revelation 13:11-17 and clearly identifies him as Antichrist's right hand man. It is the Antichrist and his false prophet who have led men astray, led them to take the mark of Antichrist and led them to worship the Antichrist. It is these two individuals who are instantly seized and tossed into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the final hell. It is the ultimate destination of Satan and all his cohorts. It is the ultimate destination of all unredeemed men. It is the place of eternal suffering and damnation. It is the place where the worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched (Mark 9:48). It is the place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42). It is the place where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever (Rev. 14:11). The Antichrist and his false prophet are the first to arrive in the lake of fire.

The Judgment of the Armies of the Beast {v. 21}:

After the removal of Antichrist and his false prophet the rest were killed with the sword of Christ's mouth and all the birds indeed were filled with their flesh. The rest is a specific reference to those gathered together to battle the Lord. It is the armies of the Antichrist who are instantly slaughtered at this point. The other unredeemed people of the earth who are not killed at this point will be judged at the sheep and goat judgment, which will take place directly after this time (cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Here we are simply told that the armies will be slaughtered and the birds will be filled with their flesh. Zechariah gives a much more detailed and frightening scene in Zechariah 14:1-13:

1 Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. 5 And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, [and] all the holy ones with Him! 6 And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. 7 For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. 8 And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. 9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be [the only] one, and His name [the only] one. 10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

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11 And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security. 12 Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. 13 And it will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.

This picture should serve as a warning to unbelievers to repent and it should stimulate believers to godly living and the sharing their faith. (cf. 2 Peter 3:9-11)