



Citadel Of Faith Covenant Church

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ALPHA AND OMEGA

Like the twists and turns of a great novel, the book of Revelations leaves the stark scenes of Babylon's destruction and the doom filled announcements of the angelic host over her ruin to the greatest praise and worship scene that we've been able to see in scriptures. Revelation chapter 19 opens with a sound that the writer John described as a roar of a great multitude in heaven. Have you ever been to a large sporting event or concert? When the team or performer does something spectacular, the roar of the crowd is almost deafening. In Chicago at Stadium where the Chicago Bulls basketball team would play; the design of the stadium was such that they had a meter that would rate the level of sound that would rise from the people, it would reach almost deafening decibels. Well, no earthly arena could match the heavenly hosts roar. Notice the contrasts, in chapter 18 there were "woes" from the earthly inhabitants who felt robbed because their economic "cash cow" had topples. Not only is the whole of humanity reeling from the plagues which have ravaged the earth, now on top of every environmental and physical malady, it's coupled by this economic meltdown. The cries of the earth are now met with the praise of heaven. This should be a word for us. As the people of this world bemoan their situation, the people of God should always respond with a heavenly response. The earth complains, the saints praise. This is why the Bible says in Psalms 34:1 (read) that praise should be continually on our lips.

The words that were coming from this multitude were: Halleluiah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God... While the false prophet, antichrist and seat of false power is toppling, heaven is declaring the true and real power, God! The second part of verse one reminds us that the reason why God is so worthy is that his judgments are true and just. This is not just thrown in here for no reason. How can a loving God allow evil in the world? Have you ever heard this question? Whether it's unnecessary wars and poisonous gases being released on innocent people in Syria, children being slain by bullets in Chicago or the untimely death of a loved one. How can God be real when these things happen? Remember the response of the people on earth in Rev. 16:21? The people cursed God when they saw his judgments. Why would they do this? It's because at the core their is the assumption that God is unjust and that He is unfair. Well, heaven sets the record straight! God's judgments are true and just. What's happening to the earth is what has been prophesied for millennia. Sin is the ultimate cause of all of this and this is because of man's free will to choose Satan and self over God. Indeed the judgment is our fault and not God's!



Rev. 19:2 continues with the voices in heaven explaining God's truth and justice. It's because of God's condemnation of the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her adulteries. God has exacted vengeance on her for the blood of His servants. Remember Rev. 6:10 (read) when the multitude asked when would their martyred blood be avenged? Well, here it is! The more you think, you thank! Then another praise goes up, Halleluiah, because the smoke from her goes up forever! Remember the twenty four elders seated around the throne of God in Rev. 4:4? Well, here they are again doing what they always do, falling down and worshipping God! Let's pause and reflect on this again. These elders or rulers worshipped. It's unfortunate in many church's leaders, both pastors, deacons, elders and department heads are often the least when it comes to public worship. I've seen ministers, deacons and church leaders sitting so sophisticated and non-responsive at some of the most amazing times of worship. Well, they should take a cue from the elders in heaven who fell down and worshipped along with the four living creatures. They echoed, amen, halleluiah (it is so/true....halleluiah). Now a voice from the throne says: Praise our God (notice the consistent use of the personal possessive pronoun "our"? This is showing relationship! Praise Him all his servants and those who fear Him both great and small. Do you think that this is an admonition only for those in the future? Or is the book of Revelation calling us to do the same at all times and everywhere? Verse six then says that there was another thunderous sound of the multitude and this time they were shouting: for the Lord God almighty reigns; rejoice and be glad and give Him glory. Just as the Babylonian kingdom fueled by the demonic arrogance of the devil (see Isaiah 14:12) resulted in glory being given to Satan and the two wild beasts and their propped up kingdom, now TRUE glory is being given to the only ONE who deserves it and this is Jesus Christ! Then they mention the wedding of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready. As you know the Jewish ear would be very familiar with this allegory. There were many stages to the Jewish wedding: the betrothal: the period of time where there is a binding contract that the couple will be married even though they are not together, they make preparations although the actual ceremony may be a long way off; then there is the presentation: which is when the home is ready and the arrangements are finalized, the groom would leave his home and travel to the bride's home to claim her as his beloved bride (sounds like holy week!) then finally there is this elaborate ceremony known as the wedding supper which could last for days.

I love the following piece from Charles Swindoll on how this connects this term (marriage supper) connects to the church. *"The analogy of the church's marriage to Christ reflects these ancient Jewish wedding customs. In God the Father's foresight, He chose the church "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1: 4). When sinners are saved, they are betrothed to Christ — a binding relationship that is still awaiting its complete realization. At the presentation, the church will be raptured to meet the Lord in the air (Matt. 25: 1-13; 1 Thes. 4: 17). Then, at the wedding feast of the Lamb, the final consummation will begin as Christ and the church take their places to reign over the earth (Rev. 20: 4-6).*[Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)* (Kindle Locations 6965-6970). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition."

Rev. 19:8 then depicts the bride's adornment: fine linen, bright and clean was given to her to wear (remember the church is the bride of Christ). The fine linen refers to the righteous acts of God's holy people. This means that our "heavenly attire" is connected to the actions that we do on behalf of our Lord. Notice the contrast between the attire of the great prostitute versus the attire of the church. She robed herself in the entire world and flesh could provide, yet we are clothed with righteousness (character clothing). The next verse has an angel speaking to John and asking him to write these words: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" and then added that these are the true words of God. What a blessing it is to be invited and then to accept the invitation. ONLY the invited can attend and ONLY those who accept the invitation. At this in the next verse, John falls at the angel's feet to worship him. But then there is a strong rebuke which happens.



The angel tells John emphatically, “Don’t do that!” I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Angels are not to be worshipped. If angels are not to be worshipped, neither is any other being other than God. Many of my brothers and sisters in other Christian traditions will worship a saint or Mary or a place where a miracle was wrought. However, we need to hear heaven remind us that we are only to worship God! Let’s remember to not give worship to anyone but our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Why is worship and praise such an integral part of heaven’s landscape?
2. Why is it such a challenge to praise God on this side of heaven?
3. How do our acts on earth translate to what we will be in heaven?
4. List as many contrasts as you can between Babylon and Heaven (Satan and Jesus) from this chapter.
5. In what ways did Jesus teaching on the invitation to the banquet relate to the invitation to the marriage supper of the lamb? How did Gentiles get invited?