

The end of the world and final judgement of sin

At the end of Revelation 19:10 we have been brought (once again) to the end of the world and the final judgement of sin. Babylon is doomed^{□1} and the people of God are preparing for 'the marriage supper of the Lamb'^{□2}. Revelation 19:10 is the end of a section, and the end of history seems to be near.

□1 19:1-5
□2 19:6-10

• *A new section begins*

I have been arguing that there are eight occasions in the book of Revelation when the total scenery changes. This is the seventh. It is as if a curtain closes for a few moments. Then the curtain opens again and we are looking at something new altogether. ¹¹*I then saw heaven opened . . .*, says John. It is the same kind of language we had in 4:1. The vision of the destruction of Babylon is closed. Now a new section of the book of Revelation is about to be presented.

• *Seven visions*

As we continue reading after this 'raising of the curtain' we again find seven visions. 'I then saw heaven opened^{□1} . . . And I saw an angel^{□2} . . . And I saw the beast^{□3} . . . I saw an angel coming down out of heaven^{□4} . . . And I saw^{□5} . . . And I saw^{□6} . . . Then I saw^{□7} .

□1 19:11
□2 19:17
□3 19:19
□4 20:1
□5 20:4
□6 20:11
□7 21:1

• *A new angel and a new scene*

When we get to Revelation 21:9 there is again a new angel and a major transfer to a new scene. 'And there came one of seven angels . . . saying, "Come . . ."' This kind of language and a change of location have been the mark of the end of a major section and the beginning of another. All of this marks out 19:11–21:8 as a clear major unit of the total book of Revelation, again with seven minor units within it. The seven smaller units generally speak of some kind of spiritual conquest or spiritual victory. We may call the section 'Visions of Victory' and divide it as follows:

'Visions of Victory'

The Triumph of God – and Seven Visions of Victory^{□1}

- The glorious Lord Jesus Christ^{□2}
- The supper of God^{□3}
- Beast, kings and false prophet – all destroyed^{□4}
- Satan bound^{□5}
- Martyrs raised; Satan conquered^{□6}
- The final judgement^{□7}
- The new creation^{□8}.

□1 19:11-21:8
□2 19:11-16
□3 19:17-18
□4 19:19-21
□5 20:1-3
□6 20:4-10
□7 20:11-15
□8 21:1-8

• *Not a historical sequence*

In the light of what we have seen in the book of Revelation we must again note that this section is not to be thought of as following historically what has happened in the previous vision. There is no need to think that Babylon was destroyed and then later some of the other enemies of God were destroyed. Nor does the binding of Satan have to be a later event. The visions come one after another, but they are not necessarily fulfilled in historical sequence, one after the other in history. Rather what we have here is that in one vision after another Satan and his allies (or rather the allies of Satan and then Satan himself) are being conquered. This has been implied all the way through the book of Revelation!

• *In each vision the allies of Satan and then Satan himself are being conquered*

• *The book of Revelation is spiral*
• *Each vision gives us glimpses of events which will happen sooner or later in the church*

The book of Revelation is spiral or 'parallel' in structure. It goes over and over the same area. It goes round and round like a spiral staircase. The curtain opens and closes and opens again to give us revelations about the same gospel-age of human history. The visions are not historically successive; they give us one glimpse after another of things that will happen sooner or later in the story of the church. On the other hand, each section that arises as we go forward in the book does bring us nearer to the end of the story, just as a spiral staircase as well as going round and round also goes higher and higher! We are getting nearer to the 'glimpses of glory' at

• *Still looking at the same gospel-age*

• *New scenes – more of Christ's enemies are defeated*

Seven visions

(i) *Glorious Jesus*

(ii) *Vultures called to eat the bodies of God's enemies*

(iii) *Beast and false prophet are thrown into a lake of fire; other enemies killed by the rider*

(iv) *Satan is bound for a thousand years*

(v) *Martyrs raised from dead; Satan is thrown into the lake of fire*

(vi) *Last judgement and extermination of Death, Hades and the wicked; a new universe*

the end of the book.

From Revelation 17:1 onwards the emphasis has been upon the victory of the church and the defeat of Jesus' enemies. The previous section^{☐1} showed us that Babylon – the great prostitute – is to be defeated. Now in Revelation 19:11–21:8 we are still looking at the same church-age or gospel-age. But it shows us some new scenes in which some more of Christ's enemies are defeated. Let us try to look at it first as a total picture.

In Revelation 19:11 there is a change of scene. John again sees a vision of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ^{☐1}. In another small vision an angel is calling the vultures to come to the supper of God where their food will be the corpses of God's enemies^{☐2}. In a third vision the beast and the kings of the earth are wanting to make war against Jesus, the rider of the white horse^{☐3}, but the beast and his ally the false prophet are both thrown into the lake of fire for punishment and destruction^{☐4}. The rest of the enemies of God are killed by the rider on the white horse^{☐5}.

Then there is a fourth vision and the story goes on (or jumps back) to start considering how Satan is progressively destroyed. Before the time when Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet are to be found, there is an earlier stage when Satan is bound for a thousand years^{☐1}.

In a fifth vision martyrs are seen raised from the dead^{☐1}. Then after the thousand years Satan goes out to make war against the saints^{☐2}, but he is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire also^{☐3}. If the war against Jesus in 19:19 and the war against Jesus in 20:7–9 are the same war, then 20:1–6 has jumped back to give a run-up to the same point when beast-and-prophet-and-Satan are destroyed.

Then in 20:11–15 we have the sixth vision, revealing the last judgement and the extermination of Death and Hades and of the wicked. It is followed by the seventh vision, the introduction of the new universe^{☐1}. The entire section is intensely rich and controversial. Yet one thing is sure: in all of it Jesus is the great Overcomer.

☐1 17:1-19:10

☐1 19:11-16

☐2 19:17-18

☐3 19:19

☐4 19:20

☐5 19:21

☐1 20:1-3

☐1 20:4-6

☐2 20:7-9a

☐3 20:9b-10

☐1 21:1-8



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