The Wedding of the Lamb

Revelation 19

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| **Natural Divisions** | * Revelation 19:1-10 A great multitude in heaven erupted in praise because of the destruction of Babylon, and the imminent wedding of Christ to His church
* Revelation 19:11-16 Christ returns from heaven to earth to judge, with blazing eyes, a robe dipped in blood, and a sword of judgment coming from His mouth; and the name on His thigh is King of Kings and Lord of Lords
* Revelation 19:17-21 The beast and the false prophet were captured and thrown into the lake of fire, and their followers were destroyed by the sword of Christ
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| **Summary Sentence** | As heaven rejoices in God’s just destruction of Babylon, Jesus returns to destroy the beast and false prophet and to strike down the ungodly with the sword from His mouth—the Word of truth  |
| **Central Idea** |  When Jesus returns, there will be destruction of God’s enemies, reward for God’s people, and God’s eternal Kingdom will come. |

As we’ve studied the book of Revelation this year, we’ve seen that at times the structure of the book resembles the way we see football games presented on television. When you’re watching a football game, there will be an important play. The quarterback throws a long pass to his receiver. You watch the running back race down the field, outrunning and outmaneuvering the defensive linemen. It’s a touchdown! The crowd is on its feet. And then everything stops.

Now, as we’re viewing the game on our television, in our living room, we have a replay, where the exact same play is shown from the vantage point of a camera in the end zone, and from that vantage point we get a whole different view of the events we’ve just seen. Then everything stops again. Now we have another replay, and we watch that same play through the lens of a camera that was zoomed in on just one aspect of the action, and we see the same play again.

The accounts of events in the book of Revelation are very much like that. Revelation doesn’t proceed in chronological order. And so, as we read through the book of Revelation, we will see the same event described again and again in different chapters of the book.

That makes understanding the book of Revelation hard for us, because we tend to write our stories in careful chronological order. We tend to tell our histories in chronological order, but the ancient Hebrews didn’t necessarily do that. The ancient Hebrews didn’t feel constrained to tell their stories in chronological order. The emphasis in Hebrew writing is on concepts, not timelines.

Last week we considered a view of the book of Revelation that understands the book as being composed of seven sections—each section presenting a different viewpoint—a different aspect of the course of the church age. According to this view, which is the view that I hold, the book of Revelation is descriptive of the entire church age.

The church age is the span of time between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the future day of His return. The span of time in which we’re now living is called the *church age*. The church age began in the first century and it will extend until the return of Christ and the day of final judgment.

My view of the book of Revelation is that Revelation is descriptive of the entire church age. Revelation was given to *comfort* the church—to comfort us—as we seek to live godly lives in a world where evil is still prevalent. Revelation was given to *encourage* God’s people to stand firm even in the face of opposition. Revelation was given to *challenge* God’s people to hold fast to their faith even as they live in a world that is characterized by godlessness and hostility toward God.

These seven sections have different emphases, but in a general sense, these seven sections are parallel accounts that describe aspects or elements of the church age. Every one of these sections, except the first one, ends with a view of the end of the age. Every one of these sections, except the first, ends with a description of some aspect of the day of the return of Christ, the destruction of the earth, and the coming of the Kingdom.

Today we are looking at the sixth section of Revelation, chapters 17-19. In this section we see the return of Christ, and we see this glorious event in greater detail than we have seen in prior sections. In this sixth section of Revelation we see the destruction of God’s enemies—we see the destruction of Babylon, the beast, and the false prophet. We see the announcement of reward for God’s people. We see the announcement of the wedding of the Lamb, and we see the assurance that God’s Kingdom will come. **When Jesus returns, there will be destruction of God’s enemies, reward for God’s people, and God’s eternal Kingdom will come**.

Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 19.

In the first two chapters of this section, in chapters 17 and 18, we saw the condemnation and the destruction of the harlot Babylon. *Babylon* is a metaphor for the godless self-serving cultures of the world. *Babylon* is the archetype of every godless culture—every godless community of man in history. *Babylon* represents the seductive allure of worldly pleasure, of materialism, of power and fame and luxury. *Babylon* represents the false view that fulfillment and security may be found in success and prosperity and power.

Babylon is a harlot. She’s a seductress. We’ve seen that Babylon—any godless human culture—is instrumental in seducing non-believers to set their goals on worldly pursuits, and they are thereby distracted from any interest in the things of God. Just as an immoral woman may seduce a married man away from the loving arms of his wife; even so, harlot Babylon seduces mankind away from the knowledge of the love of God.

Last week we saw God’s judgment on Babylon. Last week we saw the destruction of Babylon. We are viewing the day of the return of Christ, and Revelation teaches us that **when Jesus returns, there will be destruction of God’s enemies, reward for God’s people, and God’s eternal Kingdom will come**.

Look at verses 1-3 of chapter 19.

*“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 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." Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."*

There is rejoicing in heaven at the destruction of Babylon. In this future day, God has displayed His perfect justice, and He has exposed and terminated the complex system of worldly values that has corrupted the world He created. God has brought to an end the arrogance of earthly powers that stood in defiance of the authority of God. In this day of Christ’s return, God destroys all evil, and now God will establish His perfect eternal Kingdom. It is a great day.

Look at verses 4-6.

*And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."*

 *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.”*

Beginning in verse 7 we have the happy announcement of the wedding of the Lamb. Look at verses 7-8.

*“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"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”*

We can gain insight into this concept of the wedding of the Lamb by considering the marriage customs of the Hebrews in that day. There are three stages—three elements—of a Jewish marriage.

First there is the betrothal. The betrothal is far more binding—far more significant—than is the engagement period in American culture. On the day of the betrothal, the terms of the marriage contract are accepted in the presence of witnesses, and God’s blessing is pronounced upon the union. From the day of the betrothal, the bride and groom are legally considered to be husband and wife, although they don’t live together as man and wife until the marriage.

The second stage is the interval between the betrothal and the wedding-feast. At the time of the betrothal, the groom pays the dowry to the father of the bride. Sometimes the dowry is money, or property; sometimes the dowry is in the form of service rendered to the father of the bride.

The final event is the procession and the wedding-feast at the end of the period of betrothal. The bride in her home prepares herself in her finest attire. The groom proceeds from his home with his friends to the home of the bride. He receives his bride unto himself and he take her with him to his home, and the wedding feast, which includes the marriage supper, takes place at his home. The usual festivities last seven days—sometimes even more.

The Bible repeatedly compares the love-relationship between a bridegroom and his bride to the love relationship that exists between God and His people—between Christ and His Church.

The church—the people of faith—are said to be betrothed to Christ. The Bible pictures the body of believers as betrothed to Christ.

In 2 Cor. 11:2 Paul says this to the church at Corinth: *“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I betrothed you—I promised you—to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him.”*

 We are betrothed to Jesus, and Jesus has paid our dowry. The dowry set by the Father was Christ’s death to pay for our purification. Jesus paid our dowry by His blood—by His death on the cross.

We live in the interval between the betrothal and the wedding feast. During this period the bride must keep herself pure and make herself ready. She has been given fine linen—a righteousness that was given to her by God’s grace. This linen pictures the righteous deeds of the saints—the righteous acts of the people of faith. These righteous acts have been accomplished only through the grace of God—only through the enabling of the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, these righteous acts are adornment for us, and they enhance our presentation to our bridegroom.

At the end of the church age, Jesus, our Bridegroom, will come to receive His bride, the church, and the wedding feast will begin. This glorious moment is the event that is described in verses 7-8 of Revelation 19. Christ will come to His bride, the church, at the end of the age.

This is not simply a New Testament concept. Throughout the Old Testament, in various places, this concept of a wedding was announced. Throughout the Old Testament, we find here and there the promise of a future bond of marriage—a marriage covenant between God and His people.

And so, at the proper time, God sent His Son, Jesus, and Jesus assumed our flesh and blood. The betrothal took place; the dowry was paid at the cross. And now, in chapter 19, after an interval which is but the blink of an eye in light of eternity, the Bridegroom returns for His bride. Verse 7 says, *“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.”*

In our study of Revelation, we have come, again, to the consummation of the church age—to the day of the return of Christ. Revelation teaches us that **when Jesus returns, there will be destruction of God’s enemies, reward for God’s people, and God’s eternal Kingdom will come**.

Let’s look at His glorious appearing. Look at verses 11-16. *“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. 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. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. 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. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

This is the long-anticipated event—the second coming of Christ. Now the enemies of God will be utterly and eternally destroyed. Now the power of Satan will be eliminated. On this day, all things will be made new. On this day, the Kingdom of God will come.

Consider first the appearance of our Lord. His eyes are like blazing fire, speaking of His omniscience undergirding His judgment. Jesus returns as Judge, but He is all-knowing. He is all-wise. His judgment is perfectly just.

Jesus has many crowns, which speaks of His ultimate, unlimited authority over all of creation.

Jesus has a name that no one knows but He Himself. In ancient times, a person’s name denoted his character and his authority and his accomplishments. No one fully comprehends the glory and the majesty and the holiness of our Lord. Jesus is glorious far beyond our comprehension of Him. He has a name that no one knows but He Himself.

His robe is dipped in blood. Some have understood this blood to be the blood of God’s enemies. According to this view, the image of a bloody robe brings to mind Isaiah 63, which portrays God’s garments splattered with blood from His enemies as God’s vengeance was poured out upon them. When Jesus returns, Jesus, God the *Son* will bring judgment against God’s enemies. His robes are soaked blood red because, according to verse 15, *“He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty.”*

Others take the view—and this is my view—that the robe *dipped* in blood (*baptized* in blood) is a reminder of Christ’s shed blood at the cross—that His blood has purchased redemption for God’s people. It is His blood that enables God’s people to be spared the final judgment. It is His blood that enables us to be purified as His bride. His robe is dipped in blood.

Verse 13 says that *“His name is the Word of God.”* The *Word of God* refers to the revelation of God’s purpose. What Jesus does is the expression of God’s will. His coming is the fulfillment of God’s plan. When Jesus judges, it is God’s judgment that falls. *“His name is the Word of God.”*

Verse 15 says that *“Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.”* Think about this; this is important. If Jesus were returning with a sword for the purpose of engaging in bloody military combat with the forces gathered against Him, then His sword would be in His hand. It’s not; the sword is in His mouth.

This is a metaphor—it’s symbolism. It conveys an important message. There will be no military battle on that day; there will be no physical combat. When Jesus returns, He will *speak* destruction on His enemies. Just as God *spoke* the world into existence—just as on the day of creation, God *spoke* and there was light; even so, on this day, Jesus will *speak*, and His enemies will be judged. Jesus will *speak* and the armies of the beast will be destroyed.

Now look at verse 14. *“And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses.”*  Who are these armies? They’re riding white horses of victory. Their clothing of white and clean linen is the attire of the bride of Christ, which we just saw in verse 8. Furthermore, this same scene was described in Revelation chapter 17:12-14, which says this: *“And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind and hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are His called, chosen and faithful followers.”*

When Jesus returns to judge His enemies, He will bring with Him those who are His called, chosen and faithful followers. They will be victorious, and they will be dressed in white and clean linen. They are the people of God; they are the church.

Look again at verse 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.”*

This image of striking down the nations and ruling them with a rod of iron brings to mind Psalm 2:7-9, which says this: *“…the Lord said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall dash them to pieces like pottery.’”*

This speaks of the complete and total victory Christ will accomplish over His enemies. Figuratively speaking, He will rule them, or break them, with an unbreakable iron scepter. He will dash them to pieces like pottery. Their arrogant defiance against their Maker will be dashed to pieces like a broken clay pot. The victory of Jesus will be absolute and complete.

**When Jesus returns, there will be destruction of God’s enemies; there will be reward for God’s people; and God’s eternal Kingdom will come**.

In verse 16 we see that on His robe where it covers His thigh He has written the name, *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”* Jesus is the supreme authority over all the earth. He is over all kings. He is over all of the movers and shakers of this world. He has the authority to judge, to redeem, to vindicate and to recreate this earth. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

So certain and so comprehensive is the destruction Jesus brings that John tells of an angel who summons the birds—the vultures—to come and be ready to feast on the bodies of the fallen warriors—to feast on the bodies of those who gather in rebellion against our Lord.

Look at verses 17-18. *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.’”*

This is a gruesome picture; I know this. But it stands as a contrast between the blessing of the supper God provides for His people—the wedding supper of the Lamb—and the supper of God the wicked will experience—a supper where their bodies are the main dish. What glorious blessing there is for those who have been saved by the blood of the Lamb. What terrible destruction there is for those who refuse the authority and the grace of God.

Let’s look at this final battle. Look at verse 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.”* Who are these armies gathered to oppose the authority of Christ? Who are these people whom Christ will destroy?

All of those who serve the beast—kings and captains, slaves and free men, both small and great, old and young, men and women—all of the ungodly—are included in this gathering of nations engineered by Satan. All of those who have chosen to reject the gospel and to disobey the call of God will be included in this multitude.

When Jesus returns, the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire—they will be thrown into the place of eternal judgment. At the same time, when Jesus returns, all of those who have rejected Christ will be slain. They will be cast down by His Word of judgment—the sword from His mouth. This will not be a military battle; but there will be the destruction of all those who have rejected Christ.

The battle that ends the course of the church age is resolved in the blink of an eye. One moment John sees the beast, the kings of the earth allied with the beast, and their followers all gathered to execute the ultimate war against Christ and His church. The next moment, the beast and false prophet and cast into the lake of fire, and the ungodly are destroyed by the judgment of Christ.

Satan gave it his best shot, and he has been utterly defeated.

As we have completed this sixth section of the book of Revelation, we have come to the day of the return of Christ. We have seen that when Jesus returns, there will be complete destruction of God’s enemies. Babylon will be destroyed. The beast and the false prophet will be thrown into everlasting judgment. On the other hand, Christ’s coming will be the day of reward for God’s people, and the wedding feast of the Lamb will take place. And finally, we’ll see in the final section of this book that the promised Kingdom—the eternal Kingdom of God will come at last.

Praise God!