

The Return of the King

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Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Well, we are near the end of our series through the book of Revelation. And today we're going to see the end of chapter 19 and all of chapter 20.

Now these two chapters are very, very complex. And particularly chapter 20, the millennium, has been debated for as long as the church has existed.

And probably will continue to be debated until Jesus comes and shows us the answer. I think the two major positions about chapter 20 are called premillennialism and amillennialism.

If you haven't heard about this before, you can do your own research. I'm going to preach what I think is the least problematic reading.

I think it's still problematic, but it's the least problematic. If you disagree, that's okay. As long as you believe in Jesus, you're still my brothers and sisters in Christ.

[1 : 09] And we can talk about it in grace and generosity. And please show grace and generosity to me as well. Later on, we'll see that the important truths, though, are simple enough for us to understand.

And they are great truths that will empower and comfort us. And because it's a difficult passage, we're going to walk through most of the passage first before talking about what it means for us.

And also, because it's difficult, let's pray first. Let's pray. Father, help us through your Spirit to understand your Word and reveal the glory of Jesus to us.

In His name we pray. Amen. Amen. You've probably heard of the problem of evil, usually formulated in three points.

Point one, if God is unable to stop evil, then He's not all-powerful. Two, if God is not willing to stop evil, then He's not all-good. And three, if God is both willing and able to stop evil, why does evil exist?

[2 : 25] In our passage today, we will see that God is both willing and able to stop evil. All evil.

He hates evil way more than we do. Evil has broken the good world that He has created and caused much suffering towards the humans that He loves.

But He's also way more patient than we are. Here we will see that God has provided the world with an answer that ends all evil.

And that is Jesus. So in chapter 19, in verse 11 to 16, In verse 11, we see a vision of the second coming of Jesus, riding on a white horse, and His name is faithful and true.

Which is so appropriate for us to consider on the first Sunday of Advent. Because in the Advent season, we not only look back to the first coming of Jesus, the baby, cute boy Jesus, we're also looking forward to the second coming of Jesus.

[3 : 43] And compared to the meek baby Jesus that we often remember at Christmas, the Jesus that will come again will be the mighty warrior Jesus, who will be both the judge and savior of humanity.

So He will come as the judge. His eyes are like blazing fire, penetrating every soul, looking at every sin.

He has many crowns on His head, symbolizing His status as the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

He has a sharp sword coming out of His mouth, indicating that His words will be words of judgment. Sharp. Jesus will come as the judge. But He will also come as the Savior. Remember the context of this passage, because last week in verse 7 and 8, we heard about the bride of the Lamb.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.

[5 : 05] The bride has made herself ready, and here the bridegroom comes, riding on a white horse, to save His bride from His enemies, to pick her up, to bring her to glory along with Him.

We can see some fairy tale motif here. And that's what we see in verse 14.

And this is where it's very different to fairy tales. In verse 14, When Jesus comes, the armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses, and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. The wording is almost the same as in verse 7 and 8. In verse 7 and 8, God gave the bride a fine linen, bright and clean.

And here in verse 14, we see her wearing the fine linen, and march as the armies of heaven. That's us, by the way.

[6 : 12] When Jesus comes and saves us, we're going to ride with Jesus on white horses like His, sharing His glory. Jesus will come.

And He will come to judge His enemies and to save His bride. But who are His enemies? Whom is He going to save us from?

Well, in the past couple of chapters, we have met several embodiments of evil. God's enemies. The first beast, who embodies all powers and rulers that persecute people and draw them away from God.

The second beast, that embodies falsehood, lies and deceit, that again draw people away from God through deceits. And Babylon, who embodies wealth, economic powers, trading systems, that again draw people away from God through self-centeredness, through self-sufficiency.

And the dragon, the devil himself, the figure behind them all, who causes suffering and agony and even death, and who causes the persecution of God's people.

[7 : 42] When Jesus comes, He will destroy all these enemies once and for all. Starting with the two beasts in verse 19 to 20.

The beast and the people of earth gather together to wage war against the rider on the white horse. But there will be no battle.

The beast was captured straight away and the false prophet, that is the second beast, is also captured and they are thrown into the lake of sulfur.

Hell. What about Satan? Well, let's jump a little bit to chapter 20 in verse 7 to 10. When a thousand years are over, we'll talk about a thousand years later, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations, all nations in the world in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, and to gather them for battle.

In number, they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city He loves.

[9 : 00] But fire came down from heaven and devoured them and the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.

They will be tormented day and night forever and ever. I think this part of chapter 20 and the last part of chapter 19 that we have looked at before are parallels.

They refer to the same event. How do we know? Well, John has shown us before in chapter 16 in the sixth ball as a part of God's judgment, God lets the dragon and the beasts deceive people and gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

That is, the day of God's judgment. And straight away, the text goes to quoting Jesus' promise of His second coming in verse 15. Now, that passage is alluded to quite strongly in our chapters in Revelation 19 and 20.

So, if you look at Revelation 14 and Revelation 19 on that table, the similarities are striking. Jesus is coming and the beasts gather the people to fight for the day of judgment.

[10 : 30] judgment. The only thing missing in those two chapters, in chapter 19, is the dragon. And when we look at chapter 20 on the right-hand column, a similar event unfolds.

The dragon deceives the nations in verse 8 and gathers them for battle in verse 9 only to be judged in verse 10.

I think that shows that these two parts in chapters 19 and 20 are not consecutive one after another, but they refer to the same event seen from different perspectives.

And we have seen that method of storytelling in the book of Revelation over and over again. Like the movie Vantage Point that I talked about two weeks ago where the storyteller tells one story from start to the end and then goes back to the start and tells the same story from another perspective.

So the sixth ball pictures them as one event where the dragon and the beasts together deceive the nations to fight God. Chapter 19 shows the same event but focusing on the beasts and chapter 20 focuses on Satan.

[11 : 52] But they all refer to the same event and that event will happen when Jesus returns. What's the point of the story?

Well, the point of the story is that Jesus will return to judge all evil and to save his bride from evil. And when he comes God will lift up his hand of grace.

He's not going to limit evil anymore. and when evil is not limited by God's grace everyone who hates God and who doesn't want God in their lives will be gathered by Satan will be deceived by Satan and gathered by Satan and his beasts to fight Jesus for one last battle.

There will be no battle. They will be defeated, judged and eradicated. in a sense that's how God eradicates evil by lifting his hand of grace so evil runs free so that he judges it and destroys it justly because they fight him.

So whether or not that's good news depends on whether you belong to the community of Jesus who loves him the bride or whether you reject him and fight him or even hate him and don't want him in your life because the destination of the latter is quite different in chapter 20 verse 11 to 15 then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it that's God the earth and the heavens fled from his presence and there was no place for them and I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne and books were opened and another book was opened which is the book of life the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books the sea the sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them and each person was judged according to what they had done then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire the lake of fire is the second death anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire this is the final judgment after Satan and his beasts are eradicated there will come the final judgment of all people great and small where everyone will be judged according to what they have done now if you think oh I have done good things in this life that text never says that you will be saved by the by the deeds recorded in the books in the last verse anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown in the lake of fire we are saved only if our names are written in the book of life how do we get our names written in the book of life in revelation 2 or 3 where Jesus says if you are faithful if you are victorious if you are faithful to

[15 : 39] Jesus your name will be written in the book of life the book of revelation never gives saving value to things that are good in the eyes of the society like feeding the poor giving away your money to an orphan age fighting for human rights they are good things don't get me wrong they are good things and God does want his people to do them out of love for others but they won't have much saving value in themselves on the day of judgment because it's not our deeds that save us it's God who saves us through Jesus actions cannot save us a person can and so doing good things while rejecting the savior doesn't save like when my siblings and I were kids my sister wanted something that my mom did not allow her to have and out of anger she said

I hate you mom I don't want you as my mom and that hurt my mom now imagine if then my sister had decided to mop the floor wash the dishes do her homework but still refused to talk to my mom or apologize to her the good things the deeds that she does good yes but that wouldn't have done anything to their relationship but only when she came to my mom and apologized it's the same here salvation is not just a transaction I do these good things you give me salvation God no it's a relationship with the savior and so in the last judgment saving values are given to faith and faithfulness to Jesus which is repeated over and over again in the book of Revelation patient endurance as

Christians face persecution for Jesus perseverance in trusting Jesus while being tempted by the world to abandon him again repeated over and over again doing good things while rejecting the savior means that the good things are done in the spirit of the beasts and Babylon in the spirit of making a name for ourselves or in the spirit of accumulating wealth or in the spirit of making us feel good about ourselves or making us feel powerful and those things done in the spirit of the beast and Babylon and the dragon will be thrown into the lake of fire along with them actions don't save a person saves and that's Jesus let's put our faith in him and then after that the other enemy death itself is defeated in verse 14 for a lot of people this is the greatest enemy isn't it death some people are struggling with the prospect of their own death others are struggling with the death of their loved ones and yet others are struggling with the concept of why there is death and sickness and suffering in this world at all if

God is good well the Bible constantly shows us that God is angry at death he weeps when he sees that the beautiful world that he has created is tainted by death after all he is the God of life but when Jesus comes back he will eradicate death once and for all no more death and Hades the place that holds dead people will be thrown into the lake of fire dead people will rise let's put our faith in Jesus now what do we do with the millennium passage in chapter 20 verse 1 to 6 we don't have time to read all this text but here we read of the dragon

Satan being seized and bound and for a thousand years and the saints who bear testimony to Jesus being raised to life to reign with Christ for one thousand years but when does that happen I don't want to focus too much on this part because this is where not because I'm lazy but because this is where Christians disagree and often the disagreement can move our focus away from the important bits which is Jesus and his coming but we can talk about it just a little bit some people believe that this 1000 year period will happen later after Jesus comes which the text actually presents it that way Jesus comes in chapter 19 1000 year period in chapter 20 so I can see valid very very valid arguments for that for that interpretation reasons you can ask me after graciously please you can ask me after but one of the reasons

[22 : 04] I think is this as I've shown you the eradication of the beasts in chapter 19 and the eradication of Satan in chapter 20 are parallels and they refer to the end time judgment when Jesus comes and that event is said to happen after the 1000 year reign that means the millennium or the 1000 year reign happens before Jesus comes and that is now there are other reasons please ask me afterwards but I think that's the main reason during the 1000 year reign the martyrs are raised from the dead but it's not just the martyrs here it's those who don't have the mark of the beast they had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark in other words these are those who are faithful to

Jesus faithful Christians us if we are faithful to him and this doesn't refer to the final bodily resurrection because in verse 6 it's called the first resurrection that means there will be another one the second resurrection will be physical resurrection the first one is spiritual what does that look like well it's like what Paul says in Colossians you have been raised with Christ you have been raised with Christ already now or what Jesus has promised in John whoever believes in me have eternal life already have eternal life eternal life is a present spiritual reality even though it will be physically realized later we are reigning with

Christ now our identity is in heaven with Christ reigning with him sitting on thrones so while waiting for Jesus to return and eradicate evil we already have eternal life because the eternal spirit of God lives inside us and we live in Jesus who has been resurrected although the world can still fight us we have power especially over our enemies death and sin and the devil we don't fear death like Paul says death where is your victory where is your sting and we have the power to say no to evil and to Satan but that's all because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross so let's put our trust in

Jesus like I said it's a complicated passage isn't it but I hope you've been able to see the great promises that God has revealed in these chapters in Jesus so what are the implications what do we need to remember if we forget all that after we go home which we often do I sometimes do as well what do we need to remember well like I said what we need to remember it's not difficult to discern from the passage it's quite simple and it's not debated this is one thing that we need to remember Jesus will come and he will save us all Christians who believe in the Bible believe in that and are not debating that Jesus will come on the last day our actions cannot save us a person can save us and it's

Jesus he will save us if we put our trust in him so let's put our hope and trust in him he is our salvation he has come to defeat evil on the cross and he will return to eradicate evil forever picture this in chapter 19 verse 13 Jesus will come in a robe dipped in blood now this could be a reference to Isaiah 63 where the Messiah comes as a warrior covered in the blood of his enemies and here in our chapters the biggest enemies are the beasts who are the persecutors the devil who constantly lies to us and death that constantly puts its shadow and fear over humanity wouldn't you like to see those enemies destroyed aren't you angry at death and sin and the world's brokenness and conflicts and even our own brokenness inside of us and the constant temptations that we face that stop us from enjoying our lives to the full aren't you frustrated and angry wouldn't you like to see

[27 : 52] Jesus coming as the victor who will indeed defeat evil forever he will win he will win against the dragon the beasts death and Hades Satan and death will bleed and be destroyed let's

put our trust and hope in Jesus but the blood on his robe could also refer to Jesus own blood the blood of the lamb who was slain and the title that's the word of God that comes right next to it reminds us of his identity in the gospel of John the word of God who came into the world to be the lamb who was slain for sinners that's us so perhaps the blood on his robe is his own as well and that's how he will come as both the judge the victor who wins against his enemies and the savior who saves us if you think about it

Jesus will come with a robe dipped in blood bloody robe but we will ride with him in clean shining clothes it should be the other way around we should have the bloody robes with our blood but there is an exchange it's already happened on the cross when Jesus died for us and so he comes in a robe dipped in blood for those who put their trust in him that's great news Jesus will come to save us from all evil and suffering so friends if you're struggling with any kind of evil and I bet you are the evil that has broken this world and hinders us from enjoying the good life that

God has given us put your hope and trust in Jesus he has come first Christmas and stripped those evils from their power on the good Friday and he will come back and eradicate all evil he will save us and we will be turned from victims to victors riding on white horses along with him let's pray