

"THE TWO SUPPERS"

I. Introduction

- A. The beginning of Revelation 19 stands in sharp contrast to chapter 18, where the fall of Babylon was lamented by those whose hopes were bound up with her.
- B. Revelation 19 opens with a picture of the redeemed in heaven doing what they were instructed to do in verse 20 of the preceding chapter: celebrating the destruction of Babylon and the consummation of their salvation.
- C. It is good for God's people to rejoice over the fall of Babylon.
- D. Babylon is the engine that Satan employs to spread wickedness and oppress the church.
- E. This is why our Shorter Catechism says that whenever we pray, "Thy kingdom come," one of the things we are asking is that Satan's kingdom would be destroyed.
- F. The visions of Revelation 19 are a depiction of the answer to that petition.

II. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

- A. Our text begins with John hearing a heavenly multitude crying out, "Hallelujah!"
 - 1. This cry is repeated three more times in the following verses.
 - 2. Interestingly, this chapter is the only place in the New Testament where the word Hallelujah appears.
 - 3. It is a Hebrew word that means 'praise Yahweh.'

4. It is one of the few Hebrew words that has come directly into the English language.
 5. Interestingly, one of the other such words also appears in this chapter, the word "Amen," which is used to express wholehearted agreement with something that has been prayed or asserted.
- B. God is praised by the heavenly multitude because of the salvation that he has brought about for his people.
1. They sing, "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God."
 2. This underscores that God is utterly sovereign in salvation.
 3. Salvation is God's work, not man's.
 4. Therefore he alone is glorified in it, for it puts his power on display.
- C. The heavenly multitude also exclaims their hallelujah over the fact that God has judged the great prostitute Babylon.
1. In doing this, God manifests his justice.
 2. Babylon had corrupted the world and shed the blood of the saints.
 3. Back in chapter 6, the martyred church cried out to the Lord saying, "how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
 4. Here in Revelation 19 the wait is over.
 5. This is the answer to the prayers of the saints for justice.
- D. Verse 3 says the smoke from Babylon will go up forever and ever.
1. This alludes to two Old Testament passages.
 2. The first is Genesis 19:28, where Abraham looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and saw smoke going up like the smoke of a

furnace.

3. The second is Isaiah 34:9-10, where never-ending smoke is a memorial to God's punishment of Edom.
 4. Both of those temporal judgments stand as foreshadowings of the final judgment at the end of history, which is what is being depicted here in Revelation 19.
 5. The never-ending smoke is a picture of the eternal torment that will be experienced by the wicked in hell.
 6. It is also possible that in John's first-century context this may have been a polemic against Rome, which was known as "the eternal city."
 7. Rome thought that it would endure forever, but because it was a manifestation of spiritual Babylon it will share in the eternal destruction that will come upon Babylon at the end of the age.
- E. In the next part of John's vision, he hears the great multitude praising God for his universal reign, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."
1. This line is the basis of Handel's famous "Hallelujah Chorus."
 2. All throughout that part of the oratorio, God is glorified as the One who shall reign forever and ever.
 3. And note what this text tells us about this eternal reign.
 4. It is inaugurated by Christ's marriage to his Bride, the church.
 5. In using this image, the vision is drawing upon ancient Jewish marriage customs.
 6. The marriage was arranged by the parents of the prospective bride and groom and was then publicly announced.

7. This was followed by betrothal, which, unlike our contemporary practice of engagement, was legally binding.
 8. Then there would be an interval during which the groom would pay the dowry to the father of the bride.
 9. Once that was done, there would be a procession and a wedding feast.
 10. Only at that point would the marriage be consummated.
 11. William Hendriksen explains how all of this points to what God has done for his church in Christ, saying, "In Christ the bride was *chosen* from all eternity. Throughout the entire Old Testament dispensation the wedding was *announced*. Next, the Son of God assumed our flesh and blood: the *betrothal* took place. The price — the *dowry* — was paid on Calvary. And now, after an *interval* which in the eyes of God is but a little while, the Bridegroom returns and 'It has come, the wedding of the Lamb.' The Church on earth yearns for this moment, so does the Church in heaven. Then we shall all be with Him for evermore. It will be a holy, blessed, everlasting fellowship: the fullest realization of all the promises of the gospel." [181]
- F. John hears the multitude singing of how the Bride has made herself ready and beautified herself for the wedding.
1. This is a picture of our redemption in all of its fullness.
 2. It points to our justification, in which we have the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith.
 3. It points to our sanctification, in which we are made progressively holy and upright throughout this life.
 4. And it points to our glorification, in which we are made perfectly righteous in both body and soul for all eternity.

5. All of this comes to us as a free gift of God's grace.
 6. This is emphasized in the text when it says, "it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."
 7. As Paul says in Ephesians 2, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that he prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
 8. This is what we are to spend our entire lives doing.
 9. We are to walk in the good works that God has prepared for us.
 10. And as we do so, we are adorning ourselves and making ourselves ready for the marriage of the Lamb.
- G. As we turn to verse 9, we see a shift in the marriage metaphor.
1. In the preceding verses the church was the Bride, but here believers are referred to as the guests at the wedding feast.
 2. In the corporate sense, the church is Christ's beautiful Bride.
 3. But at the individual level, we are those who have been invited to the glorious wedding feast.
 4. The term that the ESV translates as "invited" is literally "called" in the Greek.
 5. The context makes it clear that this refers not merely to the free offer of the gospel, which is extended to everyone.
 6. Rather, this is referring to our effectual calling, in which the Spirit of God persuades and enables us to embrace Christ as he is offered in the gospel.
- H. The first half of the chapter ends with John telling us of how he was tempted to bow down and worship the angel who delivered this message

to him.

1. In one sense, it is understandable that John would be inclined to do this.
2. Both the message and the messenger are glorious.
3. Nevertheless, the angel is quick to rebuke John and remind him that God alone is worthy of our worship.
4. Yet even in this there is a note of encouragement, as the angel refers to himself as a “fellow servant” alongside us believers.

III. The Great Supper of God

- A. We turn now to the second half of the chapter, which begins in verse 11.
 1. This section begins a new vision that is chronologically prior to what was described in the first half of the chapter.
 2. While the first ten verses of Revelation 19 gave us a picture of the church in glory, these remaining verses go back before that and provide yet another picture of the defeat of the forces of evil at the end of history.
 3. There are some interpreters who disagree with this.
 4. For example, David Chilton, who is one of the most prominent preterist commentators on Revelation, contends that verses 11 and following are not describing the second coming of Christ but the progress of the gospel throughout the church age.
 5. Remember, preterists typically see Babylon in Revelation as a symbol for Jerusalem.
 6. That being the case, they contend that the fall that is celebrated in this chapter is the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

7. Once that took place, Christ went forth to conquer the nations with the gospel.
 8. Now, it is certainly true that the gospel is spreading throughout the world during this present age, but this does not appear to be what the second half of Revelation 19 is talking about.
 9. As we have noted before, it is very difficult to defend the notion that Jerusalem could be described as “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth,” which is how Babylon is described at the end of chapter 17,
 10. Furthermore, Chilton’s position is significantly weakened by the fact that there is absolutely no mention of the gospel here in the second half of chapter 19.
 11. Everything that is said here contributes to a picture of judgment.
 12. It does speak of Christ’s robe being dipped in blood, but the context indicates that this is not pointing to the blood that Christ shed on the cross but to the blood that splatters up as he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.
 13. Moreover, the worldwide spread of the gospel was not prompted by the destruction of the temple in AD 70 but by the pouring out of the Spirit on the church on the day of Pentecost, nearly four decades earlier.
- B. The images of Christ striking down the nations with a sharp sword from his mouth, ruling over them with a rod of iron, and treading the winepress of God’s wrath are drawn from multiple Old Testament passages.
1. In Isaiah 49:2, the Messiah says, “He made my mouth like a sharp sword.”
 2. In Isaiah 11:4, the Messiah is described with these words: “he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”

3. In Psalm 2:9, the Lord says to his Messiah, "You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
4. And in Isaiah 63 the Lord says, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood splattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel."
5. In John's vision, these passages are being drawn upon in order to provide another picture of the last battle, the battle of Har Magedon.
6. When the enemies of God assemble together at the end of history thinking that they will make an end of Christ's church, it is they who will be slaughtered and made into a feast for carrion birds.
7. Note that the judgment of the wicked is referred to as "the great supper of God," setting it in contrast to "the marriage supper of the Lamb."
8. Everyone who has ever lived will participate in one of these suppers.
9. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb enjoy the blessing of being called to partake of his marriage supper.
10. But those who are still in their sins when Christ returns will face the wrath of the Lamb.
11. Notice also that the last battle is not depicted as a long, protracted struggle.
12. On the contrary, it is an utter rout.
13. The kings of the earth and all their vast armies will not stand a chance when the rider on the white horse comes with the armies of heaven.

IV. Conclusion

- A. I read an article this week that cited two current instances of Christian persecution.
1. These examples were not from the Muslim world or communist China, but from Great Britain and in the United States of America.
 2. In Britain, a Christian physician has lost his position because he refuses to refer to patients by their preferred pronouns.
 3. Specifically, he refused to use the pronouns “she” and “her” to refer to a large, bearded man who identifies as a woman.
 4. The article said that an employment tribunal recently issued the following statement in its ruling on this case: “[B]elief in Genesis 1:27, lack of belief in transgenderism and conscientious objection to transgenderism in our judgment are incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others, specifically here, transgender individuals.”
 5. This doctor has been deemed a violator of basic human rights because he believes the Bible when it says, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
 6. The article also cited a similar situation in America, where a high school teacher was fired for refusing to use the pronouns “him” and “his” to refer to a female student who identifies as a male.
 7. This is what Babylon does to Christians.
 8. If it cannot succeed in pressuring or seducing us to bow down to its idols, it uses its power to oppress us for our refusal to do so.
- B. It is not vindictive for us to want Babylon to be destroyed.

1. Of course, we should want people to come out of Babylon and turn to Christ.
2. We should pray to that end and make the most of opportunities to talk to people about the gospel.
3. But this does not change the fact that we should long for God to vindicate his name by destroying all who persist in their opposition to him.
4. The day is fast approaching when God will do so.
5. In the words of Joel Beeke, “Here on earth, God’s saints suffer much because of the world around them. They struggle with injustice in the world, with the sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. They are tempted by evil, enticed by idolatry, and lured by immorality. But God will graciously bring them through the Vanity Fair of this world. One day, their struggles will be over, for Babylon will be destroyed — hallelujah!” [474]