



# *Revelation*

## *Cracking the Code*

or

## *Why you won't be left behind!*

Week 7

Scene 7 – The Drama *Behind* History

(Revelation 19:11 – 21:8)

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## *Looking back to Scenes 5 & 6*

- ❖ Scene 5 – Punishment for the World
  - The wrath of God was behind the veil in the temple. Seven angels came out bearing the bowls of wrath
  - Seven bowls of wrath were poured out upon the world!
  - But finally . . . That was the end of it!
- ❖ Scene 6 – Babylon the Whore
  - This scene was organized around seven “words”: seven times John heard and saw
  - We met the Great Whore, Babylon, who rode the beast.
  - Babylon fell – was judged and then mourned.
- ❖ The Great Hallelujahs and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and his Bride

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## *What will we see in Scene 7?*

- ❖ Seven visions of the drama behind history
  - See these as visions of the ultimate reality
  - This is the real, the ultimate, struggle – Rome and Babylon and other earthly struggles only point us to this drama.
- ❖ Key things to look for:
  - Jesus on the white horse leading God's armies to victory
    - Who does the fighting?
    - What weapons are used?
  - The millennial reign of Christ
  - The book of life and the second death
  - The new heavens and the new earth

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## *Handling Scripture Well (from Richard Hays)*

- ❖ The Descriptive Task
  - Reading the text carefully (exegesis)
- ❖ The Synthetic Task
  - Placing the text in canonical context
- ❖ The Hermeneutical Task
  - Relating the text to our situation
- ❖ The Pragmatic Task
  - Living the text

**cyclical and overlapping**

*What it meant or What it means?*

*Revelation: Pictures or Propositions?*

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## *Christ the Warrior (19:11-16)*

- ❖ Heaven opens and from it emerges a rider on a white horse – bringing righteous judgment (see Isaiah 11)
  - As in 1:14, a sword is in Christ’s mouth. Where a sword would normally be carried, on the thigh, is inscribed “King of kings and Lord of lords.” As in 3:14, he is “faithful and true.”
  - He keeps one name secret, but is identified as the Word of God.
- ❖ Jesus’ rides forth as the Lion of Judah, but wears a robe dipped in the blood of the Lamb. (See Isaiah 63:4)
  - Christ can confront the nations because he has suffered for the nations.
- ❖ Those who ride with Christ are the “called and chosen and faithful” (17:14). They have been purified and are dressed in white. Nonetheless, there is still a battle to be waged!

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## *Victory over the Beast and its Allies (19:17-21)*

- ❖ An angel calls the birds of mid-heaven to the supper of God!
  - We think that perhaps this is a call to the marriage supper of v. 9. It is not. Instead, vultures are called to feast on the rotting flesh of those who oppose God.
- ❖ The battle ensues – but we get no “CNN” play-by-play. We simply get the outcome. Jesus wins. The beast and the false prophet are tossed into the lake of fire and the rest of Satan’s forces are killed.
- ❖ In all this depiction, there are two questions.
  - What is the only weapon? Jesus’ sword – the “word of truth” (Hebrews 4:12)
  - Where is our attention drawn? Not to the battle, but to the person of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Many of us are repulsed by images such as these. We want the scene to play out differently. We would like the Lamb and the beast to reconcile, to embrace and let bygones be bygones. But Jesus does not placate sin and evil. There is no cease-fire. Jesus defeats them. These images force us to remove any rose-colored glasses we happen to wear. (from Koester)
  - ?? Could Satan yet be forgiven ??

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## *The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)*

- ❖ We've had two contrasting pictures
  - The marriage supper of the Lamb
  - The feast of the vultures
  - These are contrasting images of promise and warning. We are to heed both! If all this gets to be too much, turn back to 5:14-19 & 7:9-10 where all the nations offer glory to God.
- ❖ Now, an angel comes down from heaven and tosses Satan back into the bottomless pit. Satan will be kept there, bound, for 1000 years.
  - Where is the entrance to the bottomless pit? What do we make of this 1000 years? (see 2 Peter 3:8-10)
  - Why is Satan simply not finished off? What could be accomplished by his temporary confinement?

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## *The Reign of the Saints (20:4-6)*

- ❖ The 1000 year reign of the saints with Jesus
  - Here, John makes no use of all the OT imagery about the Kingdom of God! Later, when describing the New Jerusalem, John will make lavish use of the OT – *but not here.*
- ❖ Who is it that comes to life and reigns with Christ for 1000 years?
  - It is actually quite ambiguous, which can be seen in the most literal translations. Is it the 24 elders & the martyrs & all faithful – or only the martyrs – or only the 24 and the martyrs
  - The Jewish resurrection has already been split in two by the Christians – first Jesus and then the rest. Does John intend to create another “stage”? Regardless, by the end, all are raised.
- ❖ Will the martyrs judge? This is also not clear. John doesn't say.
- ❖ Where are the saints? In heaven or on earth? The only real answer we get is relational – they are “with Christ.”
- ❖ Pre-, post-, and a-millennialists (see Metzger p. 94-95)

**This section cries out for humility in interpretation!!**

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## *Victory over Satan (20:7-9)*

- ❖ Satan is released – by whom and why we aren't told.
  - He is not repentant: like Robert Tilton he keeps returning to his old ways! God is relentless in his pursuit of his people; Satan is relentless in his opposition to God.
  - Don't you wonder how any nations could follow him at this point?!
- ❖ Satan gathers new armies who surround "the camp of the saints and the beloved city."
- ❖ But fire from heaven consumes Satan and his armies in their final defeat. Satan is tossed into the lake of fire alongside the beast and the false prophet.
- ❖ John's vision is largely the fulfillment of Ezekiel's visions (38 & 39) but re-sequenced.
  - Yes, God will protect his people and defeat his adversaries – but the chronology of events matters little.

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## *Resurrection & Last Judgment*

- ❖ Regardless of what we make of John's staged resurrection, in the end all people are resurrected. Everyone, including Jesus, suffers the first death. Who will suffer the second?
- ❖ **Everyone** is now confronted with two books: the book of merit & the book of grace
  - What we do matters! It has ultimate consequences. Free will and responsibility are foundational to what it means to be made in the image of God!
- ❖ Fortunately for us all, God's final decision is based on what he finds in the book of grace; i.e., the book of life.
- ❖ Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life suffers the second death. They are tossed into the lake of fire – along with Death and Hades.
  - The fact that "Death" is tossed into the lake ought to prepare us for the truth that the lake is not literal, but metaphorical.

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## *New Creation!!*

- ❖ The coming of God's kingdom was always seen as the restoration of creation. Isaiah speaks of the "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17)
  - When humans first turned from God in the Garden, it damaged their relationship with God and it damaged God's creation. Thus, Paul speaks of all creation awaiting its own redemption (Romans 8:21).
- ❖ Now, John sees the new earth and the new heavens – the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven
  - This is all very physical – though John's images are not literal!
  - This is a time of great comfort – all the powers that have opposed God and God's ways are gone. Even death is gone.
  - The one on the throne is making all things new! He offers the thirsty the water of life. Who is the water of life (John 4:13-14)?
  - But lest we forget where we have been, we are reminded that God's new city is meant for the faithful and will not be enjoyed by those who have opposed God.

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## *Next Week – Scene 8*

- ❖ New Creation
- ❖ The Holy City and the Holy People
  - Koester calls it a "Tale of Two Cities," contrasting Babylon and the New Jerusalem!
  - There is no temple! Why?
  - Restoration of relationship!
- ❖ Glory to God and the Lamb
- ❖ The End is Near!
  - The warnings continue to the end.
  - Our time and God's time.
- ❖ A few reflections on our journey
  - What does this book mean for us?

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