

Revelation Ch. 19: The Victory Feasts

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Jerusalem has fallen (18:2), and now is the time for celebration (19:7). The last part of this chapter makes it clear that just as this wicked nation gathered against God and fell, so would any who attempted to do the same (19:19-21).

The Marriage Supper

Verse 1-2

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! For 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.”

While many in the world would be troubled (18:9-19), God's people rejoice to see justice served (cf. 16:5, 6; Ps. 19:9), vengeance delivered (18:20; cf. 7:10; 11:15-18; Lk. 21:22; Heb. 10:30), and prayers answered (6:9-11). This is reminiscent of the song of Moses (15:3, 4; Deut. 32:43). It is worthy of note that the phrase “Alleluia,” meaning “Praise the Lord,” is found in the New Testament only in this chapter (four times).

With men, we sometimes see partiality shown in such matters, yet God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). This event in history stands out more so than any other as a demonstration of God's righteous judgments, because He justly punished His own chosen nation.

Verses 3-4

Again they said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!”

This event would forever be impressed upon the minds of God's people, demonstrating the justice and wrath of Almighty God (cf. 4:1-11; 5:1-14; 6:17). The language is reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:28), and is used of the fall of Edom (Isa. 34:10), and of all enemies of God (14:11). As Creator (4:11), Redeemer (5:9), Deliverer (17:14), and Judge (11:18; 15:4; 16:5; 20:12), God is worthy of worship for who He is, and what He has done (cf. 11:16).

Verse 5

Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”

Even those who were not Christians (yet), would be in awe at the judgment of Jerusalem. The gospel message and irrefutable proofs that validate it should cause all to praise God (cf. Acts 1:3; Rom. 1:16).

Verse 6

And 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!”

The voice of a great multitude responds to the request in a loud voice (cf. 1:15; Ezek. 1:24). Certainly included in this multitude are all the Christians who were avenged (cf. 7:9).

Verse 7

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.”

Contrasted with the unfaithful harlot Babylon (17:1-5; 18:7), the New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ (cf. 21:2, 9, 10; Isa. 62:5), the righteous people of God in heaven and on earth (Heb. 12:22-24). She is the church (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:25-27), betrothed to Christ on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2; 2 Cor. 11:2), and now fully built up and prepared (cf. 10:7; 15:8; cf. Eph. 4:13). She is the mother of the righteous (12:1, 2; Gal. 4:26), contrasted with the mother of harlots (17:5).

This emphasizes that while it was the end for the harlot, it was just the beginning for the bride.

Verse 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.

As most brides, she is arrayed in white, symbolizing her purity and righteousness (3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 14; 15:6; 19:14; cf. 14:4; 2 Cor. 11:2), whereas the harlot was adorned with purple and scarlet and jewels (17:4). The people of God have their sins cleansed by the blood of Christ (Isa. 1:18; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Jn. 1:7), and strive to keep themselves unspotted from the world (3:4; Jas. 1:27). Notice that “to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen,” signifying that only through Jesus can we be considered righteous (Rom. 5:19; Gal. 3:27; cf. Jn. 14:6).

Verse 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.”

It is an honor to be invited to a wedding, and how much more so that of the Lamb! The marriage supper is ongoing, and all are called to attend (2 Thes. 2:14; Rev. 3:20). Let those who hear the invitation accept it graciously, turn from their wicked ways (Acts 3:19), and enjoy the blessings that come with having a relationship with Christ, and being reconciled to God (22:17; cf. 2 Cor. 5:19).

Tying in perfectly with the events at hand, notice what Jesus said of those who rejected this invitation:

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (Matt. 22:1-14)

Verse 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.”

John was in such awe by what he was seeing that he fell to worship the heavenly messenger (cf. 22:8, 9). For this, he is rebuked (cf. Col. 2:18), and told that God alone ought to be worshiped (Matt. 4:10; cf. Matt. 14:33; Jn. 9:38; Heb. 1:6). Though with power and authority comes the temptation to allow

worship, good men and good angels recognize that only God should be served (Acts 10:25, 26; Rev. 22:8, 9).

We ought to worship God because of what He has done through Christ (19:3, 4; cf. 5:9). Certainly, the vast majority of prophecy was to point to the coming Messiah and His kingdom (Matt. 5:17; Lk. 24:27; Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; many others). If one does not see Christ throughout the Old Testament, they are not seeing much of anything.

The Victorious Rider

Verse 11

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.

Jesus is the rider of this white horse, symbolizing victory, called Faithful and True because His testimony stands forever (1:5; 3:14; Jn. 18:37; Heb. 3:1-6). Therefore, He judges righteously (Jn. 12:48; Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:8), and engages in spiritual warfare with all who dare oppose Him (17:14; Eph. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:25; 2 Cor. 10:5; cf. Matt. 10:34).

Verse 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.

His eyes are like a flame of fire, because all things are laid bare before Him (1:14; Heb. 4:13). He has many crowns on His head, for He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16). Like His followers, He had a name written that no one knew but Himself (2:17), perhaps a reference to His exalted status (Phi. 2:9), or to the authority that only He possessed (19:13, 16; Matt. 28:18; cf. Col. 3:17).

Verse 13

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Though He sacrificed His life for mankind (7:14; Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:26), the robe dipped in blood most likely refers to His treading of the wine-press as He poured out His wrath on His enemies (14:18-20; cf. 19:15; Isa. 63:2-4). He is the embodiment of the Word, a title found only in the writings of John (Jn. 1:1-3, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1).

Verse 14

And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

The armies in heaven are His followers (17:14; 19:8), soldiers ready to serve for His cause (Eph. 6:10-17). This heavenly army could also include angels (Matt. 26:53; cf. Rev. 12:7; Dan. 12:1).

Verses 15-16

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, the word of God that strikes at the hearts of men (1:16; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; cf. Isa. 49:1, 2; Hos. 6:5). It is here a word of Divine judgment (2:16) from the Ruler of the Universe (17:14; cf. Dan. 4:17; 7:27), holding the rod that can be used to shepherd or smite (2:27; 12:5; Ps. 2:9; Ps. 23; Isa. 11:4; Rev. 7:17). It is He who treads the wine-press, trampling upon

the wicked in His fury (14:18-20; Isa. 63:2-4; cf. Heb. 10:31).

His robe and thigh would be the most prominent places for the name of the rider, being clearly seen by all. Jesus Christ is clearly King of Kings and Lord of Lords (17:14; 1 Tim. 6:15), with the power to protect or destroy (7:1-3; 11:1, 2), and we ought to obey Him (22:14; 2 Thes. 1:6-9).

The Victory Supper

Verses 17-18

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

As the church is glorified, the birds of prey gather to devour the dead remains of the wicked, and cleanse the land (Deut. 28:26; Matt. 24:28; Ezek. 39:16-22). This supper is a celebration of victory for the demise of the oppressors of God's people. Jerusalem would be defeated and her wickedness cleansed from the land by the Roman armies. Once their purpose was fulfilled (17:16, 17), the Roman persecutors would likewise fall (19:20, 21).

Verse 19

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

The persecution by Nero was just the first of many future conflicts with the Roman Empire (see 13:15-17). Now that Jerusalem is gone, the pagans emerge as the primary persecutors of God's people (17:14).

Verse 20

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

This depicts the fall of pagan Rome, not necessarily as an empire (c. 476 AD), but as a persecutor of the church (cf. 13:7; 17:14). Both the political beast and its pagan religions would be utterly defeated (cf. Dan. 7:11, 26). The lake of fire symbolizes the utter defeat of the enemies of God. It is the second death, spiritual defeat, in which the wicked will be ultimately punished, and eternally separated from God (20:14; 21:8; Matt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thes. 1:9).

Today, the empire is gone, along with its pagan religions, but Christianity still stands strong (11:15; Dan. 2:44; 7:27).

Verse 21

And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

The rest, that is, the other political and religious groups that dare rise against Christianity would be judged accordingly (cf. 2:16; 1 Cor. 15:25).

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