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“Marriage Banquet of the Lamb” Revelation 19:1-10

In the Christian life we all have something that we are looking forward to. There are various milestones in our lives that, depending upon our preferences, we give different degrees of value. We wait with eager expectation to be able to drive a car, to graduate high school and college, to get married, have children and grandchildren, buy a new home, finish a project, get a promotion, retire and so on.

We then see these same eager expectations played out in the younger generations. These are all wonderful things to look forward to but for the believer, the *one* milestone, that should hold first place in our list of expectations, and should fill our hearts with the deepest eagerness to see it fulfilled and experience its joys, is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In this vision John receives near the end of the book of Revelation, a revelation of the consummation of Christ’s kingdom at the end of the age when Christ returns. For those of you who have attended a wedding you will know that there is great rejoicing after the bride and the groom have come together to become one flesh and consummate their love for one another.

At the marriage supper of the Lamb, the church will rejoice with a joy inexpressible, because Christ, the true Bridegroom, will have come to take His bride to enjoy eternal communion with Him, in the presence of the Father and in the eternal bond of the Spirit, forever freed from the pains of sin and death and persecution of the world.

It is then that we will experience joys with Christ far surpassing anything we can experience in this life. *This banquet* is the milestone and the victory we long for as Christians. And it is the Divine milestone that should help us put all the events in our lives, whether good or bad in the proper perspective.

We certainly see that the purpose of this book was to give Christians suffering on earth, a glorious vision of Heaven and of the end of our sojourn on earth, so that by God’s grace we might persevere to the end.

John, in exile at the time of this writing, would have needed this as he writes to a church in need of encouragement as well. He writes in chapter 1, *“I John your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus...”*

He goes on to say that he was in exile on an island on account of the Word and that He was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. So then in the power of the Spirit here he sees the crowning celebration for all believers, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This vision begins with John saying “*after this*” I heard. After what? After John had seen the vision of the prostitute Babylon and heard of her judgment. Before this John was carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness where he saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names. It had seven heads and ten horns.

The woman was finely dressed, adorned with gold and jewels and holding a golden cup full of abominations and impurities that come from her sexual immorality. Her name was Babylon and she symbolized in the visions John received the wickedness and immorality of the unbelieving world and how this wickedness is concentrated in earthly kingdoms like Babylon and Rome.

She is called the “great prostitute” in verse two, and the “mother of prostitutes” in chapter seventeen. She is not only wicked and sinful but she is also seductive. John is told kings of the earth commit sexual immorality with her and the people who dwell on earth are drunk from the wine of her sexual immorality.

She is dressed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls. In other words she is attractive. Even the apostle John marvels at her when he sees her in the vision; “*When I saw her I marveled greatly. But the angel said to me, ‘why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her’*”

Not only does she delight in her sexual immorality and in impurities but she delights in shedding the blood of Christians. In the vision she is drunk off the blood of the saints. We are fairly certain that Rome, the Babylon harlot of John’s day, shed the blood of the apostle Paul and Peter, on account of their testimony to the cross of Christ.

Again Babylon is a woman in the vision who symbolizes the perversion and immorality and sinfulness of this world, this unbelieving age. The spread of this sinfulness is accelerated through the powerful influence of sinful kingdoms.

The vast wealth and prosperity of godless kingdoms like the Roman Empire tempt Christians into taking part in her sins. This is part of the suffering we endure as Christians, fighting against temptation.

Through the use of coercive power these wicked kingdoms often persecute Christians as well. When Christ comes again these kingdoms will be finally and forever judged. John sees the fall of Babylon, because God has judged her, and the merchants who used to gain wealth from her mourn her loss saying, “*for in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste*” (18:17).

So then “after this” John hears the sound of a great multitude in Heaven praising God because He has finally judged her for her wickedness. This heavenly choir sings “*Hallelujah!*”.

“Hallelujah” is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase that means “praise the LORD!” Four times in this section, this phrase is heard, “praise the LORD! Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!”

This praising and these calls to praise are the heavenly response to the command from the shipmasters and the sailors who were mourning over the fall of this woman. In chapter 18:20 they say “*Rejoice over her O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her*”

So then here the triumphant church sings *“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute, who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants”*

The saints and all of Heaven burst into praise at the execution of Divine justice. They ascribe to God salvation, glory and power because He judged the great prostitute and avenged the death of the saints. Back in chapter six John saw the lamb open the fifth seal on the scroll, and under the altar he saw the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and they cried out, *“sovereign Lord holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*

This vision and the praise John hears shows that at the return of Christ, the souls of the slain will no longer be waiting for vindication. The justice that came forth from Babylon was very often perverted, where the good were judged to be evil and the evil judged good.

This overturning of true justice was especially seen in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. There the Jews and Romans conspired together and rendered a guilty verdict on a truly innocent man. But in the end divine justice prevailed because it was at the cross that Christ the Lamb satisfied the justice of God on our behalf as our substitute.

In the wisdom of God the shedding of the Lamb’s blood on the cross secures for believers the forgiveness of sins. This gospel message is something that the harlot Babylon hates because it confronts her desire to continue to corrupt the earth with her immorality, and shed the blood of anyone who tries to stop her.

In the end she gets what she deserves. She shed the blood of the saints, now her own blood must be shed. We see this in chapter sixteen when the bowls of God’s wrath are poured out and an angel says, *“just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was for you brought these judgments for they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!”*

And so again they voices of the redeemed cry out: *“Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever”* This language of perpetual smoke is taken from Isaiah 34 which refers to the complete and final destruction and judgment of Edom.

Here in this vision though, final and complete judgment comes upon this entire world age. The woman on the scarlet beast symbolizes this entire perverted world order with all its systems and leaders and followers, drunk off the pleasures of immorality and violence.

Earthly judgments can be reversed. The judgment that occurs here with the return of the Lamb is final, the smoke of her burning goes up forever and ever. When Christ comes, the new heavens and the new earth will be forever cleansed of her impurities.

The redeemed praise the Lord and now the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures around the throne of God in the vision fall down and worship Him and they say, *“Amen. Hallelujah!”* And another call to worship from God on His throne comes saying to all the saints both great and small that they are to praise Him.

“And from the throne came a voice saying, ‘praise our God, all you his servants you who fear him, small and great” This vision showed John very clearly the certain destinies of two women.

We have just seen the end of the first woman, the woman on the scarlet beast. Babylon and all her wicked manifestations, will fall. But what is the certain destiny for the church, the bride of the Lamb?

The engagement of the auditory senses is primary in this section. John’s hearing is overwhelmed by the sound of a multitude of voices employed in praises to God. At the beginning of this section he hears the voice of a great multitude in Heaven, crying out *“Hallelujah!”* for Babylon had been judged.

Now John hears another outburst of praise from a great multitude in Heaven. This time he embellishes the description of the sound by saying the voice was like the roar of many waters and like the sound of strong cracks of thunder.

We need to understand that this heavenly multitude represents the entire assembly made up of every believer from all nations and from every age, crying out to God with one voice in worship of Him. This is difficult to imagine, but their voice, as expected, is incredibly powerful.

It’s burst, John says, is like the crashing of the waves of many bodies of water and like a fierce thunderclap piercing the sky with its boom. And they cry out, in song, beginning with the fourth *“hallelujah!”*: *“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”*

This heavenly choir sings of God’s reign. *“Hallelujah! For the Lord ou God the Almighty reigns”* Now Scripture teaches that Christ presently reigns over all things. In chapter 1:5 John calls Christ *“the ruler of kings on earth”*. He is the One who is alive forevermore and has the keys of death and Hades.

In His sovereignty He has a special concern for the church. But at present, to our eyes, it often does not look like Christ is in control because of the wickedness still around us and because of the sinfulness that still resides within us.

As the writer of Hebrews states in chapter two: *“now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone”*

But at the end of the age there will no longer be any futile attempts to usurp Christ’s throne. Babylon will be forever judged and our sin will be forever eradicated from our bodies and souls. The praising that is heard here is the voice coming from those who are no longer threatened by the first woman Babylon, because she has permanently fallen, and it is praise from those who are no longer plagued by sin within.

This is sinless praise that John hears from the redeemed. Even on our very best days we do not experience this here on this side of the consummation. The Spirit of Christ does produce something of this kind of praise in us now, but the fullness of this experience has yet to be felt.

John hears the thunderous voice, praising God the King and imploring one another to rejoice and exult and give him glory, and they do this because the marriage of the Lamb has come:

“Hallelujah! For the Lord God almighty reigns let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come”(v.7).

The words of this song imply that the marriage celebration of the Lamb has not yet come in its fullness. At present we have not yet experienced the joy of *this* banquet that John hears about. By faith we have been betrothed to Christ our bridegroom but the wedding feast and the consummation of this betrothal has yet to take place.

We see this for example in 2 Cor. 11 where Paul says of the church, *“for I feel a divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ”* The union and communion we have with Christ by faith is depicted in Scripture like that between a husband and wife.

The Bible says that when a man and a woman are joined together in the covenant of marriage, they become one flesh, there is no longer two but one. Therefore the intimate fellowship shared between a man and his wife, as now one from two, on earth reflects the even deeper spiritual bond and communion that exists between the church, the true bride, and her bridegroom Jesus Christ, the Lamb.

He is referred to as the Lamb again here to emphasize Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, as the slaughtered Lamb. Jesus is the Lamb whose blood was shed to purchase his bride. His own life laid down was the brideprice given for us.

But Christ as the Lamb here also emphasizes the great redemptive feast that we will enjoy when Christ returns. For the Passover lamb slain in the OT to atone for sin was eaten as a meal. Just as in our culture so too it was in Jewish culture that weddings were a time of great joy, rejoicing and *feasting!*

The angel tells John in verse 9 *“write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb”* --In Jewish culture the feasting at weddings often lasted seven days or more. Feasting and weddings go together in the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, *“the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,”* and in this parable Jesus said the king sent his servants to tell those invited, *“See I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered come to the wedding feast”* Jesus’ first miracle was done at a wedding feast in Cana where the wine had run out.

The first sign He performed to display his glory was supernaturally turning the water in six stone jars into around one hundred and twenty gallons of well-aged cabernet. The master of wedding feast on that day called this wine that Jesus produced, *“the good wine”*

When the Lamb comes to take His bride, this wedding feast will consist of rich food full of marrow and the good wine will flow. To put it another way all of God's people will experience the fullness of joy in the presence of Christ here bridegroom.

So then we have here the certain destiny of the second woman. The church in all her glory is depicted here as the bride of the Lamb. Her illustrious beauty will be described more specifically in chapter twenty-one. But here she is announced.

And we are told that the bride has made herself ready, and that it has been given to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure. We are told in verse eight that the fine linen symbolizes the righteous deeds of the saints.

The first woman was clothed in beautiful clothing in order to seduce and deceive. It was a façade that hid her true character and danger. Here this woman, the bride, is adorned with splendor and beauty that is true and bright and pure, undefiled. The pure fine linen is an expression in this song in the vision of the inner beauty of her soul.

By faith she has done righteous acts for the glory of God, and therefore she has made herself ready. Beloved these deeds were done even while being harassed by the temptations and persecutions coming from the harlot on the scarlet beast. This woman has persevered, that she might be presented before Christ as a pure virgin, bright and spotless.

Beloved this clothing is something that is described in the song as something that was given to her, it is a gift from God for "*it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen*" But even though it is a gift she nevertheless participates in the process of making herself ready.

Friends, John gives us a vivid picture from the words of these heavenly songs of our sure destiny as believers in the Lamb. The very last milestone we will reach is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But this comes beloved at the end of the process we go through in this life of making ourselves ready. By God's grace we are refined through the fires of affliction that come as a result of the persecutions and temptations coming from the hand of the first woman on the beast. Her end is coming. When the Lamb returns our wedding feast will begin.