

REVELATION

Chapter 19

Rejoicing in Heaven

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” 3 Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

19:1–21† The final victory of Christ, consisting of the wedding supper of the Lamb (vv. 1–10) and the rider on the white horse (vv. 11–21). (CSB)

19:1-4 After the judgment and destruction of the harlot and the beast (which together comprise Babylon) had been announced and demonstrated in chapters 17–18 (μετὰ ταῦτα, “after these things,” 19:1), John hears “something like a loud voice of an immense crowd in heaven” (19:1). The “voice” sings in victorious celebration. This celebration follows the call for such rejoicing in 18:20. Perhaps the “loud voice” (19:1) comes across to John as “*somethinglike* a loud voice” because of a heaven-like quality. Prior to receiving the revelation, John had never before heard such a harmonic and melodic voice. So beautiful was the voice of this heavenly choir that, though John could understand the words, the euphonious sound was beyond the ability of the natural human voice. Whatever the explanation, John now hears the “Hallelujah Chorus” of the great Te Deum, the continuing song of praise to God, the beginning of which he had heard in 4:8 and stanzas of which he heard every so often throughout the prophetic message of Revelation. With this tremendous Hallelujah Chorus the great Te Deum comes to a climaxing crescendo. (CC)

19:1 *great multitude*. † Here the reference is to the members of the church triumphant. (CSB)

Likely the same assembly described in 7:9–17—the Church Triumphant, the saints who have passed into glory. (TLSB)

Who is the “immense crowd” (19:1) that shouts out this Hallelujah Chorus? Is it the angelic host? Is it the saints in heaven, the church triumphant, the same crowd that sang before God in heaven in 7:9–10? Andreas (sixth century) in his Greek commentary on Revelation interpreted the “crowd” to be *both* angels and human beings, because God’s people are *with* the angels in heaven and are *like* them (ἐκ τε τῶν ἰσαγγέλων ἀνθρώπων). In 19:4 the twenty-four elders represent the church of both testaments, while the four winged creatures are angels. In 19:5 “the Church is called to add her Hallelujah.” Because this Hallelujah Chorus continues through 19:8, it seems that the whole heavenly host of *both* angels *and* God’s saints make up this choir. Perhaps the various stanzas of the chorus are sung antiphonally by the saints and the angels, with the twenty-four elders and the four winged creatures as the choir masters of the saints and angels, perhaps respectively (see 19:4; cf. 4:9–10; 5:8, 14). (CC)

Hallelujah! Occurs four times in vv. 1–6 but nowhere else in the NT. It is derived from two Hebrew words meaning “Praise the LORD.” (CSB)

Whatever the exact makeup of the choir, its Hallelujah Chorus celebrates the readiness of the bride for marriage to the Lamb and celebrates the invitation to the wedding feast itself. The bride of the Lamb—the communion of the saints of God, the church—is prepared first of all in that God has judged and “passed sentence on the great harlot” (19:2). She who had “corrupted the earth in her immorality” and shed “the blood of [God’s] slaves” (19:2) is now gone forever, never again to threaten and hurt God’s people. God himself wrought deliverance from this archenemy of his saints on earth, through the victory of the Lamb demonstrated at his resurrection (see 1:17–18; 5:2–10). This deliverance from Babylon was not just for the personal safety and well-being of God’s people, as important as that was (cf. 7:1–4; 11:3–6), but it was also for “the safeguarding of God’s entire redemptive program,” else all would have been lost (cf. Mk 13:19–20). (CC)

salvation and glory and power belong to our God – Echoes 7:10, yet it adds the words “glory” and “power.” (TLSB)

19:2 *true and just* – Important affirmation, esp in light of all the evil described in this Book. One of the main themes of Rv is that, despite all the chaotic and oppressive conditions Christians must face, God remains firmly in control of all history. (TLSB)

corrupted the earth – ephtheiren – Defiled

Therefore the heavenly choir in this Hallelujah Chorus attributes all “the salvation and the glory and the power” to God (19:1), for the entire “salvation” of God’s people by the blood and victory of the Lamb and their deliverance from the harlot who rides the beast (17:3, 7) come from God alone. And because the Christ suffered in the stead of God’s people and received God’s judgment against their sins, God is now “righteous” (16:5) and his “verdicts of judgment are true and just” (19:2; similarly 16:7) in handing down to the harlot the sentence of eternal death. She “who corrupted the earth in her immorality” (19:2), that is, she who motivated the peoples of the earth to worship the goddess of sensual self-indulgence as if that were the true form of Christianity, receives the sentence of the eternal fires of hell (see 19:20). The blood of the saints that she shed now comes back to her in double measure (18:6) by the vengeance of God as he makes his “arrows drunk with [her] blood” (Deut 32:42). Vengeance belongs to God, for he alone has the right in his truthfulness to judge and punish the enemies of his people (Lev.19:18; Is. 35:3-4; 47:1-4; Jer. 51:36-37; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30-31). One of the important results of God’s holiness and righteousness is that he always judges according to the standard of the truth. For example, in Ps 96:13 the psalmist declares that God will “judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.” It is for that reason that Paul in Rom 3:4 says that every person should recognize himself as “a liar” and confess that only God is “true” (ἀληθής), so that God will be (remain) “righteous in his pronouncements and will prevail when [he] judges.” (CC)

19:3 *smoke...goes up* – A most ironic counterpart to the incense smoke previously described as rising during the heavenly worship (8:3; 15:8; see notes, Ex 30:1, 7–8; Ps 141:2). (TLSB)

forever and ever. † Both the punishment of “Babylon” and the church’s victory are eternal and will never end. (CSB)

Phrase that often appears at the conclusion of Christian doxologies (cf Eph 3:21; 1Tm 1:17). In this setting, it contrasts ironically with the term “eternity” (Lat *aeternitas*), which was inscribed on first-century Roman coins. (TLSB)

In Rev 19:3 a second “hallelujah” is raised to God in praise as the heavenly choir sees the evidence of the harlot’s destruction as “her smoke ascends.” Her judgment and punishment will endure “forever and ever.” There will be no reprieve from her sentence, no release for good behavior. Her confinement in hell and her torment will be permanent, without hope of ever ending. This second “hallelujah” is not merely a repetition of the first, but something like a climatic encore in view of the fact that the harlot’s judgment is final. And so her rising smoke demonstrates the finality of her judgment and moves the heavenly host to shout out a second “hallelujah” in response. Perhaps John was reminded of Isaiah’s prophetic utterance that God in his vengeance would make Edom a heap of blazing fire which will never be quenched, the smoke from which would rise forever (Is 34:8–10). In such a manner God eventually will deliver and vindicate his people by judging all their enemies (cf. Is 34:8). And so here in Rev 19:1–3 the first stanza of the Hallelujah Chorus ends as it began, with a mighty shout of “hallelujah” (ἀλληλουϊά). (CC)

19:4 *twenty-four elders and the four living creatures.* Mention of these figures recalls the scenes of the heavenly worship described in 4:1–5:14; 7:9–17. (TLSB)

God – In response, “the twenty-four elders and the four winged creatures fell down, and they worshiped the [only] God” and shouted out an affirming “amen, hallelujah!” (19:4). These choirmasters of the heavenly singers affirm the choir’s Hallelujah Chorus by falling prostrate in worship and praise before God “on [his] throne,” and in this worshipful posture they, perhaps antiphonally, shout out their own “hallelujah.” One might imagine that even the rafters of God’s heavenly sanctuary shook and reverberated with this holy chorus and the shouts of hallelujahs and amens, just as the temple quaked when the prophet Isaiah heard the “holy, holy, holy” of the winged creatures before God in his majestic vision (Is 6:1–4). In Revelation 4–5, during the worship of God on his throne and of the victorious Lamb in the heavenly vision of God’s glory, the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves (4:9–10; 5:8, 14; also 11:16) while the four winged creatures (as the chief choirmasters) led the whole heavenly host in the opening stanzas of this great Te Deum. Here in 19:1–4, as the Hallelujah Chorus concludes this glorious hymn of praise, once again the twenty-four elders fall down before the throne of God. But this is the first time the chief choirmasters, the four winged creatures, also prostrate themselves before God. Perhaps the winged creatures did so to indicate that this is the end of the hymn and nothing more is to be added. (CC)

hallelujah – Hbr for “praise God” (Ps 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20). (TLSB)

19:5 *came a voice* – The voice from the throne calls upon all of God’s servants—including those living upon the earth—to join in the heavenly chorus. (TLSB)

While this Hallelujah Chorus and the resounding hallelujahs and amens were still ringing in John’s ears, a “voice came out from the throne” inviting all of God’s people, both “the small and the great,” to worship and praise him (19:5). Again the source of the voice is unidentified (as in 10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:13; 16:1, 17; 18:4). Sometimes the voice comes out of heaven (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13; 18:4) or is in heaven (12:10) or emanates from the heavenly temple (16:1, 17). Once the source of the voice seems to be that of God himself (18:4), but usually it seems to be that of an angel speaking on behalf of God. Here in 19:5 the voice comes from “the throne,” and because it invites the slaves of God (“his slaves”) to worship him, most likely it is an angel who is speaking, perhaps one of the angels of God’s presence who stand before him and wait on him (e.g., see Lk 1:19). (CC)

The entire community of heaven, particularly the church of God's saints, is summoned to worship the Lord, who now at the End takes his reign and demonstrates before the whole creation that he, the Lord Yahweh, is King. (CC)

fear. Filial fear of God, which combines awe, devotion, and tenderness. (TLSB)

both and great – God's people are identified as "his slaves, and those who fear him, the small and the great." In one of the hallelujah psalms (Psalm 135) "the slaves of Yahweh" (Ps 135:1) and "those who fear Yahweh" (Ps 135:20) are invited to "bless Yahweh" (Ps 135:19–20) and "praise Yah!" (הַלְלֵי יְהוָה, Ps 135:1, 21). And in Psalm 115 the psalmist declares that "Yahweh ... will bless those who fear Yahweh, the small with the great" (Ps 115:12–13). The identification of God's saints in Rev 19:5 as "his slaves ... who fear him, the small and the great" echoes their identification in 11:18. There the prophets of God are called "slaves" and the saints of God are "those who fear [his] name, the small and the great." In 20:12 all the dead are raised and stand before God in judgment, including "the great and the small." And in 19:18 the fallen and doomed hosts of the harlot and the beast include "all free people" and "slaves" and "small and great ones." The designation "the small and the great" includes all people of whatever social, economic, or educational rank or status. It encompasses *all* of God's saints here in 19:5 (cf. 1 Cor 1:26–28) and *all* of the unbelieving hosts of the harlot in Rev 19:18. A telling and dramatic illustration of "the small and the great" worshipping the Lord God took place at the first advent of Jesus Christ, the beginning of God establishing his reign over the human race, when shepherds came to worship the newborn Christ Child (Lk 2:8–20) and later Magi too came to adore the Child (Mt 2:1–12). (CC)

19:1–5 The heavenly chorus praises God for the collapse and destruction of the great prostitute Babylon. Some may be reluctant to join in this praise, still feeling sympathetic to Babylon and thus exhibiting a shameful self-centeredness. But Christ frees us from tyranny's grip and promises to share the spoils of His victory with us. Thus, we can heartily join in this praise now and forever. • Holy Spirit, move my heart and voice to join in this great hallelujah chorus, both here on earth and then forever in heaven. Amen.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. **7** Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; **8** it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. **9** And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." **10** Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

19:6-10 This call to worship is the prelude to the announcement of the marriage feast of the Lamb and an invitation to the same (Rev 19:6–10). John hears "something like a voice of an immense crowd" (19:6). Unlike 19:5, this time the source of the "voice" is identified, that of "an immense crowd." Most likely this is the same crowd that is mentioned in 19:1–3 and consists of the heavenly hosts of God's saints and angels. In 19:1–3 the heavenly hosts celebrated God's judgment of the harlot. Here (19:6–8) the same heavenly hosts rejoice at the pending marriage feast of the Lamb. (CC)

19:6 *great multitude* – This time the voice of the heavenly crowd is “like the sound of many waters and like the noise of crashing thunders” (19:6). The shout of this immense crowd of the heavenly hosts is so loud in the ears of John that it sounded perhaps like “the roar of a mighty cataract.” The voice of the exalted Son of Man, when he came to commission John, was also “like the sound of many waters” (Rev 1:15; cf. Ezek 1:24; 43:2; Dan 10:6). As the church triumphant sings, it is in a voice “like the sound of many waters” (Rev 19:6). The church militant, pictured as the 144,000 standing on Mt. Zion with the Lamb (14:1–5), previously heard coming from heaven the “new song” (14:3; cf. 5:9) that was likened to the “sound of many waters” (14:2). While still on earth, they too learned to sing the “new song” of the church triumphant in heaven. In 14:1, the church militant stood in readiness for the judgment of Babylon at the present world’s end and in joyful readiness to be received before God in heaven and thus to join the church triumphant. And so the whole church anticipated the second coming of Christ (14:14–20) as she sang the “new song.” Here again in 19:6–8 the entire people of God, and this time joined by the angelic hosts, shout out in a loud voice “like the sound of many waters” in joyful anticipation of the marriage of the Lamb and also of Christ’s immediate second coming to receive his bride (19:11–16). (CC)

The loud voice was also “like the noise of crashing thunders” (19:6). The adjective “crashing, mighty,” *ισχυρός*, connotes divinity in 5:2; 10:1; 18:2, 21, where in each case an angel acts or speaks for God himself. In 18:8 the adjective describes the Lord God himself. Perhaps there came to the mind of John the sevenfold יהוה יקול in Ps 29:3–9, the “voice of Yahweh” who “thunders” over “many waters” (Ps 29:3) (Cf. Ps. 18:13 {MT 18:14}; 68:33 {MT 68:34}; Jer. 25:30). Apparently John actually heard the sevenfold thundering voice of Yahweh (Ps 29:3–9) when the “mighty angel” (Rev 10:1) cried out with a voice “as when a lion roars,” since it was accompanied by the voices of “the seven thunders” (10:3–4). That could perhaps also be the “noise of crashing/mighty thunders” John hears here in 19:6. Certainly all this indicates that the shout of the heavenly hosts of both saints and angels was overwhelming, since it is likened to the sound of rushing waters and the deafening noise of crashing thunders. There could be no greater shout than that which announced the marriage of the Lamb with his bride and its ensuing banquet. For it was like the shouting, mighty voice of God himself, as if he were the one announcing the marriage of his Son (cf. Mt 22:2–3). But God gave this honor to his church triumphant, accompanied antiphonally by the angelic hosts. (CC)

The announcement of the marriage of the Lamb is introduced by a fourth “hallelujah” (19:6). This hallelujah serves both as a confirmation of what is being said in the second stanza of the Hallelujah Chorus (19:6–8) and as a transition from the first stanza (19:1–3) to the second. The first stanza celebrated the judgment of the harlot in the salvation and glory of God. This second stanza celebrates the inauguration of the royal reign of Yahweh, God Almighty, which inauguration actually comes about by means of the marriage of the Lamb and its feast. (It is by the marriage of his Son that God will exhibit his everlasting reign for all to see; cf. 1 Cor 15:24–28; Phil 2:9–11.) Thus the two stanzas of the Hallelujah Chorus proclaim in words of praise the final deliverance of God’s people and the unveiling of the kingship of the Lord God in the ceremony of the wedding of his Son, all to the praise and glory of him who is the Creator and King of all life. (CC)

almighty reigns – Echoes the core proclamation of the earthly Jesus, who over and over taught about “the kingdom [reign] of God.” For the characters in this scene, the coming of God’s kingdom/reign is no longer a matter of faith but of sight and direct experience. (TLSB)

The first thing mentioned in the second stanza of the Hallelujah Chorus sung by the heavenly choir of saints and angels is this fact: that Yahweh, God Almighty, “has taken his reign” (19:6).

The aorist indicative active form (ἐβασίλευσεν) suggests a completed and single action by which the Lord God *enters into his reign as King*, an action or event by which *he takes his kingdom and exhibits that he alone is King*. Of course, God never lost his kingdom, for he is the eternal King (1 Tim 1:17), and he has always ruled everything through *power* and judgment. But his *gracious* reign over the human race was interrupted by humanity's sin of rebellion, beginning with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1–24). In that sin humanity lost paradise. But God would win back mankind and again exercise his reign of grace and love, and thus (so to speak) take back his kingdom. This he did through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his Son. (CC)

The OT anticipates this coming of the kingdom in Christ. It says Yahweh reigns especially when he acts in history to save and deliver his people (e.g., Ex 15:18). He reigns on Zion, the place of the temple, the sacrifices for sin, and God's Word (e.g., Is 6:5; 24:23), and that is where he installs his Son, the Anointed One, or Christ, as King. At his first advent Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom of God (e.g., Mt 3:2; 4:17) and was crowned as King on the cross (Mt 27:29, 37). His accession to the throne of David (Is 9:6–7 [MT 9:5–6]) was signaled by his victorious resurrection (Rom 1:3–4). (CC)

The book of Revelation begins on this very note: *through the victory of his Son, Jesus Christ, God regained his gracious reign over his people*. Rev 1:5–6 testifies that by his blood Jesus Christ set God's people free from their sins and thus “made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ). This theme is repeated in 5:9–10 at the exaltation and coronation of the Lamb, when the heavenly hosts praise the Lord Christ because he ransomed with his “blood [a people] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and . . . made them for our God a kingdom and priests.” During earthly life this reign of God over his people, while present through the eyes and the knowledge of faith (see e.g., Lk 17:20–21), is not openly seen by God's people (see e.g., 1 Cor 2:9–10; Heb 2:7–9), nor is it acknowledged by the unbelieving people of the world (see e.g., 1 Cor 2:6–8). *But at this world's end, when the Lord Christ at his second coming displays his exalted lordship over the entire human race for all to see and acknowledge* (Mt 24:29–31; 26:64; cf. Phil 2:6–11), *God will claim his rule over all people in full view of every human eye. In particular, he will openly enter his eternal reign over his saints* (see e.g., 1 Cor 15:20–28). Here in Rev 19:6 John hears that the Lord God has come into that gracious reign over his own people. Previously, God had established his eternal reign in power and judgment over his foes through the fall of Babylon in Revelation 17–18, which permanently crushed all rebellion and removed forever any and every threat to the welfare of his people. (CC)

As Yahweh, the God of his people, enters his reign, he is identified as “the Almighty” (ὁ παντοκράτωρ, 19:6). In the LXX this title for God is used primarily to translate the Hebrew word שַׁבְּאוֹת (“Sabaoth, hosts, armies”). The title or epithet “Yahweh of hosts” expresses the idea that Yahweh is the God over everything—“the heavens and the earth and all their host” (Gen 2:1)—and all powers, human and angelic and spiritual. It thus expresses Yahweh's sovereign power and majesty over the entire history of the human race and its affairs, and it says that he is the only God over all the powers throughout the entire universe. It is an epithet and title of supreme might and creative power that sums up Israel's faith in Yahweh, that he alone is the King and only God and Lord of heaven and earth and everything that exists in them.³¹ In particular, God names as “my hosts” “my people, the children of Israel” (Ex 7:4); his redeemed people are “all the hosts of Yahweh” (Ex 12:41). Now at the End and by way of the wedding of the Lamb and his bride, the church, the Lord God will openly display this sovereign lordship over the entire universe as Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, “the Almighty” (Rev 19:6). (CC)

19:7 marriage of the Lamb. The imagery of a wedding to express the intimate relationship between God and his people has its roots in the prophetic literature of the OT (e.g., Isa 54:5–7; Hos 2:19). Cf. the NT usage (Mt 22:2–14; Eph 5:32). (CSB)

Although coming to faith and being baptized function as our betrothal to Christ (2Co 11:2), the solemnization and consummation of the Church’s marriage to Him nonetheless remain a future event. This scene portrays how that future consummation will be. (TLSB)

made herself ready. The bride’s preparations for the marriage are the result of God’s grace and Spirit, not simply her own efforts. (TLSB)

This gives cause for the rest of the second and final stanza of the Hallelujah Chorus, in which all the heavenly hosts burst out as they “rejoice” and “celebrate” (19:7–8). The immediate cause for the rejoicing and celebration is the “marriage of the Lamb” (19:7). But because this marriage of the Lamb with his bride is the occasion by which Yahweh, the Almighty God, openly enters his reign and receives his kingdom, the real and actual purpose of the rejoicing and celebrating is to “give the glory to him” (19:7). The marriage of the Lamb causes and motivates the celebration, but its purpose and end result is to glorify Yahweh, God Almighty. (CC)

The concept of the divine marriage “is deeply rooted” in the OT. The OT usually pictures Israel as Yahweh’s *wife* and implies that the original marriage *already took place* at the exodus (e.g., Hos 2:14–16, which envisions a remarriage like the first one; cf. Ezek 16:8). The entire book of Hosea dramatizes Yahweh’s faithfulness to his people as a faithful husband despite their spiritual adultery. Though his people were unfaithful, God would call them back to himself as their rightful husband, even as Hosea bought back his unfaithful wife, Gomer, and renewed the marriage vow of faithfulness (Hos 3:1–3). In Hos 2:19–20 (MT/LXX 2:21–22) Yahweh promises through the prophet, “I will betroth you to myself forever.” Speaking to Israel as to a woman (feminine singular), God continues, “I will betroth you to myself in righteousness [LXX: ἐν δικαιοσύνη] and in justice [ἐν κρίματι] and in mercy [ἐν ἐλέει] and in compassion (ἐν οἰκτιρμοῖς).” A third time God vows, “I will betroth you to myself in faithfulness [LXX: ἐν πίστει], and you will know Yahweh.” In Is 54:5–8 the Lord calls himself his people’s “Creator,” “husband,” and “Redeemer” (cf. Is 62:5). Even though he temporarily hid his face from his unfaithful wife, he would bring her back and show mercy to her “with eternal grace” (עוֹלָם עֲרֻבָהּ, Is 54:8). In Ezek 16:4–14 the prophet narrates in detail how Yahweh raised, wooed, and wed his people: “I passed by you and saw you, and behold, your age was the age of love. So I spread my garment over you, and I covered your nakedness. I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you ... and you became mine” (Ezek 16:8). (CC)

This imagery of the divine marriage between God and his people is carried over into the NT. However, the NT pictures the relationship as an *engagement*, with the wedding still in the *future* (unlike the OT, which portrays Israel as the wife already married to Yahweh.) Now the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the bridegroom of the bride, the church. In the parable of the marriage feast (Mt 22:2–14), the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a king who plans a marriage for his son. (Though the bride is not mentioned, she is presupposed.) In Mt 9:15 (Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34) Jesus refers to himself as “the bridegroom” (ὁ νυμφίος). In Jn 3:28–29 John the Baptist refers to himself as only “the friend” (ὁ φίλος) of the bridegroom, for it is Jesus Christ who alone has “the bride” (τὴν νύμφην). Paul in 2 Cor 11:2 speaks of the believers in Corinth as a “chaste virgin” (παρθένον ἀγνήν) whom he pledged to one husband, who is Jesus Christ. And Paul also uses the imagery of the divine marriage in Eph 5:22–33 when he likens the relationship between husband and wife to that of Christ and the church (cf. Rom 7:1–6). (CC)

Among the Israelites and later among the Jewish people at the time of Christ, marriage had two major events: the betrothal and the wedding itself accompanied by a feast. Betrothal was taken very seriously; it was tantamount to marriage, but the betrothed couple did not come together and live as husband and wife until the wedding and its feast.³⁹ The wedding ceremony and the marriage feast usually took place at the house of the bridegroom (see, e.g., Gen 29:21–22). The wedding feast could last for a week (Judg 14:12) or even two weeks (Tobit 8:19–20). Often the groom would pay a betrothal price to the bride’s father (Gen 34:12; Ex 22:16; 1 Sam 18:24–27; 2 Sam 3:14; cf. Ruth 4:10). (CC)

19:8 *granted*. † Reflects the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. (CSB)

Emphasizes that the saints’ righteous deeds, which are here identified with spiritual adornment, are a gift granted by God, not a human achievement. (TLSB)

righteous deeds – God chose the seed of Abraham to be his people, his bride, Israel. She proved to be unfaithful and adulterous, but amazingly God promised to pardon her and to betroth himself to her again forever at a price he himself would pay: “I will betroth you to myself in righteousness and in justice and in mercy and in compassion; and I will betroth you to myself in faithfulness” (Hos 2:19–20 [MT/LXX 2:21–22]). How poignantly this was carried out in the life and crucifixion and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! For this was the betrothal price that God paid in order to purchase his people as his bride. Paul reminds his readers (e.g., 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 11:2) that they were purchased at a price and therefore belong to Christ as his betrothed (cf. 1 Pet 1:18–19; Rev 1:5–6; 5:9–10). It was in the “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) of Christ that God made his chosen people to be his betrothed wife. (CC)

Thus the bridegroom has *purchased* his betrothed and made her to be his *promised* wife. That promise will be fulfilled when Christ returns for his bride at the End. But now John hears that “the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has prepared herself” and is now ready for her husband, the Lord Christ, to claim her and receive her (Rev 19:7). How does she make herself ready for the wedding? It is not her own preparation to be received by her husband in marriage that made her the bride of Christ. The Lord Christ himself, when he chose her to be his wife, made her worthy of such an honor by paying the betrothal price. Ezekiel (16:8–10) had prophesied that God covered his chosen one with his garments when he betrothed himself to her. And so Jesus Christ clothed his chosen one with the garment of righteousness, washing her in his blood and thus making her pure and holy (see Rev 5:9–10; 7:14–15). Isaiah also described how Yahweh prepared his betrothed. God clothed his chosen people with the “garments of salvation” (עֲשֵׂתֵי יְרֵבָבֶקֶת; LXX: ἱμάτιον σωτηρίου) and adorned them with “a robe of righteousness” (הַקִּדְרָץ לְיַעֲקֹב; LXX: χιτῶνα εὐφοροσύνης) “as a bridegroom dresses his head ... and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Is 61:10). (CC)

Purchased by means of the betrothal price which Jesus Christ himself paid to make her his bride, now as his betrothed she prepares herself for the wedding. “There was given to her that she should be clothed in pure, bright linen” (Rev 19:8). Her attendants clothe her with the wedding garment of pure linen. The wedding garment is defined as “the righteous deeds [τὰ δικαιώματα] of the saints” (19:8). This garment is not the same as the robes of the saints in heaven in 7:9–17, for those robes were made white by the blood of the Lamb (7:14). The robe of each of the saints in the church triumphant, before God’s heavenly throne, is the robe of *Christ’s blood and righteousness* by which they are covered and thus stand forgiven and righteous before him (7:13–17). The wedding garment here in 19:8 is defined as the *righteous deeds of the saints*. Perhaps it could be pictured as an outer cloak worn over the robe of Christ’s righteousness so as to adorn and glorify it (cf. Titus 2:10). (CC)

Ever since she was betrothed to her husband and covered by his garment of righteousness, she has adorned herself with works and actions that demonstrated that she belonged to Christ and to no other. For soon he would come and claim her as his wife, and until then she, by grace and through faith, remains faithful to him. “The righteous deeds of the saints” (Rev 19:8) are “the saintly acts of the members of Christ, wrought in them by His Spirit.” *These good works of Christian piety and sanctification are as much a gift of God’s grace in Christ as is the saving status of righteousness merited by his sacrificial work.*⁴⁴ It is by these “righteous deeds” that God’s people on earth glorify him (Mt 5:16) and by which they adorn the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ’s saving victory (Titus 2:10). And it is these works of Christ’s love that God will use in the judgment at the End as evidence to demonstrate that they are his faithful people (Mt 25:31–40). (CC)

In reality it is Jesus Christ, her husband-to-be, who fashions the wedding garment, the “righteous deeds” with which she is clothed. For he set her free to do these works, and by the Spirit of God empowered her to do so. And so at the wedding and its feast she is clothed in the garment of deeds wrought by herself but given to her as a gift from her husband-to-be. Now the bride stands ready to be received by her husband. The Lord Christ had purchased her as his bride by paying the betrothal price, and he has thus clothed his betrothed in the robe of his righteousness. All through the time of her betrothal to the Lord Christ, she wore this robe of his righteousness, the wearing of which covered her sin, sanctified her, and made her pure and a virgin for her husband. Also during her time of betrothal, the time of her exile here on earth, she prepared her wedding garment (“prepared herself,” Rev 19:7) through “righteous deeds” (19:8), which she would wear as an adornment of her robe of righteousness. Clothed in this wedding garment, granted to her from her husband, she was ready for the wedding and its feast to begin (cf. Mt 22:11–14; Rev 21:2). (CC)

19:9 *Blessed.* The fourth beatitude. (CSB)

Perhaps while the Hallelujah Chorus was still ringing in his ears, John hears someone saying to him, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who have been invited to the feast of the marriage of the Lamb’ ” (19:9). Most likely the speaker is the same angel (one of the seven censer-angels from Revelation 15–16, who also are the seven angels of the seven churches in Revelation 2–3) who has been John’s guide since the vision of the End began in 17:1. (CC)

The angel says, “Blessed” (19:9). Seven times in Revelation the word μακάριος appears, each time to introduce a beatitude (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). These may be called “the seven beatitudes” of Revelation; in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) there are nine beatitudes (5:3–12). The first beatitude in Revelation (1:3) pronounces a blessing upon the one who hears and keeps the prophetic message of Revelation. In 14:13 a blessing is spoken over those who die in the Lord and who have received rest from their earthly toil, and “their works accompany them.” In the third beatitude (16:15) the blessing is spoken to the one who watches and is ready for the Lord’s second coming at the End; such a Christian guards his “garments” (τὰ ἱμάτια) so that the shame of his nakedness will not be visible. (CC)

The fourth beatitude, here in 19:9, appears in a logical thought sequence after the second and third beatitudes. The works that follow those who die in the Lord (14:13) are now pictured as the wedding garment of “pure, bright linen” (19:8) worn by the bride of the Lamb. And the “garments” that cover the individual Christian’s shame in 16:15 are the same as the robe of righteousness from Christ (7:14) by which his people were betrothed to him and which in 19:8 is now adorned with the wedding garment given to the bride. And so the fourth beatitude here 19:9

is pronounced over all those who have been invited to the wedding of the Lord Christ and his bride. For the bride has kept her garment of righteousness, which covers her nakedness and keeps her pure and virgin (16:15), and her wedding garment is ready to wear, for her works have followed her (14:13). She is now ready and her husband receives her. How “blessed” are those invited to the wedding! (CC)

So then the fourth beatitude is now spoken to the invited guests. But who are these guests who attend the wedding and its feast? The manner in which the metaphorical figure of the bride is used for the church might suggest that the guests are different from the bride. But in reality they are one and the same. *The bride in the collective sense consists of the guests who have been invited and who have been brought in*, as pictured in the parable of the marriage feast in Matthew (22:1–14; cf. Lk 14:15–21). In the parable, some of those invited did not accept the invitation. In Rev 19:9 the blessing is addressed to and realized only in those who are actually brought in and who then sit as guests at the feast. They are now the guests of honor at the marriage feast of the Lamb, for they are the bride of the Lord Christ. So while all who heard the gracious invitation of God were blessed in that they were recipients of the invitation, only the guests now ushered into the banquet hear the blessing and receive the contents of it: to sit in the presence of God as the bride of his Christ (cf. 3:21). (CC)

As the guests come forward to take their place by grace as the bride of Christ, the announced beatitude of God’s blessing envelopes them and thrills their hearts. Perhaps the prophetic pronouncement of Isaiah momentarily came to the mind of John: “On this mountain Yahweh of hosts will prepare for all the peoples a banquet of rich foods, a banquet of aged wines. . . he will swallow up death forever and . . . wipe away [every] tear from upon every face” (Is 25:6–8). Upon reflection John would have remembered the word of the Lord Jesus that “many will come from the east and the west and will recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens” (Mt 8:11; cf. Lk 13:28–30). Certainly there would be before his mind’s eye the parable of the marriage feast (Mt 22:1–14) as a point of comparison. Possibly also there would have come to mind the words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, “I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I will drink it anew with you in the kingdom of my Father” (Mt 26:29). (CC)

In Jewish theology (as reflected in pseudepigrapha) the thought and picture of a holy meal prepared by God for his people was also present, most likely drawn from references such as Is 25:6–8 and Is 55:1–2. For example, in 4 Ezra 2:38–40 at a heavenly feast prepared by God for his people, the invited guests are said to have been sealed for this honor and to have received “glorious garments” from God, and thus they are “clothed in white.” 3 Enoch 48:10 says that when Israel is saved, the Messiah will appear and God’s people, of both Israel and the Gentiles, will share in a banquet. (CC)

supper. Same word as used in 1Co 11:20, where it refers to Holy Communion. This beatitude promises blessing not only to those who participate in heaven but also to those receiving the Lord’s Supper here and now. (TLSB)

true words of God. † Verbal inspiration. (CSB)

Here in Rev 19:9 the heavenly banquet furnished by God takes place at the End. It is the marriage feast of Christ and his bride, the saints of God. To affirm this, and as if to remind John, the angel says, “These are the true words of God” (19:9). Certainly this is an appropriate assessment of all Scripture. But this particular affirmation of divine authority is aimed specifically at this beatitude, as well as the whole section of the prophetic message beginning with 17:1 through 19:9. For it

seems to be the same angel who guides John throughout the message concerning the present world's end (17:1–22:5) who now speaks these words of affirmation. Also, the Hallelujah Chorus and the marriage feast are the culmination of all that has been revealed to John so far concerning Christ's return and the ensuing End. Two further times a similar affirmation of God's divine authority will be spoken concerning a part of the message of Revelation: in 21:5 in connection with the revelation of the new heaven and new earth and in 22:6 at the beginning of the epilogue. Here in 19:9 the definite article (“the,” *οι*) before “words” (*λόγοι*) makes it all the more emphatic that these words are “*the* words” of God, and that they are true and trustworthy. (CC)

19:10 *fell at his feet.* At the conclusion of the Hallelujah Chorus and at the words of the affirmation that God's words are true, John “fell before his [the angel's] feet to worship him” (19:10). It is a little difficult to understand why John would so revere an angel, especially considering his background. No true son of Abraham would ever knowingly worship anyone save God alone (cf. Deut 5:6–10; 6:4–5; Is 42:8). And especially since the Logos became flesh, John would always worship God only through Jesus Christ (see Jn 1:18; 14:6–11; cf. Col 1:14–20; Heb 1:1–3). Did John momentarily or mistakenly think that this angel was the Lord Christ himself in angelic guise? Probably not, for if John had ever taken an angel for the Lord Christ, it probably would have been the angel of Rev 10:1, who was arrayed in the majestic emblems of Christ's glory as well as those of God the Father. But John did not worship that “mighty angel.” The angel who mediates God's message to John in 17:1–19:10 is never arrayed in the holy and majestic glory of Christ. Rather, he is designated as “one of the seven angels who have the seven censers” (17:1). More likely, John fell before the angel to worship him because he was so overwhelmed by what he had just seen and heard (from 17:1 to 19:10) by God's revelation and word that he fell before the angel in awe and reverence. (CC)

must not do it – The Bible consistently forbids the worship of anyone other than the one true God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

Nevertheless, John should not have done so. No matter how much one is overwhelmed by the Word of God spoken by a prophet or an angel (or a pastor or evangelist), because of the awe that that Word evokes and out of respect for the holiness of the event, one is never to worship the messenger, but only God himself, who sent the messenger. While John's action might be understandable, the word of Paul in Col 2:18 should be a corrective, for one is never to be so awed by a godly event as to engage in the “worship of angels” (*θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων*). (CC)

With a sharp rebuke, “See that you do not [do that]!” (*ὄρα μή*, 19:10), the angel immediately rejects any and all such forms of worship. Even though he is a godly and heavenly messenger, given such an overwhelming revelation and word from God, he is still just a “fellow slave” of God like John himself and all John's “brothers” and fellow saints, “who have the witness of Jesus” (19:10). Angels are never to be worshiped, for as stated elsewhere, they are created beings and so are far lower in status than the Lord Christ, who is the Son of God and is himself God (e.g., Heb 1:4–13). And whenever angels are sent to earth by God, they carry out his mission as servants who are ministers to God's saints, the heirs of Christ's salvation (Heb 1:14) (Cf. Ps. 34:4-7 {MT 34:7-8}; 91:9-12). So the angel identifies himself as “a fellow slave” (*σύνδουλος*) of God just as John is, and just as are all God's saints on earth (Rev 19:10). Thus the angel and John stand before and under God as slaves equally. Though they have different roles of service, God alone is the author of whatever service they are called upon to do (cf. 1 Cor 3:5–9). (CC)

testimony of Jesus – The divine prophetic word is here equated with the message from and about Christ. (TLSB)

The directive of the angel to “worship only God” is placed between the mention of those “who have the witness of Jesus” and the statement that “the witness of Jesus is the Spirit of the prophecy” (Rev 19:10). The double mention of “witness” (μαρτυρία) in this context suggests that the saints on earth, God’s slaves, worship God by being witnesses of Jesus to the world. This brings to mind what Jesus said to the disciples in Lk 24:44–48: the message of the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Writings of the OT was fulfilled in his death and resurrection, and in his name the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations, for the disciples were “witnesses [μάρτυρες] of these things.” “*The witness of Jesus is the Spirit of the prophecy*” (Rev 19:10), *that is, the witness that the Spirit gave in the prophetic writings of the OT is the same witness that the apostles and John and the saints of God now hold concerning Christ* (cf. 1 Pet 1:10–12), *and it is the witness which they proclaim to the world. By this witness they worship God.* To worship an angel would signify that their witness was not to Christ and his saving victory, but to an angel, and this they are never to do. (CC)

Does “the witness of Jesus” (ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ) mean “the witness *about* Jesus,” taking Ἰησοῦ to be an objective genitive? Or is it to be understood as “the witness *from* Jesus,” the witness which Jesus himself gives, interpreting Ἰησοῦ as a subjective genitive? Often this kind of genitive does not sharply distinguish between these two possibilities so as to be one and not the other, but rather includes some elements of both possibilities.⁵⁸ *It is the witness which Jesus gave concerning himself in his ministry on earth* (e.g., Mk 2:10–11) *and which he now continues to give by the Spirit* (Jn 15:26) *through the witness of God’s people on earth* (e.g., Jn 15:27; Acts 1:8). It is also the witness which tells about Jesus’ victory for the human race, that is, the Gospel message about his birth and ministry and life and death and resurrection (see, e.g., Rom 3:21–26; Gal 2:15–21; cf. Acts 2:32–38). Here in Rev 19:10 this “witness” is that message about Jesus’ saving work, which is witnessed to by Christ himself and which he gave to the church to hold and proclaim to others, namely, that Christ is the Savior of the world. (CC)

spirit. Essence. (CSB)

“The Spirit of the prophecy” (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας) identifies “the witness of Jesus” (ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ) as the same witness that the Spirit gave to and through the prophetic message of the OT. This is the witness concerning the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, which witness is now conveyed through the “true words” (19:9) of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:10–12; 2 Peter 1:16–21; cf. Lk. 24:26–27, 44; 1 Cor. 2:13). (CC)

19:6–10 God follows up His victory over Babylon by solemnizing the marriage of His Son to His Bride, the Church. Though the Father earnestly invites all to come and be a part of this greatest imaginable marriage feast (Mt 22:1–14), some still resist the call of His Gospel. The Lord never gives up on them. Until the end of time, He continues to extend His gracious invitation to believe on His name and receive eternal life. • Lamb of God, because You have shed Your blood for me, keep me faithful to You so I may commune with You forever. Amen.

The Rider on a White Horse

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He

will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

19:11–21† The rider on the white horse. (CSB)

In these verses Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, is described as the “King of kings” (19:16) and the Lord of the hosts of heaven coming at the present world’s end. Though the rider on the horse is not designated as the Son of Man, “his eyes ... like a flame of fire” (19:12) together with the “sharp sword” (19:15) that issues from his mouth point out that he is the Son of Man (see 1:13–14, 16; 14:14; cf. 2:18). This is the second time in Revelation that the second coming of the Lord Christ is portrayed. In the vision of the harvest of the earth at the End in 14:14–20, the first view of his second coming, the Son of Man was pictured as the Lord of the harvest. Here in 19:11–16 he is described as the mighty warrior, the Lord of hosts, who comes at the End to execute the judgment of God and to carry out the sentence of that judgment (19:17–21). (CC)

19:11 *heaven opened* – The vision begins with “heaven opened” (19:11). In 4:1 John saw “an opened door in heaven” so that he could enter into the very presence of God. That began the visionary revelations through which the prophetic message of Revelation was given to him. Here in 19:11 heaven is opened and John sees the Lord Christ coming to inaugurate the events that occur at the End. The epiphany which began at the incarnation is about to be concluded in the display of the glory of God in this appearance of his Son as the victorious and conquering champion of his people. For Christ’s return is the conclusion of that mission which began with his life on earth. During his first advent Jesus completed his mission of offering the sacrificial atonement for the world’s sin. He also set in motion the church’s worldwide mission of Gospel proclamation. Now the time allotted for the church’s mission is concluded. Christ’s return at the End is the fulfillment of the promise that the two angels (the two “men” dressed in white) made to the disciples on the mount of the ascension when they said that the Lord would come again to them in the same manner in which they saw him ascending into heaven (οὕτως ἐλεύσεται ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ σύννεφον καὶ ἔρχεται ἐπὶ τοὺς σύννεφους, Acts 1:9–11). (CC)

white horse.† Probably not the white horse of 6:2. The context here indicates that the rider is Christ returning as Warrior-Messiah-King (cf. 1:5; 3:14; 6:10). (CSB)

A fitting mount for the royal commander in chief. (TLSB)

The Lord Christ is described as “the one sitting upon” a white horse, and he is designated as the one who is “faithful and true” (Rev 19:11). In 14:14 “the Son of Man” as he comes at the End was sitting on “a white cloud.” In his trial before the high priest Caiaphas Jesus said that when he came again as “the Son of Man,” he would come “upon the clouds of heaven” (Mt 26:64; cf. Mt 24:30; Dan 7:13). And according to Acts 1:9–11, as the Lord ascended into heaven in a cloud, his disciples were told that he would return in the same way. But here in Rev 19:11 he comes upon a

“white horse.” While clouds will accompany his coming as the emblem of God’s heavenly glory, his coming on a “white horse” points out that he comes as a *warrior*, a warrior who has been victorious in battle and now comes in triumph to claim his spoils, his rightful rewards (Is 40:10; 53:12; 62:11). (CC)

faithful and true – Jesus is similarly called the “faithful and true witness” in the letter to the Church in Laodicea. (TLSB)

He is called “faithful and true” (Rev 19:11). In the prologue of Revelation Jesus Christ is presented as “the witness, the faithful one” (ὁ πιστός, 1:5). In 3:14, at the beginning of the seventh letter, he is called “the witness, the faithful and true one” (ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός). The Lord Christ is the true and faithful witness from God and for God—the witness to all that is true about God and the human race. And as he comes at the present world’s end to execute the judgment of God, he comes as the only true and faithful one to witness to the truth of the only God.⁹ Thus he alone has the right to judge humanity on behalf of God and to determine the ultimate destiny of every last man, woman, and child, because of his incarnation, death, and resurrection (1:17–18). (CC)

judges and makes war – The Lord Christ comes in righteousness to judge and make war (19:11). In 19:15 the symbol of his judgment and warfare is “a sharp sword.” In the OT it is *Yahweh himself* who is presented as the mighty, all-conquering warrior who comes with his sharp “sword” (e.g., Josh 5:13; Is 27:1; 31:8; 66:16) and with his hosts to make war (Is 13:4) against his enemies and those of his people (e.g., Ex. 14:14; Deut. 3:22; Is. 31:4; Xech 14:3; cf. Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 10:20; Joel 3). But even in the OT the role of Yahweh as a warrior (Ex 15:3; Deut 10:17; Is 42:13) was pictorially and prophetically delegated and assigned to the Messiah, and as in Rev 19:15, he would conquer by means of the Word in his mouth. For example, in Is 11:1–5 the Branch of Jesse will execute the judgment of Yahweh by striking “the earth with the rod of his mouth.” As he carries out the judgment he will do so as one dressed in “righteousness” and “faithfulness” (Is 11:5). In Is 49:2 the messianic Suffering Servant says that Yahweh “set my *mouth* like a *sharp sword*.” In Josh 5:13–15, before the battle for Jericho, “the commander of Yahweh’s army” (LXX: ὁ ... ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως κυρίου) with “a drawn sword” appeared to Joshua, and Yahweh told Joshua that he would deliver Jericho to him (Josh 6:2). This idea that the Messiah would carry out Yahweh’s role as warrior is continued in the NT. In 2 Thess 2:8 the Lord Jesus at his second coming “will kill by the spirit [τῷ πνεύματι] of his mouth” the “man of lawlessness” (cf. Mt 10:34). Now here in Rev 19:11 John sees in dramatic fashion the Lord Christ coming as the warrior of Yahweh to judge and destroy the enemies of God and of his saints—now the beast and the false prophet—by casting them into hell (19:19–21). (CC)

19:12 eyes.† His omniscience (cf. Jn 2:24; Ro 2:16). (CSB)

“His eyes were like a flame of fire” (19:12) directly identifies the one sitting on the white horse as “the Son of Man” (1:13) who appeared to John in 1:9–20 and commissioned him to write Revelation (1:19). As the Son of Man, his hair was white and his eyes were like a flame of fire (1:14; cf. 2:18), his legs were like fiery polished brass and his voice like rushing waters (1:15), and his appearance was like the sun (1:16). Of those characteristics, here in 19:12 only his blazing fiery-like eyes are mentioned. Such eyes indicate a penetrating look of holy purification before which no human can stand unless covered and cleansed by the forgiveness and righteousness of God (Ex 19:10–19; Mal 3:1–4; 4:1–3). Nothing is unknown or hidden from such searching, searing eyes (Heb 4:12–13). (CC)

fire.† (Cf. 1:14.) (CSB)

diadems.† Diadems, as symbols of divine rule, not victory crown (*stephanos*) as in 6:2. (CSB)

Authentic royal crowns. These stand in contrast to the counterfeit diadems of the dragon and first beast (13:1) (TLSB) (CLHS – Crown Him with many crowns)

“Upon his head were many diadems” (Rev 19:12). Though the Son of Man in 1:9–20 was robed in a long flowing robe with a golden cincture like that of the high priest, no diadems were mentioned. But here in 19:12 he wears on his head “many diadems.” The diadem (διάδημα) signifies kingly royalty and authoritative sovereignty, and he who wears it exercises absolute and lordly power. In the first vision of the second coming of Christ at the harvest at the End (14:14), “the Son of Man” wore a crown (στέφανος) which represented his victory. By right of his victory (see 5:5–10), he was rewarded with the authority to be the Lord of the harvest. Here in the second vision of his return at the End, the Son of Man now wears “many diadems” (19:12) because he comes as the absolute Ruler and Lord to execute God’s judgment as his mighty warrior. He comes now as the regal Lord who already became the Victor at his resurrection. (CC)

In 12:3 the dragon (Satan, the devil) wore seven diadems and by them falsely claimed that he was the spiritual ruler of the universe. Despite that pretense, Jesus, during his temptations in the wilderness, refused to ascribe to Satan such royal sovereignty (Mt 4:8–9), for that sovereignty would be conferred upon God’s Son by his Father (cf. Pss 2:6–8; 110:1–2). In Rev 13:1 the beast from the sea, the first henchman of the dragon, wore ten diadems, by means of which it arrogantly boasted that it was the supreme ruler on earth in human affairs. Now the Lord Christ as the mighty warrior wears “many diadems” (19:12), far more than the seven of the dragon and the ten of the first beast. The “many diadems” (διαδήματα πολλά) could be understood as *all* the diadems, which now are on the head of the Son of Man, for at his coming to judge no one will dare to wear a diadem of any sort. (CC)

name written.† A secret name whose meaning is veiled from all created beings (cf. 2:17). (CSB)

Probably refers to the sacred name by which God revealed Himself to Moses (Ex 3:14). (TLSB)

The rider on the white horse has “a name written which no one knows except he himself” (19:12). What is this name? Perhaps John thought it best not to inquire, for even to speculate about it would be out of place. Perhaps there came to his mind the incident related in Gen 32:22–32, when Jacob wrestled with the mysterious divine presence in the form of a man. When Jacob asked his name, he answered, “Why do you ask my name?” No name was given. Nevertheless, the “man” blessed him, and Jacob realized that he had seen “God face to face.” So here in Rev 19:12, even if John had asked, perhaps he would have been given no answer with regard to the name. Speculation nevertheless exists. Was this hidden name the sacred tetragrammaton, that is, יהוה (“Yahweh”), a name so awesome and holy that Jewish custom refrained from pronouncing it? (In place of it יְיָ [“my Lord”] usually was pronounced.) In the NT the Lord Christ is associated with and identified as the visible presence of Yahweh, the ineffable God (Jn. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:L4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; cf. Jn. 8:56-58). (CC)

However, “Yahweh” is probably not the unknown name here written, for the name of Yahweh was known and could have been read and identified. The name in Rev 19:12 was written and evidently was visible to John, but it could not be deciphered. In 2:17 the one “who conquers,” that is, the faithful Christian, will be given “a new name written which no one knows except the

one who receives it.” In 3:12 the Lord Christ says that he “will write upon” the one who conquers “the name of my God and the name of the city of my God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God—and my own new name.” Is the unknown name here in 19:12 the “new name” of the Lord Christ which will be revealed only when he has returned and established the everlasting reign of God in the new heaven and new earth? Is it that “new name” which he will also share with God’s faithful saints and thus only he and they will know? Is this unknown name related to what is said in Phil 2:9–11, that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow ... and every tongue confess”? Whatever the exact meaning, it seems to imply a name which is now hidden from those on earth but expresses the mystery of Christ’s own person and exalted status as the Son Man. It is a mystery that only the Son of God fully understands but which his true believers, after the parousia and their resurrection and entrance into the new heaven and new earth, will also have and know (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). (CC)

There might be a connection between the hidden name of Jesus (19:12), the hidden name given Christians (2:17; cf. 3:12), and Baptism. In Baptism the triune God is pronounced (Mt. 28:19), and it became customary for the person baptized to receive his “Christian name” (today the first name) on that occasion. In Baptism a person is given a new status as a child of God with the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and new and everlasting life (Acts 2:38-39); Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:27-29; Col. 2:11-13). However, all that is hidden from sight and especially is hidden from the unbelieving world. It will be revealed for all to see only on the Last Day (Col. 3:1-4), as will (apparently) the hidden name written upon Christ in Rev. 19:12. (CC)

When the exalted Son of Man appeared to John in Revelation 1, he was dressed in a long flowing robe like that of the high priest (1:13). Here at his second coming he is a warrior clothed “with a garment that had been dipped in blood” (19:13). In Is 63:1–6 the prophet sees the Messiah, the one who says, “I am speaking in righteousness and am great enough to save” (Is 63:1), coming from Edom. Edom represents the enemies of God’s people, and the vision portrays the battle through which the Messiah delivered the people from their enemies, including their sins. As evidence that he destroyed the godless nations, he wears garments that are stained in red because of the blood that spattered on them as he trampled the enemies in his anger (Is 63:2–3). His garments looked like those of a person “treading [grapes] in a winepress” (Is 63:2). In this prophecy by Isaiah the trampling of the enemy was for both judgment and redemption (Is 63:4). Therefore the blood spattered on his garments included the blood of redemption, which the Messiah alone could provide (Is 63:3a; cf. Is 53:4–5, 8, 12)—that is, the Messiah’s own blood, shed in the battle he fought to save his people. The blood also was that of his enemies, shed because of his judgment against them—and this is the main emphasis in Is 63:1–6. (CC)

19:13 robe dipped in blood. Either the blood of the enemy shed in conflict (cf. 14:14–20; Isa 63:1–3), or the blood of Christ shed to atone for sin. (CSB)

The blood Jesus once shed for sinners (cf 7:14). (TLSB)

Upon reflection there likely came to the mind of John this reference in Isaiah, for now he sees in this vision of the Son of Man in Rev 19:13 what was prophetically received by the prophet. The emphasis here in 19:13, as also in Is 63:1–6, is that the blood on his garment is the blood of the enemies crushed in the judgment of God which he as the Son of Man executes. While he comes as the Redeemer to his own people (Is 62:12; 63:4), to unbelievers he comes as the judge and warrior of God. He comes to tread the winepress in the anger and judgment of God (Rev 19:15). But John “could hardly have failed to think also of the ‘Blood of the Lamb’ (1:5, 5:9, 7:14, 12:11) which was shed in the act of treading the enemy under foot.” The prophetic passage of Is 63:1–6

would also lead to such an interpretation. For by the shedding of his own blood to defeat the enemy, and thus bring salvation to God's people, Christ earned the right now to judge those enemies by the shedding of their blood. So his garment is "dipped in blood" (Rev 19:13), the blood that he shed for the redemption of God's saints. But that same blood now signifies that he has the right to judge and destroy God's enemies. And as he tramples underfoot the enemies, his garment will become spattered by their blood. Thus the first blood that covers his garment is his own, but as he comes in judgment, at his second coming, his garment will be stained with the blood of his enemies (19:15). (CC)

Word of God. † See Jn 1:1, 14; 1Jn 1:1. (CSB)

Important Christological title in John's Gospel (Jn 1:1–3, 14). As such, this verse forms an important thematic link between John's Gospel and Rv. (TLSB)

The warrior on the white horse who is called "faithful and true" (19:11) bears a name, "the Word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, 19:13). With the possible exception of Heb 4:12, the expressed thought of a personal "Word" (λόγος) is confined to Johannine literature. In the gospel of John the title is used as a personal name by which Jesus Christ is introduced as "the Word" who was "made flesh"—incarnate (Jn 1:1–14). In 1 Jn 1:1 the title "the Word of life" (ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς) is used in reference to Jesus Christ. In Jn 1:3, 10 the Word is presented as the person through whom all creation came about, and thus he is the agent of God's creation. The Word is identified as the "only-begotten God [μονογενῆς θεός] who is in the bosom [τὸν κόλπον] of the Father" (Jn 1:18). The Word is described as the person who brings light and life (Jn 1:4; 1 Jn 1:1–5). He is identified as the only-begotten (Son) of God (Jn 1:14, 18), Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). (CC)

Here in Rev 19:13 the Son of Man is called "the Word of God." Is the exalted Son of Man as the warrior-judge named "the Word of God" because he speaks for God and is the agent who carries out and executes the judgment on behalf of God? In the LXX the designation "the word of the Lord" (ὁ λόγος κυρίου) frequently appears as an OT phrase for the prophetic messages that came from God to the prophets (E.g., Micah 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; Zech. 1:1). The fact that John calls Jesus Christ "the Word of God" certainly implies that he is *the* prophetic spokesman for God (See Deut. 18:15; Jn. 6:14; Acts 3:22; 7:37; cf. Mt. 21:11; Jn. 7:40). He is the complete and perfect and final revelation of God to humankind in his person and work and in his teachings (see Heb 1:1–4). And now, as the exalted Son of Man, "the Word of God" will speak and execute the judgment of God. (CC)

When he comes as the warrior-judge bearing the name of "the Word of God," this name suggests that his role as the spokesman of God is not only for the judgment of God's enemies; the name also hints that as "the Word of God" he will, by means of the judgment and after it, carry out an active role in a new creation. For in Johannine literature the "Word" (Logos) is always presented as the powerful Word of God that creates and brings to life. While the emphasis here in Rev 19:11–16 is on the warrior-like role of a fearful judge, the fact that he is named "the Word of God" indicates that, after his second coming at the End, the Christ is going to do something more than judge—something positive by the grace of God, something creative and new. (CC)

19:14 *armies of heaven.* Angelic beings (cf. Dt 33:2; Ps 68:17); possibly also believers (cf. 17:14). (CSB)

Although the heavenly host is elsewhere solely angelic (Dt 33:2; Ps 68:17), it is possible that the army being described here includes the saints, since both this assembly and the aforementioned "Bride" of the Lamb (Rv 19:7) are attired in fine white linen. (TLSB)

“The hosts which are in heaven” (19:14) attend the Lord Christ as he comes. They are “dressed in pure, white linen” (19:14). “Hosts” in Greek (στρατεύματα, also twice in 19:19 and once in 9:16) designates “soldiers, armies of armed troops.” The closest OT equivalent is הַיְהוָה, the Hebrew word for “hosts, armies.” In the OT this plural form often appears as a part of a title for God, “Yahweh of hosts” (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), and it refers to the ranks of God’s people (e.g., Ex 12:41; 1 Sam 17:45; 2 Sam 7:26–27) and also to the heavenly bodies, the stars or the angels or both, for stars often represent angels (E.g., Judg. 5:20; Job 38:7; Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:4; 1 Enoch 90:24). Here in Rev 19:14 the “heavenly hosts” are the angelic hosts who follow and attend and serve the Lord Christ (cf. Zech 14:5; Mt 26:53). (CC)

An interesting thought is voiced in Neh 9:6, which says that Yahweh is the Lord because he created all the heavens and all their host (צְבָאוֹת) and the earth and everything on it and the seas and everything in them. Therefore Yahweh alone is the Lord because he is the Creator and Giver of all life (חַיִּים), and because of this all “the host of the heavens” (צְבָאוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם; LXX: αἱ στρατιαὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν) worship him. This reference in Nehemiah suggests that in the OT the title “Yahweh of hosts” was an epithet that expressed the idea that Yahweh was the only God of all creation, of all powers and might, and that the heavenly angelic hosts attending and serving him worship him as such. The fact that the heavenly hosts could also refer to the stars indicates that in his creative power Yahweh is also the Lord and master of the entire physical universe, to which fact the heavens and their hosts of stars give witness (Ps. 8:1-4; 19:1-4 {MT 8:2-5; 19:2-5}; cf. Ps. 97:6; Rom. 10:18). Here in Rev 19:14 “the hosts which are in heaven,” the angels, now attend and serve the exalted Lord Christ as he returns at the End to make war and to judge the enemies of God. (CC)

fine linen – The heavenly angelic hosts are “dressed in pure, white linen” (βύσσινον λευκὸν καθαρὸν, 19:14). The bride of Christ is dressed in “pure, bright linen” (βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν), which garment is “the righteous deeds [τὰ δικαιώματα] of the saints” (19:8). Here the clothing of the angels suggests “the righteousness of divine retaliation,” the purity and holiness of God’s righteous judgment to be executed now by the exalted Son of Man as he is attended by the angels in this holy task. While the “pure, white linen” (19:14) might suggest that the heavenly hosts are the saints of God (cf. Rev 7:14), here the hosts are *angels* for they, and not the saints, elsewhere are associated with Christ as he comes at the End for the purpose of judgment. The 144,000, representing the church *militant on earth*, do follow the Lamb as an army (though not wearing white)—but they do so for a different purpose. Here the divine warrior coming from heaven to earth is followed by the heavenly hosts of angels sitting “on white horses” (19:14; as does Christ himself, 19:11) for the purpose of judgment. The saints of God, either on earth as the 144,000 or those in the church triumphant, do not follow the Lord Christ *for the purpose of executing God’s judgment*. (CC)

19:15 sharp sword.† See note on 1:16. Here the sword represents judgment.

The “sharp sword” (ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα) which comes out of the mouth of the Son of Man (19:15) is reminiscent of his appearance in 1:16. But there the purpose of the sword was “to chastise the impenitent members of the Asian congregations,” for in 2:12–17 (the letter to Pergamum) the sword out of Christ’s mouth (2:12) was for such a stated purpose (2:16). Here in 19:15 Christ’s purpose is to wield his sword against those who are *outside* the church, for the Son of Man comes to “strike the pagan nations” (19:15). His sword represents the deadly power of the word of judgment that issues from his mouth, as in Is 11:4, where the Branch (Is 11:1) will “strike the earth with the rod of his mouth” and thus will kill the wicked. He earned the right to wield the sword of justice and judgment because he himself was struck by the word of God’s justice and

judgment against the world's sin in order to deliver the people from such a sword (see e.g., Zech 13:7–9). (CC)

rod of iron. In addition to the sword, the Son of Man will also use “an iron rod” to “shepherd” the pagan nations (Rev 19:15). Is the “iron rod” the same as the sword? In Is 11:4 it is a rod or staff from the Branch's mouth, but in Is 49:2 the mouth of the servant of the Lord is likened to a sharp sword. This could suggest that the sword which strikes the pagan nations is similar to the “iron rod” by which he thus shepherds or rules the nations in judgment. The fact that the Son of Man is described as one who shepherds the nations implies that as he comes to destroy the pagan nations, he first *separates* them from his own followers with the “iron rod” and then strikes them down with the sword. As prophesied in Ps 2:6–9 the Son of God would shepherd the nations with “an iron rod” (תִּרְעֶם בְּעֵקֶט בַּרְזֶל ; LXX: ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ) and would “break them in pieces like pottery.” Thus in several figurative thoughts the Son of Man coming at the End in judgment comes as the victorious *Warrior* wielding the sword of justice, as the *King* with his ruler's scepter, as the *Shepherd* employing his staff as a rod to separate his sheep from the pagan nations before executing that justice, and perhaps the added figure, implied by way of the quote from Ps 2:9, that like a *potter* he will shatter those earthen vessels that displeased him (Jer 18:1–10; Rom 9:19–24). (CC)

winepress.† Symbol of God's judgment on the unbelieving world. (CSB)

Imagery borrowed from Is 63:2–3 and probably related to the cup of wrath metaphor appearing in Rv 14:8, 10; 16:19. Significantly, all the imagery in this verse involves judgment. Luth: “The tyrants, heretics, and whatever opposes the Word are a potter's vessel. So when it comes to a contest between them, it is impossible for the earthen vessel to prevail over the iron. The iron will break it in small pieces and pound away the potsherds. But with us who believe, true righteousness, wisdom, salvation, and life will remain, whether the world and Satan like it or not. For the Word of God will remain into eternity. Christ, our High Priest and King, will remain. We also who believe in Him shall remain. But the enemies of the Word will all fall and perish. Amen” (AE 12:66). (TLSB)

Another figurative thought at the conclusion of Rev 19:15 pictures the warrior-like Shepherd carrying out his role of judge and destroyer: “he himself treads the winepress of the wine of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty.” As 19:13 described, his garment is “dipped in blood,” *the blood that he himself shed because he bore transgressions and God's judgment in the stead of sinful humanity.* But now as he comes in judgment at the End, his blood-red garment illustrates the truth that he will tread down the pagan nations in the winepress of God's anger as grapes are trodden underfoot (cf. Joel 3:12–14). His garment is now blood-red because of the spattered blood from the pagan nations underneath his feet. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a vengeful God (Heb 10:30–31). “Any view of God which eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the Apocalypse.” Without question God will destroy forever in hell (Rev 19:21; cf. 20:15) the sinner who rejects the only true God, the Almighty, by denying his Son as the Savior of the world (1 Jn 2:22–23). (CC)

19:16 on his thigh – The scene of the second coming of the Lord Christ (Rev 19:11–16) is concluded with the statement that the Son of Man “has on his garment and on his thigh a name that has been written: King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16). The “garment” is probably the same garment that is covered with blood (19:13) for they are both called ἵμάτιον. Though covered in blood, his “garment” also bears a written name which is above every other name. The name was also written on “his thigh” (19:16). Usually the name (in a spiritual sense) is on the forehead

(μέτωπον) for identification purposes (cf. 14:1 and 22:4). But here on the Son of Man the name is on “his thigh.” Whether the name is written once, on that part of the garment which covers the thigh, or twice, on the garment and also underneath on his thigh itself, John pointedly records that it was on “his thigh.” (CC)

In Gen 32:25 (MT 32:26) Jacob’s “thigh” (גָּרְסָא; LXX: μηρός) was touched by God when Jacob wrestled with him. The Israelites abstained from eating the muscle of the thigh (ET Gen 32:32) out of respect, because it was a sign of what had happened between God and Jacob when his name was changed to Israel. The name “Israel” was a reminder that, while Jacob fought with God (in the form of an ordinary man; cf. Is 53:1–3) and conquered him (Gen 32:28) and was thus blessed by God (Gen 32:29), God touched Israel’s thigh so that he limped (Gen 32:31). God did this to remind Jacob that, while he fought and overcame God, he did so because of God’s condescending love and mercy to him. (CC)

Does this suggest that the name was written on the “thigh” of the Lord Christ in order to indicate that the real “conqueror of God”—the one who successfully endured the judgment and anger of God the Father—is Jesus Christ? Or could it recall the humility of God in Christ, who became a mortal man in weakness and allowed himself to be “defeated” by his human adversaries, for the purpose of providing the atonement for their sin—and the sin of the whole world? In either case, Jesus Christ is the ultimate “Israel” who, in God’s condescension, love, and grace, suffered and thereby conquered the anger and judgment of God so that God would always favor humankind. The name on the thigh would then be the mark which identifies Jesus Christ, having once conquered sin and death by his own death and resurrection, as the true Israel, of which Jacob of old was a prefigurative type. Matthew (2:15), when narrating how God called the Christ Child out of Egypt, interprets that call as the fulfillment of God’s call for Israel to come out of Egypt (Hos 11:1). In this way Matthew identifies Jesus Christ as the true Israel of God’s people. Similarly here in Rev 19:16 God may be making the same identification by revealing to John that Jesus Christ has his conquering name written on his “thigh.” (CC)

KING OF KINGS. For a third time in 19:11–21, the Son of Man in his role of warrior-judge is given a name. First “he has a name written which no one knows except he himself” (19:12). Next his name is called “the Word of God” (19:13). And now he is said to bear the name “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ Κύριος κυρίων, 19:16). (CC)

This title has a rich background in Scripture. In Deut 10:17 Moses declared that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is “the God of gods and the Lord of lords” (אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים; LXX: θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ κύριος τῶν κυρίων), and therefore is “the only God, the great and the warrior [גָּבִר] and the fearful.” In Psalm 136, as the psalmist urges the hearer to “give thanks to Yahweh because he is good, because his mercy is forever” (Ps 136:1). He then says that the hearer should “give thanks to the God of gods” and “the Lord of lords” (Ps 136:2–3). In Dan 2:47 Nebuchadnezzar, after his dream had been interpreted by Daniel, praised the God of Daniel as “the God of gods and the Lord of kings,” because he alone reveals mysteries. And in 1 Tim 6:14–15 Paul refers to Jesus Christ as “the King of those who are reigning and Lord of those who are lording” (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριεύοντων). Paul uses this appellation in reference to Christ when he will, at his “appearing” or “epiphany” (ἐπιφανείας), exhibit himself as “the blessed and only Sovereign” (ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης). (CC)

Now here in Rev 19:16 John sees this holy and awesome title of Yahweh applied to Jesus Christ as he comes at the End to call to account the entire human race and its history. It is a name which shouts out that the Lord Christ is the universal Ruler of the entire creation, the only King and Emperor of the human race, and the Lord before whom all people of whatever race and nation

and tongue will kneel and acknowledge as the only Lord and as true God (Phil 2:6–11). For by right of his victory and under the authority of his Father he will determine the end result and destiny of the peoples of the world. He will judge and bring all history to its conclusion, and he will bring to an end the present physical world. But even now as his followers, the saints of God on earth, struggle in the battle against the harlot and the beast, they know and honor the Lamb as “the Lord of lords and the King of kings” (Rev 17:14). On earth they may suffer defeat (11:7; 13:7), but ultimately they will triumph because their Lord has triumphed and will triumph (12:11; 17:14). (CC)

19:17-21 At the coming of the Son of Man as the commander of the heavenly hosts (19:14, 19), John sees the conclusion of the warfare between the Lord Christ and the hosts of the beast and the false prophet. The beast and false prophet are cast into hell, and their hosts are destroyed (19:20–21). Just as before the destruction of Jericho “the commander of Yahweh’s army” (Josh 5:14; LXX: ὁ ... ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως κυρίου) met Joshua to encourage him to know that the hosts of Jericho would be destroyed, so now John is comforted by the Son of Man in the knowledge that the hosts of the enemies of God’s people would be overcome and victory would belong to the Christ and his church. (CC)

19:17-18 A ghastly counterpart to the Lamb’s wedding banquet, this “feast” emphasizes the great difference between the end of God’s people and those who oppose Him. (TLSB)

19:17 *standing in the sun* – The scene of this conclusion is introduced by “one particular angel [ἓνα ἄγγελον] standing in the sun” (Rev 19:17). The fact that the angel is identified as “one particular angel” suggests that he is the same angel which John saw in 18:1 and again in 18:21. In chapter 18 the angel who announced the judgment of Babylon (which consists of the harlot and the beast, 18:1–2) and who demonstrated the destruction of that great enemy of the church by throwing a millstone into the sea (18:21) is called “one particular mighty angel” (εἷς ἄγγελος ισχυρός, 18:21). In 18:1 that same angel had “great authority” (ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην), and “the earth was bathed in light by his glory.” (CC)

Here in 19:17 the “one particular [ἓνα] angel” apparently is that same angel from 18:1, 21 who now appears again. The fact that he stands “in the sun” (19:17) reinforces the identification of this angel with the one of 18:1. His standing “in the sun” indicates that it is *in the majesty of the Lord Christ* that he announces the final and total destruction of the hosts of the beast and the false prophet. In 18:1–2 the angel announces the coming judgment of the beast and the harlot (who together comprise Babylon) and, as he does so, he lights up the whole earth with his glory—that is, with *the glory of Christ*, which he reflects. The same angel, now “in the sun,” stands in “a position of splendor appropriate to a herald of victory.” That is to say, he stands *in the majesty of Christ, from which he shouts out the final and complete victory*. It is fitting that the same angel who announced the judgment of Babylon (18:1–2) and who illustrated the finality of that judgment by throwing the millstone into the sea (18:21) should now be the angel who heralds the final destruction of the hosts of the beast and the false prophet. (CC)

birds – The angel “cried out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, ‘Come, gather together for the great banquet of God’ ” (19:17). From his position in the sun the angel can easily command “the great birds of prey that fly high in the zenith.” And certainly the birds will obey, for the angel cries out to them in the majesty of their Creator and Lord. The “mid-heaven” or “zenith” (μεσουράνημα) was the same place where John saw an “eagle” or “bird of prey” (ἀετός) which cried out three woes upon those dwelling on the earth (8:13), and from where John also saw an angel calling out to the people on earth to fear God and to give him glory because “the moment” (ἡ ὥρα) of his judgment had come (14:6–7). Now here

in 19:17, from the same part of heaven—its highest point in its arch above the earth and the point at which the sun is directly overhead and also is at its brightest—the angel invites the birds of prey to “gather together.” (CC)

great supper of God.† A grim contrast to the “wedding supper of the Lamb” (v. 9; cf. Eze 39:17–20). Verses 17–21 portray the execution of the judgment, which is anticipated in vv. 11–16. (CSB)

They are to gather as invited guests, as it were, at “the great banquet of God” (19:17). This particular banquet, at which the birds are to feed upon the corpses, appears to be the counterpart of the marriage feast of the bride and the Lamb (19:7, 9). While the marriage feast for the bride—the Christian church—is taking place, “the great banquet of God” is also being prepared and eaten. The banquet at which the birds feed on the corpses is in terrifying contrast to the marriage feast of joy and celebration. It is called the banquet “of God” because God has planned this banquet and brought it about by his judgment. He has set it up and has provided its provisions: the corpses of the fallen hosts of the enemies of Christ and his church. As gruesome and revolting as this scene of God’s banquet must have been to John, on reflection there must have come to his mind the similar banquet prepared by God in Ezek 39:17–20. The prophet Ezekiel saw the hosts of Gog and Magog making war upon God’s people and overwhelming them (Ezek 38:1–23). But God would intervene and destroy the hosts of Gog and Magog (Ezek 39:1–29) and as a result would prepare a banquet at which every bird (ὄρνεον, LXX Ezek 39:17) and all the wild animals would feed on the corpses of their fallen hosts. This banquet of the fallen hosts of Gog and Magog is also *God’s* banquet because he says it will be at “my table” that the birds and wild animals will feed on the corpses (Ezek 39:20). Though the scenes in Ezekiel and Rev 19:17 are repelling, the point of such a graphic banquet is to impress upon the reader the horrible fate that awaits those who war against God, and the comforting promise to the viewer that these fallen hosts will never again arise to haunt and hurt God’s people. The last scene of the battle is of the fallen bodies strewn about, to which birds of prey are flocking to peck at and pick apart. The bodies of unbelievers will be carrion for scavengers and homes for worms (Cf. Gen.40:19; Deut. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; 2 Sam. 21:10; Prov. 30:17; Is. 18:6; 66:24). Such a scene, when branded on the mind and heart, shouts out, “Never again will they arise to fight another battle!” So here in 19:17–18 the lesson of the banquet of God is clear. Finally and forever the enemies of God’s people are never to rise again to torment the Christians. Though the scene is repugnant and evokes fear and awe, nevertheless, it is for the comfort of the followers of Christ yet here on earth. (CC)

19:18† The supper consists of 10 (the number for completeness) terms: (1) kings, (2) generals, (3) mighty men, (4) horses, (5) riders, (6) all, (7) free, (8) slaves, (9) small, (10) great—indicating the total victory of the Lord over all his enemies. (CSB)

The fate of those who refuse to serve and fear the one true God. Plainly, the faithful are not among those being judged. (TLSB)

Rev 19:18 identifies the fallen hosts. They are made up of all ranks and kinds of people, the mighty and the lowly, the slave and the free. They include all who were adherents and worshipers of the beast and its image and who received the mark of the beast (13:11–18), all who fornicated with the harlot (17:1–18:3), and all who believed the preaching of the false prophet, who deceived many (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Their bodies lie unburied on the field of conflict to be prey for predators who gorge themselves upon them. To remain unburied and preyed upon “was considered by the ancients to be an ignominious fate.”⁵⁹ That was the usual fate of victims who were impaled or crucified (cf. 2 Sam 21:10). Horses are also mentioned as part of the banquet’s

fare. In the banquet pictured in Ezekiel horses are mentioned because the men and soldiers of Gog and Magog rode upon them (Ezek 39:20). When the riders fall as casualties, the horses that bore them also fall. In modern parlance one can imagine that whatever the adherents of the harlot used in their spiritual and physical warfare against the saints of God, those vehicles and incarnations of evil will be destroyed with them. (CC)

19:19-21 In Rev 19:19–21 a description of the actual battle is given, in particular its end. The human hosts under their “kings” are arrayed in order “to make the war with the one sitting on the horse and with his host” (19:19). This is a battle presented in spiritual dimensions, for the human hosts of the harlot and the beast are now fighting against the warrior-judge, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and against all the angelic hosts of heaven. The hosts of the harlot and beast had already fought against the saints of God on earth and had conquered them (νικάω, 13:7, 15; cf. also 11:7). However, that victory was ephemeral, for the saints (though bloodied and dying) came out victorious because of the Lamb. But in their arrogant audacity, having laid low the church of Christ, the harlot (who is also the false prophet) and the beast and their human hosts now take on the Lord Christ himself and his angelic hosts. It is an impossible undertaking on their part (17:14), for they are instantly thrown down and laid waste, fit now only to be gorged upon by the birds of the air. As Ezekiel prophesied, just when the hosts of Gog and Magog had all but destroyed the people of God, God himself intervened with fire from heaven and annihilated their forces (Ezek 38:22–23; 39:3–6; cf. Rev 20:7–9). Thus there is present in these verses a reference to the battle of Armageddon (16:12–16), in particular its end, emphasizing the total destruction of the human hosts of the harlot and the beast. These are not two different battles, but two different visions of the same battle immediately preceding the present world’s end at the return of Christ. John will see the conclusion of this last battle before the End one more time: in 20:7–10, where the forces of the false prophet and the beast are typified by this imagery of Gog and Magog. (CC)

Here in 19:19–21 the end of this great battle emphasizes the overthrow and destruction of these human hosts together with the beast and the false prophet. In 20:7–10 the emphasis at the end of this last battle will be the casting of Satan, the mastermind behind the beast and the false prophet, *into hell*. While only the beast and the false prophet in particular are mentioned in 19:20 as being “thrown into the lake of fire,” which is hell or “the *second* death” (20:6, 14; 21:8), all the human hosts of their adherents who worshiped the beast and received its mark are also destined for hell (20:11–15; contrast 20:4), and so is Satan himself (20:10). But for now, the human hosts are only “put to death by the sword of” the Lord Christ (19:21). And as slain corpses they are preyed upon by the birds of the heavens as they await their impending judgment at and after the resurrection. (CC)

The basis of the proverbial saying “all hell breaks loose” (16:12–16; 17:12–14). The final cosmic battle ends with evil’s defeat and Christ’s ultimate victory, as is described in the concluding chs. (TLSB)

19:20 *beast ... false prophet*. See notes on 13:1, 11.

Here, two members of the anti-Trinity (see notes, 13:4, 11–18) are captured and taken out of commission. However, their leader, Satan, will continue causing more trouble (20:3, 7) (TLSB)

fiery lake of burning sulfur. See 20:10, 14–15; 21:8. Punishment by fire is prominent in both Biblical and non-Biblical Jewish writings (e.g., 1 Enoch 54:1). Although the designation *gehenna* is not used here, this is what John refers to (see note on Mt 5:22). Originally the site of a cultic shrine where human sacrifices were offered (2Ki 16:3; 23:10; Jer 7:31), it came to be equated with the “hell” of final judgment in apocalyptic literature. (CSB)

A description of eternal punishment (cf Mt 25:41; 2Th 1:9). (TLSB)

19:21 *sword that came from the mouth* – “Christ’s kingdom is not to be administered with physical power, with the sword or the rod. It is the province of the parents to wield the rod, and that of government and executioner to use the sword. No, His are an oral rod and an oral sword. ... The words of reprimand and rebuke are the rod” (AE 22:222). (TLSB)

birds were gorged. † The “great supper of God” of vv. 17–18. This brings the sixth series of visions to a close. It ends, like all the others, with a portrayal of the last judgment—in this case as it applies to the antichristian forces in the world. Only one more enemy remains—Satan himself—whose defeat is described in ch. 20. (CSB)

Cf Ezk 39:17–20. Note Jesus’ enigmatic saying: “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather” (Mt 24:28; Lk 17:37). (TLSB)

Concluding Thought: Three Women

Three women appear prominently in the book of Revelation: (1) the woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and with a crown of twelve stars, who gave birth to the “male Child” (12:1–6, 13–17); (2) the harlot clothed in purple and scarlet and arrayed in gold and precious stones, who sits on the beast with seven heads and ten horns, and who bears the name “Babylon” (17:1–19:3); and (3) the bride of the Lamb, who is clothed in the wedding garment of pure, shining linen (19:7–8; 22:17; cf. 21:2, 9). (CC)

The woman of Revelation 12 represents the people of God, who in the OT are often called the wife of Yahweh and in the NT are called the bride of Christ. She first represents the OT community of God’s faithful, and then, after the birth of the “male Child” (12:5), she represents the church of Jesus Christ. The crown of twelve stars would represent the twelve tribes of Israel, then after the birth of the “male Child” they would represent the twelve apostles. Especially in her role of giving birth to the Christ Child, the woman of Revelation 12 is embodied in the Virgin Mary. In a way Mary represents the OT people of God (cf. Lk 1:54–55; Rom 9:5). She is also the mother of our Lord (Lk 1:43) and the first to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and so she can represent the NT church. (CC)

The woman of Revelation 12 is arrayed in the splendor and majesty of God and of his Christ, thus signifying how much God in the Christ loves and honors her. Though arrayed in the honor and love of God, her life is one of hardship in her exile-like existence in the wilderness of her life on earth. She is hunted down and pursued by the dragon and, though he is not able to destroy her, he causes her untold pain and suffering. The prophecy of Simeon that a sword would pass through the soul of Mary (Lk 2:35) was true of the entire existence of the woman of Revelation 12, that is, the church of Jesus Christ. (CC)

The harlot of Revelation 17–18 represents the *antichurch*, and she and the beast she rides (17:3, 7) are the two henchmen which the dragon uses in his warfare against the church, who is represented by the woman of Revelation 12. The harlot fares sumptuously and is clothed in the costliest of garments and precious stones. She is wealthy and is held in honor by the world which worships at her feet. She wields by way of the beast (which is the political and economic beast of 13:1–10) enormous political and economic power. She is the spiritual force that encourages and motivates the peoples of the world in their own lusts and desires for position and power and wealth. She is the queen of her world. And all this power of position and influence and

spirituality she uses against the church, her rival “stepsister,” in order to destroy her. She wants to believe that she is the most beautiful and encourages the people of the world to receive her as the true bride of Christ. *For this reason the harlot is also called “the false prophet”* (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). But in her heart she knows she is not that bride, for someone else holds that position before God, her “stepsister” whom she hates and taunts. And though her poor “stepsister,” is dressed, to the human eye, in rags and is the laughing stock of the world, the harlot is terribly jealous of her. For she knows that one day the despised woman in rags—and not she herself—will be the bride of Christ. In contrast, her own end will be to be stripped naked (17:16; cf. 16:15) and shamed before God and then cast into hell. Her “stepsister”? She is the woman of Revelation 12, who becomes the bride in Revelation 19–21. (CC)

The bride of Christ of Revelation 19, who on earth was the woman of Revelation 12, now is no longer in exile—tormented, bereaved (12:17), and driven to endless suffering by the dragon through the beast and the harlot (or false prophet). During her earthly life she was spiritually clothed in the righteousness of Christ and washed in his blood, but to the human eye she was destitute, dressed in rags, spurned by the world, and mocked by the harlot. But now at the End she is publicly honored by God for all to see as the bride of his Son. Now she is arrayed in her wedding garment, as she is presented to her husband (cf. Zech 3:1–5). The day for which she, the church, so ardently longed has arrived. The bride comes to her Lord with rejoicing and with the hymn of the Hallelujah Chorus, for now the time of weeping and fasting has passed, and she joins the angelic choir in singing the Te Deum to her God and Savior. From now through all eternity she will bask in his majestic presence and behold his unveiled face. (CC)

19:11–21 In the great final battle between good and evil, Christ returns and begins to destroy the remaining enemies of His rule once and for all. The end of those who oppose God and His Messiah is fearful, as birds of prey will devour their flesh. But the faithful know that Jesus will come to right wrong and redress evil, and that He freely pardons all who embrace His mercy. • Lord, grant to all people true repentance and sincere faith, so that we may all escape Your vengeance and enter with You into eternal bliss. Amen.