

The Apocalypse of St. John Chapter 19

INTRO: Review the meaning of an Apocalypse. As Eastern Christians we are within that same living tradition. In the Apocalypse...

- We saw there were presbyters.
- We saw them worshipping God together before the holy altar
- We saw this was in the holy of holies in liturgical service -We saw them offering liturgy together with the angels before the throne and altar of God.
- We saw them offering liturgical hymns, refrains, wearing vestments, and making bows and prostrations.
- We saw them using incense to represent the prayers of the saints ascending before God in heaven.
- We saw all of this centered around an altar in an inner sanctuary that was the holy of holies where there was even a seven-branched candelabra.
- We saw martyrs crying out from beneath the altar to God.
- We saw the saints in heaven interceding before God on behalf of those suffering upon the earth.

All this is our world as Eastern Christians living in our authentic Orthodox tradition. Therefore we are

that within that same community that this book was written for.

As we have seen, the backdrop of this entire book has been a liturgical context. Tonight Chapter 19 continues this. Why is the Liturgy so important? The Divine Liturgy, during our time here on earth, offers Christians our greatest worship & encounter with God. During times of joy it allows us to offer our greatest praise of God and during times of persecution and suffering it gives us our greatest strength. The D.L. is our participation now in the heavenly liturgy and an anticipation of how we will spend eternity in Divine Worship of the All Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Read 19:1-5

OSB (Orthodox Study Bible) Note 19:1

OBS (Orthodox Bible Study excerpts): "Alleluia" comes from the Hebrew "Hallelu-Yah" = "Praise Yahweh."

These shouts of jubilation are a big contrast to the last chapter's lamentations over Rome's fall (18:19). It is as if the sound of the great multitude of saints in heaven crying out "Alleluia" drowns out the sound of the unrighteous who sorrow over Rome's destruction. -P. 192

OBS v. 2 explains this jubilation: God, whose acts are always true and righteous, faithful and just, has judged Rome -the great prostitute- who corrupted the earth with idolatry and poured out the blood of God's servants, the Christians. **Remember Idolatry = excuse to not follow God's truth.**

OSB Note 19:2

OSB Note 19:3

OBS The cry "alleluia" v. 3 is heard a second time. Heaven's jubilation over Rome's destruction cannot

be restrained. The smoke of Rome's final destruction goes up "unto ages of ages." In other words God's final triumph over evil is permanent.

The 24 presbyters represent the 12 tribes (Israel) and the 12 apostles (New Israel, the Church). The four living creatures (represent the four corners of the earth & all creation). Together they all offer liturgical prayer, rejoicing in God's triumph over evil (remember IC XC NIKA!). -P. 192

OBS then in v. 5 an angel's voice comes from God's throne (the altar) inviting the servants of God on earth to join in their jubilation & praise of God [much like our deacon does in the Divine Liturgy]. It is "proper & just" to offer God praise because the moment of their liberation has come at last.

OSB Note 19:3-5

Read 19:6-9

OBS St. John hears the sound v. 6 of the great roaring crowd like the sound of many thundering waters over a waterfall, or strong peals of thunder.

OSB Note 19:6

ADD: "Omnipotent" is literally "Almighty, All-Ruling, Absolute & Universal Sovereign." In Gk. Pantocrator "παντοκράτωρ pantokrátōr, pan-tok-rat'-ore; from

[G3956](#) and [G2904](#); & in Hebrew it is "El Shaddai. God Almighty will become manifest as King and His authority will be made known in the earth. -P. 193

OBS The word "Alleluia" appears in the NT only here (v. 1, 3, 4, 6). It is repeated four times in five sentences! Alleluia is repeated over & over -like antiphonal prayer in our Church tradition (E.g., Magnificat "More honorable than the cherubim").

This is to lift the hearts of the suffering Church on earth who have undergone such terrible persecution. -P. 193

ADD: With the demise of the harlot (v. 2) comes the simultaneous rising of another woman who was mentioned back in chap 12 as the "Woman clothed with the sun." This is the Church's triumph over the harlot. Here (v. 7) she is called "the Bride of the Lamb."

What does this title mean?

OSB Note 19:6-9 a, b

OBS: We have here the classic image of the Kingdom of God as a marriage feast (Matt 25:1-13).

A marriage supper was one of the great joys of life in the ancient world. Marriages always took place at night. Among the Jews, the bridegroom would come with his attendants to "surprise" the bride at her home on the appointed day and take her home to be

with himself. All the family and friends were invited to celebrate with them as they then began a week long feast, with plenty of wine, food, and joyful song. Thus we too await our bridgeroom's surprise return and look forward to going with Him to our heavenly home. Thus marriage, in Christian tradition, is a fitting image for the eternal joy shared by Christ and His Church when He returns on the Last Day.

OBS: In preparation for the wedding, all brides spent much time in adorning themselves in costly and elaborate wedding garments. The bride of the Lamb, the Church, also adorns herself in beautiful attire: She must be clothed in the fine-linen and bright and clean which symbolize the righteous acts of the saints (Gr. dikaiomata). This is their obedience to God's commandments (cf. 12:17; 14:12).

OSB Note 19:6-9c

-Dikaiomata is mentioned earlier in these ways: Rev. 12:17 "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." ADD: So these righteous acts of the saints are simply keeping the commandments of God. In Christianity, keeping the commandments of God is synonymous with keeping the faith of Jesus.

ADD: This direction from the Lord (v. 9) for St. John to write another beatitude [beatitude means blessing] (this is the fourth of seven in the book (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14)).

These are Jesus' messages to us post the four Gospels:

<http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/charts/The%20Seven%20Beatitudes%20Of%20Revelation.htm>

It states, "Blessed are those who come to the wedding supper of the Lamb" and is followed with "These are the true sayings of God."

OBS: In other words, "Just as the invited wedding guests of a great King would be fortunate to be invited to such a feast, so Christians as a reward for their fidelity to Christ are invited to take part in that final eschatological wedding supper. If the merriment and joy at an earthly wedding supper were wonderful, how much more the joy at this nuptial feast? -P. 194

As a Byzantine Thanksgiving Prayer after Holy Communion states: "For there 'the voice of those who feast is unceasing, and the gladness of those who behold the goodness of God's countenance is unending.'" -P. 194

Read 19:10

OBS: Some speculate there angel worship may have been a problem in Asia Minor (Heb 1:5 & Col 2:18). If so, St. John may have included this story to impress upon his readers that angel worship is unorthodox & heretical.

ICSB (Ignatius Catholic Study Bible): The worship of any created thing is idolatry. John is not an idolater but he is overcome by the heavenly glory radiating from the angel (22:8-9). The angel reminds him, Divine Worship is to be offered to God alone.

"Worship God" = Gk is θεῶ προσκύνησον = Theo proskoo'neson

comes from: προσκυνέω proskynéō, pros-koo-neh'-o;

It means:

-to kiss the hand to (or towards) one, in token of reverence

-among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

-in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.

OSB Note 19:10

ADD: We are Baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19). We pray in the D.L. "For to you, Father, Son (cf. Rev. 5:13-14) and Holy Spirit is due all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and forever. This underlines the fact that all three persons of the Holy Trinity share in the one Divine Nature and are to be worshiped.

Read 19:11-16

OBS Note 19:11-16

OBS: This and the following chapters is the climax of the Apocalypse. [ICBS This is the battle of Armageddon (mentioned in 16:14-16)]. Way back in

1:7 it was foretold that there would be a time when all would see Jesus coming with the clouds. Here at last the Lord is seen coming in this way. In classic apocalyptic description, the conquering Lord sits upon a white horse. Horses were used in military for speed and power in battle. White is the color of triumph, joy and victory. -P. 198

OBS: He is called “faithful and true” v. 11 because His promises to judge the evil and redeem His people are now fulfilled.

OBS: His eyes v. 12 are as a flame of fire because He sees all men's works. On His head are many diadems (including those falsely claimed by the beast) to show all sovereignty on earth belongs by right to Him.

OSB Note 19:13

Add: In other words Christ's victory is over death -by death. He trampled down the power of death by His own death and through this He grants life to His faithful servants.

OBS: His name is Word of God (v. 13) λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ. St. John explains at the beginning of His Gospel that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Thus God's Divine Word and Son, is Divine also. The

word "Word" signifies the eternal, divine and creative power of God. Those who know His name will put their trust in it, and all the nations of the earth will fear Him when they see His coming in glory. -P. 198

ADD: Btw, Jesus is already in His glory. This is why the proper liturgical translation is not "When You come 'into' your glory." He's in His glory. So we pray, "When you come in Your glory." In other words we are praying, "When You come, 'being already in' Your glory."

OSB note 19:14

OBS: v. 14 The heavenly armies are clothed in fine-linen, white and clean, that is, they are clothed in the purity of their righteous acts (v. 8), in festal white (as we wear), showing their purity and the justice of the God's divine judgment.

OSB Note 19:15a

ADD: The sharp sword of His mouth reminds us of Heb 4:12-13 where it says, "the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the divine of soul and spirit... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

To be joined to God's truth is to be joined to God. Jesus said about Christians, "They will know the truth and the truth will make them free." To reject God's truth is to be enslaved to sin, error, darkness and death. It is to bring judgment (the striking with the sharp sword) upon one's self.

ADD: To be "ruled with a rod of iron" (comes from Ps. 2) means that a people has brought judgment upon themselves by rejecting God & His truth.

OSB Note 19:15b

OBS: "Treading the winepress of the indignation of the wrath of God, the Almighty: As harvesters trod grapes and purpled their robes with the juice, so God would tread the overflowing winepress of His judgment on men's sins (141f; Is 63;3). Christ would manifest this judgment and bring this divine wrath upon the world. The Father's indignation for the evil sins of men would be expressed at Christ's Second Coming.

Jesus' title "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" is on His robe and His thigh to express His absolute sovereignty over all the earth. It is on His robe because His robe was dipped in His own precious blood which redeems us from sin and conquers death. This title is also written on His thigh. A sword

is carried on a warrior's thigh. Jesus' title is found on His thigh because there is no sword there. Where is the sword? The sword sharp sword comes from His mouth (i.e., His Word).

Read 19:17-18

OSB Note 19:17, 18

OBS: The angel standing in the sun v. 17 symbolizes that he is in a prominent place where he can be seen & heard by all. He summons all the carrion eating birds to come and feast upon the flesh of all men. All who reject God would be there without distinction. This is similar to an apocalyptic vision in Ezekiel which describes a final assault of the nations upon God's people. God's response is to defend His People. The opposing army was so great that its destruction provided the vultures with an unparalleled meal from their resulting corpses (Ezek. 39:17-20). The implication is, after the final battle, the carnage would great and stretch out across the earth. This image is used to show how great will be the overthrow of God's foes at the Second Coming. -P. 200

Q. What is the Second Coming?

Read 19:19-21

OSB Note 19: 20, 21

OBS: The beast and the false prophet, the leaders of the enemy armies are taken hold of. Like kings who flee in terror after their armies are defeated, but are nonetheless captured and brought to justice (e.g., Saddam Hussein), so the beast and the false prophet face their final demise.

OBS: They suffer a truly horrifying end but a fate fitting to their deeds. [ICSB While this shows us the divine punishment on the first persecutors of Christianity, ultimately, this foreshadows the final battle of history, when Christ returns and destroys the powers of the evil once and for all.]

In other words the enemies of God, will be swallowed up by sudden terror just as we read with these images of the destruction of Imperial Rome.

The wrath of God will over-take them suddenly and cast them alive into the lake of fire. The host of those who rebel against God are slain by Christ's word of judgment, the sword which proceeds from His mouth, smites all the nations. -P. 201

CONCLUSION:

The book of the Apocalypse is written for those within the community (then & now) to encourage them through their sufferings. We heard numerous

calls for "patient endurance" and calls to "conquerer in Christ." We talked about how this relates to our historic Christogram (the four letter abbreviation): IC XC NIKA. First we must let Christ conquer in us over sin and then we become victorious -in Christ- over all that we must endure & overcome in life.

Tonight (and in the remaining chapters) we have a glimpse of the final victory in Christ. This victory is just as much for the Christians living in the Roman Empire who remained faithful, as it is for Christians of every age who remain faithful and who conquer over sin and evil in Christ.

Glory to Jesus Christ!
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