

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 41 - Chapter 19

Today is going to be another day of working to understand as much as we can of a prophesied future over which we don't have all the details nor have geopolitical events played out sufficiently, yet, to help us identify some of the important players that are referred to in John's Apocalypse as kingdoms and kings. Therefore this lesson will get challenging and require all of your focus. But more importantly we must rely on the work of the Holy Spirit to help us gain whatever insight and understanding the Lord wants His followers to have at this point in human history.

Last time we got no further than the 1st verse of Revelation chapter 19 that tells us of a huge crowd in Heaven shouting Halleluyah. This crowd must be the souls of redeemed Believers as opposed to angels because in the Bible large gatherings of angels are called "heavenly hosts" and not a "crowd". Halleluyah is a Hebrew word that means praise God. And in this setting of chapter 19 (that takes place in Heaven) the praise is because God has achieved the goal of the ages, which is to rid His creation of the cause of its corruption; Babylon. We spoke last week about how we need to view the term Babylon, or Babylon the Great, or even the Whore of Babylon, as more or less the same entity. But also, just as a car is composed of many distinct and necessary pieces (like an engine, a transmission, a passenger compartment, brakes, etc.) that are carefully integrated in order to create a functioning system, so is Babylon a system composed of several pieces. Babylon is many things. And while Babylon on the one hand must be taken as figurative, symbolizing all that represents an evil world system that opposes God and oppresses His people, on the other hand it is also literal and real and tangible because every piece or element that together form Babylon will actually physically exist (if some or all of it doesn't already exist). That is, in the End Times Babylon there will be a secular governmental piece with human beings running it. There will be an actual city and capital with buildings and people. There will be an enormous religious institution that is wealthy, vibrant, and influential. And yet Babylon is the product of a spirit of evil and deception that has existed since time immemorial and has been spawned by Satan himself, so there is an invisible spiritual side to it as well that transcends all of history past, present and future.

Let us remember that what we're reading is prophetic. The description in

Revelation 18 of the destruction of Babylon is still future to us. So what we read in chapter 19 seems to be the reaction in Heaven WHEN what happens in chapter 18 finally occurs.

Let's re-read all of chapter 19.

RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 19 ALL

The words of verse 2 speak of 3 attributes of God: salvation, glory, and power. Our CJBs use the word "victory" in place of "salvation" (in Greek, *soteria*). I'm not sure why David Stern

chose to make this change, but I think it weakens what is actually said. **Soteria** speaks of redemption, deliverance, and salvation and that's how we should take it. These descriptive words tell us of God's inherent attributes. God is salvation. It's His nature. God is glory. It's His nature. God is power. It's His nature. And who could be more aware of this than those who live with God in Heaven? W. Barclay commented on this passage and I can do no better than to simply quote him. ***"Each of these three great attributes of God should awaken its own response in the heart of man, and these responses taken together constitute real praise. The salvation of God should awaken the gratitude of man. The glory of God should awaken the reverence of man. The power of God is always exercised in the love of God, and should, therefore, awaken the trust of man. Gratitude, reverence, trust.... these are the constituent elements of real praise"***.

So let me say this slightly differently. The realization that the very substance of God is salvation, glory and power ought to elicit a response from humans consisting of gratitude, reverence and trust towards Him. If that is NOT our response, then I think it is fair to wonder if belief in God and His Son is real and sincere. I don't say this as a means for us to judge others; but rather as a means for us to honestly examine ourselves.

And now that God's intrinsic attributes have been listed, that can leave no question as to why it is said that His judgments are described as true and just. This is great place to pause and define some terms. We should not take the word "judgments" as used here in the same sense of the 21 judgments of wrath that the Lord has sent upon the earth and wicked humankind. Rather here it is meant in the sense of the ability to make a considered decision. It is a neutral term. So, for instance, God could make a considered decision (a judgment) that is positive and in your favor. As Believers we are judged just as are the wicked; but God's promised judgment upon Believers is that we are innocent and worthy of mercy because of our trust in Christ. However when God made His considered decision about wicked Babylon, He determined that she proved herself to be guilty, her crimes allow for no redemption, and therefore Babylon is worthy only of complete and eternal annihilation.

Because of His perfection and righteousness, then God's judgments for or against can rightly be said to be true and just. So now let's talk about what is just and what "just" means. Because God's judgments for and against operate within His established justice system, given to mankind in the form of the Law of Moses, then when God stays within those same parameters His verdicts can be said to be just. That is; God's judgments are not serendipitous or circumstantial; they are based on precedent and principle He established long ago. One basic principle of God's justice system is substitutionary atonement (that is, an innocent victim dies in place of the guilty person), which is demonstrated in the Levitical system of animal sacrifice and is then exemplified in Christ's death on the cross. This means that it is just within God's ordained legal system for sinners who sincerely repent and trust in what God has provided for them (atonement through Yeshua) to be granted forgiveness for their sins and obtain eternal life with Him. At the same time, another basic principle of God's ordained legal system calls for the death penalty for harlotry, adultery, and idolatry and it is demonstrated with actual executions of the guilty parties (with no atonement available for them) as prescribed in the Law of Moses, but is now exemplified in Revelation in the destruction of Babylon whose inherent attributes are harlotry, adultery, and idolatry. Therefore no atonement and no forgiveness is

available for Babylon's sins, and this is also just because this consequence is clearly established within God's ordained legal system.

What I just said can rub many Christians the wrong way. There is specific biblical reasoning behind how and why God judges as He does; however it gets obscured in modern Christianity because of the red herring accusation of legalism hurled towards those followers of God who understand that He HAS a legal system that is very well defined in the Torah. We, as His created, are commanded to operate within that legal system, and (with a couple of caveats) God also operates within that same legal system when it comes to His judgments of human beings. Essentially, the great crowd in Heaven is acknowledging this reality and is praising the Father for acting upon it.

Therefore, starting in the next sentence of verse 2, God has made and handed down His considered decision concerning the great harlot..... the Whore of Babylon who corrupted everything God has created on earth. And the considered decision (the judgment) is that vengeance shall be taken against her because in her corruption and wickedness she has not only seduced the majority of mankind to the dark side, she is responsible for the deaths of so many of those who she was not able to corrupt....those who retained their loyalty to God at any cost..... a cost that resulted in millions of unjustified deaths.

After another Halleluyah, the vast crowd in Heaven praise God for justly exacting His vengeance against Babylon as verse 3 says that "Her smoke goes up forever and ever". "Forever and ever" means eternally. "Her smoke" means her permanent ruination.

In verse 4 we see the 24 Elders and the 4 living beings also fall down in worship to the Father. These are the beings in Heaven that are allowed into the nearest proximity to God; the highest privilege for any being God has created. The 24 Elders I am convinced are the souls of redeemed Levites (or perhaps they are the Heavenly precursors of Levites on earth) since in earlier chapters we read of them playing harps and handling golden bowls..... part of standard Temple duty for Levites on earth. The 4 living beings seem to hold perhaps the absolute highest status and position of any created being. They are said to surround and guard God's throne and to travel with Him. So the meaning is that the highest of the highest of all created beings also praise God for His act of justice against Babylon. All of Heaven is in agreement; and therefore all of God's people on earth ought to be in agreement with God's just judgments as well.

From a 30,000 foot view, agreeing with God's judgments isn't only as it regards Babylon. All who call God Lord ought to agree with His judgments and His will all of the time. Our personal perceptions of mercy, vengeance, love, and justice will become clouded by societal norms, peer pressure, and our own desires over time. So our personal perceptions are to be remolded and remade into that of the Lord's commandments as we grow and mature, and the primary source of learning and wisdom to change our perceptions comes from God's Word..... The Holy Bible. Therefore verse 5 is directed towards humans living on earth. And it is that **if** we are truly God's servants, and **if** we truly fear Him (meaning we have complete loyalty to Him), then we are to join in the Heavenly praise over the destruction of Babylon as a sign of our agreement..... it's not unlike our utterance of "amen" after a prayer.

For many Believers who will be alive at that time, it is going to require not only being loyal to God but also having the correct knowledge and doctrine ingrained in us so that we will be able to praise God as the world economic system collapses and our lives become more precarious. When Babylon is destroyed life is going to become unbelievably difficult and insecure for everyone on this planet, without exception, and I also suspect that Believers will become targets for the wicked because of our praising what the world hates and resents. I contend that the dominant religious institution of that day, no doubt being led by the False Prophet (the Land Beast), surely will **not** be praising God at the demise of Babylon even though this dominant church institution will be full of people who insist they are Christians (assuming they have not "come out of her" as God has begged His true followers to do). In reality this worldly church of deceived people will have long ago sold out to Babylon and the leadership will have taught the people wrongly; and thus they will believe wrongly. The result is that what they believe will not be the kind of required salvation belief for God to grant them mercy and redemption nor will they recognize God's hand in the current events. So these will be the ones who hear from Yeshua the most devastating words written in the Bible:

CJB Matthew 7:23 *Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'*

Verse 6 then speaks of another roar of a crowd; one even greater than the first. This roar has the sound of rushing waters, even a little like thunder, it is so loud. If you've ever been to Niagara Falls or to another great Falls system like Iguassu Falls in Brazil, the sound is more than deafening; you can physically feel the pounding of the waters in your body. This is what John is describing. This next praise again begins with the most glorious Halleluyah yet!

Following that, something gets said that needs some extensive explanation. It says: "Adonai, God of heaven's armies, has begun His reign". It sounds simple enough, but there's more to it than a casual reading reveals. First: the CJB has taken some liberties with this verse and inserts a thought that isn't there. There is nothing in the Greek that refers to heaven's armies. Rather, it translates better as "the Lord God Almighty reigns". But, second, this short proclamation begs the question: what has suddenly changed other than Babylon has been destroyed? Didn't God always reign from on high? How can it be said that only now (after Babylon's destruction) His reign begins? This reign is referring to the everlasting kingdom that is now fully established; it is here that we could reasonably say that the Millennial Kingdom is inaugurated. But, there is more.

This everlasting kingdom of God is spoken about in several places in the Bible, but none is more pertinent and connected to Revelation and John's visions than Daniel chapter 2. In this chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar has had a troubling dream and Daniel is brought in to interpret it for him. Here is the relevant passage:

CJB Daniel 2:31-45 ³¹ "Your majesty had a vision of a statue, very large and extremely bright; it stood in front of you and its appearance was terrifying. ³² The head of the statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its trunk and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

³⁴ As you watched, a stone separated itself without any human hand, struck the statue on its feet made of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken into pieces which became like the chaff on a threshing-floor in summer; the wind blew them away without leaving a trace. But the stone which had struck the statue grew into a huge mountain that filled the whole earth.

³⁶ "That is what you dreamt, and now we will give the king its interpretation. ³⁷ Your majesty, king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ so that wherever people, wild animals or birds in the air live, he has handed them over to you and enabled you to rule them all- you are the head of gold.

³⁹ But after you another kingdom will rise, inferior to you; then a third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule the whole world. ⁴⁰ The fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron. Iron can break anything into pieces, pulverize it and crush it. So just as iron can crush anything, this kingdom will break the other kingdoms into pieces and crush them.

⁴¹ Finally, you saw the feet and toes made partly of pottery clay and partly of iron; this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the firmness of iron, since you saw the iron mixed with clay from the ground. ⁴² Just as the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ You saw the iron mixed with clay; that means that they will cement their alliances by intermarriages; but they won't stick together any more than iron blends with clay.

⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not pass into the hands of another people. It will break to pieces and consume all those kingdoms; but it, itself, will stand forever- ⁴⁵ like the stone you saw, which, without human hands, separated itself from the mountain and broke to pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold. The great God has revealed to the king what will come about in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation is reliable."

So; there are several important pieces of information here that may help us understand some difficult verses in Revelation. The first thing to notice is that of the 4 kingdoms Daniel speaks about, the first is the current kingdom of Babylon where Judah has been exiled and where Daniel is residing. This is logical since verse 39 makes it clear that this vision-statue is about the future and not the past. It is not a history lesson for the King of Babylon; it is a prophecy of what is to come. It is often thought among Bible scholars that this vision-statue has a direct connection to the 7 heads of John's Revelation Beast because John says that the 7 heads are 7 mountains, and biblically mountains are figurative of governments and kingdoms. Daniel, however, only mentions 4 kingdoms (not 7) so whatever the connection is with Revelation, Daniel's vision is incomplete when compared with John's. That it is incomplete makes sense since what Daniel is reporting happened almost 7 centuries before John received his visions, and much history has transpired between Daniel's era and John's, so in John's era more is known and so more can be revealed.

The 4 kingdoms of the statue, beginning with the head of gold, are (in order) Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. Each description Daniel gives is quite accurate as to characteristics of these coming kingdoms. Our focus today, however, is on the 4th kingdom and something curious that happens to it. This 4th kingdom symbolized as being of iron will be the most powerful of the 4, and is represented by the legs of the statue. And yet, as we move on down to the feet that are at the bottom of the legs Daniel says that this means that the 4th kingdom will eventually become a divided kingdom. This divided kingdom will have some characteristics and strength of the kingdom of iron (Rome), and yet the iron will be in chunks and mixed with weak clay, which means that when this division happens this kingdom is not only divided it is also unstable and not as strong as the united 4th kingdom of solid iron.

We discussed in an earlier lesson that historically the Roman Empire was indeed divided into 2 in the 3rd century because the Roman government felt that the size of the Empire was too widespread and unwieldy to be controlled by one Emperor from one capital city. Thus, the Roman Empire was divided into Eastern and Western regions, but nonetheless they were still both the Roman Empire. This geopolitical division occurred when the strong iron legs of Nebuchadnezzar's vision-statue evolved into the much weaker iron and clay feet. And sure enough, in the 5th century, the Western portion of the Roman Empire (ruled from the city of Rome) collapsed and was conquered. However the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire, ruled from the capital city of Byzantium (Istanbul, Turkey in modern times), lived on for almost another 9 centuries until it too collapsed and was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, an Islamic empire. So Nebuchadnezzar's statue and Daniel's interpretation of it has proved to be accurate according to recorded history.

But now we arrive at a difficult conundrum to deal with that bears great similarities to a similar conundrum we found back in Revelation 17 regarding the Beast with the 7 heads and 10 horns. **Verse 44 of Daniel 2** says this:

44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not pass into the hands of another people. It will break to pieces and consume all those kingdoms; but it, itself, will stand forever-

The conundrum begins with the words "in the days of those kings". Which kings are being referred to? Nebuchadnezzar's vision-statue, and Daniel's interpretation of it, speak of kingdoms..... not kings. Each of those 4 kingdoms had several kings over time. Some might say that Daniel's prophecy refers to any and all kings of those 4 kingdoms. However, the scriptural context of verse 44 is that in the days of "those kings", "God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed". Clearly this is referring to the Kingdom of God and about the earliest we could stretch the beginning of God's kingdom on earth (His eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed) is upon the birth of Yeshua in the 1st century during the rule of Rome and not before. Remember: the Roman Empire is the 4th kingdom represented by the legs of iron, so how are we to integrate what is being said about "those kings"?. Something doesn't add up; there is mystery going on here that is difficult to process. Interestingly in Revelation 17 (and I think this is a direct connection to Daniel 2) we read in verse 9 this confusing statement:

CJB Revelation 17:9 *This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is sitting; also they are seven kings-*

Or alternately as found in other Bible versions:

KJV Revelation 17:9 *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.* ¹⁰ *And there are seven kings:*

"They are" 7 kings versus "there are" 7 kings. So does this mean that the 7 heads are both kingdoms and kings? Or does it mean that the 7 heads symbolize 7 kingdoms..... but as a separate matter there will also be 7 kings. My point is this: Daniel suddenly jumps from kingdoms to kings in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream just as John in his vision of the 7 heads of the Beast jumps from kingdoms to kings. And yet when we look carefully at the wording of those passages in both books, the kingdoms aren't necessarily said to line up with certain kings. There are kingdoms, and there are kings; but perhaps it is not that we're supposed to be trying to pair a king to a kingdom..... either in Daniel or in Revelation 17. It is only that 7 kingdoms have their roles in history, and so do 7 kings have their roles in history. But the timelines of the kingdoms and the kings don't necessary line up nor do they have to although it has been a rather standard assumption among Bible commentators that they must line up in some way like the tumblers of a combination lock.

So let me remind you why we took this brief whirlwind tour of Daniel 2: it is because of the statement in Revelation 19:6 that only NOW, after Babylon's demise, that God begins to rule over His kingdom. We can understand and agree that God's kingdom was inaugurated with the birth of Christ. The Gospels, as one might expect, deal with this exact issue on a number of occasions and leave little room for debate.

CJB Mark 1:15 *"The time has come, God's Kingdom is near! Turn to God from your sins and believe the Good News!"*

CJB Luke 17:20-21 ²⁰ *The P'rushim asked Yeshua when the Kingdom of God would come. "The Kingdom of God," he answered, "does not come with visible signs; ²¹ nor will people be able to say, 'Look! Here it is!' or, 'Over there!' Because, you see, the Kingdom of God is among you."*

CJB Luke 11:20 ²⁰ *But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you!*

There are many more similar passages I could quote, but this ought to be sufficient to establish the premise that Yeshua's advent..... and not before.... marked the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth. So, in reference to Daniel 2, then perhaps we need to understand that the symbolism of the rock cut from the mountain that smashes this series of 4 kingdoms to dust, plus the evolution of the 4th kingdom of iron into two kingdoms that together are weaker than the one from whence they came, it is to give us an illustration of what Daniel is communicating:

CJB Daniel 2:44 ⁴⁴ *"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will establish a*

kingdom that will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not pass into the hands of another people. It will break to pieces and consume all those kingdoms; but it, itself, will stand forever-

How does this rock (likely referring to Christ) break to pieces and consume ALL those 4 kingdoms if at least 3 are history past in relation to when Christ first appears? And in fact, each successive kingdom conquered the one before it. It is because Babylon is representative of them all. All of these kingdoms bear the common trait that they oppose God in one way or another. Further, John's Revelation vision (that is much more complete than Daniel's) says that by John's era (basically the same as Christ's era) the 6th kingdom or empire was ruling (5 have fallen and one is living now, says John in 17:10). And since it was the Roman Empire living and ruling in John's day, then it means that it was only during the time of a unified Roman Empire (Daniel's 4th Kingdom, the legs of iron, which is the same as John's 6th Kingdom) that the Kingdom of God was inaugurated on earth. This, to me, is further proof that we need not attach specific kings to specific kingdoms, or try to extend that to mean certain Popes as some Christian End Times doctrines do, but rather we're learning that 7 unnamed kings have roles to play and 7 unnamed kingdoms have roles to play in God's plan of redemption. And while there might be some relationship between the kingdoms and kings, there may be no direct one to one connection between a specific king and a specific kingdom that he may have one time ruled over. That is, the 7 kings are separate from the 7 kingdoms.

So now we've come full circle. The final kingdom that will signal the end of human history is said to be an 8th one that is also said to come out of the 7th kingdom. And the final king, which is an 8th king, that is supported and installed by 10 kings who appear in the End Times (represented by the 10 horns of John's Beast), represents the Anti-Christ who rules over a kingdom that was not necessarily established by him. From my perspective the Anti-Christ essentially takes over what was previously ruled by Babylon the Great. But what the Anti-Christ doesn't realize is that with the demise of Babylon the Great (something he planned and carried out by means of those 10 kings that are the 10 horns of the Beast), Satan and he are now doomed to failure in a very short time. Further, if the Anti-Christ and the kingdom he rules over are still in operation by verse 6 of chapter 19, it would seem to be premature for all Heaven to shout: "Adonai has begun His reign!". Therefore, since I have cautioned all along to be careful not to think that various sections of John's visions necessarily occur in precise sequence, nor are we to assume that unless some set amount of time is said to have passed that each event is happening immediately following the preceding one, then it is my contention that the reason that the voices of the crowd in Heaven rise to such a deafening crescendo in verse 6 is because not only is Babylon destroyed and gone, but also the Anti-Christ (that 8th king) and the final worldly kingdom.... also the 8th one..... is gone. Thus what is being signaled in verse 6 can only be the end of Satan's influence of humanity on earth (as the prince of the air) and the moment of entry into the Millennial reign of God on earth. Or as it is better known, the 1000 Year Reign of Christ, when God's Kingdom on Earth is finally fully manifested.

We'll stop here and next week take up the matter of the wedding of the Lamb to His bride.