

# The Return of the King Revelation 6-19

## How to Survive the End of the World

### Rev. 6 & 2 Pet. 3

Almighty God who sees everything, knows everything, and is infinitely wise, has a plan. That plan involves ending the sin, death, evil, and rebellion in this world. That plan has been written down and is ours today.

As we start our study of this next section it reminds us that ONLY God knows the future. No person, no demon, no astrologer, no prophet, no writer, no one but God KNOWS the future. That is one of the most amazing facets of God's character. He never is surprised. God always knows what WILL happen; and only He knows that. We need to listen to God.

## The Return of the King

All of human history, since the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, has been hurtling towards this moment, when the Creator and King of the Universe comes back to set things in order.

For thousands of years sin has run rampantly throughout the earth and the universe. Satan and his evil angels have done all they could do to thwart and disrupt the knowledge of God. Evil and misery have festered. Sin has permeated every part of human history. Death has taken every human but Enoch & Elijah. No one else has avoided death. So how can someone survive the end of the world? By listening to God's Word.

Revelation 6-19 marks the Lord says enough and starting the inexorable conquest back of sin's reign and Satan's rebellion.

There is probably no part of Scripture more relevant to our times than this one. No portion of Scripture better frames the way we should see global events than this one. We are in the timeliest, most cutting edge truths of God's Word as we enter these chapters, because:

## Only God knows the Future

To understand the magnitude of what lies before us, do you remember God's calling card

from the Old Testament? When Israel was sinking into idolatry, false worship, and apostasy, God declared that they could know which God was the true God by the simple fact that only He knew the future.

Look with me at Isaiah 41 as we read a most amazing declaration.

As you turn there, think of what God is saying. He says no person, no group, no creature, no angel, nothing in the Universe but God Almighty knows the future. As we read this think of the power of the Bible. God has told us everything we need to know to live today and to be ready for every, and any, tomorrow. Since God already knows what is coming, He has packed His Word with everything needed.

The more you ponder that truth, the more your heart should be drawn to this Book. It is all we need for life (dealing with whatever comes) and godliness (being all that God wants us to be).

This is a powerful tool, a priceless gift, to hold our very own copy of God's voice telling us what is coming in the future, and narrating exactly what we need to do to be ready. Only God can declare ahead of time the future. Here is God's challenge:

Isaiah 41:21-23 (NKJV) "Present your case," says the Lord. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. 22 "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. 23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together.

God says, listen to me, only I know the future. Now, turn back to the end of God's Word, to the final, written-in-advance history, describing of the end of days for human history.

## **God's Written Description of the End of the World**

This final book of the Bible was sent to us by God the Father, through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the final information we need to survive the last days.

The flow of Revelation is simple to see.

- **Chapter 1** is Jesus Christ showing Himself in all His glory, as Almighty God the Son. *Lesson: the only hope of surviving the end of days is with Christ.*
- **Chapters 2 and 3** are Christ's personal letters to the churches that bear His Name.

*Lesson: we who are in Christ's church have a very specific purpose in life.*

- **Chapters 4 and 5** are Christ's guided tour of the Throne Room of God Almighty. *Lesson: God wants our worship and seeks us to focus upon Him in a life of worship.*
- **Revelation 6-19** holds the vital details piecing together all the events of the Return of the King, who is the Redeemer, and who is the Judge. *Lesson: God has decided ahead of time each event that is to come, and has shown it to us His people.*

But before we dive into this most vital guide to the closing events for human history, we need to remind ourselves of:

## The Challenge of Revelation

No other New Testament has more debates about how to understand what God has said, that the last book. Basically, all the various views can be described by one of these four positions<sup>1</sup>:

1. **The “already happened in the New Testament era” position or the *preterist* approach** “interprets Revelation as a description of first century events in the Roman Empire . This view conflicts with the book’s own often repeated claim to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19). It is impossible to see all the events in Revelation as already fulfilled. The second coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century”.
2. **The “overview of history” position or the *historicist* approach** “views Revelation as a panoramic view of church history from apostolic times to the present—seeing in the symbolism such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church (as well as various individual popes), the emergence of Islam, and the French Revolution. This interpretive method robs Revelation of any meaning for those to whom it was written. It also ignores the time limitations the book itself places on the unfolding events (cf. 11:2; 12:6,14; 13:5). Historicism has produced many different—and often conflicting—interpretations of the actual historical events contained in Revelation.”
3. **The “timeless truths” position or the *idealist* approach** interprets Revelation as a “timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this view, the book contains neither historical allusions nor predictive prophecy. This view also ignores Revelation’s prophetic character and, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs the book from any connection with actual historical events.

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur Study Bible definitions, 303 words quoted.

Revelation then becomes merely a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.”

4. **The “end of days” position or the futurist approach** “insists that the events of chaps. 6–22 are yet future, and that those chapters literally and symbolically depict actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene. It describes the events surrounding the second coming of Jesus Christ (chaps. 6–19), the Millennium and final judgment (chap. 20), and the eternal state (chaps. 21,22). Only this view does justice to Revelation’s claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as chaps. 1–3 and the rest of Scripture”.

So from both the actual words of Revelation, and the way that the early church understood them, and the rest of God’s Word, the most consistent position is the futurist approach, which is what we are looking at today.

So, how can we summarize this huge section of the Book? Every part of these chapters is somehow connected to Christ's Second Coming as King of the Earth and Creator of All. But with so many chapters before us, what is a framework that can help us? Here is a thumbnail view of these 14 chapters:

## **An Overview of the End of Days in Revelation**

Chapter 6 starts the judgments, and from that moment to the climactic return of the King in Revelation 19, the river of God’s wrath just keeps flooding the earth. Note the rapid devastation.

We begin in chapter 6 with the Lord beginning to unroll the seven seals, as each one breaks open it reveals another event that's going to happen on the earth. By the sixth seal in Rev. 6:12-17, we have an earthquake.

When God makes the earth shake, it is a big one. The sun becomes as black as sackcloth of hair and the moon becomes like blood. The stars of heaven fell to the earth. Imagine a day when the sun goes black, the moon goes blood-red, and the stars all fall out of heaven, as the sky departs like a scroll. As those scenes flash by above, below, every mountain and every island get shaken out of their places. This is like a:

## **Global Horror Movie**

Can you imagine that? These will be scary time in verses 15 to 17. The shaken inhabitants of Earth scream for the rocks and the mountains to fall, to hide them from the face of him

that sits on the throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?

That was only the first of the 14 chapters of tribulation horrors. Next, jump to the last seal in Revelation 8:1. This seal unleashes the seven trumpet judgments, another way to signify terrifying, wide-spread judgment.

Rev. 8:7 gives us just a little taste of what is going on as the judgments roll across the land, seas, and skies: "The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up".

Like in one of the countless computer-generated science-fiction movies: a huge, huge ball of fire fall from the sky and hit the seas, destroying a third of the oceans.

Only it wasn't a computer-generated theater disaster, it actually happens. Most people will probably just stand there in unbelief. They had seen New York and LA destroyed so many times on screen, but never heard the ear-shattering concussive blast of impact, or felt the skin- searing heat of the devastation.

Soon a tsunaminous-tidal wave that would be absolutely beyond imagination, follows the flaming ball of fire that plunged into the sea, joining the other fires that come down to the earth that burn up a third of everything on the globe. But we know that:

## **Chapter 6-8 Is only the Movie Trailer**

Each of these disasters is only a preview, we understand, of the devastating fire of God, when He will consume everything left at the end of the thousand years, before He sets up the new heaven and the new earth.

While all the implications of that horrible scene is being digested by our minds, note the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet in Rev. 9:1.

John sees an angelic creature falling like a burning meteor to earth with a key. What a key he holds. This is probably Lucifer, the Devil who is allowed to let out all the imprisoned terrorist-like demons, locked up by God over thousands of years.

All the bound up, out-of-control demons that have been imprisoned down there for centuries gush out of the prison pit in verse 2, like: "Smoke out of the pit, like the smoke of a furnace and the sun and the air darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

## **When the Real Horror is Unleashed**

It says in Rev. 9:3 that these demons sweep across the face of the Earth like a dark, thick plague of locusts. If the terrifying quake of chapter 6 seemed bad, this is so much more terrifying. Like the sound of locust cloud screeching overhead is this cloud of evil, that envelopes the Earth.

There is nowhere to go, there is no escape, because there is no secure room to hide from creatures that transcend any physical barrier.

This is one of the main reasons why the Tribulation is going to be such a terrible time.

Think of all the bound demons of the Pit being turned loose in addition to the ones that are already running all over the earth.

Then, as if these hordes were not bad enough, out of the smoke rising from the Pit in v. 11 emerges the most fearsome monster of all, their king Abaddon the Destroyer. This is the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in the Greek tongue, Apollyon. Both languages capture this creature's name, it means destroyer. But all these demons are allowed to do is inflict pain, not death. Death is coming, but not quite yet.

## **The Greatest Massacre Arrives**

A world, terrorized for 150 days (9:10), now has something to fear. The searing pain is about to be replaced by horrific death.

In Revelation 9:17, at the sounding of the sixth angel, trumpet, another army rises. Destroying horse-like creatures and those who sat on them, it says, are riders with breastplates the color of fire and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions.

With fire, smoke, and brimstone: a third of mankind is killed. Brimstone is like volcanic lava, which proceeded out of their mouths.

Either this is some kind of graphic figurative description of a great fiery force, or maybe God just opens the earth and turns loose the Earth's volcanic capacity. In deadly destruction, a third of the world's inhabitants are plunged into Hades.

But, that's just a preview, a little taste of what's coming at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom. Skip over the next 7 chapters of the Beast, False Prophet, and the seven bowls of scorching fire, blackness of darkness, and Armageddon, and turn with me to Rev. 20:7-9.

Rev. 6-19 is all just a starting point for the final devastation of fire that consumes the whole universe. That's how it's going to end.

## **The Fire that Melts the Entire Universe**

The Lord has given many Old Testament warnings, and many New Testament descriptive previews of what is coming at the end of the seven-year period of Tribulation, just prior to Jesus' return to set up His thousand-year Kingdom.

But the end really hits with that furious fire, that is going to come upon that great rebellious army that are going to fight Jesus Christ at the end of His earthly Kingdom.

Rev. 20:7-9 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

It is at that moment in Rev. 20:7-9 that the final holocaust hits, when all of the universe is consumed and the elements melt with intense heat, right down to the elements.

To understand the end, turn with me to 2 Peter 3:10.

John has already told us in 1 John 2:17 that the world would someday pass away, but only Peter describes the exact way it happens.

It is with the fire of God: the consuming, purifying fire that brings a new heaven and earth.

Note what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:10.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

What does Peter mean that the "elements" melt?

Peter is guided by the Spirit to use the Greek word *stoichea*, which means the microscopic components that make up the building blocks of matter. God tells us that He is refining with fire the Universe, right down to the very essence of matter, it's all going to be consumed.

## Everything Unconnected to God, Burns

As God's Word says in 1 John 2:17: "the world passes away." The universe, the earth and the world's systems: social, economic, cultural, and religious, are all consumed.

Now look at 2 Peter 3:11. This is where we will begin next week, Lord willing. But until then, there is a question Peter asks us on behalf of Almighty God.

These words may be the most import words to really wrap your mind around if you believe God, if you know Jesus, and if you want to please Him with your life.

Please stand with me, we are going to read these words from the screen together.

Then we will close with a song of dedication.

1 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?**

## Living for Jesus is All that Matters

Now, with those words before us on the screen, reach down, grab a hymnbook and open to the clearest description of what we are to do while we live out our time on Earth.

Its number 372: Living for Jesus.