

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 25, Revelation 19:11-21, The Description of the Warrior and the Description of the Battle

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 25 on Revelation 19:11-21. The Description of the Warrior and the Description of the Battle or Judgment.

In chapter 19 and verses 11 through 21, we are introduced to, in a sense, the climax of chapter 17 and 18 and the first part of 19. Chapters 17 and 18 focused on the destruction of Babylon itself, of Babylon Rome. Now it seems that chapters 19, chapter 19 and verses 11 through 21 will be devoted to the judgment of its allies, to the judgment of the nations that committed adultery with it.

So first, Babylon gets a judgment in 17 and 18, and that sort of becomes a model, for now, the judgment that will fall on the rest of the world and particularly on those that were its allies and that was seduced to commit adultery with it. So, chapter 19, in a sense, does not represent something that chronologically happens after chapters 17 and 18 as far as if we see chapters 17 and 18 as representing Rome against the backdrop of the end of the world. In that sense, chapter 19 does follow the destruction of historical Rome.

But on the other hand, if we understand the destruction of Rome as also including the final destruction of Babylon at the end of the world, then chapter 19 is a natural corollary to that. So again, chapters 17 and 18 are the destruction of Babylon Rome, but then the rest of the earth received judgment along with it. And that's where chapter 19 comes in.

In chapters 19, verses 11 through 21, all the forces of evil and all of humanity in opposition to God and his people, all of rebellious, prideful, idolatrous humanity that opposes God and oppresses his people now, are the subjects of God's judgment in chapter 19. This section of chapter 19:11 through 21 can be divided into two parts. The first part in verses 11 through 16 is the description of the main character, and that is the warrior Jesus Christ, who comes seated on a white horse, and he's described in detail.

And then finally, in 17 and following, the battle itself is described, which we're going to see in a moment that it is not really much of a battle at all. The battle will end before it really ever begins. So we'll be aware of those two sections, 11 through 16, the description of the warrior who comes out to do battle, that is the rider on the white horse.

And then second, in verses 17 and following, the battle itself is described. The way this section is set up, I would suggest to you that the focal point of this section is not the battle itself in verses 17 and following, but the description of the warrior, Jesus Christ on the white horse, the rider on the white horse in verses 11 through 16. His description is the most prominent element and the focal point of chapter 19.

Now, chapter 19, verse 11, then begins with an important feature, and that is verse 11 says, I saw heaven opened. The other place we found that language was back in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, where John sees heaven open, and he then is summoned up to heaven to see a vision, and he sees the divine throne room. This mention of heaven being opened, I think, is a crucial feature and marks a crucial section and climax of the book of Revelation.

And that is, beginning with chapter 19, verse 11, in my opinion, the rest of the book of Revelation is going to be about a series of images that portray the effects of the return of Christ at the end of history. So I think verse 11 in chapter 19 is the introduction to that; by having heaven open, it marks a new scene, a new significant scene, as it did back in chapter 4, yet now this scene with heaven open will not result in John going up and seeing the heavenly world, it now results in Christ returning to consummate God's plan for the end of history. God's redemptive plan for history resulted in judgment and salvation.

So, as I said, I think with chapters 19 and verse 11, everything from now on occurs at the second coming of Christ. And what we're going to find is a number of scenes that, once again, starting here, leading up to chapter 21, a number of scenes that don't necessarily follow chronologically after each other. In other words, a number of scenes that do not necessarily portray events that follow in chronological session.

Instead, it's as if the author draws on a number of images to interpret and explain what happens at the second coming of Christ. Or what is the meaning of Christ's second coming? What does it accomplish? What are its results? The author will see, through a number of scenes, will just take different images to explore the meaning of the coming of Christ to bring history to an end, to consummate God's redemptive plan. So, chapter 19 and verse 11 then begin a significant section and actually could have its own chapter division, I think.

But what I want to do then is read chapter 19 as we've read other sections so that you sort of get the flow of the text. And you are sort of able to visualize and feel the effect of the text, rather than just jumping in and trying to analyze all its details.

So, chapter 19, starting with verse 11
, this is John's description of the final judgment scene. I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse whose rider was called Faithful and True.

With justice, he judges and makes war; his eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.

He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe, dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in white linen, white and clean.

Out of his mouth came a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the wrath of God Almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh, he has the name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So that's the description of the warrior or the main figure, Jesus Christ, who comes to do battle.

Then, in verse 17

, I saw an angel standing in the sun. This section will be the description of the battle. Who cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and the riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the white horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him, the false prophet, who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. Revelation 13.

With these signs, he deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Then, the rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the white horse.

And all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. Now, interestingly, those of us who are more prone to think of Jesus in terms of the image of the gospel, of a gentle lamb or someone who has children gathered around him, and one who says, take upon you my yoke because it is light, we're not prepared for the vision of the Son of Man or the vision of Jesus that we see now in chapter 19. He's presented now as anything but the gentle shepherd and the kind Jesus who holds children and says some of the things he does in the gospel.

Even if you read the gospels, there are plenty of places where Jesus warns us of coming judgment, but there's really nothing to prepare us for the vision of Jesus that we see here. Seldom do you find this picture of Jesus on the stained glass windows or portraits hanging in our churches.

We would rather see Jesus holding the Lamb or something like that. But now we see Jesus coming in all his glory at the end of history, riding a white horse, deliberately coming out to do battle against the rest of the world and against his enemies. The fact that he's on a white horse is clearly suggestive of its connection elsewhere with Revelation.

We've already seen the role that horses play in battle scenes. For example, in the first seal of chapter 6 of Revelation, a rider comes out on a horse and he's clearly dressed in a white robe and he holds a bow and arrow. He's clearly bent on warfare and destruction.

In chapter 9, we saw a demonic cavalry, horses, and riders that clearly the author linked with demonic beings. So a rider on a horse in Revelation is clearly evocative of conquest and warfare and defeat. But now we see that in contrast to the Roman Empire, in contrast to the demonic cavalry, now Jesus comes out on his horse and he comes out to do battle and to defeat his enemies.

I suggested to you that verses 11 through 16 are probably the focus of this section. That is, the main focus is not going to be on the battle and the war. In fact, we will see that there's really not much of a battle; there's really not a war at all.

And I want to suggest to you what I think this warfare imagery might be pointing to and might be symbolizing and indicating. But the focus of this chapter is on the description of the warrior in 11 through 16. And the way Christ is described is through a number of Old Testament texts that particularly refer to God as a warrior, but also the author draws on a couple images from chapter 1 of Revelation.

Remember, back in chapter 1, John sees a vision of the Son of Man, and he is described as having a sword coming out of his mouth, for example. Described with feet as burnished bronze and eyes like fire, etc. You will find those picked up in chapters 2 and 3. Now, once more, the author has provided a composite picture of Christ from Old Testament texts, but also his description of Christ back in chapter 1 to describe Christ as the one who is both able to defeat his enemies but is also completely just in doing so.

So that's important. Christ is not just portrayed here as this colossal warrior who is able to come and defeat his enemies. Yes, that's part of it, to show Christ is able and powerful enough and strong enough to defeat his enemies.

But also, the author will draw on language that shows that he is just in doing so. So the language of being right and just, we saw that back in chapters 18 and 19. God was praised as being just, holy, and righteous in his defeat or judgment on Babylon, Rome.

So Christ is both able, but also just in defeating his enemies in a final all-out war. And again, here we are at the end of history. Here we find the second coming, the consummation of history that the rest of Revelation has pointed to, that we've seen snippets of, that our appetite has been whetted to finally see, and now we're not disappointed, we see a full disclosure of the final battle.

We've already in the form of other judgment scenes; we've already seen this event anticipated, starting in the sixth seal, back in chapter 6, the day of the Lord and the defeat of the enemies. We saw this anticipated back in chapter 17, where all the nations gather to defeat the Lamb, yet the Lamb defeats them without a struggle. Back in chapter 14, we see the saints emerging victorious, standing with the Lamb.

So we've seen this scene anticipated several times throughout Revelation, but now finally we find a fuller portrait that we have been waiting for. I just want to draw attention to several of the ways that Jesus is described in demonstrating his ability, but also his justice in the final battle scene. First of all, note that he is called faithful and true.

This language, and also the one who judges and makes war in righteousness, this language comes right out of the Old Testament; a number of Psalms indicate Jesus as or indicate God as the one who now, in righteousness and is the one who is faithful, now makes war. Probably a specific allusion to Isaiah chapter 11, an Old Testament text that plays a crucial role all over the book of Revelation, as hopefully you're beginning to pick up on. Chapter 11 and verse 4 of Isaiah and interestingly, begins with chapter 11, verse 1, a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots, a branch will bear fruit, the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him.

Verse 3, and he will delight in fear of the Lord, he will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears, and here's verse 4, Isaiah 11, but with righteousness he will judge, with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor in the earth, he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. In verse 5, righteousness will be his belt, and faithfulness the sash around his waist. So notice here that the messianic figure from Isaiah chapter 11 is now portrayed in terms of one who judges righteously, one who judges with fairness, especially judging for the needy and the poor, and slaying the wicked.

And so here in chapter 19, in the similar language of faithfulness and righteousness and justice, God is portrayed as coming to bring judgment, to vindicate his people, and now to punish his enemies. The fact that his eyes are like flames of fire is probably another judgment motif; we saw that back in chapter 2, 18-23, the Christ coming with eyes like flames of fire, was the main figure of speech used, or the main image used to address that church, because of their situation. But it goes back to

chapter 1 and verse 13, where John says, Among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe, reaching down to his feet, and with a golden sash around his chest.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. So now we see this portrait of the son of man, coming as a mighty judge, and coming now as a warrior, who in righteousness and justice, will decide on behalf of his people, his saints, and will do so in a way that brings judgment upon the nations of the earth. Note the fact that he is also described as having crowns on his head.

We've seen elsewhere that different individuals had crowns, most specifically the beast himself, who had seven heads with crowns on them. And now Jesus is described as the one who has crowns on his head, so that probably we're to see a parody, between the beast, who had seven crowns, and he goes out and conquers, he makes war with the saints, he claims divine status. But now Jesus Christ comes in direct contrast to that, with crowns on his head, demonstrating his power and his sovereignty over all the nations, and that now he is able to judge it.

One interesting feature is, the fact that Christ is described as having a name that no one knows. And I don't want to go into all the details, the suggestions of what that name might be, but intriguingly we've seen already the significance of a name, throughout the book of Revelation, the name on the foreheads of the people of God. Isaiah chapter 62 and verse 2, we find emphasis on a new name.

And now the name is applied to Christ, but it's a name that no one knows. The idea here might not be so much that, this is a mysterious name that no one can possibly figure out. The background of this is to know someone's name, would be to have control over that person, or authority over that person.

And especially in the context of being able to name demons, or naming a demon would be to have control over that demon, or that God, or something like that. So, by saying that Christ has a name that no one knows, the emphasis is not so much on the fact that it's mysterious and Christ has a name that no one's ever going to be able to figure out. The idea of naming, not knowing what that name means, is another way of saying Jesus Christ; no one has authority over him.

Jesus Christ has complete control, he is absolutely sovereign. The fact that no one can name his name, signifies his complete and absolute sovereignty, over all the nations of the earth, and over all the powers of evil, including the dragon and the two beasts, which we'll see he deals with in just a moment. Two other features to draw your attention to by way of images, one is Jesus Christ is described as having his robe dipped in blood.

Now, it's intriguing that Jesus Christ is described as having his robe dipped in blood before he ever engages in warfare and before the battle is ever described. Maybe this is a reference to other battles he's involved in. One suggestion is that this blood is actually his own blood, and that's part of the debate: whose blood is this on Jesus' robe? One suggestion is that this is Jesus' own blood.

So, once more we find that the ironic way in which Jesus conquers, he conquers through his own death, he conquers through his own shed blood on the cross, and so the blood here should be understood as Jesus' own blood that he sheds at his death. Once more describing the ironic way in which he overcomes. Not like Rome, but now he will overcome his own suffering and death.

However, I think the key to understanding the blood on Christ's robe before he ever gets into battle, interestingly, and I'll return to that, is to pay attention to the Old Testament context, and that is here, Isaiah chapter 63 seems to be the background, verses 1 through 3, for the depiction of Jesus. We've already seen that chapter 63 of Isaiah has provided a background for the grape harvest; back at the end of chapter 14, the vision of the grape harvest and the treading of the winepress of God's wrath, so that what comes out is not the juice from the grapes, what comes out is the blood of the enemies. This background in Isaiah 63, 1 through 3, seems to be reflected in this description of Christ's robe that is already dipped in blood.

Let me read chapter 63 of Isaiah again, which anticipates a day of vengeance, a day of judgment, when God will return to punish his enemy. Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? I have trod in the winepress alone.

From the nations, no one was with me; I have trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my own wrath. Their blood splattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing with their blood. So, in other words, if we are to understand perhaps the judgment scene back in chapter 14, of the treading of the winepress and resulting in the blood of the enemy, perhaps we should understand the blood on Jesus' robe, his robe dipped in blood, here in chapter 19 in the same way.

That the blood is not his own blood, though it could be, and you could make good sense of that, but the blood primarily is the blood of his enemies, in fulfillment of Isaiah 63. The blood of his enemies is a result of God's wrath, of God trampling the winepress of his wrath and bringing judgment on his enemies. Now, this seems strange.

How can you have Christ's garment dipped in blood before he ever defeats his enemies? I would suggest this is just part of the apocalyptic symbolism, that we don't

need to be so literal in suggesting how he has the blood of his enemies before he ever fights them. Remember, John is describing Jesus Christ here. John is not interested in giving us a precise, detailed, logical account, where, no, you can't have Christ with blood on his garments before he ever fights.

John is simply interested in drawing Old Testament text to demonstrate, to describe the warrior, to demonstrate his ability and his justice in bringing about war. And so part of that is, this is simply due to his allusion back to Isaiah 63. John is now describing Jesus as the warrior in fulfillment of Isaiah 63.

To do that, he draws on the image of a garment dipped in blood, even before he has ever defeated his enemies. But already, he is saying something about the nature of Christ, as the one in fulfillment of Isaiah 63 is about to come and slay and judge God's enemies. The other interesting feature to draw attention to is that I think is crucial and important for understanding the background of this, and that is the fact that Christ is described as having a sword coming out of his mouth.

We saw that this is part of the description of Jesus back in Revelation chapter 1, and also gets picked up in chapters 2 and 3 in relationship to one of the churches. But the image of a sword coming out of his mouth clearly depends on Old Testament text, but also seems to portray this, I think, as primarily a judgment scene. We'll pick that up in just a moment.

But Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 2 appears to be one of the texts that John is drawing on. Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 2. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword. In the shadow of his hand, he hid me.

He made me like a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. But in that first part, he made my mouth like a sharpened sword. And back in the text that we just read, Isaiah chapter 11 and verse 4. But with righteousness, he will judge the needy.

With justice, he will make decisions for the poor. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked.

And so now Jesus is portrayed as having a sword coming out of his mouth as an image of the one who comes to execute justice. As we've already seen, it would be rather ludicrous to try to present or construct a literal picture of Christ. I'm not sure this is the Jesus I want to see with a sword coming out of his mouth.

How do we understand this? Earlier on in chapter 5, isn't he a slain lamb? And he has the seven spirits and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits. So you have a slain lamb; now he's wearing seven crowns. And he has a sword coming out of his mouth.

Is Jesus able to morph into different forms? Or how do we understand this? No, John is using symbolism primarily from the Old Testament as well as other apocalyptic literature to say something about the person of Jesus Christ. Who he is and what he does. And so here, John, borrowing language from the Old Testament, is portraying a picture of Christ as one who comes to execute with justice and righteousness.

Comes to execute God's judgment upon the earth and upon people who oppose him and on rebellious wicked humanity. So now, the sword is an image of judgment. Interestingly, the sword coming out of his mouth may also have led the author to the next text.

And that is Psalm chapter 2. When the author says in verse 15, Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. A clear allusion to Psalm chapter 2 and verse 8. So now Christ, John has described Christ, described Jesus Christ using Old Testament language that portrays him as a mighty warrior coming to execute justice, God's justice, coming to execute in the form of battle, justice upon the earth by judging God's enemies.

And all these Old Testament texts have been drawn from those sorts of contexts. Now, cumulatively describing Christ as a mighty warrior. One other feature to draw attention to is rather intriguing.

Two other features. Interestingly, in verse 13, His name is the Word of God. Besides John's gospel, this is the only other place you find Jesus referred to as the Word.

John chapter 1, at the beginning, was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

Now, you find the Word of God appearing again. Or the Word, the Logos, is now referring to Jesus Christ. This is the only place outside of John where this happens.

The other interesting feature is that later on in the text, the rider on the white horse is described as, I'm trying to locate the exact verse, where he is described as having his army follow him. Jesus Christ comes riding on a white horse, and his army, the army of heaven, follows after him. Now, two things to say about this, interestingly.

First of all, note that, and we'll pick this up later, note that the army apparently doesn't do anything. The army does not appear to actually be involved in any fighting or any battle. The army is described as following Christ, but it doesn't actually do anything.

Verse 14 was the verse I was looking for, the armies of heaven following him. But notice, the armies, despite what Grant Osborne says in his commentary, that

apparently the armies have a role in the defeat of the enemies, the text is not clear. In fact, the text almost says the opposite.

It's Christ himself who defeats the enemies. And besides, after the way he's been described in verses 11 through 16, who needs an army to defeat the enemies? But it's intriguing that he's described, perhaps just adding to the battle scene and the battle imagery, he's described as the armies of heaven following him, although they do nothing. They don't seem to play a role in the battle.

The second thing to say about these armies is there is debate as to whether this army should be understood as the people of God, the saints themselves, or whether they are angelic beings. It appears to me that although some commentaries say it's both, it's a combination of both; the fact that they are described as being dressed, noticed in verse 14, in fine linen, white, and pure, would suggest to me that this is a vision of the saints themselves. And this would add to the scene of vindication.

The saints themselves accompany Christ when he avenges their blood when he vindicates them by now judging their enemies. But, as we said, they really don't do anything at all. The warrior is completely sufficient for doing battle.

So, now, at the end of verse 17 and end of verse 16, we are now prepared for a description of the battle. We now have the warrior described; we've been presented with the warrior, the one who is both able and just in executing God's judgment on the earth, in vindicating the saints who suffered at the hands of their enemies; now God is described as the one who is perfectly capable, as well as righteous and just, to carry this out in fulfillment of the Old Testament. Now, in verses 17 to the end of the chapter, we find the description of the battle itself.

And again, I simply want to make a handful of comments regarding the battle. First of all, the book of Ezekiel, we've seen, has played a crucial role throughout the book of Revelation. To the extent that, unlike the way that John seems to use Isaiah, he uses it more thematically, where he'll gather text from different places in Isaiah, at different places in Revelation, to support thematically what John saw and what John is trying to describe.

Unlike that, Ezekiel has played a crucial role to the extent that John largely follows it in the order of the text of Ezekiel itself. So, we saw in chapters 4 and 5 John draws on Ezekiel 1 and 2 for a description of the throne room. In Revelation 7, John has drawn on Ezekiel 9 for the imagery of the sealing of the 144,000 for protection.

We've seen that in chapters 17 and 18, John has drawn on Ezekiel 27 for the description of the downfall of Babylon, or the downfall of Tyre, the judgment of Tyre in economic terms. Now, John will draw on Ezekiel 38 and 39, which also describes a battle scene, an end-time battle. After chapter 37 in Ezekiel, where we read about

the restoration of Israel, in terms of raising up the dry bones, and putting flesh in them, and giving them life, following that imagery, in chapters 38 and 39, we find the language of an end time battle.

So, Ezekiel 39 is the primary model behind Revelation chapter 19 and verses 17 through 21. For example, when you read Ezekiel 39, I just want to read a handful of verses here and there that illustrate, clearly, the connection. Chapter 39, and starting with verse 4. On the mountain of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and all the nations with you.

I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion and birds, and to the wild animals. And then dropping down to verse 17. Son of man, actually, this is the title used to address Ezekiel.

Son of man, Ezekiel, this is what the Sovereign Lord says. Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals, assemble, and here's where he's to call out. Assemble and come together from all around the sacrifice to the sacrifice that I am preparing for you.

The great sacrifice on the mountain of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood; you will eat the flesh of the mighty men, and drink the blood of all the princes on the earth as if they were rams and lambs and goats and bulls, all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat until you are gluttoned and drink blood until you are drunk.

At my table, you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers, and every kind, declares the Sovereign Lord. Hopefully, you picked up the imagery here in chapter 19, verses 17. Actually, it is 17 through 18, which is actually only preparation for the battle.

That is, in preparation for the onslaught and carnage and warfare about to take place, now in 17 and 18, an angel, unlike Ezekiel doing it in chapter 39, now an angel calls upon the birds to come and prepare for a feast that will now ensue as a result of the end time battle. It's difficult not to read this language of a feast or a great supper, in contrast to the supper or the feast of the Lamb back at the beginning of chapter 19. Now we find another feast or supper, but now the guests that are invited are not the nations; they are the feast, and the birds are the ones invited.

But John is clearly drawing on Ezekiel for this imagery, and the language of charion or birds gathering to feast themselves is simply part of the image of the symbol of the carnage and destruction that will take place as a result of the battle. But verses 17 and 18 are only the preparation, and verses 19 and 21 will narrate the battle. But the author wants to make clear he's drawing on Ezekiel 39 for this imagery of end time battle.

The other thing to mention that is true of much of this is hopefully, you begin to see that John here is using symbolic language. So we should not literally think of a time when there will literally be birds that come somewhere on the earth to somehow gorge on the corpses of warriors and soldiers who have been put to death. But John is using language imagery and symbolism from another apocalyptic type book in Ezekiel 38 and 39 specifically here to simply depict the finality of, the extent of, and the complete destruction of the final judgment that Christ, the rider on the white horse, will bring upon the people.

So that's the first thing. Ezekiel chapters 39 and 38 function as the primary models, the primary text that John draws upon to construct his vision of the end-time battle. The second thing that we've already mentioned is notice that no fighting takes place.

You do not have to; this is no normal battle. This is a very unusual battle. In most battles, you have the armies lining up, and there are casualties on both sides, and there is skirmishing and conflict until one side emerges victorious.

That is not what takes place here at all. There is no fighting at all. Instead the Lamb simply comes down and with the sword that comes out of his mouth he slays his enemies.

In Ezekiel chapter 38, actually, the enemies are destroyed by fire. We'll see that will get picked up later on in chapter 20. But now, in his battle scene, John describes the defeat of the enemies, not with the armies that follow Christ.

There's no fighting that takes place with casualties on both sides. Simply, the Lamb comes, and with the sword that comes out of his mouth, he defeats the enemies. I think this is helpful in responding to attempts to wonder whether this or that war or the threat of war might be Armageddon or might be the final war.

I'd like to tell people if a war starts, and there are casualties and fighting, you can pretty much be sure that it's not the end-time battle because the end-time battle does not have any fighting. Christ simply comes and, with the sword from his mouth, slays his enemies. So when we see wars or when we see actual battles taking place or threats of battles, I think we can be pretty sure that that is not the last one because the last one is like no battle that history has ever seen because there's no fighting by two sides or two armies.

The Lamb simply returns and slays or judges his enemies with the sword that comes out of his mouth. The third observation I want to make about this end-time battle scene is in my view in light of the Old Testament text used and especially in light of the imagery of a sword. The way that Christ defeats his enemies is from the sword coming out of his mouth. In my opinion, then, and in my judgment, this end-time

battle is not referring to any literal battle at all, whether in the heavens or on earth or any kind of spiritual battle.

This is not referring to a literal battle at all but I think the author is using battle imagery to symbolize and depict the final judgment of Jesus Christ, which he simply speaks with a word of his mouth. So this is to be seen not primarily as a battle literally, but the author is using battle language to describe the complete judgment and the final judgment of God's enemies that Jesus brings about, which Jesus executes simply by speaking the word. So, I think what we have here is primarily a judgment scene of Christ speaking the word of judgment on his people in the world, and that now is portrayed and symbolized by the language of a great battle.

So I think that it is very important that we understand that the battle imagery is being used to symbolize something very specific and to speak to something very specific, and that is a judgment, not a literal end-time conflagration or conflict or battle, but this is simply a judgment that occurs when Christ speaks the word of judgment.

Fourth is, note that first of all, the first enemies that God disposes or judges in chapter 19 is the beast and the false prophet, who appear to be the ones who have gathered the warriors together and now are prepared to mount a final war. Now, in verse 20 first of all the beast is captured and then the false prophet from chapter 13 and this would also suggest that the beast and the false prophet from chapter 13 although there they are identified with Rome and perhaps those in the Roman provinces that are keen to enforce emperor worship and to draw attention to the beast of the Roman Empire and the beast number one symbolizing Rome and perhaps the emperor.

It is intriguing that now they actually are present at the final end-time judgment, suggesting once more that the beastly figures are more than just Rome. They are the same beasts that inhabited and energized and inspired other nations in the past in Israel's history, other godless, idolatrous, oppressive nations. Now, once again, they have surfaced in the form of the Roman government and Roman Empire, and now they are portrayed as being subject to the final judgment that now comes as a result of Jesus Christ's second coming.

So first of all, the beast and the false prophet, other names for the two beasts in Revelation 13, are thrown into the lake of fire. We'll talk more about the lake of fire when we get to Revelation chapter 20 where it emerges again. But at this point two observations debate.

Notice that you may have wondered what about the dragon. You have the two beasts being removed, but what about the dragon? Well, we have to wait for the dragon until the next chapter. Just a few verses later, in chapter 20, the dragon will

be deposed. Interestingly, what you have John doing is almost literally deposing the two beasts and the dragon in the opposite manner in which they were introduced or in the opposite order. In chapter 12, the dragon is introduced, and then in chapter 13, the two beasts.

Now, in their removal, the two beasts are removed first in chapter 19, and then the dragon will get removed and judged in chapter 20. So that's why you don't find the dragon appearing here is because John is going to progressively see evil removed. It begins with Babylon being removed in chapters 17 and 18 and judged then it begins with the rest of the world being judged.

It also entails the removal first of all of the beasts, the two beasts, and then finally, Satan himself will get removed in chapter 20 in a progressive scene of removal of evil in the form of judgment. Second, also is what is going on here is simply, as I've said before, I think symbolic of God's removal of all evil and God's judgment of all evil. So we shouldn't even progress; I don't think we should press the chronology as if literally the beast and false prophet will be judged first and then sometime later the dragon or sometime later the nations.

But once more, the author is trying to demonstrate through a series of images what we find happening at the end of history, and that is the complete judgment and the complete removal of all that is evil. But now, as I've said, he anticipates that not through literal fighting or literal carnage but that the language of judgment is used, the language of battle is used to demonstrate the swift and decisive nature of God's judgment and here defeating the powers, the beastly figures, the first and second beast, the beast and the false prophet who inspired and who actually lay behind the oppressive activities and the murderous attempts of the Roman Empire to destroy and defeat God's people. So naturally, they go into judgment first, and then following them in verse 20, the rest of them are killed with the sword that comes out of the mouth of the writer, again symbolizing judgment that Christ simply speaks the word of judgment and all of his enemies then that have opposed God and his people they are finally defeated.

So what is going on here is, as I've said, a progressive removal of evil in the form of judgment scenes that will prepare the way for the emergence of the new creation in chapter 21. When you get to the end of chapter 20, all of evil has been removed, all of evil has been judged, there's nothing left of an oppressive, godless, idolatrous, wicked empire and the earth that it ruled over that has all been removed in scenes of judgment so that now the only thing left is for a new creative act of God to bring about the inheritance and the reward of his people who are faithful and who refuse to give in to the beasts and its demands. The last thing I want to say about chapter 19:11-21, especially 17-21 that narrates the battle which we said is really not a battle at all in the way it's narrated as well as what it symbolizes, it's meant to symbolize a final judgment and not a literal battle is a question we raised back in chapter 16 and

that is starting in chapter 16 and I would add chapter 17 as well, towards the end of chapter 17 we saw that the kings of the earth colluded with the beast, they allied with the beast to make war with the Lamb.

So I want to include that text as well, but starting in chapter 16 in verse 14 if you remember as part of the sixth bowl judgment that out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, the unholy trinity came three frogs and they were able in reflection of an exodus plague, they were able to deceive the nations into gathering for a battle that then the author describes in verse 16 as the battle of Armageddon probably borrowing an Old Testament concept of a famous place of battle now blown up into apocalyptic proportions as the scene of a final battle. But we saw in verse 16 there was no battle described; it only mentioned the gathering of them for battle; you did not see a description of any battle. Then in chapter 17, towards the end of chapter 17, we find a brief mention of a battle that I just mentioned, starting in verse 12: the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but for one hour, they will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast, they will make war against the Lamb. So the beast and these kings of the earth, these kings symbolized by the ten horns, will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and king of kings. This is similar to the name; in fact, is the exact name found on Jesus' robe in verse 16 of chapter 19; he is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

So we have two battles so far, chapter 16, the battle of Armageddon, where the nations are gathered, and the kings are gathered for war by the frogs that come from the dragon, and the two beasts. Then in chapter 17 we have a battle between the beast and his ten kingdoms and the Lamb where they are defeated. Now, in chapter 19, we are introduced to another battle in verses 11 and 17-21.

Another battle where the one seated on the horse that is Jesus Christ himself, the word of God, comes to do battle and simply defeats the enemies who have been gathered against them. Notice verse 19. Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, probably the kings from chapter 17, those ten kings, and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider. So the ten kings just symbolizing all the kingdoms, the complete number of kings.

So now you have this picture at the end of the world with all the earth gathered to do battle. And then chapter 20 verse 8, chapter 20 and verse 8, starting in verse 7, actually, When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released, and he will go out and deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for the battle. And then what happens is they go up to the city of the saints, and fire comes from heaven and devours them.

So what is going on? How many battles are there? Are these four different battles? Are there a series of battles leading up to the end time? Are there two battles? Are there three battles? Do some of these overlap? Is there one battle? In my opinion, I think we should understand all these battles as referring to the same event. They all have the theme of Satan and or the beast deceiving and gathering the nations in order to do battle. And then they are simply defeated without engaging in any warfare.

So I think chapter 16, the battle of Armageddon, where the beast gathers them together, then is further depicted in chapter 17, where the beast and the ten kings wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb, who is king of kings and Lord of lords defeats them. Now we see the battle narrated again a third time. Same battle, but a fuller narrative.

In chapter 19, now the king of kings and Lord of lords goes out where the beast and the ten kings have gathered an army once again. Note the theme of gathering an army and that the beast and or Satan is involved in that, and they are simply slain by the Lamb. Notice that in all of these, no warfare is taking place.

And then finally, I would suggest to you that chapter 20 is the same battle. It's the same end-time battle. Notice again that Satan deceives the nations as he did in chapter 16, the battle of Armageddon.

Satan deceives the nations to gather them for battle. Notice the theme of gathering them for battle, prepared for war, and they are simply defeated. And by the way, the other thing that links the battle in chapter 20 back to the one in chapter 19 is the fact that the same Old Testament text lies behind both of them.

Ezekiel 38 and 39. So I take it that all of these refer to the exact same end time battle, looking at them from different perspectives. Now we're going to have to ask, why does the author narrate the battle a fourth time in Revelation 20? We'll talk about that in our next discussion.

But chapter 19 then ends with the first result again chapter 19 verse 11 begins a new section in Revelation, a series of images, a series of scenes, that depict what happens at the parousia, or the coming of Jesus Christ. The first scene here in 19:11 through 21, portrays the final judgment that will be the result of Christ's coming. Now, there's still some cleaning up to do.

We'll see chapters 20 will still have scenes of judgment in them, but already, we find the final judgment of all evil, the removal of all evil, beginning to prepare the way for the emergence of a new creation in chapters 21 and 22.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 25 on Revelation 19:11-21. The Description of the Warrior and the Description of the Battle or Judgment.