

THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB HAS COME

Revelation 19:1-21

Key Verse: 19:7

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”

As we come to chapter 19, there is a drastic change in mood. When we studied the destruction of Babylon in chapters 17-18, though it was God’s righteous judgment against his enemies, it left us feeling somewhat heavy-hearted. On the other hand, today’s passage fills us with joyful expectation. It tells of the wedding of the Lamb to come. Weddings are always exciting, happy events. No one appears gloomy or grumpy; everyone smiles and wears their best clothes. Especially, the bride is most beautifully dressed, and her face is radiant, expressing the fluttering of her heart. The wedding taking place in this passage is the most joyful and greatest event because it is the wedding of the Lamb. The Lamb and his bride are metaphors for Christ and the church. The wedding metaphor is uniquely mentioned in this passage to describe the intimate union of Christ and his church. Babylon’s fall signifies the beginning of our celebration, but the real highlight is our union with Christ. This is the true source of our joy. Let us consider what this means to us.

19:1-6 is a celebration of Babylon’s fall with a threefold “Hallelujah!” Verses 7-10 is the announcement of the wedding of the Lamb. Verses 11-21 describe Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, who judges the beast and false prophet for eternity. The climax of these visions is the announcement that the wedding of the Lamb has come.

First, threefold Hallelujah over Babylon’s fall (1-6). After John saw the vision of Babylon’s fall, he heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven (1a). It was a vast chorus of the redeemed from every nation. Their great roar arose as they sang wholeheartedly in one voice, praising God. They shouted: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants” (1b-2). “Hallelujah” is a transliteration of the Hebrew “halal,” meaning “praise,” and “yah,” the first syllable of Yahweh, the name of God. Surprisingly, this is the only place in the Bible where the word “Hallelujah” appears. They praise God because salvation, glory and power belong to him. Salvation comes from God. The word “salvation” (*sōtēria*, Gr.) emphasizes deliverance from slavery. Slaves cannot save themselves by their own effort. The great prostitute, Babylon, a symbol of the Satanic world system, had enslaved God’s people with an iron grip. God destroyed this wicked oppressor with his mighty power, setting his people free, and demonstrating his sovereign rule. They also praised God because his judgments are true and just. If God were unjust or random in his judgment it would be hard to praise him. The word “friendly fire” in the military, refers to

accidentally killing one's own forces. There is no "friendly fire" from God. Only his enemies are destroyed. God never makes a mistake; his judgment is perfect.

Verse 2 tells us the two sides of his judgment. He condemns the great prostitute who had corrupted the earth by her adulteries. The word "corrupted" means to cause someone to become perverse; it is a type of moral destruction. Her insidious influence had turned God's beautiful creation into a cesspool of depravity, ruining people, and nature. Her devious and wicked schemes had led the whole world astray. This is a terrible crime before God. This crime should be punished; otherwise, there is no justice. But who can judge this horrific enemy? No one can do that except God, who has almighty power and wisdom. Another side of God's judgment is to avenge on her "the blood of his servants." God's people were persecuted and even killed unjustly. They cried out, "How long, sovereign Lord?" (6:10) If there were no judgment, believers would be nothing more than victims. But God hears our cries and vindicates his people.

The second Hallelujah shouted by the great multitude is accompanied by the words, "The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever" (3). The language used here is like that describing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28). It indicates that the judgment against Babylon is final, irreversible, and permanent. There will be no more rebellion, false religion, unrighteousness, or injustice. If this evil could rise again, like a second Holocaust, people would be terrified. But God has terminated evil completely and eternally. This is why his people praise him.

The third Hallelujah comes from the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. They fall down and worship God, who is seated on the throne (4). As we saw in chapter 4, the throne means God rules the whole world and carries out his judgment and salvation universally. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures represent God's people and angelic beings. They worship God, crying, "Amen, Hallelujah!" "Amen" expresses certainty. They give full affirmation to God's righteous judgment and praise God.

Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small" (5). This voice calls all of God's servants to praise him. In response, the sound of praise to God is amplified to a crescendo. John heard what sounded like a great multitude--the voices of innumerable people and angelic beings. It was also like the roar of rushing waters--lively and refreshing. And it was like loud peals of thunder--very strong and powerful. They shouted "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns" (6). Since Adam's fall, Satan has reigned as the prince of this world through evil people, religious systems, and antichristian empires. Though he caused so much damage and pain, no one could defeat him. But God destroyed Babylon with his almighty power and restored his rightful reign over all things. Where Satan reigns, there is hell. Where God reigns, there is paradise. All creation longs for God's reign to be restored. God's reign brings life, peace, and joy to all creation. This is why such a great shout of praise rises up to God.

Second, the wedding supper of the Lamb (7-10). Now the focus of praise shifts from God on the throne to the Lamb, as it did in chapters 4-5. Let us read verse 7. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." When we hear these words, "Let us rejoice and be glad," it may be hard for us to respond because life is tough and we experience anxiety, depression, fear, and sorrow--in particular at this time. So many die every day due to Covid-19. When we hear "Let us rejoice" we may respond, "Are you crazy?" How can we rejoice and be glad and give glory to God? We can do so when we know the wedding of the Lamb is coming, and his bride is making herself ready.

Here, we need to understand what God has done for us through the Lamb. The word "Lamb" appears 27 times in Revelation in reference to Jesus Christ. Significant deeds of the Lamb are described in several ways. First and foremost, the Lamb was slain and shed his blood for our sins (5:5; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8). Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Creator, glorious, awesome, and holy. But he humbled himself to obey the Father's will and came down into the world in a most humble and gentle way. He became the friend of all kinds of sinners and cared for them as the Good Shepherd (7:17). Finally he died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He was slain in the most brutal and violent way, shedding his blood as the Lamb of God. In this way he saved us from our sins. Then God raised him from the dead; Christ ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God on the throne. Now he is worthy of praise and worship from all creation. This Lamb is most gentle, loving, humble and sacrificial. At the same time, he is mighty, victorious, and majestic. Now God prepares the wedding of the Lamb. It is not just an ordinary wedding; it celebrates God's victory over his enemies and the eternal union of Christ and his church.

We have met the bridegroom. Now let us meet the bride. When the bridegroom is ready, the bride should also be ready. Otherwise, the wedding cannot proceed. In two aspects this bride is prepared to present herself to the bridegroom. First, she has made herself ready. This means that she has been faithful to Jesus (2:10,13; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14). She did not compromise with the sinful culture, or give in to fear of persecution, and renounce Jesus' name. She endured hardships, even to the point of death, to remain true to Jesus. She did this by the power of God through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, she is dressed in beautiful garments. Verse 8a says, "Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." As brides say, "It's all about the dress," so it is with this bride. Her wedding clothes are fine linen, shining and clean. Fine linen is strong and absorbent; it is expensive and beautiful. But these are not mere cloth garments; they are the righteous acts of God's holy people (8b). Righteousness is not earned but imputed at the moment we believed in Jesus. When Christ comes again, believers receive his perfection as their very own. As long as we live in this world, believers suffer from a sinful nature. Selfishness, pride, lustful desires, greed, and jealousy come from within our hearts and make us ugly and wretched. By the Holy Spirit's help, we can live a somewhat victorious life. Still the sinful nature is there. However, at the wedding of the Lamb we will be

transformed into a glorious body and be free from sin forever (1Co 15:42-44). Jesus will make us holy and blameless, without stain, wrinkle, or any other blemish (Eph 5:27). What a beautiful bride we will be! On the wedding day, we will see Jesus face to face (1Co 13:12). We will be joined with him in everlasting union with the fullness of his presence. St. Paul says, "Now we know in part." In some sense our relationship is virtual; we meet through his letters--the Bible, and our phone calls--prayer, just as we meet friends, family, and colleagues by Zoom video conference these days. But then we shall know him fully, face to face and in person, even as we are fully known. Our wedding with Jesus is the beginning of eternal paradise. This blessing comes only by God's grace.

Many women say that among the highlights of life, their wedding day is the greatest. They prepare their minds and hearts, save up money, and plan the best celebration. But after the wedding: children are born, and then life becomes laborious and she gradually starts to get gray hair, wrinkles, and arthritis. It is the case for men as well. This is reality. It seems there is no hope. But we believers have a glorious hope to present ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, our bridegroom. We will all be most radiant, resplendent, and glorious. There will be no more defects, diseases, or aging. We will be young and vibrant forever. We will be united with Christ in a most intimate relationship, eternally. This seems like a fairy tale. But it is certain to happen because it is promised by God, the Almighty Creator. This is why we can rejoice and be glad and give God the glory!

While verses 7-8 address the church, verse 9 is more for individual believers. Then the angel said to John, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (9a) This blessing is not only for the future; we are blessed from the moment we receive the invitation. "Blessed" means happy, joyous, satisfied, and fulfilled. Who is blessed? Those who are invited. Literally, this means "called." God calls or invites people by his sovereign grace. This invitation is now given to anyone who will receive it by faith. All who are saved by God's grace through faith will be there. We will enjoy the most exquisite, delightful supper with Christ and his people. We can be sure of this, for these are the true words of God (9b). Have you responded to the invitation by faith? Then you are the most blessed and privileged person. We do not need to envy anyone else because of what they have or do. We just are glad, rejoice, thank God and give glory to him.

The angel was so holy, powerful, and dazzling that John fell at his feet to worship him. John was immediately reprimanded: "Don't do that!" It is because both believers and angels are fellow servants who testify about Jesus. We must all worship God together. We should not be so fascinated by other servants--even angels. We should all focus on Christ because the Spirit of prophecy bears testimony to Jesus (10).

Third, the rider on a white horse (11-21). In this passage the vision shifts once again from the wedding of the Lamb to the conquering King. John saw heaven standing open. Heaven was opened in 4:1 to reveal God's throne, and in 11:19, to reveal God's temple and the ark of the covenant. Now, in verse 11 it is to reveal Christ as a rider on a white horse--a

conquering King. No longer is Christ portrayed in humbleness-- mounted on a donkey's colt. Instead he rides a white horse, which symbolizes power and victory.

Christ has many names, and in this section, we can find three of them. The first is: "Faithful and True." This echoes 1:5 and 3:14, where he is called "a faithful witness," and "the faithful and true witness." These names identify him with his people, who were persecuted yet witnessed to his name (2:13; 11:3). With justice he judges and wages war (11b). Christ's eyes like blazing fire affirm that he sees and judges human hearts. Many crowns on his head indicate his legitimate kingly authority (12a). Another name is written on him that no one knows but he himself (12b). In that regard, he remains a mystery (Jdg 13:18).

In verse 13 we find another name: The Word of God. The Word of God indicates his person and works. He created all things by his word, and he teaches God's truth to people. He also judges his enemies by the words of God. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood. He has fought many bloody battles against his enemies and defeated them. In this way he identifies as the divine warrior who carries out vengeance on behalf of his people.

In verses 14-16 Christ has this name: King of kings and Lord of lords. This King is followed by the armies of heaven (14a). His people are soldiers of Christ who engage in battle against rebel forces. His people ride white horses and are dressed in fine linen, white and clean (14b). Coming out of Christ's mouth is a sharp sword--the word of God--with which he strikes down the nations (15a; 2Th 2:8). He will rule them with an iron scepter as prophesied in Psalm 2:9. The iron scepter is a symbol of destruction to his enemies and protection to his people. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (15b). On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (16). He is the Sovereign Ruler who triumphs over all enemies.

Verses 17-18 describe the great supper of God. This supper contrasts with the wedding supper of the Lamb. John saw an angel standing in the sun, reflecting the brightness of God's glory. He called all the birds to a great meal. The menu would be the flesh of kings, generals, the mighty, horses and riders, and of people great and small, free and slave. This is a horrific supper. These people are enemies of God who refused to repent to the very end.

Verses 19-21 tell us about the final battle at Armageddon, first mentioned in 16:16. The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gather together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army (19). But the beast is captured, and with it the false prophet (20a). The forces of evil cannot resist Christ's power. There is no need to describe the battle because it is over in moments. The beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur--their final destiny (20b). There they will be tormented forever. The rest of the rebels were killed with the sword coming out of Christ's mouth. Their flesh became a feast for all the birds (21). This is a gruesome image, but the message is clear:

evil must be destroyed, not only for the sake of justice, but for the purity of the new world. Not a trace of injustice or evil will remain.

These days it is rare to hear good news. We hear of signs of the end of the age, such as wars and rumors of war and evil schemes. We are told grievous stories of death daily. Many people have lost their jobs and others worry about their future. As we get old, we suffer from maladies and agonize over our children and grandchildren. When we look at reality there seems to be little reason to rejoice and be glad. But the wedding of the Lamb is coming! We believers will be the pure and beautiful bride of Christ. We enter an intimate, eternal relationship with him. We will be young, energetic, and vibrant forever. Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to God.