

The Worshiping Church Triumphant

Revelation 19:1–10

Revelation 17 and 18 describe the coming collapse of Rome in the immediate context when John was writing. Its prophetic meaning describes *the world* as God brings final judgment to Babylon, as John symbolically calls it. That phrase, *the world*, you might recall from other places in the New Testament, refers to the system of rebellion and opposition to the rule and reign of king Jesus. So in Babylon, or the rebellious world, there is human wickedness and sin, and there is spiritual or demonic wickedness described in the preceding chapters. There is no fear of God at all. The world has given all of its energy to its lusts and its passions and its hatred of God. They have slaughtered and enslaved people, especially any who would challenge their wicked behavior. Sins have accrued and heaped up, sin upon sin. Then suddenly the King of all creation intervenes and ends it. Judgment falls quickly. It's over. All the temporary pleasures and passing things they had pursued to satisfy their souls are gone. Their sinful pursuits are ruined; God judges and destroys both sin and sinner.

Those who trafficked in, and profited from sin mourn and sing a funeral dirge for the loss sin. A new song is tuning up in the choir room and they are nailing it. The new song begins to drown out and overpower the crash and calamity of Babylon's destruction. Ultimate worship is beginning, and the Hallelujah chorus is ringing down the halls of heaven, louder and louder. This new song is of final triumph over sin and the supreme reign of King Jesus.

As we read, you will notice the word hallelujah shows up four times. It's only used four times in scripture, and they are all in these 10 verses. The word is simply a call to praise God, and a shout of praise. The phrase, "Praise the Lord" is used many times in Scripture, particularly in the Psalms. But now no longer a phrase — just condensed into a word, "Hallelujah!" As we have seen in the rest of the book of Revelation, John uses vivid imagery that involves all the senses: sight, sound, smell, and even taste. In Chapter 10 he is told to eat scroll that is sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach. As *Hallelujah* is repeated, feel gaining intensity. Hear it building, louder and louder, stirring all of creation to swell and give all they have to praising Almighty God. Heaven's a loud place; no quiet corners. All that God has made gives its all to declare God's praise. So let's enter this worship service for which we long, and in which all in Christ will one day sing.

PRAY —

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Revelation 19:1–10 — 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,

² 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.”

³ Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

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!” ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

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! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ 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; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ 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.” ¹⁰ 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.*]

There are 3 main points to the sermon, and all point the Jesus — first as the Righteous Judge; second as the Reigning King; and third, as the Master of the Banquet. So the 3 points: Judgement, Reign, and Called.

I. Judgement

v. 2 — for his judgments are true and just...

Jesus is the Righteous Judge, as described in **2 Timothy 4:8**. Here he has just executed his righteous judgment against Babylon. The song of Babylon was a treasonous song against Jesus. They sang it with gusto, but Jesus had the final word. Now there is a call for a new song to be sung, one that celebrates the destruction of all aspects of sin. Oh, how we look forward to this. We long for to hear this new eternal reality as we feel our own sinful natures at war against holiness and as we feel the impact of sin and death and brokenness everyday of our lives. At this time we battle both sin and the sinful world. It will not always be thus. The world is limited.

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Note the **content** of Heaven's song. As the world's system of rebellion is judged and destroyed, the new song says **salvation** belongs to our God. These three things — salvation, glory and power — are general expression of praise rooted in God's work. But in the context of sin's destruction, I think the lyric **salvation** is particularly significant. Think back to Matthew 1:21 when Joseph was told what name to give the baby. Do you recall this passage that we often recite at Christmas? The angel told him to name the baby Jesus because he will save his people from his sin. Jesus means **the Lord saves**. I like to remind us that there are three aspects to us being saved from sin. First, we are saved from the penalty of sin, which is death. Second, we are saved from the power of sin — we are given a new heart to love God and his word. And do you remember the third thing? We will ultimately be saved from the presence of sin. In chapter 18 sin is destroyed, and we realize the fullness of the Savior's work on the cross: Saved, finally, even from the presence of sin. Hallelujah! Salvation belongs to our God! We will not always wrestle. We will not always experience the death and destruction caused by sin.

Then **glory** belongs to our God. God is glorified in the judgment of sin. He is not embarrassed by this, nor should we be. In regards to the way God deals with humans, he is glorified in two primary ways. He is either glorified in his mercy and grace poured out on sinners who turn to him in faith in repentance, or he is glorified in his judgement of their sin. In judgment, his righteousness, justice, and holiness are on blazing display as he consumes sin. This is not something just showing up in Revelation 18 and 19. God always judges and destroys sin, and he is always glorified in doing so.

Every knee will bow. Perhaps we don't think of this as accurately as we should: every single soul will glorify God. I will. You will. The only question is will we glorify him as we bow to him, deny ourselves, and embrace him as Lord and Savior, or will we glorify him when he pronounces righteous judgment on our sin as he does in Babylon, bringing down all sin-merchants and rebels, being glorified as holy, holy, holy.

His power is displayed in the supremacy of his victory. Babylon is thrown down and burned. There is no negotiation. He wins. The final outcome of the serpent's crushed head is utter destruction.

Quality of Judgment. Now note the **quality of his judgments**, if you will. Our judicial system is imperfect. Indeed, it seems more imperfect than ever because we have become untethered from objective truth. This week a man who attempted an assassination was cut loose hours after he

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perpetrated, and subsequently arrested for the crime. That is unjust. We see cases we think have been wrongly decided, or the judgment is just simply not fair. This Righteous Judge will suffer no such accusations.

His judgments are **true**. That is, they are valid and accurate according to God's law and God's record. God's law stands in judgment of our hearts our actions our attitudes and our thoughts. It has been given to us, and we are not ignorant of it. We are accountable. Further, every idle word has been recorded. We will all give account for everything that we have done in the body. His judgments are true based on his rightness of his word and failure to comply.

His judgments are **just**. That is, they are fair and deserved. The wages of sin is death. Have you sinned? Then "fair" is your death and damnation. What is not fair is that Christ paid the penalty for sin; he did so in great grace and mercy for those who turn to him in faith and repentance. For Babylon and her rebellious citizens of the domain of darkness, death is right. The only hope of escape from this Righteous Judge is to turn to him now as the friend of sinners, and Savior.

Finally in verse two, note that his judgment avenges the blood of his servants. That is talking about those who have been persecuted and suffered even to death... Those who are martyrs are avenged. In **Revelation 6:10 – 11** we see those who have been killed because of Christ asking "How long before you will judge and avenge us" Answer: now. The judge executes judgment and avenges all who have suffered for the name, including those who have been martyred. He rights every wrong.

v. 3 describes the thoroughness of sin and rebellion's destruction. It is total, and it is eternal. Smoke from her goes up forever and forever. This righteous judgement, and the victory of the Conquering Lamb demands the response of worship. Salvation, glory, and power belong to him. Worship him!

Closing out this section in **v. 5**, note what the worshipers all have in common. They **fear** God. The residents of Babylon did not fear God; they despised him, and he casts both soul and body into Hell. They would have been wise to fear this God who has such power. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. The fear of the Lord prolongs life. The fear of the Lord is the only true deterrent to sin, for by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil. Our God is a consuming fire, as we read in the Call to Worship. Those who fear the Lord now experience all the blessing and benefit they have been promised. They have wisely taken shelter in the Ark of

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Christ and the flood of judgment does not overwhelm them. They have chosen to walk in God's ways rather than sin. And they are called to worship the God who consumed sin.

Worship is the reasonable and righteous response that continues to swell on into **v. 6**. If this were a musical score, somewhere around v. 2 there would have been an instruction, *crescendo poco a poco* — that is, get louder little by little. Now a new instruction in v. 6 that doesn't include little by little... it's *molto crescendo* — a lot louder! The praise of God is a-building and a-filling creation. Additional choirs join in. All that God has given voice to now joins the praise: Hallelujah! for **he reigns!**

He reigns — our second major point. We won't spend as much time here, but let's see that his enemies have been made his footstool, the kingdoms of this world have been brought down, and the church militant — the church that sought to advance God's kingdom in wartime against the enemies of God is no longer at war, but is the church triumphant under the rule and reign of King Jesus. And to mark the end of the war, the celebration increases in intensity again! Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory! Rejoicing we get, and understand. Giving God glory we understand. Exulting is a little less common for us; we're a bit too reserved for that. To exult is to cast off restraint — to jump for joy with exceeding gladness!

What could possibly produce such gladness and celebrating? The head crusher has undone the healer's dark rebellion. He wins; He reigns. The table of communion lost in Genesis 3 is re-set in Revelation 19. This restoration was promised in **Isaiah 25:6-9** — On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. ⁹ It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

The zeal of the Lord has done it. Rejoice! Exult! Give him glory! For the marriage supper of the Lamb has come. The curse is undone. Blessing reigns. And we are back at the table. Do you feel this? Do you realize that all but 6 chapters of this book are aiming at this restored table of communion? The first 2 chapters of Genesis describe the communion with God we were created for.

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As we get to chapter 3 we experience the catastrophic fall into sin. In the last 3 chapters of Revelation the table is open. Joe, this will be the time to jump for joy — as all creation will do. *Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.*

Who gets to come to this table? His bride. Who is his bride? The church — the *called out ones* from the domain of darkness! The bride has made herself ready!

Jesus call us to himself. Drags us out of the domain of darkness into his Kingdom. His perfect obedience secures salvation. He gives a new heart to love him. He clothes us in his righteousness. He gives us the Holy Spirit who empowers us with all the power that God exerted when he raised Jesus from the dead. All of this produces obedience in the church! In love, we walk in obedience to his commands. The bride's clothing reflects that obedience that produced righteous deeds. Her fine linen stands in contrast to the tawdry clothing of the prostitute in Revelation 17. She is clothed with things that represent decadence and sinful indulgence. Rather than denying her sin nature, she has fed it, and its robust. But the church has chosen eternal beauty in obedience to Christ.

In **v. 9** we see our final point: **Called**. The Master of the banquet calls. It is the Lord himself. Blessed are those who are invited... The word in Greek is simpler; it is directly translated called. You may know the Greek word for church: *ekklēsia*. It means the **called out** ones. *Ekklēsia* has as its root the Greek word **kaleo**, which means called, and is the same word in v. 9 — **Blessed are those who are invited** or **called** — those who have overcome.

How does one find their way to this table? How do you avoid the destruction of soul and body in Hell, as Babylon will know? He calls, and you answer. Simple as that. He calls his sheep, and they hear his voice. This morning his call, his invite, if you will, is to turn from sin and rebellion which seem to promise life and blessing but in the end yield only death and cursing, and answer his call. His call is to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him. His call is to come to him if you are weary and heavy laden; he will give you rest. His call is to come out of the dark rebellion of the world and come to the table of communion. Blessed are those that are called to come. The Shepherd King is calling. Do you hear his voice?

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

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For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

PRAY — GOSPEL THREAD

This table of Communion is a transitional table. At the marriage supper, this table is over.

Application Questions

What song do you love? Does the song of Babylon still sound sweet in your ear? It will turn to a song of mourning. It occurred to me that this may be a good diagnostic tool about the condition of our hearts. What do we celebrate and what do we mourn? Babylon revealed its rebellion against God by delighting in decadence, evil and sexual immorality. They mourned when that song died out and the song of the Lord Jesus and his salvation began to drown out the dark dominion. What does your heart love? What song does your ear like? Do you love things that feed your sinful flesh, or do you long for holiness and godliness in your daily choices, and thoughts, and entertainment? If you find yourself longing for that which feeds your sin, you are in trouble at the core of your being. The end of worship songs that celebrate false gods will be the destruction of your soul.

Sinner, dull of hearing and hard of heart, God will be glorified in your life. Either in your turning from your sin and self to Christ and being washed in his cleansing blood, or in his judgment of your sin. His judgements are true and just. They are fair. No sin will be overlooked. No one gets away with anything. Why will you wait, in light of the gracious day of salvation and the call to communion — why do you wait? The Righteous Judge has become the Savior and offers salvation to all who hear him and turn to him. Babylon's rebellion ended swiftly and suddenly. You have no promise of anything other than what Babylon suffered unless you come to the Lord. Then come today. Now is the accepted time. Come to him, forsaking your sin, and sing the new song of salvation in Christ.

As we have seen the beauty and value and sovereignty of King Jesus, the reason for the first seven letters becomes more apparent. The calls to repent are rooted in the conquering Lamb's worthiness to be loved and served with full-hearted devotion. He alone is the source of life and blessing. Those who pursue compromise are pursuing what cannot satisfy but also produces death. They are misrepresenting the supreme worth of Christ, and they are leaving the blind groping about after lies and false gods. That not only is unloving to them, leaving them on the broad road to destruction, but is an offense to the only worthy Lamb who deserves their worship and devotion. And of course the

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call to repent to 5 churches, and the call to persevere is rooted in grace. There is judgment coming. It is certain. Don't persist in unbelief, in compromise. Unbelief, compromise, retaining your right to govern your life in certain areas — these things are subtle. You can fool yourself into thinking you belong to Christ, yet remain in your sin if you continue to act as your own sovereign. Repent, and flee to Christ who is both the Savior and Judge.

Things are difficult and they are going to get worse. You are called to faithfulness! Turn from false things and compromise and lukewarmness. Embrace a full-hearted love for, and devotion to Jesus! To the one who overcomes (or conquers), a reward that is described in the final chapters of Revelation. As assurance that the reward and life in Christ is certain and sure, John gets a view of Mission Control of all of Creation: The Throne of God. The success and certainty of God's conquering Kingdom is through the Lamb of God, slain for sin, reconciling all things to himself. It is the Lamb, alone, who is worthy to open the scroll that contains God's plan to bring human history to a close, and then execute the plan. This plan includes the justice and judgment — the FINAL judgment — of sin and the sentence of condemnation on those who continue in evil rebellion, and the author of evil, himself.