

19:1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ² for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants." ³ Once more they cried, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵ And from the throne came a voice crying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" - for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. ¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems;

Ch. 19 once again provides a sharp contrast to the lamenting of Babylon the Great on Earth in Ch. 18, by moving the scene of the action to heaven, where there is constant praising of God for his righteous judgment.

The 'small and great' in v. 5 suggests that heaven is occupied not only by those who are advanced in the Lord's service, but by every possible range of believers: the recent convert and the apostle alike.

v. 6 is the first declaration in the book that God's perfect reign has begun, and it is due to the fall and judgment of the Whore of Babylon—this marks a distinct change in the tenor of the book. The imagery of the Marriage of the Lamb is also introduced here: the covenant relationship between God and His people has been described as a marriage since the OT (Is 54:1-8, Ez. 16:7, Hos. 2:19), and in the NT the Church is often depicted as the Bride of Christ, an image which seems to trace its origins to Paul (Eph: 5:25. v. 9 contains the phrase 'Blessed are those...' this is the fourth of seven 'beatitudes' in the Book the others occurring at 1:2, 14:13, 16:15, 20:6, 22:7, & 22:14. They have been taken by some scholars as an outline of how to live as a virtuous Christian by some scholars. Interestingly, the Greek word *makarios* is perhaps better translated as 'happy', although that translation certainly doesn't fit the use of this book as well.

From v. 11 onwards, there commences a new vision of Christ in Power, now instead of the meek vision of the Lamb, we have here someone claiming his full power and authority: this is the Christ if the Second Coming. The vision consists of seven statements in rapid succession that each begin with "then I saw..." Note that there is a definite balance to the vision of Christ that opened the book, and many of the images are identical. To think that someone is crowned with more than one crown may seem a peculiar image,

<p>and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.</p>	<p>but John is showing us that he is the king of every land. The robe dipped in blood comes from Is 19:13, but is recast to give us the sense that it is Christ's own blood, and not that of his enemies that allows him to conquer. Following him are all the armies of Heaven, and he goes out to win the final battle against Satan. The next thing John sees is a direct adaptation of Ezekiel 38-39, although instead of describing the defeat of the princes of Gog, this is a description of the defeat of the armies of Satan. Like the all the cycles of visions throughout the book, this one is something of a repeat of the judgment of Babylon, but from the spiritual and heavenly perspective, rather than the earthly. We see again the destruction of the beast, and the false prophet. The vision has its climax at the start of Ch. 20. It is interesting to note that the battle that was being built up for at the end of the seven bowls actually seems to happen here...why? Because the last battle is not a real occurrence, but a symbol of a real event. The conflict is a spiritual one, and so it happens here on the spiritual plane, and not on the earth. Most interesting of all is that the battle is won without the help of any of the faithful, and that there still isn't really a battle, but evil is demolished by Christ alone, and from the words of his mouth. Note the sharp contrast between this and other apocalypses of the period: the War Scroll of Qumran, which describes a similar battle states clearly that without the help of the faithful, the battle cannot be won, and it gives specific measures for dispensing arms and forming the front line troops of the battle.</p>
<p>20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,</p>	<p>When Satan is defeated, however, he gets chained for a thousand year, with the statement that he must be loosed for a time at the end. This, and the passage following have led to a lot of speculation and interpretation. What we seem to have here is another deepening of the cycle of visions to include God's people, in particular, the martyrs, who reign with Christ, and will be</p>

³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and

given power to judge with Him. Satan has been arrested and is awaiting his trial, and will be judged by those humans who have conquered through the blood of the lamb.

This passage was used by the Church extensively during the 10th Century as conclusive proof that the world would end at the dawn of the year 1000. Satan had been bound for 1000 years, with the triumph of Christ on the Cross, and now would be let loose for a while, and then the world would end. This argument was used to encourage people to give all their worldly goods to the Church, and to live lives of repentance. The Church amassed such wealth during this period that it became the single greatest economic power the world had ever known, and so Christianity gave rise to Christendom. From this one passage rose all the medieval cathedrals of Europe, the crusades, and ultimately the renaissance. The fear of the world ending at the end of the first millennium was so latent in the culture that it led to widespread fear that something similar would happen with 'Y2K'

The mention of Gog and Magog are from Ezekiel as well, and they became steadily used as parallel names in rabbinic literature for Kingdoms that opposed God's people.

Ultimately Satan is destroyed and meets the same fate as his Beast and False Prophet, but in a different timescale. Is this John's suggestion that Rome and its powers would fall long before Satan? And that Satan would be free to lead another empire into evil? In any event, with the casting of Satan into the Lake of Sulphur, he is destroyed forever, and his world-age is completely ended.

It is interesting to note that four different eschatologies come from this passage as well: Millennialism, Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism. Millennialism is that which was preached by the Church at the end of the 1st Millennium, Premillennialism believes that Christ must come again to start his blissful reign, Postmillennialism believes that the proclamation of the Gospel will bring the world to a blissful state before Christ returns, and Amillennialism believes that the number 1000 is just

<p>night for ever and ever. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; ¹⁵ and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.</p>	<p>another symbolic number in the Book of Revelation signifying the long time between his Ascension and his Second Coming, and that Good and Evil develop together until the harvest at the end of the world. With the removal of evil influences from Earth and Heaven, the Last Judgment comes to its final fruition: All the dead, without exception or exemption are judged according to what is written in two books, which from other points in the Revelation and Hebrew prophecy, is probably a description of a 'Book of Merit' in which all the deeds of every life are recorded—this is attested in a variety of OT and non-canonical books, most notably Exodus, and this new 'Book of Life' in which the saving work of Christ has redeemed multitudes in spite of their lack of merit. An overarching theme of the New Testament is that Christ came because none of us is fit to stand judgment on our own, but we need his help. It is also interesting to note that we are judged after all evil influences have been removed, and once we are judged, Death and Hades are no more.</p>
<p>21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; ³ and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; ⁴ he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. ⁷ He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death." ⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven</p>	<p>With the last judgement past, and evil destroyed forever, we come to the climax of the book, and indeed the climax of the whole bible. We have a description of the completion of creation, and the fulfillment of its original intent. With these two chapters, all of God's promises are fulfilled. John uses the word 'New' to describe heaven and earth, meaning not just new versions of the old classics, but a new <i>kind</i> of heaven and earth. There is a continuation with the former kind, but now they have</p>

bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; ¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. ¹⁷ He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. ²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; ²⁶ they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

come into their own intended being. God speaks from the throne to say "behold, I make all things new." Referring to this vision of the heavenly city, but interestingly in the present tense, which suggests that this is and always has been a continuous process that God has been active in: NT theology definitely suggests that creation is continuing.

The remainder of the book is filled with beautiful and poetic images of the bliss of the City of God: Paradise regained by God's grace. The City comes down out of heaven showing that it isn't merely a voluntary association of people working for the common good, but it is God's ultimate creation: perfect bliss in His Presence forever. There is no Temple, because God Himself dwells with His people, and there is no need of created light, because God illumines all.

^{RSV} **Revelation 22:1** Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing

The final chapter of the book focuses first on the elements of Paradise that fulfill all the words spoken by God through his prophets throughout the

of the nations. ³ There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; ⁴ they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. ⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. ⁷ And behold, I am coming soon." Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. ⁸ I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; ⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." ¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price. ¹⁸ I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

ages: The river of life, the tree of life, and the blessed light of God's presence. This might rightly be regarded as the end of the book, because the tone of the book then completely changes and becomes rather discordant: the bliss of paradise is no longer mentioned and we proceed onto what Bruce Metzger calls "a primitive copyright" John avers that all he has seen is true, and warns the messengers not to change a single word. This part of the book is what caused Luther and Zwingli to hold it in contempt, because the author promised blessings and curses which were not in the power of humans to give. But this section gives us some of the best clues about what kind of book this is, and what the circumstances were when it was written. A message written in code will not make sense if the code is tampered with. And it includes a final summary of why the book was written in the first place: to encourage Christians to endure persecution and to live faithfully to the end, even if it cost them their lives, because God will be victorious in the end.