

# Lesson 45

Some people have described the book of Revelation as a jigsaw puzzle, and maybe they are right. But how do we solve a jigsaw puzzle? Do we throw our hands up in despair and say no one can ever solve it? Do we treat the puzzle pieces as unrelated images and make no attempt to ever make them fit together? Do we leave some pieces facing up and others facing down as if it doesn't really matter whether they are trying to convey a single larger image?

No. We know how to solve a jigsaw puzzle. First you lay out all of the puzzle pieces face up — that is you put all of the evidence on the table so that you can see it. Then you look for the edge pieces and put them together — that gives you the time frame and the context in which all of the other pieces will fit. From the edges you work inward, looking for things you recognize and making sure everything fits and makes sense with what is around it. And then what happens as you approach the end of the puzzle? Does the puzzle get harder to solve or easier? It gets easier! You have fewer pieces to fit, and you can see much more of the overall image that you are reconstructing. That's where we are in these closing chapters! If we have done things right so far, then the book should be much easier for us to understand now that we are in these closing chapters!

So, yes, maybe the book of Revelation is a jigsaw puzzle. But you know what? We can solve a jigsaw puzzle!

In our last lesson we ended by looking at verses 11-13 of Chapter 19, which contain one of the most beautiful and wonderful descriptions of Jesus found anywhere in the Bible.

*Behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

That beautiful and wonderful description of Jesus continues in verses 14-15.

**Revelation 19:14-15**

**14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

Jesus doesn't need any army to take care of Rome, but verse 14 tells us that armies are following him. Who are these armies?

The text gives us a big clue in verse 14: these armies also ride white horses, and these armies are clothed in fine linen, white and clean. The white horse is the sign of a conquerer, and the fine linen is the sign of purity. So verse 14 tells us that these armies following Christ consist of **pure conquerers**.

Where in this book have we already seen a large group of pure people following Christ? We saw that in Chapter 14 with the 144,000, which represent all of God's people, being twelve times twelve times ten times ten times ten, where twelve is the symbol for God's people and ten is the symbol for completeness. Revelation 14:4 describes the 144,000 as virgins "which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Can there be any doubt as to the identity of the armies in verse 14? They are the church! We are pure by the blood of Christ, and we follow Jesus wherever he goes. We are the armies of Christ! But are we fighting a **physical** battle? No. We are fighting a **spiritual** battle.

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5 — For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

The next time someone tells you about the great battle at the end of time when Christians will fight a great war in Israel against the antichrist, ask them a simple question: **are the weapons of our warfare carnal?** Paul just told us they are not. “The weapons of our warfare are **not** carnal.” That statement is very hard to misunderstand, but premillennialists seem to have trouble with it.

The armies of heaven are the armies that are allied with Christ. They are the ones who conquer with Christ. They are the ones who overcome Rome with their faithful endurance. They are **not** the armies of those who dwell on earth — they are the armies of heaven.

But if there is only one church (Ephesians 4:4), then why do we see **armies** (plural) here rather than an **army** (singular)? The Greek word used here for army just means a band of soldiers, so most likely the one church is being shown here as consisting of many bands of soldiers, possibly pointing to many congregations of the one church (as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3). A second possibility is that these armies also include armies of angels, which are typically shown as coming with Christ in judgment both figuratively (as in Matthew 24:31) and literally (as in Matthew 25:31). I favor the first view: these armies are the church!

But, wait. The soldiers in these armies are riding **white horses**, which means that they are conquerers. Were the poor persecuted first century Christians **conquerers**? Absolutely they were! And absolutely we are as well! In fact, we are more than conquerers!

**Romans 8:37** — *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

So I guess that means that those conquering Christians did not suffer persecution, right? I mean how can you be a conquerer if you are persecuted, right? Wrong! Let's go back and read Romans 8:37 again, but this time let's start in verse 35.

**Romans 8:35-37** — *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

The phrase “in all these things” in verse 37 is pointing to the persecution! It is in the persecution that we are more than conquerors! We do not conquer **despite** the persecution; we conquer **in** the persecution! Can there be any better indication than that that what we are seeing here is **spiritual** conquering rather than **physical** conquering?

Who stood with Christ when he conquered Rome? Who was allied with Christ in that great battle? Who overcame the Roman empire through faith in Christ and obedience to his word? Who remained faithful unto death and received a crown of life? **The church!**

So is this battle the great battle at the end of all time? **What great battle at the end of all time?** Where in the Bible are we ever told that there will be a battle, great or otherwise, at the end of all time? Where is there a battle in 1 Corinthians 15:52?

*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Where is there a battle in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17?

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

On that last great day we will rise to meet Jesus in the air. **There will be no great battle on earth because there will be no one left on earth to fight it, including Jesus.** We will meet Jesus in the air. **That last day will be a day of judgment and a day of sentencing, not a day of fighting.** And right after that judgment, there will no longer be any place on earth to fight a great battle. Why? Because the earth itself will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). There will be no battle and no battlefield. All there will be on the last great day are sheep and goats, and nowhere are we told that those two groups will engage in a battle.

But saying that there will not be a war at the end of all time does not mean there will not be a war. In fact, there is a war, and **we are at war now!**

**1 Timothy 6:12** — *Fight the good fight of faith.*

**1 Timothy 1:18-19** — *This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience.*

**2 Corinthians 10:4** — *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

**Ephesians 6:11** — *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

The church is at war now. We are fighting the good fight of faith while wearing the whole armor of God. We are not engaged in a physical war with carnal weapons, but rather we are engaged in a spiritual war with spiritual weapons. **And on that last great day, we will lay our weapons down; we won't pick them up.**

So what battle is being described here? This is the same battle of Armageddon that we studied back in Chapter 16. We are just being given a few more details about it here in Chapter 19. For example, back in Chapter 16 we wondered where the church was in this great battle, and we see the answer to that question now in Chapter 19: the church was right where we would expect the church to be — following Christ.

As we said about Chapter 16, God chose the most famous battlefield on earth (Armageddon) on which to depict the complete judgment and utter destruction of Rome. This battle is the warfare between the church and Rome, and that was a **spiritual** battle. How do we know? Because the Christians who overcame Rome were those who remained faithful **unto death**. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). **For a physical battle, death means defeat. Only for a spiritual battle can death mean victory!** Listen as Paul describes what our life on this earth would be like if we had no hope of a resurrection — if we had no hope of a spiritual victory.

**1 Corinthians 15:19** — *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

Why? Because we would have been storing up riches in heaven with no hope of ever going there! If this life is all there is, then why not just eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die (1 Corinthians 15:32)? We must be seeing a spiritual battle in these verses because that is the only battle that matters.

The sharp sword in verse 15 reminds us of Revelation 2:16 — “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” The same weapon that would be used against faithless compromisers in the church would also be used against the godless Romans.

**What is that sword?** Verse 15 gives us a big clue: it goeth out of the mouth of Christ. That sword is the word of God. It is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). You mean to say that Jesus will judge people with **words**? Yes.

***John 12:48** — He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.***

Verse 14 tells us that it is with that same word that Christ will smite the nations. You mean to say that Jesus can smite nations with just words? Yes, and Jesus can do much more than that with just words — he can bring into existence from nothing an entire universe! We must never doubt the power of the word of God!

***Hebrews 4:12** — For the word of God is quick, **and powerful**, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The “rod of iron” in verse 15 reminds us of the great Messianic Psalm 2.

***Psalm 2:9** — Thou shalt break them with a **rod of iron**; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.*

And it also reminds us of Isaiah 11.

***Isaiah 11:4** — He shall smite the earth with **the rod of his mouth**, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

The rod of iron is a symbol of strength and of judgment. Yes, Jesus is a Lamb, but Jesus is a Lamb who rules with a rod of iron! And, as verse 15 continues, Jesus is a Lamb who “treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

What an incredible and remarkable phrase! “He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God!” That explains why Jesus’ robe has blood on it (verse 13). Jesus is treading Rome as one would tread grapes, and Rome’s blood flows as wine from the winepress.

We are reminded at once of another judgment against an enemy of God’s people, the judgment of Edom in Isaiah 63.

*Isaiah 63:3-4 — I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*

And once again, God has trodden the winepress **alone**. Yes, Jesus has armies, but Jesus is the one who is smiting the nations, not the armies arrayed behind him. Jesus is the one who is treading the winepress, not the armies behind him. Jesus does not need an army to defeat Rome!

### **Revelation 19:16**

**16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**

In verse 12, we were told that Jesus had a name that no man knew. In verse 13, we were told that his name is The Word of God. Here in verse 16, we are told that his name is King of kings and Lord of lords. As we said earlier about verse 12, having a name that no man knows means that you have status that no man can share. That is true of Christ. Only Jesus is the word made flesh, and only Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Yes, the Roman emperors thought that their word was final, but they were wrong. And those Roman emperors thought they were King of kings and Lord of lords, but they were wrong. Those descriptions are true only of Jesus.

**Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.** What does that mean? What it means is that Jesus is King of everyone and everything and Lord of everyone and ev-

everything. If Jesus is King of kings, then Jesus is your king. If Jesus is Lord of lords, then Jesus is your lord.

But what if I do not obey him? What if I don't believe in him? It matters not as to whether Jesus is your King and Lord. It matters only as to whether you are his faithful subject. We do not obey the gospel to make Jesus King of our life or Lord of our life. We obey the gospel because Jesus is already King of our life and Lord of our life! When we obey the gospel, Jesus does not change (Hebrews 13:8), but rather we change. We change from being his rebellious subject to instead becoming his faithful and obedient subject. Denominational preachers may tell us we need to make Jesus Lord of our life, but that is not what Peter told us. Peter told us that we must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38) because Jesus is already Lord of our life (Acts 2:36).

Did Jesus become King of kings and Lord of lords because he defeated Rome in this great battle? No. Jesus was King of kings and Lord of lords before the battle even began. Jesus had all authority when this book started, and Jesus has all authority when this book ends.

*1 Timothy 6:14-16 — That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, **who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;** Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.*

Jesus **is** King of kings and Lord of lords. That was true when Paul wrote to Timothy. That was true when Jesus conquered Rome — and that was true when Jesus conquered us! Jesus **is** King of kings and Lord of lords. Be wary of anyone who would attempt to change the tense of that verb!

Jesus **is** King of kings and Lord of lords. That is something that the first century church needed to hear as they were suffering at the hands of godless Roman kings. And that is something we need to hear today. The church of Christ is the eternal kingdom made without human hands, and our king is the Sovereign King and Lord of the entire universe — the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

**Revelation 19:17-18**

**17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.**

Here we see a truly vivid, frightening, and beautiful image. An angel standing in the sun (that's the beautiful part!) invites the birds of the air to come and feast on the flesh of all who stand with the army arrayed against God (that's the vivid and frightening part!). This gruesome feast stands in stark contrast to the marriage supper of the Lamb that we saw earlier in this chapter.

Does it seem to you as if this angel has any doubts at all as to the outcome of this battle? No, and the message to the church is that it should not have any doubts either. The outcome is certain. In fact, we have already seen the victory celebration earlier in this book.

This same image is also used in the Old Testament to describe past judgments of God against the enemies of his people.

*Ezekiel 39:17-20 — And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have*

*sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.*

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). We see that here — these birds feast on all of God's enemies, be they free or bond, be they small or great. You mean there will be famous people in hell? You mean there will be great political figures in hell? You mean there will be billionaires in hell? On the day of our death, there is only one distinction that matters: are we in Christ or not in Christ. Nothing else will matter, and no other distinction will save us.

Remember that when this book was written the persecution against the church was about to begin again with renewed strength under the emperor Domitian. A central purpose of this book is to assure the first century church that their ultimate victory is certain and that, no matter how it may seem, Rome will not and cannot defeat the church so long as the church remains faithful to Christ. Yes, this image is frightening, but there is no intent here to frighten the church. The intent is to comfort the church and to assure the church of its coming victory.

But what about all of the **neutral** people in Rome? What about all of the **by-standers** who weren't on either side? If we're looking for a modern day lesson from this book of Revelation, here's an important one: **there are no neutral people!** No one is neutral when it comes to Jesus and his church! There is no middle ground. Everyone is either on one side or the other. The choice is Caesar or Christ, and there is no third choice.

*Matthew 12:30 — He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*

The only two dwelling places we see in this book are the dwelling place of the church (which God shows as already dwelling in heaven) and the dwelling place of Rome (which God describes as dwelling upon the earth). There is no other dwelling place in this book. Either one is in Christ or out of Christ, and those who are out of Christ are living in rebellion to the reign of Christ.

## **Revelation 19:19-21**

**19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to**

**make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.**

Verses 19-21 are describing the same battle between Christ and Rome that we have seen several times before in this book. It is the same battle that has been brewing since the opening chapters. It is the same battle that Daniel talked about in Daniel 2:44 — “it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

This is the same battle we saw back in Chapter 14.

***Revelation 14:9-11** — And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

This is the same battle we saw back in Chapter 16.

***Revelation 16:12-16** — And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the*

*water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

These verses are all describing the same event — the triumph of Christ and his church over Rome. And although we do see some additional details here, we do not find here a description of the battle itself. Instead all we see is the outcome of that battle.

One way that commentators get into trouble with Revelation is that they fail to see just how often things are **repeated** in this book. God shows us the church from many different angles in this book, and God does the same with the judgment of Rome. Many see the battle in Chapter 14, the battle in Chapter 16, and the battle in Chapter 19, and they think we must be seeing three different battles. The context and the time frame say otherwise. We are seeing the same battle from three different perspectives. God wants us to see things as He sees things, and so God is giving us different views of those things. It is as if we can walk all around them and look at them from many different angles.

So let's focus now on what verses 19-21 are telling us about this great battle between Christ and Rome.

First, who is arrayed here against "him that sat on the horse, and against his army," which is Christ and his church? The group arrayed against Christ and his church here is the same cast of characters we have seen many times before. In fact, that we are seeing the same cast of characters is confirmation that we are still looking at the same battle.

So who are those characters arrayed against Christ and his church? First, we see the beast. This is the beast from the sea, which represents the royal side of Rome. This royal beast in verse 19 is standing with the king of the earths and their armies, all gathered together to make war against Christ. These kings are the emperors of Rome, the client kings of Rome, and possibly all of the

other kings who have ever been against God all throughout history. We have already seen how Rome was considered a continuation of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, and so perhaps these kings even include those past kings. **The message is that it does not matter who is on the other side when Christ is on our side!** Do we think that is a message the early church needed to hear? Do we think that is a message that **we** need to hear? “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Let’s pause for just a moment to think about the image in verse 19. In the first century, nothing could have been more frightening than a Roman army. They were the seemingly unstoppable force that had conquered the known world. Who could stand in their way? Who would have ever thought that the church stood a chance against such a great army? Well, Daniel, for one. Daniel knew the outcome of this battle six centuries before it occurred. In fact, the outcome was so certain that we have already seen the victory celebration earlier in our study of this book! Where does that **great confidence** come from?

***Hebrews 3:14** — For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our **confidence** stedfast unto the end.*

***Ephesians 3:11-12** — According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with **confidence** by the faith of him.*

***2 Corinthians 5:6-7** — Therefore we are always **confident**, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight.)*

***Acts 28:30-31** — And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all **confidence**, no man forbidding him.*

***1 John 4:17-18** — Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have **boldness** in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.*

***Ephesians 6:10** — Finally, my brethren, be **strong** in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

The people of God are a **confident** people. The people of God are a **bold** people. The people of God are a **strong** people. The people of God are not held back by fear, but rather we charge forward with Christ as our leader. **That is the message of verse 19!** The message is **not** that there will be an atomic war at the end of all time following a great battle in Palestine with the Antichrist. **The message is that the church will be bold, confident, and victorious if they faithfully follow their eternal king!**

In verse 20, the beast is taken. That beast is the the beast from the sea, representing the royal side of Rome. We also see the false prophet taken in verse 20. That false prophet is the beast from the earth, representing the false religious side of Rome. This false prophet represents emperor worship and the worship of all the other false gods of Rome and Greece. Together these two beasts depict Rome as a royal priesthood. But Rome is a **false** royal priesthood, and that false royal priesthood has come up against the **true** royal priesthood, the immovable unshakable eternal kingdom of Christ, who is the perfect King and High Priest. **Who will win in that battle?** It is no contest! The kingdom of Christ “cannot be moved” (Hebrews 12:28). And why is that? “For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). And we see that consuming fire here in verse 20.

These are the same two beasts that we have been studying for several chapters in this book. The focus of Chapter 19 has not changed one bit. We are still in our first century time frame, and we are still looking at the promised triumph of the church over Rome. There is no reason to leap forward to the end of all time, and there is every reason not to do that. This book has not changed its focus, and neither should we.

**But wait — hold your four horses!** I see a **lake of fire** in verse 20. I see **fire and brimstone** in verse 20. That must be the end of the world, right? Wrong. In fact, the first time we see brimstone in the Bible, it is not describing the end of the world but is instead describing the end of **Sodom and Gomorrah** in Genesis 19:24. We see brimstone again in Isaiah 30:33, again not describing the end of the world, but describing the end of **Assyria**. We see brimstone again in Isaiah 34, again not describing the end of the world, but describing the end of **Edom**.

***Isaiah 34:9-10** — And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone,*

*and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.*

Being tossed into a lake of fire depicts a complete and utter defeat — a defeat from which there is no recovery. Let's keep that in mind as we proceed because we are about to a lot more about this lake of fire.

Will there be fire and brimstone at the end of the world? There will certainly be fire (2 Peter 3:12) and most likely brimstone as well. Must we be looking at the end of the world every time we see a judgment involving fire and brimstone? No. God has described other judgments using that same language, and I think that is exactly what God is doing here as well. But the judgment here is not that of Sodom, or of Assyria, or of Edom, or of the entire world — this judgment is the judgment of Rome. This judgment is the judgment of the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, which together represent the royal side of Rome and the false religious side of Rome. That is who we see here in verse 20.

One word in verse 20 is particularly chilling — the beasts are cast **alive** into the lake of fire. Why are they cast in **alive**? What does that part of the figure depict? The key to answering that question is to look at the power of Rome in the first century. The Roman empire reached its greatest geographical extent in AD 117 under Trajan, which was just about forty years after this book was written. **Rome was judged and sentenced while Rome was still very powerful and very much alive.** This book reminds us repeatedly that the events it describes were to come to pass **soon**, and they did. Rome's judgment by God did not happen at the end of Rome's life. Rome's judgment by God happened at the height of Rome's powers. Rome was cast into the lake of fire **alive**.

This description also tells us something else about these judgments — we should not be looking for the **physical** judgment of Rome here. What we are seeing is a **spiritual** judgment, just as we have seen the **spiritual** deliverance of Christians, and not their **physical** deliverance. History confirms this — Rome did not end with Domitian. Should that historical fact concern us? Not at all. We need to stop judging things with our eyes. Why? Because things are not always what they seem. We need to judge things by what we read in God's word. I have reached the age where I have a different pair of eyeglasses for every activity, but the most powerful and important eyeglasses I own are not

made of glass at all — my best eyeglasses are made of paper and ink! Those eyeglasses give me 20-20 spiritual vision!

**Sometimes the most momentous events in history from God's perspective don't look like much from the world's perspective.** For example, think about the birth of a baby in the backwater town of Bethlehem. Or think about the death of that child on a Roman cross along with two criminals. Or think about the establishment of his eternal kingdom. What did those events look like on earth? Did mighty Rome take any notice of them at all?

But how can we have Rome continue on after its judgment? Is that a problem? Not at all. We see the same thing elsewhere in the Bible. For example, when did **Judaism** end? Didn't Judaism end at the cross when the new covenant came into force at the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16)? And yet to the world it looked as if Judaism continued on. Judaism still had its High Priest, it still had its temple, and it still had its rituals. The church had a different High Priest, a different temple, and different rituals. Then what happened. Jerusalem was judged by God in AD 70 — nearly forty years **after** Judaism ended. In fact, to the world it looks as if Judaism continues to this very day. **But is that how God sees it?** We need to judge things by how God sees them. That is the central message of this book, and we should start with how we see the judgment of Rome.

**What happens next?** In verse 21, the remnant of those on Rome's side are slain by Christ and the sword coming out his mouth (which is his word), and they become food for the birds, just as was foretold at the beginning of the battle.

So does that mean the church finally had enough, and so it rose up and killed its oppressors? Is that what we see here? No. It is not. Instead, what we see here is yet another reminder of Romans 12:19 — "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The followers of the beast are **not** slain with the **swords** of **those** that sit upon white **horses**, but rather that are "slain with the **sword** of **him** that sat upon the **horse**."

We learn **two important lessons** from that. **First**, Jesus marches with armies to defeat Rome, but Jesus doesn't need armies to defeat Rome. Jesus destroys the armies of the earth by the sword that issues from his mouth, which is his word. And **second**, it is **the word of Christ** that slays Rome, not **our** word. Our power comes from the word of God; our power does not come from our own words.

But is that really all we have here — **just words**? No atomic bombs? No 666 tattoos? No ballistic missiles? We have none of that. All have are just words — **but those words are more powerful than any atomic bomb!** Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the word of God is powerful, but just how powerful is it? Well, here we see the word of God defeating the mightiest army the world had ever seen! The word of God in Daniel 2 has said six centuries earlier that Rome would lose in the conflict and the church would win — is there any power anywhere that could change that outcome? Is there any atomic bomb that could overcome those words from God?

There is nothing on this earth more powerful than the word of God — and we can hold it in our hands! There is no weapon that is more effective against Satan or more feared by Satan than the word of God — and we can carry that weapon around with us twenty-four hours a day! We can carry this weapon into an airport! (At least in **this** country! In some countries it would be easier to carry a gun in than a Bible! They at least recognize the Bible's power!)

If we are fearful or if we are losing the fight, it is **not** because we lack a powerful weapon. Instead, it is because we are not using the powerful weapon that God has given us. If we march out to war and leave the sword of the spirit behind in our tent — whose fault is that? It is not God's fault! We are soldiers for God, and we need to make sure we are properly equipped.

***Ephesians 6:11-17** — Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Onward Christian soldiers! We are marching as to war! Not with carnal weapons, but with spiritual weapons. And not against flesh and blood, but

against spiritual wickedness in high places. What is that Bible like? How does God see that battle? We just saw the answers to those questions.