



# The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

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## SESSION 13. THE RETURN OF THE KING REVELATION 19:1–21

### I. I'll Be Back!

A. We love stories in which the hero promises to return and finish the work he has begun.

1. Early in 1942, American forces in the Philippines were defeated by the Japanese and forced to abandon the islands. Evading the enemy in a harrowing escape, General Douglas MacArthur landed in Australia and made a famous promise to the Philippine people: “**I shall return.**”<sup>1</sup>
2. In the movie *The Terminator*, the character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger promises those who are hindering his plans that he will return to finish the job he had begun. With his heavy German accent he simply said: “**I'll be back.**”<sup>2</sup>
3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of *The Lord of the Rings* is entitled **The Return of the King**. It recounts the climactic moment when Prince Aragorn returns and takes the throne that is rightfully his. One wonders if J. R. R. Tolkien may have been thinking of Revelation 19 when he chose his title for this final volume.

B. Jesus' promise.

When Jesus finished the work he had come to do, he promised his followers that he would come again and bring to completion all that he had begun.

*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2–3).*

Indeed, the last recorded words of Jesus written in the Bible are a promise he repeated three times: “**I am coming soon**” (Rev. 22:7,12,20).

C. A helpful analogy.

Donald G. Bloesch uses an analogy from World War II to help us better understand the two comings of our Lord. He compares the first coming to **D-Day** (the landing of allied troops in Normandy which was the decisive battle that assured Germany's ultimate defeat). However, many bloody battles would be fought before Germany finally surrendered (**VE-Day**). Bloesch makes the point that though Satan has already been decisively defeated by the first coming of Christ, he continues to fight. “Calvary signifies that the warfare is virtually, but not actually, over” (*Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Volume 2, p. 205).

### II. Revelation 19.

A story is only as good as its **ending**. God wants us to peek at the last chapter of the book so we know how it is all going to end. “And they lived happily ever after” is a fitting ending

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<sup>1</sup> Leaders in Washington urged him to amend his promise and say “We shall return,” but MacArthur ignored their request.

<sup>2</sup> The American Film Institute chose this line as the 37<sup>th</sup> most memorable quote in the history of film.

to the greatest story ever told. Once Babylon the Great has been destroyed (chapters 17–18), things move quickly and in a very positive direction. Chapters 19–22 describe the final events of human history... and they are all good!

- The *Hallelujah Chorus* is sung and wedding invitations are sent out (19:1–10).
- The King of kings returns (the Bride Groom) (19:11–16).
- The Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet are defeated (19:17–21).
- Christ and his followers reign for 1,000 years (20:1–6).
- Satan is released, defeated and tossed into the Lake of Fire (20:7–10).
- The final judgment before the Great White Throne (20:11–15).
- A new heaven and a new earth... here comes **the Bride!** (ch. 21–22).

A. The *Hallelujah Chorus* is sung and wedding invitations are sent (19:1–10).

The word “hallelujah” occurs only here in the New Testament (Rev. 19:1,3,4,6). It transliterates a Hebrew expression meaning “praise God.” George Frederick Handel was thinking of this passage (Rev. 19:6,19; 11:15) when he wrote his *Hallelujah Chorus*.

1. Notice *how* the chorus is sung.

In stark contrast to the dirge-like lament sung over the fall of Babylon (ch. 18), a huge choir is singing with a single voice (v. 1). The song is **loud** (v. 1) like a mighty waterfall, like thunder (v. 6). And once is not enough! They keep **repeating** *Hallelujah... Hallelujah... Hallelujah...etc.*

2. Notice *why* the chorus is sung. Three reasons are given. Because:

- a. **Babylon** has been judged and works her evil no more (v. 2).
- b. The Lord God Omnipotent reigns (v. 6).
- c. It is time for the **Marriage of the Lamb** and the Bride is finally ready (v. 7–8).

3. Notice *what* the words of the chorus are.

a. The **attributes** of God:

- Salvation, glory, and power (v. 1).
- His judgments are **true** and **just** (v. 2).

b. The **mighty deeds** of God:

- He has judged the Great Prostitute, Babylon (v. 2).
- He has avenged the martyrs (v. 2).
- He reigns (v. 6).
- He has enabled the Bride to make herself ready (vv. 7–8).

c. Therefore “praise him,” “rejoice,” “Exult,” and “give him glory” (vv. 5,7).

4. Notice *who* is doing the singing. Though the singers are not specifically named, “the great multitude” (vv. 1,6) is probably composed of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The heavenly beings join in (v. 4).

B. The King of kings returns (the Bride Groom) (19:11–16).

1. Who is this rider on the white horse? He is called by four names:

- a. **Faithful** and True (v. 11).
  - b. The **Word** of God (v. 13).
  - c. King of kings and Lord of lords (v. 16).
  - d. A secret name that no one knows except himself (v. 12).
2. What is he like?
- a. He is riding on a **white horse** (v. 11).
  - b. His eyes are like fire (v. 12).
  - c. He has **many crowns** on his head (v. 12).<sup>3</sup>
  - d. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood (v. 13). Whose blood?
  - e. A huge army is with him in white robes on white horses (v. 14).
  - f. A sharp sword comes from his mouth (v. 15): the only **weapon** mentioned.

What a contrast between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings of Jesus Christ!

JESUS' FIRST COMING

A tiny baby

Riding on a **donkey**

In **meekness** and humility

He came to save

He is seen by a few

To shed his own blood

The **Lamb** of God

JESUS' SECOND COMING

A mighty warrior

Riding on a white horse

In **glory** and power

He comes to judge

He is seen by **everyone!**

To shed the blood of his enemies

The Lion of Judah

3. The Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet are defeated (19:17–21).

The battle described in this passage is apparently **Armageddon** (see Rev. 16:13–16). This is actually not the last battle but the next-to-the-last battle (see Rev. 20:7–10). The prelude to battle is an invitation to “all the birds” to come to “the great supper of God” (v. 17–18). What a contrast this is to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (v. 9).

King Jesus and his army are opposed by Beast (Antichrist), the False Prophet and the kings of the earth with their armies. The **greatest battle** in human history is described in two short verses, without mention of weapons or strategy or tactical operations.

*And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet.... These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 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. (vv. 20–21).*

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<sup>3</sup> The dragon wore 7 crowns (12:3) and the Beast (Antichrist) wore 10 crowns (13:1). King Jesus has “many.”

### III. Remembering our Future.

#### A. Six things to remember about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

1. It will be **physical, bodily**. Some pretend that the return of Christ is only a spiritual way to talk about the new birth. The second coming thus becomes a metaphor of hope, not something to be taken literally. But the New Testament speaks differently. Just as Jesus ascended bodily into heaven, so he will return (Acts 1:9–11).
2. It will be **universally visible**. Though it is difficult to imagine how it will happen, the Bible is clear that when Jesus returns “every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7). All the nations of the earth will see him coming on the clouds (Matt. 24:30). No one will miss the reality of what is happening.

*Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as **the lightning** comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:23–27).*

3. It will be **glorious**. In sharp contrast to his first coming, when Jesus comes again he will come “in clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).
4. It will be **sudden and unexpected**. Though Jesus wants us to “save the date”, the Scriptures are clear that no one knows the day or the hour of Christ’s return... “not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (and He’s not talking!) (Mark 13:32). Thus, Christ’s return will be “like a thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2).

*For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. (Matt. 24:37–41).*

5. It will be **final**. Though the final judgment will occur after Christ’s return and his millennial reign (Rev. 20:11–15), there is little reason to believe that people will have opportunities to repent and receive forgiveness and experience salvation after Christ returns on his white horse. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins Jesus explains how some people will be ready and others will not.

*And while (the foolish virgins) were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and **the door was shut**. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour (Matt. 25:10–13).*

6. It will be **soon** (Rev. 22:7,12,20). Though this has been true for 2,000 years it is the attitude of expectation that God wants us to nurture in our hearts.

*The doctrine of the Second Coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realize that at every moment of every year in our lives this question is equally relevant: “What if tonight was the world’s last night?” (C. S. Lewis. *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*).*

- B. Five imperatives from Matthew 24 concerning our response to the Second Coming.
1. Be **wise and discerning**. Let no one lead you astray because many false prophets and false christs will come performing signs and wonders (Matt. 24:4–5, 24–25).
  2. Stand **firm**. Things will get worse. Persecution will intensify. He who endures to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:6–13).
  3. **Preach** the Gospel. Christ will return only when the Gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth (Matt. 24:14).
  4. Read the **signs of the times**. Though we are forbidden to try to determine the date of our Lord’s return, we are urged to read the signs. Matthew 24 mentions several things we are to watch for:
    - Great tribulation (wars, persecutions, apostasy, distress unequalled in history, etc.) (vv. 6–13, 21).
    - Universal expansion of the Gospel; worldwide revival (v. 14).
    - False prophets and false messiahs that deceive millions (v. 24).
    - Global and cosmic catastrophes (famines, earthquakes, sun darkened, stars fall, etc.) (v. 7,29).
    - The “abomination of desolation” standing the holy place (v. 15).

*So when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates (v. 33).*
  5. Be ready!

*Therefore, **stay awake**, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you **do not expect**. (Matt. 24:42–44).*

#### TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn about the Second Coming that you did not know?
2. Does the thought of Christ’s return bring comfort or fear?
3. Why does God keep the date of Christ’s return a secret?
4. What are the “signs of the times” indicating to you about the days in which we live?
5. What are some specific things believers today can do to better enable them to “stay awake” and be ready?

# Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

By Charles Wesley

*Lo! He comes with clouds descending,  
Once for favored sinners slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending,  
Swell the triumph of His train:  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
God appears on earth to reign.*

*Every eye shall now behold Him  
Robed in dreadful majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,  
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.*

*Now redemption, long expected,  
See in solemn pomp appear;  
All His saints, by man rejected,  
Now shall meet Him in the air:  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
See the day of God appear!*

*Answer Thine own bride and Spirit,  
Hasten, Lord, the general doom!  
The new Heav'n and earth t'inherit,  
Take Thy pining exiles home:  
All creation, all creation, all creation,  
Travails! groans! and bids Thee come!*

*The dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears;  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers;  
With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture  
Gaze we on those glorious scars!*

*Yea, Amen! let all adore Thee,  
High on Thine eternal throne;  
Savior, take the power and glory,  
Claim the kingdom for Thine own;  
O come quickly! O come quickly! O come quickly!  
Everlasting God, come down!*