

Taking Our Place At The Supper

Introduction. Have you ever heard of senioritis? A student's hard work begins to wear on them, they lose the plot, and they take their eyes off the prize of graduating. Before long, you start to see bad grades, missed classes, and a halfhearted effort.

The daily rigors of life take a toll on our ability to stay the course. It may be finances, relationships, or everything in general. All of us sometimes find that we just want to give up. And, of course, this is all too true of our spiritual journey. The terrain becomes difficult to traverse and we begin to falter. We often do not want to get up again. But there is a solution. The same solution that enables students to complete their requirements is what can help us continue our spiritual journey. That solution is a confident expectation of the future. Students keep working because they know that if they stay the course, they will earn a degree. We can keep going in our spiritual journey because we know that there is an eternal reward waiting for those who are able to stay the course.

The book of Revelation is a story of hope. John repeatedly makes the point that if you are faithful to God, then you will be a part of God's eternal victory. In the chapters prior to Revelation 19, we encounter Babylon, the great harlot. Historically speaking, the early church used Babylon as a way to refer to Rome (cf. 1 Peter 5:13). The reason for this was that Babylon, in the history of Israel, was a place that brought about the destruction of many of God's people. Babylon thus stood as an icon of human arrogance, a place that put itself before God in its pursuit of worldly pleasure and success. Early Christians referred to Rome as Babylon because they believed it represented the same sort of worldly values. The appeal of these values is characterized as the appeal of a prostitute, thus we have Babylon as the great harlot who lures people away from God. Revelation 19 concludes the theme of the harlot's fall and judgment, and contrasts the virtuous character of the bride of Christ.

I. **God Destroys**

A. Praise for justice (19:1-2).

1. These two verses comprise the first of a series of praises. The praise has two components.
 - a) Verse 1 shows us the worshipful attitude of those who belong to God. This praise is a personal statement of acceptance of God's authority and appreciation for His provision. Worship at its core is the recognition of the nature of God.
 - b) Verse 2 provides us with the reason that God's creation should praise and give honor to Him. We worship God because of who

He is (vs. 1) as we recognize that a central feature of God's nature is His justice (vs. 2).

2. The fact that John uses another, very broad figure of speech ("corrupt the earth") to describe unholy effects indicates a concern for any influence that leads people away from their heavenly Father. In the final analysis, Babylon and the great harlot thus can refer to anyone or anything that opposes God's purposes.
 3. Anyone who does not submit to God's authority is an opponent of God. There is no neutral ground in the spiritual world (John 1:5; 12:46; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 John 1:5-7).
- B. Praise for complete punishment (19:3).
1. John uses repetition to bring home the point that God is truly victorious and thus truly worthy of our praise!
 2. "For ever and ever" emphasizes completeness and permanence (cf. Isaiah 34:10). Never again will she arise to taunt and destroy. The destruction of those who reject God's authority will be permanent.
- C. Praise for victory (19:4-5).
1. Following the "much people" of verse 1, "the four and twenty elders and the four beasts" are two more groups who praise God for His victory (cf. 4:1-11). They are always found giving special recognition to God.
 2. It is thought that the 24 elders represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles, the completeness of those redeemed in Christ. The four living creatures are the highest order of heavenly beings who serve God's will.
 3. The voice we hear from the midst of God's presence issues a direct call to all the faithful to yield praise.
 - a) If we understand the worthy nature of God, then we can still praise Him even in the midst of our deepest sorrow and toughest trial.
 - b) We also offer praise because we know that His purposes are eternal, that His salvation is sure, and that His victory is guaranteed and complete. Is it not wonderful that we have a hope that transcends our temporary, earthly existence and daily difficulties.
 - c) Worship in spirit and in truth reflects the fact that we understand the true nature and purpose of God.

II. **God Provides**

- A. Everybody loves a wedding (19:6-8).
1. This praise becomes an intense moment -- this is the moment all the faithful have been waiting for. It is the moment when the faithful servants of God enter into eternal, heavenly fellowship with

- the Savior, Jesus Christ. This will be the time when all of God's work throughout history moves toward its magnificent conclusion.
2. All of this comes about because the God we serve is omnipotent (all-powerful). His power is demonstrated by the overwhelming and complete victory over His opponents. God is always in control of His universe.
 3. John now shifts to a wedding scene. The period between the engagement and the wedding parallels the period in which we await and prepare for the Lord's return (2 Corinthians 11:2).
 4. The groom is the Lamb. A pure and spotless lamb has always been the ideal sacrifice offered to God. The passover celebrated God's deliverance with the slaughter of a lamb (cf. John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6). Christ is at the heart of our redemption and our salvation (Isaiah 53:7).
 5. John also draws our attention to the fact that the wife of the Lamb has been busy getting herself ready. She consists of faithful Christians who have submitted themselves to Christ's authority. Their faithfulness is their preparation.
 - a) However, there will be no person at the wedding who is not ready. Jesus used the image of a wedding to warn about the need to be ready (Matthew 25:1-13).
 - b) In another parable, one man who had not made himself ready through proper attire was thrown out (Matthew 22:1-14).
 6. Verse 8 develops the previous verse's idea of the bride's readiness for the Lamb. The clothing projects an image of purity, which is a good thought to remember when it comes to modesty (Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9-14). This wedding attire is not something the bride herself could have acquired. Instead, it is granted to her to dress in this manner. We do not have a righteousness of our own; it is the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that enables the bride to present herself in the white and clean wedding dress (Isaiah 61:10; Philippians 3:9; 1 Peter 2:24).
- B. Everybody loves a meal (19:9).
1. The wedding itself parallels the time when the faithful are with Christ in heaven. John reserves the revealing of the actual occasion until chapter 21.
 2. This beatitude is the fourth of seven in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6; 22:7, 14). The "wise" of verse 7 are now "they which are called" by the gospel into fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).
 3. There is a slight change in the dynamics of the story here because John now draws attention to the vital nature of the message: "the true sayings of God."

C. Only God is to be worshiped (19:10).

1. We may think that the apostles were not prone to make mistakes, but here John reveals his own error. John worships what is not God (cf. Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-18; Revelation 22:9). Idolatry is more than burning incense before a mad-made statue. It is give someone or something a controlling influence in your life.
2. The testimony of Jesus is that truth to which He bore witness (John 18:37), which was the word given to Him from God (John 8:28; 12:47; 14:24). The testimony of Jesus is the first principle of prophecy. Although it is true that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy previous to John's, here the phrase has likely reference only to the prophecy of this book; He is its breath of life (cf. 1:3; 22:18).

Conclusion. The Christian life is filled with challenges that wear us down and threaten our ability to remain faithful. Satan knows all our weaknesses, and he does not hesitate to exploit them. The book *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis offers us a hypothetical account of demons trying to figure out the best ways to tempt humans. We may see ourselves as willing victims on every page!

If we understand the true nature of God -- that He really is victorious, destroying His enemies and blessing His faithful -- then we have what it takes to remain steadfast, even in the face of suffering. If we are steadfast in our faith, then we will be ready for the groom's arrival. Our eternal future is under His protection. What a reason for praise this is!