

The Book of Revelation
“The Return of Christ” Part One
Revelation 19:1-10

Alright, well if you have your bibles with you then let's turn now to the book of Revelation.

Revelation chapter 19...

We're still plugging along in our study of Revelation and we're coming up now to the end of the book—we've got probably 3-4 more studies and we'll be done.

And this morning we've come now to new and exciting section.

So far in our study of Revelation we've walked through a lot of judgment—and I mean A LOT of judgment.

We've seen three series of 7 judgments:

- The 7 Seal Judgments
- The 7 Trumpet Judgments
- And the 7 Bowl Judgments

And of course, these judgments are precursors of God's Final Judgment...

It's the beginnings of him pouring out his wrath on this unbelieving, Christ-rejecting world.

Now, last week we saw sort of the final judgment, in a way, and that's The Fall of Babylon.

Chapter 18 tells us that there's coming a day when God will cause the world's economic system to collapse and be no more.

This world and all of its shine and glitter will be lost.

And as a result, there will be lots of people who will mourn and weep over the collapse of their beloved Babylon.

People won't know what to do with themselves...

It will be a sad day for those who have put their hope and trust in the material things of this world.

And so now having seen ALL of this judgment, as we come to Chapter 19 we finally come to the good stuff...

We've come to what is probably the best part of Revelation—and that's the Return of Christ.

And so let's read this together, Chapter 19, starting in verse 1...

John writes, ¹ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

“Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
² for his judgments are true and just;
for he has judged the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

³ Once more they cried out,

“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying,

“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.
⁷ 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;
⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ 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 the true words of God.” ¹⁰ 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 brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

(Prayer)

This coming May (May 13th to be exact) Deanna and I will be celebrating our 16th wedding anniversary...

Of course, I tell people all the time, I outkicked my coverage when I married Deanna.

She far exceeds any expectations I had about a godly, loving wife.

Outside of my salvation, Deanna and my family, are the greatest blessings the Lord has ever given me.

But an interesting thing about WHEN we got married—Deanna and I were actually married on the same day I graduated from college.

I graduated from college that morning and that very evening we got married.

Some people have asked me, “*Why did yall do that?*” and I tell them—“*Well, we just figured that everyone was going to be in town anyways...why not have a wedding.*”

But I walked an aisle that morning and got a diploma...and that evening I walked an aisle and got hitched.

It was a great day—a full day...

Now, Deanna and I had actually dated for around 5 years before we got married...

We were high school sweethearts and dated through college AND THEN had a little over a year engagement...

And so to say that I was ready to finally marry her, would be an understatement.

My wedding day was something I had longed for and on May 13th, 2006, it finally became a reality.

I tell you that because as you read the bible, one of the ways in which the Scriptures describes our relationship to Christ, as the church, is that of a marriage.

In other words, Jesus relates to his church like a groom to a bride.

And there are lots of passages that speak of this...

But one I think lays it out beautifully is Ephesians 5...

When speaking to the wife, Paul says “²² *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.*” ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife as **Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*** ²⁴ ***Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.***”

And then speaking to the husband, Paul says this, he says “²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her...*”

And so you see here where the relationship between a husband and wife is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church.

Jesus is the bride groom...

And as the church, we are the bride.

Now, we're going to talk about this a little more here in a minute, but one day, the bible says, Christ (who is our bride groom) he will return to receive his bride...

In fact, Jesus used this "wedding language" in John chapter 14 when he was speaking to his disciples and he said this, he said, *"¹ Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me** that you also may be where I am."*

And so Jesus is saying, *"Hey, I'm about to leave you...but one day I will return and take you to be with me."*

He's speaking of his second coming...

And when this happens, the bible says, we will be wed together with Christ forever.

There will not only be this great celebration, but there will also be this great feast...this great supper that we will share with our Savior.

And as Southern Baptist, we like the sound of that because we like to eat...amen?

But this day that we are anticipating and waiting for, here is Chapter 19 is described for us.

Here, in this Chapter, we read of what it will be like when Christ returns and we are finally together with him in heaven forever...

It's a wonderful picture.

And so if you look there at your notes, there are two main sections here in this chapter...

The first scene that we see is that of **The Worship of the Lamb**. (v. 1-6)

There is this incredible scene of worship where this heavenly choir made up of the church and the angels singing and praising the Lord.

And there are no less than four reasons here as to why they are praising him.

Number one, they are praising him because God is a God of salvation. (v. 1)

Verse 1 says, *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! **Salvation** and glory and power belong to our God...”*

And so in heaven, one of the reasons we will be praising him is because he has saved us from hell and delivered us to heaven.

Now, I’m a firm believer that our worship here on this earth should in fact be a reflection of what our worship will be like in heaven.

And so while we have not been experience glorification in the sense that we are in heaven, we can and should still praise him today for the fact that we **HAVE** been saved, we are **BEING** saved, and one day we **WILL** be saved.

It’s the three aspects of salvation...

We **have been** saved from a life of sin...

We **are being** saved in that God is sanctifying us and transforming us into the image of his Son.

And one day we **will be** saved when we are set free from the sin and burdens of this life in heaven.

And so we have ample reason **NOW** to rejoice and sing to the God who has saved us.

But its amazing how many people will forgo corporate worship, all because, well...

- It’s raining outside...
- Or it’s too cold outside

*I know I’m meddling, but just hear me out...

It’s amazing how many people will skip out on worship because...

- It’s opening day of hunting season
- They had a long night Saturday night
- Or maybe they had a tough week at work
- Or maybe they’re in a dry season in their faith and they just don’t feel like it

Now, I'm not saying this to shame anyone for missing worship on a Sunday...

Of course, while gathering together as the people of God for worship is a command, I don't want to be legalistic about it either.

But here's why I bring this up...

It's because regardless of how busy or how hectic or how chaotic or how **difficult** life may be, if we have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ, then we have more than enough reason to gather and sing praises to his name.

In fact, I'll take a go one more for you...

If all God had ever done for us was save us from our sins...

If he didn't do another thing for us (by way of his many blessings), he would STILL be worthy of our worship and devotion.

However the reality is, he HAS done more for us than just giving us salvation!

He has given us blessing after blessing after blessing...

And so God has given us ample reason to worship him and praise him...

But right there at the top of the list is the fact that he has saved us from our sins.

He is the God of salvation.

*As the Fanny Crosby hymn states, "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus, our blessed Redeemer! For our sins He suffered, and bled, and died.
He our Rock, our hope of eternal salvation,
Hail Him! Hail Him! Jesus the Crucified.
Sound His praises! Jesus who bore our sorrows,
Love unbounded, wonderful, deep and strong.
Praise Him! Praise Him! Tell of His excellent greatness;
Praise Him! Praise Him! Ever in joyful song!"*¹

¹ Crosby, Fanny. "Praise Him! Praise Him!" 1869

So we worship him because he is the God of salvation.

Secondly though, we see them worship because God is a God of judgment. (v. 2-3)

Look at verse 2...

As they continue worshipping the Lord they sing, verse 2, “...for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

Verse 3, “Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”—of course, speaking of this world’s destruction.

Now, we read of a similar thing back in the last chapter in verse 20...

As Babylon was being destroyed we read this in Chapter 18 verse 20, it says “Rejoice over her, you heavens! Rejoice, you people of God! Rejoice, apostles and prophets! For God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you.”

And so because we see this sort of show up again here in Chapter 19, I want to re-emphasis what I shared last week...

And that is the Lord is not saying, “Hey, rejoice you people of God because the lost are going to hell.”

That’s not the heart of God and that’s not to be the heart of man.

The Lord says clearly in Ezekiel 18:24, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.”

And so if the Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, then neither should we.

In fact, I’ve always been fond of and appreciated Spurgeon’s statements about the believer’s attitude towards those who are lost and headed for hell...

He once said, “If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their

*knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”*²

And so the posture of the believer towards those who are perishing should never be, “*Oh, praise God they’re getting what they deserve.*”

But rather, I think we can praise the Lord in light of his judgment because **truth** and **justice** has finally prevailed.

You see, when we praise God for his judgment, we are praising him for finally putting an end to the evil and wickedness of this world.

We’re praising him because he has finally brought an end to ALL...

- Rebellion
- Sin
- And ungodliness

Again, truth and justice has prevailed.

But then thirdly, the text communicates that the people of God praise the Lord because he is a God of glory. (v. 4-5)

That word there “glory” means “distinguished” and “honored.”

We read of this in verse 4 and 5 when it says, “⁴ *And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures **fell down and worshiped God** (note that) who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”* ⁵ *And from the throne came a voice saying,*

*“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”*

So notice the language here...

² Quote: Charles Spurgeon—<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/74181-if-sinners-be-damned-at-least-let-them-leap-to>

He speaks of God who is “...seated on the throne...” and those who praise him verse 5 are “...his servants...” who “...fear him...”

This language here is one of a king and his subjects...

It’s a picture of servants reverently worshipping their king who is glorious and worthy of respect and honor.

Now, I didn’t know this until last week, but here in this chapter the word “Hallelujah” appears several times—about 4 times...

And some have said that this chapter here in Revelation and the words of this song, was the inspiration behind Handel’s famous *Messiah*, written back in 1741...

Particularly, his famous “Hallelujah Chorus.”

In fact, verse 6 is stated almost word for word in his composition.

But what I found interesting when I read about Handel and the “Hallelujah Chorus” was that it’s actually tradition that when that part was sung, the audience rises to their feet and stands.

It’s said that it started back in 1743 when King George II stood up during Handel’s Long performance.

And of course, when the king stands, everyone in his presence must stand as well.

Now, there’s speculation about why the king stood that day...

Some say that he arrived late to the performance and he just came in during that chorus and so everyone stood as he made his way to his seat.

Others believe that he stood because he was sleeping during most of the performance but when it came to this big chorus (the Hallelujah Chorus) he was brought out of his deep sleep and awakened, causing him to stand in shock.³

But no one knows for sure...

³ <https://www.claphamschool.org/our-community/blog/handels-messiah-the-consequences-of-an-idea>

But again, it's said that this is the reason why, still to this day, when the Handel's Messiah is being played, when it comes to the "Hallelujah Chorus" is played everyone stands to their feet.

However, the difference between that Hallelujah Chorus, and the Hallelujah's here in Chapter 19 is that here, the people of God don't stand...

Rather, verse 4, it says that they fall on their faces and worship.⁴

Why?

Not in order to honor the King of England...but to honor the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ.

You see, in heaven when we are worshipping the Lord, there is this awe and reverence and respect we have for our king who is deserves honor and praise.

We bow before him because of who is and what he has done.

And again, our worship on earth should be no different...

Our worship here on earth should be a reflection of our worship in heaven.

When we gather together on days like this to worship, we are reminded that we belong to another country...

We belong to a heavenly kingdom...

We have a king that we serve and honor with our lives...

Well, lastly here, we see the people of God worship the Lord because he is the God of power. (v. 6)

Verse 6 says, *"⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

*"Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God*

⁴ Aiken, Danny. "Heaven's Hallelujah Chorus." Christ-Centered Exposition, 2016.

the Almighty reigns.

Now, the ESV uses this word here “Almighty” at the end of verse 6—“...*For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns...*”

That word or title “almighty” literally means “one who holds all things in his control.”

Now, if you have a King James Bible you will notice that it reads a little different than my ESV version.

Instead of using the word “almighty” it says “*For the Lord God **omnipotent** reigneth...*”

Got to love the King James language...

But it uses that word there “omnipotent.”

That word of course means all-powerful...

And so the people of God are praising the Lord because he reigns with absolute control...

He is sovereign over all.

And what a reason or cause or justification to praise the Lord.

You see, we will worship God in heaven AND we should worship him now, not just because he is...

- The God of salvation
- The God of truth and justice
- And the God of glory

But also because he is in control of all things.

Nothing is outside of his oversight...

Nothing is too big for him to handle...

Nothing happens without his consent...

He is ruling and reigning over ALL of things.

And so no matter what is happening in your life, no matter how crazy this world or your life becomes, the God who loves you and calls you his child, is in control.

You know every now and again, as a family, we will take a trip that will require getting home after dark...

Sometimes late.

And I can't tell you how many times I've had my kids fall asleep in their seats in the back of the car and sleep the whole way home.

We pull into the drive way and have to wake them up and drag them into the house half asleep...

But I was thinking this past week, besides being tired, you know why they're able to fall asleep in the car?

It's because their dad's behind the wheel...

And can I tell you here this morning...

I don't know what you're facing...

I don't know what's going on in your life...

But if you know the Lord through faith in Christ, your heavenly father is behind the wheel.

So get some rest.

I'm not trying to minimize your struggle or difficulty, but know and fully understand that the Lord is omnipotent and he is reigning over all...and that includes your life.

You can trust him.

And so these are the reasons why we will worship him in the future in heaven AND why we should worship him now on this earth.

Now, next in verses 7-10 we read of **The Wedding of the Lamb**.

Verse 7 says “⁷ *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...*”

And so here the Lord Jesus is seen as the Bridegroom meeting His wife (the Church), to be His bride.

And you have this marriage...this wedding.

And in verse 9 it even says that there is this “marriage supper” or “marriage feast” and blessed are those who are “invited.”

Now, there are some who believe that those who are “invited” just speaks of the church...the people of God.

However, there are others who think this is talking about the OT saints.

They say that the church is, of course, the bride, while those invited to this marriage supper are friends of the bridegroom.

Those like Abraham and John the Baptist...

Those not technically “the church” but are non-the-less there to celebrate and enjoy the feast.

Who knows...

But to understand what’s taking place here, you need to understand a traditional Jewish wedding.

A typical Jewish wedding had three parts or three phrases.

First, there was what’s called “The Betrothal Stage.”

And in some ways this is very similar to our “engagement period” although it was legally binding back then.

In some sense they were legally married.

To the extent that if one was unfaithful during this period of time they could be punished.

But there was an agreement that took place between the parents of both the bride and groom that their children were going to be married.

And there typically was some type of “dowry” involved or financial agreement.

But also in this stage there was this preparation on the part of the groom.

You see, the groom during this “betrothal stage” would leave his bride and go and prepare a place for them to live.

In many cases, they would build on to their parent’s house and prepare a place for them there.

Again, it’s very similar language to what Jesus said in John 14 when he said, “² *My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?* ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”

Jesus was speaking in Jewish wedding language...

And so he was saying, like a groom goes away during this “betrothal stage” I too am going away, but one day will come back to receive you.

And that is speaking of the second stage of a Jewish wedding and that’s the “Marriage Stage.”

This stage describes the moment when the groom has everything ready to go and he finally comes back to get his bride.

He gets all dressed up and gets his buddies together and they all go to the bride’s house where they sort of surprise her...

It's this big arrival where he takes the bride and they go back to his father's house for the third stage, which is the "Celebration Stage."

At this point it's party time...

It's a time of celebration and festivities....

Well, as we read this chapter here in Revelation, John is giving us a picture of this stage.

This scene here is that "Celebration scene" where Christ finally returns to receive his bride and they live happily ever after.

But I want to point out something that is said here in verse 8...

In speaking of the bride of Christ (us...the Church) it says "*...for it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure...*"

And so we understand this somewhat...

We read this and we think of a bride on her wedding day wearing a white dress...

And so some will read that and think, "*Oh, that's talking about how as the church we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and as we stand before him we are pure and blameless.*"

But is that really what he's saying here?

Now, don't get me wrong—it's true that we who are in Christ, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ...

We are blameless ONLY because of the righteousness of Christ that was imputed to our spiritual bank account.

That's true...

But here, I believe, he's talking less about the positional holiness of the believer and more about the practical holiness of the believer.

Because at the end of verse 8 it says “...for the fine linen is the *righteous deeds of the saints*. ”

This is the only time in Revelation where the saints are described as making themselves ready, preparing themselves as the bride of Christ for his coming.⁵

And so understand that right now as the church, in understanding these phases of the traditional Jewish wedding, we are right now in the “Betrothal Stage.”

We are still awaiting the “Marriage Stage” when Christ returns and then the “Celebration Stage” as described here in Revelation 19...

And so while we wait, we as the church have been called to remain faithful to our bridegroom who is Christ.

We have been called to “...clothe ourselves with fine linen, bright and pure...”

That is, we are to pursue holiness and purity...

We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Because one day our time of waiting will be over...

One day the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout and the one to whom we are betrothed comes for his bride.

And our desire should be that when he comes, he finds us having been faithful and undefiled by the seductions of this world.

And so I ask you here this morning, are you seeking to be faithful to your bridegroom?

Are you striving daily to abstain from sin and walk in purity as you eagerly await his arrival?

I pray this is true of all of us...

Not that any of us are perfect...

⁵ Aiken, Danny. “Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus” Christ-Centered Exposition, 2016

But that our hearts are committed to Christ and that it shows in our behavior and conduct.

Would you pray with me?

OUTLINE

- The _____ of the Lamb (v. 1-6)

God is a God of...

- _____ (v. 1)
- _____ (v. 2-3)
- _____ (v. 4-5)
- _____ (v. 6)

- The _____ of the Lamb (v. 7-10)

The Three Stages of a Traditional Jewish Wedding:

1. The _____ Stage
2. The _____ Stage
3. The _____ Stage

*“...it was granted her to **clothe herself** with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the **righteous deeds of the saints.**”*

When the Lord comes, our desire is that he finds us
having been _____ and _____
by the seductions of this world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aiken, Danny. “Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus” Christ-Centered Exposition, 2016

Crosby, Fanny. “Praise Him! Praise Him!” 1869

<https://www.claphamschool.org/our-community/blog/handels-messiah-the-consequences-of-an-idea>

Quote: Charles Spurgeon—<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/74181-if-sinners-be-damned-at-least-let-them-leap-to>