

Session 6: Big White Neigh Neigh Strikes Back!

Rev 19:11 - 20:15

(Scripture references based on NIV)

1. Key Learning Points

- Jesus is the Holy One to whom everyone and everything submits
- Believers will judge and reign with God

2. Warm-up activity / Starter Question

It is suggested to start with the first question, but choose between the second and third questions

- 1) "To me, God is ____." How would you fill in that blank with anywhere from 0 to 5 words?
- 2) Judgement. Good or bad? Thoughts?
- 3) If you had all the power and influence in the world, how would you bring justice? Where would you start? What might still hinder you from executing justice?
 - a) *Try to draw out thoughts on how their own blindness/sin may affect their judgment.*

3. Opening Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks for the opportunity, the privilege of pondering your Word today. Fix our eyes on the things which You say matter in this letter to us, and let your message, first declared to our persecuted brothers and sisters, still find its proper place in our hearts even now as we gather. In Your name, Amen.

4. Context

- Today's passage features God's final judgment of various characters that we have been introduced to throughout Revelation
- Overview
 - Rev 19:11-16 - Rider on a White Horse
 - Rev 19:17-21 - Dealing with the Beast and the False Prophet
 - Rev 20:1-3, 7-10 - Dealing with Satan
 - Rev 20:4-6 - The Millennium
 - Rev 20:11-15 - The Great Judgment of All the Dead

Note to leaders

- There are many potential "rabbit holes" of theological debate within today's passage and it may be tempting to explore all of them.
- Do remember that Revelation is a message primarily directed to the persecuted church for the purpose of their encouragement.

- As you prepare for this study, do keep the original audience and the purpose of encouragement in mind, otherwise, the complexity of the text may leave us more divided and confused, rather than encouraged.

How to use this document

- In this session, the Discussion / Exploration segment has been split into four Parts.
- In each part, there are three sub-sections - Questions, Main Point, Pause & Reflect.
- The main message of each section is simple, so leaders are encouraged to utilise more time on internalising the significance of these truths via the Pause & Reflect questions.
- You may choose from several Pause & Reflect questions that have been provided in each Part, depending on what you find most meaningful for your group.
- To manage time well, it may be beneficial to have youths share their reflections in pairs or triplets, rather than with the whole group.
- The Application / Reflection questions at the end serve as extensions of discussed themes and may not be necessary if meaningful discussions have been had around the Pause & Reflect sections.

5. Scripture Reading

Give enough time for the youths to leisurely read through Rev 19:11-20:15. For subsequent discussion parts, let the youths read through the scripture for each respective part before attempting the questions.

6. Discussion / Exploration

Part A: The Rider on the White Horse

For this part, please refer to Rev 19:11-16.

1) From Rev 19:11-16, what do we learn about the rider's attributes and the purposes for which he has come?

- Attributes
 - Sovereign / victorious
 - "...on his head are many crowns." (v12)
 - Divine / sent from God
 - "The armies of heaven were following him" (v14)
 - Ultimate / The most high
 - "King of kings and Lord of lords" (v16)

- Purpose: to deal with the sin and its effects
 - Bring about God's justice
 - "With justice he judges and wages war" (v11)
 - To conquer and to rule the nations
 - "Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations." (v15)
 - "He will rule them with an iron scepter" (v15)
 - Enact the wrath of God's judgement
 - "He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty" (v15)

(OPTIONAL) From the same verses, how will the rider achieve His purpose?

- How He will achieve His purpose
 - The Rider will execute judgment through His word/speech/commands.
 - "Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations..." (v16)
 - The Rider has ultimate authority to dictate what happens to the nations, regardless of their (un)willingness
 - "He will rule them with an iron scepter" (v15)
 - Potentially a reference to Psa 2:9. The word "rule" in Greek means "shepherd", and the "iron scepter" may refer to a shepherd's staff by which sheep are directed where they should go.

Part A main point: The rider, J___ (Jesus), is s___ (sovereign); w___ (worthy) and a___ (able) to end the reign of sin.

Pause & Reflect

Encourage your group members to take some time in reflection on one of the following questions.

- (Recommended) Does it bother you to see Jesus as the ultimately just and powerful judge instead of, say, a loving, approachable friend?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus is described as the ultimately just and powerful God?
- How might/do you reflect this understanding? Is it a way of seeing things? Is it something you do/feel?

Part B: Judgment of the Beast, False Prophet and Satan

For this part, please refer to Rev 19:17-21 and 20:7-10.

What is the battle between the beast, false prophet, earthly armies and Satan, and the white rider like? What do each party try to do and how are they dealt with?

| | Beast and False Prophet (Rev 19:17-21) | Kings of the earth and their armies (Rev 19:17-21) | Satan (Rev 20:7-10) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| What they try to do | Gather the earth kings to wage war against the rider (v19) | Gathered with the beast to wage war against the rider (v19) | Deceive the nations and gather them for battle (v8) against the people God loves (v9) |
| How they are dealt with | Thrown alive into the lake of burning sulfur (v20), seemingly without a fight. | Killed by the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider (v21) Supp: How might Hebrews 4:12 help us here? Since Jesus is also named the “Word of God”, the two-edged sword is a metaphor that symbolizes Christ’s authority and judgment. They died by Christ’s command / spoken word. | Devoured by fire from heaven (v9) and thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (v10) |

- After much anticipation for what may have been shaping up to be an epic battle since Rev 16:14-16, the Bible’s description of how these evil characters are dealt with is brief and not noteworthy at all.

Main Point: Can you really call it a f____ (fight)? N____ (nope). The baddies are dealt with s____ (swiftly) and d____ (decisively).

Pause & Reflect

Encourage your group members to take some time in reflection on one of the following questions.

- (Recommended) What does it mean to you to know that sin will be dealt with finally and justly?
- How eager do you think God is to remove the evil from His creation?

Part C: The Millennium (Thousand-year period of Christ's reign)

For this part, please refer to Rev 20:4-6.

Helpful context to share with youths

- The thousand year period is often referred to as the Millennium.
- Different interpretations exist on whether the Millennium is a literal period of a thousand years or that it is symbolic of an arbitrary but full and long period of time.
- Much debate also exists regarding when this thousand-year period is / will be.

Annex A provides an overview of the different interpretations of the Millennium.

Who are those who will “reign with Christ for a thousand years”? What kind of position will they hold in the Millennium? Supp: Is it a position of privilege or disadvantage?

- Who they are
 - They died testifying about Jesus (v4).
 - They did not worship / identify with the patterns of evil which are opposed to God (v4).
- The position they have in the Millennium is a privileged one.
 - They are given the authority to judge and to reign with Christ (v4).
 - They are blessed and holy (v6).
 - They are unaffected by the “second death” (v21).

Annex B has some additional information about how we might understand what judging and reigning with Christ means.

Part C main point: Believers will j____ (judge) and r____ (reign) with Christ.

Pause & Reflect

Encourage your group members to take some time in reflection on one of the following questions.

- (Recommended) What might a Christian's "reigning with Christ" imply about how God wants to relate to us?
- What might a Christian's "reigning with Christ" imply about their transformation from their past, sinful self to their sanctified self?
- How would "reigning with Christ" be an encouragement to the persecuted early church?
- How would "reigning with Christ" be an encouragement to Christians today?

Part D: Judgment of the Dead

For this part, please refer to Rev 20:11-15.

How were the dead judged according to the different books mentioned?

- The book of life
 - Either has one's name or it does not
 - Determine whether you are thrown into the lake of fire (v15) or allowed to enter the New Jerusalem (21:27).
- The other books
 - Record what people have done
 - Determine how each will be judged.

How might the judgement being based on the two kinds of books be reflective of Jesus being completely gracious and completely just?

- Everyone will still be judged by the other books. This is about justice and what they have done.
- But the only judgment described in this section is whether one is thrown into the lake of fire or not. This is about grace, based on whether Jesus has your name in the book of life (Rev 3:5)).
- By virtue of what is/isn't mentioned, only whether one's name is in the book of life seems to matter.

Here, try to convey the idea that the main criteria for being thrown into the lake of fire is whether one's name is in the book of life, NOT what they have done! We are saved by faith, not works!

Main Point: God is both g___ (gracious) and j___ (just). He does not desire anyone to p___ (perish), even at the end (Rev 20:12,15).

Pause & Reflect

Encourage your group members to take some time in reflection on one of the following questions.

- (Recommended) How does this nuance my understanding of God's Justice together with His Grace?
- Imagine the experience of a first century Christian undergoing persecution for their faith versus that of a non-believer. How might their responses to the notion that "heaven or hell is dependent on whether your name is in the book of life, not on what you do" differ?
- Does it please you to know that Justice will come to everyone and everything?

7. Main Discipleship Takeaway

Jesus is completely righteous and holy, just and merciful. He will judge fairly and the believers will reign with Him.

8. Application / Reflection questions

- 1) What does it mean to you that God will transform you to be so like Him to the point that He welcomes you to judge and reign with Him?
- 2) We read that whether one enters New Jerusalem (heaven) or is thrown into the lake of fire (hell) depends on whether their name is written in the book of life, and not based on the deeds that one has committed. How does that make you feel? Why?
- 3) How might today's passage encourage you to live in the light of grace rather than in the fear of judgement for your failures or shortcomings?

9. Closing Prayer

Lord, even as You have given us a window to know your plan a little better, develop in us a heart that cries both *maranatha* ("Come Lord Jesus") and *hallelujah* ("Praise the Lord"). Let the truths from your Word embolden us to live for You in heart, thought and action. Amen.

Annex A: An Overview of Different Positions on the Millennium and Reflections

| View of ... | Premillennialism | Postmillennialism | Amillennialism |
|---|--|---|---|
| The Book of Revelation | Futurist - Mostly Not Yet Fulfilled | Preterist - Already Fulfilled in the 1 st century AD | Idealist - it gives us poetic pictures of Christian life |
| The Return of Christ | Before the Millennium | After the Millennium | After the Millennium |
| The Millennium | It is in the future - Christ will reign on this Earth for a (literal or figurative) 1000 years | It is happening now. Christ reigns through His Church (1000 years = long time) | Spiritual - He reigns in heaven for a “long time” |
| The future of this world | Generally Pessimistic - things are going to get worse or remain constant (and the constant state is bad) | Optimistic - the Great Commission is going to be successfully fulfilled and the nations will overwhelmingly turn to Christ | Generally Pessimistic - things are going to get worse or remain constant (and the constant state is bad). An optimistic variant exists too |
| A favourable argument of credibility | Rev 1:19, 4:1 imply that Rev 1-3 are things which regard the present (1 st century AD) and chapter 4 onwards, things which regard the future. | Gen 12:3, Ps 22:27, Ps 67:7, Ps 72:8, Ps 110:1, Isa 11:9, Jn 3:17, Jn 12:32, Rom 4:13, Gal 3:8 - These passages and many others point to things getting better and better at the end of time and that Jesus started reigning when He had resurrected. | Revelation is apocalyptic literature and should be read figuratively, In the same way Satan is not bound with a chain literally (Rev 20:1-2), the first resurrection (v4) is a spiritual one. |
| Natural things to focus on | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revelation and its OT references | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus’ teachings and their fulfillment in the 1st century | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revelation and its OT references Claiming Jesus’ authority for |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|----------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maranatha</i> (“Come Lord Jesus”) and the desire for Jesus to come soon/quickly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claiming Jesus’ authority for missions / the Great Commission | transformation |
| Key differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinuity (Israel and OT have different rules from Christians and NT) or Continuity (continuous unfolding covenant of grace) • Optimistic or Pessimistic (typically an unfair characterization of any view as there are reasons for either outlook in most views) • Church is or is not Israel (is or is not “engrafted”) • Millennium (Revelation) Literal or Symbolic • Interpretation: Literal, Plain, Natural, etc. (Note that “literal” may be “according to the literary intent of the author”) • Promise of Place (land) and/or Presence (Immanuel/tabernacle principle) | | |
| Agreements | <p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bible is the Word of God; and is to be interpreted “literally” (= according to the intent of the author) • Salvation is not determined by your view of the timing of Revelation 20 but by faith in Christ’s Cross, Resurrection and Return • 1st Coming of Christ involved cross and resurrection (payment of and victory over sin) <p>Sequence of Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return + Reunion -> Judgment -> Eternity • Return -> Renewal <p>Where</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Of Christ, physically ○ Of Time of Apostasy and Persecution | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Of Christ to rapture/rescue/resurrect (equivalents) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reunion: with all who have trusted in Him ● Judgment: of the living and the dead ● Eternity: Establishment of a New Heaven and Earth under the perfect and eternal reign of Christ ● Renewal: of bodies, souls, heaven and earth <p>In short, Jesus wins and reigns.</p> |
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Annex B: On Judging and Reigning with Christ

Some other scriptures that mention believers reigning/judging with Christ

- 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 - “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? ... Do you not know that we are to judge angels?”
- 2 Timothy 2:12 - “If we endure, we will also reign with him.”
- Revelation 5:10 - “...and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”
- Revelation 22:5 - “They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

How we might make sense of them

- The Bible does not provide great detail on precisely how believers will judge and reign with Christ in the new creation.
- Depending on one’s view of the Millennium, one might understand the reign of believers with Christ as something that is already happening today.
- Nonetheless, we can have certainty that believers will reign with God in the sense that they will have a position of privilege and shared authority with God in the new creation.
- Judging with God might also be understood as endorsing God’s justice in His righteous judgments and participating in His rule over the renewed creation, like Adam and Eve were meant to exercise dominion over creation in Genesis 1:28.
- It is likely that this reigning does not entail ruling over other people with power and hierarchy, but about exercising stewardship over creation.