

## The Word

November 18, 2001

Revelation 19

Peter Hiett

*After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."*

*Once more they cried, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"*

*And from the throne came a voice crying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."*

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" --for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

Remember that The Revelation is being sent to the saints in those seven, baby churches in Asia Minor. To them The Revelation must have seemed like a myth. The Word of God must have seemed like a myth.

Asia Minor is a long way from Palestine. Paul had planted the churches forty years before, but now Paul was dead and John was exiled. A few in these churches had been killed for not worshipping the Emperor. Many were facing economic trials (exiled from the trade guilds, persecuted yet also seduced back into their old lifestyles). These were probably the days of Emperor Vespasian or Emperor Domitian. So the coliseum in Rome was brand new. Soon it would be filled with the blood of Christians slaughtered by Roman gladiators for entertainment.

The world had never seen an empire—culture—economy—as glorious and powerful as Rome.

Now John writes this letter and sings a funeral dirge over Rome. He tells these churches they will *conquer* with Christ. It must have seemed like a *myth* . . . a lie . . . good words separated from their daily reality.

When you think about it, all good words seem separated from reality. I think we call that “futility” and sometimes “injustice.” The word “love,” for instance, shouldn’t feel like pain and suffering. Yet in this world it often does. The word “evil” shouldn’t look like a handsome man in a designer suit with gold rings. Yet in this world sometimes it does.

In fairy tales the good somehow always turns out beautiful, and the evil is always exposed as a monster. Even in “Shrek” they turn out to be good-looking ogres. Something tells us the word “beloved” *should* look like a gorgeous bride, spotless and without blemish. The words “faithful” and “true” should look like a prince on a white horse. The words “coward” and “lie” should look like a snake.

The Hebrews didn’t really have a word for “word.” “Word” meant “thing”—“dabar.” So you “say a thing”; “hear a thing.” The Greek word for “word” was “logos”—idea—reality—meaning, and also “rhema”—applied meaning.

But this is what’s so hard about words in this world: They don’t always line up with the reality we experience. And so we say, “It’s just words.”

In the twentieth century we came to believe that unless words matched what we could prove with our five senses, they weren’t really true . . . just myths. That’s called Logical Positivism, Empiricism, Scientism, or Modernism. The only problem is that Logical Positivism can’t be proved true with Logical Positivism (our flesh, our senses), for truth is not of this world.

Well, what I’m saying is: Speaking good words in the world can be very hard. Words like “just,” “faithful,” and “true” tend to get crucified in this world. It’s hard to speak the Word of God—Jesus, because . . .

1. The Word seems ridiculous and weak, and our world likes demonstrations of power.
2. The Word seems confused. How do you prove or define a word like “love” or “Jesus” (wrap Him up nice and tidy)?
3. The Word is painful. God’s Word cuts against this world and into your own heart. And when it does, it lives in you with power and passion. But when you share it, it’s often rejected as myth.

So many times when I’m done preaching or witnessing, I feel like a jackass . . . I feel like an *ass*: ridiculous, weak, confused, alone, rejected . . . by **myself**—my own flesh, my own five senses. I think, “How could I have *said* such things?!” *Crazy myths*. Haven’t you walked out of church and said to yourself, “What was *that*?” I have.

Arguably the most influential theologian of the last century was Rudolph Buttmann. In 1941 in Germany he published an historic essay on “Myth in the New Testament,” in which he argued that Scripture embodied a pre-scientific view of the world. He reasoned that to communicate the Gospel to the modern mind we needed to translate Scripture into non-mythical terms. That is, we needed to “de-mythologize” the Word.

So while Hitler preached pagan myths, we (the Church) “de-mythologized” the Word.

In mainline churches that fueled a liberalism that tended to make angels and demons into psychologies, and God into a great idea. So The Revelation was like a parable.

Fundamentalist churches reacted against that idea, but they did their own de-mythologizing, trying to prove the Word of God with science. They said they took The Revelation “literally,” which meant scientifically or empirically. They took numbers and calendars, space and time, very seriously. But the *meaning* was a *secondary* issue.

I think even Charismatics got in on de-mythologizing by teaching that God didn’t show up unless someone shook, fell down, or got up out of a wheelchair . . . unless there was *scientific evidence* . . . something you could see.

Mainline, Fundamentalist, Charismatic . . . I’m a bit of each. And for us in the twentieth century church, words just didn’t cut it. To believe something we needed to see it, explain it, chart it, or feel it. We needed *flesh*. Surely you don’t expect faith to “come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”! In this world “word” is ridiculous, weak, confusing, and even painful. So speaking the Word of God is *hard*. And what *is* it?

1. The Logos (Word of God) is unchanging truth. It’s Scripture, *at least*.
2. The Rhema of God is more like God’s Word for a *moment*. How do I know *that* Word?

A friend tells about a prophetic meeting where a lady stood up and said in a dramatic voice, “Yeah, the Lord saith unto us He shall lead us in deliverance as Moses led the animals onto the ark.” She sat down and a few minutes later stood up and said, “Yeah, the Lord saith it was Noah.”

Cindy Jacobs tells about a meeting where a lady stood and said, “God says, Because you have disobeyed me I am going to write Michelob over this church.” I think she meant “Ichabod,” meaning “the glory has departed.” But at least they get free beer! (Maybe that could use some de-mythologizing.)

Some people think the spirit of *weird* is the Word of God. But not everything weird is holy, or we’d be worshipping Peewee Herman. Sometimes weird is just *weird*. And yet have you ever received a note or received a prayer or some words from somebody and it really *was* weird . . . not because it *didn’t* fit, but because it *fit so well*.

Even weirder, have you ever been the one who *spoke* the word? I have, on occasion, and what’s weirdest to me is it wasn’t those times I was trying *so hard* to hear God’s Word. In fact, I wasn’t even focused on me and what *I* could do. So I don’t fully know how it happened.

How are we to speak God’s true words in the moment?

*And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

Prophecy is speaking God's Word for the moment. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The spirit of prophecy is all about Jesus.

I'm a baby at all of this, but I've found that if I get all worked up about whether or not I can hear God's Word in the moment, whether or not I'm ridiculous, confused, or going to get hurt, whether or not *I* can hear . . . well, I *don't*. But if I can forget myself (my flesh) and get lost in Jesus . . .

loving Jesus—  
glorifying Jesus—  
thinking about Jesus—  
worshipping Jesus—  
testifying to Jesus—

. . . it's at those times I've been shocked to find God's Word got through, and it *fit* like a hand in a glove.

That's what Jackie is teaching in her class on the prophetic. Lose yourself testifying to Jesus, and Jesus testifies through you.

The Prophetic Team is being overrun by people wanting prayer at the Living Stone Service. But if you come because you want to know who to date, what stock to buy, how to feed your flesh, you don't get it. It's the testimony of Jesus.

He leads—the Word leads—and we follow.

When I first prayed for some people who struggled with some powerful demonic spirits, for the first time I could see violent, physical reactions to words that came off my tongue. (That was because other spiritual realities momentarily controlled their flesh.)

Now I see that many of those words were prophetic, and I spoke them when I wasn't worried about *me*. I longed to see Jesus glorified. I would speak a thought and the word was exactly like a knife sticking something in another world. And the wildest part was that it felt like the word had a life of its own. The word wasn't dependent on me. I was dependent on the Word—following the Word—which fit into a plan from before there was time. I just got the incredible privilege of speaking it into history.

The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. But The Revelation says the testimony of Jesus *is* the spirit of prophesy . . . a spirit . . . a living thing. And, you see, it's not just the few times I've been able to see it empirically in the flesh, but every time I truly "testify" to Jesus I'm speaking a word that has a life of its own, "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."

Sharper and stronger,  
Cutting into things deeper than flesh,  
Even beyond space and time.

And every time I focus on Jesus, watch Jesus, love Jesus (not thinking of myself) . . . lost in Jesus, following Jesus and so testifying of Jesus . . . the Word actually rides out and conquers, even if I look like an ass. . . and later feel like an ass when I'm alone with myself.

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.*

*And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

(Remember, we preached that that winepress from chapter 14 looks like the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem.)

*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

Remember that we just witnessed the destruction of the Great Whore (Old Jerusalem and all those whoring moneychangers in the temple). Now the Word rides in, and soon we'll see the Bride, the New Jerusalem.

Two thousand years ago the Word rode an ass . . . into old Jerusalem. He died on a cross and cleansed His harlot Bride (His temple) with His blood that is wine.

John 12: On the cross Jesus cast out the ruler of this world. He was *judgment*; His Word *is* judgment. There He draws all men to Himself. He does it through the Word proclaimed, and the Word is Himself.

Ephesians 5:25: Christ died for His Bride that He might cleanse her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present her to Himself spotless in splendor.

John 15:3: "You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you."

In this earthly realm Jesus still rides into town on an ass. Like then, He often looks ridiculous, weak, confused, and in pain.

In this earthly realm Jesus still rides on jackasses. But in reality He rides the warhorse.

When you testify to Jesus (not yourself) and follow Him, you ride with the King, clothed in fine linen. You may look and feel like an ass, but there is no greater power and glory than the one who rides out on your tongue: King of kings and Lord of lords.

If you are a **mainline liberal** you say, "Oh, that's a *myth*. It's not the real world!" Well, how do you know that the real world isn't a myth? And this mythical world is real? Maybe Jesus *is* truth, and you are the lie. Maybe there really is a world where the Beloved is a "Glorious Bride,"

where Word, faithful and true, is a “Conquering King on a white horse” where they see evil for what it is — a snake, and good always conquers. And maybe truth is invading this world of lies. But He comes humbled and riding on an ass, because God wants us to chose His world in faith . . . the freedom of love, not the constraint of fear.

And one day all eyes will be opened,  
and the judgment is:  
“Did you choose to see me  
when I rode into town on an ass?”

Many **fundamentalists** say, “This is strictly in the *future* when all eyes will see.” Revelation 1:7: “Behold [that means “look!”], he is coming, and all eyes will see him.” He already *is* coming . . . it’s just that not all eyes can yet see.

Paul prayed for Ephesus and Asia Minor, for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of their hearts would be opened and they would know, among other things, the immeasurable greatness of His power at work in us who believe (Ephesians 2).

I think that prayer was answered forty years later when John sent a letter—a book—called The Revelation. Heaven is opened and behold, He is coming.

People say, “Stop spiritualizing the text.” Maybe we need to stop “*fleshatizing*” the text, as if “the spirit is nothing and the flesh availeth much.”

John 6:63: “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Stop taking this world, this space and time, *so seriously!* Now even science has shown us that this world is relative. Ask Einstein. All matter is fundamentally uncertain. Ask Heisenberg. This world is even incomprehensible to physicists without postulating other dimensions that intersect ours.

On the night of September 11 after our worship service, my friend Tom came up and said, “Oh Peter, as you were speaking I kept seeing this white horse.” He told me later he saw Jesus on His horse, galloping up and down the front of the church. There were mounted troops lined up, and Jesus was agitated, excited, ready for war.

I think Tom saw the Word. I’m beginning to actually think Tom was seeing something more real than the room in which we sit.

**Charismatics** will say, “We didn’t see anybody shake, and no one got healed.” You realize that when Jesus, the Word, rode into Jerusalem and crushed the head of the Dragon, ransoming you from hell (that is, cleansing His harlot Bride for all time, washing her with the blood of His eternal covenant), nobody shook with joy; nobody spoke in tongues; nobody’s back was healed. It looked irrelevant, weak, wretched, confused, and painful. And everyone abandoned Him, thinking He had failed.

He is the Word. He does not return void.

The twentieth century is over, and modernity turned out to be absurd. Maybe we need to “re-mythologize” the Word (as if we ever could have “de-mythologized” it). We need to “re-mythologize” ourselves. We need to believe the Word and not our flesh.

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”*

*And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth . . .*

Remember that the kings of the earth have been consistently bad throughout The Revelation, serving the Beast and fornicating the Whore . . .

*. . . with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur.*

*And the rest [the remnant] were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.*

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” wrote Paul.

So the Beast and the False Prophet will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. But the rest—the remnant—the kings of the earth—are slain by the Word (Logos) with the Word (Rhema), and the birds devour their flesh. Now check this out: In Revelation 21:24 the kings of the earth bring their glory into the New Jerusalem. They must have been slain in order that they might live.

“The Word because flesh [sinless flesh] and dwelt among us full of grace,” wrote John. Christ went to the cross to absorb *our* sinful flesh and die in our place. And there God condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

If we are crucified with Christ we will be raised with Christ. Old flesh is stripped away, and we receive a new body. But the Word slays us—crucifies us. The testimony of Jesus is His death and resurrection, the Gospel. The Word came to save sinners, and He slays us. So He reveals my sin, my flesh, my arrogance, my pride . . . crucified so I can live.

Speaking the Word can feel ridiculous, weak, confusing, and lonely, and it *hurts* because it cuts your own pride—your flesh, and it cuts those to whom you speak.

So you may feel like an ass,  
But in reality

Nothing is more glorious  
And nothing is more powerful.

Sometimes you can even see it in this world of lies. “For the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.” “He has taken His great power and begun to reign.”

At the end of the first century in Asia Minor The Revelation must have seemed like a ridiculous myth. In 312 A.D. the emperor Constantine confessed Christ as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” By the end of the fourth century most of the Roman Empire was at least nominally Christian.

According to historians and church tradition, in Asia Minor there lived a monk named Telemachus (a descendent of the seven churches). He spent his days in prayer, worship, and contemplation of Jesus, the Word. One day he felt as if he was to go to Rome (the old Harlot). He arrived at the time of the Roman circus when the city was celebrating their recent victory over the Goths. Confused and lonely, Telemachus followed the crowds to the Roman Coliseum (where the Harlot had drunk the blood of saints for 200 years).

The little monk didn’t know what to expect but thought God had sent him. He was shocked when gladiators marched into the arena carrying swords. They saluted the Emperor and cried, “We who are about to die salute thee.” Telemachus must have shuddered as he began to realize human lives were bought and sold and offered as entertainment.

He jumped to the top of the perimeter wall and cried out, “In the name of Christ, *stop!*” No one paid attention. Telemachus followed Jesus, so he jumped down and ran on to the Coliseum floor. (This irrelevant, ridiculous, little monk.) He ran back and forth between gladiators yelling, “In the name of Christ, *stop!*”

A gladiator hit him with his shield. He went flying; the crowd roared with laughter. But Telemachus wouldn’t stop. He got in the way of a gladiator’s vision. The gladiator was angry; the crowd began to chant, “Run him through! Run him through!” The gladiator raised his sword, brought it down across the monk’s chest, and thrust it into Telemachus’ belly.

The story is that with his dying breath he spoke the Word: “In the name of Christ, stop!” With his flesh Telemachus never saw the power and glory of that Word. Yet an amazing thing happened. The gladiators and the crowd all stared at the lifeless body lying in the red dirt. After a time, a man got up and left. Then another and another. All over the Coliseum they left.

According to historians, that was the last gladiator contest in the Roman Coliseum. It was won by the Last Gladiator. He set an ambush and rode out on the tongue of a ridiculous, little monk.

That was about 400 A.D. According to the U. S. Center for World Missions . . .

- By 1420 A.D. there was one Bible-believing Christian for every 99 people on the planet;
- By 1790 A.D. there was one for every 49 people on the planet;

- By 1940 it was one in 32;
- By 1970 it was one in 19;
- By 1980 it was one in 10;
- By 1999 it was one in 8.

He is coming. There is no greater power and no greater glory. Speak the Word. “Sticks and stones may break my bones,” but the kingdom of God comes with a Word—*The Word*. Sticks and stones will one day be dissolved by fire, but the Word of God abides forever. Amen.

---

“Lord, we thank you that you have shown and have sent your power and your glory. For ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, and we have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Son begotten of the Father. And His cross *is* the power of God unto salvation.’

“So, Lord God, I know that in the end all things will be dissolved and there will be a new heaven and earth, and all eyes will see you. Lord God, I really believe you have that power. Yet I think there is a greater power, and that is your power to capture the frightened hearts of your lost children . . . to ride into trembling, frightened, and weak hearts and speak your Word of life.

“Dissolving all things with fire I think is easy for you . . . capturing the hearts of your children, wrapping yourself in flesh and hanging on a cross and bearing every sin, sorrow, and tear in this cursed world . . . that’s not easy.

“So, Lord God, I pray that you will help us to have faith in you and your Word. Forgive us, Lord Jesus, for speaking out of such anxiety and fear and insecurity and selfishness.

“Lord God, I pray that you would help us to speak your testimony, lost in you, glorifying you, speaking your Word; that you would be glorified and that your power would go forth; that we would get to be a part of that.”

If you feel something tugging on your heart, that’s not me. That’s the Lord who loves you. And He’s asking you to surrender to Him. Just say to Him in the silence of your heart, “Lord Jesus, I surrender. Thank you for dying for my sins, destroying my flesh, and giving me life. I think I love you, Jesus. Amen.”

---

The most powerful bomb we dropped on Afghanistan was two women—two witnesses—from Texas. If you’re going to bomb, be a bomb like that, a fool for Jesus.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

### Further Reading

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

-John 1:1-4, 9-14

"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. . . . He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me."

-John 12:31-32, 48-50

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

-Revelation 19:11-13

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

-Revelation 12:11

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

-Hebrews 4:12

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

-Ephesians 5:25-27

You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.

-John 15:3

It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

-John 6:63

And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

-Revelation 19:21

This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." . . . And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee." And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

-Matthew 21:4-5, 10-12

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants." . . . Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. . . . On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

-Revelation 19:1-2, 11, 16

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day. And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

-Acts 2:14-21

"Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

-Revelation 19:10b

The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us. All our words will be useless unless they come from within. Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness.

-Mother Teresa

Behold, he **IS** coming with the clouds, and every eye **WILL** see him . . .

-Revelation 1:7a

© 2001 Peter Hiett