

*All Things New: The Wedding Invitations*  
*By Jason Huff*  
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*Isaiah 61:10-11; Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:1-10*

Our final Scripture reading today is Revelation 19:1-10. May God bless the reading of His holy, perfect, and trustworthy Word. “After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!” Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!” Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.””

- These days, weddings come in all sizes, shapes, and colors
  - John Krazinski, the star of “The Office,” has been doing a show on YouTube called Some Good News, and he recently officiated a wedding online that included all his former castmates
  - Daughter of a good friend from high school got married on Friday with just family surrounding them – for them and their faith, the marriage was more important than the wedding
  - We wonder in our modern world about the place of weddings and even marriage when many people live as if they were married for years and then the wedding is essentially a big party to celebrate their love – not a sacred gathering to ask for God’s blessings and an understanding that marriage is a sacred task and responsibility

- We aren't going to talk so much about marriage today as we are about the upcoming wedding of the Lamb to His bride – of Christ and His holy people, represented in upcoming chapters as the New Jerusalem, also called the holy city of Zion, and what leads up to that marriage
  - Today, we're essentially given a wedding invitation
  - We'll talk about preparing for the wedding banquet to come
- As the passage begins, a shout goes up from the great multitude in heaven, the gathered believers – “Hallelujah!”
  - Hallelujah is a Hebrew term meaning “Praise Yah,” short for “Praise Yahweh”
  - Later in the passage, it's translated into Greek
  - But three times, it's transliterated from the Hebrew – this is the ancient cry of the Israelites; it's the cry of God's people in worship and adoration – while “hallelujah” is all over the Old Testament and is translated, only here in this passage does the word “Hallelujah” appear in the New Testament
  - John's lack of translation gives us a sense of the history and age and depth of those worshiping in heaven – this word would not have been known to the Greeks, but to the Jews in the community
  - Ultimately, the call goes out to all of us as a command – praise God!
- Why are we commanded to praise?
  - First, salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.
    - Our praise is specifically for His judgment of Babylon the Great – that the evil she has done to the servants of God has been avenged in her destruction
    - One of the most popular quotes of Jesus out of context is “do not judge so that you will not be judged” – and yet it is immediately followed by, “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”
    - The idea is that we don't have all the facts – we don't know the future, we don't know what God will do, so writing someone off is wrong, condemning them as unworthy or unsavable, unable to change
    - Yet Jesus also said, “Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?” Taken out of context, that sounds bad too.

- The point is that we as flawed human beings are bad at carrying out true justice – and yet as Christians, we should be longing for true justice to be done, especially justice that ends the abuse of the oppressed and the saints
  - The second hallelujah goes up because the smoke from Babylon goes up forever and ever
    - This is not a war cry of vengeance necessarily – it is the relief that if the smoke rises up from her forever, she will never stand again to oppose the saints
    - Last week – discussed how much we might miss Babylon – the saints rejoice in her fall – she promises everything but behind her is spiritual darkness and oppression
    - We rejoice because her temptations and evils are gone
  - The third hallelujah comes in agreement – “amen” – a Hebrew word meaning, “We believe” or “May it be so” – the greatest among the throng of saints worships God – we praise God because we live in agreement with what He is doing, we long for it to come about
  - The fourth hallelujah, the one in Greek, is a command for those who fear God to praise Him – we honor Him out of respect for His might, majesty, and power
  - The final hallelujah is for God’s reign – that with the fall of Babylon, the King is coming in power
- We transition here where the rejoicing and praise come because the time of the wedding of the Lamb has finally come
  - It’s important to note that the wedding of Jesus to His bride – to His people the church, to His faithful throughout all generations – only comes after the end of Babylon – the unfaithful must give way to the faithful, the impure refined and thrown out so that only the pure remains – we’re cleaning the banquet hall
  - Contrast between the fine linen of Babylon – scarlet and crimson – and the bright and clean fine linen of the bride – once again, the cheap imitation falls aside when the true beauty is revealed
  - The fine linen of the bride is explained to be “the righteous acts of the saints” – the preposition here is ambiguous in Greek, so it might the righteous acts **of** the saints or the righteous acts **for** the saints – it can’t be both grammatically, but it might be – the works we do that show we belong to Christ, but also all the works that God accomplished to bring us to Himself

- Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"
  - The invited here are God's people, those that God has elected and chosen
  - Jesus' parable in Matthew 22 reminds us of two things:
    - The invited don't look like what we would expect – the least, the last, the lost are given the right to come when those you would expect to come refuse the invitation
    - Not all are chosen – there is a general invitation to all, but only those who come to Jesus and clothe themselves with His righteousness, with the salvation He purchased on the cross, come in to the feast
  - If you are invited, you have a seat at the table – you are a part of God's community, a son or daughter, in a wonderful and strange way both a guest and part of the bride – multiple analogies are going on together!
- Now there's a last little bit we need to attend to. The angel gives John the true words of God. Because of that, John falls to worship – but the angel stops this from happening, telling him that he's just a fellow servant, that worship belongs to God alone – in a confusing sentence, the angel explains that the prophets give the testimony of Jesus, but they aren't Jesus.
  - Why something so confusing and bizarre? Why would John even think of worshipping an angel?
  - Remember that the angels in their heavenly garb resemble Jesus
  - Remember too that Jesus' glorified body was not immediately recognized by His own disciples – John is not intending to do wrong here
  - The angel immediately picks up on it and stops him – this is such a contrast to all the evil we've seen so far – the beast, the dragon, the harlot – who want the worship and adoration of the world
  - It is a good reminder to us that we aren't to worship or adore those who bring the Word of God to us, though we may admire and respect them
    - Noted evangelist and defender of the faith Ravi Zacharias died this week – lots of tributes up – tributes were about how he explained the gospel, helped see the logic in it – good and faithful servant – but praise to God
    - I admired R.C. Sproul – where do they direct the praise?

- Where does this passage meet with our lives?
  - It all depends on if we take this as a future, pie-in-the-sky image or one that moves in part because of our obedience
  - You might remember that last week, the angel declared Babylon the Great as fallen, in the past tense, even though it had clearly not happened yet
  - Will we take her as fallen already, or keep returning to her?
  - Things that seem to be involved in the Kingdom coming soon:
    - The praise and worship of God's people, with the prayer for the fall of Babylon and calls for justice
    - The preparation of the bride for her bridegroom through acts of obedience and service
    - Responding to the wedding announcement – responding to the salvation promise of Jesus
  - Is it possible for us to hasten the day of God's coming?
    - God knows precisely when He will bring about judgment and set all things right – Jesus warns us not to be too interested in figuring out the exact day
    - Yet God brings into consideration His people and their actions when He plans to return
    - In 2 Peter 2:11-12, Peter talks about the coming day of the Lord. He says, “What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”
  - Know that we are both guest and bride
    - This is about us! God has made His preparations. What joy there will be when this finally occurs! More joy and celebrating than any earthly wedding
- The wedding announcement has been made and the invitations sent.
  - What will you do to prepare?
  - Are you wearing the wedding clothes of Christ?
  - Are you preparing the fine and bright linen for the bride?
  - Are you rejoicing that the day is coming?