

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 7TH–8TH, 2024 // REVELATION

REJOICING IN HEAVEN (REVELATION 19:1–5)

John's third vision of the two cities (Babylon and Jerusalem) began in Chapter 17.

- So far, the focus has been on Babylon, the prostitute city.
- Chapter 18 was John's final report about Babylon's fall, and now, in Chapter 19, the focus shifts to heaven rejoicing at God's victory.
- The focus will also shift from the "prostitute" to the "bride" of Christ.

Christ will be seen in three ways moving forward: as a bridegroom and warrior king in Chapter 19, and as a righteous judge in Chapter 20.

- John opens this vision by reporting "something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven" celebrating.
- The first word heard is "Hallelujah," which simply means "praise the Lord" in Hebrew (this is the only time that word appears in the NT).

Often, we see hallelujah accompanied by reasons why one should praise God.

- The reasons provided by this crowd are:
 - Salvation belongs to Him exclusively (v. 1)
 - His judgments are true and just (v. 2)
 - He has judged the "notorious prostitute" (v. 2)
 - He brings justice to those who have killed innocent people and "corrupted the earth" (v. 2)

This multitude celebrates not only the judgment of evil, but its finality (v. 3 shows evil's end is permanent).

- The 24 elders show up again to add more praise by saying, "Amen, Hallelujah," which means "truly it may be, praise the Lord!"
- The three-part funeral song (or dirge) for Babylon in Chapter 18 is now reversed as a celebration of God's victory.

An unknown voice completes the praise with the Greek phrase for hallelujah: "praise our God."

- It's interesting to note that both Hebrew and Greek are used in this heavenly celebration.
- This signifies that all kinds of people from "every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Rev. 7:9) are invited to this celebration.
- The term "servants" (or "slaves") shows ownership—the saints of God are owned by Him!

REASONS TO SING HALLELUJAH.

- What has God done to save, deliver, protect, or provide for you?
- What attributes of God are you grateful for and amazed by?
- Do you feel like our world is broken? Do you believe that someday God will make all the wrong things in our world right?

THE LAMB & HIS MARRIAGE (REVELATION 19:6–10)

With the words "then I heard," John's vision enters into a second phase.

- Babylon, the great prostitute, will never appear in Revelation again.
- She's been defeated and now the focus shifts to another woman—the Bride.
- The vision of the great multitude in vs. 6–8 looks remarkably similar to the multitude John saw in Rev. 11:16–18.

Possibly, both passages picture the same event. If that's the case, then the 7th trumpet is the end, and Chapters 12–18 are a flashback.

- The crowd is so huge John describes their sound as being like "the sound of cascading waters" and "thunder" (v. 6).
- The crowd is celebrating and worshipping God because "the marriage of the Lamb has come" (v. 7).

Why a marriage? In the OT, the people of Israel were called the wife of the Lord, and in the NT the church is referred to as the wife of Christ (Eph. 5:25–32).

- The best way to understand vs. 7–9 is through the two phases of a Jewish marriage.
- The first phase was betrothal, where the bride and groom were "married," but lived apart and hadn't consummated their marriage.

During betrothal, they would remain faithful to one another, but there was no consummation of the relationship.

- The second phase was the wedding ceremony: the groom went in procession to the bride's house and then escorted her back to his home for an elaborate feast of several days.
- So, this text announces that at last, the Church and Christ have been united for eternity.

The ultimate story of redemption has reached its pinnacle: all that was tarnished by sin is gone and God's people are ready to be united to Him.

- The "bride has prepared herself" and is clothed with "fine linen... bright and pure."
- V. 8 tells us that this fine linen is the "righteous acts of the saints." Nothing is more beautiful than when the Church performs righteous acts.

Chapter 19 gives us a picture of Christ as our husband. It's important to remember God loves us and wants to be with us more than we can imagine!

- We also must remember that the Bride has "prepared herself"—we're to make ourselves ready for that day.
- At any time, our bridegroom could appear ready for His bride, so we must be ready now!

"BLESSED ARE THOSE INVITED..." (V. 9)

You and I cannot gain access to this wedding feast on our own merits or goodness. We must respond to the divine invitation (Matt. 22:3, Luke 14:17).

- God invites us to the feast, but we must respond!
- After we've responded, we must prepare ourselves and stay ready (Matt. 25:1–13).

John is overwhelmed by the magnitude of this announcement (and maybe confused by the identity of his tour guide), so he falls down at the angel's feet and begins to worship him.

- This angel corrects John's mistakes and orders him to not worship him.
- Angels are simply messengers of God ("fellow servants" v. 10) and are not to be worshipped.

THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE (REVELATION 19:11–16)

John has already seen Jesus portrayed in two other visions in Revelation.

- The first image of Jesus was in Ch. 1, walking amongst the 7 lampstands (churches).
- The second image of Jesus was in Ch. 5, as the slaughtered Lamb before the throne of God.
- Now, in Ch. 19, the third image of Christ John sees is of a conquering King riding on a white horse.

The only other time in Scripture where Jesus is shown as a rider on an animal was on a donkey to enter Jerusalem (John 12:12–15).

- But in this vision, Jesus is riding the traditional white horse that victorious Roman generals would ride through the streets of Rome in triumphal procession.

- White symbolizes the spotless, unblemished, holy character of the rider.

Though Jesus is not specifically named, it is crystal clear who the "rider" is through the descriptions and titles given.

- Four titles are given as the Rider descends from heaven to war against evil.
- 1st title: "Faithful and True" (v. 11), showing God is committed to His promises and doesn't lie.
- 2nd title: "a name written that no one knows except himself..." (v. 12)

This unknown, mysterious title speaks of the infinite, unknowable aspects of His character as God.

- "Eyes like a fiery flame" shows wisdom, eternity, and omniscience.
- "Many crowns" shows complete authority and that He has conquered His enemies.
- "Robe dipped in blood" is most likely the blood of His enemies (Isaiah 63:2–4)

The 3rd title is "the Word of God" (v. 13) which unmistakably identifies Him as Jesus Christ.

- He is called the "Word of God" because He Himself is the revelation of the fullness of God (Col. 2:9).
- The heavens opened not only to reveal the rider on the white horse but also the "armies of heaven."
- Most likely, this army is comprised of the church, the martyred tribulation saints, resurrected OT saints (Dan. 12:1–2), and an army of angels (Matt. 25:31; 26:53).

The weapon of choice the Rider uses is His Word ("a sharp sword," v. 15). God spoke the universe into existence, and now with His Word He vanquishes His enemies.

- The mark on Christ's thigh shows a distinction between the placement of the marks in Revelation and more importantly, His title, "King of Kings & Lord of Lords."
- This shows absolute power, sovereignty, and that Jesus is not "one among many"—He ALONE is God.

WHICH VERSION OF JESUS DO YOU PREFER?

For some of us, we're comfortable with a Jesus who is a teacher, a savior who died for us, and a friend of sinners who loves us in our brokenness.

- But we squirm a bit when we read of Him being a King who requires absolute submission and allegiance to His decrees and commands and as a judge who will one day totally destroy all evil and evildoers.
- Are we believing and following the Jesus of the Bible or the one we've made up?

KING OF KINGS (REVELATION 19:17–21)

Revelation 19 pictures two great suppers: the "marriage feast of the lamb" (v. 9), and now this "great supper of God" (v. 17).

- This second supper is completely different and is really an invitation for carrion birds to feast on the slaughtered enemies of God (v. 18).
- This graphic scene shows the absolute humiliation of the proud enemies of God that will bring an end to all wickedness.

This is a picture of the final battle between good and evil mentioned in Chapters 16 and 17 that will take place in the plain of Megiddo ("Armageddon").

- This battle is over before it really even begins—the Antichrist, false prophet, and kings of the earth gather to make war against Jesus.

- The beast and false prophet are quickly captured and thrown into the "lake of fire" (v. 20).

This is the first time in the Bible that hell is mentioned in these terms, though it will be mentioned more in the next two chapters.

- Everyone else is "killed with the sword that came from the mouth" of Jesus, and the birds feast on their flesh (v. 21).

- It's no contest—the armies of the kings of the Earth are obliterated instantly by the words of Jesus.

In this chapter, Jesus is pictured as a bridegroom (vs. 6–10), as a Warrior King (vs. 11–16), and now we see Him as a righteous judge (vs. 17–21).

- If we don't want to receive Him in our lives as our husband and our king, we must face Him as our judge.
- This scene is a fulfillment of the main theme of Revelation—Jesus is returning as King!

THE RETURN OF THE KING OF KINGS

- The King could return at any time, so we're to be ready at any and every moment.
- Is the life you're living right now one that gives Christ honor as the rightful King?
- How are we honoring Christ with our time? Our words? Our attitudes? Our money? Our relationships?
- Waiting means being active participants in the Kingdom of God, not passive bystanders who are waiting for a rapture from responsibility.
- Brides typically have work to do to prepare themselves for weddings—how's that work going?
- Are we growing in godly character? Are we making disciples (Matt. 28:19–20)?
- Because evil will someday be eternally vanquished, we're to be people of hope (but not those who find our hope in the world).
- This world can never grow so dark that we, as those with the light of God, give into despair, discouragement, and hopelessness.
- Where do we find our hope?
- Waiting means being faithful in trials, obedient amidst difficulty, and persevering in our suffering.
- Our labor in the Kingdom of God can be discouraging, but our labor is NEVER in vain (Rev. 14:12–13).
- Someday, the King will return and reward those who are faithful—is that you?