

The millennium (20:1-6)

This part of Revelation has been much debated. I will make a few suggestions as to what I think it might mean.

1. The book that is about events that must take place soon. (1:1) This is the first time we are told about events that go far into the future.
2. John has told us about the conflict between the Roman Empire and the followers of Jesus. The downfall of Rome, is crucial to the story. It means victory over the devil, who is the ultimate power behind the Empire.
3. The devil's defeat is victory for the martyrs, who like Jesus win despite their deaths. They are described as those who have been beheaded or 'axed.' This might be to give dignity to them, as Rome would behead its citizens rather than crucify them. The days for patience (6:9) have ended.
4. There is a link here to Daniel 7. "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."
5. The martyrs are resurrected as Jesus was and they reign with him. For a thousand years they replace the government of the Empire. The devil is powerless to stop them.
6. The weakness in my suggestions is that this doesn't seem to have happened. Rome fell eventually but as far as we know there has been no 'first resurrection' and the devil has not been taken captive. The church has not yet given the accuser no place in heaven. The challenge to be faithful to Christ still stands.

Revelation 19:1-20:6

Hallelujah!

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The word 'hallelujah' is Hebrew for 'Praise Yahweh.' It appears in most English translations as 'Praise the LORD.' This is the only chapter where it is used in the New Testament. The evil empire is defeated. God is king.

Prophecy

We learned at the beginning that Revelation is a prophecy, and we will be reminded at the end. Chapter 19 verse 10 tells us that the aim of prophecy is to point to Jesus. We should be impressed by Jesus, not the messenger.

Let's go back to the seven letters in chapters 2 and 3. There are glorious promises, but also warnings that victory is not guaranteed. The fulfilment of prophecy is never guaranteed. This book was meant to encourage the churches so they would triumph.

Hallelujah! (19:1-8)

Babylon (Rome) has fallen. God has become king. The claims of the Empire have been smashed, as we saw last time. God has judged Rome.

When God judges the empire it is time for great rejoicing.

The first invitation (19:6-21)

The first invitation is to the 'marriage supper of the Lamb.' The

word translated as 'supper' means a banquet served in the evening. It is a time of great celebration.

The Lamb, as always, stands for the once crucified Jesus, now established to reign on behalf of God. The words of Revelation 1:5 are now true. His people, those who have overcome in the time of persecution, are reigning with him as we have known they will since 5:10. They are now described as the Lamb's bride. The bride is clothed in bright, fine linen symbolising purity. This bride has kept herself faithful to Jesus. She has consistently followed the teachings of Jesus (verse 8.)

An invitation (better 'call') goes out to invite people to the marriage. Those who are 'called' are described as 'blessed,' a word that is sometimes translated as 'happy.' It can also be translated as 'well-off' or 'fortunate.' The word is used seven times in Revelation.

Jesus victorious (19:11-16)

The picture changes in verse 11. Jesus is now riding on a white horse, waging war. His people are his army, riding on white horses too. This picture does not mean that Jesus has suddenly become violent; the previous white horse (6:2) was an evil imitation. This is the real thing, the rider is Faith and True and the Word of God. His weapon, symbolised as a sword is the word from his mouth. He rules with 'a rod of iron,' meaning that he has total control. (remember 2:27 and 12:5., and the link to Psalm 2.)

Jesus will do what the Roman Empire has previously done, rule the nations, and his people will rule with him. This is why it matters so much that his people follow his example. They will

overcome as he did, through the cross, even through their martyrdom.

Note that Jesus' robe is dipped in blood. This comes from Isaiah 63 where treading a winepress is a symbol of judgement. Remember the links between blood, grape juice and wine. Wine in Revelation stands for both the means of judgement and, as blood, the results of the judgement.

Jesus won the victory by shedding his own blood. His weapon is his word, not a literal sword.

The second invitation (19:17-21)

We now have the second invitation (call) to the great supper/banquet of God. This time it is to the birds, invited to feast on the corpses as Rome falls. Rome will fall in warfare. Its fall will be devastating, for every level of society. What else could it be?

We are now back in the picture of chapter 17, where the beast is the Roman Empire, which with its client kings is waging war against the Lamb and being conquered.

Chapter 19 tells us nothing about this war, except that the beast and the false prophet (the second beast) are captured. They are thrown alive into a fiery lake of sulphur and the other kings are killed. We wait to see what this picture will mean, but it is clearly a picture of devastation.

The birds are called to eat the flesh of kings etc. This may remind you of Jesus' words in John 6:53-56. There is a link here to the Lord's Supper.