

MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

DEVOTIONAL READING: Revelation 19:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 19

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Revelation 19:1-8

I. Heaven's People

Revelation 19:1-3

¹ After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power
belong to our God,

² for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her
adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of
his servants.”

³ And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for
ever and ever.”

1a. The phrase *after this* refers to the announcement of the judgment and destruction of Babylon. *The roar of a great multitude* speaking in unison reminds us of the great crowds of the redeemed in previous visions of the throne room in heaven.

1b. *Hallelujah* means “Praise God!” It stresses the text’s deep concern with proper worship of God.

1c. What comes next is a now-familiar litany of divine action (*salvation*; Revela-

tion 7:10; 12:10) and attributes (*glory and power*; 4:9-11; 5:12-13; 7:11-12). We too can praise God for his attributes and how he works out our salvation.

2a. The voice of the great chorus continues, focusing on God’s victory over *the great prostitute* (Babylon) as stated in Revelation 18. *His judgments* on her have been *true and just*—as all have ever been and ever will be (Psalm 119:160).

One of Babylon’s two great sins is that she corrupted the earth by her adulteries (Revelation 17:2, 4; 18:3). This vivid figure of speech, as used by the prophets, describes idolatry (Jeremiah 3:6-9; Ezekiel 23:36-37; etc.). This corrosive influence had affected “all the nations” (Revelation 14:8).

2b. This is the second of Babylon’s two great sins: persecuting God’s *servants* to the point of death.

The multitudes of Heaven see the destruction of “the great prostitute” for what it really is: a magnification of the power of the God who is faithful to keep his promises to those who are faithful to him.

3. The great crowd of heavenly voices cries out with the second of four occurrences of *hallelujah*. John uses this repetition to bring home the point: God is truly victorious and thus truly worthy of our praise! The crowd’s desire for the wicked city’s *smoke* to continue rising *up for ever*

and ever acknowledges that *her* destruction is not temporary.

Although the words *for ever* are enough to assure that this punishment is everlasting, the extra *and ever* cements the certainty. The permanence of this judgment is ironclad. This judgment parallels the eternal reign of God and the eternal nature of his kingdom (Revelation 11:15).

John's vision echoes similar language from the prophet Isaiah, where God's judgment on the land is described as "burning" and where "its smoke will rise forever" (Isaiah 34:9-10; Revelation 14:11).

II. The Throne

Revelation 19:4-5

⁴ The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"

⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

**"Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both great and small!"**

4. A second declaration of worship comes, this time from *the twenty-four elders* (Revelation 4:10; 5:8, 14; 11:16). Together with *the four living creatures* (4:6-8; 5:6, 14; 7:11; 14:3), they surround God's *throne* as the inner circle of those in the presence of the Almighty.

But why the numbers 24 and 4? Some propose that 24 stands for the Old Testament's 12 tribes of Israel plus the New Testament's 12 apostles, while the other 4 reflect Ezekiel 1:5-14.

Their united acclamation of worship consists of just two words: *Amen* and *Hallelujah*. The combined effect is to affirm the praise of the great crowd in Revelation

19:3 and repeat its central component: Praise the Lord!

5a. Another *voice* joins the multitude, the elders, and the living creatures in worship. *The throne* itself always refers to the presence and authority of God. Even so, the voice is likely not from God or from the Lamb, and it is uncertain whether it is from an angel herald or another entity. What is important is that the voice has divine authorization to call for worship.

When we understand the true nature of God, then we can praise him even in the midst of our deepest sorrow and toughest trials. We can do this because we understand that he is worthy. We also offer praise because we know that God's purposes are eternal, that his salvation is sure, and that his victory is guaranteed and complete.

The form of worship demonstrated here differs slightly from previous exclamations. Rather than the command "Praise the Lord," this version exclaims *Praise our God*. This echoes the commands of Psalm 66:8.

5b. The type of *fear* in view is not that of the terror as in Revelation 6:15-17. Rather, it refers to those who revere God (11:18).

The phrasing *great and small* indicates the inclusive nature of the imperative (Revelation 11:18). Status symbols considered important on earth no longer have the same impact. As some have noted, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. And so it is before the throne.

III. Unified Multitude

Revelation 19:6-8

⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

**"Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty
reigns.**

**7 Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has
come,
and his bride has made herself
ready.**

**8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”**

6a. John hears yet another voice, this time only described in similarity to a *great multitude*. The sound likened to *rushing waters* is more like that of a thunderous waterfall or the crashing of stormy waves on a beach.

The word translated *thunder* is always associated with divine power, authority, or initiative (John 12:29). Its use in the verse at hand alongside the sound of water bears strong similarity to the prophet's visions in Ezekiel 1:24 and 43:2.

6b. We come now to fourth and final *Hallelujah* in the book of Revelation. This imperative to praise God is accompanied by a reason to do so.

6c. God's actions are often grouped under three headings: he creates, he rules, and he redeems. The text before us speaks to the second of those. In that light, the praise is for the universal kingship of *our Lord God*. There can be no rival to God, either in his rule or in our praise of him.

God's power to reign is demonstrated by his overwhelming and permanent victory over enemies; now his all-powerful nature brings his promises to their completion.

7a. Three more imperatives are now added to the one above. This is unique, being the only place in the New Testament where the verbs *rejoice*, *be glad*, and *give* occur together in the same verse.

7b. This is the reason for the unique triple command. It is the moment the faithful had been waiting for: the time and occasion when the faithful servants of God

see their eternal, heavenly fellowship with their Savior, Jesus Christ, finalized. Such joy! This is the moment when all God's work throughout history moves toward its magnificent conclusion.

Old Testament prophets often used marriage as a figurative reference to describe the relationship between God and his people. Jesus, too, described the kingdom of heaven in terms of a marriage.

A marriage requires two parties: a bride and a groom. The groom in view here is *the Lamb*.

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29). Peter said that Jesus was “a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19). The idea of Christ as the sacrificial lamb lies at the very heart of our redemption and salvation.

7c-8. The book of Revelation is loaded with figurative language; that is when an image of one thing is used to express another. This is the great challenge in interpreting both Jesus' parables and the book of Revelation as a whole. A key difference between the parables and Revelation is that Jesus often identified the references in his parables later (Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43), while the apostle John almost never does that in Revelation. A rare exception is in the verses before us when John explains that *fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people*.

John's use of wedding imagery speaks to the relationship between God and his people. The bride of Christ is the church: holy ones sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit. The *bride* has been redeemed because of the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9), the very same blood applied to those who “washed their robes and made them white” (7:14). The time for rejoicing is coming! Like a bride engaged to be married, the church awaits the return of Christ and the eternal marriage feast between the bride and the groom.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Into the Lesson

Consider a memorable wedding—either your own or one you’ve attended. How did your expectations of wedding procedures and traditions differ from those of other cultures?

Today’s lesson may challenge our view of how weddings “should” be.

Into the Word

Read Revelation 19:1-8. Start an agree/disagree discussion between, “praise” and “worship” from your own research.

Praise

Definition: _____

Worship

Definition: _____

What are differences between the two?

What is the meaning and significance of “Babylon,” which is mentioned several times in Revelation 18?

Consider the futures of “Babylon” and the Church. Answer the following prompts for each.

Babylon

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Why: _____

How: _____

The Church

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Why: _____

How: _____

Into Life

List characteristics and qualities of each:

Unbride-Like Church: _____

Bride-Like Church _____

Write one “unbride-like” quality or tendency that you can help your church overcome.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Look for hallelujah moments in your life.