

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST: THE REBELLION

Salvation Belongs to Our God
Revelation 19

Mark Vroegop

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." 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. 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. 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." 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. 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. 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, 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." 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. 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. 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 (Rev. 19, ESV).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is cosmic, prophetic, corporate, and personal.

The last book of the Bible is cosmic in the sense that it details an other-worldly battle. It's prophetic in the sense that it identifies events for which we are waiting. There's more to come. It's corporate in the sense that it's the story of God's people. There are multitudes. People from every tribe, nation, language, and tongue. But it's also personal.

Revelation was first given to one man, John, while he was exiled on Patmos. Revelation is written to help Christians see the world and the future through the lens of God's plan so that they can endure hardship and suffering.

In the letters to the churches, it sounded like this:

To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11).

To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it (Rev. 2:17).

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26).

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels (Rev. 3:5).

There's something in this book that's cosmic, prophetic, corporate, and personal. It's big. It's future. It's together. But it's also personal.

Today we round the corner for our final lap of this glorious book. Chapters 19-22 show us the glorious end which is actually just the beginning. Over the last six weeks, we've looked at some really dark texts about divine judgment. In Revelation 19 the clouds break, and we begin to see the rays of sunshine again.

I want to take Revelation 19 and make it practical from the very beginning. This book is meant to encourage and strengthen you. It's designed to give you hope. Here's what we'll see: **Jesus makes me joyful, complete, and safe.** Of course, you could exchange "me" for "us." Nothing wrong with that. But I want to shape this sermon with a very personal angle so that you'll remember, Christian, that the goal of this book is to help you make it. Right now. Today.

1. Jesus Makes Me Joyful

Joy isn't merely one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. It's the dominant emotion expressed by God's people when they consider who God is and what he's done. The new heavens and the new earth are going to be filled with joy.

If there's one word in the Bible that captures this, it's the word "hallelujah." As I've traveled to different parts of the world, it's interesting how this word is common in worship services regardless of the language. It's a statement or shout of praise to God. That's the meaning.

But the sound of the word—hallelujah—has roots in the Hebrew language. It literally means "praise the Lord," and it sounds in English and in Greek how you would say it in Hebrew. It's what individual people said to God and how it sounded when they were filled with joy.

I find it fascinating that the Hebrew word is preserved. I wonder if part of the reason is because the sound of joy is connected to the meaning of joy. In other words, joy isn't just a word. It has meaning, but it also has a sound. Joy is holistic and all-encompassing. Hallelujah!

In verse 1, John's vision turns from the fall of Babylon to the "loud voice of a great multitude in heaven." What follows is an incredible anthem of joyful praise connected to three words:

- Salvation – God rescues people. God is gracious.
- Glory – God is full of perfection, holiness, and beauty.
- Power – God is mighty.

Notice that these are not merely statements about what God does. This is who God is. Salvation, glory, and power belong to him. God's people do not merely praise God for what he does. They praise him for who he is. The worthiness of God is directly tied to his essence, not just his activity. Getting this right is really important.

By the way, the same should be true of how you think about yourself. Who you are before God defines what you do. Identity informs activity. But the world and our selfish desires tell us that activity (what I do) defines my identity. Salvation, glory, and power belong to God. And they are the basis of our joy.

Verses 2-3 connect joy to God's deliverance through his just and true judgment.

"...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" (Rev. 19:2-3).

The overthrow of Babylon is complete and eternal. Never again will God's people have to endure her schemes, seductions, and oppression. The corruption of Babylon is over. The wicked spell has been broken.

Can you imagine a world with no temptation, greed, lust, envy, or manipulation? No oppression, anger, or injustice? Imagine a world where evil has lost its power. This reminds me of a moment in *The Lion*,

the Witch, and the Wardrobe when Father Christmas appears after a long time of continuous winter but never Christmas. His appearance, along with the melting snow, signals that Aslan is on the move. The children find themselves joyful, but they don't fully know why. It's the joy of realizing that everything has changed—for the better. Because Aslan is on the move.

Verse 4 takes us back to the twenty-four elders and four living creatures that we read about in Revelation 4-5. The joy is like a wave that comes out from the multitude, returns to the throne room, and then goes out again. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

And the final statement is an invitation.

And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great" (Rev. 19:5).

The appeal is meant to be universal. It's the reverse of the curse where the creation worships itself. This is a joyful realignment with the way life was meant to be.

Christian, this is the future that Jesus purchased for us, planned before the foundation of the world:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:3-6).

Joy is rooted in what is true about God and what is true about us. It's not connected to circumstances. Christian joy is something God does in you because of Jesus.

Do you know this? Do you feel this? Do you embody this? Revelation invites us to remember that Jesus makes us joyful.

2. Jesus Makes Me Complete

What comes next in the text is just incredible! In verses 6-9 we learn about the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is a heavenly gathering that signals the completion of God's redemptive plan.

Look, I know that sometimes weddings can be complicated. Maybe something bad happened at yours. Or maybe you are no longer married or have never been married. I realize that this metaphor, like all metaphors, may have some personal challenges with it.

But imagine a wedding reception that's perfect. The food, the people, the joy are what you would have dreamed. That's the moment the vision has in mind.

It's fascinating to me how central fellowship meals are for John. The Gospel of John records the first miracle of Jesus as turning water into wine at a wedding, in John 2. And the last words of Jesus in the

same Gospel were spoken over breakfast on a beach. There's something personal, intimate, and relational here.

John hears another loud sound, like a waterfall and thunder (v. 6). Once again, "hallelujah" leads the anthem of celebration. Once again, God is praised, "For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns" (v. 6b). Once again, people are invited into joyful worship, "Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory" (v. 7a).

What follows in verse 7-8 is the main point of this section:

"...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 (Rev. 19:7b-8).

We've seen before that the people of God are described as a bride. This was a common way to talk about God's relationship with his people in the Old Testament prophets (see Ezek. 16:8-14). And we'll see this image return in Revelation 21 when New Jerusalem is described as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

Notice that the bride has made herself ready by virtue of her righteous deeds and that it has been granted to her to be clothed with fine, bright, and pure linen. This is the culmination of God's plan for his people to faithfully endure through hardship. Here's how Peter describes the mindset:

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

This is the completion of God's plan. Jesus rescued people from their sins and transforms them into those who are obedient and faithful. They've made it to the end as the Spirit of Jesus has helped them to be faithful through all the challenges of earthly living. They've felt the wrath of the beast, and they kept trusting in the One who is faithful and true.

Then John is given instructions to write again. He hasn't been given this instruction since chapter 14. It must be important. It is. John is told:

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" (Rev. 19:9).

The people at the marriage supper are there by invitation. Wait? I thought they were present because of their righteous deeds. Exactly! As we saw in Revelation 17:4, the people are called, chosen, and faithful. All of it is because of God's work in their lives through the death and life of Jesus.

Just to be sure that we don't miss the certainty of this moment, we read, "These are the true words of God." This is it! The plan of God, through Jesus, now complete. John is apparently so stunned by all of this that he falls on his face in worship. He's overwhelmed with gratitude. But the angel checks him.

The messenger redirects John's focus. He reminds him to worship God, about their common standing, and the importance of the testimony about Jesus.

This is the completion of Jesus's work. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a beautiful celebration of the grace of Christ and the perseverance of the Holy Spirit.

3. Jesus Makes Me Safe

The third and final hopeful lesson in chapter 19 is the kind of victory that Jesus brings so that his people are safe. Verses 11-21 show us our Savior as a conqueror. It's a glorious image as long as you are on the right side of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In verse 11 heaven opened, and the first thing John sees is a white horse. It's a symbol of victory. The imagery that follows is stunning, and much of it is a combination of previous symbols.

We first learn about his name and character. He's called faithful and true (see 3:14). This describes the essence of who he is. But he also judges and makes war in righteousness. Jesus comes to make things right and crush the enemies of God.

Then we learn about his appearance. In verse 12 he has eyes like a flame of fire. On his head are many crowns. And he has a secret name because there are things beyond our understanding. He's more glorious than we can know. He's wearing a robe dipped in blood (v. 13), a symbol of his death, and he's called the Word of God. Jesus is the revelation of God.

According to verse 14, he's leading the armies of heaven. The hosts are arrayed in the same kind of garments as at the marriage supper, and they are following him on white horses too! What's more, he's full of authority and power. Notice that he has a sharp sword in his mouth (v. 15), and it is by mere command that he can conquer. What's more, he rules them with a rod of iron. He executes the full authoritative judgment of God, the kind of judgment we read about in chapter 14.

And then we see an important title. It's defining. On his robe and on his thigh are the words "King of kings and Lord of lords." John makes it very clear who this is. It's a stunning image.

In verses 17-21 we read a graphic account of the judgment of those who are in rebellion. An angel ominously calls the birds of the air to gather in preparation for a massive slaughter (vv. 17-18). The vultures are circling as the great battle approaches. Verse 19 tells us that the Beast and the kings of the earth gather to fight against the King of kings.

Verse 20 tells us about the outcome. The beast is captured. So is the false prophet. Notice the description, "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." Both the Beast and the False Prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire. And verse 21 tells us that the rest of the people who sided with the Beast are also killed. They were killed by the mere words of the King of kings.

Take note that there's no real battle mentioned. The power of the Savior is no match for the forces of darkness.

Jesus makes us safe by prevailing against the evil opposition that is in the world. Part of the reason for the graphic imagery is to show us how defeated the enemy really is. They're not coming back. They're dead. This reminds me of the beloved Psalm 23.

A PSALM OF DAVID. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Ps. 23).

Jesus makes us joyful. Jesus makes us complete. Jesus makes us safe.

Joy is rooted in what is true about God and what is true about us. It's not connected to circumstances. Christian joy is something God does in you because of Jesus.

God's plan is going to be completed in you. Jesus rescues people from their sins and transforms them into those who are obedient and faithful. We're going to make it to the end as the Spirit of Jesus has helps us to be faithful through all the challenges of earthly living. You may feel the wrath of the Beast, but keep trusting in the One who is faithful and true.

Jesus judges and makes war in righteousness. He comes to make things right and crush the enemies of God.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Ps. 23:5-6).

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