

Revelation: The Hope of Glory

The Hallelujah Chorus

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THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS Revelation 19

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power 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."

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."

Then I 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; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

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." 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.

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and

slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh (Rev. 19:1-21).

If you have Bible and I hope you do, turn with me to Revelation 19. Finally...the good news! We've been waiting. Seven seals and seven trumpets of judgment, seven visions and seven bowls of wrath, the dragon and the beast and Babylon rising up to oppose and seduce and deceive and persecute the people of God. And now, in Revelation 19, Jesus arrives riding on a white horse with eyes like fire and crowns on His head and a sword in His mouth, and just like that the battle is over, the beast is gone, and a cascade of praise erupts in a chorus of hallelujahs across the heavens. Yes! This is where all of eternity is headed.

Last week, we looked seriously and soberly, as we should, at the dangers of worldliness, at the seductive attractions of this world that pull away the people of God. But brothers and sisters, they will not have the last word. Satan and sin and the suffering produced by both will not have the last word in this world.

Man-centered worldliness will ultimately be overcome by God-centered worship.

The good news of Revelation 19 is that man-centered worldliness will ultimately be overcome by God-centered worship. That is the theme of Revelation 19. Right in the middle of the chapter (verse 10), the angel tells John, "*Worship God!*" Worship God. Overcome man-centered worldliness with God-centered worship.

God orchestrates all of history to display His glory.

Let's dive right in. See this: God orchestrates all of history to display His glory. God orchestrates everything in all of history to put His glory on display. There's one word that drives Revelation 19, and it's mentioned four times. You might circle them.

Revelation 19:1, "*After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, 'Hallelujah!'*" Revelation 19:3, "*Once more they cried out, 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.'*" Revelation 19:4, "*And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, 'Amen. Hallelujah!'*" Revelation 19:6, "*Then I 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!'*"

Did you know that this is the only time in the entire New Testament where this word is used? It's like all the New Testament has been building up to this. After 26 books and 18 chapters of Jesus coming to the earth, dying on the cross, rising from the grave, ascending to heaven, sending His Spirit, inaugurating His church, being preached among the nations, the history of the church, the story of the King who came and His Kingdom being

proclaimed, by this point in Revelation 19, as a testimony to all nations and tribes and tongues and peoples. And now as Jesus returns, in light of all history, heaven has nothing left to shout but "Hallelujah! Praise Yahweh! Praise the Lord!"

Mark this down, brothers and sisters: the goal to which all of history is headed is the glory of God. Everything in all history—everything!—is aiming toward the day when "Hallelujahs" will ring from the heavens and the earth to the glory of our God. God writes this Book, God writes this script, and He determines how it ends. And it ends with Him being praised across the universe.

To some that seems selfish—for God to bring everything in history to culminate in His praise. But I would ask you, "Who else do you think should be praised in the end of it all?" You? Me? Us? No. God is the only one who deserves to be praised in the end of it all.

But the beauty is the way we're involved in this praise.

God ordains all of His people to enjoy His glory.

You see, God orchestrates all of history to display His glory, and God ordains all of His people to enjoy His glory. So John writes in verse 1, "*After this, I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude...*" (Rev. 19:1). "After this..." After what? What's "this"? "This" is a reference back to the two chapters right before this that we looked at last week where we read/heard about the destruction of Babylon.

Babylon—this picture of the non-Christian, anti-Christian culture surrounding the church throughout her history, luring people away with worldly wealth and worldly pursuits and worldly pleasures. Seducing people—even some who once seemed to be among God's people—seduced into spiritual adultery and spiritual idolatry.

So here's the picture. You have the church in the middle of worldly Babylon. They're surrounded by all the pleasures and all the satisfaction and all the wealth and all the fame and all the luxury this world has to offer. And in the middle of it, the church is saying, "No. Our deepest joy, our deepest pleasure, our deepest satisfaction is not found in the things of this world. Our deepest joy, our deepest pleasure, and our deepest satisfaction is found in the worship of God!"

That is my prayer for The Church at Brook Hills. That even in this place every single Sunday that we gather together, our worship as God's people might be a public declaration in the midst of Birmingham, in the midst of this country, in the midst of this world. That our worship every single week will be a public declaration that we will not be drawn in by the pleasures and pursuits and wealth and luxury and temptation of this world because we have found in God the supreme satisfaction of our souls. And He is more to be desired than anything and everything this world could offer us.

I love the way John Piper puts it. He says:

"Worship is an open declaration to all the powers of heaven and to all of Babylon that we will not prostitute our minds or our hearts or our bodies to the allurements of the world. Though we may live in Babylon, we will not be captive to Babylonian ways. And we will celebrate with all our might the awesome truth that we are free from that which will be destroyed... Corporate worship is the flagrant, open enjoyment of God in the midst of a very seductive Babylonian culture."

That's who we are, church. That's what we do in worship. This morning we're saying amidst the money and the wealth and the success and the pursuits, plaudits, and pleasures that surround us in this world, "Behold our God! Nothing can compare... Come, let us adore Him!" He is worthy of our worship. And He is the only One who satisfies our souls.

So bow before the splendor of God the Father.

God ordains all of history to display His glory, and God ordains all of His church to enjoy His glory, so bow before the splendor of God the Father. These first 10 verses give us a glimpse into heaven's worship of God. If we're going to worship God the way heaven worships God, we need to see God the way heaven sees God.

What causes sounds like the roar of many waters and the shouts of mighty thunder in heaven? And the answer is a God who is victorious. Verse 1 says "salvation" belongs to our God. This is a word that's used two other times in Revelation—in Revelation 7:10 and Revelation 12:10. Both times when heaven is shouting praise to God for His victory in saving His people. That's the connotation behind this word. God is victorious.

We said a few weeks ago that three words that sum up the message of Revelation. What are they? Do you remember? OUR GOD WINS. And that's what's being celebrated here. From the third chapter of the Bible, when sin entered into the world, God has been in the process of drawing sinners back to Himself and defeating the author of sin and the destroyer of men's souls, Satan. So here, as we come to the culmination of all history, heaven shouts, "Victory! Salvation is here!" God is victorious.

He is glorious. "Glory" belongs to Him. Magnificence, splendor, beauty, wonder, and grandeur belong to Him. He is glorious.

He is omnipotent. "Power" belongs to Him. Who else has power to conquer the beast? Who else has power to conquer the evil and suffering of Babylon? Who else has power to conquer evil and suffering in all of history? Only God. He has the power.

He is just. Verse 2 says, "...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" (Rev. 19:2). Now at first glance, this seems a little strange, seeing God praised for His vengeance. We're not used to that. We don't have a lot of vengeance in our worship songs, praising God for wielding His sword, for His wrath.

I remember first learning Psalm 149. "Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord!" But then it says,

"May the praise of God be in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord" (Ps. 149:6-9).

God praised for His vengeance upon the nations. But this exactly what the book of Revelation is about. This is exactly what we heard the saints crying out for in Chapter 6. Do you remember their prayers around the altar of God? Revelation 6:10, "They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" They were crying out for the justice and the vengeance of God.

And now, here, we see the multitudes of heaven worshiping God in His justice. And this is where we need to remember what we talked about a couple of weeks ago, when we considered how and why God is worshiped for His wrath.

Remember that the focus here is on the true judgment that sin and sinners are due in this world before a holy God. And specifically Babylon here. Babylon, who Revelation 17:6 described as a *"woman...drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus."*

If God turned a deaf ear to these things, if God turned a deaf ear to sin and evil and injustice and suffering in this world, He would not be true, and He would certainly not be just. So here, God is rightfully and wholeheartedly praised for His justice. Oh, what it would do for our evangelism if only we really believed that the people around us who don't know Christ are sitting under the judgment of a just and holy God, a God who desires to save them by His grace as we speak his gospel. If only we would truly see the justice of God in our worship, surely we would be compelled to give our lives as witnesses. God, help us to see the truth and justice of God in our worship.

Next, He is eternal. Verse 3 emphasizes the eternality of His truth and justice. Smoke rising up forever and ever indicates that God's judgment is final, permanent, irreversible, and everlasting.

This is solemn news. News that I would urge everyone within the sound of my voice to heed. The judgment of God is final and eternal. Do not play around with the justice of God, carrying on in sin like it does not matter. It does matter. His judgment is final, permanent, irreversible, and everlasting.

And this is also good news. In light of evil and suffering and tragedy around this world, it is good to know that there will be a day when God's justice and truth will reign supreme, and evil and rebellion against God will never escape to arise again against God and His people. We praise Him because He is eternal.

He is mighty. Skip down here to verse 6, *"For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."* This is the supreme title for God in the book of Revelation; it's used 9 different times. Remember how the Roman emperor had given himself the title, "Our Lord and God," and that's what people in the Roman Empire were supposed to call him. So John is sitting on the island of Patmos, exiled there by the Roman Empire, and he decides, "I'm going to show him who's God." And nine different times in Revelation (it's only used one other time in the New Testament altogether) John refers to God as the "Almighty God." That took some guts, John. God is mighty.

And He is sovereign. The Lord God almighty "reigns." He is in control. How could this little band of believers, this little alien outpost of faith in the Roman Empire keep on singing the praises of God with hope and confidence and joy despite all the pressures and persecution around it? They knew that God reigned over the Roman Empire. This is what keeps you singing with all your might right in the middle of it all, even when it costs you your life. You know that He reigns.

And behold the supremacy of Christ the Son.

Bow before the splendor of God the Father and then behold the supremacy of Christ the Son. So after this glimpse into heaven of the worship of God the Father, verse 11 says John *"saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!"*

And the images that follow paint one of the most powerful pictures of Christ ever recorded. The suffering servant who came into Jerusalem riding on a humble donkey is now coming out of heaven riding on a warhorse. The horse is white, representing purity and victory.

And listen to His description. He is faithful and true. In the very beginning of this book, Revelation 1:5, Jesus was called the *"faithful witness."* In Revelation 3:14, He was called *"the faithful and true witness."* From the start of Revelation, we have been anticipating the arrival of the King who promised to come for His people, and now He comes, faithful and true to His Word.

He is the righteous Judge. *"In righteousness He judges,"* John says (Rev. 19:11). He is coming to make all wrongs right, to dispense the justice of God rightly, fairly, and justly.

And He is the Messianic warrior. John says at the end of verse 11, *"In righteousness He judges and makes war."* In righteousness, He makes war. He is on the assault against evil and injustice and unrighteousness in the world.

And in that war, He sees all, knows all, and judges all. *"His eyes are like a flame of fire"* (Rev. 19:12). This is imagery we saw in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 depicting the omniscient eyes of Christ. He sees everything, everything in our lives, everything in the world. Nothing is hidden from His knowledge. You and I cannot hide anything from the coming King.

"His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems..." (Rev. 19:12). There are many crowns on His head. You know what's interesting? There are two other times when we see diadems like this mentioned. Look at them with me.

Turn back to Revelation 12:3. The first time we see diadems is when they are on the head of the dragon, a symbol of Satan. *"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems."* And then, when you get to the next chapter, Revelation 13:1, you see diadems on the head of the beast. Verse 1 says, *"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads."*

So up until this point, you've basically had false claims to kingship in the book of Revelation. The dragon and the beast looking like they were kings, claiming to have sovereign authority. But now, when you get to Chapter 19, you see Jesus not with seven or with ten, but with many diadems crowning His head as the true King.

There are many crowns on His head, and there is much mystery to His name. Revelation 19:12 says, *"He has a name that no one knows but himself."* There's a lot of discussion about what this name is.

My kids have been learning the names of God all throughout Scripture, and I think they know Hebrew better than I do right now. We were having family pizza night the other night, and we were doing some names of God trivia at the table. They were spouting off Hebrew names and titles for God left and right—Jehovah Rohi and El Elyon and Yahweh Shammah and Elohim—and telling me what they mean. I thought, "Man, my four- and six-year-olds know the character of God better than I do!"

And that's what a name reveals in Scripture—character. So the picture here seems to be a fullness of character that's still yet to be fully revealed until the day when Christ returns and we see Him as He is. Over and over again throughout history, God has revealed Himself through different names and titles, and His revelation will continue in history when Christ

the King returns for His people in fulfillment of His promises. There are many crowns on His head, and there is much mystery to His name.

Christ comes, and He conquers God's enemies. This is where the imagery gets graphic. Jesus is clothed here in a robe dipped in blood, which could be a reference to the blood He shed on the cross. But in light of the context here, it is more likely a reference to the blood of those whom Jesus comes to judge. Isaiah 63 prophesied of one coming *"in crimson garments ... splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength ... speaking in righteousness, mighty to save ... with red apparel because he treads the winepress of God's wrath"* (Is. 63:1-3). That's exactly what we see happening here in Revelation 19. Jesus is coming as the clear conqueror of God's enemies.

He reveals God's Word. Here we see one of Jesus' various names and titles, even in this passage: *"the name by which he is called is The Word of God"* (Rev. 19:13). Jesus is the authoritative Word (with a capital W) in Revelation. He brings judgment and salvation through the power of a Word, and by His Word, through his Word, with His Word He ends the history of this world.

It's interesting. The scene is set here for a major battle, but we don't really see a battle take place. Instead, all we see is Christ striking down the nations with a sharp sword, and just like that it's over. The beast and the armies of the earth are immediately no more. With a sword from His mouth, He ends the history of this world.

And not only that, but He rules the nations of this world. *"With a rod of iron,"* verse 15 says, building on prophecy from Psalm 2, the climax of that prophetic chapter. Psalm 2,

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against his Anointed... He who sits in heaven laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill' ... The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'" (Ps. 2:1-2, 4-9).

All who have taken their stand against the Messiah will be ruled by the Messiah.

He rules the nations of this world, and He brings God's wrath upon this world. *"He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty"* (Rev. 19:15). What a frightening picture that plays out in verses 17-21.

As Jesus brings the judgment of God, He ushers in the wrath of God in two primary ways here. First, He ushers in God's wrath upon sinful men and women. The angel calls birds to swoop down and feast on the flesh of kings and captains, mighty men, horses and riders, the flesh of all men, both free and slave, small and great who have turned from God and trusted in themselves and lived in their sin. A graphic depiction of the just judgment of God and the final end of sinful man who refused to trust in the Savior King.

Jesus will usher in God's wrath upon sinful men and women and upon Satanic agents and ambassadors. We've been introduced to a dragon and a beast and a false prophet and Babylon—all who oppose God and His people. And now, systematically, one by one in

reverse order, we are seeing them judged and overthrown. First, we saw it happen with Babylon. And now, we see it with the beast and the false prophet.

The dragon still remains, and we'll see what happens to him in the next couple of weeks, but the picture is clear. These Satanic ambassadors/agents, the beast and false prophet, and all those whom they have controlled are captured and thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. This is a picture of eternal torment that will become even clearer next week at the end of Chapter 20. When Jesus returns, He will clearly come, yes, to consummate salvation for all who have trusted in Him, but also to usher in wrath for all who have turned against Him.

And it will be abundantly evident that He alone is the King of kings. And He alone is the Lord of lords. *"On His robe and on his thigh he has these names written"* (Rev. 19:16).

Let's revere Him.

What a powerful picture of Christ: on a white horse, faithful and true, the righteous Judge and Messianic warrior who sees all, knows all, and judges all, crowned with diadems and shrouded in mystery. He comes to conquer God's enemies once and for all, to end the history of the world with the revelation of God's Word, to rule the nations as He brings the wrath of God upon this world dominated by sin and Satan. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. So ladies and gentlemen in this room, let us revere Him.

"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great" (Rev. 19:5). Fear Him; revere Him.

Let me ask every single person within the sound of my voice: Have you turned from your sin and trusted in this Savior King? Have you come to the point where you have acknowledged, confessed, realized your rebellion against a holy God, rebellion that the Bible says warrants the wrath of God?

And have you seen and believed that Jesus has taken the punishment due you upon Himself? He has died on a cross for the sins of all who will trust in Him, and He has risen from the grave in victory over sin so that you and I, when we trust in Him, will experience His salvation and will be saved from God's final and eternal wrath. Have you turned in fear and reverence to trust in Him?

For one day soon He will return. He will usher in full and final salvation for all who have trusted in Him, and He will usher in full and final wrath for all who have turned from Him. Which will you receive on that day? I urge you, if you have not come to the point where you have called out for Christ to save you as King of kings and Lord of lords, I urge you to do that today, now, in this moment!

And then, when you do, and for all who have, let's revere Him. We are His servants, small and great, and there is no room for casual worship before this King. No room for casual worship. Only room for reverent, humble, passionate praise of this King.

Let's rejoice in Him.

Let's revere Him, and let's rejoice in Him. Verse 7, *"Rejoice and exult."* Why? *"For the marriage of the Lamb has come!"* A wedding, cause for celebration.

I remember my wedding day, December 18, 1999. I wake up in the morning and think, "Man, I'm going to get married today!" And I gather together with my friends and my family, and there's laughter and rejoicing and expectation and celebration, and they all have

a seat, and I stand there at the front, and the doors in the back swing open, and there I see my bride! Everybody stands in her honor, and she walks down this aisle with a smile on her face. She takes my hand, and we turn to one another, and we unite our lives with each other. And then we walk out, hand in hand, husband and wife, where we go to a celebration with all the people we love most and who loved us most in this world.

What a scene! And this is the imagery we have of the return of Christ for His people. This is cause for rejoicing! And it's interesting imagery, because when you get to verse 9, the scene shifts. Instead of being the Bride (which we'll talk about more in a second), the angel says, "*Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb*" (Rev. 19:9). Here the saints who have been saved by the blood of Christ are the guests at the party, invited by God to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb.

See this. The worship of God is cause for joy and delight and feasting and celebrating. Let us rejoice in our God. Let us rejoice in our King. Let us enjoy His glory more than anything in this world. We have reason to rejoice in Him.

Let's be ready for His coming.

Let's be ready for His coming. "*The bride has made herself ready*" (Rev. 19:7).

Now wouldn't that have been unfortunate if those doors in the back had swung open at my wedding, and no one was there? And someone runs down the aisle (not my wife) and says, "She's not ready yet. Give her some more time." That's not the way weddings work. The bride is ready when the doors open.

So, brothers and sisters, bride of Jesus Christ, let us be ready. Let's walk by faith in Him. The end of verse 7 says that "*the Bride of the Lamb has made herself ready.*" It's the only time in the book of Revelation where followers of Christ are described as preparing themselves, so how do they do it? How do they get ready?

And the answer is in all the ways that we've seen throughout this Book. They get ready by remaining faithful to Christ in the midst of a fallen world. They get ready by proclaiming Christ, even when it costs them persecution. They get ready by enduring hardship and trusting God in the middle of suffering. They get ready by obeying the commands of God and carrying out the mission of God.

Let's walk, let's live by faith in Him. It's not easy, and it won't be easy. That's what Revelation promises us. You see, God has a purpose in Babylon and a beast and a false prophet. He uses them to prepare His Bride for marriage, to purify her, to refine her faith, to teach her to trust in Him more than the things of this world, to trust in Him even amidst suffering in this world.

Christian, we live by faith in Him. By faith we walk in righteousness until He returns. But notice that this life of faith is not something that we generate out of our own strength and in our own willpower. Notice that it's the grace of God that empowers such faith.

Did you see the seeming dichotomy here? The end of verse 7 says "*his Bride has made herself ready*" with "*righteous deeds.*" But then right in the middle, in the beginning of verse 8, the Bible says, "*It was granted her to clothe herself with fine line, bright and pure.*"

So is this something that the Bride did herself, or is this something that the Bride was given to her by God? And the answer is yes. Yes, the Bride made herself ready. Yes, the Bride

walked in righteousness and lived in purity and trust and hope in God. Yes, the Bride did all of these things. But the Bride was able to do all of these things only by the grace of God.

So let's live by faith in Him, Christian, and let's work by grace from Him. This is what Paul says in Philippians 2: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling..."* Work, work out your salvation day-by-day. *"...For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13). Work as God works in you. The grace of God is what makes the life of faith possible.

It's like when my kids buy me a gift with money I have given to them. I give them money, I take them to the store, I walk them to the place where they can get something I want or need, they pick it up, they carry it to the counter, and they pay for my gift with my money. They pay for my gift with my gift. So were they involved in this picture? Absolutely, they were totally involved, a heartfelt gift from them to me. Was I involved in this picture? Absolutely, I was. This gift to me was not possible apart from my gift to them.

It's not a perfect illustration, but it is a picture of how walking by faith is a work of grace. What do you have to give to God that He has not given to you? Nothing, Christian. Nothing. Which is why the beginning of verse 7 here says, *"Let us rejoice and exalt and give God the glory."* Why does God get the glory when the Bride makes herself ready? Because the Bride is only able to make herself ready because of the grace of God.

So here this good news today, Christian. You live amidst adulterous Babylon where you are surrounded by the pleasures and pursuits of this world, surrounded by temptations to sin, surrounded by trials and suffering, all of which take aim at your faith. So how do you live by faith? How do you stand firm in your faith? How do you walk in righteousness when you're tempted on every side with worldliness? Here's how: only by the grace of God.

Call out for His mercy, cry out for His grace, say to God, "I can't make myself ready in my own strength, in my own willpower, with my own resources. I need you to make me ready." And God stands ready and willing to give you the faith you need for what you are walking through in this moment. God stands ready and willing to give you the strength you need to overcome sin and to trust Him amidst suffering.

I was talking with one person this week who is in a fight of faith, and this person said, "I just can't do it." And I said, "That's the point." So fall on your face and cry out for the mercy of God and the grace of God and the strength of God, and He will grant it to you. And as He does, you will make yourself ready.

Oh, let's be ready for His coming, brothers and sisters. You have to realize the cultural background behind this picture. In this day (and in various places around the world today), a marriage involved two major events: the betrothal and then the wedding. So a couple was betrothed to be married, and during that time they were considered husband and wife, even though they had not yet come together in marriage.

If you'll remember Matthew 1, we learn that Joseph and Mary were betrothed to one another, but she was found pregnant before they actually came together in marriage. Yet Joseph resolved, Matthew 1:19 says, to divorce Mary quietly. Well, why did he have to divorce her if they were not already married? And the answer is because they were viewed as married, even in their betrothal. They were just waiting for the consummation of their marriage when they would officially come together as husband and wife.

So a betrothal would occur, and then there would be a waiting period that would eventually lead up to the wedding. And when the day for the wedding came, it would start with a procession to the bride's house, and then a return to the groom's house where the marriage feast would finally take place and everything would be official.

And I share all that background simply to give you a picture of where we find ourselves now. Christian, you and I who have trusted in Christ are betrothed to Him, united to Him, sealed in relationship with Him. At the same time, we are waiting. And there is coming a day when our groom, our King, our Savior from heaven will come to us and bring us to His place where there will be a wedding feast for the ages. When He comes, we want to be ready. When He comes, we must be ready.

Are you ready today? I want to stop right here. I know we've got one more blank to fill in, but I want to leave us hanging for a few minutes there because I want us to stop and answer this question: Are we ready for His return? Are you ready for His return? Are you walking in faith? Or are you holding on to sin? Are you holding back your trust? Are you proclaiming the gospel faithfully and fervently to the people around you?

I want to invite us to enter into a time of prayer and reflection. I want to invite you to ask the question in the next few minutes: am I ready for Jesus to come back right now? What in my life needs to change so that I might make myself ready? And as you answer that question, know that Christ stands ready in His grace to give you everything you need to be made ready.

For we will reign with Him forever.

The last blank. Revelation 19 has given us a picture of His coming on a white warhorse, and verse 14 says that following him are "*the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure*" (Rev. 19:14). This is the same description that we have of the church earlier in verse 8. And there's some debate over whether these "armies of heaven" are just a reference to angels, or if this includes a reference to saints, or maybe both. But I'm convinced, based on the clear allusion to verse 8, that at the very least, these armies include the saints.

Regardless of how one might interpret this verse, the picture across Revelation is absolutely, abundantly crystal clear. When Jesus returns for His people, we will reign with Him. So, in view of Revelation 19, brothers and sisters, let's revere Him, let's rejoice in Him, and let's be ready for His coming, for one day soon we will reign with Him forever.

* NOTE: A list of additional resources to assist you in further study of the book of Revelation and eschatology are available as a PDF download at Radical.net/Revelation. Click on the "Materials" button under any message in the series for this and other weekly resources.

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