

Series: Behold the Royal Lamb (a study in Revelation 19-20)

Sermon Text: 19:1-10 The Faithful Husband (See App for lesson, slides, and to ask questions)

I read [an interesting tale](#) that relates to our recent studies. During World War II, young women living under tyrants in occupied Europe began a quiet rebellion. Under the enemy's nose, they sewed wedding dresses made of smuggled silk parachute scraps. No date could be set because their grooms were away on the front lines, yet they sewed in faith that their enemy would fall and their grooms would return. In many ways, these brides-to-be mimic the early church living under Roman tyranny--a system that used, abused and depleted life. And Revelation proves that even as we walk in the shadow of corrupt empires, God is with us--preparing our *table* while enemies watch and providing *fine wedding linens* to prepare us for our groom's guaranteed return. *Chapter 19* will assure and challenge us with this actionable...

BIG IDEA: Trying on our Lamb-given garments helps us resist Babylon's rags.

Let's start in *verses 1-5* where John's gaze got redirected from *Babylon's* demise on earth to a chorus of *hallelujahs* in *heaven: After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah!* (Praise Yahweh!) *Salvation and glory and power* (i.e. deliverance, majesty and strength) *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"* (indicating the finality of her judgment). *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."* This powerful song mimics the *chapter 5* refocus from earthly mayhem to heavenly praise where this crowd praised *The Lamb* whose resurrection qualified Him to unseal God's scroll. *Angels* were then unleashed with trumpets and bowls to explain the mystery of how Jesus partners with His church to repair

creation. *Chapters 6-18* frame all this as *judgments* which include a “*tale of 2 cities*” depicted by 2 women (Babylon, the Great Prostitute and New Jerusalem, the Lamb’s Bride).

Revelation 19, then, offers us a prophetic peek at praise to occur after **God** finally *judges the great prostitute* for *corrupting creation* and *slaying His servants*. But my question is: “*What exactly are they celebrating?*” I mean, “*Should people of God applaud death and party over other peoples’ pain?*” That’s unlike God who in Ezekiel 33:11 said, *“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”* It’s also contrary to Romans 12:14-15 which urges us to *“Bless, not curse, those who persecute us... weep with those who weep...and feed hungry enemies.”* I like how Professor J. Scott Duvall (249) answered my question: *“On the day God brings judgment, we are not called to applaud the tragedy of human lives under judgment. We are to applaud the God who does all things well.”* **Heaven** will never be happy about death, but God will be praised for ending Babylon’s blood drunk system of people prostitution! He will be praised for *saving* (delivering) the *small and great* which reinforces this easily missed point: Since satanic systems are equal opportunity oppressors, salvation is for everyone from all social classes!

Another reason for their reveling is in *verses 6-7* where John *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.* John received a sneak peek of the church who will somehow emerge *ready* for *marriage* despite centuries of *Babylon’s* use and abuse. His breathtaking *“first look”* at *The Lamb’s Bride* preps us for her decent down the aisle that occurs later in *21:2* where John *saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* But this raised another question for me: “*Why depict evil’s defeat and creation’s renewal as a wedding?*” Well, the marriage metaphor best reflects God’s desire to have close intimacy with His people! In the Old Testament, God took Israel as His bride. Even when she was unfaithful, He vowed to forgive, remain faithful, and restore their relationship (cf. Isaiah 62:1-5; Ezekiel 16:60-63;

Hosea 2:16-20). In the New Testament, Jesus revealed Himself to be the long-promised Bridegroom and the Jewish-born church to be His bride (cf. Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-33). So, a **wedding supper** is a fitting finale for history which is all about Christ, our **husband** pursuing us with relentless **fidelity** despite our unfaithfulness with **Babylon**.

This begs the question, “Does anything we do matter or is Jesus only interested in whisking us away to His castle in the sky?” We often view “faith” and “works” as opposing options, but James 2:17 states: *“faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* Marrying these concepts more beautifully, Ephesians 2:8-10 NLT says: *“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”* While firmly founding our relationship with God on the faithfulness of Christ (HOW we're saved), Scripture also says WHY He delivered us--it's “so we can do good things he planned for us long ago.” (i.e. salvation frees us to become the creation-caring partners He designed us to be). Now, notice **verse 8** says ***it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure--for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*** Our **righteous deeds** are grace gifts--a wardrobe fully funded by our groom, not an outfit of obedience and morality we weave together to impress Him. This gown of **good deeds** is a contrast to the awful activities with which **Babylon** adorned herself. Her apparel and pearls appeared pricey in **17:4** and **18:16**, but God's **true and just** (perfectly right) **judgment** will expose her outfits, culture's version of “looking successful”, as filthy rags and costume jewelry.

And since resisting Babylon rarely feels like a **blessing**, John was given a Beatitude in **verse 9** which says: ***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."*** You may recall Gary teaching about how Revelation provides 7 Beatitudes to strengthen our resolve. This one suggests that as warfare rages and delays our wedding date, we can live like those WWII brides-to-be who did simple **deeds** to actively refute Babylon's claims of permanence. Only

verse 8 reminds us that the church doesn't weave her own fabric, we just keep showing up for dress fittings in quiet, faithful defiance of a war our groom has already won via resurrection. To be more practical, I'll answer a great question asked in our app to graciously prompt me to improve my *chapter 18* application: Is it enough to just disagree with systems while supporting them when reasonable alternatives exist? Shouldn't we sacrifice convenience for others' human rights?" The simple answers are "NO, intellectual disagreement is not enough. And YES, followers of Jesus must live sacrificially." While I doubt there are any morally perfect corporations, we wade into Babylon by treating human beings like cheap commodities to fuel our personal convenience. Trying on our wedding garments, then, could look like refusing to climb ladders by crushing the necks of coworkers, intentionally auditing our lifestyle to ensure we're not buying comfort produced by abuse of image-bearers, or using God-given resources more for kingdom mission than self. My point is that cultural uniforms will be hard to fit over our **Lamb-given** wardrobe! For clarity though, the Revelation of Jesus is the story of 1 collective **Bride making herself ready**, not individual brides out for themselves. Now, "Can you see how The Lord's Supper points us to the wedding supper?" Approaching the family table is a visual reminder that Christ's body isn't just for us and compels us to ask questions like: "How can I ready The Bride for His return with deeds that restore right relationships?"". The meals are also reminders that we're not in this alone and always have helpers as we take next steps. Moreover, it fixes our gaze on Christ's perfection, not ours, as we see in our final verse.

Check out John's amazing confession in *verse 10*: ***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.*** Those of us who keep messing up should be sure to thank John when we see him! The fact he recorded his act of idolatry here and again in **22:8** is remarkable. This sort of honesty by biblical writers makes Scripture seem more credible. Like us, John briefly treated a good thing (**the angel**) like God. Romans 1:25 says we too often "*worship and serve the creature (us/others) rather than the Creator.*" Anyway, in response to John's blunder **the**

angel reminds us that *worship* belongs to **God** alone and to never turn any created being into an idol we *worship*. Instead, simply view them as *fellow servants who hold to the testimony of Jesus*, which he referred to as *the spirit of prophecy*. 2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV affirms that “...*prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” Thus, the reason for and ultimate destination of *prophecy* is to bear *witness to Jesus Christ*--we’re to always keep our gaze firmly fixed on our groom!

So church, let’s be like those wartime brides in Europe who didn’t wait for a regime changed before trying on their dresses. Like the churches in *chapters 2-3*, let’s live in quiet rebellion until *our husband* returns--*clothing ourselves* with His resources so we can complete our creation mandate. Simply stated, *Babylon dresses herself* by exploiting others, but *The Lamb’s Bride adorns herself* by *servicing* others, like her husband. Every choice of ethical integrity over shady deals or sacrificing convenience in defense of human rights is a way we tailor our *dress*. Preparing for our wedding is how we practice a peaceable rebellion in Babylon’s presence which keeps us from wearing her bankrupt styles or adorning ourselves in enemy uniforms and identities. Because the lamb has already won the war, let’s practice our victory until He returns by *clothing ourselves* in Him!

Let’s pray: Father, thank you for this dramatic and vivid apocalyptic portrait of what Christ has done for us, all He has given us, and what we’re supposed to do with it. Our text reminds me of the Apostle Paul’s more familiar way to say all this in Romans 12:2-5 NIV puts it: “*Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.*” Help us, oh God! Amen.

Sunday to Monday Connection:

- **Question:** See takeaways below
- **Next Step:** See takeaways below

- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. God's final judgment is not a celebration of human destruction, but a holy restoration that permanently ends systemic abuse and exploitation. **Thought-Provoking Question:** As we look at the world's brokenness together, are we motivated by a desire to see our enemies punished, or are we longing to see God's righteousness restore and heal what is broken? How can our family become a better model of God's healing justice in how we treat one another?
2. Our good works are not a way to earn God's love, but a joyful, grateful response to the wedding gown of grace He already gave us. **Thought-Provoking Question:** When we look at the ways we serve our church and community, do the younger generations see the older generations serving out of a heavy, exhausting obligation, or out of a shared, contagious joy? How might our minds have to change to feel like our service is a celebration of a gift we could never afford?
3. Being the Bride of Christ means actively changing how we live and spend, rather than just quietly disagreeing with the world's broken systems. **Thought-Provoking Question:** How do our family traditions, comforts, or spending habits, our households and daily lifestyles look visibly different from the worldly culture around us? How do they look the same? Because we are fully known by the Father, we find our strength in being truly known by each other—for it is together, as a transparent and united family, that we put on the Bride's linen and bring the atmosphere of heaven down into the streets of earth. God's peace be with you...
4. What does the image of a wedding feast tell us about the mood and atmosphere of eternity with God? Why do you think God chose the intimacy of a marriage metaphor rather than just a King-and-subject relationship?
5. Looking at Israel's history, how does God's radical faithfulness to an unfaithful bride comfort you today?
6. How should living as the "Bride of Christ" right now change the way our church interacts with the world this week? How can we wear our wedding garments in faithfully defiant ways so as to resist appearing like accomplices of collapsing empires? How do we, **the bride, make ourselves ready** with the garments our husband has provided? How can we, the church, drive out Babylon's darkness by displaying God's goodness?
7. Because lines are easily blurred when we're serving folks we care about, remember to ask yourself: "Is this what God says is best for everyone involved, or have I slipped into creature worship?"

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Just Judgments:** Speaking of God's coming judgment against ancient Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah speaks words echoed years later in Revelation

18–19: “For the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be disgraced and her slain will all lie fallen within her. Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, ... Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon” (Jer. 51:47–49). In other words, there are times when the most appropriate response to God’s judgment of evil is rejoicing...They shout ‘Hallelujah’ or ‘Praise Yahweh’ for his judgment of the wicked city (19:1, 3, 4, 6), and attribute to him not only “glory and power” but also “salvation” (cf. 7:10–12), a term that signifies something larger than personal deliverance here—namely, “the safeguarding of God’s entire redemptive program.” God deserves praise because his judgments flow out of his character as a faithful and righteous God (cf. 3:7; 15:3; 16:7). He has not excused or ignored evil, and he has not failed to rescue his suffering people. The cry of 6:10 has at last been answered: “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (cf. 16:6–7; Ps. 70:1). God’s judgment of the adulterous and corrupting prostitute is fair, decisive, and final (cf. 14:11; Isa. 34:8–10).” (Duvall, 246-247)

- **For ever and ever:** “Although ‘eternal’ is applied more broadly in Revelation (Rev. 14:11; 20:10), it is not impossible that such an image of Rome’s eternal judgment may be a partial polemic against the mythical name Roma aeterna (‘eternal Rome’), which was one of the names for the Roman Empire.” (Keener, 449-450)
- **A call to action:** “Revelation repeatedly stresses the importance of the church’s actions and deeds (see the sidebar in 2:18–29). As Paul says in Ephesians 2:8–10, salvation is by grace (source), through faith (means), and for good works (results). Even in Romans where Paul goes into great detail about justification by faith (Rom. 3–5), he also gives a great deal of attention to how God’s people should live (Rom. 6–8, 12–16). The church is characterized by obedience to God and loyalty to the Lamb, rather than compromise with the world system. As we allow God to transform us, we are preparing ourselves as the body of Christ for his appearing (Phil. 1:6; 2:12–13). Spiritual (by the Spirit) formation should always be wedded to Christian eschatology.” (Duvall, 254)
- **Don’t misuse the text:** “But those who exploit biblical images of the final battle to support their violent agendas teach the opposite of this text’s point. Believers suffered and proclaimed Christ nonviolently throughout the rest of the book of Revelation. Here the text cannot be more explicit that Jesus himself (in the Old Testament, God) destroys the enemy armies by his own sword (19:11, 15, 21); his hosts are with him (19:14, 19), but do not participate actively in the slaughter. Further, these hosts come from heaven (19:11, 14); the earthly armies may or may not all be allied with one another, but they are all opposed to Christ (16:12–14; 19:19). Those militant groups on earth committed to genocide are certainly among those doomed to death at Jesus’ hand at his return!” (Keener, 458-459)

- **Praising judgment:** “It is hard for us to be comfortable in this world and the status it values, yet hear clearly heaven’s rejoicing in judgment. It is particularly difficult if one of the societies receiving God’s judgment is our own, especially when we think concretely in terms of judgments’ effects on people we know and care about. His compassion is one reason God delays judgment and enacts it sparingly, but in the broader scope of history the judgments are necessary for the repentance of some and vindication of others. If our devotion of time and energy is more to what the world offers than to God’s purposes, we may be among those needing repentance. God will ultimately judge all nations (Ps. 110:6; Jer. 25:31; Joel 3:12). God often sends judgment to stop oppression, but he also sends judgment to avenge oppression, vindicating his justice for the oppressed. In this world God does not settle all scores in the short run, but his justice is always satisfied in the end. Even repentance does not allow sins to escape justice—for the scores of the repentant were settled in advance on the cross.” (Keener, 459)
- **The wedding metaphor:** “Of all the images God could have used to describe the eternal state, why a wedding supper? It’s because throughout Scripture the marriage metaphor depicts God’s relationship with his people like no other (e.g., Hos. 2:16, 19–20; Isa. 54:5–7; Jer. 2:2; Matt. 25:1–13). The prophets often speak of Israel as the wife of Yahweh (Isa. 49:18; 54:5–6; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:15–63; Hos. 2:14–23). Negatively, Israel’s unfaithfulness is compared to the adultery of an unfaithful wife (Jer. 3:20; Ezek. 16:15–63; Hos. 2:1–13; 4:12, 15). Yet God remains faithful and plans to restore his bride under the new covenant (e.g., Isa. 62:1–5; Ezek. 16:60–63; Hos. 2:16–20). It makes sense that Jesus portrays himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2:19–20; John 3:29) and the church as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–33; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17). The wedding supper of the Lamb (also called the ‘messianic wedding banquet’) is the future fellowship celebration of God with his people in the new creation. As the divine husband, God promised his bride a lavish banquet celebrating his defeat of her enemies and his abundant provision. A key Old Testament passage is Isaiah 25:6–9, which describes the rich feast God will provide. Jesus also speaks of a wedding banquet in his consummated kingdom (e.g., Matt. 8:11; 22:1–14; 25:1–13; Luke 13:29; 14:16–24). Even the promise Jesus makes to his disciples at the Last Supper assumes the coming reunion banquet: ‘I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom’ (Matt. 26:29). The wedding supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:9 likely points forward to the more complete description of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21–22. This eternal celebration of God’s people stands in contrast to the “great supper of God,” where the birds consume the dead bodies of God’s enemies (19:17–18, 21; Ezek. 39:17–20). Overall, the image of a wedding supper conveys the personal, intimate, joyous time of fellowship that God is preparing for his people.” (Duvall, 252-253)
- **Israel vs the church:** “My view is that the distinction between the Church and the Jewish people is less sharp and more subtle than Dispensationalism has generally depicted it (see Ro 11:23–24&N), and that Yeshua the Messiah

sometimes represents and sometimes is intimately identified with the Jewish people (see Mt 2:15&N). For these reasons I see no significant substantive distinction to be made between the bride of the Messiah and the wife of YHVH. Rather, the Bible employs a variety of metaphors to express the future intimacy of God with his people; different ones are used at 21:2–3, 22:3–5.” (Stern, Re 19:7)

- **A warning against false worship:** “John himself is so excited by all this that he begins to worship the angel who is revealing it all to him. (He does it again at the end of the book, in 22:8, with the same result.) But this would be a bad mistake. He must not confuse the messenger with the message. Even John, even at this moment, can slip up, can lapse into idolatry, into worshipping that which is not God. Perhaps he tells us this in order to encourage those of his readers who are battling with the challenge of idolatry themselves: it’s been a challenge for me, too, he says. But in saying this he reveals something remarkable. Throughout the book the focus has been on the uninhibited worship offered by the whole creation to ‘the One on the throne and the lamb’ (5:13). Jesus shares the throne of God; Jesus shares the worship which is due to the one God and him alone. The angel’s rebuke highlights the total difference between Jesus himself and all others, no matter how exalted those others may be.” (Wright, 170)
- **A prophetic spirit:** “Some Christians rank the anointing of other Christians based on their possession of particular spiritual gifts, but Christ gave all of us his Spirit to testify about him (Acts 1:8). Thus, every Christian who witnesses about Jesus experiences in some measure the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3) ... This empowerment by the Spirit also means that our effectiveness can far exceed our natural human abilities.” (Keener, 460)
- **Perspectives on Revelation:** “Sometimes we read our theology into the text. Some suggest that the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place during the Tribulation preceding Jesus’ return. The text, however, says that at the end of the age the bride is merely ready; the marriage supper in Revelation, as in early Judaism, was a banquet prepared for the righteous in the messianic era or the world to come.” (Keener, 455-456)
- **Way of the Lamb:** “How does one live in a world that is anti-God, devoted to opulence, consistently opposed to the way of the Lamb, full of itself and intent on being impressive, protected with the might of its militarism, aiming to become the international power, living on the precipice of constant internal betrayals, driven by economic exploitation of anyone and everyone, structured into a mysterious hierarchical system of power and honor, and driven by arrogant ambition? His answer is worship, yes. But what kind of worship? John points us to a life of embodied worship, a worship of both words and works.” (McKnight, 196)

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.

2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- [5 Strategies for Reading Revelation](#) from the Bible Project (the first 17 minutes is GOLD!)
- [Heaven and Earth Theme](#) from the Bible Project
- [Other super helpful Revelation summaries](#) from the Bible Project
- [How Revelation mimics ancient Olympic games](#) by Marty Solomon

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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