
The Bride and Her Conquering Groom

Revelation 19:6-21

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I love the Lord of the Rings trilogy. It is inevitable that scenes from those wonderful movies will sit before our eyes as we hear the words of this text...

At the center of this text is the King and His Son, the conquering groom. They are surrounded by the vast multitude who is praising God. They are praising God for what is happening on the earth and in the heavens.

By way of review the opening of this chapter (v. 1-5) is better a part of chapter 18. This is the way I taught it last Sunday. This celebration is in praise of God's judgment of the great whore and mystery Babylon. The multitude around the throne praises God for finally executing his justice against the world systems.

¹ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for he has judged the great prostitute
² for his judgments are true and just;
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

³ Once more they cried out,

“Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying,

“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

John shows us the final scenes of the Day of the Lord. Jesus comes down out of the heavens. He comes in victory. He comes to execute holy vengeance. He comes as a warrior-groom.

The Marriage of the Lamb**(v. 6-10)**

After a long betrothal, the day of the marriage of the Lord and His bride, the church, is soon to come.

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷ 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;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Its Accompanying Praise**(v. 6-8)**

The multitude in heaven lifts their voices in a great roar of praise. This is a shout, a mighty lifting of innumerable voices. This is the people of God in all ages rejoicing and singing together. This is not a meek hymn. This is a mighty paean of praise.

It celebrates the Lord Jesus Christ. He is at the center of this song.

It sings to celebrate the sovereignty of the Lord. Hallelujah! He reigns. He rules. He is the Almighty God. He has ascended the throne and is now preparing to mount up and ride down in victory.

It summons to celebrate the preparation for the Lord. The groom has chosen a bride. He has set her aside for Himself. She has prepared herself for this day. He has given her the simple, white garments of righteousness to clothe herself in.

This is in stark contrast to the beast and the whore. Unlike their gaudy and pretentious attire, the bride is arrayed in simple white – and all the more beautiful for it. The bride is dressed in that which the groom has given her. But note carefully here. She has been graced to dress herself – she is in the fine linen outer garment of the righteous deeds she has done by the grace of God.

The Jewish wedding customs are being alluded to here. There was the asking and accepting to be married. Then there was the betrothal period, similar to our engagement period but one in which the couple were viewed as legally bound, but not yet physically one. William Hendriksen helpfully overlays the customs with the reality of redemptive history.

In Christ the bride was *chosen* from 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, due 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. [Hendriksen, cited by Kistemaker, p. 514]

Its Sure Blessing

(v. 9)

The angel’s words are meant to gladden the heart of suffering saints. There is blessing in being invited to the marriage of the Lamb. That blessing is salvation. That blessing is holiness. That blessing is joy in God and with His Son, our groom.

And that blessing is sure. Let there be no doubt. Let there be no question. What has been said and sung in these chapters is going to take place. It will surely be blessing indeed.

Its Proper Worship

(v. 10)

¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

John is so overwhelmed by these great truths that he falls down to worship the messenger. It is understandable. Here is an angel from God. Here is a message that is astonishingly wonderful. But only God is to be worshipped. Even angelic messengers are but servants. (O, that elders/pastors would remember this! We are but servants!)

This last sentence is difficult. Holding to the testimony of Jesus marks true brothers who are fellow servants. It explains why God is to be worshipped and not servants. And yet it is saying something about this book. It is almost as though we are quietly being told something very significant. The heart of prophecy is the public declaration of who Jesus is. This whole book is the testimony, the witness to the revelation of Jesus. Since prophecy is about Jesus Christ, don’t worship the messengers no matter how grand or glorious they may be. Worship Jesus.

Kistemaker notes, “The command is for everyone to worship God anytime and everywhere regardless of circumstances. The early recipients of the Apocalypse realized that by giving their testimony about Jesus they placed themselves in open conflict with pagan and Roman authorities that compelled them to worship idols and Caesar. Now they are told to worship God and by implication to be his witnesses.” [p. 517]

The Majesty of the King

(v. 11-16)

It has been difficult to divide and order this teaching. I envisioned a single sermon that encompassed this whole long section in the Last Days and the Final Victory. But it is too much. So, let me set it up and then we'll take this section tonight and the rest of the book after I return from India.

In the visions we were shown the false and rebellious rule. We saw Satan first in chapter 12, the two beasts in chapter 13 and finally, the vile prostitute in chapter 17. In reverse order, we see their destruction. It began in chapter 18 with the prostitute, continues with the beasts here in chapter 19 and ends with Satan in chapter 20. All through both sets of visions are the believing and praising multitudes in heaven and the unbelieving and rebelling multitudes on earth. So, the King of Kings is advancing. The Lord Almighty is implementing His reign. He is preparing for the wedding feast. And now He is conquering His enemies and bringing in the fullness of His rule and reign.

For the second time in the book of Revelation, heaven is opened. Then, John went up into the heavens; now, the Lord comes down from the heavens.

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is unmistakably a vision of conquest, of victory. We are to be struck with awe and a loving reverent fear. We have seen Him as our groom. Now, this is the King of Kings.

Who He Is

(v. 11-13)

We have had the true words of God from the angel. Now we have the True and Faithful One who will judge in righteousness. So much Old Testament imagery is gathered up in this marvelous description. He is conqueror. He is faithful. His eyes burn with holy wrath. His head is adorned with circlet upon circlet of divine authority. He has a name that is unknown so that He is just the *I am*. His clothing is red, dipped in blood. His public name is *the Word of God*

Here is the conquering King. He is sovereign and savior. He will be faithful to His Word, to who He is. And He will judge the earth, bringing about the fullness of His promises and the vindication of His Name. The imagery here while sharp and edged cannot begin to convey the magnificent descent of the King of Kings, the Word, the Almighty, Lord.

Who Follows Him**(v. 14)**

In His train is the vast army of heaven. We are not told here exactly who they are. We know from their raiment. These are the saints who rule and reign with Him. When He descends out of heavens, He brings us with Him. The imagery here is meant to convey a vast and innumerable of *mounted* soldiers. As it the King of Kings and sword of the Word were not enough, here are vast multitude who follow Him, for He is the Lord of Banners, the Lord of hosts.

What He Does**(v. 15-16)**

How does the King of Kings defeat the enemy? How does He strike down the nations? With what rod of iron does He rule? The sword of the Word that comes from His mouth. We must not ruin this imagery with literalism. All through this text, the people of God are take strength and courage and hope from the surety and the power of the Word of God. This very language tells us there is so much more here than Jesus riding out on a heavenly horse with a sword hanging from His mouth. We may not know exactly what this represents in a future reality, but we do know that this shows us that the Word of God will prevail.

Where the Word brought salvation, now it brings judgment. The very instrument by which faith was conveyed now is the instrument of destruction. The King of Kings now is ready to stomp rebellious, sinful humanity in the fury of the wrath of God. We must not shy from this! This is our God. He loves His Name, His Son and His people so much that He unleashes His Word and His wrath to bring utter destruction upon the wicked.

The Massacre of the Wicked**(v. 17-21)**

The New Covenant age is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36-39. The language of Ezekiel 39:17ff is invoked here in verse 17.

¹⁷ "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, 'Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸ You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. ¹⁹ And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰ And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' declares the Lord GOD.

²¹ "And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. ²² The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. ²³ And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴ I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

²⁵ "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. ²⁶ They shall forget

their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid,²⁷ when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations.²⁸ Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore.²⁹ And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God."

And, now what John writes.

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God,¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

The Summoning of Vultures

(v. 17-18)

The scene is awe inspiring and fearsome at the same time. Having seen scenes like this growing up in Africa, this is vivid. Hitchcock like *Birds*. The circling of dark wings. The tearing of flesh. The cracking of bones. Yes, it is grotesque – but it is meant to be. It is meant to make us shudder – that loyalty to the Anti-Christ, unbelief and rebellion against the King of Kings ends in such a horrible way – a meal for the vultures.

The Gathering of the Nations

(v. 19)

We are once again seeing the scenes of Ezekiel 38-39 as well as Revelation 16. Here is battlefield earth. Like a vast horde the dark army of the beast and the kings of the earth gather to wage war on the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Almighty. What has been fought in throne rooms, in counting houses, in legislatures, in board rooms, in pleasure domes, in universities, in churches, in dark places of the earth, in bright glittering rooms, across lands both slave and free, in homes, in hearts is now in the open field. Teeming masses of armed humanity – a dark lord and a vile vicar – darkness swarming over the earth while light and glory from heaven descends.

The Defeating of the Enemy

(v. 20-21)

The King of Kings captures and shackles the beast and false prophet. They are taken to edge of time and the banks of the Lake of Fire. They are thrown in alive to die the second death. They are the first to experience eternal separation from God. Into the outer darkness, alive, knowing, aware but screaming in eternal pain as the Presence of God recedes and only selfdom remains. Alone with themselves. Alone in their darkness. Alone forever.

Then light like glory leaps off the edge of the sword of the Word of God scything through the masses. Death, destruction and damnation. From the skies the vultures gather in the valley of judgment as the blood runs and the war ends.

Hallelujah, the multitude shouts. Hallelujah, heaven's citizens sing. Hallelujah, the principalities and powers in the universe bow. Hallelujah for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. The King is victorious.

Reflect and Respond

This calls for the same response from all of us. Fear, awe, and victorious joy. The King, the King, the King...

This challenges all of us. Have we so surrendered to the Lord of lords today that we will not be a banquet for birds? Will we be arrayed in white? Will we follow in His train? Will you believe and bow even in this moment?

