

INTRODUCTION

1. In our last two times together we looked at Ephesians 1:7-8 in reference to the redemption that God provided for His people.
2. This morning I want to move forward from the cross and the resurrection of Jesus to His return.
3. As we do that this morning, I want to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to Revelation chapter 19.
4. In verses 11-21, we come to the event to which the rest of the book of Revelation has been looking forward—the glorious coming of Christ to earth in order to put down His enemies and set up His kingdom.
5. In the previous section in chapter 19 we hear the *hallelujahs in heaven*.
6. This morning we are going to learn why heaven is rejoicing.
7. Read Revelation 19:11-21.
8. God's people throughout redemptive history have eagerly anticipated the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat His enemies and set up His kingdom.
9. Because it's during that time that the destruction of Satan will be completed (Gen.3:15; Rom.16:20); the King will

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receive the ruling scepter (Gen.49:10); God will establish the throne of David's greater Son (2 Sam.7:13; Isa.9:7); the Son will rule the earth with a rod of iron (Ps.2:6-9); the armies of Gog and Magog will be shattered (Ezek.38-39), and the nations will be judged (Joel 3:1-2, 12-14).

10. The second coming of Jesus Christ is the culmination of redemptive history.
11. Peter describes it as a day when "the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat" and where we "look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet.3:12-13).
12. In anticipation of this long-awaited event, Peter says, "since these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Pet.3:11).
13. This day is so important that the Bible lists several compelling reasons why Jesus must return to earth:
 - a) The numerous promises of God in Scripture demand Christ's return (Rev.1:7; 3:10; 22:20)
 - b) All three Persons of the Trinity spoke of Christ's return—if Christ does not return then the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit would be guilty of making false promises—which, of course, is impossible, since God is incapable of lying (Num.23:19; Tit.1:2; Heb.6:18)

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- c) Jesus must also return because of God's plan for the nations—their judgment (Rev.14:14-20; Joel 3:1-2)
 - d) The destruction of Satan also necessitates Christ's return (John 12:31; 14:30).
11. The Second Coming of Christ must be distinguished from the Rapture of the Church.
 12. The differing biblical descriptions of the two events indicate that they are distinct from each other.
 13. At the Rapture, Christ comes for His saints (John 14:3; 1 Thess.4:16-17).
 14. At the Second Coming, He comes with them (Rev.19:14).
 15. Furthermore, at the Rapture, Christ meets His saints in the air (1 Thess.4:17) to take them to heaven (John 14:2-3); at the Second Coming, He descends with them from heaven to the earth (Zech.14:4).
 16. Some take Revelation 19:11-21 as the Rapture but I contend that it is best to see it occurring at the end of the 6th seal in chapter 6, verses 12-17.
 17. (Chart) If you will recall in our earlier studies, we saw that the first 3 ½ years was called “the beginning of birth pangs” (Mat.24:8). This parallels the first 3 seals in Revelation 6.

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18. The last 3 ½ years, according to Matthew 24:21, is referred to as the “great tribulation” and that parallels seals 4-6 in Revelation 6.
19. When we read in Matthew 24:29, “Immediately *after the tribulation of those days*, we hear the events of the 6th seal. Jesus says “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (v.30).
20. This parallels Revelation 1:7 which says, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”
21. But the greatest parallel is found in Revelation 6:12-17. John says, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 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, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the

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face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

22. In Revelation 7:9-10, John tells us that after the 144,000 were sealed he saw “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, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”
23. In verse 13, “one of the elders” asked John “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”
24. John answers by saying “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. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them” (vv.14-15).
25. These saints who came “out of the great tribulation,” which occurred during the last 3 ½ years in Daniel’s 70th week are the raptured saints.
26. I mentioned all of this to show you the distinction between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ and what we see in the 19th chapter of Revelation is not the Rapture but the Second Coming.

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27. Now I realize as we have studied all of this that there exists problems — that's why we are no dogmatic on things that are not clear.
28. We believe in the personal, bodily, return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Rapture and at His Second Coming or we probably should say His third coming (the first before the cross, the second at the rapture, and the third here in chapter 19).
29. Look at chapter 19, verse 11.
30. Here *John Saw Heaven Opened*.

I. John Saw Heaven Opened (vv.11-16)

A. This Scene is Very Similar to His Vision in 4:1

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

B. Instead of Seeing a Door Opened in Heaven, He Sees “a White Horse” Coming Out of Heaven (vv.11-16)

1. This is also a similar scene

2. But in the first scene the rider on the white horse was the Antichrist (6:1). Here the rider is Jesus Christ.

3. He is described in various ways:

a) He is on a “white horse” with the armies of heaven following on “white horses” (v.14)

“It was customary for a triumphant Roman general to parade on the Via Sacra, a main thoroughfare of Rome, followed by evidences of His victory in the form of booty and captives (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). The white horse is thus a symbol of Christ's triumph over the

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forces of wickedness in the world” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

b) He is called “Faithful and True”

- (1) He is called “faithful” in 1:5
- (2) He is called “true” in 3:7
- (3) He is called “faithful and true” in 3:14

There is no more appropriate name for the Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful to His promises and what He speaks is always true.

Though some would like to pick and choose which teachings of Jesus they wish to accept, He is just as faithful to His promises of wrath and judgment as He is to His promises of grace and salvation.

Because Jesus is faithful to His word and righteous character, it follows that “in righteousness He judges.”

c) “In righteousness He judges and makes war” (v.11b)

- (1) His holy nature demands a holy, righteous reaction to sin. And because He does what He says, He must judge the wicked

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2 Thess.1:7-9 says “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,” His coming will be “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

- (2) Jesus came the first time as Savior; He will return as Judge

When He came the first time, wicked people judged Him; when He returns He will judge all wicked people (Acts 17:31).

According to verses 15 and 21, He will not only be their Judge but also their executioner. Angels may gather the wicked for judgment, but the Lord Jesus will pass the sentence on them.

Jesus is no longer seen as the Suffering Servant of His incarnation; in this vision He is seen as the warrior King who wages war against His enemies.

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John Phillips says, “The Lord is a man of war! It is an amazing title for the Son of God. Says Alexander White, commenting on Bunyan's Holy War,

Holy Scripture is full of wars and rumors of wars; the wars of the Lord; the wars of Joshua and the Judges; the wars of David, with his and many other magnificent battle-songs; till the best known name of the God of Israel in the Old Testament is the Lord of Hosts; and then in the New Testament we have Jesus Christ described as the Captain of our salvation.... And then the whole Bible is crowned with a book all sounding with battle-cries.... till it ends with that city of peace where they hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more.

The Lord is a man of war! In righteousness He judges and makes war. The judging has been going on throughout the breaking of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the bowls. Now He makes war. He, who for long centuries has endured patiently the scoffings, the insults, the bad manners of men; who

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for ages has contemplated Calvary and all that it displayed of human hatred and contempt; and who, through the millennia has made peace through the blood of that cross, now makes war over that blood. (Exploring Revelation, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 232).

- d) “His eyes were like a flame of fire” (v.12a)
- (1) This is consistent with John’s earlier vision of Him in chapter 1. John also saw “His eyes like a flame of fire” (1:14).
 - (2) Nothing escapes the notice of His penetrating, piercing vision
 - (3) He can see into the deepest recesses of the human heart, because “all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb.4:13 - NASB).
 - (4) To the worldly church, Thyatira, He presented Himself as “the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire” (2:18).

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- (5) To each of the seven churches, He said to them “I know your works” (“know” eido, “see”)

“The eyes that wept over the fate of unrepentant Jerusalem and over the sorrow, suffering, and death in this sin-cursed world, John sees flashing with the fire of judgment” (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p.217).

- e) “And on His head were many crowns” (v.12b)

“Many crowns” Gr.diadema, refers to a ruler’s crown (cf.12:3; 13:1). Here they are worn by Jesus to signify His royal rank and regal authority.

“Many” indicates His collecting of all the rulers’ crowns, signifying that He alone is the sovereign ruler of the earth.

Collecting the crown of a vanquished king was customary in the ancient world. After defeating the Ammonites, David “took the crown of their king from his head...and it was placed on David’s head” (2 Sam.12:30).

- f) “He had a name written that no one knew except Himself” (v.12c)

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All speculation as to the meaning of that “name” is obviously pointless, since the text plainly states that “no one knew except Himself.”

- g) “He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood” (v.13a)

The “blood” is not representative of that which He shed on the cross; this is a picture of judgment, not redemption.

The “blood” is the blood of His slaughtered enemies.

The imagery is similar to Isaiah 63:1-6 - “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.” Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? “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. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there

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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. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth.”

The question arises as to why His garments are blood spattered before the battle has begun?

The answer is that this is not His first battle; it's His last battle.

He has fought for His people throughout redemptive history, and His war clothes bear the stains of many previous slaughters.

At that day, they will be stained as never before when He “treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (v.15).

- h) “And His name is called The Word of God” (v.13b)

That the riders names is called “The Word of God” identifies Him unmistakably as the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14).

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He is called “The Word of God” because He is the revelation of God. He is the full expression of the mind, will, and purpose of God, “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb.1:3 - NASB).

- i) Verse 14 tells us that He will not return alone, but will be accompanied by “the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,...on white horses” (v.14)

Verse 7 described the “wife” of the Lamb being “granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

“Fine linen” was expensive and beautiful cloth (18:12, 16).

“Clean” (katharos) is translated “pure” in 21:18, 21

“Bright” (lampros) means “glistening, shining or radiant”

- j) “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the

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fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (v.15).

(1) John had already seen a “sword” in 1:16 where it was used by Jesus to defend the church against Satan

(2) John sees it again in verse 15 but this time it is used as a “sword” of judgment

That the “sword” comes out of “His mouth” symbolizes the deadly power of Christ’s words.

Once He spoke words of comfort, but now He speaks words of death.

(3) The stern, swift judgment that marks the onset of Christ’s kingdom will be the pattern of His rule throughout the Millennium

During His thousand-year reign, “He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron” (cf. 12:5; Ps.2:8-9).

He will swiftly judge all sin and instantly put down any rebellion. All people will be required to conform to His law or face immediate judgment.

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In Rev.2:26-27, Jesus promised the believers in Thyatira that “he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘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.”

- (4) The phrase that ends the verse: “He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” was seen chapter 14 as a vivid symbol of God’s wrath stomping out judgment.

This pictures the ancient practice of stomping on grapes as part of the wine-making process. The splattering of the grape juice pictures the pouring out of the blood of Christ’s enemies.

- k) “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (v.16)

- (1) This is the third name given to the Lord Jesus Christ in this passage

- (a) Verse 12 gave the name “no one knew except Himself”

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- (b) Verse 13 said “His name is called The Word of God”
- (c) Now He is called “King of kings and Lord of lords” (v.16)
- (2) The name “King of kings and Lord of lords” expresses His sovereign triumph over all foes and His absolute rule in His soon to be established kingdom

Paul referred to Him with this title in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 by saying “He who is blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

II. John Saw An Angel Calling All Birds to the Supper of God and the Final Great Battle (vv.17-21)

- A. The Angel was Standing in the Sun (vv.17-18)
 - 1. Once again an angel plays a key role in one of the end-time scenarios described in the Apocalypse
 - 2. The angel was standing in the proximity of the

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sun, possibly in front of it, partially eclipsing it

- a) He stands in a conspicuous, prominent place to make his important announcement
 - b) Evidently the worldwide darkness associated with the fifth bowl (16:10) has been lifted, since the “sun” is again visible
 - c) The lifting of that earlier darkness would also explain how the smoke from Babylon’s destructed was visible at a distance (18:9-19)
3. The angel “cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great” (vv.17-18).
- a) The angel declares Christ’s victory before the battle is ever fought
 - b) His invitation to the “birds” is reminiscent of Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:27-28:

“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of

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the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

- c) This will not be the first time birds have feasted on human carrion in Scripture
- (1) Isaiah 18:6, describing the results of judgment on Cush (modern Ethiopia), reads, “They will be left together for mountain birds of prey, and for the beasts of the earth; and the birds of prey will spend the summer feeding on them” (NASB).
 - (2) Jeremiah relates that, after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, “the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten them away” (Jer.7:33).
 - (3) In a striking parallel to the present passage Ezekiel wrote:

“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

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for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. 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. 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. 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.”

Joseph Seiss writes about this awful scene in Revelation 19:17-18. He says:

“This tells already an awful story. It tells of the greatest of men made food for the vultures;-of kings and leaders, strong and confident, devoured on the field, with no one to bury them;-of those who thought to conquer Heaven's anointed King rendered helpless even against the timid birds;-of vaunting gods of nature turned into its cast off and most dishonoured dregs. And what is thus forintimated soon becomes reality. The Great Conqueror bows the heavens and comes down. He rides upon the cherub horse

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and flies upon the wings of the wind. Smoke goes up from his nostrils, and devouring fire out of his mouth. He moves amid storms and darkness, from which the lightnings hurl their bolts, and hailstones mingle with the fire. He roars out of Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, till the heavens and the earth shake. He dashes forth in the fury of his incensed greatness amid clouds, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun frowns. The day is neither light nor dark. The mountains melt and cleave asunder at his presence. The hills bound from their seats and skip like lambs. The waters are dislodged from their channels. The sea rolls back with howling trepidation. The sky is rent and folds upon itself like a collapsed tent. It is the day for executing an armed world,-a world in covenant with Hell to overthrow the authority and throne of God,-and everything in terrified Nature joins to signalize the deserved vengeance.” (The Apocalypse [reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1987], 441).

- B. The Beast, the Kings and Their Armies Gathered to Make War Against Jesus (vv.19-21)
 - 1. As the next stage in his incredible vision unfolded, John saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war

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against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

- a) The beast is Antichrist (11:7; 13:1-8), leader of the last and greatest empire in human history
 - b) The kings of the earth are the ten kings who rule the ten sectors into which Antichrist's worldwide empire is divided (17:12-14).
 - c) Their armies have assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse (v. 11) and against His army (v. 14; Zech. 14:5).
2. The formidable and seemingly invincible armed might of the beast, with all its firepower, awaits the arrival of the Rider. But before there is any battle, it is all over
- a) In an instant, the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image (13:11-17).
 - b) These two demonically empowered political and religious leaders of the world are dealt a horrible blow; these two were thrown alive

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into the lake of fire.

- (1) This is the first mention in Scripture of the lake of fire, the final hell, the ultimate destination of Satan, his angels, and the unredeemed (Matt. 25:41).
- (2) Isaiah described it as the place where "their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched" (Isa. 66:24), a description echoed by the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 9:48.
- (3) In Matthew 13:42 Jesus added that it will be a place where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- (4) Revelation 14:11 says of those who suffer there, "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night."

Apparently, these two don't die, but are transformed miraculously into eternal form to burn in hell. They are the first of millions of men (20:15) and angels (Matt. 25:41) to arrive in the lake of fire.

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3. Hell has always existed, but this is its final form
 - a) Unlike Hades, the lake of fire is not a temporary holding place (cf. Luke 16:23) but a permanent place of incarceration and punishment
 - b) Brimstone is frequently associated with the fire of judgment (cf. 9:17; 14:10; 20:10; Luke 17:29).
 - c) That the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire a thousand years later when Satan is cast there (20:10) is a convincing refutation of the false doctrine of annihilationism

As the two most evil, vile, blasphemous people who have ever lived, it is only fitting that these two be the first to arrive in that awful place. The New Testament is clear on the eternity of punishment (cf. 14:10-11; Matt. 13:40-42; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:17; 12:47-48).

- d) And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. Bereft of their commanders, Antichrist's leaderless forces will then be

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destroyed, as the rest of those gathered to fight against Christ were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. Then suddenly it will all be over.

In fact, there will be no war at all, in the sense that we think of war. There will be just a word spoken from Him who sits astride the great white horse.

Once He spoke a word to a fig tree, and it withered away. Once He spoke a word to howling winds and heaving waves, and the storm clouds vanished and the waves fell still. Once He spoke to a legion of demons bursting at the seams of a poor man's soul, and instantly they fled.

Now He speaks a word, and the war is over.

John Phillips says, “The blasphemous, loud-mouthed Beast is stricken where he stands. The false prophet, the miracle-working windbag from the pit is punctured and still. The pair of them are bundled up and hurled headlong into the everlasting flames. Another word, and the panic-stricken armies reel and stagger and fall down dead. Field marshals and generals,

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admirals and air commanders, soldiers and sailors, rank and file, one and all-they fall. And the vultures descend and cover the scene. (Exploring Revelation, 236)

CONCLUSION

These sobering truth present to us one thing: God is serious about sin, therefore, you'd better repent and humble yourself before Him.

Let's pray.

LIFE APPLICATION

What are you doing to prepare yourself for the return of Jesus Christ?

How does His return relate to what 1 John 3:3 says?

Does Jesus' pending return have anything to do with our witness about Him? If yes, in what way?