**Chapter 24 - Engaged to the Lamb**

As we get to chapter 19 of Revelations, there begins an anticipation for the final stretch of the journey. This is the chapter where we, as the Bride of Christ is invited to the wedding feast to partake in the rejoicing and worship that is already happening in Heaven.

*Hallelujah*

The mention of Hallelujah in Revelations 19 is of significance. Though Hallelujah is mentioned multiple times in Old Testament book such as Psalms, this is the only place in the New Testament where Hallelujah is used.

* + *Hallelu* - “you praise” and *Yah* - “God”
  + An instance where Hallelujah is used repeatedly is the “The Hallel Psalms”, songs sung during Passover to commemorate God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. In similar ways, here in Revelations, we are using Hallelujah to celebrate God’s deliverance of his people from Babylon
  + Deliverance is possible because of the blood of the Lamb of God

Order of the Hallelujahs

1. For judgement - we are rejoicing that God has pronounced judgement on the great prostitute - Babylon. This celebrates the fall of the oppressor of God’s people, the power that opposes God’s purpose.
2. For worship - the 24 elders and 4 living creatures are worshipping God who is seated on the throne
3. For praise - everyone of God’s servants and those who fear him is invited to participate in the act of worship and praise of God. No matter who you are, how great and powerful or humble and lowly your position, you are invited to join in the act of worship at the feet of the throne
4. For rejoicing - a great multitude is shouting Hallelujah - there are so many people that it sounds like rushing waters and peals of thunder. Imagine that! How exciting it is to be worshipping and know that millions of other voices are doing so alongside you!

A New Wedding Feast

“Let us rejoice and be glad” - this phrase is found in the NT only in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount in the 8th beatitude and here in Revelations 19. The rejoicing and being glad then is a result of the blessing. Therefore, a new “beatitude” is seen in vs. 9: “Blessed is everyone who is invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb”

We are called to be Jesus’ Bride - alluded to in the messages given to the 7 churches in Rev 2/3

* + - Ephesus - you have left your ‘first love’ (2:4)
    - Thyatira - Jezebel seduces Jesus’ bride with Babylon (2:20)
    - Laodicia - stand at the door and knock…. (3:20) ref OT (Song 5:2)

Old Testament References making parallels for the relationship between a husband and wife

Isaiah 54:4-6 - because your husband is the Maker, you will not be humiliated

*“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame.*

*Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.*

*You will forget the shame of your youth*

*and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.*

***5****For your Maker is your husband—*

*the Lord Almighty is his name—*

*the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;*

*he is called the God of all the earth.*

***6****The Lord will call you back*

*as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—*

*a wife who married young,*

*only to be rejected,” says your God.*

Isaiah 61:1-10 - God has clothed you with robes of righteousness

*I delight greatly in the Lord;*

*my soul rejoices in my God.*

*For he has clothed me with garments of salvation*

*and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,*

*as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,*

*and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Jeremiah 2:2 - God laments over lost interest of lover

***2****“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:*

*“This is what the Lord says:*

*“‘I remember the devotion of your youth,*

*how as a bride you loved me*

*and followed me through the wilderness,*

*through a land not sown.*

Ezekiel 16: 8-16 - God enters into covenant with you and adorns you with beautiful garments, what did he do to make you want to follow false lovers?

***8****“‘Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine.*

***9****“‘I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you.* ***10****I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put sandals of fine leather on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments.* ***11****I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck,* ***12****and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.* ***13****So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen.* ***14****And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

***15****“‘But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his.* ***16****You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. You went to him, and he possessed your beauty.[a]*

Marriage Customs of Judaism

* + Betrothal ceremony - groom leaves with best man to bride’s house and finalize arrangements with the bride’s father - bride is consecrated! Groom travels back to his home for ~12 months to prepare a room in his father’s house (sound familiar?)
  + Bridegroom would come back to the bride’s house dressed in festive attire and it would be a “surprise” (sound familiar?) and the bride would come out with her maidens who are carrying lamps (sound familiar?) and the wedding feast would begin
  + Wedding feast at the groom’s home for 7-14 days

Did the bride make *herself* ready or did the *bridegroom give her something* so that she could prepare?

* + Philippians 2:12-13 - *12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*
  + The answer is both - God’s work in our lives enables us to be ready and the new deeds we commit are because of the new life we’ve received

Application: What does it mean for us to be engaged to the Lamb

1. Jesus loves us as his bride - deeper and more authentically than any other type of love
2. We are secure - we have been bought with the price of he blood of the Lamb into a covenant that is unbreakable
3. Discipleship has to do with loyalty - one cannot be engaged to two lovers. We must choose to be the harlot of Babylon or the bride of Christ
4. Sin is adultery - when we sin, we rebel against God and harm the relationship we have with Christ
5. Be ready - God is preparing a room for us in heaven and just as the bridegroom in Jewish tradition comes at an hour of surprise, we must also be ready when Jesus returns!
6. Call to simplicity - LIFE IS FAR TOO BUSY, WE ARE FAR TOO BUSY. being busy takes away from the time we have to stay in love with Jesus.

**Chapter 25 - Here He Comes!**

The verb “open” is used four times in Revelation, dividing the grand vision into five major sections or windows.

Window One (1:9 - 3:22): “I heard behind me a loud voice…” John sees seven lampstands representing the seven churches, and Jesus dictates seven messages addressing crucial dimensions of discipleship.

Window Two (4:1 - 11:18): “I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.” John sees a throne, and the Lamb is sitting upon it. Only He is worthy of opening the seven seals. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he will reign forever and ever.

Window Three (11:19 - 15:4): “And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened.” John sees the cosmic war behind all war - the woman and the dragon, the beasts of the sea and of the earth. This war ends when “one like a son of man” comes with a sharp sickle to reap the harvest. In the end, those who are victorious sing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb.

Window Four (15:5 - 19:10): “I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened.” John sees the seven angels with seven bowls. The judgment of God leads to the destruction of Babylon. We sing “Hallelujah” because (1) Babylon has been judged, and (2) the marriage supper of the Lamb has come and the Bride is ready!

Window Five (19:11 - 22:17): “And I saw heaven opened.” This last major section of Revelation culminates in the descent of the City of God.

Heaven is opened, and we see a Person - Jesus Christ. Heaven is all about a Person, which is why the last book of the Bible is all about a Person. The same Person who has been breaking through to us in nearly every scene of the last book of the Bible.

Parallels of the First and Fifth Window:

Prologue - John says, “Jesus is coming…” (1:7)

Epilogue - Jesus says, three times, “I am coming…” (22:7, 12, 20)

Prologue - John says, “For the time is near” (1:3)

Epilogue - “For the time is near” (22:10)

Prologue - God says, “I am the Alpha and Omega…” (1:8)

Jesus says, “I am the first and the last…” (1:17)

Epilogue - Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13)

First window - Jesus makes tremendous promises to the seven churches.

Fifth window - Each of those promises is now fulfilled.

First window - He promises access to the “tree of life” (2:7)

Fifth window - Access to the “tree of life” is given (22:2)

First window - “I have the keys of death and Hades” (1:18)

Fifth window - “And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire” (20:14)

This time Jesus appears riding on a horse. The horse is the symbol of war; this time he appears as a warrior. He is coming for “the final battle”. This is misleading because “the final battle” is never fought. THE FINAL BATTLE was the cross, when Jesus triumphed over the principalities and powers. The “final battle” need not be fought because THE FINAL BATTLE has already been fought and won. Jesus Christ rides simply to finally implement the victory of the cross.

In 19:1-10, we were invited to the marriage supper of the lamb. In verses 17-21, we are invited to a different supper - a gory feast for the birds, who eat up the carcasses of God’s enemies.

Why does Jesus win the battle? Because of who he is.

Jesus wins because he is called “Faithful and True”. He is faithful to his Father from beginning to end. He is “the real thing”. That is why he and he alone can sit as Judge.

Jesus wins because “his eyes are a flame of fire”. His eyes not only look at us, but they look through us. Nothing is hidden from him.

Jesus wins because “upon his head are many diadems”. Wearing many crowns suggests many spheres of sovereignty under a single lord. Every person whom Jesus has set free from sin and death is a diadem on his head.

Jesus wins because “he has a name written upon him which no one knows except himself”. He is under no one’s control. Jesus has revealed himself to us under many names (Lord, Savior, Son of God, Bread of Life, etc), but there is more to know than can ever be known.

Jesus wins because he is “clothed with a robe dipped in blood”. Before he comes to the final battle, his robe is already stained with his own blood. Jesus the Warrior does not fight the final battle because he already fought it at the cross.

Jesus wins because he is “the Word of God”. Jesus is God’s final speech. The living God, invisible, transcendent, all-powerful, beyond description, has spoken for himself. And his speech, his Word, is Jesus.

Jesus wins because “on his robe and thigh he has a name written, ‘King of Kings, and Lord of Lords’”. There is someone over every king and queen, lord and lady, president and premier, governor and mayor, and he will be around long after every one.

How does Jesus win the battle? By simply speaking (19:15). It has always been this way. God spoke nothingness into being, and Jesus spoke miracles into happening.

In this vision, Jesus is speaking to the great crisis facing the first-century church: the crisis of conviction. Who is going to win? Caesar, with all of his military power? Or Jesus with his simple sword? The church in our century is facing the same crisis: Who is going to win? Caesar and all of his economic and technological power? Or Jesus with his simple Word?

“I saw heaven opened.” And look! A person. A warrior riding to battle. A very different kind of warrior riding to a very different battle. A battle that is never fought because the warrior has already won. He won when the lion became a lamb and gave himself for the sin of the world.

Heaven is not a far away place. Heaven is another dimension of reality, very close at hand. At any moment he can break through - that is what “apocalypse” means.

Jesus is going to win because He already has. Things are not as they seem.

“I saw heaven opened”. And look! Here he comes!