



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Revelation 19: 1-21

"The Second Coming"

Revelation

TRANSCRIPT

Our text is Revelation 19. We're going to look at the entire passage, which is the greatest warrior and the greatest battle, the battle of Armageddon. We'll begin the chapter in verse 1:

After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; Because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant

of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come to You with grateful hearts. We've read a text that is about judgment, judgment that will come upon this world, and judgment that we all, by nature, deserve. And yet, we who have believed in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, have been delivered from that. And so, we can read not of our judgment to come, but of our victory to come, and of the kingdom to come, and to rejoice that that day will come, most certainly. And it may come soon.

We give You the praise, 'cause this is something that will come about by Your sovereign work. You are the author of history. You govern history. You are moving all things along to the appointed end, the end that You have drawn up in Your plan of the ages, and nothing can frustrate that. The great message that we get from this text, if we understand nothing else, is that our victory, which is Your victory, is certain to occur. We have a glorious future. We give You the praise and the thanks for that. Thank You that we're a part of that because are a part of it, only by Your grace. You brought us to Yourself. You keep us in Christ. We have You to thank for all that we have. We give You the praise for that, and pray that our time of study together and worship together will be profitable, and that You will, through this study of Your word, give us a great appreciation of You, of who You are and what You're doing, and may we be sanctified, conformed to the image of Christ, as we consider these great truths.

So bless us spiritually, and we pray that You bless us materially as well. We pray for those who are sick, that You'd give them encouragement and healing, and bless those who are discouraged from the trials of life. We pray that You would encourage them with the hope that we have, and the certainty that You're working out Your plan in their life, and the lives of each one of Your people. And it's going to come to a good end for all of us.

Father, we give You thanks also for the nation in which we live. We remember those brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for our freedom down through the years and over the centuries, and we thank You for them. We thank You for those that are standing for us now, and we pray for those who are in foreign lands, particularly those in the Middle East. We pray that You'd bless our troops there, and protect them, pray particularly for the Christian men and women who are in the armed forces, wherever they may be that they would have a strong witness for Christ.

We pray Your blessings upon our government. We pray that You'd give our leaders wisdom in very trying times. And bless this nation, not simply materially. We would pray for peace, and prosperity. Those are good things in and of themselves, but they're really nothing if there's nothing spiritual there, and that's really what we pray for. We pray that You'd bring great spiritual awakening within this land and that You would use us to be a part of that.

And so, we pray that our time together would be helpful to that end, and You would conform us to the image of Christ. Prepare our hearts now for a time of study. We commit our time to You in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] I grew up in the 1950s, so I was in grade school before the Supreme Court ruled against prayer in the public schools, and we had it in the school I attended in Kansas City. One year, when I was in the fifth year, we began each day with the Lord's prayer. Class would stand. We would all bow our heads and recite it. Everyone but one. We had a Jewish student in class, and he wouldn't pray. I know that for a fact because I used to peek. We'd begin the prayer. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." And I'd start looking around to see what Arlan was doing, and there he was in the back with his arms folded, looking up at the ceiling defiantly. He would not pray.

Now, in all fairness to him, I think if the Gentiles in class had understood what we were praying, they might not have participated either, because in that prayer, we confess our sins. Well, people don't like to confess if they're sinners. And, we pray that Christ will come and judge the world. That's the meaning of the request: "Thy kingdom come." The kingdom is not coming through brotherly love of the preaching of the gospel. It's coming through judgment.

Psalm 2, we read that Christ will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware. Now, that's the message of our text this morning, Revelation 19. It is about Christ's second coming and the defeat of all His enemies to establish His kingdom on the earth.

In fact, we can divide the chapter into three parts. First: rejoicing over the coming kingdom in verses 1 through 6. Second: the invitation to enter the kingdom, which is called the Wedding Feast in verses 7 through 10. And thirdly: the coming of the kingdom and the coming of Christ in verses 11 through 21. We begin with the joy of this news. John hears a great multitude in heaven saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God." This is the first place in the New Testament where the word "hallelujah" occurs. That's interesting because we're so familiar with the word, but it doesn't occur in the New Testament until we come here, and we read "hallelujah." It means "praise Yah." "Yah" is short for "Yahweh." Praise Yahweh. Praise Jehovah. Praise the Lord.

In fact, the word occurs four times in this passage in verses 1 through 6 and only here in all of the New Testament. So, there is great rejoicing over the judgment of Babylon, not because of the suffering of those who are punished and perish, but because of the salvation that will come with the ruin of that city and that evil system.

The kingdom of God cannot coexist with the kingdom of the beast. Light and darkness cannot mix. So, this system, this city must be destroyed and its corrupting influence removed from the earth. That's the reason for rejoicing. Evil has been judged, and defeated, and justly so. That's the explanation that's given in verse 2. "Because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." That is justice, and it is fair.

So, for a second time, the heavenly multitude praises God with hallelujah in verse 3. Her smoke rises up forever and ever. They say. It's forever destroyed. The 24 elders join with them in verse 4 with an Amen, and the third hallelujah. And then, all of God's servants join in praise to God in verses 5 and 6 because the kingdom will now come. Their praise is given in deafening sound like mighty peals of thunder. There's a fourth hallelujah in verse 6 and the declaration: "The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

Now, that statement, reigns, is in the English text put in the present tense, but it's actually in the Greek text in the past tense, the *eras* tense, and probably has the force of "begins to reign." But we've made this point before about future prophecies being written or described in the past tense. It's not uncommon in the Bible. It's sometimes called the prophetic perfect. It's a prophecy that's put in the past tense to underscore the certainty of it. It is so certain to come. This outcome is so absolute that it's as though it's already happened. It's described in that way.

We're reading here about the future of God reigning, and yet we know that God is always reigning over His creation. He is ruling in the present, as He has in the past, and He will be reigning in the future, even during that great terrible time of the tribulation, when the beast will have that reign of terror over the earth. Still, even then, God is reigning, in control of everything.

But the announcement here is that His reign upon the earth and the promised kingdom to come is about to begin, and is certain to happen. That's an encouraging

word. That encourages us to live for that day. In fact, the Lord tells us to do that, to "seek ye first the kingdom of God," and all these things will be added unto you.

Well, that's quite an investment to make, is it not? To live your life for the kingdom to come. Don't live for the moment. Live for the future, and that's completely contrary to what the world tells us to do. It says invest in this world, invest in this life. live for the moment. It's all you have. What Christ is telling us is: no, don't live for the moment; live for the future, which is eternal. And what we have verified here is that's not a bad investment. This kingdom is so certain to come that it's as though it's already come. It's as though it's a past event.

So, we have great comfort in that. In fact, that ignites a great celebration we read of in verse 7: "the marriage of the Lamb is about to take place, and His bride has made herself ready." Literally, bride is wife in the Greek text. And all through the Bible, Israel and the church are described in both ways as a bride and as a wife. Israel is God's wife in the Book of Hoseah. In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul describes the church as the Lord's wife, even though the actual wedding has not yet occurred. But in biblical times, an engaged woman was called a wife, even though the marriage had not yet taken place. She was considered to be that, to be the wife. And we have that description of God's people here.

The Lord's bride, the Lord's wife, is His redeemed people, and she is ready. She is described in verse 8 as "dressed in fine linen, bright and clean," which is the righteous acts of the saints. She is to be seen in stark contrast to the great harlot, who was dressed in purple and scarlet, these bright, brilliant colors. The bride is dressed in white, in purity. She is characterized by obedience. She has acts of righteousness. That's her garment. That's her wedding dress.

Numerous acts of faithful righteousness suggesting the transformed life of the saints. I think that's really the point here. It's not so much justification signified in the purity of her garments, though that is fundamental to what is described here. But these are the acts, the life, the conduct of the justified person. It's characterized by obedience. It's characterized by faithfulness, and that's how we prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming.

A person prepares himself or herself for the Lord's coming, first and foremost by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior, becoming a justified person, a person who is accepted by God fully and completely and forever is righteous in His sight. But, that

person will then live a life of obedience in anticipation of the Lord's coming. That's how we prepare ourselves.

We don't simply wait and hope for His coming. That's a sanctifying hope. But if it's truly having its sanctifying upon us, we're going to live a disciplined, obedient life, and that's what's described here of these saints of the bride of the wife. They've prepared themselves. And yet, what we read here, this description is a description that's all of grace.

The statement in verse 7, "His bride has made herself ready." That does not contradict the idea of grace. In no way does that suggest human merit or free will as though the bride has made herself of her own free will what she is, and God has therefore accepted her because of the things that she's done.

Well, we know that's not the case, and we know that from a number of texts. I could quote numerous texts. One is sufficient, I think: Romans 3 verse 11. There's none who seeks for God. Not even one. So that undercuts the whole notion of free will that we, of ourselves, apart from the work of God, of our own initiative, placed ourselves in God's good favor.

No, not at all. You were dead in your trespasses and sins, Paul tells us. The only reason we live is because God, being rich in mercy, made us alive. Dead people can't make themselves alive. There must be an intervening work of God, and that's what Paul tells us, and that lies behind this as well.

Dr. Johnson put it well when he described this as "not free will, but freed will." Regeneration. The new birth. Makes people free to believe so that when God regenerates, they do believe. And if they believe willingly, they'd believe gladly. So, the bride is not what she is by her own free will, nor is she what she is because she's been brought in reluctantly against her will. Not at all. She is a willing bride, but a bride by grace alone. Sovereign grace.

No one can come to Me, the Lord Jesus said, unless it has been granted Him from the Father. Granted is given. And that's the meaning here, because in verse 8, we're told that it was "given to her to clothe herself in fine linen." Given means "gifted." That's grace. Our faith, our saving faith, our initial act of faith, and all of the faith that follows, and all of the good works that follow. All of that is a gift. A gift of God. That's what Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10, that our works were prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Well, what do you think that means? We didn't prepare them. They were prepared beforehand. They were predestined for us, that we would walk in then. That's grace, and this theme of grace continues in verse 9 where John is told to write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Well, this is the kingdom to come that's described, and we know that because throughout the gospels, the kingdom is described as a great banquet. It's a time of celebration. It's a time of joy. But only the invited come. We don't invite ourselves. God invites us in His eternal election and effectual calling. And by His grace, we come, and we come gladly. And we're blessed because we come, and we will be blessed for all eternity.

Now, John is overwhelmed by that thought. He's overwhelmed by what has just been revealed to him, what he's just heard about the marriage supper of the Lamb, the splendor of it and the blessing of it, that we will enjoy forever. And in response to all of this, we read in verse 10 that he falls at the feet of the one who was speaking. He has an angelic guide, and this angel who is speaking to him is there, and he falls before him, and this angel is obviously a glorious being because John is going to worship him. He's just about to do that when the angel who was speaking stops him.

Now, just think about that for a moment. This is an apostle falling down before an angel to worship him. What glory that angel must exhibit. It's the things that he says that provoke this, but it must also be the very sight of this angel, that it was so glorious that it elicited this kind of response from him. But then, consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 3 that we will judge angels. We'll be far greater than angels when we're glorified.

So, if the glory of that angel is this great that an apostle would be tempted to worship him, what must it be like for us? What must our glory be like in the future? Something beyond our imagination.

Well, this glory and this message is so great that John wants to worship, and the angel stops him. He says, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. But words of grace and blessing sometimes draw people to the messenger, rather than the one of whom the message is about. You may remember in the Book of Acts in chapter 10 when Paul goes to preach the gospel to the Gentiles for the first time. It's an epical moment in the Book of Acts and in the history of the church. Now, the gospel's going to go to

the Gentiles, and Peter goes to the house of Cornelius, and Cornelius fell at Peter's feet, like one worshiping Peter.

And Peter had to tell him: "Stand up. I am only a man, myself." And here, the angel directs John to the only one worthy of worship, and that's the one who has obtained these glorious blessings of which the angel speaks and the heavenly host sings the blessings of the kingdom that so thrilled John. He directs him to Christ. He directs him to worship Him.

I think that's really the connection we have when he says, "Worship God," because you'll notice after he says that, the next thing we read is in verse 11. The heavens open, and John sees the one that he is to worship. He sees Him in glory and power. " And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war."

This is the second coming. It is an essential doctrine of Christian theology. It is the completion of Calvary. It's the completion of our Lord's work on the cross. At the cross, Christ won the victory over sin and death and the devil. At the second coming, He will execute that victory over evil and sweep it away. At the cross, He obtained us for His kingdom, and He obtained the kingdom. At His second coming, He will establish that kingdom, and will enter into it.

George Ladd wrote, "Apart from His return to purge His creation of evil, redemption remains forever incomplete." It's not yet complete. It's complete in one sense. There's nothing more that needs to be done to gain salvation. It's been settled once and for all. But the execution of that, the bringing about of these great events are yet to come, and that will complete our Lord's mission, and it will complete it when He comes into this world again, not as a lamb, but as a warrior.

That's what we pray for when we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." We're praying that He will come like this, on a white horse. Now, will He actually come on a horse? Maybe. If you believe that, you have this to appeal to. You can say, well, that's what the Scriptures say, and that's true.

But I think we need to remember that this is a book that was given to John in symbols. That's what's said from the very outset, the very first verse of this book informs us of that and tells us how we're to interpret the book from the very beginning. It is about actual persons. It's about real events, when Jesus ascended into heaven. You remember in Acts chapter 1 and verse 11, that chapter they were

looking up to heaven. They were fixing their gaze on Him. He's taken up into a cloud and they keep looking, as I'm sure all of us would, keep straining their eyes to see if they can catch a glimpse of Him.

And then in verse 11, the angels speak to them and say that He will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. In other words, He will return in the same way, as He went up. He'll return to earth, literally. He'll return to earth bodily.

But His return is described here in the style of the book, which is in symbols to express the magnitude of the event. So, I don't think He's coming on an actual horse. At least, not on a horse like we know horses to be. I don't think He will have an actual sword projecting from His mouth as described in verse 15. These are figures of speech that indicate the way in which He will come, which will be a way of violence. The way of a warrior. He will come to make war. So, He is described as a fierce but righteous warrior, on a horse, which was the animal of warfare in the ancient world. And, He's faithful and true. He's not like the beast, who is a deceiver, and a destroyer of the faithful. Christ is the deliverer. He said He would return, and true to His word, He will come,

And He'll come in power. Verse 12 says "His eyes are a flame of fire," reflecting His eagerness to carry out His mission, His zeal for His mission, and reflecting the penetrating insight that He has as the Son of God. Nothing escapes His gaze. On His head are many diadems, crowns, indicating His right to rule. John says, "He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself."

And no one will ever know that name. It is an expression of His person. That's what the name is. We've probably gone over this more than once in our studies, but names have a particular significance in the Bible. They're not just a way of identifying a person to distinguishing one individual from another. They're helpful in that way. That's basically the way we use them. We like the sound of a name or we like the association with some person in history or in our family, and we give that name to a child. But, in the Bible, it was much more significant than that. The name defined the person. It spoke of the character, and that's what is meant here. This is more than just an appellation, a title to Him. It speaks of His person. And there is much about the person of Christ that is unknowable and always will be.

Eternal life is knowing God, knowing the Triune God. That's how Christ explains eternal life in John 17:3. And we will know Him, we will truly know Him, and we'll know Him with a deep and profound knowledge. We'll know Him deeply, but not completely. Never, will we know Him completely. That's impossible. He will always be a mystery to us because He is infinite, and that's more than our finite minds can comprehend. That's really one of glories of heaven, when you think about it.

In Colossians chapter 2 and verse 3, Paul speaks of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge being found in Christ. He is a great, as it were, treasure chest or treasure mind. And for all eternity, we will be mining that treasure of the knowledge and the wisdom of Christ, and we'll never come to the end of it because there's no end to the knowledge of Him. We'll spend all eternity. And after age, upon age, upon age, billions and trillions of years, if we can think of eternity in terms of time elapsing like that, we'll just be scratching the surface. There's no end to this. So, we'll never come to a full knowledge of Him. This name will always be unknown to us, known only to Him.

His robe is described in verse 13 as "dipped in blood." A picture of Him taken from Isaiah 63 verses 1 through 6 where the Messiah is described as a conqueror treading the winepress of wrath. His garments are soaked in blood from battle, the blood of the enemy. Then John mentions a third name, it is called "The Word of God," which reminds us of John chapter 1 verse 1 and the preexistent Son, who is the Word, who was with God and is God. He's all powerful. He created everything. He's the Almighty, still.

When He comes, He'll come with an army. Verse 14. " And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses." It's a heavenly army made up of angels, but also saints. We're told in chapter 17 and verse 14 that those who are with Him when He wages war are the chosen and faithful. In other words, they are the elect. Christ is the Lord of hosts. He is the Lord of the armies. He is the Lord of the angelic and the human armies. That's what that title, Lord Sabaoth means, Lord of the hosts, of all of the armies. He commands them. That's what Luther drew upon when he wrote that line in his great hymn "A Mighty Fortress," "Lord Sabaoth His name from age to age the same, and He must win the battle."

And He will. He'll come with a great army. But He won't win the army because He has a great army with Him. He'll fight the battle all alone. That's what He says in Isaiah 63:3, that He treads the winepress alone. So it'll be His work alone, not the work of that great army that's with Him. We really do nothing.

His weapon in warfare, described in verse 15. First, he will "strike down the nations" with a sharp sword that comes out of his mouth. This is the language of Isaiah 11 verse 4 which says the Messiah will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth. It signifies the lethal power of His word. He simply speaks and destroys. Then He will rule with absolute authority, with a rod of iron, not a flexible rod, not a breakable rod, a rod of iron. No one can resist Him. This is no gentle Jesus, meek and mild. This is the stern side of His character. This is about the wrath of God. It is about divine vengeance. It is coming, this vengeance, this wrath, and it will come swiftly and it will be overwhelming. Now, that's clear from the teaching of Scripture. This passage, this verse, is a development of four Old Testament texts: Isaiah 11, Isaiah 49, Isaiah 63, and Psalm 2. All Messianic texts, which indicate that God's word is authoritative. This is predictive. This is prophecy about things to come, and what John is saying is: those prophecies will all be fulfilled.

John had complete confidence in the Word of God. He relied upon the Word of God. It will be fulfilled perfectly. He's saying that in his citation of all those texts. The Lamb is also a Lion. Christ will come to judge the world. He can do it. He will do it. He's absolutely sovereign. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That's the fourth name that's given in verse 16. It's written twice. It's written once on His robe and once on His thigh. Why it is written on His thigh, we're not told, and somewhat mysterious. None of the commentators, at least those of which I read, could really answer why that is. But, I think it's significant that it is at least in this regard that we have this title written twice, which gives a twofold testimony to the fact that Christ is the rightful king. He is not a usurper. He's the rightful king. That's testified to twice in those names. And, his coming is a coming that is rightful. He is coming for what is rightfully His. I think that as the first century saints would have sat in their small churches. I don't know how big they were, but they must've been quite small and in the shadow of the temples of those days and the imperial cult, the cult of Caesar, and heard this text read, it would have been a great encouragement to them and encouraged them to remember in spite of everything that they see, everything they

hear. In fact, in spite of the sword of the state that would try to force them to bow the knee to Caesar. It's not the emperor Domitian who is the Lord of Lords. It is Jesus Christ.

We bow to Him alone. He alone is our hope. Those who follow the beast, and those who travel with the world, they will someday all be swept away. That's how the chapter finishes. In verse 17, an angel appears standing in the sun, giving a grim invitation. He calls to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God." Obviously intended to be in contrast to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; the great supper of God is not a feast of joy. It's a feast of judgment. The birds are to gather, he says in verse 18, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

This verse has been called ghastly. William Barclay, who has written a number of popular commentaries describes it as a "bloodthirsty picture," which he thought was out of line with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But, dismissing it as distasteful doesn't change what will be. And it is completely consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Evil will be destroyed totally. What is the option to that? Tolerating evil? Allowing it to continue? No. Christ is righteous, and He will deal with evil. Christ will reign, good will triumph. That's the gospel. That's at least a part of the gospel.

The good news for every believer in Jesus Christ is that we escape this judgment, that our sins have been paid for at the cross. Christ suffered in our place, but also that evil in which we still live. This is an evil world. Sin is still with us. That's going to be removed forever and completely. That, too, is the gospel.

It's only those who refuse that, who reject that, refuse to believe and bow to Him as Lord, will perish eternally. That's the teaching here, and it promises a catastrophic end for those who resist Him. Men today find that distasteful or bloodthirsty and objectionable. They do that because they have fashioned God into their own image. They imagine Him to be a gentleman who would never be so crass as to judge others.

But the God of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament is a holy God. He is a just God. He is as the author of Hebrews tells us, a consuming fire.

His wrath is real, and it will consume many. That's what's described in the final verses. John deals with it briefly in verse 19. He sees the enemy gather for battle at Armageddon. The place is not identified as that here, but is earlier in chapter 16 in verse 16. This final battle. The kings of the earth and their armies are led by the antichrist. It's an impressive force of nations that gathers to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

And from that description, we might expect a further description of some mighty clash of arms as these two great forces meet in battle, but there is none of that. John simply says, "the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet." The false prophet is still identified here by his signs and powers which dazzled men and called them to wonder at the beast. But those signs and powers and wonders that he performed have absolutely no effect upon our Lord and can do nothing to stay His hand or deliver this false prophet and his beast from their certain doom.

It's all powerless before Christ. Both are captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. The statement suggests that there's really no battle at all. Its mighty armies form, face off, and then nothing. It's just Christ sweeps the field of His enemies in a moment. In an instant. He simply speaks, and it's over.

I think we get a hint of what will take place then by what happened in the past. In John chapter 18 and verse 6, we have that incident described in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is arrested. It's at night. The soldiers come for Him with torches and weapons. It's a small army of men. And when they said that they were seeking Jesus the Nazarene, He answered, "I am He." That's all He said. It's actually shorter than that. It's two words. "*Ego eimi.*" I am. The text says they drew back and fell to the ground. I think they drew back and fell to the ground with violence, but that's what happened. "I am." Was all He said.

That's the name of the Lord. That's the name that the Lord gave to Moses out of the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14. He said, "I am who I am." It's the basis for His name, Yahweh or Jehovah. And what this shows is the power of Christ's name, meaning the power of His person and His words.

Now, if He could produce such an effect by speaking two words in His earthly life, in His humiliation when He is the servant, and when He is giving Himself over to the enemy to be crucified, well, what will happen when He comes as a warrior, as a

lion, not as a lamb? And comes as judge and speaks in His wrath? Far greater. What were the kings and their armies thinking when they gathered to make war on the rider on the white horse? Fighting Him is like shooting arrows into the sky to bring down the stars. It's foolish. It's impossible trying to overthrow the Almighty God. But when men reject the truth, they're given over to the lie. When men reject the gospel, well, they only have the lie to believe, and that's what they believe. They're given over to deceptive thoughts.

When men adopt error, when they sin, they're deluded. Sin does that. It deceives, and it leads people down the path of destruction. Sin breeds a kind of insanity, an irrationality, and it does so here. The kings of the earth and the armies come against Him. They will oppose Christ. And in an instant, their armies will be scattered.

That's what John writes in verse 21. "And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh." In a mere moment, all that the beast stood for, and the vast kingdom that he built will be gone. Everything that he'd achieved for himself would be gone in a moment, and for eternity, he will live, be, in the lake of fire.

Not much of a return of his investment. Invested in this life, and ignored eternity. He lost everything. Far better to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He'll add everything to you. Well, that's the end though, for all who oppose Christ. What about the third member of this infernal trinity? What about the dragon, Satan, who is the real power behind the beast and the false prophet? Well, he meets his end too, and that's what we'll cover in the next study, in chapter 20. He is captured, he's bound, and ultimately, cast into the lake of fire.

What all of this tells us is: God is in control. He's sovereign. Don't ever despair. God has a plan and He is working it out. He has a plan of the ages. But that plan of the ages is not just some general kind of an amorphous plan that will end in a kingdom. He is working out that plan in detail in the details of the lives of His people, and He has a good plan for your life, and He's working that out even now.

And what will be the end of it all is great glory. That's our future, and it's certain. This is what Christ instructed us to pray for when He said, "Pray Thy kingdom come, they will be done." There's great encouragement for us in that prayer. Evil will be overthrown and righteousness will rule. That is an encouragement, and it

gives us perspective on life, and it gives us real hope. Not vain hope, but hope that's grounded in God's word, and grounded in the very person of God.

But, this is also a warning for unbelievers. Your world is doomed, and all who persist in unbelief will perish. But here's the encouragement. The God who is a consuming fire is also love. And in His infinite love, He gave up His son to death on the cross for the salvation of sinners. All you must do is believe in Him. We are saved through faith alone in Christ alone, so flee from the wrath to come, flee to Christ, flee to the cross. May God help you to do that. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we give You the praise and the thanks for all that we have. We thank You that the right man is on our side, the Godman, the Lord Jesus Christ who is Lord Sabaoth, and He is always with us, and His kingdom will come. We look forward to that day and pray that it may be soon. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.