

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation

Chapter 19

April 22, 2025

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Overview

- While the previous chapter depicts the effects of God's judgments on Babylon, the present chapter presents a glorious vision of Christ's return and his victory over the beast, the false prophet, and their allies in the last battle at the end of history (19:11-21) (305).
- Before the action resumes, however, John overhears a victory celebration in heaven over the judgment of the great harlot Babylon (19:1-4) and a wonderful announcement about what lies in store for the other woman of Revelation, God's covenant people (19:5-10) (305).

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Overview

- Chapter 19 gives us the final hymns of the Apocalypse. They celebrate the fall of Babylon and introduce us to the Marriage of the Lamb. The passage has three sections.

Section	Explanation
19:1-4	Celebration of Babylon's judgment
19:5-8	Celebrates the Marriage of the Lamb
19:9-10	Angelic beatitude and rebuke

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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- The hymns of the Old Testament traditionally have three parts (McIlraith, 160).

Part	Explanation
1.	Hallelujah: Which is Hebrew for “praise the Lord.”
2.	Reasons why we give praise to God.
3.	They expand on the reasons. Sometimes they end with another “hallelujah.”

- We find elements of this hymnic structure in our two hymn sections in chapter 19.

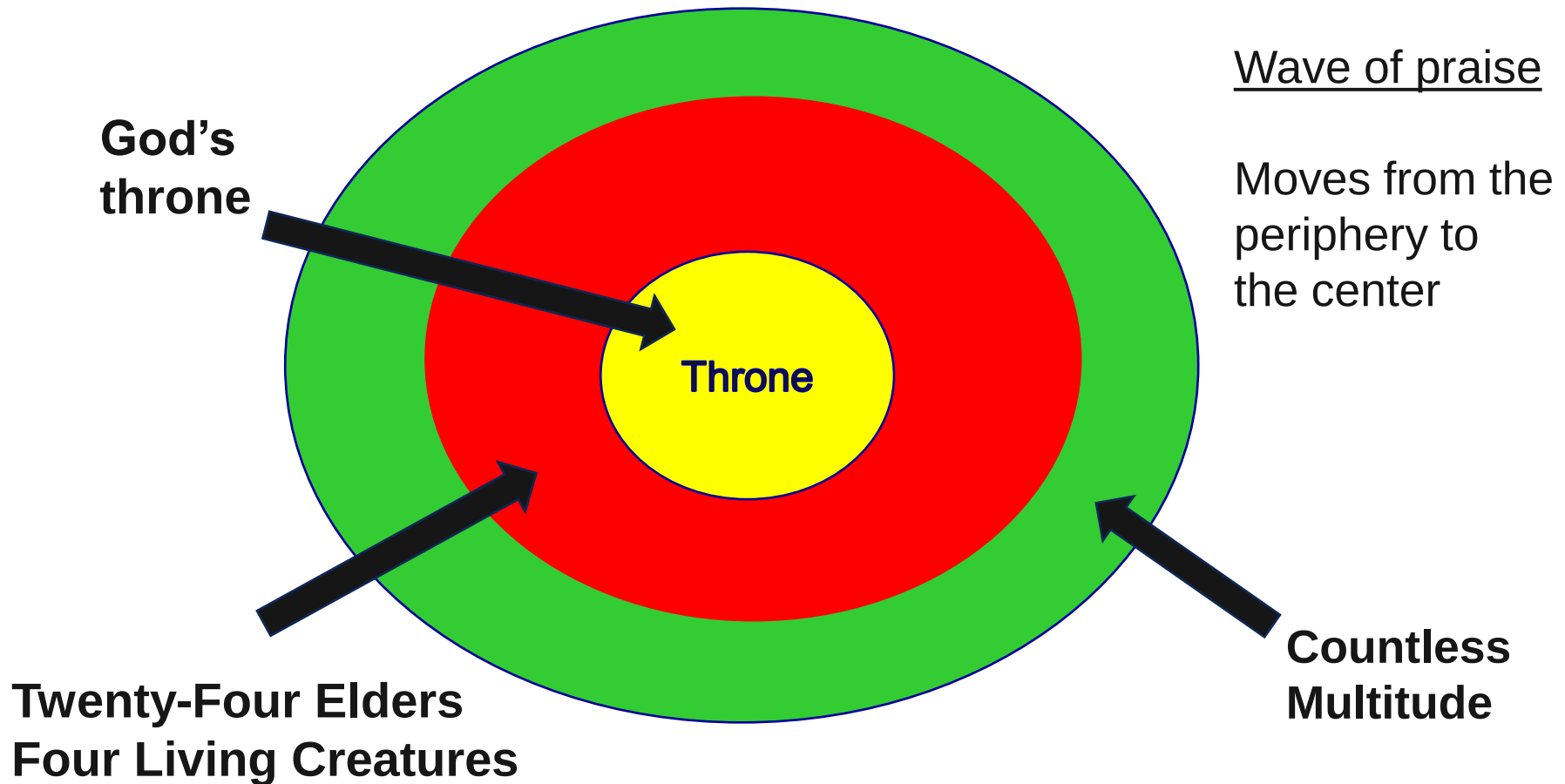
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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- Great multitude in heaven: Engage in a heavenly liturgy, praising God in antiphonal worship, with those near the throne (306).
- Part I: Alleluia: “Praise the Lord!”
- Part II: They declare salvation (rescue from death) glory (supreme honor) and might (sovereign authority) belong to our God (306).
- Part III: For true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the harlot...avenged the blood of his servants.

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Victory Celebration in Heaven



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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- The final hymn of the book (19:5-8) opens the rest of the Apocalypse for us and appropriately celebrates the final destiny of humankind: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (McIlraith, 160).
 1. Part I: Alleluia!
 2. Part II: The Lord has established his reign, [our] God, the almighty.
 3. Part III: For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready. She was allowed to wear a bright, clean linen garment (McIlraith, 160).

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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- Although this is not said explicitly, it appears that the final stage of the marriage can only take place when Babylon is completely gone from our lives, only when we “come out” of Babylon for good (McIlraith, 160).
- A royal marriage is about to occur, like the one celebrated in Ps. 45. As in the literature of many cultures – after all enemies have been defeated, the story of Revelation also ends happily with the marriage of a virtuous and victorious king (308).



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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- Marriage is a familiar image of God's relationship with Israel (308).
 - Isaiah 54:5: "Your maker is your husband."
 - Hosea 2:21: "I will betroth you to me forever."
 - Isaiah 61:10: "Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."
- The chapter that follows confirms that the Lord is marrying his people; he is reestablishing Jerusalem (308).

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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- Other writings in the New Testament announce the same theme (308).
- Matthew 9:15: Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.
- John 3:29: The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.

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Victory Celebration in Heaven

- St. Paul speaks about the Church's bridal relationship in Ephesians:
 - Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).
- Note: Priests are configured to Christ as Bridegroom, acting in his person as head and shepherd for the building up of his Bride, the Church.

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Bride of Christ

- It was granted her to wear a bright, clean garment: The bride's clothing stands in contrast to the fine linen, purple silk and scarlet of Babylon (Rev. 18:16).
- Christ enables his bride to freely cooperate with divine grace and thus to become worthy of the promises of Christ and to enter into all that God has in store for us (309).



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Bride of Christ

- Blessed are those called to the wedding feast of the lamb: The Eucharist is a “foretaste of heaven,” a sacramental celebration where we participate in the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, uniting ourselves with the Lord and the Church in heaven.
- Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.



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Bride of Christ

- These words are true; they come from God: The angel attests to the trustworthiness of this beatitude (309).
- I fell at his feet: The divine glory of the heavenly messenger and of the revelation he brings moves John to fall at the angel's feet and worship him (310 – 311).
- I am a fellow servant: The fact that John has similar standing as the glorious angel shows the lofty dignity of Christians (311).
- Worship God: Both the angel and John are to worship God.

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Jewish Wedding Customs

- New Testament allusions to marriage, including these in Revelation, presuppose first-century Jewish wedding customs (310).
- First stage: Betrothal, which typically occurred before the woman was of childbearing age and always before the couple began living together. A betrothed couple was understood to be legally married (310).
- Second Stage: Marriage, the wedding began when the bride came to live in the house of the groom and was accompanied by various ceremonies (310).

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Jewish Wedding Customs

Jewish Customs	Revelation
Bride is adorned – end of the betrothal period	19:7-8
Procession – bride processes to house of groom	21:2
Wedding feast – lasted a week, a great celebration	Announced in 19:9
Consummated – first day of the celebration, bride and bridegroom began living with each other from then on	21:9 – 22:5

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Three Judgments

- Part two of the conclusion of Revelation begins in 19:11.
 1. 19:11-21: The judgment of the two beasts and their allies
 2. 20:1-10: The judgment of Satan
 3. 20:11-15: The judgment of the dead and of Death itself
 4. 21:1-8: Revelation concludes with a glimpse of the new creation and the new Jerusalem.

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Fulfillment of Isaiah

Isaiah	Revelation
Is. 61:10-62:5: God will marry his people and Jerusalem will be reestablished.	Rev. 7-8: For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready.
Isaiah 63:1-6: God comes as a warrior to rescue and vindicate his people	Rev. 19:11-16: Christ comes as a warrior to judge and wage war in righteousness.

- The focus of these verses (19:11-16) is on Jesus as warrior king leading his prepared Wife in their marriage procession (McIlraith, 165).

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The King of Kings

- In a Jewish marriage, the wife is prepared and robed for the banquet and union. When the wife is robed, the procession takes place – and here it is.
- It is an unusual wedding procession because her groom leads his wife through a battlefield.
- We do have a certain scriptural precedence for this in the Old Testament, in Psalm 45. This song is a royal marriage song. It tells of the king who wars and weds. First, he goes to war to protect and make his kingdom firm. Then he weds to ensure his dynasty (McIlraith, 165).

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The King of Kings

- I saw: Signals a new vision. As usual in Scripture, the vision provides not a literal description but a symbolic description of its subject (312).
- White horse: The Lord comes as a warrior king to judge on a white horse. A victorious Roman emperor customarily rode a white horse in triumphal processions (312).



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Christ as Warrior

Christ as Warrior	Explanation
Faithful and true	He is loyal and trustworthy – a model for Christians
His eyes were like a fiery flame	Indicates penetrating knowledge and the justice of judgment that follows from his clear view of reality
On his head were many diadems	The royal crowns of a ruler who reigns over an empire of many nations. The rightful king will be restored over all nations.

~Williamson, 312

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Christ as Warrior

Christ as Warrior	Explanation
Name inscribed that no one knows except himself	Suggests his identity is beyond the understanding of any creature.
Cloak that had been dipped in blood	A reference to his sacrificial death on the cross, the solitary combat in which the Lamb has conquered (5:5-6).
His name was called the Word of God	God's Word is his instrument in creation and redemption (e.g., Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6; Isa. 55:10-11).

~Williamson, 312 - 313

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Christ as Warrior

Christ as Warrior	Explanation
Out of his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the nations	The sword's function is judgment of the nations – those not God's people.
He will rule them with an iron rod, and he himself will tread out in the wine press the wine of the fury and wrath of God the almighty.	Messianic prophecy that we saw of the male child born of the woman in Rev. 12:5. Treading grapes is an image of divine judgment (Is. 63:1-6).
He has his name written on his cloak and on his thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords.	Indicates that Jesus will return with complete authority and irresistible power.

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The Last Battle

- The vision of 19:17-21 depicts the final battle in horrifying images from Ezek. 38-39. According to Ezek. 38, when God's people are dwelling securely, Gog the king of Magog (names of uncertain origin that refer to a pagan ruler and a pagan land) will come up against Israel with a great horde of peoples, a mighty army mounted on horses (315).
- When the battle comes to pass, the Lord resoundingly defeats Gog and his armies, sends fire on the land of Magog (Ezek. 39:6), and tells Ezekiel to summon the birds of prey and wild beasts to "eat the flesh of warriors and drink the blood of the princes of the earth." (315)

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The Last Battle

- Angel standing on the sun: With a clear view of the world beneath him, the angel concerns himself with a battle where the outcome is certain (316).
- Gather for God's great feast: In a temple sacrifice, men feast on animals. In this frightful situation the reverse happens and God's creatures – the birds of the air – are invited to feast on the human corpses. This shows total and final defeat, and the glory is given to God (McIlraith, 167).
- Revelation kicks up on Ezekiel's horrible banquet to show the victory of Christ, the divine Warrior (McIlraith, 167-168).

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The Last Battle

- The battle itself is not shown, only the outcome: the banquet that celebrates the victory. John's text widens Ezekiel to show that all humanity who oppose God will experience the fate shown in this symbolic vision. The next vision shows the final stage of the battle (McIlraith, 168).
- No sooner have the enemies gathered than the war is over. In the end, the beast is no match for the white rider (316).
- John describes the outcome since there will be no battle to speak of when Christ returns: the beast was caught, or "captured," and with it the false prophet, who performed signs and deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast (316).

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The Last Battle

- Satan is not dealt with here but his helpers, those who assisted him in deceiving the people and leading them away from Christ. The beast appears first and his allies, the kings of the earth. Now they experience the effects of their rejection of him.
- Both the beast and the pseudo-prophet are seized and thrown alive into Gehenna in the Old Testament. The lake of fire, shortly to be identified as the second death, is the place of eternal punishment. The rest, namely, the armies, were slain by the sword coming from the mouth of Christ (McIlraith, 169).
- Before the new creation begins, however, two more adversaries must be dealt with: Satan and death. Revelation 20 tells the story of their end (317).

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The Call for Conversion

- Revelation presents the same Christ as that presented in the Gospels. Although the Gospels show Jesus' mercy toward sinners, they also reveal his severity toward the proud who refuse to repent, toward the rich who hoard their resources, and toward those who refuse to forgive.
- Jesus' message is not all soft and reassuring: rather, his love moves him more than any other person in the Bible to warn people about personal accountability, the danger of hell, and the urgency of repentance (318).



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Next Time

- Tuesday, May 6th



Revelation 20	
The Thousand-Year Reign	20:1 – 10
The Large White Throne	20:11 – 15