

## CHAPTER 19

Chapter 18 pictured God's judgment of the great harlot and events that will bring an end to the powers of false religion on this earth. Therefore, the events described in chapter 18 will take place on earth before the second coming of Christ. Chapter 19 foretells the final outcome of the beast and false prophet. (See v. 20.) The false prophet is another symbol used to describe the same people as the great harlot. The "great harlot" symbolizes their spiritual fornication, and the "false prophet" symbolizes their desire to teach others to follow their ways of sin. A biblical definition of a false prophet is given in Second Peter chapter 2. The beast represents "the kings of the earth" (v. 19), which are those governmental powers that oppress the church and cause all types of persecutions and hardships. Therefore, chapter 19 is a picture of the final destruction of those who have persecuted God's people throughout the ages, either by civil or religious powers. They are symbolized in this chapter as the beast and the false prophet.

The chapter division is somewhat misleading because there is a gradual transition from the vision of the judgment of the great harlot in chapter 18 to the subject of chapter 19. The actual division between the two visions comes closer to being between verses 4 and 5 of chapter 19. Verse 4 could actually serve as the concluding verse of the judgment of the great harlot or as the introductory verse to

the vision of chapter 19. Therefore, the first three verses of this chapter are concluding comments concerning the judgment of the great harlot.

In order to properly interpret chapter 19, the time frame of this vision must clearly be understood. As is the case with many of the visions in Revelation, information concerning this present Christian dispensation is given, and then we are taken into the final judgment. (Compare this with the outline of the seals, the trumpets, and the plagues.)

The purpose of this vision is twofold. First, it assures us that the church has been established. Then, it compares the destiny of the church to that of the beast and the false prophet. Because the church has been established, man has a way to avoid the plagues God will levy against the great harlot (18:4) and the final destruction of the beast and the false prophet (v. 20). Obviously, we avoid these plagues by following the teachings of our Lord and being numbered among his faithful.

Throughout the years, many in the church have believed and taught that Revelation dealt largely with our final eternal abode or heaven. When we come to understand that many of the symbols actually refer to the spiritual city of God, the church, Revelation will take on a much different meaning and have a more powerful message for Christians today. This should be a tremendous help to us as we endeavor to live the Christian life.

## HEAVEN REJOICES

**Verse 1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:**

After the vision of the complete destruction of the great city of Babylon, John hears many people in heaven giving praise and honor unto the Lord. This is representative of Christians giving glory unto God because he refused to allow these false religions that were persecuting them to stand. When this time of the downfall of the great harlot

arrives, God will have partially answered the question that was asked by Christians in 6:10. They asked, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" God will avenge the blood of saints by bringing total destruction upon the great harlot who was responsible for their deaths (18:24). This will be only partial judgment because, according to verse 20, the final judgment against the beast and false prophet will be eternal destruction in hell.

As Christians we must give God our praise and honor because of this judgment. Because we have obeyed him, he has given us salvation and will eventually destroy all those forces that have persecuted us.

**Verse 2. For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.**

God's judgments are true. The judgments that God has rendered against the great harlot will definitely take place. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind who believes the Bible that God will do those things which he has foretold. Many people today believe that since God is a God of love, he could not possibly punish man eternally in hell for deeds that were committed on earth. God is a God of love, but he is also a just God. Much of Revelation is devoted to the idea that saints are persecuted now, but eventually they will be free of those persecutions and those who persecuted them will be punished by God in eternal torment. In 6:11, after the saints had asked God when he would avenge their blood, he told them to rest for a little while until the brethren who were to come after them had suffered their persecutions. The indication is that God will definitely avenge the blood of saints. This should give Christians hope and strength to remain faithful through all kinds of trials.

God's judgments are righteous. Not only will God's judgments come to pass, they will be exactly right for the acts committed. God is a righteous judge, and he will

administer punishment to those who have disobeyed him in exactly the correct manner. Many times we as human beings are not capable of completely understanding the ways of God, and we must simply believe it because he has said it. For instance, the punishment that God will levy against sinners seems to be far greater than we as human beings might think appropriate. According to God, this is just punishment. In 18:6, speaking of the great harlot, God said, “Reward her even as she has rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.” This should be a great deterrent to anyone who might want to believe that God will not punish those who sin.

God states that he has judged the great harlot and has avenged the blood of the saints at her hand. In this vision, we are still at some period of time, possibly far off in the future, looking back at what has happened on earth. Chapter 18 described the judgment that God will direct against the great harlot in order to avenge the blood of saints. It is important to remember that this great harlot has already been “judged.” God has told us exactly what will happen to her. The only thing remaining is the fulfillment of that judgment.

**Verse 3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.**

The smoke of this great harlot, which rises up forever and ever, indicates the eternal nature of her destruction. This was pointed out in 18:21-23. Not only will this great harlot be completely destroyed from this earth, she will also be cast into eternal punishment where she will remain forever (v. 20).

Those people in heaven cried, “Alleluia.” This is the cry that all Christians should have as we read these chapters assuring us that those who persecute us will eventually have their measure of torment in hell. It should be the desire of every Christian to witness the destruction of those forces that cause people to be unfaithful to God.

**Verse 4. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.**

The twenty-four elders and the four beasts (living creatures) are those described in chapter 4. Information is given in the comments on that chapter concerning the identity of these twenty-four elders and four beasts. For the discussion here, let us summarize by saying that the twenty-four elders represent the spiritual part of man's being and the four beasts (living creatures) represent his physical part. The lesson of verse 4 is that all spiritual worship and all physical worship should be directed to the one and only true and living God. There is no other being to whom we should direct our spiritual worship; neither should we give our physical means or abilities to any other god. God is worthy of all man's worship, both spiritual and physical. Therefore, these twenty-four elders and four beasts show that we must praise God because he has judged the great harlot which persecuted the saints. Verse 4 is also a fitting introduction to the remainder of this chapter. It teaches that man may escape the plagues of the great harlot by following the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Verse 5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.**

This is a further admonition to those who are servants of God. We must praise God if we are to be acceptable to him. We should praise him because he has pronounced judgment on the great harlot, and we should praise him for providing a way for us to escape her punishment. All men are to praise God, both small and great. It does not matter to God whether a person is well known to the people of this earth or lives in relative obscurity (Rom. 2:11). What does count is: regardless of one's position in this world, he gives praise and honor to God.

**Verse 6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the**

**voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**

In order to correctly interpret the remainder of chapter 19, it is important to understand verse 6 correctly. Many believe that since we have just seen the destruction of the great harlot, this verse must take us into the time of Judgment. This chapter does take us into that time period but not until verse 17. This vision is constructed like many of the visions throughout Revelation. It takes us through the time of the Christian age and then into Judgment. As the vision changes from the destruction of the harlot to a description of the church, we are changing our viewpoint. In the vision of the destruction of the harlot, we were in the future looking backward at events that are yet to be fulfilled upon the earth. As the vision changes, we are again taken back through the Christian age. Events are described that will take place during the Christian age, and later in this vision, we are shown some of the events that will occur during the time of Judgment.

We know the time period being dealt with here is the Christian age because of the statement, “for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Christ is reigning today on his throne in heaven. Christians need to have this concept clearly in mind, especially in view of the teachings of many religious organizations today. They believe Christ’s reign will be for one thousand years after his second coming. Christ’s reign began when he ascended to heaven to sit on his throne at God’s right hand. (See Lk. 1:31-33; Rom 15:12; Heb. 1:1-8.) A king reigns as he sits on his throne ruling over his kingdom. Today, Jesus is King of kings. He is sitting on his throne in heaven and ruling over his spiritual kingdom, which is the church.

Acts 2:29-35 gives the account of Jesus being exalted to his throne at God’s right hand. He is compared to David who sat on his throne as king ruling over the children of Israel. Jesus now sits on his throne in heaven ruling over God’s children who make up the church – his kingdom. Therefore, the voice of the great multitude crying, “Alleluia,” represents the voice of Christians proclaiming

that our Lord now reigns. If Jesus had not yet ascended to his throne in heaven, there would be no forgiveness of sins because the law of Moses could not forgive sins (Heb. 10:3-4). Christians must proclaim the glad tidings that Jesus has risen to his throne and has made forgiveness of sins possible for all men.

The voice of the great multitude is described as many waters and mighty thunderings. Just as the “waters of life” represent the words of God (Jn. 4:14), the waters that flow from the mouths of Christians are their proclamations and teachings about Jesus and his gospel. Let us make sure we proclaim “many waters.” These voices are described as thunderings because of their importance. Thunder is used by God to announce events of great importance. (See Ex. 19:16.) Nothing on earth is more important than the proclamation of the Word of God. Verse 6 is teaching that Christians are to continually give thanks and proclaim the mighty truth that Jesus has risen to his throne and is reigning over the church today.

As a sidelight to this verse, this understanding of the reign of Christ also makes it possible to understand the meaning of the “thousand years” of chapter 20. In 20:4, the saints are described as reigning with Christ for one thousand years. Rev. 5:10 says we shall reign upon the earth. Since Christ is reigning in heaven today and Christians are reigning with him upon the earth, then we must be in the thousand-year period.

**Verse 7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.**

The church is the bride of Christ. Rom. 7:4 states, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” We are married to him who was raised from the dead – Christ. Because we are married to him, we will bring forth fruit unto God. The marriage of the Lamb and his wife (the church) has already

taken place. The gospel of Christ has been given, and his church has been established. When we become members of that church, we are married to Christ.

We are reminded to be glad, rejoice, and give honor unto him because the church has been established. All men now have the opportunity to become part of that church and receive forgiveness of his sins. This is in contrast to the law of Moses, which was given exclusively to the Jewish nation. There were no provisions in that law to take away the sins of the people. The establishment of the new law gave us cause to rejoice and be glad because we now have forgiveness of our sins immediately available by becoming members of Christ's church. This brings us in contact with his blood. (See Rom. 6:3-4.) By establishing the church, Christ gave us a new and better law that made forgiveness of sins directly available to all men through him. (See Heb. 8:6-13.) The children of Israel did not have this. Only the priests were allowed to enter the tabernacle to offer sacrifices for sins on behalf of the people. All Christians are priests of God today (1:6). Let us be glad and rejoice!

It is also stated that the wife hath made herself ready. The church has been established and is prepared to be taken to heaven to be with Christ for all eternity. We do not know when this will happen, but we know that the church is married to Christ. Membership in the church is available to anyone who is willing to be obedient to the law of Christ. When men obey the law of Christ, they become members of his church and put on the white robes of righteousness (v. 8). By putting on these white robes, the wife makes herself ready to meet her husband when he returns.

## **THE MARRIAGE FEAST**

In order to have a complete understanding of this passage, we must first discuss the Jewish customs of marriage and also the parable of the wedding feast found in Mt. 22:1-14.

Coffman has an excellent section concerning the "Marriage Metaphor."<sup>1</sup> Concerning the symbolic language



used in this vision, he writes,

It is exceedingly important to remember that the Jewish customs of marriage are those prominent in all of these usages. The betrothal, which often took place as much as a year before the actual marriage, was fully equivalent legally to the marriage itself; during this period of waiting, the bridegroom was absent preparing a place for the bride (as in John 14:1-13), and any infidelity upon her part was considered as adultery; then came the great day of the marriage supper when the bridegroom and the bride began to live together... "The marriage supper," here, comes after the long period of waiting is over, and the bride and the bridegroom are taking up life together.<sup>2</sup>

This makes it clear that the church today is in that waiting period. The church is married to Christ, but he is away preparing a place for them to live together eternally. When he returns for her at his second coming, she will have made herself ready by being arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, and will partake of the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (v.9). Then, those in his church will dwell with him eternally in that place he has prepared.

Another good comparison to this symbolic metaphor is the parable of the wedding feast in Mt. 22:1-14. It is not our purpose to explain the entire meaning of this parable. We only want to make some major comparisons that applies to the symbolism being used in this passage in Revelation. In Mt. 22:2-10, the king is bidding many to "come unto the marriage." (See Mt. 22:4, 9.) This is taking place today as the gospel is being taught. All men are being asked to come to the marriage, which means to come into the church. Mt. 22:11 says, "The king came in to see the guests." This is a comparison to God sending our King (Jesus Christ) the second time. Also, in Mt. 22:11-12 when he came in, he looked at his guests to make sure they had on a wedding garment. This would be the same as the fine linen, clean and white, of verse 8. Only those who had on the wedding garment were allowed to partake of the marriage feast (Mt. 22:12-13). All others were cast into outer darkness (Mt. 22:13). As men today accept the invitation to come to the

marriage, they are accepting the invitation of the gospel to come into the church. When they obey the gospel, they are given a symbolic wedding garment, which is the white robe of righteousness. This indicates that their sins have been forgiven and that they are spotless in the sight of God. (See Eph. 5:25-27.) Christians also have the responsibility to keep their garments white. In the account of the church in Sardis (3:1-6), there were evidently many who had defiled their garments because he says in 3:4 that there were a “few” names in Sardis which had not “defiled their garments.” To keep our garments undefiled means to continue to walk in the ways of righteousness. Also, in 3:18, the Laodiceans, who thought they were something but were actually nothing, were told to purchase “white raiment” in order to be clothed. To purchase white raiment is to purchase forgiveness of sins. If we keep our garments white (Mt. 22:11), we will be able to partake of the wedding feast when our king returns. All others will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 22:13).

This is also in full agreement with the interpretation of the term “overcometh,” which is used at the conclusion of each of the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. Rev. 3:5 states, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” According to 1Jn. 5:4-5, to “overcome” is to be “born of God” or to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Both statements refer to the same event, which is rendering obedience to the gospel of Christ and being added to the church by our Lord (Acts 2:47). (Refer to the section on “overcoming” in the introduction of chapter 2.) When one overcomes this world of sin and is added to the church, he figuratively puts on the white robe of righteousness by having his sins forgiven. (Also see Isa. 61:10.)

This particular concept is of utmost importance in being able to correctly interpret many passages in Revelation. It is not within the scope of this book to make comparisons of all passages relating to this subject; therefore, we urge you to make that study on your own. If we could, we would

“guarantee” that it will benefit you greatly in your study of Revelation.

**Verse 8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.**

From the previous discussion, it should be clear that verse 8 refers to Christians as they wear their white robes of righteousness in the church today. We are specifically told what the white robes represent in this verse. They represent the “righteousness of saints.” The mistake many make in interpreting verse 8 is that they apply this strictly to heaven. Obviously, in heaven the saints will wear white robes of righteousness, but the point which is missed is that we receive those white robes here on earth when we obey the gospel. Rev. 16:15 admonishes Christians to keep their garments. We, obviously, cannot “keep” something we do not already have. These white robes demonstrate the difference between people in the world who live in sin and those who have forgiveness of sins in the church.

The color white is always used symbolically to represent purity, cleanliness, sinlessness, or holiness. The following are some references that should help us understand the meaning of wearing white garments.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:  
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white  
as snow; ... (Isa. 1:18).

...wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow (Ps. 51:7).

Many shall be purified, and made white, ... (Dan. 12:10).

And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; ... (Mk. 9:3).

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have

not defiled their garments; ... (Rev. 3:4).

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; ... (Rev. 3:5).

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;... (Rev. 3:18).

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14b).

When one obeys the gospel, he puts on the white raiment of righteousness. This means he is living in a state of righteousness on this earth. This is possible because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from our sins (1Jn. 1:7). This does not mean that Christians cannot sin or do those things which fall short of God's will. It means that we are his children, and he will forgive us of those shortcomings as long as we continue to strive to follow his commands. (See 1Jn. 1:7.)

In the parable of the "wedding feast" (Mt. 22:1-14), their wedding garments are comparable to our white robes of righteousness. We must strive to keep our white robes clean and unspotted because when God sends his Son to earth the second time, these white robes will make it possible for us to partake of the great wedding feast, which is eternity in heaven.

**Verse 9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.**

As men hear the gospel of Christ, they are being invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The meaning of the marriage supper can be derived from the parable of the wedding feast of Mt. 22:1-14. Mt. 22:10 states, "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together

all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.” Those wedding guests are those people from all walks of life who have heard the invitation of the gospel and have answered its call. They have come unto the marriage (Mt. 22:4). They are the bride of Christ. They are awaiting the return of the bridegroom to live in the place he has prepared for his bride. (See comments concerning the marriage feast at the end of v. 7.) In this parable, we never observe the actual eating of the supper. It is logical to assume that this took place after the king came in to see his guests (Mt. 22:13). This represents the time when the king will divide those who are faithful from those who are not (Mt. 22:12-13). We know this will take place at Judgment. Therefore, this marriage feast must represent the final feast for all Christians, which will be our eternal life in heaven.

This is also in agreement with the teachings in the parable of the great supper as recorded in Lk. 14:16-24. In this parable the Lord sent his servants out into the “highways and hedges” to compel any who would come into his house to eat the great supper he had prepared. In Lk. 14:22-23, many had been invited but there was still room available, so the lord sent the servant out once again in order to fill the house. Those people who accepted the invitation to the great supper represent those who accept the invitation of the gospel, become Christians, and enter into the house of the Lord – his church. Verse 24 states for certain that those who were bidden to come but refused will not partake of the great supper. We also know that only those who are in Christ, or in his church, will receive the inheritance he has prepared for us (Eph. 1:11). The requirement for partaking of the great supper was to come into the house, and the requirement for receiving the inheritance of God is to enter into his house – the church. This enables us to conclude with a great deal of certainty that the marriage supper of the Lamb is referring to the final reward which those will receive who are faithful to him. The concept that must be kept firmly in mind is that the invitation to this marriage supper represents the

invitation of the gospel to come into the Lord's house. Those who accept this invitation are of all men most blessed.

**Verse 10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

John falls down at the feet of the angel who has shown him this vision and begins to worship him. This must be the angel introduced in 17:1 who took John to see the vision of the great harlot. From that point forward, we have been introduced to several angels, but they were all part of the vision that John was seeing. It actually makes little or no difference exactly which angel John began to worship because the point of verse 10 is to show that we are to worship no one except God, not even another heavenly being. Worship to God must also include Jesus Christ because he has ascended to heaven to sit on his throne at God's right hand. The central idea of chapter 5 is to show that Jesus died for our sins and is worthy of our praise and honor (5:12-14).

If men are not allowed to worship another heavenly being, then certainly we should not worship another man or some image created by man. Neither should we worship dead saints who have passed on before us. The only being that we should worship is God.

The angel informed John that he, too, was a servant of God, along with John and his brethren who had the testimony of Jesus Christ. The ASV states this part of the verse in this manner, "See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Concerning this, Coffman comments, "'They that hold the testimony of Jesus,' as used here, is a reference to the Twelve Apostles."<sup>3</sup> Possibly this is correct, but the "spirit of prophecy" refers to the ability to teach God's Word. (See 10:11.) Therefore, any

Christian who teaches the Word has this “spirit of prophecy.” This verse also says that this “spirit of prophecy” is the testimony of Jesus. Any Christian who teaches God’s Word is testifying to the fact that Jesus lived and is the Savior of all men who obey him.

## **CHRIST ON A WHITE HORSE**

**Verse 11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.**

John looked and saw heaven open. This marks the beginning of a new vision with its subject being a rider upon a white horse. We know this rider is Jesus Christ because verse 16 identifies him as King of kings and Lord of lords. The vision presents a symbolic explanation of how Jesus Christ spreads the gospel throughout the world during the Christian dispensation. One common mistake in interpreting this vision is to consider this a description of events that will occur in heaven. The vision has nothing to do with our eternal abode in heaven, other than the fact that those who are dressed in white and follow Christ as he rides the white horse will be the ones who will eventually enter heaven. (See v. 14.) We believe that as you study verses 11 through 16, it will become clear that the subject of this vision is the spreading of the gospel by teaching the Word throughout the world today.

In 6:2 the first of the seven seals introduces a rider upon a white horse. Some commentators go to great lengths trying to prove that these passages are not dealing with the same subject. We find absolutely no reason to believe they are different. They both use the symbol of the white horse. In 6:2 the rider goes forth “conquering, and to conquer,” and this verse says that “in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” The passages are parallel. They both describe the spreading of the gospel throughout the world. (See comments on 6:2.)

The rider of this horse is called Faithful and True. In 3:14

Christ is referred to as the faithful and true witness. In 1:5 he is also called “the faithful witness.” When Christ came to earth and carried out his Father’s will, he was the faithful and true witness of God. He did the will of his Father in heaven. For us to be faithful and true witnesses of Jesus Christ, we must keep his commandments.

In righteousness Christ does judge and make war. According to Jn. 12:48, the world will be judged by the Word. It is no secret what the judgment of this world is. We have already received it in the written Word. All we have to do in order to know the fate of those who are disobedient to God is read the Bible. God’s judgments have already been given. The only thing left is the final sentencing. (See comments on 15:4.)

The war spoken of here is a spiritual war. Christians do not declare physical war on those who refuse to obey the gospel. We do not gather armies to literally destroy dens of sin and iniquity. We war against evil by teaching the gospel. This is exactly how Christ desires it to be done. In verse 15 Christ is described as having a sharp sword in his mouth, which he uses to smite the nations. The sharp sword is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). As we teach the Word of God around the world today, we smite evil in every nation with this great sword. This is exactly what Christ meant when he said, ‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword’ (Mt. 10:34). As Christians preach and teach God’s Word, Christ is figuratively going forth throughout the world on a white horse making war against the forces of evil.

**Verse 12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.**

“His eyes were as a flame of fire” is a repeat of the description of Jesus in 1:14. Fire symbolically represents the consuming nature of God (Deut. 4:24). He goes forth in the world today making war against evil, and nothing escapes his sight. He knows the acts of every individual whether they are for him or against him. (See 1:14 for more



discussion of this symbol.)

On Christ's head were many crowns. This symbolizes the power and authority of Christ. He wore many crowns, diadems (ASV), to show that his authority is greater than any earthly king.

Christ had a name written upon his head "that no man knew, but he himself." These words have been explained in many ways, and many guesses have been made about the identity of this name. Searching for the actual name that was written in his head has nothing to do with the proper interpretation of this phrase. We know who rides the white horse: It is Christ!

The point of this statement is that no man could wear this name – only Jesus. Jesus came to earth and fashioned himself in the form of a man (Phil. 2:8). He lived a sinless life and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 5:8,9). Only Jesus could wear this name because he is the only one who could, and did, shed his blood to atone for our sins.

**Verse 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.**

Christ being clothed with a vesture dipped in blood is an obvious reference to his crucifixion and death. All of these descriptions in verses 11 through 16 are designed to identify the rider of the white horse as Christ.

His name is called the Word of God. Jn. 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jn. 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Jesus has always been with God. He came to earth in the form of a man and gave his life in order that we might have forgiveness of sins. While he was on earth, he spoke the commandments that God gave him, and if we obey those commandments, they will enable us to have life everlasting. (See Jn. 12:49, 50.)

**Verse 14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.**

The armies who are following Christ upon white horses and dressed in clean white linen can only be Christians. Verse 8 says that fine linen is the righteousness of saints. The saints, or Christians, are those who have obeyed the gospel and are “following” Christ. Christians are going forth throughout the world, with Christ as our leader, teaching the gospel and making war against the evil ways of mankind.

There are two reasons why some might not understand these followers on white horses to be Christians. First, they do not understand that Christians put on their white robes of righteousness when they obey the gospel and receive forgiveness of their sins. Second, this verse says these armies were in “heaven.”

There are two logical explanations why these armies are in heaven; both fit the interpretation presented and possibly both meanings are intended. (1) John saw these armies in heaven just as he did all the visions, but their symbolic meaning is applied to Christians on earth. The armies following Christ in heaven on white horses represent Christians following Christ by obeying his Word on this earth. (2) The term “heaven” itself can have a symbolic meaning. Eph. 2:6 states, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” These heavenly places must refer to the church because when we are “in Christ,” we are in his church (Gal. 3:27). Therefore, if heaven is intended to be symbolic in this verse, it would refer to the church. The armies would then be those in the church who follow Christ. We also know the church is definitely being described because Christians make up the church, and they are the ones clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

As Christians, let us make sure we are in Christ’s army fighting the spiritual forces of evil.

**Verse 15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

A sharp sword is pictured as coming out of the mouth of our Lord. Since it comes from his mouth, it must represent the words that he speaks. We have the spoken word of Jesus in written form constantly at our disposal. We have the sword of Christ – the Bible (Eph. 6:17).

Christ uses this sword to smite the nations of this world. This is similar to the statement in verse 11, which says he will make war. The meanings must be similar. (See comments on v. 11.) This statement is also similar to 11:6. In that passage the saints (witnesses) use the Word of God to smite the earth with all plagues. (Also see comments on that verse.) As Christians, we must realize that the hearing of the gospel is not a pleasant thing to those who refuse to obey it because it condemns them.

Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron. This statement is also made in 2:27 and 12:5. The rod of iron represents the almighty power of Christ. (See Ps. 2:9.) We know that the gospel is the power of God (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, this rod represents the gospel. Christ rules his kingdom (the church) today, which is made up of those who have obeyed the gospel. This, in turn, gives us a better understanding of the gospel, which is possibly not being emphasized in the church today as it should be. The gospel is a rod of iron that will not bend or break. It is the same today as it was in the first century. The only way we can be a follower of Christ is to obey his Word exactly as he has proclaimed it. Many men, or religious organizations today, try to bend this rod. They design their own “church laws.” They grant membership into “their church” according to rules they have made. The gospel of Christ will not bend. If we are to be members of the Lord’s church, we must obey the gospel as God designed it. No other way will do!

Christ also treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. According to 2Thess. 1:7-9, our Lord will return in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel. (See comments on 14:18-20.) God is a loving God, but he is also a just God. He will punish those who do not obey his commands and reward those who do.

**Verse 16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**

The name of this rider on the white horse is KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. This definitely identifies him as Jesus Christ. This same title is used concerning our Lord in 1Tim. 6:15. We must realize that he is now our King and Lord. He has ascended to his throne in heaven to rule his spiritual kingdom – the church. We do not have to wait for some proposed period of one thousand years before his second coming for him to reign over his people. We do not have to wait for heaven. He reigns today!

What does it mean to be King of kings? It means that Jesus is the supreme ruler of all things. Everything on earth is under his power and control. This is the obvious meaning, but there may be a deeper meaning. Rev. 1:6 states that Christ has made Christians “kings and priests unto God.” A Christian is a king because he reigns with Christ in the church today. (See 1:5; 20:4; 1Cor. 4:8.) Christians are kings; Christ is our King. Therefore, he is King of kings.

## **THE BEAST DEFEATED**

**Verse 17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;**

Verses 6 through 16 give a description of the church as it exists today. Christ is our leader. He rides throughout the world today on a white horse, and we as Christians follow upon our own white horses, dressed in white raiment. He leads us in fighting a spiritual war against the forces of evil. Verse 17 removes us from that period of time and takes us into the Judgment scene. The angel invites all the fowls that fly in heaven to gather themselves unto the supper of the great God. This symbolism of the fowls of the air eating the supper of God is most likely related to events such as Joseph’s interpretation of the baker’s dream in Gen. 40:16-

23. Concerning the baker, Gen. 40:19 states, "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee." This shows the completeness and totality of the destruction. When those who have opposed God are gathered to this great supper, their destruction will be complete.

The "supper of the great God" is in direct contrast to the "marriage supper of the Lamb" in verse 9. The marriage supper of the Lamb represents the great eternal feast that Christians will eat in heaven. This supper of the great God is the eternal destruction that those who have disobeyed God will suffer.

**Verse 18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.**

This verse shows that men of all walks of life will be subject to this destruction. The position a person held on earth will not matter at all. Kings, captains, mighty men, free men, and bond men will all be present for this supper of destruction. Both small and great will suffer eternal punishment. The only thing that will have any value at this time is the fact that one is a faithful member of the church of our Lord. (Compare with the interpretation of the sixth seal of 6:12-17.)

Also destroyed at this time will be "the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them." This shows that those who have persecuted Christians will be destroyed. This symbolism is taken from the series of seven seals. Three horses are described in that vision which represent all types of persecutions Christians will suffer. They are: (1) the red horse, the second seal (6:4); (2) the black horse, the third seal (6:5, 6); and (3) the pale horse, the fourth seal (6:8). When the time of this great supper arrives, those forces will be destroyed. (For meanings of these horses and riders, see comments on 6:4-6,8.)

When these horses and riders are destroyed at Judgment, all persecutions of God's people will end. Christians will enter into that place Jesus has prepared and live free of trouble and persecutions forever and ever. Those who have persecuted Christians will have their place in torment for all eternity. The roles will be reversed from the situation now on earth.

**Verse 19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.**

The last three verses of this chapter picture the final destruction of all forces that have oppressed God's people, as well as all those who have been disobedient to his will. Verse 19 gives reasons why they are deserving of the destruction that they are to receive.

The war being described is not some literal physical war to be fought on earth where actual battle lines are drawn. This is the war that the forces of the devil constantly wage against Christ and his followers. In verse 11 Christ is also pictured as making war. We need to understand that there is a constant war taking place on earth between the forces of the devil and Christians. The forces of the devil use all types of weapons to attack Christians – everything from actual physical persecution to subtle enticements that war against the soul. “To make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (v. 11, 14) is to make war against Christ and those who follow him (Christians). The weapon used by Christians in this war is the sword of the mouth, which is the gospel (v. 15, 21).

“The beast, and the kings of the earth,” which have their armies gathered together, represent those ungodly, powerful civil forces that persecute God's people. This beast must be the beast that rises up out of the sea in 13:1 because its interpretation compares with that of the “kings” of the earth in 17:10-16. (See also 16:14.) In these verses we are viewing the destruction of those forces, described by symbolic language in chapters 12 through 18, that persecute Christians. The first one destroyed is the beast

out of the sea (13:1-8). The second one destroyed is the false prophet or the beast out of the earth (13:11-18). Reasons are given in comments on the next verse concerning why these two symbols are synonymous. The last force that will be destroyed is the devil, and chapter 20 is devoted to that subject. The devil is described in chapter 12 as the great red dragon. Therefore, we are being assured of the destruction of those forces that have persecuted Christians throughout the ages. (To fully understand verse 19 and the meaning of the beast being destroyed, refer to the interpretation of chapter 13.)

**Verse 20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.**

This describes the fate that awaits the beast of verse 19 and the false prophet. They will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. A false prophet is a religious impostor. This is one who claims to know Christ and follow him but does not follow according to the ways God has outlined in his Word. He substitutes his ways for God's ways. He also goes about convincing others to follow him in his error. He is a false prophet. There are many references concerning false prophets in the New Testament. (See Mt. 7:15; 24:24; 2Pet. 2:1-22; 1Jn. 4:1-3.)

The false prophet in this verse had wrought miracles before the beast and had "deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image." This is a direct reference to 13:13-15. This is exactly what the beast out of the earth that had two horns like a lamb did. (See the interpretation of 13:11-15.) This means that the beast out of the earth was also a false prophet. Verse 20 is a further description of that same force which has deceived many in the world by its false religion. The false prophet is also a representation of the "great harlot" of chapter 17 and the "great city of Babylon" of chapter 18. A comparison of

these symbols needs to be made, but it would not be practical to repeat the interpretation of each of these symbols. Instead, we will list some passages that should be compared in order to understand the connection between these symbols. They are as follows:

- (1) 13:3, 8; 17:8; 13:12; 13:1
- (2) 17:3; 13:17; 18:3; 17:2; 14:8
- (3) 13:14; 19:20; 16:13
- (4) 17:18; 18:2; 18:23; 13:14
- (5) 18:24; 13:15

All the related passages are not listed, but we trust these will suffice to show the connections. Study and compare each of these symbols in depth. This will tremendously increase your understanding of how Revelation is structured. It will become apparent that the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are the three main symbols used in Revelation to describe those forces that affect people. The beast out of the earth, the great harlot, and the great city of Babylon are further descriptions of the false prophet. (Refer to comments on 16:12-13.)

The beast and false prophet will eventually be cast alive into the “lake of fire.” According to 20:14 and 2 1:8, this lake of fire represents the second death. Rev. 14:10-11 explains that this second death will be eternal torment where there will be no rest day or night.

The main point for Christians to realize is that the beast and false prophet are alive and well in the world today, waging wars against Christians, and deceiving many people. It is our hope that having a good understanding of these symbols will make us more aware of the forces that operate today, and will in turn help us to remain faithful until our Lord returns. Let us remain in the army of our Lord who sits upon the white horse!

**Verse 21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.**



Anyone who is not included in the beast or false prophet and has been unfaithful to God will also be destroyed. This could include such people as those who do not even pretend to associate themselves with any religious organization. The false prophet is made up of people who claim to be religious, but there are many people in this world who believe all religion is foolishness. These ungodly people will also be destroyed along with those who have practiced false religion.

They will be destroyed by the sword that proceeds out of the mouth of the rider of the white horse. This, of course, is the Word of God that was given by Christ. God has given a law that we must obey. For those who distort it, or simply refuse to obey it, the Word itself will be used as a means of their destruction. Speaking concerning those who refused to obey his teachings, Christ says, “the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48). The Word of God will condemn those who refuse to obey it.

For the fowls to be filled with their flesh shows the completeness of their destruction. We should not try to determine if these fowls represent any specific being. Instead, they indicate a method of destruction. They point out that those who have been unfaithful to God will be totally destroyed. They also show that many will be destroyed at this time because these fowls are filled. This is the supper of the great God (v. 17). Let us make sure we attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (v.9) and not this great supper of everlasting destruction!

<sup>1</sup>James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Revelation* (Austin, Tex.: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1979), p. 442.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p.442.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 445.