

“Thy Kingdom Come”*Revelation 19-20***Introduction – BLANK1**

Before we continue in our journey through the last book of the Bible, I want to begin with a pop quiz. Topic = ~~Melchizedek?~~ Jesus. What was the basic message, the gospel, Jesus preached? (See **Mk 1¹⁴⁻¹⁵**; cf. Mt. 4¹⁷)

Jesus began his public ministry with a new flash, “*The time has come...The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*”^{Mk.1:15} Everywhere Jesus went he talked about the kingdom of God: how to enter it, what it is like, why we should seek first the kingdom, and pray for “thy kingdom to come...” (Mt. 6¹⁰). His gospel message was not: “Believe in me & get out of hell free”. The “good news” Jesus preached was and is bigger and better and broader than people getting “de-sinned” so they can get through the scanners into heaven.¹

For Jesus, the full gospel (not a short-sheeted or reduced version of it) had to do with God taking his rightful place as king so that his will was done “on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus came to implement God’s kingdom rule, God’s values, God’s program (e.g. “draining the real swamp”). He came to make earth a true colony of heaven (in a bigger and better way that Rome did), so that creation itself would be liberated and restored to its original glory and goodness (Daniel Erlander: “*a brief history of God’s unfolding promise to mend the entire universe*”).

Paul described creation’s current plight (in Rom. 8²⁰⁻²¹) as “groaning” in “frustration” from “its bondage to decay” (e.g. Terry’s Fox’s frustration at having to stop his marathon of hope...²). Jesus is coming to break that bondage to decay. No wonder creation “waits in *eager expectation* (great intensity)³ for the children of God to be revealed” (lit. the “apocalypsis” of the children of God, their appearing with the Messiah at his return).

¹ “The ‘gospel’ of the New Testament cannot be reduced to the Plan of Salvation....the more we submerge ‘salvation’ into the larger idea ‘gospel,’ the more robust will become our understanding of salvation....Nothing has been more revitalizing for many today than the kingdom vision of Jesus.” Scott McKnight, The King Jesus Gospel, pp. 39-40.

² He ran a marathon a day for 143 days, stopping on Sept. 1 when his primary cancer had spread to his lungs.

³ “The whole creation expects redemption with intense eagerness (lit., “the eager expectation of creation is awaited eagerly”)...because creation is caught up [unwillingly] in humanity’s futility (= something that does not function according to design).” John E. Toews, Romans (BCBC), p. 223.

Biblical Contact – Turn to Revelation 19. As I read it, imagine all of creation eagerly waiting for this climactic moment to be unveiled.

Structural Contact – See the sermon outline in your bulletin.

A) **Heavenly Worship** (19¹⁻¹⁰)

1) **Tone** – Threefold celebration^{19:1-8} matches the threefold lamentation^{18:9-19}

- great multitude (cf. ch. 7) + twenty-four elders & four living creatures (cf. ch. 4 & 5) = All God’s redeemed people and all of redeemed creation.
- Future *and* present reality...Hebrews 12²²⁻²⁹

2) **Focus** = God’s character & deeds/works (“He’s amazing”; “that’s amazing”)

- The Emperors had stolen God’s titles (“Savior”, “Lord”, “God”), and God’s glory and used their God-given power and authority to actively oppose him and his ways (cf. the “gods” & “goddesses” of our day and how they steal all the limelight; cf. who and what captures our attention and allegiance? Technology?)
- Awestruck by our own technological achievements and observe so few of God’s (screen time statistics⁴ for kids... The average kid today spends 40 minutes a week outside and 70 hours a week looking at an electronic screen. KOZ—“No Kid Left Inside”)
- Jesus did ministry around a campfire...Try an outdoor worship service...

3) **Implications** = regular *participation* in worship and *preparation* for the wedding of the lamb (e.g. ECU service...“dress appropriately” story...)

- Funeral story from Michael Dick...*Participating in 210 memorial services for seniors in 13 years has been one of the greatest serendipities in my pastoral ministry at Bakerview. As family members look back and reflect on the life of their parent or grandparent, a story of faith and faithfulness is relived...I recall the son of a wealthy individual sharing at a memorial service that although the family enjoyed holidays, his father had never bought a recreational property. Why? Dad knew it would impact the family’s regular church attendance. He told his friends, “We’re church people, not cottage people.”*⁵)

- The scene shifts from heavenly worship to holy war. **SLIDE**

B) **Holy War** (19¹¹⁻²¹)

1) **The Great Warrior**

⁴ <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/media/news/2012/09/majority-of-canadian-youth-spend-an-hour-or-less-outside-each-day/>

⁵ <http://mbherald.com/memorial-services/>

What do we see when heaven is opened (v.11)? We see another facet of the heavenly Jesus—Jesus the great warrior. **SLIDE** (Like God in Ex. 15³)

- Notice that six verses are dedicated to describing Christ. He is called “faithful” – he can be relied upon fully. He is “true” (genuine, trustworthy). He makes right judgements—every time. He is truly unique.
- **N.B.** “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood”^{v.13} (the blood of his enemies OR the blood of the Lamb?). Almost certainly *his* blood since it is on him *before* the battle with his enemies. So even when the warrior aspect of Christ is presented, he makes sure we never lose sight of him as the “Lamb” slain for us on the cross (recall Rev. 5⁶). That is where the victory was won and why “the final battle”, as we shall see, is no contest.

2) The Great **Supper** for Scavengers (cf. Ezek. 39¹⁷⁻²⁰ for the stock image)

- What do these contemporary images convey to you (sharks, vultures)?
 - The dinner invitation to the scavengers spells doom for the enemy...
 - Cf. Deliberate contrast to the “wedding supper of the Lamb”—v.9

3) The Great **Victory** (vv.19-21)

- The battle is not described, only the outcome is reported. All the foes of Christ and his church lie dead on the battlefields of history. Their formidable powers and vast numbers are useless. The battle is won before it begins because it was already won on the cross (Col. 2¹⁴⁻¹⁵).
- What we have is a vivid visual imprint of the Empire’s utter ruin (a place of fire, but also a place of darkness, both pointing to terrible realities), and Christ’s *complete* victory (cf. the end to the last battle at the Exodus—14²⁷⁻²⁸)
- Song of summary & response = “The Hallelujah Chorus”

C) A Taste of **Heaven** (20¹⁻⁶)

- ### 1) Three Views of the Millennium – we come now to the portion of Revelation that has generated more speculation than any other that of the millennium (i.e. the “thousand year” period). This is the *only place in the*

entire Bible that speaks of the millennium, yet whole systems of biblical theology have been built around it. Imagine that! **SLIDE** **SLIDE**

What is it? – A time when Satan is “bound” with “a great chain” & “imprisoned” in maximum security with no chance of parole for a thousand years—what a relief! He is released for a short time and then defeated and exterminated once and for all.

When is it? – **Post-millennialists** **SLIDE** believe that Jesus comes again, or “breaks through,” *after* the millennium (i.e. there will be a golden age of Christianization before Christ returns). **Pre-millennialists** **SLIDE** believe the millennium lies in the future and will begin when Christ returns to usher in an exact 1000 year period of heaven on earth (rapture + second coming??).

A-millennialists **SLIDE** believe that the binding of Satan took place at the first coming of Christ and that the whole period between the cross and the second coming is the “millennium” (spiritual reign in which the gospel frees people).

- **OLDEST** = a-mil (Augustine^{4th Century}; Calvin^{16th})...pre-mil = late 18th C.
- **Most CONFIDENCE** in the transforming power of the gospel = post-mil...
- **Most ZEALOUS** for the Lord’s return = pre-mil
- **Most books & movies** (e.g. “Left Behind”) = pre-mil

I want to be as confident in the cross as tide turning event of history as the a-mils, as zealous for the Lord’s return as many pre-mils, and as confident in the transforming power of the gospel as the post-mils. What they all agree on is: (a) Jesus is coming back, (b) we don’t know when, so (c) be ready!

2) The Purpose(s) of the Millennium (i.e. Why is it here?)

- **Why** – God’s purpose is “to keep [Satan] from deceiving⁶ the nations” for a very, very long time (he seduced them morally^{2:20}, blinded them spiritually^{13:14}, deceived them politically^{12:9}, and led them astray economically^{18:23} & militarily^{19:20}).

⁶ πλανᾶω = “lead astray” (Rev. 18²³; cf. of sheep—Mt. 18¹²), “seduce” (of Jezebel—Rev. 2²⁰), “deceive” (of Satan—Rev. 12⁹; 13¹⁴), “deluded”—19²⁰)

Imagine what it would be like to have the scales removed from our eyes morally (to see the wisdom of God's rules), spiritually (to see the true greatness & uniqueness of Christ), politically (to choose & follow people with honesty and integrity), economically (untainted by greed), and militarily (to make war obsolete—Is.9⁵).

It would be a taste of heaven. **SLIDE** And having been able to taste and savor that, you would think it would instill in people a deep hunger & thirst for God and his ways, and great displeasure at any cheap substitutes (e.g. fresh East Coast mussels). But jumping ahead to vv. 7-10 we see that's not what happens. The grim reality, as commentator Robert Mounce notes, is that "a thousand years of confinement does not alter Satan's plans, nor does a thousand years of freedom from the influence of wickedness change [people's] tendency to rebel against [their] creator."

While God's grand thousand year experiment is going on, the martyrs are given a taste of what Christ had promised to the faithful believers back in 3²¹ ("To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.") It's God's plan, their taste and experience of heaven can't wait. John calls theirs "the first resurrection" and declares that "those who have part in [it]" are "blessed" and immune to "the second death".

3) A Taste of Hell (20⁷⁻¹⁵) **SLIDE**

John will further define and illustrate this "second death"^{v.6} in the verses that follow—v.14 = the definition... "the lake of fire"; illustrated as the place of eternal torment^{v.10} and utter ruin reserved for that infamous trinity of evil (the beast, the false prophet, and the devil—v.10).

At some point this thousand year experiment or foretaste of heaven (for the righteous) and hell (for the wicked) is brought to an end. For "a short time" Satan is released on parole which he blows big time by picking up right where he left off (deceiving the whole world into an all-out war). It confirms beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is utterly wicked and beyond rehabilitation (no surprise). But what I find most shocking and disturbing is how those who have tasted heaven so

fully, are so unchanged by it (i.e. all people need are the right social conditions to be good, or the right education, or the right influences = a MYTH; cf. Essay contest on “What is the problem with the world today?” “I am” – G.K. Chesterton. The heart of the problem is the human heart—Jer. 17⁹⁻¹⁰).

So whenever we sense God convicting us of sin or convincing us of the truth we need to act on it with our whole heart because we will become more alive to God (or more dead to him) by the responses (or lack of them) that we make to our God given moments of spiritual sensitivity and sanity.

Implications

- 1) God’s Dream is a full restored creation...The whole gospel will cause us to pray and work for “Thy Kingdom to Come” in all its fullness and to thank God whenever and wherever we see his kingdom break into the present.
- 2) God’s Desire is for his people to savor & celebrate who He is and what he has done. Ps. 34⁸ “Taste and see that the Lord is good....”
- 3) Our Daily Decisions determine our destiny. Notice in verses 12 & 13 each person “was judged according to what they had done” (cf. Ps. 62¹²; Jer. 17¹⁰; Rom. 2⁶; 1 Pet. 1¹⁷). “The issue is not salvation by works but works as the irrefutable evidence of a [person’s] actual relationship with God. [People] are saved by faith, but faith is inevitably revealed by the works it produces.”⁷
 - What do my daily decisions indicate about my destiny?

PRAY

⁷ Robert Mounce, Revelation (NICNT), p. 366. See also James 2:14-26.