



Part 38 – The Blessed Invitation

Revelation 19:1-10

The last few chapters of Revelation have shown us both the wickedness and ultimate destruction of Babylon, the deceiver of nations. The choice for every person is whether to follow the beast or the Lamb. Will we seek our home in Babylon, the great prostitute, or in the Bride of the Lamb? The contrast between the two cities, one a harlot and the other a pure Bride, comes into clearer focus in chapter 19.

Babylon, which is likened unto a city, is also a prostitute. The church, also called the New Jerusalem, is likened unto a bride. Babylon and the Bride face radically different destinies.

As the smoke of Babylon's destruction goes up forever, the vast multitude of the redeemed lift up a mighty shout of *Hallelujah!* This praise for the destruction of the wicked is neither cruel nor self-indulgent but focused on the vindication of God's glory as his eternal kingdom is inaugurated. It is a shout of praise that God's kingdom has come and his will has been done on earth as it is heaven (Revelation 19:6-20:15).

The blessed invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb is now sent out far and wide. Jesus is returning for his bride (his church), the redeemed from every nation. And on that day, what the Apostle Paul anticipated will come about: "...so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27)

"Hallelujah!"

The response of the saints on earth and in heaven fulfills the command of Revelation 18:20 to rejoice over the final destruction of Babylon. Three different groups are described in worship: A heavenly multitude (vs. 1), the 24 elders and four living creatures (vs. 4), and the saints on earth (vs. 5).

Vs. 1 – John's auditory vision continues as he hears "a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven." These voices belong to the saints who know firsthand that "salvation and power and glory belong to the Lord."

Vs. 2 – John hears what may fairly be described as a hymn. The first two stanzas of the hymn (vv. 1-2) praise God for his gracious salvation and his righteous judgments. Both the first and third stanzas begin with "Hallelujah!" The word "Hallelujah" remains for Christians throughout the world in its Hebrew form (along with "Amen"). It means "praise the Lord." Hallelujah expresses "jubilant joy, and like 'Hosanna' in Mark 11:9-10, it had become a cry of joy in the Lord in the Jewish world."¹

Vs. 3 – A third stanza of the hymn celebrates the results of God's righteous judgments in which the destruction of Babylon is final. This echoes chapter 14 which depicts the judgment of all those who follow the beast: "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever" (vs. 11).

Vs. 4 – This is the final appearance of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in the book of Revelation. Their final words are "Amen. Hallelujah!" This particular clause is found only here and in Psalm 106:48 "where it follows a prayer for deliverance from the nations...a fitting context for this, as it celebrates the reality of that deliverance."²

As we saw earlier, the 24 elders (a multiple of 12) represent the people of God in her fullness (12 tribes, 12 apostles). The four living creatures with their strange appearance represent the world's living creatures. Remember that the number four in Revelation is symbolic for all of the world. The idea here is that all creation joins in the great "Hallelujah!"

Vs. 5 – This is the response of the saints who are called upon to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon (18:20). Here the saints are referred to as "servants," (or slaves), and "you who fear Him." This is the believing reverence of those who have trusted in the Lord. They are "small and great," referring to those with no status and those with much. This echoes Psalm 115:13 which says that God "will bless those who fear the Lord – small and great."

This is an important message for us in terms of the comfort it affords to all those who are and have been persecuted for the name of Christ. It may also serve as a means of motivating us to continue to pray for

¹ Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) p. 664

² Osborne, p. 666

this coming day. We live in a world still in rebellion against God, a world still intoxicated by Babylon. But we believe and continue on in prayerful hope toward that day when God turns the suffering cry of his people into a shout of *Hallelujah!* This is the message of hope at the center of the Book of Revelation.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Vs. 6 – The mighty roar of the saints reaches a crescendo in praise to the Lord for his victory over Babylon. Once again, the redeemed shout out their “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns...” The universal reign of God has now been fully inaugurated.

Vv. 7-8 – The praise gets even more specific “due to the coming wedding of the Lamb, a centerpiece of the universal reign of God.”³ Jewish wedding customs dictated that, on her wedding day, the bride would make ready by bathing, anointing with fragrant oil, and adornment in fine linen. The bridegroom and his company would arrive at the bride’s home and escort her back to the home of the bridegroom for the wedding feast. The depiction of God’s people as his bride is common in the Scriptures. The Lord is in covenant with his people. They are joined to him in an unbreakable union. This is why the Apostle Paul can say that there is a mysterious likeness between Jesus’ relationship to his church and the marriage relationship between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:22ff).

Vs. 9 – This is the fourth of the seven “beatitudes” in the book of Revelation (again, the importance of the number 7!). Here, life in the new creation is described as a marriage feast, specifically, the feast celebrating the longed-for union between Jesus and his beloved people. It is true that even now the believer is in union with Christ. However, we still await the day when we will be united with the Lord in his glorious presence. The church is both the bride of the Lamb and the invited guests to the wedding feast. “Such mixing of metaphors was common in the ancient world to add richness to the imagery.”⁴

The wedding feast beatitude here is similar to the beatitude from Jesus in Luke 14:15, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” We also think of Jesus’ words in Matthew 8:11, “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

The final clause, “These are the true words of God,” functions similarly to other apostolic pronouncements in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). These statements were used to highlight particularly important truths.

Vs. 10 – John responds to the heavenly messenger by falling to his knees in worship. This is a rather natural response given the glory of the angelic being speaking to him. Though it was certainly not John’s intention, the worship of an angel (or any other created being) is idolatry, so the angel firmly rebukes John. We will see this happen again in 22:8-9. The angel describes himself as a fellow servant of the Lord along with John. This heavenly messenger has far more in common with John than he does with the Lord. He too is a servant of Christ and his gospel. What a contrast this is with the beast and the dragon who demand the worship of God’s human creatures.

The final statement, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” augments the previous clause referring to “the testimony of Jesus,” of which both the angels and the church are servants. “The testimony of Jesus” is a reference to the message of the gospel. There is debate over whether “spirit” is meant to indicate the Person of the Holy Spirit. It seems best to take the clause as indicating that all faithful witness to the gospel and the Lord Jesus is the fruit of the Spirit’s work. Such faithful testimony is true prophetic speech. Beale observes that this is not referring to the Old Testament office of prophet but instead has in mind the “role of the entire church” as she gives faithful testimony to the Person and work of Christ.⁵

A proper wedding is by its very nature a joyous occasion. It is a privilege, therefore, to receive an invitation to a wedding. In this passage, what is described to John is the prelude to the return of Jesus from the perspective of the believer. For the saints of God, the return of Jesus means entry to the great feast of the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). Such a blessed vision comforts us as we wait and pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.”

³ J. Scott Duvall, *A Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2025) p. 244

⁴ Osborne, p. 675

⁵ G.K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) p. 407