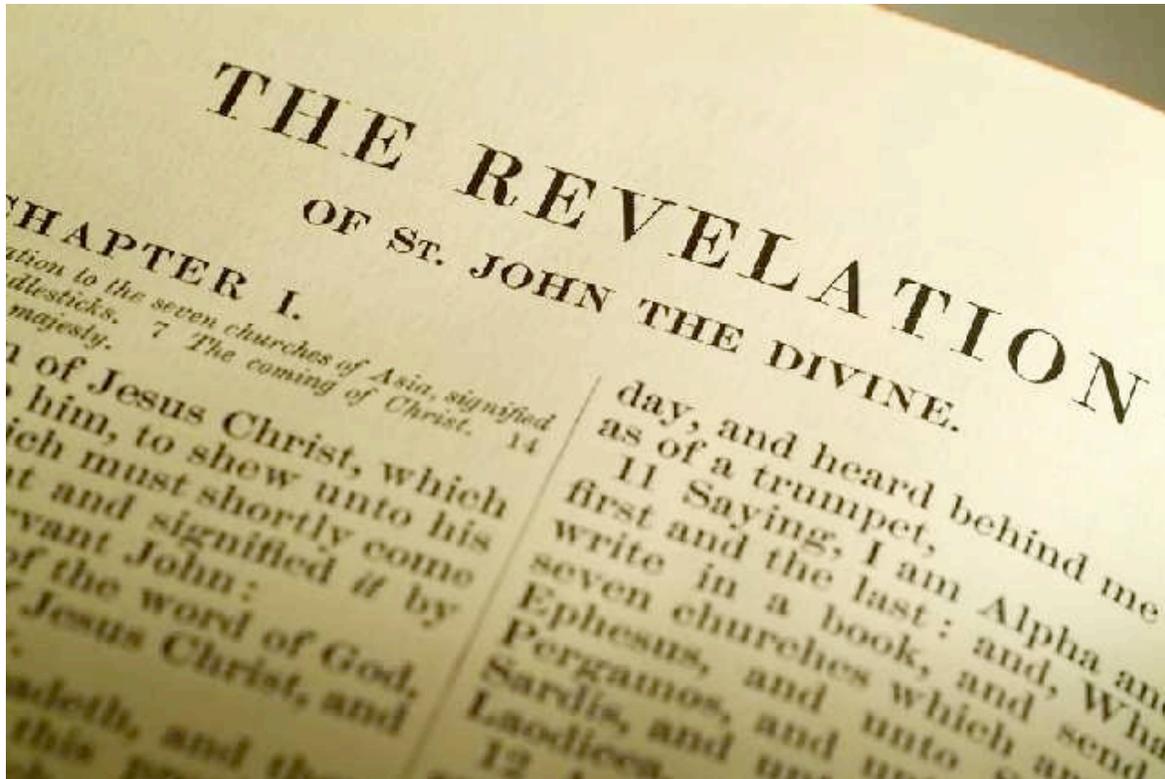


THE SIXTH FACET: REVELATION 16-20 (1)



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

Revelation: The Sixth Facet
Revelation 16-20

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Revelation 16-20 (1)

The sixth facet of the engagement ring which is the book of Revelation deals with the wrath of God and the final destruction of all wickedness and sin.

The vision presents an especially vile and disgusting image of those who reject the Lamb, whose names are not written in His book of life. But we are reminded throughout this first part of the sixth facet that God is sovereign, and He is working all things precisely according to His plan, for His own glory and for the vindication of His saints.

And we see the saints in glory, rejoicing in the Lord's victory over His enemies, and eagerly anticipating their eternal wedding feast with Him. This first part of the sixth facet continues to develop the threefold theme of Kingdom/tribulation/patient endurance which are the calling and duty of all who "have the testimony of Jesus."

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We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Wrath and History

Week 8, Monday: The wrath of God revealed

My sense is that chapter 16, which begins our examination of the sixth facet of the book of Revelation, provides an overview of the course of human history since at least the time of the New Testament (Rev. 16.1, cf. Rom. 1.18-32). We've seen such overviews already, for example, in chapters 6, 11, and 12. This chapter describes more graphically and fearfully what Paul outlines in his overview of God's wrath, and seems to cover the period of human history from John's writing to the end of time. The images are terrifying in order to encourage believers (a) to keep themselves pure from sin and (b) to love the lost and seek them as our Lord does (Lk. 19.10).

Read Revelation 16

Meditate on Revelation 16.1-21

1. We note that these bowls "pour out" "the wrath of God." Meditate on Romans 1.18-32, where Paul uses this same language. Summarize Paul's understanding of this process:
2. Look at verses 2-4. How far-reaching is God's wrath against sin? Can you see how these verses are giving us another view of what we saw in chapter 8? How does this help us in understanding our "faceted" approach to Revelation?
3. Verses 5-7 seem a bit out of place in the midst of this litany of judgment. The same with verse 15. Or are they? Why do you suppose these are included here?
4. Notice in verses 8 and 9, as in verses 2-4, the wrath of God reaches people through what today we would refer to as "the environment." Should we attach any significance to this? What does it suggest about the effects of human sin in the world? In verses 10 and 11 (keep Paul in mind) what kind of "darkness" do you suppose is suggested here?
5. Verses 12-16 clearly show the spiritual connection between events on earth and the wrath of God. Explain. Verse 16 foreshadows chapter 19, and verses 17-21 look ahead to the end, just as we saw in previous "facets" of Revelation. Should believers allow the conditions revealed in chapter 16 to keep us from "riding out" with the Rider on the white horse? Explain.

My Reflection

Keep in mind that each of these "facets" of the book of Revelation is both timeless and in-time. What evidence can you see around you that the wrath of God is being poured out in our day? Can you see evidence of this within reach of your own Personal Mission Field?

The Glory of God

God is righteous and just even amid the sufferings of the world. How can this be?

Glory to Glory

Given that the wrath of God is being poured out, perhaps even on people in your Personal Mission Field, how should knowing this affect your witness for the Lord? What do you need in order to become more consistent and effective in bearing witness for Christ?

Memorize

Our memory verses for this week are Revelation 19.7-9. Write these verses on an index card, using your

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preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage. How should these verses encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns;
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad!
Clouds and darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne.
A fire goes before Him,
And burns up His enemies round about.
His lightnings light the world;
The earth sees and trembles.
The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples see His glory.

Psalm 97.1-6

2 **The Great Harlot**

Week 8, Tuesday: Sin abounding

John sees the political powers of the world as a “beast of burden” carrying a great harlot, and thus allowing sin to proliferate. When men and nations become laws unto themselves, societies and cultures will tend toward wickedness and sin will abound. Politics itself can become a “vehicle” for immorality, corrupting everything and everyone it touches. For the saints of God, this is not only a sad and disgusting prospect, it can be dangerous.

Read Revelation 17

Meditate on Revelation 17.1-6

1. Harlotry, fornication, drunkenness (vv. 1, 2). What do these images suggest? What does this teach us about the power of sin, and how should this lead us to consider the presence of sin in our lives, and in the lives of others?
2. We’ve seen this “beast” before. Where? What does he represent? What does the vision mean to signify by the fact that this “beast” is the means of conveyance for the harlot?
3. Give some examples from throughout history in which governments have been the “means of conveyance” for sin. How does this happen? That is, how does something God intends for good (Rom. 13.1-5) become a “vehicle” for sin?
4. The arrayal of this harlot suggests images of royalty (purple) and wealth (gold, precious stones). These are the accoutrements of rule. What do these suggest about the power of sin, once it begins to be “enthroned”?
5. Why is it natural for sinful governments and societies to turn against the saints of God (v. 6)? Should Christians today expect to be persecuted for their faith, for their “patient endurance” in the Kingdom? Explain.

My Reflection

What kinds of persecution for Christ might you expect to face during the course of a normal week? What would provoke such a response from people?

The Glory of God

It can seem as though the harlot and the beasts are prevailing against the saints. But we remember that only the Rider on the white horse goes forth “conquering and to conquer.” How is the conquering glory of God revealed in the persecution of His saints? How should this affect our attitude about possibly being persecuted?

Glory to Glory

How can believers help one another to prepare for persecution? Whom can you encourage in this vein today?

Memorize

Let’s look more closely at our memory verses, Revelation 19.7-9. Recite your memory verses aloud. What will you do today to prepare yourself for the marriage supper to which you have been invited? Share these verses and your answer to today’s question with a Christian friend, even if only by email.

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Closing Prayer

The fool has said in his heart,

“*There is no God.*”

They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity;

There is none who does good.

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God.

Every one of them has turned aside;

They have together become corrupt;

There is none who does good,

No, not one.

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,

Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,

And do not call upon God?

There they are in great fear

Where no fear was,

For God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you;

You have put *them* to shame,

Because God has despised them.

Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!

When God brings back the captivity of His people,

Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

Psalm 53

3 War with the Lamb

Week 8, Wednesday: The harlot explained

John receives more detailed information about the harlot and what she represents. It's clear from this section that the wickedness promoted by the kings of the earth is influenced by spiritual forces of wickedness (v. 8), and this helps us to understand the extreme animus of governments against the Lamb and His flock.

Read Revelation 17

Meditate on Revelation 17.7-18

1. From this section, especially verse 8, how can you see the involvement of spiritual forces of wickedness in the corruption of government?
2. Why do you suppose those who dwell on earth, but do not belong to the Lamb, “marvel” at the beast and the harlot?
3. The beast and the woman are meant as symbols of Rome (v. 18), which sits on “seven hills” (v. 9) and was ruled by a succession of “kings.” But Rome itself is merely a symbol for all human governments that turn away from God. These governments “receive authority” which they bend to corrupt ways. According to Jesus (Jn. 19.10, 11), from where does the authority for human government derive? From what we've seen thus far in this study of Revelation, for what purpose is this authority given?
4. What happens when the beast and harlot “make war” against the Lamb (v. 14)? How does this happen, and what is the nature of this “overcoming”? Should we think of this “overcoming” in political terms, or otherwise? Explain.
5. How does verse 17 put this whole situation in a proper perspective and framework? Can you see how the machinations and violence of corrupt nations are nonetheless subject to “the words of God”? What does this suggest about the words – and the Word – of God?

My Reflection

What lines of response should you follow in working to “overcome” the effects of sin in your Personal Mission Field? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = “Highly effective”, how effective are you in this effort at this time? Why did you choose the number you did?

The Glory of God

The glory of God and the progress of His Kingdom are in the background of this chapter, while the power of sin is thrust forward. Nevertheless, how can we see that God is still doing all things well and working all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?

Glory to Glory

Today, in what ways do you expect to see the glory of God coming to light as you work to overcome the powers of sin in your Personal Mission Field?

Memorize

Recite your memory verses aloud: Revelation 19.7-9. Share them with a Christian friend. Share any way that these verses have begun to affect your daily walk with the Lord.

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Closing Prayer

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2.10-12

4 Judgment against the Harlot

Week 8, Thursday: Judgment promised against the harlot

As nations and peoples become more captive to spiritual forces of wickedness, the wrath of God continues against them (v. 4), leading to a final, promised judgment (v. 8).

Read Revelation 18

Meditate on Revelation 18.1-8

1. What is the call to God's people in the face of the growing wickedness in the world? How does Paul qualify this command in 1 Corinthians 5.9-11?
2. The beast and harlot are now associated with "Babylon." Of what would this remind John's readers? How is the "fall" of "Babylon" described in verse 2? We note that this is prior to the actual destruction of the city, promised later in this chapter. What kind of "fall" is this? How might we be able to tell when a nation or government had "fallen" in this way?
3. Verses 6 and 7 put forward a principle of divine judgment. How would you explain it?
4. If every sin is an infinite transgression against God, and sinners (as we have seen) will not be moved to repent by the poured out wrath of God – not even at the final judgment – what does this suggest concerning the kind of judgment they should expect in the end? Will it be temporary only? Should they ever expect to be relieved of this? How should knowing this affect our witness to lost sinners?
5. The Lord is described as "strong" in judging "Babylon." What kind of strength is this? Is this strength available to us? In what ways? For what purposes?

My Reflection

Meditate on 2 Peter 3.10-14 and 1 John 3.1-3, keeping in mind the story before us in chapters 16-18. What priorities do these passages suggest for you?

The Glory of God

God is omniscient (v. 5) and strong (v. 8), and He requires His people to live righteously in the face of the wickedness of the age (vv.4, 5). How should knowing this affect our worship of God?

Glory to Glory

How will you use the memory verses you've learned thus far in our study of Revelation to help you obey the Lord's command of Revelation 18.4 today?

Memorize

Recite Revelation 19.7-9. How might you incorporate these verses into your personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ?

Closing Prayer

What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD

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Now in the presence of all His people.

Psalm 116.12-14

5 In One Hour

Week 8, Friday: The final judgment of sin

John is given a glimpse toward the end, when sin will finally be destroyed and all heaven will rejoice.

Read Revelation 18

Meditate on Revelation 18.9-20

1. Sin is being destroyed, and we cannot help but notice the contrast of emotions between those who indulge sin (vv. 9-11, 19) and those who have overcome it (v. 20). How do we account for these different responses? Why is it important that we see this contrast?
2. We note the catalog of things that satisfied the souls of men on earth (vv. 12-14). What counsel for believers is implicit in this situation?
3. Meditate on Matthew 5.17-19 and Mark 10.42-45. How does greatness in the City of God compare with greatness (Rev. 18.16) in the City of Man? What's the answer to verse 18?
4. Ruin comes upon "Babylon" "in one hour." Meditate on Daniel 5. Do you suppose Jesus, in showing this vision to John, may have had Daniel 5 in mind? Explain.
5. Meditate on Revelation 18.20. In what sense is this scene a work of "avenging"? Who is avenged? For what? Who does the avenging? How should the promise of this affect our ability to overcome?

My Reflection

Consider all that we have examined thus far in the first six facets of the book of Revelation. In the light of John's words in Revelation 1.9, summarize your thinking about each of the following;

Kingdom of God:

Tribulation in the world:

Patient endurance (overcoming):

The Glory of God

God is glorified in the destruction of sin and all those for whom sin is the "fruit" of their souls. How can this be? What do we learn from this about God that should lead us to glorify Him?

Glory to Glory

How does today's passage counsel us concerning the priorities we should be devoting our time and strength to in these last days? What are the implications of this for you today?

Memorize

Review Revelation 19.7-9. Write a prayer based on these verses.

Closing Prayer

Pray the prayer you wrote from your memory verses. Write it on a card and carry it with you to pray it over and over today. Pray it and keep praying it, so that your desire for the return of Christ will increase, and you will continue to prepare yourself diligently to meet with Him in glory.

6 The End of Sin

Week 8, Saturday: Sin's end is total

The judgment of God against the sinful world is total. All the familiar ways of sinful men will be finally and completely overthrown.

Read Revelation 18

Meditate on Revelation 18.21-24

1. Verse 21 is terrifyingly final, in particular the final clause: “and shall not be found anymore.” How can you use this prospect to improve your prayers for the people in your Personal Mission Field?
2. Verses 22 and 23 depict the complete destruction of culture, society, institutions – an entire way of life. Does this mean that *nothing* in unbelieving culture today is of any value or use for those who are called to overcome? Explain.
3. Why are we not surprised by what we read in verse 24?
4. This chapter depicts the destruction of the City of Man at the end of time, expressed as a catalog of activities, institutions, artifacts, and so forth that “shall not be found anymore.” Yet all culture has the potential to bring glory and honor to God (1 Cor. 10.31). What advice or counsel does this chapter hold for overcomers, as we engage in culture and society in these last days?
5. This chapter – and, indeed, much of Revelation and the entire New Testament – reminds us that there is thin line between using culture to serve and glorify God and using culture as an end in itself, for personal enrichment and satisfaction. How can we know when we have begun to cross from the one into the other? What should we do at that time? Meditate on Psalm 119.59, 60 in your answers.

My Reflection

How would you evaluate your use of culture at this time? Is your use of culture more like those in the City of Man or like those who are working through patient endurance to overcome for Christ and His Kingdom? Explain.

The Glory of God

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10.31. If people in the City of Man use culture in a way that God considers an abomination, how should overcomers use culture, so as not to fall under His wrath?

Glory to Glory

Given that sin is coming to a complete and terrible end, what should our attitude be toward the sins that continue to present themselves as options to us daily? Meditate on Psalm 97.10, and suggest some ways of making this verse a practical reality in your daily walk with and work for the Lord.

Memorize

Recite Revelation 19.7-9. Pray through these verses in the light of everything we've seen so far in Revelation 12-14. Make the words your words. Declare to the Lord your longing for His return, and for you to be united with Him forever in glory.

Closing Prayer

Unto You I lift up my eyes,

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O You who dwell in the heavens.
Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God,
Until He has mercy on us.
Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us!
For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorn of those who are at ease,
With the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 123

7 Rejoicing in Heaven

Week 8, Sunday: Heaven rejoices at the destruction of sin

This first part of chapter 19 provides more detail on what was mentioned in Revelation 18.20, and serves as a kind of formal announcement and rallying cry for the hosts of heaven to prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Read Revelation 19

Meditate on Revelation 19.1-10

1. Meditate on verses 1-7. In what sense does each of the following three works “belong” to the Lord, or should be ascribed to our God?

Salvation:

Glory:

Honor:

2. These verses provide a concise summary of everything we need to know about why Christians worship God. Explain. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = Completely, in every way, how well does this summary describe the worship in your church?
3. Meditate on verses 5-7, and recall Revelation 1.15. Notice 1 John 3.1-3. What has happened to this “great multitude”? In the light of John’s promise and 2 Corinthians 3.12-18, what should we be striving to realize every day?
4. Meditate on verse 9. Who are “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb?” From what we’ve seen thus far in Revelation, why should the prospect of this fill us with hope and joyous anticipation? What do you make of that emphatic last sentence in verse 9?
5. Verse 10: What is the “testimony of Jesus”? What does it mean to “have” this testimony? In what sense is “the testimony of Jesus” “the spirit of prophecy” (and recall Revelation 10.11 as you consider this)?

My Reflection

What does it mean for you to have the testimony of Jesus during times of corporate worship? During your daily walk with and work for the Lord? How is it evident to others that you have this testimony?

The Glory of God

Worship is a primary setting for exalting God, celebrating His works, ascribing praise and honor and glory to Him, enlarging our vision of Him, and preparing our souls to live in His presence forever. What kinds of things get in the way of worship fulfilling these objectives?

Glory to Glory

What is the state of “the testimony of Jesus” in your life? Today, if you could take one step to improve the state of this “spirit of prophecy”, what would it be? Share your answer with a Christian friend, then take that

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step as often as you have opportunity to do so today.

Memorize

Today, share your memory verses for this week (Revelation 19.7-9) with a Christian friend, and briefly explain what you have learned about these verses.

Closing Prayer

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Psalm 71.14-16

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Week 8: Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Review John 1.9. How can you see that, in many ways, John provides in this verse an outline of the theme of Revelation?
2. The sixth facet of the book of Revelation focuses pointedly on the wrath of God. Summarize what we learn about the wrath of God from chapters 16-18. What place does the wrath of God have in “the testimony of Jesus”?
3. In what ways are you working to “overcome” any and every obstacle to your “having” the “testimony of Jesus” more consistently in your walk with and work for the Lord? How might your fellow believers assist you in this?
4. What are the most important lessons for you personally from Revelation 16-19.10? Summarize those lessons:
5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

For prayer:

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Thank you.