

“Come to the Table”

Rev 19:1-16

Resurrection Sunday – April 21, 2019

He is Risen! (He is Risen indeed!)

Our Theme this weekend is “Come to the Table.” On Friday night, we gathered, as it were, at three tables. We looked back to the table of the first Passover in Egypt which foreshadowed Jesus as the Lamb of God. Then we came to the table of the last supper in the upper room where Jesus established a new covenant by His blood. And finally, we gathered to commune with Jesus at the Lord’s table, for the Lord’s supper.

On this Resurrection Sunday, we turn our attention to yet another table, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—that feast that will exceed all others in its infinite and unspeakable joy as the Lamb welcomes His bride into His heavenly home.

On Friday, we focused on Jesus as the Lamb of God—the Lamb that was sacrificed for sin. But its also important for you to understand that the Risen Lamb is also the Almighty Warrior who will stand on the last day, having the final definitive victory over His foes. In Revelation 1, John had a vision of the Risen Christ. John writes that when he saw His eyes like a flame of fire, His mouth as double-edge sword, and His face shining like the sun in its strength, John fell at His feet like a dead man. Then Jesus placed His hand on John and said, **“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.”** (Rev 1:17-18) The Risen Christ has the authority to raise the dead as He wishes and He has the authority to cast the wicked into Hades—even to cast Hades itself into the eternal lake of fire (20:14-15). Believers, we can be hopeful in the face of evil and confident in the face of death because we are one with the Risen Christ who has the final word over every man’s destiny.

So much will take place between now and the Marriage supper of the Lamb. The blood of many more martyrs will be spilled, the wrath of God will be

poured out on the earth, and the nations will gather as one under the Antichrist to wage war against the Lamb.

But as we come to Revelation 19, heaven erupts with the joy of praise to God because God has meted out final justice, the rebellion of the world has been overthrown, God’s honor is restored as the center of all worship, and the long-awaited marriage supper of the Lamb has come.

To grasp the joy of heaven in chapter 19, let me summarize the preceding 2 chapters. Rev 17 describes the judgement, the fall, of Babylon which is pictured as both a great city of power and wealth and as a great harlot. As the city, Babylon is the center of economic and political control. As the harlot, Babylon is not only known for gross wickedness, but also appears to be a worldwide false religion. This harlot-religion will use her lusts, enticements, and deception to dominate the nations of the world (1, 15)—all the kings of the earth will embrace her. In fact, we are told that the people of the earth will get drunk on her immorality (17:2; 18:3). The sense here is that the world will so crave her false, religious, immorality to the point of drunkenness, that they will not tolerate anything that is not immoral.

Rev 18:2 refers to Babylon as the dwelling place of demons. Her satanic hatred of believers will not stop short of excessive bloodshed. Rev 17:6 describes her as “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”

For a time, this harlot will be supported by the beast who is the antichrist. But in time the antichrist, and the kings of the earth that support him, will turn on the harlot and destroy this false religion (17:16) so that the antichrist himself, alone, becomes the center of worship on the earth—for a time.

Then the antichrist, with the kings of the earth, will turn to “wage war against the Lamb,” their final enemy. But *“the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings...”* (17:14).

By the way, there is a remarkable note at the end of chapter 17. We are told that the kings of the earth will have one purpose, to give their power and authority to the beast/antichrist (17:13). Why? Why would any ruler hand over his authority? Do you remember on Friday night, we discovered that when the Sanhedrin came to arrested Jesus in Gethsemane, He said to them, “this is your hour when darkness reigns” yet even in that hour God was reigning over them for His higher purpose?

Listen now to Rev 17:17: “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.”

So why do the rulers hand their kingdoms over? Because God is causing them to do so! They believe they are serving their own purpose to oppose the Lamb when in fact they are serving God’s purpose by positioning themselves for God’s judgment. As the antichrist reigns over the kings of the earth, God is reigning over them, causing them to be united as one man with all the strength and resources of the whole earth, empowered by Satan himself, so that with one swipe, God can execute His judgment on the evil, world-wide, satanic empire as though it is no more than an invalid infant. So great is our God!

Chapter 18 goes on to describe the response of the kings of the earth and those who depended on the great wealth of Babylon—they stand a gasp at the terror of Babylon’s fall. But heaven is commanded to rejoice: **[18:20]**.

Why rejoice? Because the fall of Babylon is the fall of the pinnacle, evil, worldwide, united, Satanic rebellion against God and the Lamb and His saints. It is the end of the kingdom of darkness, even in its full strength!

This brings us now to chapter 19, where heaven erupts with joyful praise for the victory of God through a 4-fold Hallelujah that culminates in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let me summarize them:

1. **Hallelujah! Salvation belongs to our God who has brought justice to bear** (Rev 19:1-2).

[vs. 1-2] The word Hallelujah (which means “praise God”) is used four times in the NT—all of which are right here in chapter 19. The first use of this word in the OT is also in response to the earth being cleansed of the wicked: “*Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord (hallelujah)*” (Ps 104:35).

Here heaven rejoices because God’s people have been saved and God’s glory and power have been put on display.¹ He has brought justice to bear on the wicked, blood-drunken harlot. God’s judgments are true, righteous, and inescapable. The blood of every martyr will be avenged. In fact, the harlot will be given a double portion of God’s wrath because hers sins pile up as high as heaven (18:5-6).

Its important to grasp that God’s judgment is not an overemotional reaction. It is a righteous, deserved, exacting of justice (cf. 16:4-7). There is righteous sense of rejoicing, which we will experience in heaven, when the wickedness of evil is judged with finality.

2. **Hallelujah! The rebellion of sin is forever ended** (Rev 19:3).

[vs. 3] The emphasis here seems to be on the decisive and unending nature of God’s justice. Never again will evil and rebellion against God rise to defame His glory and torment His servants.²

3. **Hallelujah! God reigns with unrivaled worship** (Rev 19:4-5).

[vs. 4-5] In heaven there is only One around whom all worship centers and it’s the Triune God. There all things are restored to there proper order and God is rightly honored as God by heavenly beings and saints alike, regardless of “status”. Notice that the posture of worship in heaven is prostrate with humility and reverence.

¹ John MacArthur, *Because the Time is Near*, pg. 282.

² John Piper, *Worship God!*, 9-15-91 sermon on Rev 19:1-10 at www.desiringgod.org.

Beloved, everything in our earthly lives—including our unwanted suffering—should be a rehearsal for that heavenly stage—centering our lives our God; living, working, resting, loving for His pleasure.

4. **Hallelujah! God reigns with glory over the marriage supper of the Lamb** (Rev 19:6-10).

[vs. 6-10] The marriage supper of the Lamb, the final union of the Son of God and the people of God in glory forever is the climax that all of redemptive history has been moving toward. The marriage supper of the Lamb is what Jesus was talking about at the Last Supper when He said, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29).

What’s puzzling about these verses is that on the one hand vs 7 says, “His bride has made herself ready.” Yet vs. 8 says “it was given to her” or “granted to her” to clothe herself in fine linen which is the righteous acts of the saints. So is the bride’s readiness the result of her doing or God’s doing?

Remember, that no works of righteousness can be done without a new heart of imputed righteousness that comes from God as a gift of grace. So we can’t make a complete distinction between the inward righteousness of Christ and the outward righteousness of our actions.

But notice that what’s in view here is “the righteous acts of the saints” which should bring glory to God because we not only do them by His power (the Spirit’s power), He also provided them for us to do. Eph 2:10 says, no one should boast, God should get the glory, because “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” God reigns over our righteous acts.

What’s incredible to see here is that every righteous act by every believer that God has enabled us to do, will culminate in a beautiful gown as the

bride is presented at the marriage supper of the Lamb. How God will be glorified by what He has done through what we have done. And don’t forget that the finished product of our sanctification is not completed by us.

“When He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2).

As we think about the marriage supper of the Lamb, keep in mind that ancient Jewish weddings were different than our customs today.³

Marriages in biblical times were arranged by the parents and typically initiated by the Father of the groom. For example, Abraham took the initiative in sending his servant to find a wife for His son Isaac in Gen 24.

When the Father found a prospective bride, he would send his son, the bridegroom to the home of the bride to offer her father a bride price. The bride price was a way for the groom to demonstrate that he was financially capable of providing for the all the needs of the bride. Gal 4:4 says that “when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law.” You are the bride that the Father has sent His Son to gain. “Do you not know...that you are not your own? You have been bought with a price?” (1 Cor 6:19-20). Every believer in Jesus Christ is a blood-bought bride. 1 Peter 1 says we were redeemed not with perishable things like gold and silver, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished, the blood of Christ.” The resurrection we celebrate today is the Father’s affirmation that Jesus payment was sufficient for His bride—He is more than sufficient to care for our every need.

Once the bride price was offered, then the couple would be betrothed (a legally binding engagement that could only be broken by divorce). The betrothal was entered into as the couple sipped over a cup while the Father of the Bride offered a prayer of blessing. At the last supper, Jesus took the cup, shared it with His disciples and said, “This cup is a new covenant in my blood shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

³ The following aspects of ancient Jewish wedding customs adapted from Jerry Benjamin, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (audio transcript of audio teaching), pg. 276-298.

Having been betrothed, the couple were considered husband and wife, but continued to live in separate households until the wedding ceremony. During this time they were to remain exclusively set apart for one another just as the church is to be a bride without spot or blemish so that we can be presented to Christ holy and blameless (Eph 5:27). The father of the bride assumed responsibility for presenting his bride in purity to her husband. Jude 1:24 declares that "God is able to keep you from stumbling and present you before Him blameless and with great joy."

After the betrothal, the groom would return to His father's home to prepare a home for His bride. In John 14, Jesus said, "*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*"

The interesting thing is that it was not up to the groom to decide when the accommodations were ready for his bride. That decision was his father's. When the disciples asked Jesus about the timing of His return, he said, "no one knows the day or the hour, not even the Son. Only the Father knows." It was the Father's role, not Jesus', to determine the time of His return.

When the time did come, the groom would lead a procession to the home of his bride announcing to his friends that he was going to claim his bride and inviting them to meet back at his Father's house for the wedding feast.⁴

But how would the bride know that her groom is coming for her (2 Tim 4:8)? Just before he arrived he would shout for her. 1 Thess 4:16 says, That the Lord Himself will descend from heaven (for His bride) with a shout!

The couple would go back to the his father's house for the ceremony and feast, called the presentation, where the pure bride was presented faultless and with great joy (Jude 1:24)! Then the wedding supper would begin and when the guests saw the bride they would praise and honor the groom.

This brings us full circle to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Rev. 19. The Father has sent His Son to secure a bride at the price of His own blood. Yet Christ came for a bride who was not pure or unblemished. The reason He

redeemed us with His blood, was to clear our guilt before the heavenly Father. For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).

Blessed are those who are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb! Blessed are those who forsake life on their own, to be betrothed to Christ, for He will come again for them and escort them into His heavenly kingdom.

But what about those who refuse His bride-price of the Lamb? There is no other husband to rescue them from their sin. They will be left to the city of Babylon and they will face the wrath of the Lamb. There is another great supper of God in Revelation 19, but it is not one of blessing.

When Jesus comes to earth again for the final battle, an angel is sent to call all the birds to gather for the great supper of God. That is, to eat the flesh of all who are slain by the sword of his mouth as he carries out the wrath of God on every remaining unrepentant sinner (19:17-21). And the devil and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night forever, along with anyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life (20:10, 14-15).

But today, Jesus calls you to come under the purchase price of His blood to receive mercy, and grace and forgiveness; to be betrothed to Him, to be given a white robe, to be welcomed to His banqueting table, to come under the loving authority of the Lamb who was not only crucified and risen, but who will also come again and raise up all those who trust in Him to everlasting life.

I have been to many beautiful weddings. But questions always is, what will life be like for the bride married to this man? Jesus not only promises to never leave you or forsake you, He leads you to a life eternal where there is no more sorrow, pain, sickness, sin, or suffering. Just joy! Inexpressible infinite joy in His presence! That's what the last 2 chapters of Revelation are about.

There are many difficult things to understand in the book of Revelation, but in the end it comes down to a very simple reality. There is a divine Lamb

⁴ See Matt 25, the parable of the ten virgins

who was slain to save all who trust in Him. But all who refuse His mercy will be slain by Him to a death that never ends, because His judgments are true and righteous. He holds the keys of death and Hades.

How do you come under the purchase price of Jesus' blood? *"Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation"* (Rom 10:9-10).

To those who believe, don't get caught up in the lusts and allurements of this of Babylonian world (Rev 19:4). Don't flirt with her sinful ways. For you have been betrothed to one husband as a pure bride. Don't be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ as your Bridegroom (2 Cor 11:2).