

Revelation 19:1–10

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[0 : 00] Reading comes from the book of Revelation, chapter 19, verses 1 through 10. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. Revelation 19, verses 1 through 10.

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 worshipped 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, and 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.

[1 : 24] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. You may be seated. You may be seated. Well, just a couple of words before I begin preaching.

One related to Easter. I'm very excited, as Arthur has already alluded to, that we're going to have a sunrise service here. And I'm especially excited because the plan is from 7 to 8, be worshiping on Easter morning, and then walk right down the street to Valois.

[2 : 30] So to have an Easter breakfast at Valois as a congregation, it is a Hyde Park institution. And so that should be a great way to begin the day.

Looking forward to that. And also, I just want to highlight this Saturday, particularly for women, Missional City Sisters.

There is a retreat, a morning retreat taking place on the north side. And this week's subject is in regard to supporting gospel families.

And so I know a number of the women here. I'd like to see you all there. I won't be there myself, but my wife will be, and she'll be teaching. And I know that raising a family in the city is a very important thing.

And so I hope that all of you can make it, even those of you who are single or thinking about getting married. That is this Saturday. Please check the details for that. Well, if ever there were a dream scene to match Hollywood's conception of the apocalypse, last week's text and sermon would be it.

[3 : 48] Take a look. According to 1823, on that fiery apocalyptic and final day, all festive marital celebrations, no more.

The illuminating glory of the great urban cities, no more. Every industrialized mill, according to verse 22, abandoned.

That means no more gears grinding, no more assembly lines humming, no more cloth cutting, no more corrugated boxes running, no more toy producing plastics forming, and even on a clear but cold day in Chicago, no more steam rising.

All gone. All gone. No more trains running. No more planes flying.

No more trucks hauling. No crescendoing sound emanating from the earth of that rubber on asphalt.

[5 : 10] Gone. Gone. Forever. No more ships embarking. No more outcry from the stock pits emerging.

No more federal grants given to universities coming. No more applications for undergraduate programs.

No more. No more. Chapter 18, even back at verse 22, says that even the sound of the harpists and the musicians of flute players and trumpeters will be heard in you no more.

Makes me think with our guest musicians here this weekend, we played with jazz and java, and what a great night that was. We thank you for coming. No more.

You think of Buddy Holly and Richie Valens and Giles Perry, the great big bopper. February 3rd, 1959, going down in the little plane in Clear Lake, Iowa, en route to 24 cities, tour, Midwestern states.

[6 : 30] McLean later calls it the day the music died. Chapter 18 is the day the music dies. This is an apocalyptic vision that surpasses anything you or I could comprehend.

And the text declared that the men and women who survive the great fire of that vision of John stand far off and mourn.

Six times mourn. Threefold. Alas! Alas! Alas! Alas!

an■■■■. And then, The writer of this apocalyptic book must have awoke.

He awakened, perhaps in a cold sweat. and he still found himself on the island called Patmos where he'd been in confinement for preaching the Word of God.

[8 : 15] And I envision him, after that dream sequence, walking feet needing solitude, mind swirling, the southern tip of the island, turning to his right, gazing at what would be the direction of Rome, and with its great distance of over a thousand miles, almost envisioning the smoke rising.

And then facing and turning left, back toward the 600 miles as the crow flies that would take him to Jerusalem, and he wonders, in that great day, that horrible day, when the world comes to a grinding halt by the hand of God, what is to become of Jerusalem?

God's people. The bride of Christ. Perhaps he sits, thinks, closes his eyes, and suddenly he's carried into another dream.

Look at the literary convention with which chapter 19 opens. It's those simple two words, after this. What those mean to the writer is, And I saw another vision.

There's a full stop after 18. There's a season of thought and life that took place for John the writer. And then, he saw another vision.

[10 : 16] We know this is a literary convention of John, because we've been tracing it all the way through. Take a look back at chapter 4, verse 1, where we saw it for the very first time. That great two-chapter sequence, that brought him into the throne room of heaven.

2, 4, 1 opens, after this. Take a look at chapter 7, in verse 1, when those visions had come to an end. After this.

Meaning, and I saw another vision. The same literary device is used in chapter 7, verse 9. After this. Or chapter 15, and verse 5.

Again, stating that a separate vision is now coming to him. After this. I looked. We saw it again in 18.1. After this.

And now, we come in chapter 19, to an entirely different vision. And here, you have to envision that John, being in the Spirit, is being lifted up some way that we could only call mystical.

[11 : 25] and earth begins to recede. And the lingering vision of the utter and complete devastation of the cities before him.

And his eyes are lifted up, and he passes through, into the gates of heaven, into the very throne room of God.

And all of a sudden, he hears what seems to be a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! The contrast couldn't be greater or clearer. He's taken into the heavens, and these words are heard.

Hallelujah! which simply means praise the Lord. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. And then there are two clauses in the Greek which indicate the cause for the singing.

[12 : 41] For, his judgments are true and just. And then again, For, he has judged a great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. And then he connects those causes with the word, and, he 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 worshipped God.

What a sight it was he saw. And they saw him who was seated on the throne saying, Amen!

Hallelujah! It's this antiphonal response.

He's ushered into the presence of God where the great multitude, and we're not told who they are, are they simply the hosts of heaven? Perhaps. Do they embody the hosts of heaven and all the church throughout the ages?

We do not know. But there is a song in heaven long after the music on earth has died.

[13 : 55] What an antiphonal refrain. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! And the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in response.

Amen! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! It's interesting to me that in the very opening phrase of our text we have this word hallelujah three times.

And the reasons given for it are clear. The last, of course, is in verse 3. The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.

Praise the Lord because the kingdoms which have rejected his son and his rule will be laid waste forevermore.

Praise the Lord for all the rebellion against the Lord is forevermore put away. it's interesting to me how quickly our mind begins to think that that verse is somehow incongruent with what would be a hopeful or helpful response.

[15 : 09] Praise the Lord because all the rebels have been laid waste. We think oh how tragic we ought to let the rebels live a bit longer you know.

No. Only God reigns. We await the day when all rebellion will cease against him forever and ever. So says the song of heaven. The second reason for which they are singing hallelujah is there in verse 2.

In fact they're both there in verse 2. First for his judgments are true and just. Second for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with immorality and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.

God's ways are true and just and the prostitute has been judged. The overriding point of the song of heaven in this vision is that God's final judgment on the world is rooted in his commitment to justice and righteousness to truth to fairness to equity.

[16 : 33] Praise God for he is fair and right and true honorable. These are the very words we saw earlier didn't we in chapter 15.

These same phrases as in earlier vision chapter 15 and verse 4 just and true are your ways or in chapter 16 and verse 5 just are you O holy one who is and who was for you brought forth these judgments or chapter 16 and verse 7 yes the Lord the almighty true and just are your judgments the final apocalyptic vision of chapter 18 proves this if it proves anything that the character of God as a just and righteous and true God will be vindicated and believe me it's in need of vindication today not only will his character be vindicated but his children and their conduct in an ungodly world will be avenged now we need to stop on this because this is the meat of the passage isn't it truth will be done justice will be served the character of God will be vindicated the conduct of his children avenged it's ironic really there's a present day thought and let me put it this way many reject a belief in the existence of God today in part because they have predicated that his belief depends in some measure on him being just and so the logic goes like this on the streets of Hyde

Park if there is a God in the heavens he must be just point a since there is so much injustice on the earth b God does not exist here or in the heavens c it's ironic isn't it in fact many today point to the many injustices that are done on the earth in the name of God as a reason for the rejection of a belief in God and certainly there are many injustices that one could point to in the name of God secondly many reject God because they look at the church today and they say there's such a lack of concern for justice within the body of Christ that they're unwilling to follow the name of Christ so let me ask you why would God open himself up to such a charge why would God delay why would God let hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and thousands of years go on in which his character is assailed and his church is without being avenged for the name and in the name of

justice let me put it though another way I think the human tendency is to think that we're a little smarter than God that if we were God things would be different we would mete out justice we would root out evil and we would do it in a moment now but let me ask you this do you wish to live in a world where there is no time that separates a declaration of arrest and the final conviction that is delivered we would be appalled to live in a world where the presumed guilt of an individual was trumpeted and immediately executed we want time because we are just but God has no time in our mind our judicial system is put together in such an exquisite way that there demands a period of time between the declaration of arrest and a conviction which is made and a sentence which is pronounced and a judgment that is meted

I don't want to live in any other kind of world where the presumed innocence of an individual has no time from which to either prove its innocence, declare itself to be innocent, show itself to be innocent or at least be afforded the protection of justice until it is declared guilty well as it is with you and me so it is with God so it is with God and it is according to the teaching of the Bible that we begin to read and sort out all the confusion in our minds and we read in the Bible that we have all sinned against God that we have violated His statutes that we are declared guilty before His character and yet it is in the Bible that we read of the Gospel or the good news that God has sent His Son and meted out justice upon Him for all who believe so that they may escape the eternal wrath of a holy God by embracing the work of His Son in faith before He declares all of us universally guilty as we are in other words when you begin to read the Bible seriously rather than we live in a culture that flaunts its weak tenets against God's character we begin to see that God's delay in executing justice is rooted in His everlasting mercy everlasting mercy take a look at 2 Peter in chapter 3 this very point is made by the apostolic writer 2 Peter 3 verse 8 but do not overlook this one fact beloved that with the Lord one day is a thousand years and a thousand years is one day the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness but is patient toward you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance but the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed and the rationale for this intermittent season between your guilt and mine and God's willingness to come and execute judgment upon it is rooted in the mercy that He would in history put forth His Son born under the law that He would live righteously in it and that through His death sacrificial as it was you and I might latch on to Him in faith before retribution comes

[25 : 18] He is not slow in this but patient not wishing that any should perish and so the song in heaven when the earth is laid bare and exposed is hallelujah for His judgments are true and just and He has judged the prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and He avenged on her the blood of His servants that's the song of heaven and I apologize if I'm just a little tired of living in a world that keeps God on the dock He is just and we are not He will come as certainly as you are sitting here today and His moment will be irreversible for us all the language of heaven then is fairly simple isn't it look at the response

I mean verse 5 right after this antiphonal moment and from the throne came a voice we don't know whose voice it is it speaks of God so it must have been some other creature from the throne came a voice saying praise our God all you His servants you who fear Him small and great that is your response to the teaching of scripture which vindicates the character of God and avenges the faithfulness of the saints in a world which rejects Him praise God small and great all you His servants you who fear Him praise our God that's the songs of heaven notice in the text in this vision he moved from seeing this moment in song to a moment at supper verses 6 and following 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 and here's the rationale again two times the word for for the Lord our God the almighty reigns let us rejoice and exalt 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 they moved from being at song to at supper the wedding marriage of the Lamb has come you know weddings are great occasions for celebration

I I used to run a singles ministry at a church I previously served at with about 150 people in our Sunday school class they're all single I think there was one summer where we did a wedding almost every weekend I didn't get much of a summer was so busy in parties rehearsals ceremonies parties not a bad summer I guess I have many memories 20 21 years into ministry now of weddings they're

very fond memories some of your weddings are a cause of great joy I think of the preparations that are made of the discussions that are had I think of

Jing and Dan even now right engaged in a week or two ago not even a week congratulations Jing where is Dan where's Dan is he hiding behind me Dan is down in the sound catacombs the other day when I heard of the announcement of your engagement I was standing next to Jing and Dan and Sandy Mulholland was there and I gave Jing a hug you know because Jing just came to know the Lord in the last year and a half through the ministry of the backstoms and was baptized in Lake Michigan what a day that was I think of Dan Harak and his coming to faith as an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago and then becoming a member here and staying in Chicago and then to see this wedding emerge what a wonderful wonderful thing it is and I gave

Jing a hug I said I'm just so excited I got to give you a hug and then I said I'm so excited I'm going to give Sandy a hug and I gave Sandy Mulholland a hug and it wasn't I who broke her wrist by the way oh oh to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb had the privilege of being at June and Rochelle's wedding what a wonderful thing to see you here what a tender thing it is you know June and Rochelle came to know Christ last year or so here we're baptized in our church both were translating the sermons into English or into Mandarin from English even before they knew the Lord think of that in part coming into the family of God through your own preaching that must be a wonderful thing also through the ministry of the backstoms we praise

[31 : 51] God for you Jim and Mary Carol but oh oh to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb I remember Rochelle coming into her reception with her Chinese dress on what's it named again Rochelle yes I won't try to repeat it absolutely stunning I still have notes I keep in my Bible from your wedding day that my little daughter Mariah wrote down because at the reception she was meeting with the Chinese women and asking them how to say certain words in Mandarin I thought it might help me when I met visitors at the church even to this day I keep this in my scriptures that we can be a family here that celebrates the ethnic fullness of the family of God but oh oh to be invited to the marriage supper of the lamb it isn't as if you and

I get ourselves all dressed up and cleaned up you gotta make sure you understand what the meaning of that that's going on in verse 8 it was granted her to clothe herself in this way the righteous deeds of the body of Christ like the Holy Trinity Hyde Park congregation the righteous deeds with which we clothe ourselves are the clothing with which we have been granted to wear the fine linen the beauty of Christ Jesus all his glory because we're all capable of growing weeds and getting tangled in them the glory of the gospel is that he frees you from them cleans you of them and dresses you in the robes of the righteousness of Christ in other words we're all moving toward this supper it's one of the favorite things I like about the book of

Ecclesiastes is the end of life is to get home for dinner to be at table your community group gatherings as fragile as they are in the great expanse of this city are not merely a prelude to heaven's table they are already a participation of that day it is heaven on earth to be with one another and to be having fellowship in Christ's name no wonder the antiphonal response to this section is write this down because it's all true you know

William Tyndale who first gave us the Bible New Testament in English 1526 when he got to this passage he wrote in the margin Matthew 22 Matthew 22 is the story of a parable of one who wants to throw a big party and so he invites all the people you would think would want to come to a party all the people with money all the people with access all the people with incredibly incredible amount of free time they all got invitations nobody came all too busy the parable then is well if they reject that feast that supper then go out to the street doggone it make my party full the invitation and we ought to ask ourselves

I don't want us to look at this text and say oh I just want to get to that day we ought to ask ourselves my goodness to escape chapter 18 is everything who can I invite to participate with us on that day seriously when is the last time we corporately by that I mean generally invited anyone to a consideration of the great claims that in our heart hold our eternal destiny this is the party this is the party and as long as we have breath we ought to be inviting people to hear about it for without it they'll go on thinking

[37 : 43] God isn't just and that God isn't coming well I didn't know that it would go this way in the sermon so let me close with this thought one of the favorite things that I enjoy at the weddings of Holy Trinity are the receptions I'll always remember you know there came a season I see Pastor Dennis in the back there was a season we had so many weddings at our church I began to make a

joke I said in order to get kind of the papal blessing of a Holy Trinity wedding John Dennis had to do the worm at the reception in dance form because he can do the big hip hop what do you call it John what kind of dance is that yeah break dance that's the term I can't do it of course but when you're at a Holy Trinity no John I'm preaching now I called on you I don't need you anymore when you see John Dennis do the worm across the floor at a Holy Trinity wedding guess what you have received the blessing of the pastor yeah that that's the kind of family I want to live with a great family in Hyde Park that knows how to celebrate the union of faith and church so we ought to dance we ought to dance we ought to prepare but realize this that all of your participation in the glories of the gospel now even in song are not merely a prelude you are already in faith participating in your eternal glory let's pray our heavenly father we call upon you to be gracious to our family give us great faith encourage everyone here who is downcast and overrun may we again treasure our salvation in your ways in Christ's name amen on your feet the songs of heaven await! Amen to! to to to to to to!