

Revelation 19:1-10
Isaiah 54
Psalm 45

“The Announcement of His Coming”

December 22, 2019

Isaiah 54 – not surprisingly – comes immediately after Isaiah 53!

Isaiah 53 is the famous passage that speaks of the suffering servant –
“All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned – every one – to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 54 then turns immediately from the Suffering Servant to the Bride.

God will restore the fortunes of his Holy City –
and the fact that the Bride is the Holy City is clear in verse 12 –
“your pinnacles...your gates...your wall...”

God will vindicate his Holy City.
He will restore the fortunes of his Bride.

Our Psalm of Response is Psalm 45 –
a wedding song – a love song –
the song for the royal wedding!

The Wedding Supper of the Lamb!!

Notice in Psalm 45 that the daughter of Tyre has come to serve the bride.
We have encountered Tyre often in the imagery in the book of Revelation.
And for that matter, we have encountered a princess from Tyre –
Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre.

In the days of David and Solomon,
Hiram, the king of Tyre, was their closest ally and friend –
so it would make sense that the daughter of Tyre
would be among the well-wishers at the royal wedding in Jerusalem!!

There is hope for the cities of the earth!
If they repent – if they submit and bow the knee to the Son of David,
then all nations will be blessed!

Sing Psalm 45 (PHSS)
Read Revelation 19:1-10

We saw three weeks ago that the first message of Advent is:
Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!
Repent, for the King is coming!

Two weeks ago we saw that the second message of Advent is that:

We need Jesus!!

And if you want Jesus then you will need to “come out” of Babylon,
become like a little child,
and organize your life around *Jesus*.

And that leads to the third message of Advent:

that we need to be *ready* for his coming –
and we get ready by putting on the clothing that Christ has given us

Like the bride in Psalm 45 – we come to Jesus,

the one who has washed us and cleansed us in his own blood –
and who has given us white garments (Rev 3:5; 6:11).

1. The Song of the Multitude in Heaven: Salvation Belongs to the LORD (v1-3)

*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.”

In chapter 18 we heard the call to rejoice over the Fall of Babylon –

because in the Fall of Babylon we see the vindication of God’s justice –
and we see that our faith and our hope was not in vain!!

This world is not going to keep going on and on and on like this forever!!

And this is summed up well in verses 1-3:

The English word “Hallelujah” is a transliteration

of a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew phrase!

meaning “praise the LORD” – praise Yahweh!

It’s usage in this passage highlights the connection to the Psalms –

where the phrase “praise the LORD” (hallelu-jah) frequently recurs.

We often think of the word “Hallelujah” in connection with praise songs –

and rightly so – since the word *means* “praise the Lord”!

But why do you praise God?

And here in Revelation 19, *why* is the great multitude praising the LORD?

First, Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.

Salvation – deliverance – rescue –
all these words and ideas presuppose that there is a *problem*.
And particularly, that there are hostile forces – enemies –
who are seeking to destroy us.

Because look at the reasons – look at the word “for” in verse 2.
Why do salvation and glory and power belong to our God?

For (because) his judgments are true and just.
God is a just judge who does what is right and good.
And the second “for” explains the first.
“For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality.”

It’s important to remember that sexual immorality is being used here
as a picture of the whole political and economic system that drives the city of man.

So let’s start with the picture so that we can see clearly what the problem is!

He has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality...

Why is sexual immorality a problem?

So often, in our day, you hear people saying, “Oh, but what’s the harm?
No one gets hurt!”

As long as no one gets hurt...

I think of the man who says that – as he divorces his wife to marry his mistress,
leaving two little boys to make sense of how to piece their lives together.
I think of the man who chose not to marry –
but had children with six different women –
destroying his own life (and theirs)
because he couldn’t possibly support that many households!
Or the man who decided a decade into his marriage that he is really a woman –
and so now their children have two mommies...

No one gets hurt?

I think that it is safe to say
that *whenever* we choose to do what is right in our own eyes –
rather than what is right in God’s eyes –
people get hurt.

You often hear people say that God is a cosmic killjoy.
“He doesn’t want people to have fun!”

No, actually he wants *everyone* to have something far better – and far more enjoyable –

than “fun.”

What we call “fun” is enjoyable for a fleeting moment.

But if our “fun” winds up harming others all around us –
then there is *nothing* loving about it!

That’s why Babylon is called a prostitute.

Sex with a prostitute is “fun” for a fleeting moment.

And sure – you can go back to the same prostitute over and over and over –
and keep having “fun”!

But a bunch of other people are also having “fun” with the same prostitute.

Who gets hurt?

Yes, the wives, the children, the community...

but as we saw in chapter 18 –

in the end, the prostitute herself gets hurt!

Babylon is destroyed by her lovers.

This is why God uses sexual sin as the illustration of human sinfulness in general.

Sexual sin promises great happiness and pleasure –

but it results in great misery in the end.

And sexual sin has an addictive quality to it.

You see this in the online porn industry.

Porn offers all the “fun” of prostitution –

with the removal of all limitations.

You can have as many sexual partners as you can imagine!

It’s all online!

Never mind that millions of other people are sharing the same partner!

We want more – and the pursuit of our selfish desires then rewires our brains
so that we cannot be satisfied with the real thing.

In the last 15 years this has reached epidemic proportions.

From the first studies in the 1940s – and as late as the 1990s – men under the age of 40
experienced erectile dysfunction at a rate of 1-3 percent.

Since 2010 studies are reporting rates of 14-37 percent of men under the age of 40
experiencing ED.

(why do you suppose you see so many ED advertisements with younger men...)

When the brain is rewired to find satisfaction in porn –
the real thing no longer satisfies.

It’s ironic, because if this were being caused by something in our food,
you would see a massive outcry!

If this were being caused by something in our water – or in the air –

there would be new government regulations!

But this is the *point* that we have been seeing for the last several weeks in Revelation 17-18:

Babylon's charms are real.

Her attractions are powerful.

The kings of the earth – indeed, all earth-dwellers – are *addicted* to her.

<https://www.amgreatness.com/2019/12/15/a-science-based-case-for-ending-the-porn-epidemic/>

And this is where we need to see how the *picture* connects to the *point*.

Babylon has corrupted the earth –

which corruption has resulted in persecution and death for those who serve God.

Someone recently commented that when you talk with each individual person,

you find that most people are generally decent folks –

but when you look at the system as a whole, it looks awful.

That was Alexander Solzhenitsyn's point in the *Gulag Archipelago* –

his study of the Soviet prison system.

The Russian people were no better and no worse than people elsewhere.

But if you play people off each other and appeal to their selfish side –

you can create a system that will do unspeakable horrors –

where only a few people actually do the worst bits –

and everyone else just goes along for the ride...

How does it happen?

Well, if each individual is slightly twisted –

and all those involved in an organization are twisted in the same direction,

then that organization will have a pronounced bent in that direction!

And if an organization – or a society – is blind to its own twistedness,

then it will perpetuate that twistedness more and more.

No one individual seems all that awful –

but the fruit that results is downright dreadful!

Communist Russia was that way –

but so also Capitalist America!

Babylon does not play favorites – when it comes to economic systems.

She thrives with gift exchange economies –

as well as mercantilism, capitalism, socialism, or communism.

She welcomes democracy as well as monarchy or aristocracy –

because so long as people are seeking power, pleasure, and prosperity,

they will be addicted to her.

And if you remember the picture of Babylon from chapter 17 –

she is sitting on the beast.

We saw in chapters 12-18 that there is an *unholy* trinity –
the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet.

And in the same way, there is an *unholy* city – Babylon.

Whereas the Holy City – the heavenly Jerusalem – is the bride of the Lamb,
the *unholy city* – Babylon – is the harlot of the Beast.

In every society there is a ‘national religion.’

What I mean by that is that in every society there is *something* that you *must worship*.

In Rome it was the emperor.

As long as you worshiped the emperor,
you could do whatever else you want!
Religious toleration always has limits.

It’s no different in America.

If your religious practice interferes with the law of the land,
that religious practice cannot be tolerated.

So, for instance, if you said, “I am a worshiper of Molech.
My god demands child sacrifice...”
the courts would refuse to allow you to practice your religion!

In the Roman world, this led to the persecution of Christians –
because Christians refused to sacrifice to the emperor.

That is why the multitude in heaven praise God because he:
has avenged on her the blood of his servants.

God tells us “vengeance is mine, says the LORD, I will repay.”

We start by praying with Jesus – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” –
but then – if they continue to harm the innocent
and join Babylon in corrupting the earth with their wickedness –
then we ask God to avenge the blood of his servants.

That’s what the souls under the altar had prayed for in chapter 6, verse 10 –
“O Sovereign Lord, holy and true,
how long before you will judge
and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

You hear lots of echoes of that here in the response of God’s people (verses 2-3).

God is true.

His judgments are just.

And so...

³ *Once more they cried out,
“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”*

In Isaiah 34, the smoke continually ascending symbolized God’s final and forever judgment.
In Isaiah 34, it was the smoke of Edom’s judgment –
but Edom had sided with Babylon in the attack on Jerusalem –
and so it is fitting that Edom and Babylon are mingled together here.

Particularly since Rome was often called “the eternal city” –
and here in verse 3, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever
(which is the Greek way of saying “eternally”).

Back in chapter 14, verse 11,
we heard that those who worshiped the beast will drink the wine of God’s wrath...
“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever,
and they have no rest, day or night,
these worshipers of the beast and its image,
and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

In other words, this language was used earlier in Revelation
to speak of the eternal punishment of those who worship the Beast.

Now we hear that *Babylon* gets the same punishment.
“The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

Will we praise God for the judgment of the wicked?
When you consider the alternative –
you will!
What is the alternative to judgment?
Remember – they have already been called to repentance.
And they refused to repent.
They *know* that God condemns what they do –
but they do it anyway.

What is the alternative?
Either God must let them continue harming others –
or he must bring judgment.

(And based on the “poetic justice” principle of divine justice,
it is reasonable to assume that God will judge them according to their works,
repaying them for what they have done to others.

And how is it fair that the punishment be eternal?
Because the wicked do not cease to sin once they are dead.
Their rebellion continues forever.
Even so – their punishment.

Then in verse four, we see once again the heavenly throne room!

2. The Heavenly Throne: Worship Is at the Heart of Everything (v4-5)

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.”*

At this point, I'd like to call your attention to the structure of the passage.

The four-fold use of “Hallelujah” holds everything together.

In verse 1, the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven cry ‘Hallelujah!’
In verse 3, they cry out again, ‘Hallelujah!’
In verse 4, the 24 elders and four living creatures say ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’
And in verse 6, the voice of a great multitude again cries out, “Hallelujah!”

Throughout this series I've been calling attention to the liturgical structure of the book –
because the whole book of Revelation follows the basic pattern of the liturgy.
At the end of each of the “sevens” in the book we hear the response of the people of God.
Each of the “sevens” consist of God's sermon –
the word of the LORD – God's plans and purposes for history.
And after each of the sevens, we hear the prayers and praises of God's people.

The Fall of Babylon (chapters 17-18) does not use a seven-fold structure,
but does contain the declaration of God's purposes for history.

Now at the end of the Fall of Babylon, we hear the praises of the Heavenly Jerusalem –
the great multitude in heaven (contrasted with the ‘earth-dwellers’).
And after the multitude cries out “Hallelujah” –
the 24 elders and the four living creatures say “Amen. Hallelujah!”

We have often seen the 24 elders play the role of the “worship leaders”
in the heavenly liturgy.
Here they give the exclamation point, as it were, to the heavenly praise.

“Amen. Hallelujah” is the final line in Psalm 106, verse 48.
Psalm 106 is the closing psalm in book four of the Psalter.

Book Four of the Psalms (Psalms 90-106)
is all about the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 106 retells the story of the deliverance from Egypt –
and particularly focuses on the rebellions in the wilderness.

Psalm 106 was plainly written at a time when many were still in exile –
since verse 47 says, “Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations...”

In other words, Psalm 106 is a prayer –
asking God to restore and save his people from Exile –
because we are too much like our fathers in the wilderness!

Now the 24 elders take up that final line from Psalm 106 –
Amen. Hallelujah!

And then, from the throne we hear a voice –
(and as we have seen before, the voice from the throne is either the Lamb –
or “him who sits on the throne.”)

In this case, it is almost certainly the voice of the Lamb:

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

And this brings us to the final “Hallelujah!”

3. The Thunder of the Multitude: Righteous Deeds Are the Clothing of the Bride (v6-8)

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.*

Once more we hear the “Hallelujah” of heaven –
the hosts of heaven crying out “Praise the LORD!!”

Why?

Because the Lord our God the Almighty reigns!

Some prefer to translate it “the Almighty has *begun* to reign.”

That might be overdoing it a little –

but the central point *is* that the kingdom of God has come in a new way!

Sure, in one sense God has *always* reigned.

He is King from before all eternity.

But in the rebellion in Eden – Adam and Eve handed over the kingdom to Satan –
and the Dragon reigned as usurper until Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father.

We saw that in Revelation 12 –
where the child of the Heavenly Jerusalem – our Lord Jesus –
was raised up to the throne of God.

The phrase “the Almighty reigns” or “the LORD reigns”
is commonly used in Book Four of the Psalms
as a way of affirming that God’s kingdom cannot be thwarted.

In the days of the exile – and for 500 years after the restoration –
it sure didn’t look like God’s kingdom was coming!
There was no Son of David on the throne –
and there was no likelihood of that ever happening again!

In the same way – it can look like that now!
Yes, Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father.
But really – how often do we *see* the kingdom of God actually doing anything!!

The whole book of Revelation was written to remind us that what we *see*
is only a small part of the story.
Faith does not come by seeing.
Faith comes by hearing!!

And then faith goes into action.
Faith cannot sit idle –
for who would sit idle when the King has come!

And though we do not yet see everything in subjection under his feet –
we see Jesus, who was crowned with glory and honor in his ascension –

and because we see Jesus –

*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;*

The language here is important.
His Bride has made herself ready.

Some have struggled with this language.
If we are justified by *grace* –
if salvation belongs to the *Lord* –
then how can we say that the Bride *has made herself ready*?

Verse 8 is a lovely statement that explains it well:

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.*

Notice both parts:

it was *granted her* –
in other words, this is a *gift* – a *gracious gift* –
God gives to the Bride the ability to clothe herself.

But she *clothes herself*.

There is no hint of coercion or force here.

This is important because of all the sexual language in this part of Revelation.
God does not force himself on us!

(One of the most important contributions of Christianity to sexual ethics
is the necessity of *consent* for a marriage to be valid.

In many cultures, as long as the parents consent, the marriage is valid.

But all the way back to the days of Isaac and Rebekah,

the question was asked of the woman,

“Will you go with this man?”)

Even so, when God saves us, he does not act *against* our will –
rather, he woos us – enabling our wills to choose what is right.

And so those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life
from before the foundation of the world
will *always* clothe themselves with fine linen, bright and pure.

And the end of verse 8 explains:

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

Scripture regularly uses this twofold way of speaking.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says

“For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*,
which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God.

Salvation is a gift – grace is a gift – even faith is a gift!!

But then Paul says that we are created in Christ Jesus *for good works*.

In the same way, John now says that at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb,
the Bride will be arrayed with the righteous deeds of the saints.

Think carefully *about the picture!!*

Who is arrayed in fine linen?
Who is the Bride?!!

This is not a statement about *your personal attire* at the Wedding!
This is a statement about how the *Bride* is attired.

The heavenly Jerusalem is decked out in all the righteous deeds of the saints –
all the just and right things that God’s people have done through all of history!!

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...
and these goods works will adorn the Bride on her wedding day!

Conclusion: Worship God (v9-10)

⁹ *And the angel said^[a] 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.*

What is it that causes John to fall at the angel’s feet?

John has heard a lot of angelic voices –
he has seen many angelic beings:
even the Four Living Creatures – the Cherubim – who guard the throne of God!

But only now is he tempted to fall down and worship an angel!
Why now?

He has just the good news:
The angel told him to *write this down*:
“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”
And then the angel added:
“These are the true words of God.”

Most of the vision is left to John to write down as best he can.
He is seeing and hearing *amazing things* –
but he is rarely given precise words to write down.

Only one other time before this was he given a similar charge:

14:13 –

“I heard a voice from heaven saying,

‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’

Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors,
for their deeds follow them.”

John has been hearing a lot of difficult things –

terrible judgment being poured out on all the earth –

suffering and affliction coming upon both believer and unbeliever alike!

But now he hears the news that he has been longing for!

“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

And when he hears “These are the true words of God” –

he assumes that the one speaking is, in fact, God!

How do you respond when you hear the true words of God?

You should fall on your face and *worship God!!*

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Repent, for the King is coming!

Two weeks ago we saw that the second message of Advent is that:

We need Jesus!!

And if you want Jesus then you will need to “come out” of Babylon,

become like a little child,

and organize your life around *Jesus*.

And that leads to the third message of Advent:

that we need to be *ready* for his coming –

and we get ready by putting on the clothing that Christ has given us –

as Paul says in Colossians 3:

we need to “put away” – “take off” – the clothing that belonged to our old life,

and

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,

compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another,

forgiving each other;

as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”