

The Triumph of Christ in Crushing His Enemies

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-21

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How did we get from an exposition of the Book of Ezra, where we were considering a letter written by the Persian king, Artaxerxes (in Ezra 7), to 34 sermons about the Beast of Revelation, the Number of the Beast (666), the Mark of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Image of the Beast, mostly taken from the Book of Revelation? Let us briefly refresh our memories as we conclude this Lord's Day this prophetic detour, and resume our study in the Book of Ezra next Lord's Day (God willing).

In Ezra 7:11-12, you'll recall that King Artaxerxes wrote a letter granting to Ezra the Priest, the security, provisions, and authority to continue the work of reformation in Israel. In this royal letter, Artaxerxes declared himself to be "king of kings" over all of the nations that had been subdued and added to the Persian Empire. That phrase, "king of kings", points to the Lord Jesus Christ, who as Mediatorial King is given the title of "King of kings, and Lord of lords" in Revelation 19:16, where it is revealed that Christ prophetically and figuratively rides forth on His white horse to crush His enemies before His millennial reign over all the earth from His throne in heaven (the millennium begins in Revelation 20). The three stated enemies that are specifically mentioned in Revelation 19:20 are: the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Image of the Beast. One cannot fully understand the victory of Christ, as King of kings in the Book of Revelation, if one does not understand who these great enemies of Christ are that war against the faithful witnesses of Christ and deceive much of the world by their satanic lies and wonders for a period of 1,260 years. Thus, began our search through prophetic Scripture to interpret these prophetic enemies by the use of Scripture itself.

Since Scripture interprets Scripture, Scripture interprets its own prophetic symbols. Scripture interprets the Civil Beast of Revelation (whose number is 666) to refer to the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Head. Scripture likewise interprets the False Prophet of Revelation to refer to the Harlot Church of Rome (especially as represented by her hierarchy). Finally Scripture interprets the Image of the Beast to refer to the Papacy (i.e. the Papal Antichrist). These are the three great enemies of Christ and His faithful witnesses presented in the Book of Revelation (especially in Revelation 13), whom Christ will destroy before the millennium begins (in Revelation 20). Today, we want to look more closely at the judgment that Christ brings upon these enemies. The main points for the sermon this Lord's Day are: (1) The Long Awaited Judgment of the King of Kings Comes (Revelation 19:19-21); (2) Some Practical Lessons Learned from the Book of Revelation.

I. The Long Awaited Judgment of the King of Kings Comes (Revelation 19:19-21).

A. What is the biblical concept of judgment? In order to understand the judgment that Christ brings upon His enemies, we need to have a basic understanding of the concept and application of judgment.

1. First, when we speak of the concept of judgment, we are applying the Divine attribute of justice to God's moral creation—angels and mankind. God must exercise judgment in the world (upon the wicked) because He is absolutely just and righteous as to His essential nature. If God did not exercise judgment upon the wicked in the world, He would not be just. God is infinitely holy, righteous, and just. He can do nothing wrong. He cannot err. He cannot make mistakes. He cannot deny Himself or violate His own holy, righteous nature. He is absolute truth and only speaks and acts in truth without any contradiction or inconsistency with any other attribute that belongs to Him (whether love, goodness, or mercy). The testimony of Scripture is clear: Psalm 145:17; Daniel 9:14. Thus, when God judges the wicked in the world, He is doing

that which is right and just (and absolutely essential to His nature—as essential as breathing is to the physical life for man), and anyone who condemns God for judging the wicked only demonstrates his/her own pride, ignorance, foolishness, and enmity against the Lord.

2. Second, justice is giving to one what he/she deserves. When our infinitely righteous Lord sends His judgments upon the wicked, He is not being unfair to them, but is giving them what they justly deserve for their transgression of His Holy Law (Romans 1:18). When our infinitely Holy God eternally judges and sentences the wicked to everlasting torment in hell, He is giving them what they justly deserve. When one commits a crime against finite man, one deserves temporal judgment from the civil magistrate. When one commits sin against the infinite, everlasting God and transgresses His Holy Law, one deserves infinite and everlasting judgment in hell: Romans 3:5-6: “Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? (Revelation 21:8). The reason God’s judgment upon the wicked is everlasting judgment is because the infinite debt of their sin is never paid. The only one who can pay that infinite debt of sin is Jesus Christ. That is why it must be emphasized that you and I cannot pay the debt we owe God by our own works of righteousness—only Christ’s righteousness is sufficient (and all sufficient).

3. Third, if **justice** is giving one what he/she deserves, **mercy** is not giving one what he/she justly deserves, and **grace** is giving one what he/she does not deserve. Dear ones, even when God sends temporal judgment upon the wicked in this world (by way of natural calamities, wars, economic upheaval, and tyrannical leaders), He does not forget His mercy. Mercy is displayed in God’s temporal judgment upon the wicked in this world when the Lord calls the wicked to turn to Christ in faith and to repent of their sin (their temporal judgment being a foretaste of that everlasting judgment to come): Isaiah 26:9-10; Romans 2:3-4. Moreover, when the infinitely righteous God sends temporal judgment upon the wicked in this world, He does not eternally judge the wicked immediately as the wicked justly deserve, but mercifully delays that everlasting judgment. But God’s mercy (in not giving to one what he/she justly deserves) is uniquely demonstrated in not pouring out His infinite wrath and condemnation upon sinners like you and me who deserve His infinite justice, but whose infinite justice was completely satisfied when God poured out His righteous and infinite judgment upon His Only Begotten Son on behalf of all who were chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began and who in time trust in Christ and His perfect righteousness as their only ground and hope of justification before an absolutely Holy God (Titus 3:5-6).

4. Dear ones, in the eyes of the world (and sadly among so much of popular Christianity today), it is one of the worst violations (if not the worst violation) of common decency and respect for your fellow man to believe (let alone to say) that religions, churches, civil governments, so-called rights of choice, so-called marriages, and sexual preferences and orientations, that are contrary to Holy Scripture are sinful and ought not to be tolerated in families, churches, or states. It is almost certainly to be identified as one who is bigoted, sexist, homophobic, intolerant, and despises freedom and liberty.

a. But dear friend, a Christian (as defined by God in Scripture) is one who hates what God hates, and loves what God loves. If we love what Christ hates, and hate what Christ loves, we have no rightful claim to call ourselves Christians—for we are not following Christ and His Holy Word, but are rather following man’s own immoral standards and the sinful imagination of man’s own mind. The sinless and righteous King of kings and Lord of lords hates what is contrary to His Holy Law (Proverbs 6:16-19; Revelation 2:6,15—a sect of antinomians within the Visible Church).

b. If God loves false religion and grants a “right” to embrace false religion, why did He command His people to destroy all false religion (Exodus 23:24)? If God loves false religion and grants a “right” to embrace it, why will He punish forever those who practice it (Revelation 21:8)? God righteously judges all those who will not obey the truth revealed in Scripture (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

c. Dear ones, Christians are to imitate God’s hatred for all that is contrary to His Holy Law (Psalm 119:128; Proverbs 8:13). Just as we are to praise God for all His merciful and gracious works in this world, so we are to praise our infinitely righteous God for all His righteous judgments upon the wicked

(Revelation 15:3-4). For in so doing, God is glorifying Himself (reflecting the glory of His grace and the glory of His justice).

d. And let us not forget that Christians not only hate what God hates, but also love what God loves. It is, in fact, one of the marks and characteristics of those who belong to Christ to love Him with all of their being, and to love His righteous law and commandments (Psalm 119:127; 1 John 5:3; Luke 6:46). To love Christ is to love God's Law! We are even to show love to our enemies by feeding and clothing them when they have need, just as God likewise does (Matthew 5:43-45).

e. And finally on this point, the righteous judgment of God against the wicked will not engender pride, arrogance, or conceit in the life of the Christian that is being taught by the Holy Spirit. To the contrary, the righteous judgment of God against the wicked rightly engenders humility, meekness, thankfulness, and loving obedience to Christ. For the Christian that is being taught by the Holy Spirit realizes that he/she justly deserves the everlasting judgment that falls upon the wicked (for we are by nature wicked and ungodly), but it is only due to the mercy of God in not giving him/her what he/she justly deserves (and rather giving to us what we do not deserve—namely, the everlasting love of God in redeeming us from our wickedness and ungodliness, the faith to trust in Christ and His righteousness as our justification before God, and eternal life with Christ in the glories of heaven). When pride wells up within our hearts over the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked, it is time to repent of our own transgression of God's Law and to seek our Father's forgiveness, lest we incur the severe fatherly chastening of the Lord (it is a time to learn righteousness according Isaiah 26:9; it is time to hear the words of Christ, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" Luke 13:3). Let us be quick to hear and apply the warning found in James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy."

B. The prophetic judgment that is portrayed for us in Revelation 19:19-21 is that of Christ (as King of kings) bringing upon the Civil Beast of Europe, upon the Ecclesiastical False Prophet of the Church of Rome (and her hierarchy), and upon the Papal Antichrist, the realization of the faithful and righteous prayers of God's faithful witnesses and martyrs that were uttered very early in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 6:10). Though Christ's righteous judgment may seem slow in coming, it will certainly come, and will be decisive when it comes (as evidenced from our text in Revelation 19:19-21). The cry of the righteous even today is "How long, O Lord." How long will such wickedness, abominations, idolatry, false religion, heresy, blasphemy, covenant-breaking, Sabbath-breaking, murder, and immorality continue within the nations of this world? The Book of Revelation assures us, it will not be long delayed. God's justice requires that His righteous judgment fall (it is even now being revealed).

C. This righteous judgment of the King of kings against these enemies is depicted in figurative language **in terms of a great earthquake** that destroys the kingdom of His enemies (Revelation 11:13; 16:18); **in terms of a city falling**, like that of Jericho (Revelation 14:8; 18:2); **in terms of reaping the earth and trampling the winepress of God's wrath** (Revelation 14:15-20); **in terms of being consumed and burned with fire** (Revelation 17:16; 18:8); and **in terms of being crushed in battle** (Revelation 16:16; 19:11-21). Though different in their expression, each of these references signifies the judgment that the Lord Jesus Christ will bring upon His enemies just before the initiation of the millennium.

D. This judgment of Christ upon His enemies is presented using the language of warfare in Revelation 19:19-21 (a spiritual warfare no doubt, but also a military battle as well).

1. Our warfare against the enemies of our soul is clearly an ongoing battle that we as Christians fight every day (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The power to fight this battle comes not from God's Law (as holy and righteous as is God's Law), but the power to fight and to win this battle comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16; Romans 6:14).

2. Though not in any way denying the reality of this spiritual battle that presently exists between Christ and His enemies, I submit that the language of warfare in Revelation 19:19-11 also refers to a great military battle by which God will manifest His power in judging His enemies and saving His people before the millennium begins. The use of military language in the Book of Revelation to depict actual wars and battles within nations is frequent (Revelation 6:4,8,9; Revelation 9:15-18; Revelation 11:7-9; Revelation 13:7,15; Revelation 14:20; Revelation 16:14-17; Revelation 17:12-16; Revelation 19:13-21).

a. How does God destroy these enemies? By the power of the Gospel in converting the ten horns (European nations) and then turning them against the Civil Beast, the False Prophet (or Harlot Church of Rome and its Papal Antichrist) as we see in Revelation 17:16.

b. This Civil Beast and False Prophet of Rome and its hierarchy (including the Papal Antichrist) will be cast into hell to receive God's righteous and everlasting judgment. This is the same judgment that falls upon the Papal Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9. Thus, Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords will righteously judge these three great enemies before the millennium begins (in Revelation 20): the Civil Beast of Roman Empire of Europe and its head; the Ecclesiastical False Prophet and Harlot of Rome (and its hierarchy); and the Image of the Beast (the Papal Antichrist). Satan will then be bound for a thousand figurative years so that he can no longer deceive and mislead the nations into any false religion, for Christ will reign mightily from His throne in heaven over all of the nations of the world, which nations (including Israel) will all be brought into the Visible Church of Christ and will engage in national covenants to be the Lord's people ("The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" Revelation 11:15).

II. Some Practical Lessons Learned from the Book of Revelation.

A. The Book of Revelation reveals what it costs to be a faithful witness of Christ: sacrifice, suffering, tribulation, deprivation, and even death. If we would reign with Christ, we must suffer with Christ and for His truth and righteousness (and not for our own sin). Christ never promised us as Christians that our lives would be without trials, temptations, afflictions, persecution for the Cause of Christ. In fact, Paul said that it is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God. The testimony of a Christian is not in merely the faithful testimony and true testimony that is professed with one's mouth, but is also the sacrifices one is willing to make in his/her life that evidences his/her trust in Christ and love for Christ. Remember how the faithful witnesses of Christ overcame Satan: "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb (their justifying testimony), and by the word of their testimony (a verbal and living testimony); and they loved not their lives unto the death (a sacrificial testimony). This is how we overcome the enemy that would enslave us to sin within our lives, as well as the enemy that would deceive and mislead us, as well as the enemy that would tyrannize our consciences and compel us to yield an absolute obedience.

B. The Book of Revelation reveals that the most successful weapon in Satan's arsenal in leading the world to follow his ambassadors is not raw force, but is deception (Revelation 19:20). The steps to self-deception are: (1) an ignorance of Scripture and its doctrine (2 Thessalonians 2:11); (2) a self-sufficient pride in our own knowledge and abilities (Proverbs 28:26); (3) a desire to know the truth, but not to practice it (John 7:17); and (4) an unwillingness to be instructed, corrected, and rebuked (when necessary) by Christ's faithful messengers (James 3:17 "the wisdom that is from above is . . . easy to be entreated"). We will not be deceived or self-deceived if we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, if we daily put to death the pride in our own hearts, if we have not merely a form of godliness, but have the power of it in our hearts and lives, and if we learn and grow from the instruction, correction, and even rebukes of God's faithful messengers in our lives.

C. The Book of Revelation reveals Christ as our all-sufficient Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ as

Prophet reveals to John God's (doctrine, worship, practice, and events to come). Christ as Priest is the Lamb in the Book of Revelation who redeems His people from sin, Satan, death, and hell. Christ as King sovereignly rules over, governs, and destroys His enemies. Christ is not simply sufficient for the martyrs, who laid down their lives for Christ and His truth, He is all-sufficient for all your needs, every day of your life. Are you in need of wisdom? Christ is made unto you wisdom. Are you in need of forgiveness? Christ is the Lamb who laid down His life to secure forgiveness for all who trust Him. Are you in need of sanctification in growing in holiness, patience, courage, perseverance, prayer, humility or any other grace? Christ is King and has already conquered all His and our enemies and has already purchased and applied all these graces to His beloved ones. All the promises of God are in him yea and in him amen to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 1:20). Christ, who redeemed us who trust in Him, became a curse for us that we might be delivered from God's curse, was crucified, buried, and resurrected for us is our Amen (Revelation 3:14). And this all-sufficient Savior, Jesus, leaves in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation this offer to all who read or hear this Book of Revelation: Revelation 22:16-17. Come without price, without anything you can offer Him, and freely receive the gift of Christ's forgiveness, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's everlasting life. Christ alone is our refuge from the righteous judgment that God will bring upon this wicked world for all eternity.

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