

# THE RETURN OF CHRIST

## Summary and Historical Background

This chapter has two characteristics. First, it is a chapter of culmination. It culminates the Tribulation section (Rev. 4-19) by providing insight into the final events that occur in the last half of the Tribulation. The blood of martyrs that was shed by the great harlot is avenged (19:2). The praise of God in Heaven over the judgment of Babylon is ecstatic (19:1-6). The long-awaited marriage of Christ and the Church is completed (19:7-9). The return of Christ to destroy His enemies is triumphant (19:11-21).

Second, this is a chapter of contrasts. In at least three areas the false is shown in contrast to the true. One, there is a contrast in the destinies of the true Church and the false religion (great harlot), which corrupted the earth with her idolatry. The false church will be judged and destroyed (19:2-3; cf. 17:16); whereas, the true Church will be married to Christ and be blessed in His Kingdom (19:7-9). Two, there is a contrast in the locations of these two “women”: the harlot will be joined to Antichrist on this earth (19:2); whereas, the Bride will be married to Christ in Heaven (19:7-9; cf. 19:11-14). Three, there is a contrast in the outcome of the leaders of the two opposing armies: Antichrist is defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire with his false prophet forever and ever (19:20); whereas, Christ is victorious and will reign over the kings of the earth (19:15-16).

### I. Marriage of the Lamb in Heaven – 19:1-10

#### A. Excitement in Heaven – 19:1-6

##### 1. Praise to God for His Salvation – 19:1

19:1 – The chapter begins with praise to God for His salvation, glory, honor and power. After the visions of Babylon’s total destruction (Rev. 17-18), John hears the voice of a great multitude in Heaven shouting “Hallelujah.” The shout of “Hallelujah,” is repeated four times (19:1, 3, 4, 6). It means, “Praise the Lord!” They praise the Lord for His salvation, not only for salvation from sin, but especially for salvation from the tyranny of Satan and from Antichrist, who was ruling the earth for Satan (cf. 14:13; 15:2-3). They also praise God for the brilliance of His glory, which had filled His Temple (15:8) and from which the seven angels with the bowls of God’s wrath had come (15:5-8). They praise Him for His honor (some texts omit it) and for His power to maintain the victory that He had won. His victory will be secure.

This great multitude could be the angels praising God (4:8; 5:11, 12) or it might be the martyrs of Tribulation that praise Him (7:9-10, 14-17). However, it seems likely that every believer in Heaven from the beginning of time would want to lift up his voice in praise to God for this great day of triumph. Who in Heaven could possibly keep silent?

##### 2. Praise to God for His Judgment (19:2-3)

19:2 – The judgment of “the great harlot” is cause for three shouts of praise by a great multitude and by the 24 elders. She taught Antichrist to practice fornication (idolatry) and to persecute believers with bloodshed. So God put it in the hearts of the ten kings to destroy her near the middle of the Tribulation (17:16-17). But Antichrist continued her sins in Babylon to a greater extent during the last half of the Tribulation (18:3-8, 24; cf. 11:3-11; 13:7). Antichrist demanded kings and merchants worship him before they could do any business (13:16-17). So the Lord is praised for the judgment of Babylon that practiced the sins of “the great harlot” throughout the Tribulation.

19:3 – The believers erupt with another shout of “Hallelujah!” The smoke of religious Babylon will rise up forever. This is a figure of speech indicating it will never recover and be a threat to God’s people.

##### 3. Praise to God in Agreement with Others – 19:4

19:4 – The 24 elders (representing church saints; cf. 4:4) and the four living beings (representing the

creatures living on the earth; cf. 4:6-8) also worship God. They fall down before His throne in full agreement with the previous stated reasons for praising Him by saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

#### **4. Praise to God for His Reign – 19:5-6**

19:5 – A voice (possibly that of an angel) coming from the throne of God commands all of God's servants, small and great, to praise God.

19:6 – A great multitude responds with the voice like the sound of a great waterfall and as the sound of a mighty thunder storm. They say, "Hallelujah!" They go on to say that God is omnipotent (all-powerful) and by His power He reigns. Jesus Christ will reign over the entire earth on behalf of His Father. Jesus earned this right by dying for the sins of all men in obedience to His Father. It is the inheritance that His Father gave to Him on the day of His resurrection (Ps 2:7-9; Act 13:33-34).

### **B. Exaltation of the Bride – 19:7-10**

#### **1. The Marriage Ceremony – 19:7-8**

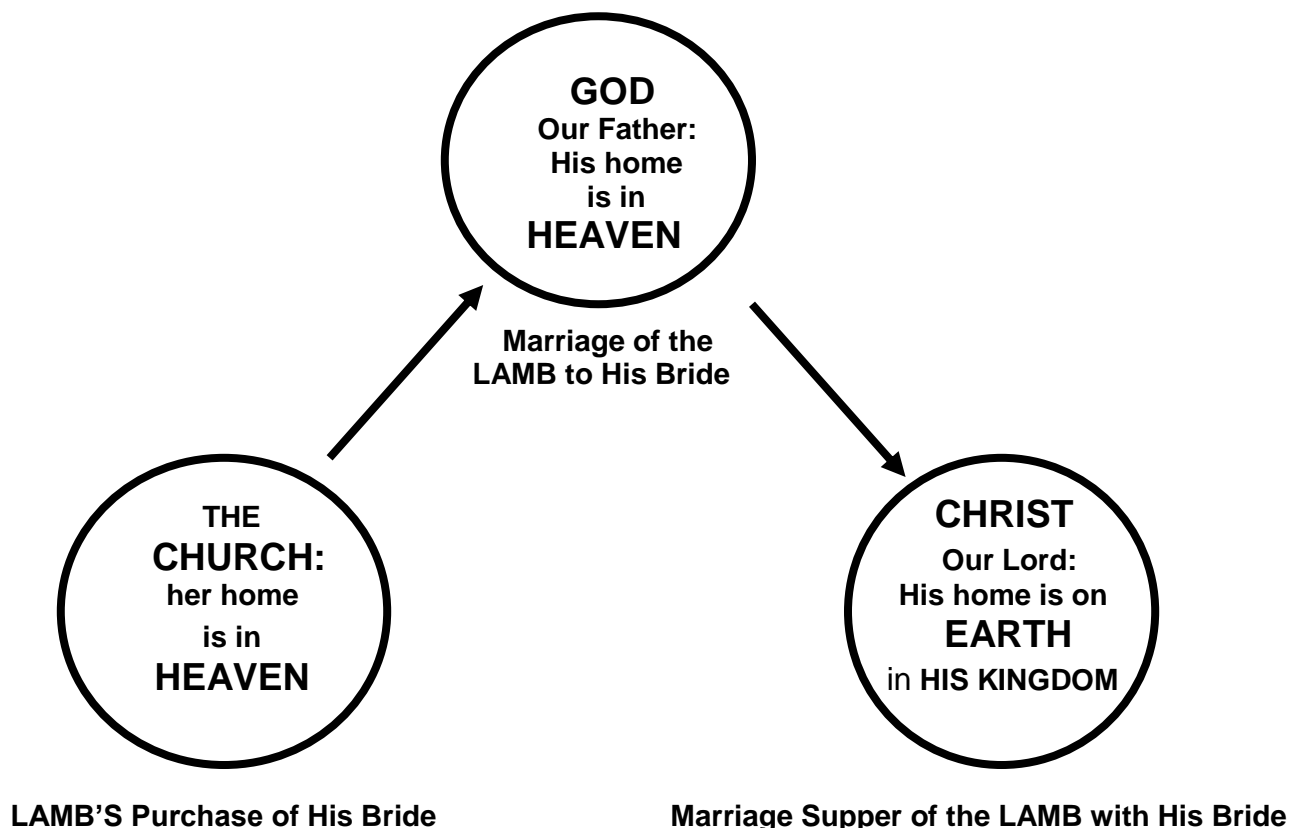
19:7 – The great choir in Heaven continues with an exhortation for believers on earth to be glad and rejoice and give glory to God. The reason for this celebration is the Lamb's marriage. The time has finally come. The first question concerning the marriage of the Lamb concerns His Bride. Is His Bride Israel, the Church or the New Jerusalem? The Old Testament called Israel the wife of God, but she was an unfaithful wife to God (Hos 1:6, 9; 2:13), whereas the Bride of Christ is holy and without blemish (Eph 5:27; 2 Cor 11:2). Although Israel will return to God, she disqualified herself as the virtuous Bride of Christ. The Church is the Bride of Christ and He is the Lamb (Eph 5:29, 32). However, the New Jerusalem also is called the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb (21:2, 9). How can this be explained? The Church will be complete at the Rapture and she is the Bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7. The Church is the Bride of Christ throughout the Millennium, but when the new heavens and new earth are formed, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from Heaven, will become the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb. Then the Bride will include not only the Church, but also all believers from the nation of Israel and those that lived before Israel. It will also include all believers from the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom.

The second question about the marriage of the Lamb concerns the time of His marriage. At first glance it might appear that the marriage takes place on earth after the Tribulation. However, the marriage custom in that day may clarify this issue. There were two parts to an ancient Near Eastern wedding. The first part was the marriage ceremony which occurred at the home of the bride's father (her home), and the second was the marriage supper which was held at the home of the bridegroom. So the marriage of the Church to Christ would be in her Father's home in Heaven after the Rapture before or during the Tribulation. The marriage supper would be on earth in Christ's home, the Kingdom, after the Tribulation. After Christ spends some time with His Bride in the house of her Father, He will take her to His house in Zion where she will reign with Him over the earth (Rev 3:21). It is in Christ's Kingdom on earth that all other believers will join Him and His Bride at the marriage supper.

The third question regarding the marriage of the Lamb is about the guests at the marriage supper. The Old Testament believers will be resurrected after the Tribulation (Dan 12:1-2) so they can be at the marriage supper in their new bodies. Likewise, the Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected after the Tribulation to be in Christ's Kingdom (Rev 20:4-6). True believers that lived through the Tribulation will see Christ return and they will enter His Kingdom to partake of the marriage supper (Mt 25:10).

This verse goes on to say that His Wife has made herself ready. This implies works, but salvation is by grace without works. However, there is a work that remains for believers after salvation that prepares them for their rule with Christ. They are commanded to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19-20). This involves witnessing, winning and training people to be followers of Christ. The success of their work will be determined at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). His rewards will prepare them for their reign with Him in His Kingdom. This concludes the message of the heavenly choir (19:6-7).

19:8 – The Church will be clothed in fine linen, clean and white. Her garments are identified as “the righteousness of saints.” This has reference to their deeds of righteousness. The present work of Christ is not only to build the Body of Christ in numbers, but it is also to sanctify the Body in holy service (Eph. 2:10; 5:26-27). Jesus taught the Jews other lessons about this marriage supper in His parables (Luke 12:35-40; Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13).



## 2. The Marriage Supper – 19:9-10

19:9 – An angel told John to write a word about the guests that are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He wrote that they are “blessed,” which means they are saved. Only the saved can enter Christ’s Kingdom. This is the fourth beatitude in Revelation. The blessed ones include the redeemed of the Old Testament as well as those from the Tribulation. Even though they are saved, they are not the Bride. Only believers in the Church will be the Bride. John the Baptist identified himself as a friend of the Bridegroom (Jn 3:29), so Old Testament saints are friends of the Bridegroom. The inauguration of Christ’s Kingdom will take place before the supper. Daniel was told the Kingdom will be established 75 days after the Tribulation is over (Dan 12:11-12). Some say that this supper will extend to the end of the Millennial Kingdom and others say it will extend throughout the Eternal Kingdom.

19:10 – John was so awe-stricken that he fell down to worship the angel that revealed these things to him. However, the angel told him not to do such a thing, but to worship God. He said that he was simply a fellow servant of him and his brethren, who hold the testimony of Jesus (cf Heb 1:13-14).

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Christ is the central person of prophecy, which adds to the beauty of Christ. The Gospels present Christ as the suffering Savior while Revelation presents Him as the reigning King (19:16).

## II. Judgment of the Antichrist on Earth – 19:11-21

### A. Description of Christ – 19:11-16

#### 1. His Purpose – 19:11

19:11 – John sees Heaven open up and beholds a white horse with a rider on it descending to the earth. This is the first of nine visions that are the result of the seventh bowl of wrath being poured out (16:17-21). Each vision begins with the words: “And I saw” (19:11-16; 19:17-18; 19:19-21; 20:1-3; 20:4-10; 20:11; 20:12-15; 21:1; 21:2).

The rider on the white horse is called Faithful and True. He is Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke to the church at Laodicea, He was called a faithful and true Witness (3:14). Here He is the faithful and true Warrior. He is coming to claim the earth, which His Father gave to Him as His heritage. He is the rightful owner, but He must wage war with Antichrist and his armies to obtain it. Satan has given Antichrist his authority to maintain control of the earth at all costs. Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet will gather the armies of many nations at Armageddon (the mount of Megiddo) in preparation for their attack on Jerusalem, but Jesus promised the believers that He will come as a thief (16:14-16). He will make a surprise counterattack against these wicked armies. The coming of Christ to Jerusalem with His army to wage war is clearly prophesied by Zechariah (Zech 14:1-4). The armies of Antichrist will attack Jerusalem, but when Christ comes to the Mount of Olives, He will completely overwhelm and defeat the armies. Christ will be faithful and true to the Word that He received from His Father: He will destroy the wicked armies under the direction of the dragon (Satan) with Antichrist as the commander of these armies. The False Prophet will be the counselor to the nations.

#### 2. His Portrayal – 19:12-13

19:12 – The eyes of Christ are a flame of fire (1:14), piercing into the dark and hidden discussions taking place on the earth between Antichrist and the leaders of nations. Nothing is hidden from His sight (Heb 4:13). His knowledge allows Him to make correct decisions to counteract their plans.

Christ will have many crowns (diadems, the crowns of kings) on His head. These crowns are taken from the rulers of the world that He has conquered and indicate His sovereignty over them. These crowns of glory are a contrast to the crown of shame that He wore on the cross for sinners (cf Mt 27:29; 1 Pet 1:11).

He has a name that no one knows except Himself. A name in Scripture often indicates the nature of a person. Christ's name is hidden to the unsaved because they cannot comprehend His divine and human nature united in one person. He is the God-man: fully God and fully man. As such is the perfect King for this world. What is inscrutable to the unsaved, is fully known to Christ and is believed by the saved.

19:13 – He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. Some say that Christ's bloodstained garment refers to His blood shed on cross at Calvary, but the context and other Scriptures indicate it is more likely that it refers to the blood of His enemies when He judges Edom first. He will tread the winepress of the wrath of God alone and their blood will be sprinkled on His garments (Isa 63:1-6). He will rescue the Jews that fled to the wilderness first where they were protected by God for 3 ½ years (Rev 12:6, 14; Zech 12:7). Then He will go to Jerusalem with the blood of His enemies on His vesture.

His name is called The Word of God. John is the only one that uses this name for Christ (Jn 1:1, 14; 1 Jn 1:1; 5:7). In the Gospel of John this name was used in relation to Christ's work as Creator. In Revelation it is used in relation to His work as Judge. All of Christ's judgments will be done according to God's Word.

#### 3. His Patriots – 19:14

19:14 – The heavenly armies, which will descend with Christ, include His Bride, the Church, as well as

His angels (2 Th 1:7-10). White garments are worn by the Church (cf. 19:8). There is evidence that church-age believers will be engaged in this conflict with Christ against the armies of Antichrist. They will rule them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Rev 2:26-27).

#### 4. His Power – 19:15-16

19:15 – Christ will use the power of His word to conquer Satan, Antichrist and the armies of the nations gathered against Jerusalem. The Word of God that He speaks is symbolized by a sharp sword that comes out of His mouth (1:16; 2:12, 16; cf. Isa. 11:4). When Satan tempted Him three times in the wilderness, He defeated Satan by speaking the words of God from the Law. Each quotation from the Law was appropriate to address each temptation (Mt 4:1-11) and Satan was defeated. But what words will He use from God to defeat Satan at this great battle for control of the world?

Before the Tribulation begins Christ will receive a scroll from His Father in Heaven (Rev 5). The words inscribed in this scroll will defeat Satan. This scroll contains the promise of God to His Son that He is the rightful owner and ruler of the earth. This scroll might be considered the title deed to the whole earth. This document is so important that it is sealed with seven seals, so that no one, especially Satan, can open it and change the name of the rightful owner. When Christ breaks the seven seals and opens the scroll, the words in the scroll will reveal the rightful owner of the earth. God said these words to His Son on the day that He raised Him from the dead. These words are found in the prophetic psalm of David where Christ quotes the decree that His Father gave to Him: “You are My Son; this day have I begotten you” (Ps 2:7). David prophesied that these words would be spoken by God to His Son on the day He was begotten, but when was Jesus begotten? In one of Paul's sermons, he said that Jesus Christ was begotten, not on the day that He was born in Bethlehem, but on the day that He was raised from the dead (Acts 13:33-34). That means this decree was made after Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world and was raised from the dead. This made it possible for Him to defeat Satan and repossess the world.

Psalm 2:8-9 goes on to record the words of the decree that the Father said to His Son: “Ask of me and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” These are the words of God that Christ will read to Satan and to the nations of the world to prove He is the rightful owner and ruler of the earth. This is the sharp sword that will come out of Christ's mouth (cf Isa 49:2). These words will enable Him to defeat Antichrist and enable Him to establish His righteous Kingdom on the earth. In doing this, He will be administering God's divine wrath, symbolically portrayed as the winepress (cf. 14:19-20; Isa. 63:1-6).

19:16 – Jesus Christ is the **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**. When He descends from Heaven, He will have the power and authority to rule all the nations of the earth as their sovereign King.

#### B. Defeat of Antichrist – 19:17-21

##### 1. The Birds – 19:17-18

19:17-19 – John saw an angel standing who summoned the birds of prey to come and partake of the carnage of this end-time battle. This is the second vision that was given to John after the seventh bowl was poured out. The birds would feast on the flesh of horses and men in Antichrist's armies that are killed in battle with Christ. This battle will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:11ff), also known as the Kidron Valley, just to the east of Jerusalem.

##### 2. The Beast – 19:19-20

19:19-20 – When John receives the third vision after the seventh bowl is poured out, He sees Antichrist (the beast) and the armies of his allies ready to make war against Christ and His army. Before this happens Antichrist will lead an attack against Jerusalem and seek to slaughter all the Jewish people, possibly even destroying the Temple of God (12:17; Zech. 14:1-2). It appears the kings of the East and their armies are among his allies (cf. 16:12-16). Then Christ will suddenly descend from Heaven with His



army to defend His city. Then Antichrist and his allies will turn to make war with Him. Antichrist with his cohort, the False Prophet (13:11-18), will be seized and cast alive into the Lake of Fire (cf 2 Th 2:8). The judgment of these two deceivers and blasphemers is immediate (cf Mt 25:41).

### **3. The Battle – 19:21**

19:21 – The armies of Antichrist and his allies will be slaughtered by the sword that proceeds from the mouth of Christ. His word will destroy them. He may call for more lightning, earthquakes and hailstones as were poured out in the seventh bowl (cf 16:17-21; Josh 10:11). He could call for fire to come down from heaven (cf 20:9). Or, He may call for some other means to destroy His enemies, but He will totally destroy their armies. This battle will be fought in the area of Jerusalem.

## **DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING**

### **RAPTURE**

1. Called the “blessed hope”
2. It is revealed in the New Testament
3. No signs are given
4. Can happen at any moment
5. Comes before the Tribulation
6. Evil people are not judged
7. The “times of the Gentiles” continue
8. Creation is left unchanged
9. “The Lord is at hand” (Phil 4:15)
10. Only believers see Christ
11. Christ comes for His Bride (Church)
12. Believers meet the Lord in the air
13. Believers removed to Heaven
14. Believers enter the Lord’s presence
15. Church is judged
16. Church is blessed
17. Precedes the marriage of the Lamb
18. Israel’s covenants remain unfulfilled
19. Only believers are affected
20. Precedes the wrath of Satan

### **SECOND COMING**

1. Called the “glorious appearing”
2. It is revealed in the Old Testament
3. Many signs are given
4. Cannot happen for at least 7 years
5. Comes after the Tribulation
6. Evil people are judged
7. The “times of the Gentiles” end
8. Creation is remarkably changed
9. “The Kingdom is at hand” (Mt 24:14)
10. All people see Christ
11. Christ comes with His Bride (Church)
12. Believers meet the Lord on the earth
13. Believers remain on earth
14. Unbelievers exit the Lord’s presence
15. Jews and Gentiles are judged
16. Israel is blessed
17. Precedes the supper of the Lamb
18. Israel’s covenants are fulfilled
19. All people are affected
20. Follows the wrath of God



## JUDGMENT OF ANTICHRIST, THE FALSE PROPHET AND SATAN

Revelation 19:19-20; 20:1-3 and 7-10