Lesson 14: The Final Battle (Rev 19:1–20:15)

Warmer

Describe the most beautiful bride / wedding ceremony you have seen / attended.

Into the Word

Read Rev 19:1-10

We come now to scenes depicting the final victory of God over Satan and the forces of evil. After the ecstatic praise of God for his just punishment of the prostitute we are told that at last the time for the wedding supper of the Lamb has come. (Mounce, 345)

1. Who is the bride of Christ? Why must she be clothed in fine linen?

The bride is this joyous wedding is the church. She wears a wedding garment of fine linen (the righteous acts of the saints). (Mounce, 346) The metaphor of marriage as expressing the relationship between God and his people has its roots in the prophetic literature of the O.T. (cf. Hos 2:19; Isa 54:5-7)

The plural (“acts”) may indicate that the bride’s garment is woven of the innumerable acts of faithful obedience by those who endure to the end. This does not contradict Paul’s doctrine of justification based on the righteous obedience of Christ, but suggests that a transformed life is the proper response to the call of the heavenly bridegroom. (Mounce, 348)

In biblical times a marriage involved two major events, the betrothal and the wedding. Theses were normally separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered husband and wife. The wedding began with a procession to the bride’s house, which was followed by a return to the house by the groom for the marriage feast. (Mounce, 347)

Note that in vv. 7-9 the church is pictured both as the bride and as the guests who are invited to the wedding. Far from constituting a contradiction, this sort of freedom is a normal characteristic of apocalyptic writing. (Mounce, 348-349)

Read Rev 19:11-21

2. What are the descriptions that accompany the warrior-Messiah?

Faithful and True; judges and makes war with justice; eyes like blazing fire; many crowns on head; a name written on him that no one except he himself knows; His name is Word of God; rule with an iron scepter; on his robe & thigh is the name: treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God; King of kings and Lord of lords.

The imagery of a white horse with its rider reflects the Jewish tradition of a warrior Messiah, who would come forth in the last days to establish his kingdom over rival nations. The returning Christ is the warring Messiah. He is called “Faithful and True” and with justice he judges and makes war. God is faithful to his promises and will in due time vindicate the faith of all who place their confidence in him. (Mounce, 351-352)

His eyes are a flame of fire – nothing can be hidden from the penetrating gaze of the Messiah. Upon his heads are many crowns, which indicate unlimited sovereignty. Since he is King of kings, all authority is his. Regarding the name, the most common interpretation is that it is a secret name whose meaning is veiled from all created beings. It expresses the mystery of his person. (Mounce, 353)

To rule with an iron scepter means to destroy rather than to govern in a stem fashion. Once again we meet the stern reality of the “fierce anger of God”. (Mounce, 355) As much as God is a personal God who loves, the truth remains that he hates sin and he will judge those who sin.

The name “King of kings and Lord of lords” emphasizes the universal sovereignty of the warrior Christ in his eschatological triumph over all the enemies of God. (Mounce)
Lesson 14: The Final Battle

Lesson 14: The Final Battle
Revelation 19:1–20:15

3. How would you describe the supper of God?

Gory… Squeamish… bloodthirsty picture… barbaric…

The supper of God presents a grim contrast to the wedding feast of the Lamb. It is the supper of God in the sense that God will provide it. Their bodies will lie on the field of battle to be devoured by birds of prey. To remain unburied for the pleasure of the predators was considered by the ancients to be a humiliating fate. The scene is one of universal dishonor and destruction. (Mounce, 357)

4. What happens in the battle of Armageddon?

Interestingly, there is no description of the actual warfare (which we the readers are reminded that the Apocalypse is dominated by metaphor and symbol). The beast and false prophet are seized and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The beast is the personification of secular power in its opposition to the church. The armies of Antichrist are killed with the sword that comes out of the mouth of Messiah. The sword is the proclamation of divine retribution that slays all who have in the final alignment of loyalties arrayed themselves against God and the forces of righteousness. (Mounce, 358-359)

The battle of Armageddon has arrived. The Seer is not describing the gradual conquest of evil in the spiritual struggles of the faithful, but a great historic event that brings to an end the Antichrist and his forces and ushers in the long-awaited era of righteousness. (Mounce, 358)

5. What happens during the first thousand years after the battle?

Satan is seized, bound and thrown into the Abyss for a thousand years. Souls of the martyrs came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Many discussions have taken place to interpret this segment of scripture in order to propose a particular view of the millennium. If we are to just look at the text plainly, it just says is that during a period designated as a thousand years Satan is bound and cast into the Abyss, which is then locked and sealed. The purpose of the confinement is not to punish him but to prevent him from deceiving the nations. (Mounce, 361-362)

During the first resurrection, those who have proven their loyalty to the Lord by not worshipping the beast, were brought to life to reign with Christ for a thousand years. The faithful, over whom death has no power, will serve as priests to God during the millennium. After the thousand years are over, the rest of the dead will come to life. With the binding of Satan, the stage is now set for the triumphal reign of the church victorious. (Mounce, 363-364)

6. What happens in the millennium that follows?

Satan will be released from the Abyss and will go out to deceive the nations again. Then the nations that have been gathered by Satan are devoured by fire from heaven. And the devil is cast into the lake of burning sulfur. Following this, the time has now come to judge the rest of the dead. The forces of Satan in this world will be destroyed, and he and his henchmen will burn forever in the lake of fire.

This vision closes forever the chapter on sin and stands ready to enter the eternal state of glory.

"Earth and heaven flee away" may be only poetic imagery expressing the fear of the consummable in the presence of God, although it may be understood more literally as the dissolution of the universe as we know it in preparation for the new heaven and new earth that will shortly appear. (Mounce, 375)

The great white throne judgment is not arbitrary but based on the evidence written by the life of every person. Books are opened, and the dead are judged on the basis of what they have done as recorded therein. (Please be reminded that the issue is not salvation by works but works as the irrefutable evidence of a person’s actual relationship with God.) In addition to the record of people’s deeds there is another book to be opened, the book of life. We are unsure the difference between these two books. (Mounce, 376-377)

NB: Hades denotes the place of all souls during the intermediate state. (Mounce, 377) On the other hand, the lake of fire indicates not only the stern punishment awaiting the enemies of righteousness but also their full and final defeat. (Mounce, 378)

Application

If you are allowed a peep into the books, how would you life be written?
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5. What happen during the first thousand years after the battle?

6. What happen in the millennium that follows?

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