The Two Eschatological Banquets

Revelation 19

Introduction

Revelation is written in a style that repeats, or recapitulates, certain events, especially the period between Christ’s crucifixion and the final Day of Judgment.

For example, notice what John says about the seven bowls:

Revelation 15:1 (nkjv) Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

After the bowls are poured out, God has no more wrath to pour forth onto the world because the final judgment is complete. However, the last bowl is poured out in chapter 16 and there are still six chapters in Revelation to go with plenty more wrath on display! The reason for this is that John is repeating or recapitulating the same story over and over again for emphasis.

When we come to our text in chapter 19, we should notice that John is repeating the story of the final day judgment from chapter 16.

Revelation 16:12-14 (nkjv) Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Notice some key points:

1. The dragon, beast and false prophet vomit out demons that deceive the nations
2. The deceived kings of the earth are gathered together against God
3. They are ready for “the battle” ie the Battle of Armageddon, the Final Judgment Day

Actually, this story will be repeated three times in the following chapters, each focusing on a different enemy of God. We can illustrate this as a TV show where the same event is shown in different episodes from the point of view of different characters.

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| The Battle of Armageddon in Three Episodes | | |
| Episode 1 | Revelation 17:1-19:10 | The Harlot |
| Episode 2 | Revelation 19:11-21 | The Beast and the False Prophet |

Episode 3

Revelation 20:1-10

The Dragon

Note that these three “episodes” are all the story of the Final Day of Judgment.

Revelation 18:7-8 (nkjv) In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine.

And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

The Harlot’s judgment is not describing the decline and collapse of the Roman Empire.

Notice that John wrote that “her plagues will come in one day” and it was “the Lord God who judges her”. This is the Final Judgment on the Harlot, whatever form she takes, whether it be Babylon (Revelation 17:5), Rome (Revelation 17:9), Sodom, Egypt or Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8).

Chapter 19 is split into two halves that describe two feasts:

1. vv1-10 The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
2. vv11-21 The Carrion Feast

These two banquets are describing the same thing from two different points of view:

1. Judgment on the righteous
2. Judgment on the wicked

1. Marriage supper of the Lamb Big picture

The big picture presented in this section is a celebration of God’s justice in destroying the Harlot that had shed the blood of the saints. The marriage supper is the consummation of all God’s promises to His people.

The OT background passage for this section is Isaiah 62:

Isaiah 62:1-5 (nkjv) For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns. 2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name. 3 You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.

4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah;

For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.

Hephzibah means “My Delight is in Her” and Beulah (where we get the song, “Beulah Land” from) means “Married”. One day, Isaiah prophesied, God’s people will be joined with Him and no longer parted, like a husband and His bride.

2. Details of Marriage Supper

There are three groups of people that praise God, which contrast to the three groups that mourned the destruction of the Harlot in chapter 18

Who are the groups?

1. The saints
2. The angelic host
3. All servants of God, human and angelic

The first time we read about a “great multitude” was in Revelation 7, after the 6th seal (which was the Final Judgment).

Revelation 7:9-10,13-14 (nkjv) After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Notice that they are doing the same thing as in chapter 19: praising God. One of the elders explains to John that they are the saved that were faithful until death (Revelation 2:10).

The second group is made up of the elders and four living creatures: this is the heavenly host who are always present before the throne of God.

The third group is again a great multitude, this time as the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings. The idea is the size of the group and volume of the praise and it reminds us of the voice of God. This praise is in response to a command from the throne (possibly the Lamb, although the text is silent on who spoke) for all servants small and great to praise our God. Thus the choirs of both the human saints and heavenly hosts join together to praise God for His justice (reign) and exaltation at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

What are they saying?

The first praise, by the human saints, is a reference to the prayer in Revelation 6 when the fifth seal was broken.

Revelation 6:9-11 (nkjv) When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying,

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

The martyred saints had to wait until the number of martyrs was fulfilled, ie until the Last Judgment. The praise in Revelation 19:1-2 indicates that the Final Judgment has been given and justice has been mete on the “earth-dwellers”.

Alleluia (hallelujah) means “Praise Yah(weh)” or “Praise Jehovah”

The bride was given bright linen robes and the significance of them is explained: the righteous acts of the saints. This is a reference to earlier passages in Revelation.

Revelation 3:4-5 (nkjv) You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 3:18 (nkjv) I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

This is the end time judgment. Those who are at the marriage supper of the Lamb are the faithful saints where the promises to the church are consummated.

Why does John bow down to worship the angel? He is overcome by the power and authority, yet the angel tells him that he is a fellow servant. What an encouragement for the persecuted Christians in Asia this would be! A mighty angel considers himself a fellow servant. The power of Caesar is nothing compared to God’s angels.

What is the point of this section?

This the Last Day Judgment from the perspective of the saved. They will join their voices with the heavenly choir and enjoy the consummation of the promises of God to the church in heaven.

3 Carrion Feast Big Picture

This is (lit) the battle.

Revelation 19:19 (nkjv) And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make [the- literally in the Greek] war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Jesus comes as the victor on the white horse and comes in judgment against the earth. He is resplendent in glory and His army follows behind Him. An angel appears in the sun (ie he is glorified and in the sky) to invite the birds of the air to a carrion feast. Before the battle begins, its end is declared.

The OT background to this section is Ezekiel 39:

Ezekiel 39:4,17-20 (nkjv) You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

17 "And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: "Assemble yourselves and come;

Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. 18 You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, Drink the blood of the princes of the earth, Of rams and lambs, Of goats and bulls, All of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 You shall eat fat till you are full,

And drink blood till you are drunk, At My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you. 20 You shall be filled at My table With horses and riders, With mighty men And with all the men of war," says the Lord GOD.

The war is over without a contest and the beast and the false prophet are seized and cast into the lake of fire and the rest are killed with the sword that proceeds out from the mouth of Christ. The birds feast on their dead bodies in fulfillment of the prophesy/invitation of the angel.

4) Details of the Carrion feast

Jesus is presented as a victorious general (white horse) before the battle even begun because the outcome is certain. A lot of the language used to describe Jesus is referencing His description in Revelation 1.

Remember that when John (the beloved disciple) first saw Jesus, he fell down as if dead because of the awesome and terrifying visage of the Son of God. Jesus then comforted John and told Him not to be afraid (Revelation 19:17). Jesus was showing mercy to the faithful.

Revelation 1:5 (nkjv) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

Revelation 1:14-16 (nkjv) His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as

if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

The same awe-inspiring figure is shown here in chapter 19, however this time He is coming to judge and make war. Revelation 1 is a picture of Christ from the perspective of the saved and Revelation 19 is from the perspective of the lost.

This section is referencing the prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 11:4 (nkjv) But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

Note the similarities of a name that no one knows to the Angel of the Lord in Genesis 32:29 and Judges 13:18.

Jesus’ garment is dipped in blood: is this His own blood or someone else’s? The OT background passage shows that it is the blood of His enemies.

Isaiah 63:1-6 (nkjv) Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? 3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. 4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me. 6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."

Jesus will trample down His enemies with a great slaughter and trample them in the winepress of the fierceness of the anger of God as in Revelation 14:19-20. As such, His robe is stained red with their blood.

What does His army consist of? In the Old Testament, God’s armies are often made up of angels (cf 2 Kings 6:16-17, Matthew 26:53), but here in Revelation 19, the armies are a reference to an earlier passage in the same book

Revelation 14:1-5 (nkjv) Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the

sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Note that they are not defiled with women, a requirement for soldiers in God’s holy wars. They do the same thing as the armies of heaven in Revelation 19:14 (follow the Lamb wherever He goes) because they are the same group and the same groups as in Revelation 19:1. Again, this is the same scene of Final Day Judgment being shown from different perspectives.

Notice the description of Christ as fulfilling earlier passages in Revelation:

Revelation 2:26-27 (nkjv) And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— 27 'HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON; THEY SHALL BE DASHED TO PIECES LIKE THE POTTER'S VESSELS'—as I also have received from My Father;

Revelation 12:5 (nkjv) She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Christ reigns from heaven now, but His reign will be consummated at His second coming.

His promises of reward to the righteous and punishment for the wicked will be fulfilled.

Note that the list of the people that the birds are invited to feed on the corpses of are very similar to the list of the people who suffer Final Day Judgment in Revelation 6:

Revelation 6:15-17 (nkjv) And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This, again, is another link that John uses to show that this is a recapitulation of what he has already written about, not a new sequence in human history.

Some may say that John and Jesus are being gruesome and unfair here. Why such a violent display?

The answer is in the justice of God. Justice demands that the punishment fits the crime. Notice what the earth-dwellers had done to God’s people (this is in context of the two faithful witnesses, Smyrna and Philadelphia):

Revelation 11:8-10 (nkjv) And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Just as the world had denied an honourable burial for God’s people, so was God going to deny the world an honourable burial. This, of course, is metaphorical and corresponds to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (hell) that the beast and false prophet are cast into. It is a punishment that lasts after death.

Conclusion

We don’t really learn anything in Revelation 19 that we don’t already know from the rest of the Bible. We read that there will be a Judgment Day on which Jesus will judge the world.

Acts 17:31 (nkjv) because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

We know that on that Day, Jesus will return in triumph and the righteous will be rewarded.

2 Thessaionians 4:15-17 (nkjv) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, where is our treasure? What will we be thinking about on that Day. Will we be lamenting the fall of the Harlot and the world or will we be rejoicing over the returning King? Will we be following the Lamb wherever He goes or will we be arrayed against him with the Beast and False Prophet? Which banquet will we be a part of? The marriage supper of the Lamb or the carrion feast?

If you want to be with the Lord always, then you have to start now. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes by obeying His commands.

If you haven’t been baptised, be baptised today.

If you are stumbling in your walk, make yourself right with Him today.