

## Revelation 19-20 Worship And Judgment

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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We start this morning by picking up where we left off last week – on the heels of the Babylon’s judgment. If you remember we saw the Scriptures tell us that one day, a single city, Babylon, will rise to prominence over all others. It will be a source of global economic and political power. And, just like we see with our own city, people will come from around the world to get what they can out of it – to benefit personally from being in the city.

The city was also called a harlot, or a prostitute for the way she gave herself away to anyone who was willing to pay for the experience - we said the city was all about indulgence without commitment. And that promise, of indulgence without commitment, makes for a very powerful attraction. So the city appeared, metaphorically to be sitting on top of the beast – reveling in her status and privilege, but one day the very people she seemed to control will rebel against her and the city will collapse “in a single hour” in a judgment ordained by God, but occurring at the hands of men.

When the city fell, we saw many people wept and mourned. Kings – those in the political sector, merchants – those in the business sector, and sailors – or those in the transportation sector - who grew wealthy from the prosperity of the city stood at a distance and cried as they watched the economy go down the drain.

This morning, we see the same event from an entirely different perspective and watch an entirely different response to the city’s destruction.

**Revelation 19:1** After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God! 2 For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.” 3 Again they said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!” 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”

Instead of mourning the city’s collapse, these saints in heaven (and that includes you and me Christian) and the angels will be rejoicing over what has happened, celebrating the destruction and judgment and praising God for it.

Now, can we stop and talk about that for a moment? I mean, if you’re going to rejoice over the judgment of other people, you’d better be pretty careful, don’t you think?

Ever heard the expression, “those in glass houses ought not throw stones?” Or, as Paul puts it in **Romans 2:3** “Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?” Self-righteousness is a dangerous and hypocritical trait, isn’t it?

But here we find saints in Heaven rejoicing, openly, blatantly, about the judgment of others. What’s going on? Why is this OK?

Well, here’s what you need to know. First of all, they’re rejoicing more about the victory of God than about the defeat of Babylon. Yes, they’re celebrating the city’s fall, but only in light of the fact that God has proven His power, His might, and His righteousness through it. God has cleared His own name so to speak. And they are cheering for that. It’s kind of like the way everybody cheers when Bruce Banner just lets the Hulk loose and he smashes things. You know he can, and you wish he would, so when he finally does, you get all excited.

Now, that’s not a perfect analogy by any stretch, God isn’t going off in a big green gamma-induced rage smashing the world. But you understand the enthusiasm we have when something that *could* be done for the sake of justice or help or overcoming the enemy finally *is*.

But again, you can only have that kind of enthusiasm if you know the same power is *not* going to be directed *against you*. Because we understand it could, we understand that it most certainly should. But we also understand why it is not. You see, if you understand Christianity very much, you understand that we believe and accept, and admit, that we have been just as guilty as many of the people being destroyed in Babylon.

We understand that we have lied, we have cheated, we have stolen, we have been unfaithful, we have been indulgent – we have sought after personal gain at the expense of others. We have reasons for it, we have excuses, we have explanations, but we do not have innocence.

So how can we cheer? How can we praise God for pouring out the very judgment we deserve to receive?

It’s not because we’re innocent. It’s not because He’s our friend and He’s willing to overlook it all. No, it’s because we understand that He has poured out His judgment on our sin – just like it’s being poured out on Babylon – only we didn’t receive it – Christ received it on our behalf.

All the judgment we deserve – it wasn’t just written off – it wasn’t part of the cost of God doing business, He didn’t just claim the loss on His taxes. And He didn’t forget. You don’t have to keep quiet about that thing last summer in case He suddenly remembers. No. He knows. He knows everything. And He has taken full action on it – it wasn’t even discounted. Jesus bore the full weight of our guilt and punishment on the cross of Calvary.

And that is why you can, and will rejoice. You will rejoice because it is all true. God really does judge, but you really have been pardoned. You have no debt because yours has been paid. And since it has been paid, it can never be brought up again and never charged against you.

That, my friends, is kindling for the fire of worship that we see erupting here. So, let's consider a few more aspects of worship while we're on the subject.

We've already made much of the fact that Christians have been excused from the judgment of God by Christ who has suffered in our place. But what I also want us to see, is that what we read here in Revelation 19 is corporate worship, much like what we experience here together on Sunday mornings.

We find a tapestry of worship being woven together by all the different voices. We find "a great multitude in heaven" worshipping along with the twenty-four elders we met in Chapter Four who surround the throne of God, and a voice that comes from the throne of God calling people to praise. In other words, everyone is participating. No one is sitting back and enjoying the show up front. They all understand praise is an audience participation event.

It can be annoying when you go to a concert and the person next to you is singing their heart out and it ruins your ability to enjoy the show. But friends, worship and praise of God should never be a show – we should all be singing along like we see here.

And that brings us to the How of worship. Many times we don't participate in worship because it's not our style, or we don't like to sing that way. But look at what we see here: a voice comes from the throne of God, [saying "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"](#)

First of all, it's an imperative – the words "Praise our God" aren't a statement: "Praise God." Nor are they a response: "Well, praise God!" No, they are a command – they're telling us, they're not asking, if you fear His name, if you are His servant, praise Him!

And notice the call goes out to "both small and great." And right here we have a problem that plagues worship in our city.

You see, many people come to our city to be a part of something great, something important. They have a position, a role, an identity. And, they're trying to figure out how to be that thing.

How are you supposed to conduct yourself as a student at the prestigious Georgetown University? Or, how are you supposed to act when you're a medical student at George Washington University? If you just pinned on O-6, how is a Colonel or a naval Captain supposed to carry himself or herself? And then you combine all of that with the desire to be faithful to God and you're left asking questions like - how does a member of Congress worship? How does an Assistant Undersecretary praise God? Friends, these are the real

problems Christians, in our city – some of you sitting in here this morning - deal with. How do you be faithful and fervent in light of your current role or position?

And if you try to write it off like the answer is simple or the question is foolish, then you haven't been in their shoes or you don't appreciate the issue. Many people in this city are trying to figure out – how do I hold the position I do in the public eye and still worship God in the way I see others worshipping?

For some people the problem may be in their heart – they want to please both God and man so they can keep climbing the ladder, but I think for the majority, they want to please God but they don't know how. He has given them this rank, this position, this opportunity, this office, and they want to do their best with it, but they just don't know how to be true to their faith without it tarnishing their career. They're caught in a trap.

Well, I don't have all the answers for every situation, but I do know this: God wants all of us to worship – so the call goes out to those both small and great – “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him!”

If you're trying to figure out how to balance your relationship with Jesus with your professional position, can I encourage you to err on the side of God and let Him balance you out? If someone is going to curb and shape your behavior and the things you do and don't do, would you let it be God and not professional pressures? Because it was God who brought you to this place, and long after your profession fades, He'll still be there. Let Him be the constant. And if you need to change in any way, let Him dictate those terms to you – not the expectations of others. Be wise, but don't be silenced. And especially in here, in the congregation, be who you are before God and leave all your titles at the door.

One other thing we need to notice about the worship we find here, and that is the volume. John says in Revelation 19:1 “I heard a loud voice of a great multitude.” Then he says in verse 6 “I heard as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings.” This was not a quiet, reflective, somber experience. The word “loud” occurs 22 times in the book of Revelation. Silence only occurs once in Revelation – in Chapter 8:1, at the opening of the seventh seal.

Most of us, as teenagers or young men and women have probably had that moment when we could identify with the sentiment that “if it's too loud, you're too old!” And we cranked up the volume to whatever we were enjoying because we identified with it, we agreed with it, we found in that music an expression of who we were and what we felt and we wanted it loud – sometimes because we wanted others to hear, but most often it was because the music captured what we felt and playing it louder some how magnified not only the volume but the feeling.

Well, we find that to be true with worship as well. Those who we find worshipping in Revelation are not quiet and restrained. They're letting loose.

Now, volume and vigor are no substitute for substance. You don't suddenly make things better or more godly by just cranking up the gain – but when the substance is there, and the internal passion is there, we shouldn't find it surprising that the volume begins to creep up as well.

Someone once spoke to me about the need for all five gears in worship. There are times we need to start off slowly in first gear. Maybe take it up to second and drive along cautiously and slowly. But then there are also times when we need to slap it into fifth and go for it. We experience a wide range of emotions, from reflection to passion and excitement and we should be able to express all of that before God.

So, let me encourage you great and small, if you serve and fear God – worship Him publicly and loudly in appropriate ways today so you're ready to go when we stand before the throne.

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Now you find here an incredible contrast with the harlot clothed in scarlet and purple, don't you? But this is the Church, the bride of Christ, who has been washed clean in the blood of Christ.

9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The angel says, "Hey, get up! You're forgetting who I am. I'm just the messenger." But, the real deal is riding out as we speak.

After the city was destroyed, Satan rallied all of the armies of the earth to stand defiantly against God, and now Jesus is riding out to the confrontation.

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness

and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:  
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Nothing you've ever seen in any movie or any artwork or any parade or celebration or display even comes close to the power and majesty that will be seen when Jesus comes riding out to battle.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great."

You've seen pictures of vultures and other birds picking apart the bones and flesh after a lion's kill on the African plains. Well, this is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and there's going to be plenty of carnage for the carrion birds to choose from. But the fight itself won't be that dramatic or suspenseful. There won't be any long, intense, battle scenes. In fact, it's kind of anti-climatic. It's all over before it even starts.

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

You feel the drama building here, it's getting pretty intense, right?

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Just like that, the combined forces of men and demons are captured and destroyed. It would make a terrible action movie – lots of build up, lots of drama, but the fight scene is over in an instant. You'd have to keep showing replays over and over from different angles or something to try and create some tension, but it just wouldn't work.

**Revelation 20:1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Now, here is something very interesting to me. We've said several times as we've gone through the book of Revelation that Satan is not God's equal. They're not evenly matched.

God is God and Satan is a created being that rebelled against God. He's a very high ranking created being, but a created being nonetheless. And therefore, we never get the impression that God has any difficulty containing or controlling him.

We see that point magnified here as an unnamed angel comes down, grabs hold of Satan, binds him in chains and throws him into the pit. It's not Michael, it's not Gabriel, it's just some unnamed angel. He could be Harvey for all we know – "Hey Harvey, go take care of Lucifer" and Harvey looks around, "who, me?"

But think about that – really think about that. If God can use an unnamed angel to do something like restrain and imprison Satan, what could He do with and through you? You see, it's not about what needs to be done, and it's not about you doing it, it's about God, so what does He want to accomplish? He can, and will, use any of us if we're willing to serve. So are you willing? Have you surrendered? Can He send you to do something?

Let me go back to this issue of imprisoning Satan for a moment and make one more observation that's relevant here, and that is: God doesn't lay a finger on Satan – He doesn't even have to get personally involved.

But that's the complete opposite of His relationship with you and me.

- The Bible talks about God as the potter when we are the clay.
- Psalm 139 speaks of God forming us when we were in our mother's womb.
- Even when it's a negative thing, David says in Psalm 32, that "day and night your hand was heavy upon me"
- Jesus came to earth and touched people all the time, and He allowed them to touch Him – told Thomas to touch His wounds and be sure they were real
- And then we see Jesus in the opening verses of Revelation 1, John is overwhelmed by the vision he sees and he says he fell at the feet of Jesus as if he was dead, "[But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last.'](#)"
- In chapter 21, the next chapter, we find that exceedingly precious promise that God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Friends, do not be content with the nostalgic notion of some guardian angel watching over you. God wants to be far more personal than that! What pressures and guidance do you feel Him placing on your life today? Will you thank Him for that? Will you praise Him for the fact that He doesn't outsource His dealings with you, but that He's directly connected to you? He wants to use you, He has a role for you to play in the eternal drama – watch as we see it continue to unfold:

[4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power,](#)

but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

This is a reference to the millennial reign of Christ - a thousand year period when Jesus rules the earth. Satan is locked up, peace and security are renewed, and people on earth are given a chance to live under the rule of Christ. Remember, not everyone died in the final battle – only the members of the armies. So, although life on the planet has been pretty miserable for the past seven years there are still unsaved people alive on earth when Christ returns to set up His kingdom. And these people will get the chance to experience what it's like to live under a completely righteous king.

Unfortunately, as much as we like to blame our sin on our environment, life in the millennial kingdom really serves to show that sin is deeply embedded in our hearts and even if we got to live under perfect conditions, we would still choose to sin, just like Adam and Eve in the garden.

So, after a thousand years, Satan is released from the pit and he has no problem gathering together an army of malcontents who are willing to try to stand up to God one more time.

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

This is finally the end and now the judgment.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the *Book of Life* was cast into the lake of fire.

This is the final judgment of those who have never accepted the offer of forgiveness in Christ. Those who weren't interested in God during their life on earth won't be forced to endure His presence for all eternity; they will be cast in the lake of fire instead.

The Bible has nothing good to say about eternity away from God or outside of Heaven. It's not what man was created for. He may end up there, but He was never intended for there.



That is why when sin separated us from God, when we faced a situation we could not resolve on our own, He took matters into His own hands – those same hands that touch us today were stretched out and pierced with Roman nails on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem and the guilt, the judgment, of our sin was fully atoned. Jesus Christ stood in our place and received the wrath that was due to us so that instead of experiencing the judgment we can praise God.

Will you do that today? Will you praise the God who has made you and saved you? Will you praise Him, great and small, will you praise Him with a loud voice? Will you give God thanks for all that He has done for you, and all He has saved you from?

Here is your chance church – let's pray.