

Revelation — Chapters 19 to 21:8

The Coming of Christ, the Millennium, and the Eternal State

An Outline of "The Revelation" — Walter Scott From The Faith and The Flock, 1910–1911

In this interesting section of the Apocalypse, which covers the ground from the destruction of Babylon till the eternal state—some of the most stirring and solemn events are found. We shall briefly note these.

Rejoicings in Heaven, 19:1-9

Four times the beautiful Hebrew “Hallelujah” (found nowhere else in the New Testament) is triumphantly rung out in the heavenly courts (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6). In the last five Psalms, it is the opening and closing word of each. “Praise ye Jehovah” shall yet resound throughout heaven and earth, thus bringing them into blessed unison. The first recorded song was led by Moses, accompanied with timbrel and dance by Miriam (Exod. 15), but the songs and triumphs of the heavenly hosts are personally conducted by the Savior and Lord—risen and glorified (Heb. 2:12).

There are three grounds for the songs of triumph in heaven. The first ground of heaven’s joy is the utter destruction of the Apostate religions system—a confederated system of satanic wickedness.

Babylon is no more. Her downfall and utter ruin fill heaven, in all its

vastness, with joy. The destruction of the whore is a more important matter, and creates more interest in heaven than even that of the Beast., i.e., the confederated nations of Western Europe.

The second reason of Heaven’s joy is the reign of the Lord God Omnipotent. He takes the reins of Universal Authority and the Kingdom into His mighty hands. But who is He who sways the scepter? It is Jesus Christ who assumes the government of the world. The world is His Kingdom (11:15). The Universe is His Dominion (Psa. 8). All things are put into His hands for administration (John iii. 35), and all things are put under His feet in subjection (1 Cor. 15:27). Wherever man is found on earth, limits the extent of the Kingdom. Wherever a created thing is, that His Inheritance covers. The Inheritance is of larger extent than the Kingdom, which He takes in His favorite character and title as Son of Man.

The third cause of rejoicing in the Heavens is the marriage of the Lamb. Had a mere human pen written v. 7, it would have been, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to her: for the marriage of the bride is come.” But no, it is not her joy that is in question, but His.

He now sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Heaven breaks out in song. The Lamb is married in heaven amidst the rejoicings of the heavenly hosts. It is the Church—not Israel nor a remnant thereof—which is the cherished bride and wife of the Lamb (Eph. 5:25-32). The harlot put aside, God is now free to introduce the Lamb and His Bride into the scene.

It will be observed that between the destruction of the harlot and the marriage of the Lamb, the Kingdom-reign is celebrated, but that is in vision only. The Kingdom is not set up till after the marriage.

We may further remark that the harlot is destroyed before the marriage. The Beast or political confederacy, after the marriage.

There is a moral necessity for the destruction of the whore ere the marriage of the Lamb could take place, and God display the bride in her beauty. Then the consolidated powers in opposition to the Lamb must necessarily be crushed before the Kingdom could be established.

The Beast and Christendom at War with the Lamb,

19:11-21 The section opens with the Apocalyptic formula, “After these things,” which refers to the fall and destruction of Babylon (17 and 18). That momentous event is viewed with lamentation on earth and rejoicing in heaven. The whore and the bride cannot co-exist. When the former is destroyed, the latter is displayed in her beauty, and God-given glory. The bride is the Church of the New Testament—the Complement of saints from Pentecost till the Rapture. The guests of whom John the Baptist is the most distinguished, are Old Testament saints—the friends of the Bridegroom (John 3:29; Rev. 19:9). The martyred saints of the Apocalypse are not raised till after the marriage, so they are as a class distinct from either the bride or guests. But the bride, guests, and martyred saints are all partakers of the heavenly calling. The earthly calling must be distinguished from the heavenly calling. The millennial earth is the destined home of those embraced in the former. The millennial heavens become the abode of those included in the latter. “I saw,” writes the seer, “heaven opened.” In an earlier vision, “a door was opened in heaven” (4:1), this latter was for the prophet to pass in. But heaven opened is for the warrior King and His invincible hosts to

come forth out of their royal home in heaven.

We here witness a spectacle absolutely unlike anything ever beheld.

The scene is one of surpassing interest. The triumphal procession out of heaven of Christ in victorious power, while saints and angels follow in His train, will be a sight grand beyond all telling. The white horses on which sat the Conqueror and His militant hosts denote victorious power. The most of the description refers to personal and official attributes borne by him Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords—the King of all who reign, and Lord of all who exercise authority. The war itself is a righteous one (v. 11). He alone bears a sword, i.e., the Divine Authority of His Word, which in itself executes judgment (v. 15).

Before the conflict commences with the contending hosts on earth, the ravenous birds of prey are summoned to supper (v. 17). The might, the greatness, the chivalry, the civilization of Europe as embodied in its kings, captains, mighty men, etc., are gathered together in the vicinity of Jerusalem. “He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.” Not so the heavenly and triumphant hosts of saints who follow the Lord. Their robes of spotless white—not stained by blood—proclaim the purity and integrity of each one of the redeemed army. Christ alone executes judgment (John 5:27). We, with Him, rule the rebellious peoples with a rod of iron. But the sword is alone used by Christ.

What an assemblage of forces! “And I saw the beast,” the ten confederated kingdoms of Western Europe; “and the kings of the earth,” the kingdoms outside the Roman World—of Christendom, “and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army.” So Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany, etc., shall bury in one common grave their mutual political and social dislikes, and gather together for one fell purpose.

Hatred to the Lamb of God and to the heavenly saints overpowers national and political animosities, and, lured on by Satan, they dare attack the Lord of glory. Their aerial fleet and land forces are crushed to atoms. The two leaders—the Beast and the False Prophet—are consigned without trial to the lake of fire, while their less-guilty followers are judicially slain. These thousands or millions are raised a thousand years afterwards to stand their trial before the Great White Throne set up when time is no more.

The Binding and Imprisonment of Satan, 20:1-3

The unseen, yet real, leader of the gigantic confederation of kings and armies, described in the previous chapter is now dealt with. An unnamed angel, having the authority of the

abyss, and of sufficient power to cope with Satan (for all angels are not equally powerful—Dan. 10:13), proceeds to bind the ancient enemy of God and of His people. The “key” and the “great chain” in the angel’s hand are, of course, symbolic. It must be remembered that Satan is a spirit, and that a literal chain is thus out of the question. The key implies authority over the abyss or bottomless pit, and the chain, that Satan is bound or restrained. His four titles (v. 2), as in 12:9, are each significant and worthy of attention. The history of Satan, from his creation in beauty, power, and wisdom (Ezek. xxviii. 12-19), on through the course of the ages till he is finally cast into the lake of fire—the most degraded of created beings and the greatest sufferer in the Universe (Rev. 20:10)—is the most awful record conceivable.

We may remark that both “Hades” and the “Abyss” are but temporary places of abode. The lake of fire is eternal. The location of the abyss is not revealed. Satan, then, is imprisoned, chained, and sealed up in the abyss for a thousand years. What a rest to the wearied sons of men! What a relief to the suffering part of creation!

The great instigator of evil, the enemy of the human race, the tempter of men is now confined and the earth freed from his presence for a thousand years.

The Glorious Reign with Christ, 20:4-6

Christ shall reign over the earth for a thousand years, and on it by His representative—a prince of the royal house of David (Ezek. 44-48).

The duration of the reign is stated in express terms, they “reigned with Christ a thousand years.” The main character of the reign is righteousness. This character of rule, kings and governments have been striving to affect for nigh 6,000 years, but to the world it is yet an ideal state of things. Christ will display it in perfection, in governmental administration. The world will be one vast kingdom, its principle of rule, righteousness, and its King, the Lord of Glory. The earthly features of the millennial reign are unfolded in the writings of the Hebrew Prophets; the heavenly character of the kingdom is disclosed in the New Testament writings.

There are three groups of saints who are said to reign with Christ (v. 4). “I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them.” These are evidently the saints of Old and New Testament times and are spoken of as “elders.” “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God.” This class of martyred saints are seen under the fifth seal (6:9-11). “And such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand”

(R.V.). This second group of martyrs is slain at a period subsequent to those in the earlier scene, and under totally different circumstances. “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (v. 5). This refers to the wicked dead of all ages (compare with v. 12).

Satan’s Last Actions And Final Doom, 20:7-10 The glorious reign is over. The imprisonment of Satan is at an end.

Christ has been on the throne and Satan in the Abyss. Has Satan profited by his long term of penal servitude? Have the nations who have basked under the smile, and glory, and beneficent sway of God’s Son bowed in heart and will to the king? Alas! no. Satan uses his freedom to go throughout the whole earth and deceive the nations once again—his last work on earth. The feigned obedience of the peoples is quickly thrown off, and they march under the leadership of Satan, covering the face of the earth for numbers.

Jerusalem, the beloved city, and the camp of the saints gathered round it, are the objects of this—the largest confederacy ever witnessed. To crush and destroy the beautiful work of God on earth—a picture of governmental perfection—is the aim of the satanic hosts and their renowned leader. “Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them”; all lie in the silence of Death. Satan’s doom is recorded in v. 10. This is the last notice of Satan in the Holy Scriptures. First cast out of heaven (ch. 12), then into the abyss (ch. 20), and finally into the lake of fire to endure its agonies for ever—not to reign, but to suffer.

The Judgment Of The Dead, 20:11-15

The throne of judgment is set up in eternity. It is termed “a great white throne.” Its vastness and intense purity, the greatness of the Judge, and the eternal issues at stake, invest the scene with unusual solemnity. This is the last inquest. It is an individual judgment, unlike that of a thousand years earlier (Matt. 25). In the Matthew judgment, we have nations before us. In the Apocalyptic judgment we witness individuals only. In the former, there are three classes, in the latter, but one. The judgments differ in time, in place, and in character. The Son of Man is the Judge (John 5:22). “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne” (R.V.). Works, deeds, sins form the ground of judgment, not the nature which produced them.

We are not responsible for the existence of the evil nature in each one—saint and sinner. We were born with it. But we are responsible for the allowance of the nature, and it is this latter which is in question in the final judgment. Condemnation—the irrevocable sentence of the Judges pronounced and executed, founded on the record of each one’s life and

actions. “The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. “The lake of fire becomes the eternal depository of all and everything contrary to God. The last notice of the lake of fire and of its miserable inhabitants is contained in the last notice of eternity (21:8).

The Eternal State, 21:1-8

The last act in time is the raising of the wicked dead, the first recorded event in eternity is the judgment of the dead. That awful judgment has its place between the passing away of the millennial heavens and earth, and the introduction of the new heaven and earth. The judgment of the dead must be eternal, for all measures and limitations are connected with space and time, and these necessarily ceased with the disappearance of the then existing heavens and earth. The Judgment of the Dead is in the infinitude of eternity.

What is eternity? It is the duration of God Almighty. His life measures eternity—that ocean without shore or bottom.

These precious verses open with a new vision beheld by the seer—a new heaven and a new earth, but in the latter “no sea.” The size, configuration, and beauty of these eternal abodes of heavenly and earthly saints are not given. Then in a separate vision, we have the bride, after a thousand years of bliss and glory, still as a bride adorned for her husband. She enters the eternal state in the joy and purity of her marriage nuptials. Her affections are unchanged; she is a joy for ever. Then follow certain characteristic features of the unchanging condition which is fashioned after the nature of God who is light and who is love. What a scene of no sickness, no tears, no sorrow, no death, no pain. The sun shall never go down, the gold shall be undimmed, the flower shall never fade; no bursting heart shall be there. God, all and in all, shall uphold these worlds of perfection for endless ages. But the horrors of the lake of fire are equally real and true (v. 8).