

IN RESPONSE - THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB (Revelation 19:1-8)

by Dennis Prutow

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In Chapter 17 in this sixth section of Revelation, we saw those trapped in unbelief wondering at the fabulous wealth, luxuriant estate and unbridled decadence of Babylon. In Revelation 18 we saw these same people standing in awe as they witness the destruction of their lives and livelihoods.

The scene now shifts. We see the response of the saints in heaven and on earth to the judgment of the great harlot.

After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her" (Revelation 19:1-2).

Heaven refers to God's people as earth refers to God's enemies. The voice of a multitude in heaven sings a song celebrating God's judgment.

You recall in the early visions of Revelation God's people call to Him to avenge their blood. They cry from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10). The saints now witness the vengeance of God. Their response? Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah. "The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9). The judgment of Babylon bears out the truth and righteousness of God's holy purposes.

Two questions. First, should the saints rejoice over the judgment of men and women who serve evil? Second, will saints in heaven be able to see this judgment? Verse 3 intensifies the questions. "And a second time they said, 'Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever.'" The saints of God see the smoke of this judgment "forever and ever."

Regarding question one, have you ever been to a football game or a basketball game of some league or conference significance? On the court or on the field, the opposition is the enemy. Did you rejoice over the defeat of the opposition? Let's carry the analogy to a higher level.

At the end of WWII, there was dancing in the streets on V. J. Day. Men and women rightly rejoiced at the defeat and humiliation of Japan. Should we not rejoice when God exacts perfect justice? Yes! We long to see justice. We will rejoice when God's vengeance strikes.

Regarding question two, Jesus likens the smoking pit of Gehenna just outside the wall of Jerusalem to hell. People of the city could look into this Valley of Hinnom and see the smoke rising. This was a picture of final judgment. Revelation 19:3 refers to another such picture. It quotes Isaiah 34:10 and the judgment of Edom.

Its streams will be turned into pitch, and its loose earth into brimstone, and its land will become burning pitch. It will not be quenched night or day; its smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation it will be desolate (Isaiah 34:9-10).

Similarly, Isaiah 66:24 pictures men and women able to peer into hell and see the awful judgments of God.

Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.

Compare Mark 9:47-48 to confirm Isaiah speaks of eternal torment in hell.

Regarding both questions one and two, the ability of heaven to peer into hell intensifies the praise offered to God for salvation. Not only do men and women see the terrible judgments of God, they realize this is their doom except for Christ. He lived a perfect life on their behalf. He fulfilled the demands of the law, perfect righteousness, for them. He also died in their place to pay the penalty due to them for their sins. They live while others perish. Adoration therefore abounds.

The praise continues in verse 4.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

I maintain the twenty-four elders are a high echelon of angels. Compare Revelation 5:9-10 where they sing a song about Christ's redeeming, not of themselves,

but God's people. In this text they offer their "Amen" to the rejoicing.

Verse 5 brings a command from the throne at the center of heaven. God calls every saint to give Him praise.

And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

When we gather for worship, we too are around the throne with the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, myriads of angels, tens of thousands of glorified saints, and all believers in the world. This is one of the great significances of our worship each Lord's Day. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are part of the choir gathered around the throne. Praise multiplies at the command emanating from the throne.

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns" (verse 6).

This is *the* Hallelujah Chorus. The Lord God omnipotent reigns. The sound like Niagara indicates the power of this song. The thunder reveals the judgmental side of God. The songs of the church ought to contain the strains of mercy *and* the sounds of judgments.

Coordinate with the judgment of Babylon is the joy of the church's wedding with Christ. Verse 7. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." The bride of Christ, arrayed in His righteousness, realizes her privileged estate. Verse 8. "It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." These are the righteous acts of the saints *as seen by of God*. He does not see "a filthy garment" (Isaiah 64:6). God sees the righteous acts of His Son imputed to us, given to us as a free gift.

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IN RESPONSE - THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD (Revelation 19:9-18)

by Dennis Prutow

The songs of heaven celebrate the consummation, the wedding to which God draws all the new creation. The angel announcing the doom of Babylon (17:1) speaks of this blessing. Verse 9.

Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Those invited to the marriage supper are the truly blessed. Having a part in this feast is the ultimate. All else pales in insignificance. As we have seen and shall see, the alternative is eternal death in hell. Individuals either enter the temple of God by way of the cross or they participate in the terror of Gehenna.

Knowing this is the case, John falls on his face in humble adoration.

Then I fell at his feet to worship him.

But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (verse 10).

The angel rightly rebukes John. We do not worship angels nor do we worship fellow servants of Christ. We all have different gifts. We do not place creatures upon pedestals of adoration. Worship God! The testimony of Jesus is the Word of God concerning Christ, His life, death and resurrection. The prophetic Word sets forth this testimony with life changing power.

The scene once again changes. We step back from the brink of judgment and the edge of the end of time. We see Jesus. He comes in power and splendor. Is this the second coming of Christ? Some think it is. I think the link is with the present age, the ongoing spread of the gospel, and the victory of Christ in Armageddon. See the exposition of Revelation 16:13-16. Christ rides forth to victory.

Gird Your sword on Your thigh, O Mighty One, In Your splendor and Your majesty! And in Your majesty ride on victoriously, For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let Your right hand teach You awesome things (Psalm 45:3-4).

Christ is presently fulfilling and will fulfill Psalm 45. John speaks, verse 11.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

Christ, the majestic King, is faithful to the Word of His Father (Hebrews 10:9). He wages successful spiritual warfare (John 18:36, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The following description displays His awesome visage. Verse 12.

His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

Christ's vision is a searching flame (Revelation 1:14). His many crowns symbolize His universal reign. His Name? He alone can plummet the depth of the knowledge of God. Christ is knowable but also incomprehensible. Verse 13 tells us this. "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God." In one breath John cannot know His Name. In the next breath John is told His name. Christ's robe is spattered with the blood of His enemies not dipped in blood.

The church of Jesus Christ is an army. In this world it is militant. In the world to come the church is triumphant. Verse 14. "And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses." The white garments are the righteousness of Christ. The white horses symbolize victory. Verse 15 continues the description of Christ.

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

This Shepherd-Warrior implements Psalm 2. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission. God the Father promised the Son in Psalm 2:8-9.

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.

Compare "all the nations" (Matthew 28:19) and "remotest part of the earth"

(Acts 1:8). The sharp sword is the Word of God. The iron scepter is Christ's firm rule. No one falls from his hand. Christ subdues hearts and brings men and women under the sway of His power by His Word, the gospel.

We therefore see another aspect of His person and character. Verse 16. "And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'" This Name not only reveals Christ's sovereignty, it is also the righteous counterpart of the unholy name with which Babylon is sealed. "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Revelation 17:5).

As Christ rides to victory and the gospel pervades the nations, God is preparing the church for its wedding. The reprobate are running head-long toward another feast called the Great Supper of God. Perdition awaits. Verses 17-18.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

The picture comes from Ezekiel 39:17-21 and the defeat of God's enemies. The wedding of Christ represents the joy and felicity of heaven. The Great Supper of God portrays judgment and the perpetual agony of hell. On one hand there is a feast of gladness. On the other hand there is a banquet of gloom and despair.

The angel takes his position in the sun. The message cannot be missed. The question is clear. To which feast are you headed? Are you engaged to Christ the King with a wedding soon to follow? Or are you among all the categories of earth, small and great, who glory in Babylon and await the doom associated with the Great Supper of God?

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IN RESPONSE - THE MILLENNIUM (Revelation 19:19-20:4)

by Dennis Prutow

Christ and his army are marching forward to victory (Revelation 19:11-16). At the same time, The hordes of Gog (Ezekiel 39:11), the unbelieving world, are also called together. Revelation 11:7, 16:13-16 and 20:8 are parallels to Revelation 19:19-21.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

This is Armageddon, *the* decisive spiritual battle pictured in all previous and lesser armageddons. This is the scene given in Psalm 2:1-3. The best course of action is to "kiss the Son" (Psalm 2:12). Christ is victor. In the vision, Christ seizes the beast and His companion, the false prophet. The lake of fire receives these unholy and ungodly institutions.

Of course, in reality, people compose these institutions. People consumed with the ideals of anti-Christian power worked out in government, education, science, and the arts are consumed in everlasting torment, the second death (Revelation 20:14). Babylon, the capitol of evil, was and is the home of the beast and false prophet. The mark of the beast is the unholy spirit animating those who follow the beast. Babylon is fallen. The beast and false prophet also fall.

The great supper of God concludes with the picture of Christ slaying evil with the sword from His mouth. The pronouncements of judgment in Scripture are as sure as the promises of blessing. The visions once again bring us to the end of time and to eternity.

Revelation 20 begins the seventh section containing Revelation 20, 21 and 22. As the previous section detailed the doom of Babylon, this final section of Revelation gives us a glimpse of the New

Jerusalem. In Revelation we see two women, the harlot and the woman with child; two cities, Babylon and New Jerusalem; two destinies, heaven and hell. *In general*, Revelation 20-21 gives us the details of life in the New Jerusalem, the city of God.

Revelation 20 begins with an overview of this present age. Verses 1-2.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

John sees another heavenly messenger. This one has a key. It is the key for the abyss first revealed in Revelation 9:2. This angel also has a chain. The key and chain are not literal but symbolic. The angel has the power to open the pit of hell.

The angel also has power to restrain the devil. This is power exercised on behalf of Christ who controls history. The dragon is the devil (Revelation 12:9). The purpose of Christ restrains the devil so gospel light may spread over the world and abate pagan darkness. The picture does not relate the complete inactivity of Satan. Verse 3 confirms this.

And he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Satan is restrained for a particular purpose, that he might not deceive the nations. The power of the devil to keep men and women in pagan darkness is broken. The gospel advances. Individuals from every tribe and tongue and people and nation may be converted. Only one nation had the Word of God at the time of Christ, Israel. Now that Word spans the globe. To this extent, Satan is bound.

The period of this binding is 1000 years. This is the only place in the Bible where the term millennium appears. The millennium is not a literal future age of 1000 years. The number 1000 is symbolic. The number 10 is the number of completeness or perfection with regard to earthly matters. Ten cubed is a large per-

fect number. It is the time during which God perfectly fulfills His purposes in this world. Paul tells us the same thing in Ephesians 1:9-10.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

God's scheme is to bring all of creation into subjection to Christ. The goal will be met at the end of time. The times and epochs will be filled with all the events prescribed by God. As God presently carries out His purposes, Christ is the administrator of this estate known as creation. God's administration through Christ is suitable to the goal of summing up all things in Christ. When the times and epochs are filled with the proper events, the 1000 years will be complete.

During this gospel period, Christ reigns as King. The basic confession of the church is, "Jesus is Lord." Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." The spread of the gospel is rooted in the Lordship of Christ.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations."

Verse 4 introduces another view of this gospel period. "Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them." Converted people have a privileged status. Jesus promises in Revelation 3:21, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne." And Paul tells us part of our gospel privilege involves reigning with Christ. God, being rich in mercy, raised us up with Christ "and seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). Our reign *with* Christ is affected as we faithfully proclaim his blessings and judgments. The millennium is now.

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IN RESPONSE - THE FIRST RESURRECTION (Revelation 20:4-15)

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Those who reign with Christ have been made alive with Christ. Again, Ephesians 2:4-5 speaks of this first and all important spiritual resurrection.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Note Paul places this spiritual resurrection logically before reigning with Christ.

We have a similar picture as we continue with Revelation 20:4.

And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

As in Revelation 6:9-11, the picture of martyrs represents all saints who witness for Christ. The word witness is the Greek word *martus*, martyr. This is not a select number of believers. These people do not carry the mark of the beast, the unholy spirit. They have the mark and seal of God, the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14, Galatians 5:22-23).

These people came to life and reigned with Christ. This *coming to life* is the first resurrection. Verse 5. "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection."

The parable of the prodigal son is significant here. The son returned to his father to beg forgiveness. When the son returned, the father exclaimed, "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:32). The Authorized Version says the son was "alive again." Revelation 20:4 uses the same word to refer to the first resurrection. It is a spiritual resurrection. It is the same resurrection mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 2:5. Verse 6 confirms this interpretation.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of

Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

There is a first resurrection and a second resurrection. There is a first death and a second death. The first resurrection is spiritual. The second is physical. The first death is physical. The second death is spiritual. Verse 14 tells us the second death is the lake of fire. Individuals who are born again, who have come to life spiritually, need never fear they will have a part in the lake of fire. The second death has no power over them. They are priests of God. They reign with Christ. They participate in the present millennial reign of Christ.

Verses 7-8 now tell us the millennium is not only a period of time. It is a state of affairs.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

I say, we see here the millennium is a state of affairs. There is a sense in which Satan is bound. The visions portray this. It is also a sense in which Satan carries out his malicious intents within specific constraints. "Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Yet he is under orders. He cannot exceed the limits set by God (Job 1:12). Satan still does his dirty work. Outside the millennium, outside the kingdom of Christ, the devil still has a people. This is perpetually the case as God promised in the Garden. See Genesis 3:15. And so the devil gathers his forces for war against God's anointed (Psalm 2:1-3). This is the picture. The parallel passages are Revelation 11:7-10, 16:13-16 and 19:19.

The battle is engaged in verse 9.

And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

This is a vision, a picture, a portrayal of reality not reality itself. We must continually remind ourselves of this. The battles are spiritual. They are difficult. The

church, the city of God, is always under siege. The victory is the Lord's. "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). The fire of judgment consumes God's enemies. We must trust the Sovereign King to deliver us.

We have seen Babylon, the beast and the false prophet each meet their doom. Verse 10 shows us the end of the devil.

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Heaven is forever. Hell is eternal. The punishment for crimes against the infinitely holy God is *eternal* fire. With the demise of Satan comes the final assize.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds (verses 11-13).

Fear grips unbelievers. The ledgers of life reveal their evil deeds. There is no escape. Punishment comes because of sin.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (verses 14-15).

Two points. "The last enemy that will be abolished is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). God is not a God of double jeopardy. Christ did *not* pay for the sins of those *not* written in the book of life. They must pay for their sins themselves.

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