



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 13 – Marriage Supper of the Lamb

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to understand the interpretation of chapter 19 of the Revelation, with particular emphasis on understanding the significance of the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

NOTES ON REVELATION 19

19:1 “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:”

After John sees the judgment of religious (chapter 17) and commercial (chapter 18) Babylon, the vision in chapter 19 occurs. A multitude in heaven begins the “Alleluia Chorus.” Since these are people speaking, and they are in heaven, it makes sense to understand these to be saints. The word “alleluia” (literally, “praise ye the Lord”) is a Hebrew word, carried over into Greek, then English. It occurs only four times in the New Testament (all in Revelation 19:1-6). It speaks of a time of rejoicing reminiscent of the Hallel (*Hallelujah*) Psalms (e.g., Psalm 111, 112, 113, 117) that all begin the “Praise ye the Lord.” They rejoice as they recognize God as the one who possesses salvation, glory, honor, and power. This statement looks back to all the events we have seen thus far in the book.

19:2 “For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

God is to be praised because his judgments are true and righteous (they are just). And specifically, God’s judgment of Babylon in the prior two chapters was true and righteous. She had corrupted the earth, that is, caused the world to join in her sin (spiritual apostasy, idolatry, various sins in the commercial context for money) and martyred saints. But God has avenged those martyred saints.

19:3 “And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”

The alleluia over Babylon’s judgment is repeated. This may simply be for emphasis, or it may be that two alleluias are given regarding her judgment because there were two judgments, that of religious Babylon and that of commercial Babylon. Carrying over the imagery from chapter 18, the smoke for her fiery judgment burns forever, that is, her judgment is permanent. As they were commanded in Revelation 18:20, they are rejoicing in God’s judgment on sinful Babylon.

19:4 “And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.”

John reintroduces the 24 elders that we saw in chapters 4, 5, 7, 11 and 14 and the four cherubim that surround God’s throne. Recall that the 24 elders are likely Christian leaders. The four cherubim are the special angels that surround God’s throne (Satan was a cherub). They have two things to say: “Amen” and “Alleluia.” Both Hebrew terms are carried over into Greek and then English. “Amen” means “so be it” or “may it be true” or “I

confirm/agree” and “Alleluia” means praise ye the Lord. In this “amen,” the elders and cherubim confirm their agreement with what has taken place, namely the destruction of Babylon. This is the third of the four alleluias in this chorus.

19:5 “And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”

Since the voice comes out of the throne, but speaks of God in the third-person, it is likely one of the cherubim. We have seen many examples of them speaking before (e.g., Revelation 4:9, 5:14, 6:1). The command goes out to the servants, all of them “both small and great,” to praise God. The servants are the saints (including the 24 elders) and angelic hosts, for these are they “that fear him.”

19:6 “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

In response to the call of the cherub to praise God, the chorus of billions sounds (“voice of a great multitude”) and, as we would expect, the chorus is extremely loud like falling water and thunder. Whereas the first three alleluias agreed in God’s judgment, the fourth agrees in God’s omnipotent reign, for God is omnipotent (all powerful), and he reigns over all creation. In all that has occurred in the book up to this point, God has demonstrated His omnipotent reign, and He is to be praised for this. This verse also marks a transition from the judgments that usher in God the Father’s reign (the first three alleluias) to God the Son’s kingship over the earth. This praise looks to the completion of God’s plan. What is imminent is Jesus’ return (later in this chapter) and his reign (next chapter).

Note on Jewish Weddings: As background for the verses that follow about the Jesus’ marriage feast, it is important to understand some of the basic steps leading up to the Jewish wedding in Jesus’ time:

- 1) The man and woman are betrothed (probably arranged). This begins a betrothal period that would commonly last about a year. For all practical purposes, the couple is considered married, but they do not yet live together nor consummate the marriage. This period served a couple of practical purposes. One was to be sure the woman was not pregnant. The other was to allow time for the man to prepare their living chambers, typically at his family’s home (John 14:2-3).
- 2) As referenced above, there is a betrothal period.
- 3) At a time of the groom’s choosing (or his father’s choosing), the groom goes to the home of the bride to fetch her away to the wedding ceremony, or alternatively, the groom sends a wedding procession to get her and he awaits her arrival at the ceremony. Wedding ceremonies typically started during the evening, and a bride was expected to always be ready to leave quickly to the wedding, since she did not know when her husband or his wedding procession would arrive (Song of Solomon 3:6-8).
- 4) The ceremony occurred, followed by the feast and the consummation of the marriage. But note that the feast could continue thereafter for several days. It was the groom’s responsibility (or his family’s) to provide the food and drink. A man’s ability to show hospitality was crucial in this culture (hence the potential embarrassment in John 2 at the wedding in Cana when the wine ran out; indeed, there is evidence that the invitees could sue the groom in such a case). Also note that the groom’s family would tend to the invitations.

If Jesus' relationship to his Church is symbolized by a Jewish wedding, then:

- 1) the betrothal occurred during Jesus' earthly ministry when he started his Church (Matthew 16),
- 2) Jesus went away to prepare a place with a promise to return later (John 14:2-3) after the betrothal period has passed,
- 3) when Jesus returns he will fetch away (the Rapture) his bride for the wedding (note that the Rapture is not preceded by any signs; the bride is expected to be ready),
- 4) the ceremony and feast occur.

If God the Father is hosting the feast (the marriage supper), we can only imagine how substantial a feast it will be. Relevant questions addressed below are: "Who is the bride?" and "Who are the invitees?"

19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

This is a day for rejoicing, and this is what the alleluias looked forward to. Of all celebrations, few are so joyous as a wedding. Here, God the Father has prepared the wedding feast for God the Son (the Lamb). This marriage has been a long time in planning, but the day has finally come. Often in the Bible, the Kingdom Age (when Jesus rules and reigns on the earth) is likened to a feast (e.g., Isaiah 25:6, Matthew 8:11, 26:26-29). On any wedding day, the bride spends a great deal of time preparing herself for the ceremony. Here, also, in the marriage of the Lamb, the bride has made herself ready. Just as any bride's preparation includes, in particular, her wedding gown, so also does the Lamb's bride's preparation include her garment, as we see in the next verse. Although we know that the Lamb is Jesus (see also Matthew 9:14-15; John 3:27-30), we are not yet told who the bride is.

19:8 "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

The bride's preparation includes her garment, made of clean, white linen. This wedding imagery is symbolic, and we are told explicitly that the wedding garment is representative of the righteousness of the saints. The identification of the garment as the righteousness of the *saints* helps us identify the bride. She represents saints, but which ones? Most likely, she is all New Testament saints (2 Corinthians 11:1-2; Ephesians 5:22-32).

19:9 "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

John is told to write that those who are called (i.e., invited) to the wedding feast of Jesus are blessed. We know that the Lamb is Jesus, the bride is the body of all New Testament saints, but who are the invited ones? Obviously, the wedding imagery would not be complete without wedding guests. In other places in the Bible, the Jewish people are spoken of as those who are invited to the wedding feast (see, e.g., Matthew 22:1-14, 25:1-13). Notice in the parable in Matthew 22 that the Jewish people are the original invitees, but after they refuse, others are invited. As we have emphasized in this study, the Tribulation is a time of great revival for Israel, so it is to be anticipated that whereas Jesus' original offer of the kingdom to Israel was rejected, at this point in history, millions of Jews are prepared to attend the wedding feast. This is a time of great joy, and the Jewish people share in this blessing (note that Jewish people saved during the Church Age are part of the bride).

19:10 “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

John falls down to worship the angel and gets a quick rebuke. The angel protests and tells John not to worship him, because he is only a servant to John and other Christians. Instead, worship God. And he adds, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” What the angel is pointing out is that the visions in this book (the prophecy) are not given to John to testify to angels so that angels can be worshipped, but instead, are given as a testimony of Jesus, and it is he who is to be worshipped.

19:11 “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”

John looks into heaven (“heaven opened”). This is not the first white horse in the Revelation. The first one was in Revelation 6:2, but in that case the rider was the Anti-Christ. It may be that a white horse indicates victory; the Anti-Christ had a white horse in 6:2 in conjunction with his arrival as a victor; here also, Jesus enters the scene a victor. The person described riding this white horse is completely different, for he is called “Faithful and True.” He judges righteously and makes war on the same basis, which is consistent with what we read elsewhere about Jesus (see, in Jesus’ own words, John 5:22, 7:24). He is Faithful because he will fulfill all that has been foretold of his second coming. He is True (that is, genuine); he is the genuine Christ (not the “anti-”). This is Jesus, as the description in the next two verses will further confirm. Note that he not only judges, but carries out the judgment (makes war). In the triumphal entry, Jesus rode on “a colt, the foal of an ass.” (Matthew 21:5) This was a reference to Zechariah 9:9-10; those two verses speak, without any indication of a gap of time in between, of Jesus’ first and second triumphal entries. The first was recorded in Matthew 21, and the second is recorded here in this verse. In his second coming, Jesus is a conquering warrior on a white stallion.

19:12 “His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.”

John describes the rider on the white horse. The description of his eyes takes us back to his first vision of the glorified Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:14. Recall that the eyes “as a flame of fire” indicate that he does not miss anything; they are eyes that judge. But there is a significant difference. Between John’s first vision recorded in Revelation 1 and his vision here, Jesus took the seven-sealed scroll (the Title Deed to Creation) and opened all seven seals. Only he was worthy to do so, and having done so, all the inheritance therein is now his to possess. Jesus’ return is for the purpose, in the first instance, of taking possession of what is now his by virtue of his holding (and having opened) the scroll. For that reason, unlike the description in chapter 1, Jesus wears many crowns. The Greek term is *diadem*, a king’s crown, and not *stephanos* as was used in Revelation 14:14 when Jesus wore a victor’s crown (like the crown given to the victor at the games). To wear a *diadem* is to indicate kingship, authority and dominion. Most kings have one crown. Some kings wear two crowns. For example, in ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh often wore two crowns, one indicating his dominion over southern Egypt, and one indicating his dominion over northern Egypt. Here, Jesus wears “many crowns,” because he has dominion over the entire planet. Moreover, he has a name written on him that no man knew except himself. The text does not say where the name is written, nor does it matter. The point of no one knowing his name is that no man exercises any authority over him. (see Luke 8:30; also recall Jacob’s wrestling with the angel of the Lord, who would not give Jacob his name) In the Old Tes-

tament, God sometimes changed a person's name indicating his authority over that person (i.e., that the person willfully submitted to God), such as Abraham and Sarah (formerly Abram and Sarai). In the New Testament, Jesus does the same thing, changing Simon to Peter (Mark 3:16). Jesus has total authority over men, and thus he possesses a name that no man knows nor can ever know.

19:13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

Jesus is clothed with a garment dipped in blood, probably a reference to Isaiah 63:1-6. The point is that John sees Jesus, who has been victorious in battle over his enemies, with their blood stains on his clothes. The first time Jesus came, his own blood was shed; this time, the blood of his enemies is shed. John tells us that the person he sees is "The Word of God," an unmistakable reference to Jesus Christ, called "The Word" in John's gospel. (John 1:1, 14-17) Note that in this and the last two verses, Jesus had three different names: Faithful and True, an Unknown Name and The Word of God. God forewarned of the destruction of His enemies (and the enemies of Israel) throughout the Old Testament. God's prophetic word was fulfilled by Jesus Christ ("The Word of God"). This is the famed Battle of Armageddon that was introduced with the Sixth Vial Judgment (Revelation 16:12-16). With the sixth vial, at the tail end of the seven-year Tribulation, God gathers the armies at Armageddon. The word Armageddon is from "Har-megiddo" or "Mountain of Megiddo." Megiddo was a town about 60 miles north of Jerusalem overlooking the plain of Megiddo to the west and the Valley of Jezreel on the northeast. Many ancient battles occurred here (e.g., Judges 5:19; 2 Chronicles 35:22). In this area, Saul was slain by the Philistines, Barak and Deborah defeated Sisera, Gideon defeated the Midianites, Ahaziah was killed by Jehu, and Pharaoh Necho killed King Josiah. Also recall from chapter 16 that God gathers armies from the east to fight Anti-Christ's forces outside Jerusalem.

19:14 "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

Recalling the battle with Sennacherib from 2 Kings 19, especially verses 35-36, we can only imagine the immense strength of this army. They are on white horses, because they are going to all be victorious over the enemies of Jesus. The armies in heaven that follow Jesus on white horses of their own are probably angels. Note that they are dressed in white linen, which speaks of their righteousness. We should not be surprised that the angels dress in white, as does God (Daniel 7:9) and Jesus (Matthew 17:2), and often angels are presented as dressed in white (John 20:12). The good guys wear white! But we have also seen the saints dressed in white in this book. The reason I identify these in white as angels is there are verses elsewhere indicating that when Jesus returns he will be accompanied by angels. (e.g., Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8) I also feel that the saints will return with Jesus (and wear white), but the focus here is on the warriors. One final issue is why their raiment is clean. The vision of Jesus in the last verse with a stained garment was proleptic of what he is about to do, not what he has already done. In this verse, Jesus heads off to battle with his angels following behind him, and since they have not yet started fighting, their garments are not yet stained with blood.

19:15 “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Anti-Christ has now spoken with big words for seven years; it is time for Jesus to say some words. John sees a sharp sword go out of Jesus’ mouth that smites the nations. That we have seen Jesus’ garments drenched in blood is likely symbolic of what he will do rather than indicating actual hand-to-hand combat. (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9, regarding Jesus’ destruction of Anti-Christ) I believe this verse indicates that Jesus will speak (or command) the destruction of the Gentiles nations; if a literal sword were in view, I think it unlikely Jesus would keep it in his mouth. This may mean that his enemies simply fall dead, or Jesus may command his army of angels to destroy his enemies (the latter is more likely). In either event, the result is the same; Jesus has taken vengeance on the nations. John also says that Jesus will rule “them” (that is, the nations) with a rod of iron (a reference to Psalm 2, indicating inflexible righteousness). The point is that in the kingdom there will still be nations, and Jesus will rule over them. The unsaved die in battle, leaving behind nations of saved people to be ruled by Jesus (more on this in the next chapter). Jesus treads the winepress, a symbolic picture of his judgment on his enemies that was already alluded to in Revelation 14:17-20.

19:16 “And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

It is unclear if both titles appear on his garment and his thigh, or one in each location, but the point is clear. Jesus is the King of kings, that is, the king over and above all others. This is similar to the statement in Song of Solomon 1:1 (“Song of Songs”), meaning that it is the best of all 1,005 songs Solomon wrote. Moreover, Jesus is Lord of lords. Of every person that has any authority or power, Jesus is above them, because he has absolute power and authority, as demonstrated by his sweeping victory at Armageddon over Anti-Christ’s forces.

19:17 “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;”

John sees an angel standing with the sun behind him and crying loudly (everything God pronounces is done loudly) for the birds to come and dine at the “supper of the great God.” The point is that God’s victory is certain, and the only thing left on the battlefield after Anti-Christ’s forces fight with Jesus will be bird food, the carcasses of the slain.

19:18 “That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, both free and bond, both small and great.”

The birds are called to eat the flesh of fallen armies (kings, captains or military commanders, mighty men or soldiers, and their horses and horsemen), and indeed, the flesh of all men of all social classes. This latter point, in my view, indicates that not only will the armies that have gathered for Armageddon die, but in fact, all of the unsaved that have not already died in the unfolding of the seven Seal Judgments, seven Trumpet Judgments, or seven Vial Judgments, will die at the close of this battle (whether they are present at the battle or not). Note that God has announced the outcome of the battle (to the birds) before the battle has occurred; Jesus’ victory is certain.

19:19 “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

The Anti-Christ (the “beast”) and the rulers (“kings”) of the earth gather with their armies to make war against Jesus, who sits on a horse (a white one) and has an army of his own. I believe that, originally, Anti-Christ and his forces were gathering in the Valley of Megiddo to deal with a rebellion from the kings of the east (see Daniel 11:44; Revelation 16:12). But the reality was that God was gathering all of these nations, both Anti-Christ’s allies and his enemies, so that Jesus could destroy them in one climactic battle. At some point, these armies apparently realize the presence of Jesus and his angelic army, and they gather their forces together against Jesus. I do not believe this is a long battle, for Jesus could merely say the word “die,” and it would immediately end. The question we should consider is why these people are willing to even try to engage Jesus and his army of angels in battle. This is more than foolhardiness; instead, it is the result of deception (by Satan and Anti-Christ; recall Revelation 13:4), pride and hardness of heart (like Pharaoh). Note that the Battle of Armageddon, though not called by that name elsewhere, is often addressed by the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Joel 3:1-3, 9-18; Haggai 2:20-23; Zephaniah 3:8; Zechariah 12:9-10, 14:1-3) and in the New Testament (e.g., Jude 14-15, Revelation 11:15-19). That God has given so much attention to this battle throughout the Bible is a testimony to its importance in God’s overall plan. The reason is that this battle gives way to the establishment of Jesus’ eternal kingdom on the earth.

19:20 “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Here, at the Battle of Armageddon, Anti-Christ and his False Prophet (False Elijah) are killed on the battlefield. We are not told exactly how it occurs, but likely one of Jesus’ angels slays them. Recall that Anti-Christ always had a big mouth, always challenging God. When God the Son stands before him in the day of battle, we see that big words were all Anti-Christ had (he was “all talk”; see Revelation 13:5). Their deaths are deserved, for the False Prophet did miracles in the presence of the Anti-Christ to deceive those that would take the mark of the Anti-Christ on their hands and foreheads and would worship the animated image of the Anti-Christ. We should not confuse their temporal death (destruction of their physical bodies) with their eternal destinies. Everyone exists forever, and the issue is where and with whom. The Anti-Christ and the False Prophet are cast alive into the “lake of fire” as their eternal destiny. This is the first reference in the Revelation to the Lake of Fire. We will get more details on the Lake of Fire in the next chapter, but we can say here that it is a literal place of torment by fire. In contrast to the children of God who will spend eternity with Him, these two people will spend eternity (these details will follow in chapter 20) in the Lake of Fire in torment.

19:21 “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

The “sword of him that sat upon the horse” is the sword that came out of Jesus’ mouth. Again, I think this indicates that he gives the command for their destruction. It is the “remnant” (i.e., those that remained) that are destroyed, that is, every unsaved person that was left standing, and moreover, the unsaved that are not at the battle (we will see in the next chapter that none survived). The battle waged for a short while, the Anti-Christ and False Prophet were killed, and then Jesus’ sword destroys all those that are left and have the mark of the beast. There are no survivors, no prisoners of war here. As they were prom-

ised, the birds get their fill on the carcasses of the slain, which indicates that the people are not simply zapped out of existence but are in fact slain in some way (perhaps by the army of angels led by Jesus).

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read chapter 19 for this lesson and chapter 20 for next week in Henry M. Morris' commentary.