

## Revelation 19

### I. The heavenly response to the fall of Babylon

- Following the laments of those who benefited from Babylon's corruption, we hear a structured sequence of praise in response to the fall of Babylon, for the judgment of the whore and the readiness of the bride.
- **The Great Multitude:** praise for the judgment of the whore
- **A second affirmation**
- **Affirmation from 24/elders**
- **The voice from the throne**
- **The Great Multitude:** Praise for the bride who is ready
- The structure of this response both anticipates the end of the book, and begins to transition the reader from a focus on Babylon and the whore to a focus on the heavenly city and the bride.
- Crucially, this section (19:1-9) emphasizes that the people of God will ultimately be vindicated, even though vindication eludes us now.

### II. The marriage supper of the Lamb

- The marriage supper of the Lamb is a collection of rich symbols from both the Old and New Testaments.
- See *Hosea* (the imagery of a bride is used to emphasize the unfaithfulness of the people of God); *Isaiah 54*: For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you (Imagery that explains the purpose of Israel's exile); *Ezekiel 16*: Again, the imagery of a bride is used to emphasize the unfaithfulness of Israel and the covenant faithfulness of God.
- In NT, the image shifts to Christ and the believers as the bridegroom and bride, reaching its zenith in Rev. See John 3:29; II Cor. 11:2; and Eph. 5:23-32.

### III. Returning to the sixth bowl: the last battle

- John sees heaven opened, with Jesus on a white horse preparing for cosmic battle.
- We will give attention to the question of what kind of battle this is soon, but it is worth mentioning now the battle's location: in heaven.
- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood (i.e. humans), but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

IV. “Feasting” on the flesh of enemies

- We then see a battle take place in which the beasts and kings of the earth wage war against the white rider and his army.
- At the conclusion of the battle, the beast and his magician/sorcerer are cast into the lake of fire. Birds of prey engorge themselves on the flesh of the beast and kings.

V. Is this imagery Christian?

- The image of Jesus riding a horse while covered in blood with a sword has – in large part thanks to Christians who do not read this passage thoughtfully – led to a perverse and unchristian understanding of what God promises in the end. Does Jesus decide to change everything about who he is and how he redeems the world to himself at the last minute?
- **Jesus is already covered in blood before a battle begins:**  
Jesus comes to the battle already covered in blood, and we are given no indication that it is the blood of his enemies. In other words, he comes covered in his own blood, and it is by his own blood that he is victorious in the battle.
- **The sword is a metaphor for his words:**  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Isaiah 11:4 He made my mouth like a sharp sword...Isaiah 49:2
- **Revelation is “cathartic” literature:** It’s easy to be critical of a passage describing birds of prey growing fat from the flesh of enemies from “the suburbs.” But keep in mind the situation of the Christians receiving these images, who needed powerful pictures of victory to find strength in their lives. Think also about imprecatory Psalms.
- **This is not a conventional battle:** John is not describing a fiery blood bath, but the ultimate, final, decisive victory of God over the forces of evil that oppress his good creation.