

STRANGER TIMES: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE APOCALYPSE (Adam Heather)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Rev 19v1-21

This series has been described by one attendee as "Bizarrely Encouraging." So it is for this talk! This passage sits between Rev 13, the Age of the Beast, and Rev 21, the New Heaven and Earth. It first highlights 2 feasts:

1. The feast of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Jesus is the Groom, the church is the Bride. The relationship is compared to marriage where dignity, delight and desire are central. Hear the wedding bells! We are worthy and wanted, not a servant but a spouse. Note that the "powers" peddle seduction, prostitution and adultery, taking us away from God and the purity of 777 leaving us impure at 666.

We're called back to God to be faithful and in covenant commitment, not a spouse grieving her husband. There is always Grace for us.

2. The feast of the War party

Revelation, as we've seen, is not literal but pictorial and metaphorical. Thus, the lake of fire and sulphur and descriptions of hell are not literal. We've been influenced by Dante's Inferno which mixes Scripture and Greek mythology. We need to "unlearn" these images. So, what is hell?

Jesus talks of Darkness (Matt 8v12) and Fire (Mark 9v47) - these are not compatible images. Paul, in 2 Thess 1v9 refers to being "away from the presence of God". God honours our choice to be away from him. CS Lewis, in *The Great Divorce*, says, "*There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done'.*" Tim Mackie says that those not participating in God's plan are "eternally quarantined".

The Self Portrait of Jesus

Between the tyranny of Rev 16 and God's eternity of Rev 21 we see One who makes the transition. Remember: The book of Revelation is the revelation of Jesus, by Jesus, to John, for us. In Rev 19 the heavens are opened for the first time (v11) and we see Jesus in 3 images:

1. His Name

He is Faithful and True (compare with the infidelity of the powers). But there is a name known only to Jesus (v12). Biblically, knowing a name means power can be exerted over that person but here the inference is no one can manipulate Jesus. His head has "many crowns (v12).

2. His Robe

It is dipped in his blood. The battle of Armageddon never happens as the battle was won "outside the city" (Rev 14v19-20). Jesus' blood flowed from his back, brow and wounds on the cross. The strong man is disarmed (Matt 12v29). The powers were disarmed (Col 2v13-15). The battle is already won.

3. His Word

Creation was by the Word. Jesus spoke "Come out" to Lazarus, "Get up" to the dead girl. Jesus' word is power. Jesus will speak - the Lamb has overcome. He is Faithful and True.

Don't worry about the end of the world, the battle has been fought and won. Can you hear the wedding bells?

- How do we see ourselves as being the Bride of Christ? What images come to mind?
- How do we react to the ideas our infidelity in comparison to Christ's faithfulness and truth?
- Regarding hell, what do we think of the quotes from CS Lewis and T Mackie?
- Consider Col 2v15, what did Paul mean? How might we describe this to a not yet Christian?
- How can we "plunder the strong man's house" (Matt 12v29)?

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