

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH VICTORIOUS

A Survey of the Book of Revelation

by Chris Reeves

- Part 3 -

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Part 1 of this series covered the church's life in Christ (Rev. 1 -3) and the church's security through Christ (Rev. 4 – 8).
- B. Part 2 of this series covered the church's message about Christ (Rev. 8 – 11) and the church's conflict for Christ (Rev. 12 – 14).
- C. This lesson will cover the church's vindication by Christ (Rev. 15-20) and the church's union with Christ (Rev. 21-22).

II. THE CHURCH'S VINDICATION BY CHRIST (REVELATION 15-20).

The NT church at the end of the first century was severely persecuted. The mighty Roman persecution would appear invincible and would pressure Christians to think that God will not come to the rescue. These persecuted Christians needed encouragement to hold on and look to the ultimate outcome. God would certainly vindicate his righteous saints by exercising his righteous wrath upon their enemies and persecutors (15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15; see 14:10 earlier). Revelation 15-20 introduces the theme of vindication: God's people vindicated from their persecutors (15:2-4; 16:5-7; 17:14,17; 18:6,20; 19:2; 20:4; see also 6:9; 8:3-5; 11:18 for references to vindication earlier in the book). In the seven seals, we see the permissive will of God and in the seven trumpets we see the reformative purpose of God, but in the seven bowls of wrath we see the "last" and "finished" retributive justice of God (15:1,5-8; 16:1,17). However, the wicked still did not repent after being judged (16:9). God's enemies are the dragon (Rev. 12), the sea & earth beast (Rev. 13), and Babylon (Rev. 14:8). The final fall of God's enemies are presented in reverse order: Babylon (Rev. 17-18), the beast (Rev. 19:19-21), and the dragon (Rev. 20:1-10).

- A. The Seven Bowls of Wrath (15-16) – the "wide angle" view of Rome's destruction.
 - 1. The seven bowls prepared in heaven (15:1-8).
 - 2. The seven bowls poured out on earth (16:1-21).
 - a) The first bowl poured into the earth was a grievous sore (16:2).
 - b) The second bowl poured into the sea was blood (16:3).
 - c) The third bowl poured into the rivers was blood (16:4-7).
 - d) The fourth bowl poured upon the sun was scorching fire (16:8-9)
 - e) The fifth bowl poured upon the beast's throne was sore pain (16:10-11).
 - f) The sixth bowl poured upon the Euphrates River dried it up (16:12-16; see 9:14; 19:17-21).
 - g) The seventh bowl poured upon the air was great hail (16:17-21; see 14:8; 17:5; 18:2).
- B. The Fall of Babylon (17-18) – the "zoom in" view of Rome's destruction.
 - 1. Rome - the great harlot described (17:1-13) and destroyed (17:14-18).
 - 2. Rome - the great Babylon described (18:1-20) and destroyed (18:21-24; see 14:8; 16:19).

C. The Fall of the Beast and Dragon (19-20).

1. The redeemed rejoice over Rome's fall (19:1-10).
2. The Faithful and True, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords is victorious(19:11-16; see 12:5)
3. The beast destroyed (19:17-21; see 13:4).
4. The dragon destroyed (20:1-10; see Ezek. 38:2).
5. Death and Hades destroyed in the final judgment (20:11-15; see Mt. 25:30-46).

III. THE CHURCH'S UNION WITH CHRIST (REVELATION 21-22).

Roman persecution would cause Christians to focus on the here and now of things. They would not be able to see the outcome of their struggle. Also, if John gave a detailed outcome of the judgment on Rome and Satan, and then stopped, what would that do to the saints? They would ask, "What will we get? What can we expect?" These Christians needed a divine outlook on the future of the saints and their final end.

Revelation 20:11 – 22:6 moves ahead to the end of time. The following points show that this is a reference to saints united with Christ in heaven, not saints on earth in the church: 1) Rev. 21-22 follows the final judgment of Rev. 20:11-15; 2) Rev. 21-22 is the period of "a new heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1,5; see 20:11), which according to Peter, is after the earth and works are burned up (2 Peter 3:8-13); 3) Rev. 21-22 is a time when "death shall be no more" (21:4); 4) the rewards mentioned in Rev. 21-22, when compared with the rest of the book, are rewards that are given after death, not before it (7:15 and 21:3; 7:14-17 and 22:3; 2:7 and 22:2); 5) saints are serving God around his throne forever (3:21; 7:9-17; 14:3; 21:3,5; 22:1,3) - a throne in heaven, not on earth (4:2-3; 5:1; 20:11-12; etc.); and 6) the reward of heaven is at the same time as the punishment of hell (21:7-8; see 2:11).

A. Union with Christ (21:1 - 22:5).

1. United in God's tabernacle (21:1-8) - perfect partnership with God (see Rev. 7:15; 19:7-9).
2. United in God's city (21:9-27) - perfect protection by God (see Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 3:12).
3. United in God's garden (22:1-5) - perfect provision from God (see Gen. 2:8; Rev. 2:7).

B. Closing Reminders (22:6-21).

1. Do not disobey the book (22:6-7).
2. Do not seal the book (22:10-17; see Dan. 12:4).
3. Do not tamper with the book (22:18-21; see Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. We learn a lesson about victory: be loyal to Christ (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3-4); faithful members of the church of all time will be victorious with their savior Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57-58; 1 Jn. 5:4).
- B. We learn a lesson about sin: impenitence and immorality will be punished (Rom. 2:4-5); separate yourselves from sin (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:11,14; Jas. 4:4,8). Come out (Rev. 18:4)!
- C. We learn a lesson about our eternal destiny: where will you be, heaven or hell? Is your name in the Lamb's book of life? (Ex. 32:32; Psa. 69:27-28; Isa. 4:3; Mal. 3:16; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23).
- D. We learn a lesson about heaven: where all of man's needs are met (Mt. 25:21; Jn. 14:1-4; Heb. 4:11; 2 Pet. 3:13).
- E. Christ in the book of Revelation: walking (2:1), standing (5:6; see 14:1), opening (6:1), overcoming (17:14), riding (19:11), reigning (20:4-6; see 11:15), and coming (22:20; see 1:7).