

Jesus Wins!
Revelation 19:11-21
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The Bible is not just a collection of unrelated events or just a history of a people - the Jews.

66 books written by over 30 men and women over a period of 1500 years COMBINE to tell one story - While the Bible is made up of many events, many poems, many sermons - there is one overriding plot that runs throughout.

It is the story of God gracious act of destroying evil without destroying those who trust him.

In most stories we read or watch on television or in theaters, after introducing us to the main characters the storyteller describes the dilemma that the rest of the story will unfold and hopefully solve.

Good Jack and Jill are likable, upstanding citizens. Evil Susan comes and kidnaps their precious baby Samantha. The rest of the story is how good conquers evil and baby Samantha is returned to Jack and Jill and evil Susan is imprisoned.

Within the first three chapters of the first book of the Bible we are introduced to God and to Satan and to humanity.

And within those same first few words we are told how people (namely Adam and Eve and everyone who would come after them) rebelliously and selfishly chose to believe the lies of Satan and follow him rather than the God who created them and loves them.

From that point forward the Bible is the unfolding of a holy and just God's plan and dealing with people to bring them back into relationship with himself.

He has to destroy evil without destroying the evil people he desires to save.

The Bible could have been a very short book.

Three chapters: chapter 1 - God graciously creates everything including people with a relationship to Him.

Chapter 2 - the people rebel against God's authority.

Chapter 3 - God justly destroys the people.

God creates people, people rebel, God destroys the people.

But God, in mercy, doesn't do that.

Instead, working a plan he made even before creation, he called one family on earth (Abraham's family) and he determined that through that family God himself would come to earth - a messiah, to save his people from their sins.

And at just the right time, according to God's plan, God the Son came and he was born

of a virgin - becoming God-man.

That was his first coming.

And after declaring and demonstrating that he was God, he died for the sins of his people.

He satisfied divine justice against evil, against the sin of his people, he paid the price for sin that his people could be justly forgiven.

And what he declared was that though the wages of sin is eternal death, he, the Messiah, would give people life - spiritual and physical life for eternity if they would ask him and trust him.

And so we live in a world dominated by the struggle between good and evil.

An evil leader in Satan,

an evil world subjected to disease and catastrophe,

and evil people desiring their own selfish ways more than God's love.

And on the other hand **a gracious God** offering forgiveness and life.

But the story doesn't end there.

We are not destined to live in an everlasting struggle between good and evil.

Jesus declared that a day would come when he would put a final end to evil - he would wipe it out - he would destroy evil and he would recreate a world where his people would live in loving fellowship with him and each other forever. **That would be his second coming**

The story began with creation and it will end with Jesus coming again for re-creation.

The book of Revelation is the last chapter in the story.

And the second coming of Jesus is the high point, the pinnacle, the denouement, the climax of that last chapter.

There are 210 chapters in the New Testament.

318 times in those 210 chapters the second coming of Jesus is mentioned.

All of human history, all of our histories, look to that event.

It is the defining moment of humanities' future.

If Jesus does not come again it means he was a liar or he was mentally unbalanced.

If Jesus does not come again there is no resurrection.

For the Bible says that the resurrection of our bodies will not happen until Jesus comes again. You will never again see, with your own eyes, those you love who have died already.

If Jesus does not come again there is no end to the cosmic, universal and personal daily struggle between good and evil.

Famine, war, earthquakes, hatred, child abuse, hurricanes, loneliness, and death will continue for millennia.

The great hope of Christians, the great hope of humanity is not just that many will become Christians, live in relative peace and affluence for a while and then go to heaven when they die!

The great hope of humanity is that Jesus is coming again and will put an end to the evil that causes such misery and suffering in our world.

This past week in just one day I moved from place to place and from conversation to conversation where I saw the outcomes of evil.

I sat with a young couple in a hospital room just hours after they learned that one of their twin babies, yet to be born, was dead and the mother's life in jeopardy. **We live in a fallen world where death destroys.**

I went from that to a meeting with a middle-aged couple whose son and daughter-in-law are on the verge of separation after years of difficulty and a young child who loves them both.

We are sinful and we live among fallen people where our own sinfulness destroys each other and even the children we love.

Next I talked with a man who hurts deeply as he watches his elderly mother face the difficulties of aging.

Death destroys and the pain of watching it even slowly creep up on those we love is sometimes maddening.

Next I talked with a young woman who is still battling the emotional hurts of a childhood filled with conditional acceptance.

I hate what our selfishness does to others - the destruction and pain it causes.

Then I went home and looked into the face of smiling baby boy whose future is so uncertain that my heart hurts to even think about it.

But Jesus is coming again and when he does he will do away with all of that.

He will destroy Satan the father of evil.

He will destroy this fallen world and recreate it in wholeness.

He will destroy all unrepentant, rebellious human beings.

And he will recreate his forgiven children in his own image - spiritually holy, physically immortal - fit for the kingdom of God.

Everything hinges on the second coming of Jesus.

But there are definitely two perspectives on that second coming of Jesus.

What will bring inexpressible joy to some will strike terror in the hearts of others.

When the Denver Police Department pulls up, in force, in front of a house wherein people are being held hostage - you can easily believe that the people inside the house hear the sirens from two very different perspectives.

The gunman hears threat and the hostages hear hope.

So it will be with the coming again of Jesus - God's people can hardly wait and the others will mourn - as the Apostle John put it.

We come to chapter 19 in our study of Revelation.

Beginning at verse 11 we reach the high point of human history - the literal, physical, personal coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

STAND and read 19:11-21

What a day that will be!

He came the first time, born in a cattle manger, raised in poverty, despised by most, declared to be demonic, and killed to silence him.

But the next time he comes - it will be very different.

Look at the authority with which he comes:

He's on a white horse - symbolic of authority.

With justice he judges and makes war - With perfect justice he measures out the punishment due to those who oppose him.

His eyes are like blazing fire - his sight penetrates and illuminates everything - he misses nothing in his gaze on all humanity.

on his head are many crowns - if one crown means authority - many crowns means all authority.

Look at his names - four of them:

He is called faithful and true - He is the thoroughly reliable one.

He has another name that no one knows - a mystery.

He name is also the Word of God - he is the exact representation of the invisible God - he is God almighty.

And he has the name "King of kings and Lord of lords" - He is the supremely sovereign Lord of the universe.

He is Jesus!

Look at his power:

He is dressed in a **robe dipped in blood** - actually spattered with blood would be a more accurate description - His clothing is bloody with the blood of those who defied

him.

Out of his mouth comes a **sharp sword** with which to strike down the nations.

He will rule them with an **iron scepter** - meaning he will crush them.

He treads the **wine press of the fury of the wrath** of God Almighty.

We saw that language back in chapter 14 when earlier John described the judgment of God on those who refused to follow Jesus.

Now before we look at what this judging, warrior God does, I want you to see **who is with Jesus when he comes again.**

In verse 14 we read, “the armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.”

Since we saw in chapter 19, just a few verses before this text, a clear reference to the church as the bride of Christ and since believers are there described as wearing fine linen, bright and clean, it is reasonable to assume that the armies of heaven include both angels and all the people of God from all the ages.

But where did these people of God come from?

What many of you have noticed already in our study of Revelation is that there is no mention of what we call a “rapture” anywhere in the book.

The word “rapture” is the English translation of a Latin word.

The Latin word is a translation of the Greek words “caught up”.

So we can rightly say either “caught up” or “raptured”

And yet we know from I Thessalonians 4 and from I Corinthians 15 that when Jesus comes again all believers who were already dead would be resurrected and all believers who were still alive when he comes again will be “caught up to meet the Lord” or as Paul says it in I Corinthians, “the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye...”

Now I know that not everyone agrees with this but I want you to see and decide for yourself about the timing of what we call the “rapture”.

In I Corinthians Paul is talking about the second coming of Jesus.

He says this resurrection of the dead and the changing of those who are alive will take place “at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound” and then the dead will be raised and the living will be changed.

And when Paul is writing to the Thessalonians about the resurrection of the dead and the living being “caught up” or raptured he again says it will happen when the “Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.”

This is second coming language wholly consistent with Jesus' own words about his coming.

He says in Matthew 24:30ff "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other... Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Dead believers will be resurrected and living believers will be changed and together they will go up to meet the Lord.

I believe when we compare the language of all those references of resurrection and rapture TO the language of Revelation 19 we best conclude that the "rapture" of the church takes place at the same time that Jesus returns in all his glory.

I see no convincing reasons to accept a secret rapture of believers some time before the second coming of Jesus.

Some might ask how such a rapture at the same time Jesus is coming actually would work - what would it look like?

A good analogy might be the way the citizens of a city in John's and Paul's day would go out of the city to meet a visiting dignitary and escort him on the final stage of his journey to their city.

So using the same Greek words that were in secular usage in Paul's day, Paul describes how when Jesus comes again and the trumpet of God is sounded, those Christ followers who had died already (all OT believers, all NT believers, as well as all believers down through the centuries) will be resurrected and at the same time all Christ followers who are still alive when Christ comes will be changed instantly - and together they will meet the Lord in the air and will come with him as he returns to this earth as the reigning King of kings and Lord of lords.

I know there are some Christians who believe that Christians are raptured or "caught up" before the tribulation begins and others who believe that Christians are "caught up" just before the worst of the tribulation.

And I am in agreement with those Christians who have agreed to agreeably disagree on this issue.

Good Christian people can disagree on this issue and not part company.

But I will once again note that an interpretation that places the rapture coincident with

the second coming of Jesus seems to be the simplest and most natural interpretation of these passages.

But whether Christians were raptured earlier or right as Jesus comes again, I want you to see what happens when Jesus comes.

V19 “Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.”

Back in chapter 16 John previewed this event.

He wrote that he saw evil spirits come out of Satan, and the antichrist and the false prophet and they went “out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God almighty... Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Here in chapter 19 we see that battle finally take place.

And what happens?

V20-21 “But the beast (antichrist) was captured, and with him the false prophet... The two of them were thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them (the kings and their armies - all unbelievers) were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse...”

Without the armies of heaven lifting one finger, without the people of God swinging one sword or firing one shot - the armies opposed to Jesus are decimated - they are killed - and they are killed by the powerful word of Jesus.

Just as God spoke the worlds into existence, and raised people from the dead with his voice, so when he speaks his enemies will be destroyed.

God let John see into the future.

And what he saw was a fulfillment of the promise of Jesus - He IS coming again!

And when he comes that whole worldly governmental system that so opposes God and his people, and that whole false religious system that so twists the truth to make evil sound good and good sound evil will be destroyed.

All those who oppose Jesus and his people will be destroyed.

The faith of God's people will be vindicated.

All those years and all those experiences that tempted us to ask “Is it worth it?”

All those times when circumstances caused us to doubt.

All those people who somehow made us feel a little foolish for believing in spiritual life and resurrection and a literal heaven and hell.

All the questions answered, all the doubts relieved, the whole picture becomes instantly clear - we see Jesus - He has come again.

And he has come as our Savior and as the judge of the earth.

So how do we respond?

I Cor 15:58 “Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

He has said he is coming again. Do you believe him?

I cannot make sense out of the evil in this world.

I cannot imagine how anyone can remain sane in the face of so much suffering, pain and evil apart from knowing that Jesus is coming again and he will make it right - justice will prevail.

Evil will be destroyed.

The question that remains is whether you and I will be caught up to meet him when he comes or whether we will be among those who do battle against him?

Those who love his appearing are we who have repented of our sins and placed our faith in Jesus and His death for us to save us from the wrath to come and to make us children of God who will come with Jesus when he comes to judge the earth.