

Two Banquets  
Revelation 19:1-21  
Newton Bible Church  
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The story is told about a man who bought a donkey from a preacher. The preacher told the man that the only way to make the donkey go was to say “Hallelujah!” and the only way to make the donkey stop was to say “Amen!” The man immediately got on the animal to try out the preacher’s instructions. “Hallelujah!” shouted the man. The donkey began to trot. “Amen!” shouted the man. The donkey stopped immediately. “This is great” said the man. With a “Hallelujah!” he rode off, very proud of his purchase.

The man travelled for a long time through some hills. Soon he was heading towards a cliff. He could not remember the word to make the donkey stop. “Stop!” said the man “Halt!” he cried. The donkey just kept going. “Bible . . . Church . . . Please stop!” shouted the man. The donkey just began to trot faster. He was getting closer and closer to the cliff edge. Finally, in desperation, the man said a prayer. “Please, dear Lord. Please make this donkey stop before I go over the cliff. In Jesus’ name, amen.” The donkey came to an abrupt stop just one step from the edge of the cliff. “Hallelujah! shouted the man.

This funny story introduces us to one of the themes of the chapter in Revelation we consider today. Chapter 19 describes how the event our hearts have longed for finally occurs – God sets everything right through the return of our Lord. Let’s pray that our hearts would be open to the glorious truths in this incredible chapter.

### **Prayer**

Revelation 19 tells of two banquets; one revealed in a description of a series of hallelujahs in heaven; the other revealed in a description of Christ’s return. The banquets share one thing in common; they are both related to Christ’s return.

The first major section could be entitled Heaven’s Hallelujahs. This heavenly Hallelujah chorus is actually the first and only time this word appears in the New Testament. The word comes from two Hebrew words (halal and Jah) and means “Praise Yahweh.” This Hebrew form introduces a number of Psalms and is regularly translated “Praise the Lord.” The first initiator of praise is revealed in the first 5 verses.

### **Revelation 19:1-5**

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,<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”<sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and

the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"<sup>5</sup> And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

This initial burst of praise is marked by a threefold hallelujah, underscoring its importance. These three hallelujahs are hallelujahs for God's righteous judgment. The first hallelujah is a hallelujah for God's just judgment of Babylon. This outburst of praise rests upon the fact that the judgments of God are both true and just (v. 2). This just judgment has avenged upon Babylon the blood of all those it martyred (v. 3).

The second hallelujah is a hallelujah for God's permanent judgment of Babylon. Verse 3 tells us that the smoke from her goes up forever and ever. This hallelujah is about something other than a permanent burn pile. It is the permanency of the judgment that is in view. This system that has been so powerful and done so much harm is destroyed and will not rise out of the ashes. This is an amplification of the statement in v. 2 that the judgment is true (valid) and just.

The third hallelujah flows out of the first two but focuses solely upon the praiseworthiness of the righteous judge. All of heaven erupts in a hallelujah for God's absolute praiseworthiness. The 24 elders and the four living creatures are all prostrate before the throne of God saying "Amen, Hallelujah!" And then comes a response from the throne – an unidentified voice exhorts all, great and small, to praise God. There is much to praise – God's righteous judgment demonstrates His sovereignty; His absolute power; His character; His faithfulness to His promises; the purity of His vengeance; the list could go on and on – He is worthy of our praise. The appropriate response to this is detailed at the end of the section describing the 4<sup>th</sup> hallelujah. It is to that hallelujah we now turn:

### **Revelation 19:6-10**

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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; <sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> 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.

The fourth and final hallelujah is a hallelujah for the wedding feast of the Lamb. That all of these hallelujahs are linked is evidenced by the fact that the initial part of the hallelujah is a hallelujah for God's reign. This ties back to His judgement of Babylon but goes far beyond – it is in the present tense – Because He reigns our response ought to be to rejoice and exult

(celebrating His sovereignty) and give Him the glory. And then comes one of those incredibly important prepositions – “for” - giving us the specific thing in view that demonstrates His reign – this is a hallelujah for the marriage feast of the Lamb.

There is no question who the Groom is in this wedding feast – He is identified as the “Lamb” who we know is none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Earlier John the Baptist so identified Him:

### **John 3:28-30**

<sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ <sup>29</sup> The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. <sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Jesus Himself said that He was the Bridegroom:

### **Mark 2:18-20**

<sup>18</sup> Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup> The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

The fact that He is identified in our text as the Lamb is a reminder that He gave Himself for the bride:

### **Ephesians 5:25**

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

For there to be a wedding there also must be a bride. To correctly identify the bride, we must remember that the metaphor of marriage expressing the relationship between God and His people has its roots in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. To Israel God said:

### **Hosea 2:19**

<sup>19</sup> And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

When Israel was in exile, she was comforted by the reminder that the Lord of Hosts was her husband and would bring her back:

### **Isaiah 54:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. <sup>7</sup> For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.”

The same symbolism runs throughout the New Testament. Paul portrays the relationship of Christ and His church in terms of the intimacy of marriage:

### **Ephesians 5:32**

<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

So, the identity of the bride is clear – it is the church, all of the redeemed who have embraced the free gift of salvation and have placed all their hope and allegiance in Christ.

In our text we learn that the bride has made preparation for the wedding. Verse 8 tells us that it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure. This goes beyond the robe of our Savior’s righteousness that He exchanges for our filthy rags of sin, for we are informed that this fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. We cannot save ourselves by our good works, but when He saves us, He enables us to do the good things we were created to do. Paul said it this way:

### **Ephesians 2:10**

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Next we see a reference to the blessed invitation. This is so important; an angel was instructed to tell John to write “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” To underscore the weight of this announcement the angel exclaimed that “these are the true words of God.” John was so overwhelmed by the magnitude of this announcement that he fell down in worship. When we celebrate the Lord’s Supper as we did a week ago, we get just a tiny taste of what that wedding feast will be like. Who could resist such an invitation? Sadly, our Lord indicated that there would be many who would turn it down:

### **Matthew 22:1-14**

22 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup> and sent his servants<sup>[a]</sup> to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’” <sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent

his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' <sup>10</sup> And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So, the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup> And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen."

When Jesus told this parable, there was a tradition that when a king would host a wedding feast, the king himself would provide the wedding garments for the guests. When the guests would arrive, they would put on the garments provided by the king. For this man to have entered the hall without a proper garment meant that he had refused to don the garment provided by the king.

The invitation to the wedding feast has been issued, but no one will get in without the garment of salvation which God freely gives to all who place their trust in His Son. One day every one of us will face the consequences of what we do with that invitation. We'll get back to that at the end of the chapter, but first we must note the intent of all these hallelujahs. The angel's response makes it clear that the heavenly intent is that we worship God! Throughout Scripture we see that only God is worthy of worship. All of Satan's attempts to usurp that worship do not change the fact that no created being or thing is worthy of worship, no matter how glorious! The heavenly multitude is already doing what we are called to do – worshiping our Almighty God.

What do we worship? For worship, we will, but who or what we worship is a choice we make. The intent of all these heavenly hallelujahs, including notice of invitation to God's forever wedding feast, is that we too would humble ourselves in worship. How is your worship life? Who or what do you get excited enough about to praise? If we could just comprehend a bit of the grandeur of the wedding feast prepared for us, and even more the grandeur of the groom, our Savior, our worship would be transformed.

We have seen the hallelujahs in heaven, now we turn to the description of the return of the King. This is what the entirety of the Bible points to as the Day of the Lord and we know as the second coming. This description also comes in two sections: the first dealing with His appearance and the second with His victory.

#### Revelation 19:11-16

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let's consider the appearance of the King. In Tolkien's "The Return of the King" the true king is recognized because he wields a sword that was long thought lost and was now reforged (the warrior king), and because his hands are the hands of a healer (the servant king). That Jesus should be recognized as the true King is revealed in our text by the description of His appearance. This description of The King's appearance includes:

He comes out of heaven: previously in Revelation the curtains of heaven were opened to let John look in, but now heaven opens for the true King to come out and set things straight.

He is seated on a white horse: He appears on the exact kind of horse the Roman generals rode through their triumphs – He is the true King!

His eyes are like a flame of fire: ordinary kings are limited in what they see and perceive; He is not – nothing escapes His gaze – He sees all and knows all!

On His head are many diadems: vassal kings wore a small crown; the more crowns a ruler had the more vassal kings they ruled over – Satan's imposter had 10. Jesus has so many they are not numbered – He is the true King!

He wears a robe dipped in blood: some would see this as the blood He shed to purchase our salvation, but the context demands a different explanation. The prophetic image evoked here was sounded back in Isaiah:

Isaiah 63:1-6

63 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." <sup>2</sup> Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? <sup>3</sup> "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. <sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. <sup>5</sup> I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. <sup>6</sup> I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

The blood on His robe is the blood of His vanquished enemies – He is the unconquerable King!

Next, we must consider the description of the King's entourage. This description includes both an identification and a description of the entourage's appearance:

The identification: the armies of heaven. Surely included in this army will be His mighty angels, but I believe that it will also include the bride mentioned earlier in the chapter – these participants are called the armies of heaven, but they are very strangely dressed!

The appearance: all the members of the armies are arrayed in white linen – no soldier would ever ride into battle wearing white linen – this is one of the reasons I believe that the church is included in this army – remember how the bride is dressed? This army is not dressed for battle; it is dressed for a wedding feast! We will see why they are so strangely dressed in the next section.

Next, we must consider the King's names. Those names include:

1. Faithful and true – because He is God incarnate, one of His names reflects the same characteristics attributed to God in the second verse of this same chapter.
2. A name written that no one knows but Himself – Grant Osborne explains:

“Therefore, the “new name no one knows except He Himself is a title reserved for eternity, the name that will reveal the true nature of the Godhead in a way beyond our finite ability to grasp. As Moses could not see the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20), so we cannot at this time know the true essence of God. That awaits His final revelation.” – His unknown name reminds us that He is fully God.

3. Word of God – the beginning of John's gospel tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The mystery of the incarnation is wrapped up in His name,
4. King of kings and Lord of lords – He is absolutely sovereign – His is the name at which on that day every knee will bow and acknowledge He is Lord.

Finally, we must consider the King's actions. These actions include:

1. In righteousness He judges and wages war – we all long for a judge that can set things right – that judge is coming & His name is Jesus!
2. He strikes down the nations with His sword – the sword coming out of His mouth is His spoken word – as Luther wrote in his song *A Mighty Fortress* – “one little word will fell them”
3. He rules with a rod of iron – this implies punishment for wrong-doing – He has the power to set things right!
4. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty – we saw this pictured in Isaiah – no one (including all the armies of the world) can stand up against Him. That is what we observe in the final section of the chapter:

**Revelation 19:17-21**

<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> 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.” <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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.

Here we see the victory of the King. This description of that victory contains four elements:

**Announcement of victory:** This announcement is made via an invitation issued by an angel to all of the birds to come eat a grisly meal. This “supper of God” stands in sharp contrast to the wedding feast of the Lamb. It is a supper of God only in the sense that God will provide it. This supper is literally for the birds – and the meal is those who reject Christ!

**Rebel armies gathered:** The beast and the false prophet attempt one last stand –earlier in Revelation the demons deceived the armies of the nations into fighting one another – now they convince those same armies to fight against the returning King! Though this seems unimaginable, through all of the judgments poured out upon these same rebels, they refused to repent. Now they are attempting what no sane person would knowingly do, to fight God Almighty! Before they can do anything, we see:

**Rebel leaders captured and bound:** the beast and the false prophet are taken captive. Before they can put their armies in motion, they are incapacitated. Not only are they incapacitated; they are thrown alive into the lake of fire. Chapter 20 tells us that when Satan is thrown into the lake of fire 1000 years later, this pair is still there! The leadership of the rebellion is suddenly gone, and the last thing we see is:

**Rebel forces exterminated:** We saw in the section above that the King would strike them all down with His sword (His spoken word) – He says the word and the battle is over. This is not a battle – it is an execution of those involved in the last battle (what we know as Armageddon). Now we see why the armies of heaven were so strangely dressed, they were not dressed for battle (they knew they would not be needed), but dressed for the celebration to follow. The chapter concludes by telling us that the birds got their feast!

This chapter demands that several key questions must be considered:

The first question comes out of the fact that if by God’s grace, we are alive when Christ returns, we will either eat at the wedding feast if we have embraced the gift of salvation, or we will be eaten by the birds if we have rejected that gift. Even if that day occurs long after we have passed from this earth, we will either be participants in the wedding feast of the Lamb, or we

will be sent to join all of the other rebels in the lake of fire. The question has to do with what we have done or will do with Jesus. So, I in good conscience must ask you today – have you accepted the invitation? If you have not yet placed your complete trust in Christ alone, I plead with you not to delay. There's a table at the wedding feast reserved for you when you do! The consequence of trusting anything else is eternal punishment.

And for those of us who have trusted Him alone, we must answer the question; how is your worship life? Are you daily worshiping our Almighty God? Are you learning to praise Him regardless of the circumstances? How could your worship life be improved? The intent of heaven is clear – all of these things in God's Word have been given to us that we might respond with worthy worship. Our culture screams that "It's all about me!" Heaven's testimony is that our culture lies and that it is truly all about Him. We are created to worship and worship we will. The question is whether we are pursuing heaven's intent or whether we have slipped into the patterns of this world!

Finally, we who have accepted the gift also must also answer the question; how is your preparation for the wedding feast going? We are part of the bride and need to be preparing by allowing Christ to work in us to produce the good works for which we were created. Are you surrendering more and more to His control? Are you involved in serving Him every day? Is His fruit increasingly evident in your life? Does His grace increasingly flow more freely through your life? The immediate benefits of surrendering to Him are significant but the eternal benefits are beyond our comprehension. We cannot even begin to imagine how incredible this wedding feast will be, but we can get a taste of it right now as we allow Him to take control.

There are two banquets coming. Will you be an eater or be eaten?

### **Prayer**