

## **Invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb**

*(Sermon 26 – Rev. 19:1-10)*

*4.13.25 Rick Napolitano*

Good morning and Greetings in the name of Jesus. Welcome to our unfolding study of the book of Revelation. If you are a guest this morning, we are grateful you have chosen to be here with us.

And with that I would like to tell you a story.

Once upon a time, in a land far far away, there was a band called the Yardbirds. This London based quartet split up for a variety of reasons. Several members of the band wanted to keep singing, so they gathered new members and the group evolved into one of the most generational shaping bands of all time. They produced many, many number one top hits.

The group was eventually titled Led Zeppelin and one of its greatest hits of all times is the smooth bluesy-rock song “Stairway to Heaven”. It's a catchy tune that is still easily recognized the world over.

While the merits of its vague lyrics caused soul searching enthusiasts to ponder its meaning for many years, its stellar melodies kept the song in favor for the many decades since its debut.

One of the many problems with the song's lyrics is that it looks at heaven from a worldly perspective- from the outside looking in. Whereas the scripture before us today looks at earth and the world from heaven's perspective.

The testimony of John this morning, our apostolic writer, and the vision he is conveying to us today describes two end states; These are destinations of the two paths that Christ warns us of. One a narrow path that leads to life, and the other a wide path that leads to destruction. There are two meals laid out before us. One is the celebration of the Lamb. The other is the supper of destruction.

These prophetic views of future events are so important for us to know that the angel of the Lord says to John very vehemently, ‘write it down’.

Our original recipients of this letter would have taken great encouragement from this vision. As they were suffering through great persecution, there is hope conveyed that gives them reason to hold fast. Stay the course, be faithful to the end. Christ our victor will bring us to life everlasting. And that is no less true for us today.

The first half of this vision speaks to the 'Celebration of the marriage of the Lamb', and

As we read this text, listen carefully. The vision follows the destruction of Babylon, and we see a very joyous celebration. John hears 4 sets of voices, 2 as choirs, and two are single individuals. While this is one glorious celebration, I think we can gain from focusing on each segment to learn what was being highlighted.

Let's read:

**Revelation 19:1–10**

**[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, [2] 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."**

**[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."**

**[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.**

(Pray)

**I. The Great Multitude**

***[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,***

We learn immediately, from this heavenly perspective, that there is a great multitude singing loudly with great praise and thanksgiving because the Babylonian harlot has been judged. She has been judged for her twin atrocities: *she corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*

There are many schemes the enemy uses against us. 2 are the 'beauty and the beast'. The beast uses worldly systems, culture, and wicked people to attack and persecute. The harlot uses attractive allurements. Her corrupting influence on the world is and has been effective because, as fallen sinners, we are attracted to her sparkling trinkets of death. We find her wealth, power, sensual beauty and worldly attractions stimulating and worth pursuing. As we know only too well, our old nature wonders after wrong.

We want to "worship" or "worth-ship" at her footstool. We think that what she has to offer is worthwhile and worth pursuing. We want to give our allegiances of time, money, pursuits - our treasures - at the altar of her liking. We are like moths drawn to the light of fire, or like metal drawn to a strong magnet. She has *dominion over the kings of the earth*. She exerts power over us because of the lust we have for her wealth and power and glory.

So dealing with our corrupt nature is an issue to attend to, but right now Jesus' words- woe to her that leads these little ones to temptation. As we noted last week, a millstone will be tied around her neck and she will be thrown into the sea. She is destroyed because of her corrupting influence and her merciless slaughter and persecution of the saints.

One of the primary reasons this chorus of a great multitude is singing is because God has "delivered us from evil". He has done it and we can celebrate his goodness. He alone has the power, ability and desire to rescue us from the bondage of sin and the tyranny of evil. And for that there is great reason to celebrate. The joyful praise is directed at God because he is the only one capable of accomplishing the feat. - "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord."

Song of Miriam Ex: This rejoicing brings to mind the song of Moses, and the song of Miriam after the exodus and triumph through the Red Sea. Sing to Yahweh, for he has triumphed gloriously. He has thrown the horse and his rider into the sea. They had just been delivered from their oppressive enemy who was vowing to crush them and bring them back into slavery. And God drowned their oppressors,

while delivering them safely to the shores away from defeat. Imagine the sight and the sounds at this great deliverance.

There is a time to be quiet and still and wait upon the Lord. And those times can be some of my favorite times. *Be still and know that I am God.* But this is not that time. This is a time of loud exuberant hand clapping, back slapping, laughter and rejoicing. We have been delivered from evil!

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There are two aspects of the 'deliverance from evil' that are worth noting. Deliverance includes individual release from bondage, and a corporate 'reverse of the curse'.

We celebrate as we read Col 1:13- he has *rescued us from the dominion of Satan*. While personally eternally grateful for my personal salvation, and rescue from that very dark dominion, the context for the salvation mentioned in this verse appears to be the grand rescue of God's perfect plan and reversal of the curse.

Mt 11 affirms the change in rulership well. 25 *At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, ...; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father,*

This is Jesus, the Son of Man is talking with the father: *"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, [Jesus - who sees all things clearly, is acknowledging the absolute sovereignty of His father in heaven. God the father is lord, master, owner, of everything in heaven and earth. There is nothing that he is not master of. Nothing is outside the domain of sovereignty. There is no dark place or secret corner that is not under his absolute majesty. He is in control of everything. No sparrow falls to the ground without his knowing about it. Nothing on the earth, nothing in the natural heavens, and nothing in the spiritual heavens ever occurs without his absolute awareness.*

And this scripture also tells us that Jesus, as the Son of man, as the incarnate son of God, has been given the keys of heaven and hell to do as he chooses. *All things - not some things- All things have been handed over to me by my Father.*

The keys are no longer with the unjust ruler, the enemy of our souls, they are with Jesus, the kind, goodly, godly lover of our souls.

There is every reason to celebrate the goodness of God. *"Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!*

God has taken the keys away from the enemy and has given them to a good king, Jesus. So there is a twofold benefit which makes the celebration of even greater delight than we can imagine: an individual release from bondage through the forgiveness of sin, and a corporate reconciliation to tear down the tyrannical rule of our sworn enemy. -----

It might be worth mentioning that Some believe this great multitude to be an angelic choir, while others consider it to include the hosts of heaven, as well as the saved saints. I'm not sure there is enough evidence either way, but my default value is that this is a chorus of everyone from heaven and earth who ‘*Fears the Lord*’, “*holds to the testimony of Jesus*” and believes “*These are the true words of God.*”.

Testimony of prayer- The concept that there is a great multitude often encourages me in my prayer times and when sharing the gospel. The scriptures teach in the parable of the rich young ruler that it is impossible for someone to be saved- and sometimes I get caught up in that as I pray. Yet with God all things are possible. Here we have a great multitude singing God’s praises. Many in this group will be people we have prayed for, and people we have shared the gospel with. In my early life, I was a drug dealing, partying hateful rebel pursuing my own allurements of the Babylonian attractions. The people who shared the gospel with me never saw the salvation and transformation of the pagan degenerate that they prayed for and spoke to. But we will meet in heaven and they will be encouraged, and I will be able to say thank you! So too, we may not see the effects of our prayers. keep praying. Keep sharing the gospel. God is able to save a great multitude.

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So we have this double crescendo of rejoicing worshippers as the first voice in the chapter- crying out “Hallelujah” 4 times in 6 verses. And it reminds us that God is worthy and deserving of all our praise- because he has “delivered us from evil”, and rescued us from bondage.

That brings us to V5 and the second voice.

## **II. The Voice from the Throne**

**[5] And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”**

V 5 has a depth of insight that I hope we can draw out. The voice this time is singular and it is coming from the throne. Who is on the throne, and what is the message from the throne?

V4 makes it clear that *God is on the throne*. And he is the focus of all that is occurring. He is center stage and orchestrating the entire grand event. All the worship is directed to him. Hallelujah- which means 'Praise God'. He is worthy.

The trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are fully present and the cause of this great celebration.

Interestingly enough, The term 'God' (Theos) is used in 7 of ten scriptures before us conveying both His centrality and importance. The various references to God throughout the chapter highlight different aspects of God's grandeur. God is always the full trinity.

The Father as supreme in authority and sovereign in his reign is on the throne. Jesus, as the groom in this event, who has enabled all to be present is on the throne. And the spirit of prophecy, the one who enables proclamation, praise, gladness and joy is clearly moving among these angels and saints. He is on the throne. We have the mysterious 3 persons in 1 God reigning from the throne.

My belief, and there are some scholars who agree and some who do not, is that this voice from the throne is the incarnate son encouraging us to add to the hallelujah chorus- Praise Jehovah - because he is worthy".

The incarnate son is adding a critical element to the praise. He is converting the term "Praise God" to Praise 'OUR' God. He is OUR father. Our father who art in heaven. He is the initiator of all this good, and he is for us not against us.

And who better to bring that message than the one that enabled us as God's enemies to now be God's friends. Jesus became flesh, and became like one of us in every way, except for our sinful rebellion. He died to pay the penalty of death. And we can now be accepted in the beloved.

We can say "Praise Our God" with Jesus, because Jesus, as our older brother- as God himself in the flesh- made it possible.

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This also points to a collective view of the saints. We are saved individually, Hallelujah! And when we are, we are incorporated into the body as a union of saints. Christ's prayer is that we might all be one, even as he and the father are one.

**Testimony-** There is another aspect of 'our' that I would like to encourage you with. 'Our father' is a true statement for every believing saint of all time in all places. But there is a local practical side of that that I experienced while traveling for a longer portion of time. We visited many very wonderful churches while we were traveling. Some of them multiple times. They were godly, gospel preaching churches. We were so happy to see evidence of God's grace prospering around the nation in many different locales. We enjoyed the fellowship and the worship. But to be clear it was not 'our church'. There is a genuine blessing for finding the group of people you belong to.

Eph tells us that life flows through the joints and ligaments. Who are you connected to? Who encourages you, and walks with you daily. Who are you helping, and who is helping you grow to maturity? When we come home and rejoin the saints here, we sing '**our** God' with new meaning.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that this is the greatest or only church around- although I find what is offered very attractive. There are many good churches. The point is which one are you committed to? Find a group of saints, that you can practice the disciplines of Acts 2 with, and sing with greater joy "our God"

That brings us to the third voice.

### **III. The Response of the Choir**

I find v6 absolutely wonderfully encouraging. When the voice from the throne reminds us that it is **OUR** God, look at the response.

**[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.**

This group of both "*great and small*", the great stadium of saints and angels crying out- IT IS TRUE. He is not only the all worthy GOD, he is OUR god. And with the tumultuous sounds of pealing thunder, and roaring waterfall-like crescendos John hears, *Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.* The chorus responds with even greater gladness and continued celebration.

And in this response, another aspect of God's greatness is added, highlighted and rejoiced in. He does not just own the past, he owns the future. He is almighty, and reigns supreme.

Leon Morris in his commentary on Revelation notes that the term 'almighty' is used 9 times in the book of revelation, and only once in the rest of the NT. From an eternal perspective, God is the alpha and the omega. Nothing is before him and nothing comes after him. The term speaks not just of naked raw power, but an all-encompassing sovereignty of God that extends to eternity past and stretches to eternity future.

V6 makes it clear God has the ability, the power, to accomplish his will. He is sovereign in every matter, always.

But the chorus does not stop there. In addition to his sovereignty, they sing of the bride's complete enamoredness with the Grace of God. This marriage, consistent through scripture, is the joining of Christ- the groom, and his bride- saved sinners throughout time.

But the attribution and praise for being saved sinners is given to, and points to the supreme grace of the living God. She is dressed in white, fine linen

**[7b]...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.**

And it was granted to her, given to her, to be able to do this. Ephesians makes it clear, WE are saved BY grace. It is through faith, but it is BY grace. Grace has been given to us. Converting, regenerating, transforming GRACE has been given to us. And our old natures of selfish pursuit, are redeemed. We are now able to love and engage in righteous actions. His commands are no longer burdensome to us. They are a delight!

Grace is the ever flowing waves of unimaginable depths of God's love for his people. Eph goes on to tell us that we cannot even comprehend the depth and breadth of his love.

Moses said to God show yourself to me. Reveal all of you to me so I can know you better. And God said , *I will show you my goodness*. With but a peeking glance, Moses left the mount so brilliantly changed the people could not even look at him. They had to put a veil over him just to talk with him. And he was but a small reflection of the great goodly God.

This goodness is the fountainhead, and spring of all our life in God. He has nothing but goodness in store for us. And this goodness allows us to be **invited and ensures we will be there at the feast**, the wedding supper of the lamb.

The term invited is actually 'calling'. And from that unfathomable verse in Rom 8:

***For those he knew ...he also called, and those he called he also justified, and those he justified he also glorified. -Romans 8:29***

Charles Spurgeon has a quote that we use in our new members class that sits so well with me each time I think of or read it...

*"I am quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen him". – Charles Spurgeon*

God took the initiative to seek you. For Christ came to seek and to save the lost.

It is God's **sovereign grace** that accomplishes his mission. It is all of him, and the ravishing bride is clear, and grateful. Singing with full orb'd gladness, 'He has made us glad.'

**Testimony:** Some recent health issues have brought me periodically low. My human frailty scares me as many of the things I have looked to in the past, (very humbly of course :-)) are dissipating in many ways.

My ability to serve, to teach, to encourage seem bound by limitations that I am not enjoying. We all know that it is so much better to give than to receive. And so we have grown accustomed to loving to give. Fruitful contributions to our body of believers, and to others- that actually bring me great joy- are not as plentiful as they once were. Our ability to host and serve families in need or friends to encourage is bound by abilities that are fading with age. **Yet God is not just sovereign when I like the results.**

Through it all, we have to rest ever more longingly on the foundation of his sovereign grace. I am not loved because 'I do' things. We are not worthy because we can fruitfully serve. We are worthy, because he has declared it so. We are all dignified and yet distraught at the same time. We 'do' because we are loved. We cannot hold with feeble hands the faith that clings to grace. Grace holds us, carries us, keeps us in the palm of his hands.

And so it is called the 'marriage supper of the **lamb**'. It is not the supper of the king, or the supper of the Lord, or the supper of the master, or the supper of the creator of all things. It is the lamb who brought us the revelation of this wonderful sovereign grace.

It is the lamb who was slain. It was Jesus Christ's sacrifice that granted the bride the ability to be clothed in white raiment.

**“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea,**

**and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” - Revelation 5:12–13**

It is Jesus Christ who calls us and keeps us until the end. Which brings us to our 4th voice.

#### **IV. The Voice of the Angel**

**[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.”**

This fourth voice sums up what is happening in the chapter as well as reminding us what is critical in life. Life is about worship. Who will you worship? What do you consider worthy of worship?

I often forget that we love, because he loved us first. It is an impossible task to earn salvation by our works. As Spurgeon says again,

*“The inn of mercy never closes its door to the crimson sinner”.*

**– Charles Spurgeon**

He pursued us. Our works and fruitfulness have a place in life, but it is never to gain more love from the one who loves us. And it is a very slippery slope to fall into easily enough.”

Look at John himself, the great apostle of the Lamb. He wrote one of the gospels, 3 epistles, and this book of Revelation. He leaned on the savior's breast, and climbed the hill of transfiguration. And yet in all that he is now seeing and hearing he falls to worship an angel.

We slip and slide, and easily look to works or other things to find our worthiness. But as the angel says, *“Don't do that!” Worship God.* Worship literally means to kiss the hand reverently.

I was reading in my devotions recently. And back to back are the stories of Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot. Mary breaks open a vial of very pricey perfume and pours it out on the savior. Jesus received this with gladness, telling the other offended disciples that her story will be told where ever the gospels are told. Mary gave what she treasured to the one she treasured more.

Judas on the other hand, talked with the Jewish leaders and said “What will you give me to betray him?” Judas wanted to get more of what he treasured, because he cared so little for the treasure before him.

Worship is about treasure. “Worth-ship’. We value what we feel is worth something. What do we value? What do we give our time to? What do we spend our treasure on? Look at your account transactions, and you will know what you treasure. You will know what you treasure, because you spend your life resources pursuing it.

Love is a great controlling passion. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Our hearts and our treasure are always in the same place. They go hand and hand together.

The eternal perspective is to set your heart on things above. See the beauty and grandeur of Christ, and the fullness of his love for you. And when you are captured by this beatific vision, you will pour out praise and adoration, because you know him who loves us and by his sovereign grace came and delivered us from evil, by his sovereign and gracious hand.

### **Conclusion:**

So in this vision, we have a glimpse of THAT day. And we have heard from four voices as recorded by John.

As we close our time this morning, we want to remember that it is good to live this day in light of that great day: the coming celebration of the marriage supper of the lamb.

Our actions twist easily when we get our heavenly and worldly perspectives confused. We worship the wrong things.

We know the enemy of our souls through trickery, and deceit has cleverly abducted the keys to the kingdom of this world. We gave it to him, rather than being faithful to the one who gave it to us.

And now instead of righteousness, peace and joy that God offered us as eternal life for the planet and its inhabitants- evil, injustice, heartache, death and ruin rule over us.

However, Our triune God, promises us redemption from the curse. And we can celebrate that vigorously.

That celebration that will mark the ultimate triumph of our God's wonderful restoral of that great misfortune: the reversal of the curse and the reopening of the gates of heaven.

John's vision captured here makes it clear that all of creation will participate in this end time event, which is characterized by two meals: the celebratory supper of the marriage of the lamb (v 1-10) or the destruction of evil at the supper of God (v 11-end)

Our response to his invitation in this life will determine which meal we will attend. A great and joyous celebration of the marriage supper of the lamb. Or the meal of destruction.

Every one of us will be at one meal or the other.

If we respond rightly to the invitation of the lamb:

We will celebrate with the saints the deliverance from evil, and rejoice in the destruction of our enemy.

We will rejoice with the Son of Man- Jesus Christ, and praise the Lord 'OUR' God together.

We will yield happily to His almighty sovereignty, and sing joyfully and gratefully praises for his abundant grace.

We will worship him eternally, because he is worthy.

We will be the most blessed people because we have responded to the invitation of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

***(Let's Pray)***