

Understanding Revelation – Topic 31

Christ triumphant

An exposition of Revelation Chapter 19:7-21

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The marriage supper of the Lamb

Introduction

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7

In sharp contrast to the three previous chapters of Revelation, this passage commences with a scene of joy and celebration. It is the celebration of the marriage of Christ and His bride. It is the marriage supper.

Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God”.
Revelation 19:9

There has been much speculation, misunderstanding and confusion about this marriage ceremony, the identity of the bride and when the marriage takes place.

Often in Scripture we find two entities with the same name. There are two marriages referred to in the plan of salvation as well as two brides. There is a spiritual aspect with a spiritual bride, a spiritual marriage and a spiritual marriage supper. There is also a literal bride, a literal marriage and a literal supper. The spiritual bride is the Christian Church - God's chosen people.

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church ... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:23, 25, 31, 32

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”
Isaiah 62:5

The spiritual marriage

The spiritual marriage takes place at conversion. After the believer is wooed by the Holy Spirit, he or she yields her heart to Christ - the husband - and is joined to Him in a spiritual union, a marriage. The believer takes the husband's name - *Christ-ian*. Christ the husband provides the food - the Word of God – as well as the clothing His wife requires. This is the robe of His righteousness. At the same time the spiritual marriage supper is celebrated:

“If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.” Revelation 3:20

The literal marriage

The literal marriage is that of Christ to the New Jerusalem. The concept is based on an Old Testament custom of a ruler involving his son in the rule of the kingdom. This was initiated by a ceremony where the son was “married” to a leading city of the kingdom.¹ Likewise God the Father, at an appointed time, conducts a ceremony in which He marries His Son to the leading city of His kingdom, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the literal bride of Christ.

...“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Revelation 21:9 -10

This marriage of Christ to the New Jerusalem is being conducted during the pre advent or investigative judgment, which the book of Daniel reveals commenced in 1844 and which concludes at the close of human probation. It is during this period that the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ.

I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated... The court was seated, and the books were opened..... One like the Son of Man ... came to the Ancient of Days ... then to Him was given ... a kingdom,...and His kingdom ... shall not be destroyed. Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

This truth is confirmed in the parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew Chapter 25.

The ten virgins parable applied	
The parable	The application
Ten virgins	The professed people of God as guests invited to the marriage
The Bridegroom	Jesus Christ who enters into the judgment scene to receive his kingdom
The Bride	The holy city - New Jerusalem - which will be given to Christ during the pre-advent judgment
Wise virgins enter in to the wedding	Since 1844 when the pre-advent judgment began, some of God’s people, by faith, have entered into the judgment scene, to the union of Jesus to the New Jerusalem
At the conclusion of the wedding, the Bridegroom gathers the guests for the marriage supper.	After the close of probation (when the judgment closes) Christ comes to earth to gather His guests, to take them to the marriage supper of the Lamb

¹ Adam Clarke, *The New Testament, Commentary and Critical Notes*(New York: A Paul, 1823). 1:209 on Matthew 22.

Other Scriptures confirm this application of the parable:

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. Luke 12:35 -37

This verse will be fulfilled when the prediction of Revelation 19:7-9 is fulfilled after the second coming of Christ.

The bride prepares herself

...his wife has made herself ready. V7

Verse 8 explains how the holy city makes itself ready.

And to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Revelation 19:8

The holy city, New Jerusalem, arrays itself in a symbolic sense with fine linen. The fine linen represents the righteousness - the righteous deeds - of the saints. The holy city is arrayed in the righteousness of the saints when the saints are resurrected and translated at the Second Advent. Then, in perfection of character and body, they enter into the holy city and dwell there. This is the union of the spiritual bride and the literal bride. They become one.

The chief adornment of a city is its citizens. Thus when the saints reach heaven and are welcomed into the New Jerusalem, the holy city will literally be adorned with the righteousness of the saints. What a magnificent adornment!

Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb'..."

The call to the marriage supper is sounding now. Ever since Adam and Eve were driven out of paradise, the call has been sounding for humankind to return to the fold of God. This is the call of the gospel of Christ. All who respond will be granted the inestimable privilege of sharing in the glorious celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb in His kingdom. Then Christ will fulfill his promise:

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. Matthew 26:29

Christ serves His people

At this celebration Jesus Christ will also wait on His people and serve them.

He will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. Luke 12:35 -37

In this life the believer is called to serve Christ.

You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. Matthew 4:10

Christ declares that in the kingdom He will serve us, especially at the marriage supper.

The fact that in the kingdom of God in heaven we will eat and drink reveals that in the hereafter the saved will possess real, tangible bodies. It also indicates that we will enjoy socializing.

...And he said to me 'These are the true sayings of God'. V9

To aid the Christian to believe, God confirms what He says by emphasizing that His Word is truth. Heaven does not represent a 'pie in the sky' hope. It is not a dreamland, nor is it a figment of the imagination.

...it is impossible for God to lie... Hebrews 6:18

Marvelous events await the child of God.

...Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Service and humility – principles of heaven

And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus"... Revelation 19:10

Angel worship is forbidden because angels are created beings. The only One who may call for worship is the One who can create life, for this power is the mark of divinity. This is why the first and second commandments forbid the worship of anyone except God alone. To worship any other is to be disloyal to the Creator and this is detrimental to humanity.

...your fellow servant...

This means "a fellow servant of John the prophet". Though the angel is of a higher order of being than John, possessed of supernatural powers, yet he classes himself as his fellow servant. Here is an example of the heavenly beings' humility of mind. Pride does not exist there. Love of self cannot abide there. This is why the apostle Paul declared:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who... made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant.... Philipians 2:5, 7

Humility is the mark of the genuine believer, just as it is of those of the heavenly world. But more than this, the angel used the word *servant*. A fundamental principle of God's kingdom is service. Heaven is not an existence where inactivity thrives. Rather, it is a place of service to others. This brings contentment, happiness and fulfillment, just as it does on earth.

...and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus...

John's brethren who had the testimony of Jesus were those with the prophetic gift, that is, they were prophets. This is confirmed by Revelation 22:9.

Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. I am your fellow servant and of your brethren the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God". Revelation 22:9

Parallels between Revelation 19:10 and 22:9	
Revelation 19:10	Revelation 22:9.
He said to me	Then he said to me
'See that you do not do that	'See that you do not do that
I am your fellow servant	I am your fellow servant
and of your brethren	and of your brethren
who have the testimony of Jesus.'	the prophets'

The testimony of Jesus

...*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 19:10*

The *testimony of Jesus* is equated with the gift of prophecy. This expression is used four times in Revelation:

1. Revelation 1:2 *The testimony of Jesus Christ.*
2. Revelation 1:9 *The testimony of Jesus Christ*
3. Revelation 12:17 *The testimony of Jesus Christ*
4. Revelation 19:10 *The testimony of Jesus.*

Some translators have incorrectly rendered the verses as follows:

The testimony about Jesus Christ
The testimony to Jesus Christ
The testimony for Jesus Christ.

The Greek reads *the testimony of Jesus Christ*. This means that the testimony is a message from Jesus Christ through his prophet.

The word *testimony* is often employed in Scripture to represent the message that a true prophet receives from God to deliver to His people.

And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them. 2 Kings 17:15

Neither our kings nor our princes...nor our fathers, have kept your law, nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies, with which You testified against them. Nehemiah 9:34

You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies... which He has commanded you. Deuteronomy 6:17

(See also Jeremiah 44:23; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 93:5).

In Psalm 119 the word *testimonies* is used twenty-three times. See also Nehemiah 9:26 and 30, Deuteronomy 32:46 and 2 Kings 17:15, where it is shown that when a prophet testifies what God has revealed to Him, that is *the testimony*.

The angel is one of John's brethren the prophets in the sense that when God communicates His testimonies to the church there is a divine order. Four persons are involved. The testimony proceeds from the Father, through the Son, to His angel and then to the prophet.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants - things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John. Revelation 1:1

An angel of God is always involved in the transmission of God's message to His prophets.

The Second Advent

Introduction

Revelation 19:11-16 presents a symbolic scene of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ.

Then I saw heaven opened...

Then I saw indicates that this is a new vision. The scene reverts back to the Second Advent. There is repetition and enlargement again.

...and behold a white horse...

This is a repetition of Revelation 6:2 - *I saw and behold a white horse*. There are two white horses in the Book of Revelation, one at the commencement of the Christian era and the other at its close. Both are symbolic. Both are associated with Christ's opposition to evil.

Characteristics of the returning Christ

The Revelator now lists eight characteristics of Christ at His Second Advent.

1. Faithful

And He who sat on him was called Faithful...

This is speaking of Christ, for in Revelation 3:14 He is called *the faithful and true witness*. It describes Christ's faithfulness and loyalty to the Father - even unto death.

...consider the Apostle and High priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to Him who appointed him.... Hebrews 3:1-2

This expression also denotes the faithfulness of Christ to His people. He has made ceaseless intercession for them before God for over two thousand years. He has been continually with His people amid their earthly conflicts, in fulfillment of His promise:

Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20

2. True

...and True...

When Jesus was on earth He declared:

I am... the truth. John 14:16.

After more than two thousand years, Jesus Christ is still the Truth. His witness, His word is eternal truth.

...and in righteousness He judges and makes war. V11

Christ is pictured riding a white horse, because a horse symbolises warfare and white symbolises righteousness and purity.

...Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Isaiah 1:18

Christ on a white horse therefore represents a war of righteousness. In Revelation 6:2 - the first seal prophecy - the white horse represented a spiritual war waged by Christ and His people against the spiritual forces of evil.² At the close of the Christian era this represents a literal war by Christ against the literal forces of evil. Under Christ, the Christian Church commenced the warfare against evil triumphantly, as predicted in the first seal.

...He went forth conquering and to conquer. Revelation 6:2

Unfortunately with the passing of time the church was almost overcome. However the scene of Revelation 19:11 depicts the church as being finally triumphant. It is a scene of war.

At the Second Advent Christ rewards everyone.

My reward is with me to give every one according to his work. Revelation 22:12

Judge means to avenge or punish and this is a scene of vengeance. Those who reject salvation, who turn on His people, He will reward with destruction.

3. Eyes like a flame of fire

His eyes as a flame of fire... V12

This is a repetition of Revelation 1:14 and 2:18, which represent Christ as the all-seeing one. Nothing is hidden from Him. He sees the good: and He sees the evil to which He is utterly opposed and which He will destroy.

² A.P. Cooke, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

4. Wears many crowns

...and on his head were many crowns...

This denotes more than just royalty. Jesus is King of kings. The bishop of Rome wears a triple crown to indicate that he is *king of earth and of heaven and of the lower regions*.³ He is the counterfeit Christ. Since the close of His priestly ministry, Christ has been the true King of kings. This indicates that there are other ruling powers under Him. These include the leaders of other worlds and leading angels to whom is delegated ruling authority, as well as others whom heaven classes as kings under Christ.⁴

5. An unknown name

...He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. V12

It has been suggested that this name represents Jesus Christ in His new role as the great Avenger of His people.⁵ It is indeed a new role because we now witness *the wrath of the Lamb*.

Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath has come. Revelation 6:16-17

6. Robe dipped in blood

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...

This cannot represent Jesus' sacrificial or priestly ministry because He has laid off those garments in place of those of a king. He is now the Avenger and is also fulfilling His other role of the Kinsman-Redeemer (see Revelation Chapter 5). The seventh seal has been removed from the book containing the title deeds of the kingdom of this world. Christ, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, invades His rightful domain to take possession of His kingdom and to punish those who have usurped His authority and despised and slain His servants.

This scene showing Christ's garment stained with blood is borrowed from the Old Testament description of Christ in Isaiah Chapter 63. Here is described His work of vengeance against the Edomites because of their inveterate hatred of His people Israel. There are several parallels between Isaiah 63:1-6 and Revelation 19:11-16 and other Bible passages, which indicate that the scene in Isaiah Chapter 63 finds its antitype in the Second Advent of Christ.

³ Lucius Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica Juridica Moralis Theologica*, vol. 6 (Venice, Italy: Gaspar Storti, 1772).

⁴ A.P. Cooke, *The Kings from the Sunrising* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

⁵ F.D. Nichol, ed. *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1957). 7:873-874.

Biblical parallels with Isaiah 63	
Isaiah 63:1-6	Revelation 19:11-16 & other passages
<i>Who is this who comes from Edom...</i>	Edom represents the enemies of God - the people against whom the Lord has <i>indignation forever</i> . Malachi 1:4
<i>...with dyed garments from Bozrah. Bozrah means vintage. The dyed garments reveal that the one coming was involved in treading grapes.</i>	The harvesting of the unsaved. <i>Thrust in your sickle and gather...the vine of the earth for her grapes are fully ripe. Revelation 14:18</i>
<i>...this one who is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?</i>	<i>The Son of man...coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24:3</i>
<i>'I who speak in righteousness,</i>	<i>In righteousness He judges and makes war. Rev 19:11</i>
<i>mighty to save'</i>	<i>Your people will be delivered. Daniel 12:1</i>
<i>Why is your apparel red, and your garments like one who treads in the wine press?</i>	The unsaved are likened to grapes trodden down in destruction by Christ in the winepress of this world. Revelation 19:15
<i>I have trodden the winepress alone and from the peoples no one was with Me.</i>	<i>He Himself treads the wine-press... v15 Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense. Hebrews 10:30</i>
<i>For I have trodden them in my anger and trampled them in my fury;</i>	<i>He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. v15</i>
<i>their blood is sprinkled upon My garments and I have stained all My robes.</i>	He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood (of the unsaved). v13
<i>For the day of vengeance is in My heart,</i>	The day of our God's vengeance. Isaiah 61:1-2 <i>He judges (punishes) and makes war. Rev 19:11</i>
<i>and the year of My redeemed has come.</i>	<i>...the Lamb will overcome them for He is Lord of lords and King of kings and those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful. Revelation 17:14.</i> <i>...He will appear a second time ...for salvation, Hebrews 9:28</i>

7. The Word of God

...and His name is called the Word of God. V13

Christ is the Living Word, the expression of the divine will, the revelation of the Father. He was the Word of God in creation (Psalm 33:6, 9), the Word of God in redemption (John 1:1, 14) and He is the Word of God in judgment and destruction.

8. Destroyer

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations... V15

By His word, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12) Christ *strikes* (destroys) the unsaved.

...whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth. 2 Thessalonians 2:8

...with the breath of his lips He shall slay the wicked. Isaiah 11:4

The Word of God can create or destroy. This is true not only in a literal sense but also spiritually as is evident in the life of the believer. The Word of God gives life to the believer (1 Peter 1:23) and the Word of God destroys sin in the believer (Psalm 119:11).

And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed him on white horses. V14

This imagery is borrowed from Isaiah 13:1-3 where the prophet describes the invading forces of the Medes and Persians and their allies when they conquered literal Babylon. The description is also typical of the destruction of spiritual Babylon.

Babylon's destruction – literal and spiritual	
Literal Babylon (Isa 13:1-9)	Spiritual Babylon
<i>V1 The burden against (literal) Babylon...</i>	The conquest of spiritual Babylon (Revelation 19:1-6)
<i>V3 I have commanded My sanctified ones... (the soldiers sanctified or dedicated to war).</i>	<i>...the armies in heaven... (V14) ...the kings from the east (sunrising)... Revelation 16:12</i>
<i>V3 ...My mighty ones for my anger - those who rejoice in my exaltation.</i>	<i>...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8</i>
<i>V4 the noise of a multitude in the mountainsthe kingdoms of nations gathered together! These are the allied nations supporting the Medes and Persians.</i>	<i>The Lord shall roar from on high....as those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earththe Lord has a controversy with the nations....he will give those who are wicked to the sword. Jeremiah 25:30-33</i>
<i>V4 ...The Lord of hosts musters the army for battle.</i>	<i>In righteousness does He judge and make war....and the armies of heaven... followed Him. VV11,14</i>
<i>V5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven - the Lord and His weapons of indignation to destroy the whole land.</i>	<i>The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God ... who will be punished with everlasting destruction..... 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9</i>
<i>V8 ...Pangs...will take hold of them...as a woman in childbirth...</i>	<i>The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night Sudden destruction comes upon them as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3</i>
<i>V9 ...the day of the Lord comes, cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners...</i>	<i>... He should strike the nations. And He himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He himself treads the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Revelation 19:15</i>

...And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron...

Some conclude that if Christ is to rule the nations, then they cannot be destroyed at the Second Advent, but the Greek reads.....

...And He (Himself) will shepherd them with a rod of iron...

The shepherd's crook had at its other end a piece of iron which was used as a defensive weapon by the shepherd to repel wild beasts and other enemies of the flock. The term *rod of iron* indicates rule that destroys evil opposition. It is a fulfillment of the messianic prediction of the psalmist:

You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm 2:9

...He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth... Isaiah 11:4

...He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. v15

This is an allusion to Isaiah Chapter 63 (see under v13) and the punishment and destruction of the unsaved. The same symbolism is used in Revelation Chapter 14.

If any one worships the beast...he himself shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Revelation 14:9-10

"Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe" (for punishment). So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city.... Revelation 14:18-20

This passage refers to the outpouring of the wrath of God through the seven last plagues (Revelation 15:1) which conclude with the return of Christ. The earth is likened to a worldwide winepress and the unsaved are likened to over-ripe grapes. The angelic horsemen are represented as treading down the unsaved in slaughter. The carnage is so enormous that the blood is symbolized as reaching the bridles of the angel horsemen. The scene depicts complete slaughter. It is Armageddon and *Armageddon* is a Hebrew term meaning "mount of slaughter".⁶

Christ triumphant

And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. V16

This description announces the universal supremacy of Christ on His return to the world. It is in striking contrast to the first advent, when Jesus was born to be king but was rejected. Now He returns as conqueror. At the First Advent He came in humility. At the Second Advent He comes in glory and power. The title KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS is also employed in Revelation 17:14 in connection with the final battle between Christ and Satan and between the Church and Babylon. While intervening on behalf of His people in the final conflict, Christ is titled KING OF KINGS. This title informs us that:

1. Jesus Christ is supreme
2. He is victor even before the battle begins
3. Other ruling powers are associated with Christ in the final conflict.

⁶ A.P. Cooke, *Grapes of Wrath* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

The manner of His coming

Revelation 19:11-16 is not a literal description of the Second Advent. Christ does not return on a white horse but rather upon a white cloud.

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him... Revelation 1:7

...behold a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle. Revelation 14:14

Christ returns in the same manner as He went back to heaven at His ascension –

...This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like (the same) manner as you saw Him go into heaven. Acts 1:11

Jesus left the earth as a man, visible to all, slowly ascending to heaven. He returns as a man, slowly descending through the heavens, and *every eye will see Him* (Revelation 1:7). He ascended publicly, he returns publicly - not secretly.

...all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him... Revelation 1:7

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24:30

Christ's glory at the Second Advent is a triple glory:

...He comes in His own glory and in His Father's (glory), and (the glory) of the holy angels. Luke 9:26

There are multiplied millions of holy angels.

...the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand (100 million) and thousands of thousands. Revelation 5:11

Undoubtedly angels compose the great white cloud enveloping the Son of Man.⁷

Events associated with His coming

The following events occur on earth at the Second Coming.

1. The sleeping saints of all the ages are resurrected from their graves.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. I Thessalonians 4:16

2. The living saints, along with the resurrected saints, are changed *...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.* (I Corinthians 15:51-52)

They are then caught up, translated, to meet Christ in the air.

...the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air: And thus we shall always be with the Lord. I Thessalonians 4:16-17

⁷ A.P. Cooke, *A Glimpse of God on His Throne* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
Matthew 24:31

As the saints rise in the air, the angels gather them to where Christ is *in the air*. This reveals that at the Second Advent Christ does not set foot upon the earth.

3. The unsaved are destroyed by the glory of Christ.

...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not...obey the gospel.... These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He comes... to be glorified in His saints... 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

...the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night (unexpectedly). ... then sudden destruction comes upon them (the unsaved). ... And they shall not escape. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will... destroy with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8

4. The resurrected and living saints who have been caught up with *the Lord in the air* then return with Christ to the kingdom of heaven.

In my Father's house are many mansions....I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:2-3

Our Lord Jesus Christ ...has begotten us... to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled...reserved in heaven for you. 1 Peter 1:3-4

...many will come from the east and west and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 8:11

Blessed are the poor in spirit (the humble), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven... Matthew 5:12

(See also Matthew 5:20; 6:20 and Revelation 2:7; 22:1, 2)

God's people at the Second Advent ascend together to the kingdom. This is the great reunion day.

Role of the Father

There are no references in Scripture which suggest that God the Father accompanies Jesus at the Second Advent. Titus 2:13 is misinterpreted by some to try and teach that the Father also appears. However this scripture is confirming the deity of Jesus Christ. It refers to Him as *the great God and Saviour*. In that the Father is the first person of the Godhead, if He were present at the Second Advent, surely Scripture would proclaim it. The silence of Scripture indicates that Jesus Christ is the Supreme One at the Second Advent.

The apostle Paul declares that the Father has delegated to Christ the responsibility of putting down all authority that is in rebellion against God.

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.
1 Corinthians 15:24-28

These verses show that the Son rules over, or is in charge of, the work of ending the reign of rebellion. This is what occurs at the Second Advent. It is Christ the Son of God who is in charge – not God the Father. On these grounds, we conclude that the Father is not present, nor is He involved in the Second Advent or in cleansing this planet of rebellion. This is the work of God the Son. It is at the second and third advents that Christ eliminates all rebellion. When He has accomplished this, He then subjects Himself to the Father.

The supper of the great God

In Revelation 19:17-19 is presented another symbolic picture of destruction.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." Revelation 19:17-18

This is not a literal scene. It is a symbolic picture of destruction. It is drawn from the prediction in Ezekiel 39:17-20. The conditions for fulfillment of this prophecy were not met, so it now has a symbolic application to the final destruction of the rebel hosts of spiritual Babylon.

If we compare the categories of people in Revelation 19:17-18 with those of Revelation 6:15-16 who rush to the mountains and rocks to hide from Christ at the Second Advent, it is clear that they are one and the same. There will be no literal birds to devour the unsaved after the Second Advent. There will be no life left on earth whatsoever, so it cannot be a literal picture.

In Revelation 19:17-18 we view a picture of utter destruction - the fulfillment of the seventh trumpet, when He *will destroy those who destroy (or corrupt) the earth* (Revelation 11:18). The imagery of being devoured by birds represents the terrible curse of God that will be pronounced upon the unsaved. When Moses, under inspiration, pronounced the blessings and curses upon Israel, one of the curses was

Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air ... and no one shall frighten them away. Deuteronomy 28:26

The graphic portrayal of the feast of the birds upon the unsaved of Revelation 19:17-18 conveys that the unsaved have received the curse of God and as a result are doomed to destruction.

The Battle of Armageddon

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Revelation 19:19

This verse makes it clear that Armageddon is not a conflict between earthly powers. While it is true that *there will be storm and war and variance*⁸ among the unsaved until the end, Armageddon is a war between heavenly and earthly powers.

Revelation 19:19-21 is a repetition and enlargement of Revelation 16:13-16.

Parallels between Revelation Chapters 16 and 19	
Revelation 16:13-16	Revelation 19:19-21
<i>the dragon...the kings of the earth</i>	<i>...the kings of the earth</i> ⁹
<i>the beast...</i>	<i>...the beast</i>
<i>the false prophet...</i>	<i>the false prophet...</i>
<i>the whole (unsaved) world...</i>	<i>their armies...</i>
<i>...performing signs</i>	<i>...who worked signs...</i>
<i>to gather them ... he gathered them</i>	<i>...gathered together</i>
<i>...the battle of that great day</i>	<i>...to make war (or battle)</i>
<i>of God Almighty</i>	<i>against Him that sat on the horse and against His army.</i>

Verse 19 also corresponds with the following verse:

The ten horns...with the beast...will make war with the Lamb...and those that are with him...." Revelation 17:12-14

The *gathering* of v19 cannot be a literal gathering of the earthly forces of evil against Christ and His people. As with the *gathering* of Revelation 16:13-16 it can only be a symbolic gathering. The Greek word may also be translated *unite*, which is a more accurate interpretation.

⁸ The world is filled with storm and war and variance, yet under one head, the papal power, the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 7:182.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 3rd ed. (Boise, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1962). 32.

The following passages explain how the earthly powers make war against Christ.

In that you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren (says Christ) you have done it to me. Matthew 25:40

The dragon was enraged with the woman and went to make war (or battle) with the rest of her offspring. Revelation 12:17

Armageddon begins with an attack upon the people of God. This leads to intervention by Christ and His angels during the sixth and seventh plagues under which *the beast and the false prophet*, that is, the clergy and other religious leaders, are brought to their end.

...These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. V20

This parallels the descriptions in Revelation Chapters 17 and 18 of the destruction of the harlot.

These shall hate the whore and will... burn her with fire. Revelation 17:16

She shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges (punishes) her. Revelation 18:8

Verse 20 also connects Armageddon with Revelation Chapter 13 and the image of the beast and his mark, again demonstrating that Armageddon is the final conflict over worship, over the commandments of God. It is between Jesus Christ and Antichrist, the remnant and the majority, commandment-keepers and commandment-breakers, those who worship the Lamb and those who worship the beast.

The fire which brings the harlot - the religious leaders - to her end is a spiritual fire¹⁰ emanating from the burning anger of her followers. As James White correctly concluded:

... there are two lakes of fire, one at each end of the thousand years.¹¹

The first lake of fire is spiritual, the second is literal.¹²

And the rest were killed with the sword that proceeded out of the mouth of Him who sat on the horse... V21

As noted above, in the Battle of Armageddon the first to fall are the clergy.¹³ Next to fall are their supporters, when they turn on each other in slaughter. Only a remnant of the unsaved remains alive. These are symbolized as being *killed with the sword* out of Christ's mouth. The sword represents the word of Christ which at the Second Advent will be one of the agents of destruction of the unsaved.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898)., 654-656.

¹¹ F.D. Nichol, ed. Article by James White in *Review & Herald* January 21, 1862, quoted in SDA Bible Commentary 8:876.

¹² This follows the principle in prophetic interpretation that descriptions are symbolic prior to the Second Advent, but literal after the Second Advent.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*. 656. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*(Washington, DC.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1882). 289-290.

*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
2 Thessalonians 2:8*

At the Second Advent there will be two remnants.

Two remnants at the Second Advent	
Revelation 12:17 – God's remnant	Revelation 19:17-21 – Satan's remnant
<i>...the rest of her offspring (God's woman)</i>	<i>...the rest... (Satan's woman)</i>
<i>...keep the commandments of God</i>	Keep the commandments of men
<i>...worship the Lamb</i>	Worship the beast and his image
<i>...have the testimony of Jesus Christ - a true prophet.</i>	Are deceived by the false prophet
Receive the seal of God	Receive the mark of the beast
Are in the army of Christ	Are in the armies of the beast and the kings of the earth
Are guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb	Are food for birds at the supper of the great God
Receive the wrath of the dragon	Receive the wrath of God
Destination is the sea of glass	Destination is the winepress of blood

...And the birds were filled with their flesh v21

This echoes the symbolic picture of destruction in verses 17-18. In that all life on earth will cease at the Second Advent,¹⁴ there will be no birds in existence to feed upon the unsaved. Verse 21 must indeed be a symbolic expression describing complete destruction.

¹⁴ A.P. Cooke, *The final windup of human history* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

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