

Revelation

Part Forty-Eight

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

(Revelation 19:1-13)

With Study Questions

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Introduction

A former player I had coached had the privilege of being on the national volleyball team for a brief period of time. It was back in the 80's and USA had had won back-to-back Olympic gold medals, so he was surrounded by excellence. He shared with me what it felt like to finally get in a game.

He was the only player on his side of the court who had not won a gold medal. During a game a ball fell in front of him that he should have made a play on, and he didn't. I asked him how his teammates responded. He said none of them said a word, but all five of them gave him a look that spoke very loudly. The look said, 'that ball gets picked up on this team'.

The coach of that team had developed a culture of victory. And my friend's mere presence in that culture made him, individually, a superior athlete. This is something great coaches-great leaders-do. They foster an environment where those in that environment become the best possible versions of themselves. And we become that best possible version, individually, by our selfless interaction and contribution to the team, or workplace, or family or church.

As we turn toward chapter nineteen, let us not lose sight of the great promise in chapter one.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:3).

From the Father to the Son to an angel and to John (Revelation 1:1) the Revelation is written to strengthen God's people in the midst of turmoil, temptation and tribulation. But it is not a strengthening designed for mere defense. The gates of hell are to be toppled (Matthew 16:18) and

we are commissioned by Christ as ambassadors, as soldiers, in this glorious enterprise.

But unlike coaches (unless they are a player-coach) and some bosses, elders and most politicians, Christians who are sent by Christ on this Great Commission have the promise of Christ's presence. By His word and Spirit, He is with us **"always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20).

It is beyond the allotted scope of one message to give all the possible interpretations of this chapter of Revelation. Suffice it to say that chapter nineteen is a major watershed when it comes to theological convictions and eschatological expectations. One is hard-pressed to find a chapter (except the next chapter) where there is such radical disagreement on God's plan for human history and our role in it.

On one end of the spectrum are the five gold medalists who are saying (even with their eyes) that ball does not go down on this team and everyone takes a deep breath and, with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, prepares for the next battle. On the other end of the spectrum are those who, when the ball hits the floor, rejoice for it is a sign that the end of the game is coming soon and even though we lose here, we win in heaven.

Again, with a broad brush we will sweep through this chapter, picking up the more major themes. It begins with a series of *alleluias*.

A Series of Alleluias

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God! ²For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her."

³Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" ⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" ⁵Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" ⁶And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns (Revelation 19:1-6)!"

Chapter nineteen opens with a series of alleluias. In all the New Testament, this word is only seen this chapter. It is the true halleluiahs chorus (meaning praise to Jehovah). There is a record here of three entities rejoicing: multitude in heaven, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. This section culminates with a call for all of God's servants to praise Him as well.

And why are they praising Him? They are praising Him for what He accomplished in chapter eighteen. Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to Him because He had judged the forces of corruption. This corruption is a Christ-killing, Christian-killing corruption. He is being praised because His judgments true and righteous.

God, though long-suffering, will not suffer evil indefinitely. In verses one through six we see Christ executing His office as King in His preservation of His elect, by **"restraining and overcoming all their enemies"** (WLC, 45). Verses one through six records the obedience to Revelation 18:20.

Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her (Revelation 18:20)!

Of course, any judgment is both good news for some and bad news for others. The marriage supper of the Lamb is the seminal event which proclaims those for whom the judgments of God are truly good news. Similar to the entire theme of Revelation and both Old and New Testaments, there is a rejoicing due to the redeeming power of Christ.

The Marriage Supper

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of

Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:7-10)

How do we know these **“true and righteous”** judgments of God are in fact good news for us? As we see so often in Scripture, the church is likened to a bride (Ephesians 5:32), a bride cleansed by Christ through the **“washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:26)**. In a primary sense, our **“clean and bright linen”** is pure by the blood of Christ.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

At the same time, John does not distance the **“righteous acts of the saints”** from this. There are times in our desire to distinguish the very critical doctrines of our justification (being acquitted by Christ alone) from our sanctification (our faithfulness and growth in Christ) we tend to give our **“righteous acts”** a vacation. Let us be reminded that one (justification-having peace with God through the blood of Christ) is always and necessarily accompanied by the other (sanctification-being conformed to His image).

Let us also point out here that there is no human endeavor that has a greater utilitarian effect in the promotion of Christlikeness than that sacrament instituted by Christ, which is here called **“the marriage supper of the Lamb,”** which is routinely called the Lord’s Supper.

Interestingly, John’s immediate response is to engage in bad worship. He begins to worship the messenger and is sharply corrected. There is an old saying, *it’s now how you worship, it’s who you worship*. It’s not a good saying. We are to worship God in a manner that He has prescribed. And the heart of that worship is to beats, not to my testimony, but to the **“testimony of Jesus.”**

With the great worship, clean linen and the marriage supper of the Lamb in the foreground, we move to a second thought portrayed in verses eleven through twenty-one. Though there is unanimous agreement regarding who is on the **“white horse”** that is about where the agreement ends. What is the event contained in these eleven verses?

Some say it is the end of the world-Judgment Day. Others in the same vein say it is the rapture which precedes the future millennium which we

meet in chapter twenty. Others, and I agree with them, see this passage as the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

A Spiritual Battle

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God (Revelation 19:11-13).

Jesus Christ is marching through history “conquering and to conquer” (Revelation 6:2). The success of the gospel is due to the truth and faithfulness of Christ. Truly, the “battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47). And let us ever be reminded that at its heart, it is a spiritual battle, not a battle “against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12).

Arguments against this account being the Second Coming are too numerous to engage in here. Suffice it to say: the Second Coming never presents Jesus coming on a horse; the Second Coming is not a process, as in this passage, but comes in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52); the sword is the word of God designed for redemption, which would be of no value if this is the last day.

Jesus wears “many crowns” indicating all authority. Truly, the “kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). His garments of warfare are a robe dipped in His own blood and His name is “The Word of God.” The great battle to redeem the world is founded on the blood of Christ which we come to know through His word, the Scriptures.

In our next meeting we will discuss the remainder of the chapter and how we should respond. But for now, notice this: there is a sublime consistency in the message of Scripture; what the Westminster Confession calls, “the consent of all the parts” (WCF, 1, 5). All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ (the “many crowns”); and we to search the “Word of God,” wherein is taught the blood of Christ which is to be preached to “all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

The extent of the success of the Great Commission will be addressed in our next gathering. For now, may our hearts ever be set firmly on the heart of hope, which is conveyed as we go to the Lord's Table.

Questions for Study

1. When you think about the spiritual environment in which you see yourself, what types of things come to mind? What should this environment look like (pages 2, 3)?
2. We see numerous alleluias in the opening verses of chapter nineteen. What appears to be the motivating factor for this (pages 3, 4)?
3. How do you know God's true and righteous judgments are good news for you (page 5)?
4. What is the marriage supper of the Lamb and why is it important (page 5)?
5. What kind of battle is being waged in verses eleven through thirteen (page 6)?