

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners.
 - i. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door.
 - ii. He took out a business card, wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and stuck it in the door.
 - iii. When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, 'Genesis 3:10.'
 - iv. Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter.
 - v. Revelation 3:20 begins 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'
 - vi. Genesis 3:10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked.'
2. Revelation is the hardest book in the Bible to understand. However, there are a few keys that are very helpful in its interpretation. Let me review some of these keys briefly.
3. Four Keys to Interpreting Revelation
 - i. The time-indicators.
 1. **Revelation 1:1-3** "The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near."
 2. Most people just assume Revelation is talking about the end times because that's all they've ever heard. But what do you do with these time-indicators? When you interpret this passage in the most natural, literal way, it says that Revelation is about things that would take place shortly after the book was written, not thousands of years later.
 3. For a more detailed explanation of this passage, see part 20 of this sermon series.
 - ii. The theme.
 1. **Revelation 1:7** "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth, will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen."

2. At first glance, it appears like this verse is talking about the second coming of Christ at the end of the world. But upon closer examination, there are good reasons to believe that this verse is talking Christ's coming in judgment upon the Jews – "those who pierced him." If that is the case, then the theme of Revelation Christ's judgment on the Jews of the first century.
 3. I went into great depth on Revelation 1:7 in part 20 of this sermon series.
- iii. The historical context.
1. There are three things you have to understand about the historical context of Revelation.
 - a. First, Jesus prophesied that God would punish the Jews of that present generation.
 - i. **Matthew 23:35** "35 So all the righteous blood shed on the earth will be charged to you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all these things will come on this generation."
 - b. Second, Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed just forty years later, in AD 70. In AD 66, the Jews revolted, Rome invaded, and in AD 70 Rome besieged Jerusalem and destroyed it.
 - c. Third, there are strong reasons to believe that Revelation was written in AD 65-66. If that is the case, then it is highly probable that Revelation is about the God's judgment on the Jews carried out by the Romans in AD 70. I went into great detail about the dating of Revelation in part 23 of this sermon series.
 2. With that in mind, then, as we study the visions and symbols of Revelation, now we have a specific period of history that we can look to for their meaning.
- iv. The recapitulation system.
1. Revelation is not a story that flows in chronological order. It is a series of visions given to John. Most scholars believe that the visions don't all represent different events, but the visions are portraying the same events in different ways. This is the meaning of recapitulation, which means to recap, or restate something.
 2. For example, in Rev 6-8 John sees the seven seal judgments – God's wrath is poured out as the seven seals on a scroll are opened. Then in Rev 8-11 John sees the seven trumpet judgments – God's wrath is poured out as each trumpet is sounded. Then in Rev 16 John sees the

seven bowl judgments – God’s wrath is displayed as each bowl is poured out. Many scholars don’t see these three sets of seven as describing three different judgments, but all describing the same judgment in different ways. Specifically, all three are describing God’s judgment on first century Jerusalem.

4. With these keys in hand, interpreting Revelation becomes much easier.

II. **CONTEXT**

1. Now, let’s get to Revelation 18. From Rev 6-17, John sees various visions portraying the same thing – the destruction of Jerusalem. In Rev 18, Jerusalem is depicted as Babylon the Great, and the whole world mourns her destruction. However, in the same chapter, Christians are commanded to rejoice because God’s enemies have been brought to justice (18:20). In Rev 19, we are going to see God’s people do just that.

2. Rev 19 can be divided into three scenes:
- i. A celebration in heaven.
 - ii. A vision of Christ.
 - iii. An assurance of God’s victory of His enemies.

III. **THREE SCENES IN REV 19**

1. **A celebration in heaven.**

i. **Revelation 19:1-5**

After this I heard something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying,

Hallelujah!

Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God,
2 because his judgments are true and righteous,
because he has judged the notorious prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality;
and he has avenged the blood of his servants
that was on her hands.

3 A second time they said,

Hallelujah!

Her smoke ascends forever and ever!

4 Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who is seated on the throne, saying,

Amen! Hallelujah!

5 A voice came from the throne, saying,

Praise our God,
all his servants, and the ones who fear him,
both small and great!

- ii. A huge celebration takes place in heaven because God has destroyed unfaithful Israel, the notorious prostitute.

- iii. The first thing to notice here is obedience.
 - 1. In Rev 18, the whole world is mourning the destruction of Jerusalem, but God's people are commanded to rejoice (18:20). And that's exactly what they are doing here. They are being obedient to God.
 - 2. Obedience is the most important thing about being a Christian.
 - a. Obedience is the key to loving God.
 - i. **John 14:15** "If you love me, you will keep my commands."
 - ii. What does it look like to love God? To obey Him. You can give all your money to the church, you can sing praise songs, you can go to church every Sunday, but if you don't obey God, you don't love Him.
 - b. Obedience is the key to intimacy with God.
 - i. **John 14:21** "The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."
 - ii. Some people want to be closer to God, to know Him more, to go deeper with God, and they say, "God, reveal Yourself to me, and then I'll obey you." God says the opposite. "The more you obey me, the more I will reveal myself to you."
 - c. Obedience is the key to blessing.
 - i. **James 1:25** "But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does."
 - ii. Some people say, "God, if you bless me, then I'll obey you." God says, "Obey me, and then I'll bless you."
 - d. Obedience is the key to usefulness.
 - i. **2 Timothy 2:21** "So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."
 - ii. We wonder why God isn't using us more? God only uses His obedient children.
 - e. Obedience is the key to answered prayer.
 - i. **John 9:31** "We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him."

- ii. People often say, “God, answer my prayer, and then I’ll obey you.” God says, “Obey me, and then I’ll listen to your prayer.”
- 3. I recently heard the story of Elliot Huck, a fourteen-year old from Bloomington, Indiana. In 2007 he worked really hard and qualified for the National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. Unfortunately, that year it was to be held on a Sunday, and in Elliot’s eyes, that conflicted with God’s command to rest on the Sabbath. So, Elliot pulled out of the competition. It was a tough decision, but Elliot said, “I always try to glorify God with what I do in the spelling bee because he is the one who gave me talent for spelling.” That’s obedience, and it is the key to the Christian life. It is the meaning of Christianity. Obeying God.
- iv. The second thing to notice in this passage is the word “hallelujah.”
 - 1. This is the first and only time it is found in the New Testament, and it is used four times in this passage. It comes from a Hebrew words, *hallalu Yah*, and it literally means “praise ye the Lord.” Since we are talking about obedience, do you know what one of God’s commands is all throughout Scripture? To praise the Lord. Specifically through singing. Do you sing praises to God? If not, then you are being disobedient.
 - 2. **Psalm 30:4** “Sing to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and praise his holy name.”
 - 3. What does it mean to praise the Lord? What does it mean to praise a person? “Good job! Way to go! You da’ man! Thank you!” With God it is the same thing. “Lord, you are great; You are loving; You are perfect; You are good; You are awesome; I love You; I adore You; thank You.”

v. Let’s look at the next few verses.

vi. Revelation 19:6-10

6 Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying,

Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns!

7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself.

8 She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure.

For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, “Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!” He also said to me, “These words of God are true.” 10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow

servant with you and your brothers and sisters who hold firmly to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

- vii. Notice the phrases, “the marriage of the Lamb has come (v. 7),” and, “Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb (v. 9)!” What is the marriage of the Lamb?
- viii. Revelation is all about God’s judgment against the Jews. One of the ways this is depicted in Revelation is with God’s divorce against Israel.
 - 1. In the OT, Israel was depicted as God’s wife, and when she was unfaithful she was called an prostitute. In Revelation, Israel is depicted as the notorious prostitute.
 - 2. In the OT, the punishment for adultery was death by stoning. In Revelation, God is carrying out the death penalty against unfaithful Israel.
 - 3. In the OT, to get a divorce a man had to present his wife with a divorce certificate. In Revelation 5, God is sitting on His judgment throne, holding a seven-sealed scroll. The scroll is God’s divorce certificate against Israel, and the seven-seals represent the seven-fold judgment promised against Israel if she ever abandoned God (Lev 26:18).
- ix. But Revelation doesn’t end with God’s divorce of Israel. It ends with God’s remarriage to a new bride, the church of Jesus Christ (Eph 5:25). The vision in Revelation 19 is showing the transition of God’s people being the Jews, to now being the church – believes in Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles.
- x. The marriage of the Lamb represents a person’s salvation, and it is depicted as a wedding feast because of the joy, and peace, and blessings that accompany a relationship with Jesus.

2. A vision of Christ.

i. Revelation 19:11-16

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and with justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself. 13 He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. 14 The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. 15 A sharp sword came from his mouth, so that he might strike the nations with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. 16 And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

- ii. The second scene in Rev 19 is a vision of the reigning Christ.
- iii. How do we know this is Jesus?

1. He is called Faithful and True.
 - a. In Rev 1:5 Jesus is called the “faithful witness.” In Rev 3:14 Jesus is called the “faithful and true witness.”
2. His name is called the Word of God.
 - a. This is the name John gave to Jesus in John 1:1, 14.
3. His description matches the description of Jesus in Rev 1:12-16.
 - a. His eyes were like a fiery flame (Rev 1:14; 19:12).
 - b. A sharp sword came from His mouth (Rev 1:16; Rev 19:15).
- iv. Some people assume that this is a vision of Christ’s second coming, but I believe it is simply a vision of Christ reigning in heaven, and from there carrying out His will on earth.
- v. If you give a small child a sharp knife, all he will see is a shiny toy, and he will hurt himself. A lot of people have a warped view of Jesus. They see Jesus as this sweet, nice, effeminate, passive, harmless, push-over. Jesus is loving and kind, but this vision reminds us that Jesus is also king, judge, warrior, and the executioner of God’s enemies. Don’t mistake his kindness and patience as weakness. Jesus makes two offers to us today: Turn from sin and bow to Him and receive mercy and grace and eternal life, or cling to our sin and reject Him and face His eternal wrath.

3. The destruction of God’s enemies.

i. Revelation 19:17-21

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he called out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying high overhead, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of military commanders, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of everyone, both free and slave, small and great.”

19 Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and against his army.

20 But the beast was taken prisoner, and along with it the false prophet, who had performed the signs in its presence. He deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image with these signs. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 The rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds ate their fill of their flesh.

ii. Three quick definitions:

1. The beast: This is the same beast as in Rev 13 and 17, the Roman empire that was persecuting Christians at the time of Revelation’s writing.
2. The false prophet: The Jewish priesthood.
3. The lake of fire: hell.

- iii. Why was John given the vision of Jesus as the conquering hero in the previous passage? It set us up for this passage.
- iv. Two things happen in this passage. In 17-18, an angel invites the birds of the air to get ready to eat the flesh many armies. In 19-21, Christ conquers the armies, led by the beast and the false prophet.
- v. This is another assurance given to the first century Christians who are reading Revelation for the first time. They were being hunted down by the Romans and the Jews. Then they receive this letter that Jesus will eventually destroy their enemies and persecutors.
- vi. This should be an encouragement to us as well. God allows evil and suffering to prevail for a season. He allows His loved ones to suffer. But that's not the end of the story. There will come a day of reckoning when God will rescue His people, relieve their suffering, and punish the wicked. Your deliverance and relief may not come until the next life, but it will come. God will have the final victory.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. In John Grisham's book, *A Painted House*, a mean kid named Jerry Sisco was killed in a back alley fight after he picked on one person too many. At the funeral, a Sunday school teacher gave the eulogy, and she made the boy sound like a Christian, like an innocent victim. Grisham describes the thoughts of a seven year old boy name Luke as he was listening to this eulogy. "There was something odd about this. As Baptists, we'd been taught from the cradle that the only way you made it to heaven was by believe in Jesus and trying to follow his example in living a clean life and moral Christian life. Anyone who did not accept Jesus and live a Christian life simply went to hell. That's where Jerry Sisco was, and we all knew it."
2. As harsh as it sounds, that's the Biblical truth. The lake of fire is real. Hell is real. It is the place where God's enemies go. But nobody has to go to hell. Jesus died for our sins so we could be forgiven and go to heaven. We just have to turn from our sins and believe in Jesus. Would you do that today?