

## The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

(Hallelujah!)

Revelation 19:1-10

George Frideric Handel, wrote the classic *Messiah* in 1741. The most famous portion, of course, is the Hallelujah Chorus. And it, of course, is based in part on Revelation 19:6, as it is found in the KJV:

*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

Scholars say that Handel composed *Messiah* without getting much sleep or even eating much food. When his assistants brought him meals, they were often left uneaten. His servants would often find him in tears as he composed. When he completed "Hallelujah," he reportedly told his servants, "I did think I saw all Heaven before me and the great God Himself seated on His throne, with His company of Angels." <sup>1</sup>

That's exactly what we have in our text this morning – a view of heaven and the worship taking place there. The reverberating, thunderous anthem of the saints is summarized 4 times in this text: Hallelujah! Praise be to God!

Quick review: for the past 13 chapters, Jesus has been showing us the sovereign purposes of God and the spiritual principalities and powers, which are operating behind the scenes. What we notice are the newspaper headlines, but behind every headline there is, as Paul Harvey used to say, "The rest of the story." The rest of the story is the spiritual conflict between the powers of hell and the kingdom of God.

As we approach the end of the book, the visions are increasingly about the end of the world. Jesus wants us to know how the story ends. It all ends with a wedding. You see, the ending of this world is only an ending for those who belong to this world. Those who belong to Christ belong to the world to come and the end of this world is the beginning of all we had hoped for. The end of all things is the beginning of all blessedness!

**Rev. 19:9** *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

You may have noticed that chapter 19 is very different from chapters 17 and 18. In chapter 18 we read of the fate of the kingdom of this world when Christ returns in all his glory. In a moment all the affairs of the nations will come to a screeching halt. In a moment, all peoples, all political parties, all family affairs, all economic activity, all trade,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/articles/history-of-handels-hallelujah-chorus.html>

all arts and crafts, all sports, all eating and drinking and life as we know it will be over.

The resounding sentence of chapter 18 is "Nevermore." The kingdom of darkness and all who belonged to it will face an eternity of irrevocable, immutable loss. And so chapter 18 is full of the mourning, a great lament from those who loved the harlot, participated in her sexual immorality, and grew rich through her commerce.

But in chapter 19, in stark contrast to the laments of a lost world, we have the ecstatic joy and celebration of those who loved and worshiped the Lamb. If "never again" is the theme of hell, "Hallelujah" is the anthem of heaven! Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

## I. The Cause

### A. God's Righteous Judgement (vv. 1-2)

We've seen the judgments of God in detail over the past chapters. But here we see the response of heaven, the response of the saints and angels.

*Rev. 19:1-2 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, 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."*

There is something within us that might shrink back a bit from a verse like this. Is it okay for God's people to rejoice over the judgement of the world? Wouldn't it be more "Christian" to weep over this lost world, the way Jesus wept over Jerusalem?

It is certainly Christlike to grieve over a lost world. Paul the Apostle wept over the unbelief of the Jews in his day. He was deeply grieved in Athens by all the pagan idols. God's children should feel the weight of men and women and boys and girls all around us who are living without God and without hope in this world. But this grieving is for this age. There will be no mourning in the new heaven and earth.

Why not? What will have changed?

There are several answers that could be given, but let me go directly to the primary one. The primary answer is that the saints in heaven have their perspective radically oriented to the glory of God. Here on earth, people are big, and God is small. People seem like the most important thing, the most valuable thing. But in heaven, you will immediately realize that God is everything. The glory of God is the ultimate value. And everything

that offends, violates, or rejects the glory of God is evil and must be judged. I'm convinced that when we finally see Jesus in all his glory and stand in the presence of the Father we will say, over and over, "I had no idea, I had no idea – how glorious and good he really is."

God is the ultimate value of the universe.

The obligation that drove Jesus to the cross was not fundamentally the value of human souls but the value of the glory of God. The deepest necessity was that the Father be worshiped! What does he pray in his prayer in John 17? "Father the hour has come. Glorify your name."

The primary **purpose** of the cross was the magnifying of the glory of the justice, mercy, love, grace, and truth of Almighty God.

The primary **accomplishment** of the cross was God's victory of sin and death and hell. We, the sinners saved by grace, are the trophies of the victory, the evidence and fruit of the victory.

If the primary reason for the cross was the magnifying of the glory of God, then it is also the primary reason for gospel mission. Missions exist not primarily because human souls are so valuable but because God is so eternally glorious and deserves the worship of his creatures! There is a thunderous "ought-ness" to the worship of God.

The deepest Spirit-wrought passion of a believer's heart is that God be glorified, and his rule and reign be established over all things.

**Henry Martyn**, a missionary to Persia and India in the early 1800s, once saw a drawing of Jesus bowing before Mohammed and it moved him to tears. When someone asked him why he said, "I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified. It would be hell to me, if he were to be always thus dishonored."

Derek Thomas makes a great point. He said, if you shrink back from the idea of the saints rejoicing over God's judgments on earth, it might help to realize that you have prayed many times for just such a thing. Have you ever prayed the Lord's Prayer? Do you remember the first two petitions: "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Every time we pray that prayer, we are praying for Revelation 19 to happen.

**WSC #102** *What do we pray for in the second petition?*

"In the second petition, which is, thy kingdom come, we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed..."

**Heidelberg Catechism #123** *What does the second request mean?*

"Destroy the Devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your Word."

And, if that's the case, then the song of the saints makes perfect sense. They are rejoicing in the glory and victory of God over the Devil and all those who belong to him.

The song is all about victory and glory of God.

**"Salvation and glory and power belong to our God"**. God is revealed and manifested as the saving God – he has revealed his glory in the salvation of sinners! He is the all-glorious God. Glory belongs to him! He is the Mighty God of all power!

**"His judgements are true and just."** He is just and true in all his ways!

**"He has judged the great prostitute and avenged on her the blood of his servants."**

The joy of the saints on the day of judgment is that God, the loving heavenly Father, has avenged the blood of his precious children. Holy Justice has triumphed over the demonic forces of hell!

That's why the children sing on the day of judgement. All that has been wrong has been answered and made right to the glory of God. The joy of the saints is that Jesus has conquered and begun his glorious, eternal reign.

**Rev. 19:6** *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."*

In other words, this is the world as it should be. The Devil and all that is evil are forever destroyed and Jesus is reigning as eternal Lord and King on his throne to the glory of our God and Father. To see that, to experience that, that's glory.

The point is pounded home in verses 10-11. John is so overwhelmed by the message he has received; it is so glorious, so magnificent, so worthy of worship and praise that he

falls down at the angel's feet to worship him. And he is sharply rebuked. **"Don't do that!"**

**"Worship God!"** The angel, dwelling in the presence of the Living God, serving as the messenger of King Jesus, knows the glory of God in a way that makes John's behavior abhorrent! God alone is worthy of worship. ALL devotion and adoration belong to him and to him alone.

## II. The Occasion

**Rev. 19:7** *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.*

Human history begins and ends with a wedding. The crowning act of God's creation and the culminating event of human history is a marriage. In the beginning God created a man and then a woman taken from Adam's side, created to be his companion, his lover, and his helper. Together they were invited to delight in the glories of God's new creation. Together they had a task to fulfill, a mandate to keep. And it was very good!

And in the end, we read of another wedding. Once again, we see a beautiful bride; once again created from the pierced side of the man. She is a bride prepared for him and by him to delight in the glories he has prepared for her in the new heaven and new earth.

In the gospel of John, we find that the first miracle of Jesus was turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana. It is not accidental. The entire ministry of Jesus was in preparation for a wedding. And here we see that final day, when the marriage of the Lamb has come.

In verse 8 we see that, just as Eve was presented to Adam without spot, as a pure and holy bride, so too the church is presented to Jesus in the splendor of holiness.

**Rev. 19:8** *It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

Fine linen, bright and pure, was the clothing of the OT priests. It is the clothing of holiness, the clothing that allows one entrance into the presence of God. The great burning question of every person should be this: How do I get that clothing? No one will enter heaven without it.

- **It is gift.** “It was granted her...” You can’t buy these clothes. They are only received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But the great promise of the gospel is that if you will confess your sin and call upon his name, he will robe you in his own righteousness. And you will be clothed.
- **It is worked out.** “...the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.” All those who are granted the clothes of righteousness pursue righteousness.  
“The holiness of their being becomes incarnate in their living.”

Yesterday afternoon, Joanne and I were driving through downtown Philadelphia on our way to the airport. We passed a fancy hotel and people were arriving for what looked like a wedding – a very fancy wedding. The men all had tuxes and the ladies wore beautiful dresses. The invitation granted them access to that banquet. But the clothing was evidence they understood the significance of the event and had prepared themselves. If that’s what the guests do, how much more the bride?

Jesus wants his bride to prepare herself. To take the gift of his righteousness and then lovingly pursue righteousness. And to that end the angel gives this beautiful benediction:

**Rev. 19:9** *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

When I saw those people enter that fancy hotel, in all their beautiful clothing, with doormen guarding the entrance, I felt a pang of desire. I could imagine what their evening was going to look like. A beautiful, flower-filled banquet hall with golden light drifting from great chandeliers; a small band playing soft jazz; servers milling about with fancy appetizers and glasses of incredibly expensive Cabernet and Chardonnay; tables loaded with the most delicious foods you can imagine. All enjoyed in a room full of beautiful, smiling people. Dancing, laughing, celebrating.

Doesn’t your heart long for something like that? If you are a Christian, it should. It’s what you were made for. You were made for a holy wedding, a heavenly banquet. It will make the most sumptuous banquets of this world seem like a very bad day at MacDonald’s.

Let me read you a description of the wedding feast God gives us in **Isaiah 25:6-9**:

*On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day,*

*"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*