

Revelation

Escape the Coming Wrath!

Lesson 19

Chapter 19

The Wedding Supper of the Lamb!

1. Read verses 1-10.

The Bible lists many reasons for giving thanks to God. He is to be praised first of all for all the perfections of His glorious being. “Through Him then,” urged the writer of Hebrews, “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15; cf. II Samuel 22:50; Pss. 7:17; 44:8; 122:4; 140:13). One of the perfections God is to be praised for is His holiness...God is also to be praised for His mercy...Scripture also extols God’s goodness...

God is to be praised not only for His attributes, but also for His mighty works...

The many rich blessings God bestows on His people also call forth praise, chief of which is the gift of His Son... Paul also praised God for his deliverance from indwelling sin (Rom. 7:23-25), believers’ triumph over death and the grave (I Cor. 15:57), and the triumph of the gospel (II Cor. 2:14; 4:15)...In summary, giving thanks to God is to be done always (Eph. 5:20) and for everything (I Thess. 5:18).

But of all the things God is to be praised for, perhaps, the least expected is for His destruction of the wicked. Yet that, too, is an important theme in Scripture. Deuteronomy 32:43 reads, “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries.”... As man’s day draws to a close and the true King prepares to return to earth, heaven will rejoice. Heavenly hallelujahs ring out in chapter 19 over the final destruction of the evil world system and the glorious victory of the returning Messiah (cf. 5:9-14).

As that long-awaited time approaches, the scene in Revelation shifts from earth, where it has been since chapter 6, to heaven. The intervening chapters have detailed God’s cataclysmic explosion of judgmental fury on the sinful world. That fury began to be poured out when the Lord Jesus Christ, the rightful heir to the universe, received the title deed to the earth from His Father (5:1-14). As He unrolled that scroll and broke its seven seals, terrifying judgments struck the earth. The seal judgments were followed by the equally devastating trumpet and bowl judgments.

The particular target of God’s wrath was Antichrist’s worldwide religious, political, and economic empire, symbolized by its capital city of Babylon. Babylon’s destruction was described in detail in chapters 17 and 18. That destruction, which caused dismay and mourning on earth (18:9-11, 15-19), now brings joy to heaven. With the devastation of its capital city, Antichrist’s empire was dealt a fatal blow. The final destruction of the world’s forces will take place shortly at Armageddon (19:11-12).

Some might think heaven’s rejoicing over Babylon’s destruction to be insensitive and uncaring. But that shortsighted view ignores the reality that those sinners will have had the greatest opportunity to repent of any people who have ever lived. They will have

experienced the reality that those sinners will have had the greatest opportunity to repent of any people who have ever lived. They will have experienced the unprecedented disasters of the Tribulation, which they will acknowledge to be God's judgments (6:17). They will also have heard the most powerful preaching of the gospel in history, from the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses, the host of the redeemed saved during the Tribulation, and even a powerful angel (14:6-7). Yet despite all that, they will remain unrepentant to the very end (9:20-21; 16:9, 11), hardened into irreversible unbelief and defiant hatred of God.

The praise seen in heaven throughout Revelation (4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-6) reaches a crescendo in this text. The heavenly rejoicing is not over the damnation of those who reject God (cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11), but because Jesus Christ will soon remove those obstinate sinners from the world. God will then be properly honored, the Lord Jesus Christ enthroned, and the earth restored to its lost glory. Heaven rejoices because history is finally going to reach its culmination as the true King establishes His kingdom on earth.⁶⁶

(a) What command does the angel in Revelation 18:20 give to the redeemed in heaven?

(b) What word summarizes the response of heaven?

The word *alleluia* is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *hallelujah*, which means "praise the Lord."⁶⁷

(c) According to verses 1-3, why does heaven rejoice?

Throughout history God's people have been disturbed by the inequity, injustice, and unrighteousness in the world, and have longed for God's justice to come... Jeremiah ...anticipated the time when the Messiah would bring justice and righteousness to the earth: "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land'" (Jer. 23:5). Earlier in Revelation the martyred Tribulation believers "cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" (Rev. 6:10). Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, they eagerly anticipated the day when God's justice would triumph. God's people hate sin because it mocks God and love righteousness because it exalts Him. They long for a world characterized by holiness

⁶⁶ Ibid. 196.

⁶⁷ Wiersbe, 616.

and justice. But that will only happen when Christ establishes His righteous kingdom and rules with a rod of iron (v. 15; 2:27; 12:5; Ps. 2:9).⁶⁸

- (d) What is the significance of the “smoke [rising] from her ...for ever and ever?”

The destruction of the last and most powerful empire in human history marks the end of man’s day. The rebellion that began long ago in the Garden of Eden is finally ended (apart from a futile, short-lived revolt at the end of the Millennium; 20:7-10). There will be no more false religion, worldly philosophy, injustice, unrighteousness; all the sorry results of human depravity will be vanquished.⁶⁹

- (e) In verse 4, who does John see worshipping God? What is the importance of *falling down* before Him (Psalm 145:14; James 4:10)?

In agreement with the angelic chorus, hallelujahs ring out from other heavenly residents. The twenty-four elders are best seen as representatives of the church. The four living creatures are cherubim, a high-ranking order of angels. These two groups worship God throughout Revelation (cf. 4:8-11; 5:8-12, 14; 7:11; 11:16-18).⁷⁰

- (f) In verse 5, who is commanded to worship God?

- (g) What does it mean to serve God (Psalm 2:11; Matthew 4:10) and to fear Him (Psalm 103:11; Proverbs 1:7; Luke 1:50)?

- (h) According to verses 6-7, why does the multitude in heaven shout out loud with rejoicing and gladness? Give two reasons.

- (i) Read II Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:25-27. Explain how marriage, the relationship between a husband and his wife, illustrates the relationship between Jesus and believers.

⁶⁸ MacArthur, 197-198.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 199.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 199-200.

- (j) What do you think will actually take place at the “wedding of the Lamb ...and his bride (II Corinthians 11:2)?”
- (k) Read Isaiah 61:10. According to verse 8, how has the “bride made herself ready?” Who is responsible for making the bride (the church) ready?
- (l) The church is the bride of Christ. Warren Wiersbe states, “The Bride, of course, is the church (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33); and Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is the Bridegroom (John 3:29).” With that said, who might be the invited guests at this wedding supper, given that the bride (the church) does not need an invitation? (Hint: Read Daniel 12:2; Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28.)

Jewish weddings in that day were quite unlike weddings in the Western world. First, there was an engagement, usually made by the parents when the prospective bride and groom were quite young. This engagement was binding and could be broken only by a divorce. Any unfaithfulness during the engagement was considered adultery.

When the public ceremony was to be enacted, the groom would go to the bride’s house and claim her for himself. He would take her to his home for the wedding supper, and all the guests would join the happy couple. The feast could last as long as a week.

Today, the church is “engaged” to Jesus Christ; and we love Him even though we have not seen him (I Peter 1:8). One day, He will return and take His bride to heaven (John 14:1-6; I Thess. 4:13-18). At the Judgment Seat of Christ, her works will be judged and all her spots and blemishes removed. This being completed, the church will be ready to return to earth with her Bridegroom at the close of the Tribulation to reign with Him in glory (see Luke 13:29; Matt. 8:11). Some students believe that the entire Kingdom Age will be the “marriage supper.”

Revelation 19:9 contains the fourth of the seven “beatitudes” found in the book (see Rev. 1:3). Certainly the bride is not invited to her own wedding! This invitation goes out to the guests, believers from the Old Testament era and the Tribulation. During the eternal state, no distinctions will be made among the people of God; but in the Kingdom Age, differences will still exist as the church reigns with Christ and as Israel enjoys the promised messianic blessings.⁷¹

Whatever distinctions may exist between the saints of the pre-Abrahamic period, the saints in Israel before Christ, the saints among the Gentiles from Abraham to Christ, the saints of the Tribulation, and the saints in the churches from Christ to the rapture...such distinctions are secondary to the great primary truth that all will be there by virtue of the

saving work of Christ and their personal trust in the true Creator God and His provision of salvation.⁷²

2. Read verses 11-16. **The Rider on the White Horse!**

A century ago most people believe that history was progressing inexorably toward a man-made utopia. The Industrial Revolution, the march of scientific discovery, and the increasing pace of social reform seemed to augur nothing but brighter days ahead. Today, however, two world wars; innumerable regional, civil, and national wars; countless acts of terrorism and senseless violence; and the nearly complete collapse of moral values make such rosy optimism seem quaintly naïve.

The Bible teaches that things will be wonderfully better, but only after they become unimaginably worse. There is only one solution for the world's problems: the return of its true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish absolute monarchy and unilateral authority in His earthly kingdom. Only under His rule will there be peace instead of war, justice instead of inequity, and righteousness instead of wickedness. But that glorious event will not occur without fierce opposition from Satan, his demon hordes, and the world of wicked sinners. The Tribulation, the seven-year period immediately before Christ's return, will see the greatest of all human world empires, headed by the evil genius known as Antichrist. The earth will be infested with demons, those who have been held all along, those cast from heaven with Satan (12:9), and those released from imprisonment during the Tribulation (9:1-10, 14-20). The Tribulation will also be a time of escalating human wickedness, despite the unprecedented outpouring of God's wrath in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. Stubbornly hardening their hearts against the truth of the gospel, people even then will obstinately refuse to repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11) Even the destruction of Antichrist's magnificent capital city of Babylon (chaps. 17-18) will provoke loud laments, but no repentance.

But while chaos and turmoil reigns on earth during the Tribulation, the raptured church will be presented in heaven. The church, the bride of the Lamb, will be eagerly awaiting the marriage supper of the Lamb in the millennial earth (19:7). But before that wonderful celebration can take place, the warrior King must win the final battle. The forces of heaven and hell will meet in the climactic slaughter of human history, the battle of Armageddon. At the final holocaust man's day will end, all of Christ's foes will be vanquished, and His kingdom will be established.

God's people throughout redemptive history have eagerly anticipated the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat His foes and set up His kingdom. That will be the time when the destruction of Satan is completed (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:20), when the true King receives the ruling scepter (Gen. 40:10), when God will establish the throne of David's greater Son (II Sam. 7:13; Isa. 9:7), when the Son will rule the earth with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:6-9), when the armies of God and Magog will be shattered (Ezek. 38-39), when the nations will be judged (Joel 3:1-2, 12-14) after their defeat in battle by the returning King (Zech. 14:3-4), when Jerusalem will be the center of Messiah's kingdom (Zech. 12:3-9), when the angels will gather the wicked for judgment (Matt. 13:41-42; 25:41), when the Lord Jesus Christ will descend visibly (Rev. 1:7) from heaven in flaming fire, bringing retribution on the persecutors of His people (II Thess. 1:6-9; cf. Rev. 6:9-11).

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Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, Ill. :Tyndale, 1983), 389.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is thus the culmination of redemptive history. Believers of all ages have eagerly anticipated that glorious even (cf. Isa. 64:1-2). In fact, the apostle Paul defined Christians as those “who have loved His appearing” (II Tim. 4:8). Many believers, however, are enamored by the things of the world and do not love Christ’s appearing as they should. Certainly the Tribulation believers will have no such problem. They will be persecuted, hunted outcasts (cf. 13:17), living constantly under the sentence of death (13:15) in an unspeakably vile, demon-infested world. Christ’s coming will be what they long for and pray for.⁷³

(a) Read Matthew 24:27-31. What is described in this passage and what does John see in verse 11?

(b) Explain what each description below teaches about Jesus:

- [Riding a] white horse (Contrast with Zechariah 9:9):
- Faithful (II Corinthians 1:20) and True (John 8:45-46; 14:6; Titus 1:2):
- With justice he judges and makes war (Romans 2:16; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; II Timothy 4:1):
- Eyes like blazing fire (Hebrews 4:13):
- On his head are many crowns (11:15; II Samuel 12:30):
- He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood (14:14-20; Isaiah 63:1-6; I Peter 1:18-19):
- His name is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14; I John 1:1):
- The armies of heaven were following him (17:14; Matthew 25:31; I Thessalonians 3:13):
- Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword (Isaiah 66:15-16; Ezekiel 39:1-4, 17-20; Ephesians 6:17):

- He will rule them with an iron scepter (cf. 12:5; Genesis 49:10; Psalm 2:8-9):
- He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (14:18-20; Joel 3:12-14):
- King of Kings and Lord of Lords (cf. 17:14; Philippians 2:9-11; I Timothy 6:15):

The Lord is a man of war! It is an amazing title for the Son of God. Says Alexander White, commenting on Bunyan's *Holy War*, "Holy Scripture is full of wars and rumors of wars; the wars of the Lord; the wars of Joshua and the Judges; the wars of David, with his and many other magnificent battle-songs; till the best known name of the God Israel in the Old Testament is the Lord of Hosts; and then in the New Testament we have Jesus Christ described as the Captain of our salvation...And then the whole Bible is crowned with a book all sounding with battle-cries...till it ends with that city of peace where they hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more."

The Lord is a man of war! In righteousness He judges and makes war. The judging has been going on throughout the breaking of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets, and pouring out of the bowls. Now He makes war. He, who for long centuries has endured patiently the scoffings, the insults the bad manners of men; who for ages has contemplated Calvary and all that it displayed of human hatred and contempt; and who, now makes war over that blood.⁷⁴

3. Read verses 17-21. **The Supper of God!**

(a) What does John see and hear in verses 17-18?

(b) Read Zechariah 14:1-13. The prophet Zechariah also saw this final battle. What did he see?

(c) Read Zephaniah 1:14-18. The prophet Zephaniah also saw this final battle. What did he see?

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John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.:Loizeaux, 1991), 232.

- (d) What will be the response of the beast, the kings of the earth, and the armies of the world that have gathered for this last battle when they are confronted by this rider on a white horse?
- (e) What will happen to the beast and the false prophet?

These two demonically empowered political and religious leaders of the world are dealt a horrible blow; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire. This is the first mention in Scripture of the lake of fire, the final hell, the ultimate destination of Satan, his angels, and the unredeemed (Matt. 24:41). Isaiah described it as the place where “their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched” (Isa. 66:24), a description echoed by the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 9:48. In Matthew 13:42 Jesus added that it will be a place where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Revelation 14:11 says of those who suffer there, “The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night.” Apparently, these two don’t die, but are transformed miraculously into eternal form to burn in hell. They are the first of millions of men (20:15) and angels (Matt. 25:41) to arrive in the lake of fire.

Hell has always existed, but this is its final form. Unlike Hades, the lake of fire is not a temporary holding place (cf. Luke 16:23) but a permanent place of incarceration and punishment. Brimstone is frequently associated with the fire of judgment (cf. 9:17; 14:10; 20:10; Luke 17:29). That the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire a thousand years later when Satan is cast there (20:10) is convincing refutation of the false doctrine of annihilationism. As the two most evil, vile, blasphemous people who have ever lived, it is only fitting that these two be the first to arrive in that awful place. The New Testament is clear on the eternity of punishment (cf. 14:10-11; Matt. 13:40-42; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:17; 12:47-48).⁷⁵

- (f) Read Joel 3:1-2. What will happen to the armies of the world that have gathered to fight against the Lord and His heavenly army?
- (g) What will happen to their bodies?

At the great supper, the birds will eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of men, both free men and slaves, and small and great. That all-inclusive statement reveals the worldwide extent of the slaughter. To have one’s body left as food for birds is the ultimate indignity, especially for proud kings and mighty military commanders. That same ignominious fate awaits all the proud, God-hating rebels

everywhere in the world, both free men and slave, and small and great (cf. 11:18; 13:16).⁷⁶

- (h) Wow! The world is headed towards the coming wrath of God and is totally clueless. Given the grim picture painted in this chapter of the end of man, what are your thoughts?

- (i) Read I Peter 1:13-17 and II Peter 3:10-14. How should you live your life from this day forward? How are you conducting yourself in this fallen world?

Then suddenly it will all be over. In fact, there will be no war at all, in the sense that we think of war. There will be just a word spoken from Him who sits astride the great white horse. Once He spoke a word to howling winds and heaving waves, and the storm clouds vanished and the waves fell still. Once He spoke to a legion of demons bursting at the seams of a poor man's soul, and instantly they fled. Now He speaks a word, and the war is over. The blasphemous, loud-mouthed Beast is stricken where he stands. The false prophet, the miracle-working windbag from the pit is punctured and still. The pair of them are bundled up and hurled head long into the everlasting flames. Another word, and the panic-stricken armies reel and stagger and fall down dead. Field marshals and generals, admirals and air commanders, soldiers and sailors, rank and file, one and all—they fall. And the vultures descend and cover the scene.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid. 222-223.

⁷⁷ Phillips, 236.