

# Revelation 19

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*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself (Revelation 19:11-12).*

It is our custom to celebrate the establishment of the New Church during the month of June because passage 791 in the *True Christian Religion* reports that it was on the 19th day of June in 1770 that the reorganization of the spiritual world, foretold in the book of Revelation, was completed. This marked the end of one spiritual age, and the beginning of a new age which we call the “New Christian Church.”

The book of Revelation provides a series of powerful images that help us understand both the drama and the importance of these events. The book of Revelation was written by John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved” about 50 years after the resurrection of Jesus. At the time he wrote Revelation, he was an old man in exile on the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. Because Peter and the other disciples had caused a lot of trouble for the Roman government, many scholars assume that John was exiled to Patmos by the Romans. Although there is no direct evidence to support this, it may well be true. It is also possible that John exiled himself to Patmos to spend some time in his old age away from all the controversy and turmoil that characterized the first years of the Christian Church. In any case, while John was on Patmos, the Lord opened his spiritual eyes to many strange and wonderful visions of things that were to come to pass in the spiritual world, and he was ordered to write them down in a book.

These visions were full of powerful and frightening images, carefully selected to picture certain human qualities, qualities that were historically a problem for the Christian Church in its various denominations. They can also be problems for us today. We would be missing the point entirely if we came away from our reading of Revelation thinking that it deals *only* with problems that existed in another time or in other churches. The hells that worked hard to lead our ancestors into all kinds of trouble are still active and working on us. The rules that govern them are tighter than they used to be, and we have a clearer picture of who they are and how they attack, but these things are not included in the Holy Scriptures because they are of historical interest only. These states of evil are present and active in the world today. They are represented in Revelation chapter 19 as the Harlot and the Dragon.

The Harlot represents the love of dominion in general, the attitude represented by the phrase, “Do what you are told by the church and its leaders or you will go to hell.” We know that this was a problem for Roman Catholicism, as evidenced by the practice of withholding the wine of the Holy Supper from the congregation, but keeping it for priests only. There was also the practice of withholding scripture, because they believed that trained priests could explain things that would be confusing to the unschooled reader. A final example is that of preaching in Latin whether or not any member of the congregation understood it.

Even though this is the prime example of these conditions within the Christian Church, the love of dominion continues to be a problem in any organization or human relationship where people seek to control the behavior of others by manipulating or withholding necessary information from them. People do this to others because of the pleasure they gain from being in control, but it is a false pleasure.

We've all had the experience of driving through the downtown of a major city on a rainy night. The light from the streetlights and neon signs reflecting off the wet surfaces can be quite beautiful. But should you then drive through the same area on a sunny morning, you will see the potholes, the litter, the decay. What looks so beautiful in the artificial light of night is seen to be ugliness in the light of day. The harlot described by John might have even been attractive in the artificial light of night, but when the light of heaven shines upon her and she can be seen in contrast to the Bride of the Lamb, the truth of her ugliness is revealed.

The Dragon is a symbol for faith alone, which is typified by a church taking the position that if you do not think the right thoughts, or if you ask the wrong questions, you will go to hell. The historic period known as the "Reformation" arose as a reaction to the problems of dominion seen in the Roman Catholic Church, and it was started by a Catholic priest, Martin Luther. In order to reform the Christian Church, he created a structure that swung the pendulum all the way to the other side. He started a backlash that led to Christian Churches that had priests without robes, some new churches organizations had no clergy at all. They held as a matter of faith that no works of penance at all were required to get into heaven. Since nothing whatever that a person could do would ever change God's mind, then the only thing that can distinguish the saved from those who are not saved is their faith.

As the harlot is a picture of those who control the actions of others, the Dragon is a picture of the state of those who believe that they have the right to control the beliefs of others, who create compelling arguments, supported by passages taken from the Word, to convince people that they must think in a certain way, and that they are forbidden to think in other ways, or even ask certain questions about the nature of God, or His will.

The dragon can only have power when there is ignorance. That's why John had the vision of the dragon poised to destroy the male child. That seemingly powerless little child was the only thing that could destroy the dragon, for the child represents the truth of doctrine from the Word that feeds the rational mind. When we interrupt others, when we don't want to let other people finish their own ideas because we can't wait to pursue our own, when we don't even listen to what they have to say before we dismiss the ideas as worthless, we are living the state represented by the dragon hovering over the Woman clothed in the Sun as she labored to give birth.

It is pretty clear that the dragon and the harlot represent opposite sides of the same problem—people trying to control other people and making them do what they want them to do by means of taking truths from the Word out of context, and then using them to threaten and cajole. Contrast the images of the Harlot and the Dragon with those of the church as a Bride and of the Lord as the Lamb that was slain.

*“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”*

The Chapter closes with the picture of the Lord, not as a Lamb, but as a king riding to victory at the head of His army. The Lord on the White Horse represents the spiritual sense of the Word revealed by the Lord, and the interior understanding of the Word which was disclosed thereby. This is the coming of the Lord.

The understanding of the spiritual sense of the Word *is* the second coming. He comes to us first in the natural sense when we learn the stories of the children of Israel, or about the gentle teacher Jesus, but the *second* coming is when the adult mind finally comprehends the big picture presented in the Word—and we cannot do that without having the spiritual sense, the key to understanding it, revealed to us.

*A name that no one knew except Himself* represents the quality of the Word in its spiritual and celestial senses. No one sees these qualities except the Lord and those to whom He reveals it.

Many people have theorized that the Word, being written by God, was probably more complex than it appears on the surface. Others have theorized that since there was much obvious symbolism in the Word, there might be other symbols that could be drawn out, but no one was successful at drawing out a consistent meaning for the symbolism on their own. The Word was written for the sake of the internal sense. This sense had to remain hidden from those who would harm it, yet be obvious to those who had faith in the Lord. Those who have faith that the Word is holy—is from God—and that it provides instruction for our spiritual lives, can take the key provided by the science of correspondences and apply it and have the wonder of the spiritual sense revealed.

*The Robe dipped in blood* signifies the Divine truth in its ultimate sense, or the Word in the letter, to which violence has been offered. Garments represent exterior or natural truths. Blood represents the way people have sought to use the Word to their own ends and so used it to justify theft, murder, and war. We are not to go to the Word to confirm what we already believe to be true, or to justify what we want to do. We are to ask the question, “What should I do in this circumstance?” and go to the Word for the answer.

*King of kings, Lord of lords* represents that the Lord teaches us what He is in the Word. He is the Divine truth of the Divine wisdom and the Divine good of the Divine love. Thus, He is the God of the universe. A few verses previously, it said that He had a name that no one knew, but now it is written in two places, proclaiming that He is King of kings, and Lord of Lords. This verse is full of teachings about the duality of the Divine. A garment has to do with Divine Wisdom; the thigh has to do with Divine Good. King of kings has to do with Divine Wisdom; Lord of lords has to do with Divine Good. He would not be God of the universe unless He had both the desire

to create a heaven from the human race (Divine Good) and the knowledge of how to accomplish and govern it once it was created (Divine Wisdom).

The heart of this chapter contrasts the love of one's own intelligence and the love of having dominion over others, with the power that comes from allowing the Word to lead your thought and the Lord to rule over your life. We can clearly see from the history of the church that when faith and charity are separated, then the bride becomes the Harlot, and a warrior on a white horse becomes a Dragon. This alone should make it eminently clear how important it is for faith and charity to be one, both in the spirit and the life of the church.

When it comes to our own actions, do we want the angels who are with us, who can see the intentions behind our acts, to see the Harlot or the Bride? When they examine our thoughts, will they see the Dragon, or one of the host of heaven, riding a white horse, following our Lord and King as he rides, victorious, back to the Holy City? Why does the Lord ask this question of us in the Word? Because while we live in the world of nature, it remains possible for us to become self-aware, to see the Harlot and the Dragon within us, and, with His help, to drive them out.

*And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.(Revelation 19:19-20)*

Amen.