

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 42 - Chapter 19 Continued

To begin we're going to review some of the complex matters we discussed last week. The first is the issue of trying to square Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream-statue that he said represented 4 kingdoms (3 of which were future kingdoms that were to come in succession after Babylon) versus John's vision of a 7 headed Beast whose heads were said to represent 7 mountains that themselves symbolize governments or kingdoms... some of them in his past, some future to him. Part of the key to understanding how these 2 sets of kingdom lists compare is to notice that while Daniel's begins with Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Babylon) and ends with the Roman kingdom, John's vision offers a panoramic tour of history that is broader, more inclusive, and so lists more kingdoms. Thus we can say that the primary difference between the two lists of kingdoms is that Daniel's list is limited and incomplete as compared to John's. However it is only incomplete because Daniel's list was centuries earlier than John's and because it was designed to communicate one purpose, while John's list was designed to communicate a different purpose.

John's list begins with the Egyptian Kingdom that existed more than 10 centuries before Daniel's Babylon: why? It is because John's list deals with all the kingdoms that had, have, and will have a direct relationship with, and impact upon, Israel. The first kingdom of history past to directly deal with Israel was the Egyptian Kingdom. No kingdom before Egypt had any dealings with Israel (such as the one that is called the Old Babylonian Kingdom that flourished at its height under Hammurabi not long after the Great Flood) because Israel didn't come into existence until well into the Egyptian Kingdom period. As we follow the progression of John's 7 kingdoms, all gentile of course, (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greek, Rome, and then the Ottoman) it is clear that Israel suffered under every one of them. And an 8th kingdom that is still in our future (the kingdom of the Anti-Christ) will again persecute Israel.

Daniel's list omits the ancient Egyptian and Assyrian kingdoms that came before Babylon that was established late in the 7th century BC; but then his list of kingdoms continues in agreement with John's list because after Babylon comes the Media-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. Daniel's list goes no further forward than Rome and omits the future Ottoman Empire and the even more future kingdom of the Anti-Christ. Why? Because the specific purpose of Daniel's kingdom list was to show King Nebuchadnezzar what was going to happen to his empire in the future. Before beginning his interpretation of the dream Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar:

CJB Daniel 2:29-30 ²⁹ "Your majesty, when you were in bed, you began thinking about what would take place in the future; and he who reveals secrets has revealed to you what will happen. ³⁰ Yet this secret has not been revealed to me because I am wiser than anyone living, but so that the meaning can be made known to your majesty, and then you can understand the thoughts of your own mind.

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon would be seized by the Media-Persians. Then the Media-Persians would lose the kingdom to the Greeks. And then the Greeks would lose the kingdom to the Romans. But, for the most part, the land mass and the various nations controlled by Babylon and then each of the 3 succeeding empires or kingdoms was approximately the same. That is: roughly the same area changed hands over the centuries and so was controlled by different governments. And what would be the history changing event that occurred during the 4th kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision that was the Roman Empire period? The advent of Christ. And thus in Daniel's interpretation, he can take it no further forward than when the rock (presumably Jesus Christ) comes and symbolically smashes the entire statue that represents the 4 kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. So Daniel takes us from his time in exile in Babylon (just after 600 B.C.) to the first coming of Christ (about 4 B.C.) John, however, deals primarily with the second coming of Christ in the End Times that is still ahead of us.

The second matter I'd like to review is this issue of kingdoms versus kings. That is, Revelation tells us that there is to be a succession of 7 kingdoms before the End Times, but there is also to be a succession of 7 kings before the End Times. It has been assumed almost universally that each of the 7 kings is directly attached to, and ruled over, one or another of each of the 7 kingdoms. One king to one kingdom. However, there's much ambiguity in the wording of what Daniel says about this, as well as what John has to say about it, such that various Bible scholars have suggested solutions ranging from these kings referring to 7 Catholic Popes, to it referring to 7 successive Roman Emperors, all the way to trying to guess at which of the many kings over each kingdom this might be indicating. My take is that I'm not at all convinced that the 7 kings have a direct or sequential association with the 7 kingdoms. That is, there are 7 kingdoms that play significant roles in redemption history, and separately there are also 7 kings who play significant roles in redemption history. And, in addition there will be an 8th kingdom in the End Times that will coincide with the appearance of an 8th king. But as I said last week: while it is fairly straightforward to conclude that the 8th kingdom will be ruled over by an 8th king, the Anti-Christ, essentially that 8th kingdom is what once was the Babylon the Great of the End Times. It's just that the Anti-Christ finds a way to put himself in charge of it by using the several kings represented by the 10 horns of the Beast to do away with the government of Babylon the Great.

The final matter I'd like to review is this issue of Revelation 19:6 saying that "Adonai, God of heaven's armies, has begun his reign". This is a bit confusing because whether Jew or Christian we've assumed that God has always reigned over His Creation. And yet there has also been this issue of God allowing Satan to have much authority over earth's inhabitants as the Prince of the Air. What I think is happening here is that this is speaking of a time when history is entering into the Millennial Kingdom period. That is, after Satan has been chained up and thrown into the abyss, after Armageddon, and after Christ has returned to claim His Kingdom. And I especially think this proves out because of what comes next: the wedding of the Lamb.

Let's re-read part of Revelation 19.

RE-READ REVELATION 19:6 - end

The scene that is unfolding is taking place mostly in Heaven; so it's important to remember that every description of beings and objects in Heaven are fashioned after physical beings and objects on earth to help humans get some kind of grasp on what is happening. And we have all this rejoicing in Heaven going on because God has advanced His agenda of bringing evil under control, and eradicating those who oppose Him, to an end. For the last few chapters in Revelation this opposition has been symbolized by all that is Babylon the Great. Thus those who have held on to their allegiance to God refusing to take on the mark of the Beast (even if it meant their death) are rewarded for their perseverance.

Now we come to one of the most talked about events in Evangelical Christianity: the wedding of the Lamb. And, says verses 7 and 8, the Lamb's bride has prepared herself in beautiful attire that epitomizes her absolute purity. To begin verse 9 we are told that those who are invited to the wedding feast are greatly blessed. The rather universally accepted understanding within Christianity is that the bride of Christ is the Church, and that those invited to the wedding feast are generally the same as the Church as well. Let's explore this by beginning with a passage taken from Revelation 21.

CJB Rev. 21:9-26 ⁹ *One of the seven angels having the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues approached me and said, "Come! I will show you the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb."* ¹⁰ *He carried me off in the Spirit to the top of a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God.* ¹¹ *It had the Sh'khinah of God, so that its brilliance was like that of a priceless jewel, like a crystal-clear diamond.*

¹² *It had a great, high wall with twelve gates; at the gates were twelve angels; and inscribed on the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Isra'el.*

¹³ *There were three gates to the east, three gates to the north, three gates to the south and three gates to the west.* ¹⁴ *The wall of the city was built on twelve foundation-stones, and on these were the twelve names of the twelve emissaries of the Lamb.* ¹⁵ *The angel speaking with me had a gold measuring-rod with which to measure the city, its gates and its wall.* ¹⁶ *The city is laid out in a square, its length equal to its width. With his rod he measured the city at 1,500 miles, with length, width and height the same.* ¹⁷ *He measured its wall at 216 feet by human standards of measurement, which the angel was using.*

¹⁸ *The wall was made of diamond and the city of pure gold resembling pure glass.*

¹⁹ *The foundations of the city wall were decorated with all kinds of precious stones- the first foundation stone was diamond, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,*

²⁰ *the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh turquoise and the twelfth amethyst.* ²¹ *The twelve gates were twelve pearls, with each gate made of a single pearl. The city's main street was pure gold, transparent as glass.*

²² I saw no Temple in the city, for ADONAI, God of heaven's armies, is its Temple, as is the Lamb. ²³ The city has no need for the sun or the moon to shine on it, because God's Sh'khinah gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

²⁵ Its gates will never close, they stay open all day because night will not exist there, ²⁶ and the honor and splendor of the nations will be brought into it.

This passage specifically, clearly, unequivocally says that the new (redeemed) Jerusalem is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. Even more, the infrastructure of the new Jerusalem is explained in some detail including that the city had 12 gates that were named for the 12 tribes of Israel. Further, the city had 12 special foundation stones that were named for the 12 original disciples of the Lamb..... who, if you'll remember..... were all Jews. So how are we to take this?

First let's discuss this accepted notion that it is the Church that is the Bride of the Lamb. Unless one is from another planet and has just arrived on earth, it is common knowledge that to the leadership of the institutional Church, and to the vast majority of its members, the Church is of, by, and for **gentile** Believers in Christ. There are those who allow for Jews to join, but generally only if they give up some or all of their Jewishness. There of course are what is called Messianic Jews (Jews who trust Yeshua as Savior) who belong to Messianic Synagogues. But the institutional Church generally does not include them in the definition of "The Church". Actually, the institutional Church isn't quite sure what to do with Messianic Jews since if they attend a synagogue it generally means to them that they are Jews who recognize Christ as Savior but still depend on obedience to the Law as their means to salvation. This is why I am most reluctant to accept the standard Christian viewpoint that the Bride of Christ is the Church; it is because I understand what the Church means by that and also who it excludes.

Second; are we to assume that since the bride is Jerusalem that Yeshua is marrying some huge blocks of stone and several fabulous gates? That is; Yeshua's bride is literally the walls, gates, and streets of the city of Jerusalem? The short answer is "no". All throughout the Bible when Jerusalem is mentioned as being unfaithful to God, or Jerusalem is condemned for its idolatrous ways, it is not referring to the stone blocks and paved streets; it means the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And it means the same thing here in Revelation. So indeed, it is redeemed people that call Jerusalem their home that are Christ's Bride. The redeemed people consist of gentiles and Jews and yet the commemorative gates and foundation stones memorialize Israelites and not gentiles. The city infrastructure is modeled after Israelite Jerusalem even using the same city name. So once again Israel is front and center in God's plan of redemption and gentile Believers need to realize that we have been graciously joined to Israel and are neither superior to Israel nor are we Israel's replacements.

Let's flesh this out a little further. I have spoken to you in times past that the Bible tells us of 2 advents of Christ, and of 2 "latter days" or End Times that are directly connected to each of His advents. But we also hear about 2 redemptions of Christ's people: Israel. The first was when they were redeemed from Egypt and their oppressors were destroyed. Thereafter, at Mt. Sinai, a covenant was agreed to between Israel and Yehoveh. From time immemorial Rabbis have

commented that on Mt. Sinai there was a betrothal of Israel (as the bride) to God (as the husband). In the Old Testament Israel and Jerusalem are regularly called the bride of God. Therefore it should be no surprise that there is a 2nd redemption of Israel in the End Times that looks much like the 1st one, and that is at least partly what we are witnessing in Revelation.

Marriage is a metaphor in the Bible for a covenant. I want to say this again because I'm not sure this has ever taken hold among Believers. Marriage and covenant are very nearly one in the same. A covenant between God and His worshippers creates an intimate and unbreakable union. Since this occurs in the invisible spiritual sphere, God has provided a way for human kind to better understand the force of effect of a covenant with Him by giving us the visible institution of marriage in the physical sphere. This is why we read so much in the Bible about weddings, brides, bridegrooms, husbands, wives, and we have several spiritual lessons given to us by Yeshua that uses the illustration of marriage and betrothal; in fact He uses this in some of His parables. A covenant with God is also guaranteed by God and therefore it will not be broken.... at least on His side. It is why it breaks my heart to hear Christianity insist that God not only broke, but discarded, His covenant with Moses that in reality is a covenant with humanity for all those, Jew or gentile, who give their allegiance to the God of Israel and His Son Yeshua. Such a claim is not only false and dishonest but it implies that God's covenants are little more than typical human contracts that are regularly broken if one side has a reason to get out it. Humans are inherently not trustworthy; but God is inherently faithful to His covenants.

Believers are not currently married to Christ, but we are betrothed to Him. Our acceptance of the God of Israel and His Son as our Savior enters us into this betrothal that is a covenant. But.... the union has not been consummated such that a legal marriage is formed. This is precisely how betrothal worked among Israel in ancient times. Betrothal is more than modern engagement. It is closer to...but not quite... marriage. Until there was physical consummation of the betrothed there was no marriage. In fact, officiated marriage ceremonies only came later in Hebrew history. At first the betrothal was the highlight and then later when the agreed to time arrived the couple would engage in physical intimacy and the new bride would present a blood stained marriage cloth to her parents as proof of her virginity and of the consummation (which in essence was the marriage ceremony). This marriage cloth was a prized possession that was even kind of an ancient marriage certificate but also proof of her having never been in union with a man before.

But here in Revelation 19 we have the actual wedding ceremony of the Lamb to His bride and so the betrothed becomes the wife. The consummation is Yeshua's physical presence with us forever and ever. The spiritual bond that we have with Messiah today as Believers is strengthened to an unbreakable union at the marriage feast when He is with us physically and spiritually. Thus we can read in verse 7 that the Bride has prepared herself, and then go to Revelation 21:9 and see that the Bride is the new and redeemed Jerusalem that is descending from Heaven. That is, the Bride is presented as singular..... one. However since the idea of Jerusalem is not about the infrastructure but rather it is about the spiritual status of its individual residents, then we can speak of this wedding feast in John's Apocalypse as it does in verse 9 when we read that those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb are blessed.

Those who are invited are the residents of the redeemed city of Jerusalem.... Jew and gentile (and redeemed people are all that exists at this point in history). Together, corporately, these many redeemed individuals of Jerusalem can be said to be the Bride of the Lamb represented by the new Jerusalem.

The angel who had delivered this astounding oracle to John assured him that these were God's very words. John was so overwhelmed that he fell in worship before the angel and appropriately the angel scolded him for doing it. He says he's only a fellow servant along with those humans who trust in Yeshua as their Lord and Savior. Then the angel says something that has perplexed many Bible translators and teachers. He says: "For the testimony of Yeshua is the Spirit of prophecy". There are so many explanations attempted for this verse that I'm going to forego my usual custom of giving you 2 or 3 and just get right to what I think it is saying. It can be rightly claimed that the Law of Moses always pointed to Christ. Christ said this in the Gospel of John:

CJB John 5:46 ⁴⁶ For if you really believed Moshe, you would believe me; because it was about me that he wrote.

But it can be equally claimed that prophecy spoke about Yeshua as well. Therefore in this instance the spirit of prophecy is like our speaking of the spirit of the Law. That is, the spirit represents the overriding intent and real meaning behind the Law versus the letter of the Law, which is the mechanical part of it. Therefore the spirit of prophecy is the overriding intent and the real meaning behind prophecy. And Yeshua's testimony, or witness, is the realization of the Gospel of salvation. Thus this difficult sentence means that the realization of the Gospel of salvation through Yeshua is the overriding intent and real meaning behind all biblical prophecy. Yes, prophecy portended real events over many centuries of history; but on a spiritual level these portended events pointed towards, or even played a role in bringing about, the Gospel of salvation through God's Son.

Verse 11 likely brings a new vision as John says he saw Heaven opened. In this vision he sees a white horse. This is not the same as the white horse of the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse back in chapter 6. Here the white color indicates purity as its rider is called Faithful and True. But this verse says something about the nature and character of Messiah Yeshua that defies the overly simplistic mantra of the modern Church that says "Jesus is love". I probably don't have to explain to most of you that the mental picture of Jesus as our best buddy, our wish-genie, as someone who wouldn't harm a fly, and who winks and nods at our sins in the name of love, is what is most prevalent today. And yet here in Revelation we are told that he passes judgment (he makes a considered decision) in righteousness (He does it not in anger or impulse but according to God's standard), and that His considered decision according to God's standard is to wage war against the wicked. So, he goes forth and slays many. His eyes look like a fiery flame; that is Christ's eyes burned with the passion to carry out the judicial action of destructive vengeance that the Father has ordered. The Lamb has just taken a backseat to the Lion. No more being the sacrifice for sins that saves people from God's wrath; now Christ goes out as a Lion as God's wrath against sinners who refused God's free gift. The warrior Messiah that the Jews of Yeshua's day had insisted upon finally makes His appearance.

Yeshua has been known by many names over the centuries: Messiah, King, Lord, God's Son, the Rock, Faithful and True to name a few. However in verse 12 we're told that He also has a name that no one but Himself knows. Recall that biblically speaking names are less a means of personal identification and more a statement of that person's attributes or character. That is the sense we need to take it here. It is that there is another side of Yeshua that He has yet to reveal. Some commentators say that His followers who know Him also know this name, but it is the wicked who don't. I don't find this interpretation to be reasonable. It says ONLY Yeshua Himself knows this special mysterious name. It allows no room for others of any ilk to know.

Verse 13 explains that He was wearing a robe dipped in blood. This is much like the verse before this one regarding His name. That is, there are varying opinions about what it means and whose blood is soaked into the robe; some commentators insist that it is Yeshua's own sacrificial blood. But really I don't think it is that hard to determine. This blood soaked robe is indicative of the countless lives of the wicked that He is taking. Listen to Isaiah 63.

^{CJB} Isaiah 63:1 - 4 ¹Who is this, coming from Edom, from Botzrah with clothing stained crimson, so magnificently dressed, so stately in his great strength? "It is I, who speak victoriously, I, well able to save." ²Why is your apparel red, your clothes like someone treading a winepress? ³"I have trodden the winepress alone; from the peoples, not one was with me. So I trod them in my anger, trampled them in my fury; so their lifeblood spurted out on my clothing, and I have stained all my garments; ⁴for the day of vengeance that was in my heart and my year of redemption have come.

There could be no clearer picture. This Isaiah passage connects directly to Revelation 19:13. Notice in Isaiah how the rhetorical question is asked about who this person is whose clothing is so heavily stained crimson (the color of blood). And the strange answer is that it is the war victor who is speaking..... the same victor who is also able to save. Then the reason for the blood stained robe is stated: "Their lifeblood spurted out on my clothing". What is the cause of all this bloodshed? "The day of vengeance that was in my heart and my year of redemption have come". So the question is answered: the horseman on the white horse (Christ) has a robe stained with the blood of His enemies. Yeshua is the divine warrior carrying out divine vengeance.

It is interesting to me that immediately, in the context of Yeshua judging and killing and wearing a robe stained with the blood of His enemies, that we read: "He is called THE WORD OF GOD". By what standard is Christ judging? It is by The Word of God. And this directly connects to verse 15 that says that out of His mouth comes a sharp sword. This is not a military instrument of war; the sharp sword is God's Word that instructs and divides. Its truth brings eternal life to the righteous and eternal death to the wicked. And, I might add, it will be by this same standard that Yeshua will rule over all the earth in the Millennial Kingdom age. Since He is using this Word to judge, then it is a Word of judicial instruction. I contend it is the Torah. And in a couple of verses we'll see another illusion to this.

Upon His white horse, Yeshua leads a huge army who is also riding upon white horses, once again indicating purity. Now I want to stop and make a statement here that we need to remember: these descriptions are figurative and symbolic. All of these horses and riders are

coming out of Heaven; therefore they can only be spiritual in nature and not physical. Thus the description we read of them is using earthly terms as illustrations to help us understand what is happening. I don't accept that when this day arrives that we'll look up in the sky and see a cloud of white horses racing along the horizon. So who are these riders of the white horses? Verse 14 is ambiguous as it uses the term "armies of heaven" that is usually reserved for angels. And yet, we read that these riders are clothed in white linen, which has more of a sense of these being the souls of Believers who were at one timing living human beings. I think perhaps a good clue comes from the Gospel of Matthew. In the 25th chapter we read:

CJB Matthew 25:31-34 ³¹ *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. ³³ The 'sheep' he will place at his right hand and the 'goats' at his left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world.*

This certainly sounds to me like Yeshua is explaining in Matthew what we are now reading about in Revelation 19. When else does the Son of Man come in glory for the purpose of assembling the nations for judgment and for assuming His seat on His throne? Clearly since He is coming for war, and is also about to take His seat on the throne, this is taking place at the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom. In fact the very next verse (15) says that out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. In earlier books of the Bible this sharp sword is God's Word and so the idea is that His judgment of the nations is based upon the Law of Moses. My conclusion is that the riders on the white horses are angels and not the souls of Believers. However, I acknowledge that the riders on the white horses could be in addition to all the angels Christ spoke about. I suppose we'll have to wait and see.

After the Lord has judged and struck down the rebellious and wicked nations, and He assumes His seat on His throne in the Millennial Temple, we are told that He will rule them with a rod of iron. Some believe that this connects with Psalm 2:9.

CJB Psalm 2:9 *You will break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot."*

I am not convinced of the connection between Psalm 2 and Revelation 19. The main reason is that Psalm 2:9 is about destroying. But the point of Revelation 19:15 is not destroying but rather ruling. In fact, the Greek word used for ruling is **poimaino** and it means to feed or to tend a flock; hardly a word that implies war or executions. But the meaning of His ruling (tending the flock) with a rod of iron (instead of a Shepherd's staff) is unmistakable: iron is the hardest, most unbending, unyielding metal there was in John's day. This means that Christ will not be looking the other way at disobedience; there will be no tolerance whatsoever for sin and evil. So by what standard will Yeshua rule? A standard which inherently has no tolerance for sin and evil and always requires a price for bad behavior. The Torah; the Law of Moses. And in fact when we read the final 8 chapters of Ezekiel that provides an excruciatingly detailed blueprint of the Millennial Temple, and it calls for sacrifices at the altar and for most of the Temple rituals to be reinstated by Levite Priests, clearly the Law Code in use at that time will be the Law of Moses.

We'll conclude chapter 19 and begin chapter 20 next week.