

## INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 19

### 1 THE THEME

### 2 THE STRUCTURE

- a. The structure of chapter 19
- b. The structure of section 6 and section 7

### 3 THE CONTENTS

- a. The celebration of victory in heaven after the second coming (19:1-10)
- b. The final battle on earth at the second coming (19:11-21)
- c. The message of Revelation chapter 19

### 4 THE BACKGROUND

- a. The marriage institution in the Bible
- b. The final battle and the great supper of God (19:17-18)

## 1 THE THEME

### *THE CELEBRATION OF VICTORY IN HEAVEN AND THE FINAL BATTLE ON EARTH*

## 2 THE STRUCTURE

### a. The structure of chapter 19

Chapter 19 contains two visions, chronologically in reversed order.

In the first vision (19:1-10) John hears and sees what happens in heaven *immediately after Christ's second coming*. The angels rejoice at Christ's victory. They praise God that he has assumed the final kingship (the kingdom in its final phase). And they rejoice that the wedding of the Lamb has come.

In the second vision (19:11-21) John sees *the second coming of Christ*. Jesus Christ and his heavenly army come for the final battle to conquer all his opponents. Consequently he comes for the final resurrection of the dead, the final judgement and the final renewal of all things (20:11-15; chapter 21).

### b. The structure of section 6 and section 7

Section 6 of the book of Revelation (chapters 17 to 19) contain the beginning of the New Testament period, the long main period in which Satan's antichristian kingdoms reign throughout the whole New Testament period over non-Christians, the short period of final persecution, the end of the New Testament period and the eternal state in which the Lord God Almighty reigns in his eternal kingdom. See the introduction to section 6.

Also section 7 of the book of Revelation (chapters 20 to 22) contain the beginning of the New Testament period, the long main period in which Christ and his saints reign throughout the whole New Testament period over everyone and everything, the short period of final persecution, the end of the New Testament period and the eternal state in which God and his Christ reign forever on the new earth. See the introduction to section 7.

It is therefore very clear that chapter 19 of section 6 and chapter 20 of section 7 of chapter 20 do NOT follow one another in a linear-chronological way!

## 3 THE CONTENTS

Revelation 19:1-10 describes the celebration of victory in heaven and Revelation 19:11-21 describes the final battle on earth before the celebration of this victory.

### **a. The celebration of victory in heaven after the second coming (19:1-10)**

The angels in heaven rejoice over the fact that all opposition has been quenched forever. In their praise they express the justice of God's eternal punishment of the godless and wicked kingdom of the world with its antichristian, godless and wicked culture (19:1-3). Everyone in heaven agrees with this (19:4-5). All the believers exhort one another to joy because the wedding of the Lamb has come (19:6-8). The wedding of the Lamb is a picture of the Triumphant Church after Christ's second coming and about to take her place in the new heaven on the new earth (cf. 21:1-3,9-10).

### **b. The final battle on earth at the second coming (19:11-21)**

Jesus Christ is depicted as the King and Judge (19:11-16). At his second coming, he conquers all his opponents and executes the final judgement on them.

'The battle' is the final battle, the battle of Armageddon (19:17-21; cf. 16:14,16; 20:8). The final battle consists of two parts: the final attack of the antichristian powers against the Church (cf. 11:7-10; 16:14,16; 19:19; 20:8) and Christ's victory over them at his second coming unto the final judgement. In this battle the beast out of the sea (the final antichrist) and the beast out of the earth (the final false prophet)(19:20; cf. 20:10; Matthew 25:41) come to their final end.

This battle is NOT a preliminary triumph followed by other historical events (as the futurist view teaches), but THE final triumph in history!

The final battle described in Revelation 19:17-21 is exactly the same as the battle described in Revelation 20:7-10. Compare the victory over the beast and the false prophet in chapter 19 with the victory over Gog and Magog in chapter 20 by reading Ezekiel 39:1,17-20.

### **c. The message of Revelation chapter 19**

The message of Revelation chapter 19 is that Christ's second coming will be for the final conquering and judgement of all his enemies (the final judgement) and for his wedding with his bride (the final salvation). Christ is faithful and will carry out the judgement he threatened and the salvation he promised! He is fair and will execute the final judgement in absolute justice! He will completely remove from the earth every influence of Satan, whether persecutions (represented by the beast or antichrist), delusions (represented by the false prophet), or seductions (represented by the great prostitute, Babylon). All these will go to hell together with Satan (cf. 20:10; cf. Matthew 25:41) and they will never again appear anywhere outside of hell.

## **4 THE BACKGROUND**

### **a. The marriage institution in the Bible**

Marriage is God's idea and institution, not man's (Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).

In the history of salvation we read that marriage had the following four parts:

The betrothal. The betrothal was considered more binding than modern engagement. The terms of the marriage agreement (covenant) were accepted in the presence of witnesses. And God's blessing was pronounced on the marriage (Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:5-6). From the betrothal onwards the bridegroom and bride were regarded as *legally* married, as husband and wife (cf. Matthew 1:18; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

The Bible teaches that marriage is a covenant made between a man and a woman in the presence of God (Proverbs 2:17; Ezekiel 16:8; Malachi 2:14-15; Matthew 19:3-6). Christian marriage is a binding and life-long relationship.

The interval. The interval was the period of preparation between the betrothal and the wedding-feast. During this interval, the bridegroom paid the dowry to the father of the bride if this had not yet been done (Genesis 34:12). Sometimes the dowry was in the form of service rendered (Genesis 29:20).

Nevertheless, the payment of the dowry is not a command or teaching in the Bible, but a historical event that is not evaluated.

The procession. The bride prepared and adorned herself. The bridegroom clothed in his best attire and accompanied by his friends that sang and bore torches, went to the house of his betrothed. He received the bride and conveyed her in a returning procession to his own house or to the house of his parents.

This event is not commanded, taught or evaluated in the Bible.

The wedding-feast. The wedding-feast included the marriage supper. The festivities lasted seven to fourteen days (cf. Matthew 22:1f).

Also this event is not commanded, taught or evaluated in the Bible.

Before the foundation of this world, the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, already chose the bride, the Church (Ephesians 1:4-5). Throughout the entire Old Testament period, the wedding was announced (cf. Matthew 22:1-14). Throughout the Old Testament period and the New Testament period God has 'effectively called' (19:9) his bride. At his first coming Christ did not symbolically pay a dowry (consisting of money or possessions) for his bride, but paid with the incalculable price of his own precious blood on the cross (cf. 1 Peter 1:19). During the period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming Christ prepares his bride (Ephesians 5:25-27,32) and the bride prepares herself for her bridegroom (19:7; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2-3). In the eyes of God the whole New Testament period is but "a little while" (17:10; cf. 12:6).

At his second coming, Christ will receive his bride (1 Thessalonians 4:17; cf. Revelation 21:2) and the wedding-feast will begin. The wedding-feast will last throughout all eternity! The absolute completed salvation at the end of history is pictured as a wedding banquet (19:7; 21:2,9; cf. Matthew 8:11-12; 22:1ff; 25:1ff). This wedding picture points to the intimate and unbreakable relationship between Christ and Christians and to the highest and purest joy.

#### **b. The final battle and the great supper of God (19:17-18)**

In the Old Testament Christ spoke through the prophet Ezekiel (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12) and in the New Testament through the apostle John (Revelation 19:17-21) and said that all God's enemies would be slain in the battle of Gog and Magog (cf. 20:8).

God would drag these enemies from the far north beyond the Euphrates river to the mountains of Israel. The Euphrates river is not the literal river, but symbolic of the border between God's people and God's enemies. The mountains of Israel are not a literal geographic place, but symbolic of Jerusalem, the place where God's people live, cf. 20:9. God would strike their bows and arrows from their hands and slay their armies and the nations that joined them. The bows and arrows are not literal weapons, but symbolic of everything they use to oppose God's people and his Community. Then God would give them as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. These are not literal wild birds and animals, but symbolic of God's instruments of judgement. God will prepare and execute this great sacrifice. The mighty men of the earth together with their soldiers of every kind (Ezekiel 39:4,17-20) will be destroyed. The fact that Gog and Magog will be eaten by wild birds and wild animals is not intended literally, but is a sign of their deepest humiliation, scorn and rejection. This is the Old Testament description of the final battle in the history of this world.