

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 19:1-10

Topic

All God's saints rejoice at the final destruction of the harlot
who for six thousand years used the earth as her brothel

Title

"O Brothel, Where Art Thou?"

Introduction

I'm going to start a sentence but I want you to fill-in-the-blank at the end.

Ready? "The world is a _____."

I would have said "ghetto," from the 1973 song and best selling album by *War*.

By the time we are done looking at our text, I hope you will see that a better, more biblical, answer is, "The world is a **brothel**."

A brothel is a place where people come to engage in sex with prostitutes.

In verse two we read, "[God] has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication..."

The harlot was identified in chapters seventeen and eighteen as Babylon. She is both a religious system opposed to God, and the capital city of a kingdom in rebellion against God.

We are told that Babylon, the harlot, the prostitute, has "corrupted the earth with her fornication." The entire earth, throughout history, in each succeeding generation, has been her brothel.

Thus, the world we live in today is her brothel.

Guess what? **Jesus picks His bride from out of the brothel.**
We're going to see her, made beautiful by the Lord, at the marriage supper He will host for her.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You've Been Removed From The Brothel To Be The Bride, and #2 You're To Rejoice In The Betrothal To Be Becoming As The Bride.

#1 You've Been Removed
From The Brothel To Be The Bride
(v1-6)

We're going to attend a marriage supper in verses seven through ten. But before our wedding supper, there is a funeral.

Rev 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!

"After these things" looks back over the first eighteen chapters:

- After the vision of the risen Lord Jesus in chapter one.
- After the revealing of the church age in chapters two and three.
- After the rapture and reward of the church in chapters four and five.
- After the wrath of the seven year Tribulation on earth in chapters six through eighteen.

The Revelation is quite orderly, even chronological, as it presents the future. It ties together all the loose threads of Bible prophecy into a coherent unit.

There are a “great multitude” in Heaven:

- There are all the saints of the church age, from the Day of Pentecost until the resurrection and rapture.
- There are also multitudes of believers who were justified by faith in the Old Testament.
- There are the martyred of the Tribulation.

“Salvation” belongs to the Lord. It is His salvation and is offered freely by grace to all, seeing that Jesus is portrayed as “the Savior of **all** men, especially those who believe” (First Timothy 4:10).

We can too easily forget that “glory and honor and power belong to the Lord.” So much is wrong with the world, it overwhelms us. In Heaven, we will understand that God was in charge, and that all things really did work together for the good of those who love Him.

Revelation 19:2 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."

Revelation 19:3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!"

These two verses summarize chapters seventeen and eighteen. There you saw God burn Babylon - both the religious system of chapter seventeen and the rebuilt city of chapter eighteen.

This, then, is her funeral.

"True and righteous are His judgments." God has the reputation of being haphazard in His judgments. The things that happen to people don't seem to make sense. Good people, young people, suffer tragedies while the wicked prosper.

Those aren't God's "judgments." We live in a fallen world. Sin is responsible for the seeming haphazardness we witness. God is working through history to redeem and restore His creation.

Do bad things happen to good people, and to God's people? Yes, they do, while God is being longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to salvation.

When God does judge, He is always "true" to His holy and loving nature. His judgments are always just right.

Normally, at a funeral, the guests eulogize the deceased. Even if he or she was a terrible person, you try to say nice things.

When the deceased is the harlot who has corrupted the earth for centuries with her seductions, your proper response is, "Alleluia!"

"Her smoke rises up forever and ever" is a way of saying that her destruction is final. As we will see in these last chapters of the Revelation, the Lord will settle everything in the universe. There will be no more sin, no more sorrow, no more suffering, certainly no more death.

No seductress will rise from the ashes of Babylon to trouble us ever again.

The world *is* quite seductive, is it not? Perhaps more so than ever, now that technology has advanced just as morality has collapsed.

[Revelation 19:4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"](#)

The "twenty-four elders" is the name given to the church after it is gathered to Heaven in this book. We did a detailed study of this back in chapter four.

- We showed how the number "twenty-four" is a representative number in Scripture.
- We showed that these elders must be men and not angels.
- And we showed that the most likely representative group of men in Heaven at that time was the resurrected and raptured believers of the church age.

The church - you and I who are believers - is raptured and rewarded prior to the Tribulation.

The “four living creatures” are a class of angels who lead the worship around God’s throne.

We've seen lots and lots of worship around God's throne. Worship isn't an event so much as it is an expression of what is in our hearts.

If I am not prone to worship, then I need to check my heart. Perhaps I've allowed some root of bitterness to grow. Or maybe I am harboring, hiding, some sin. Perhaps I've grown apathetic.

Whatever the reason, when opportunities arise to worship the Lord, and I take them lightly, or act indifferent towards them, my heart is being revealed.

Revelation 19:5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

"All" is an important word. We've just seen the church and certain angels in Heaven. There are others there, too. It puts us on notice that God distinguishes between groups of His saints. The twenty-four elders are distinct within "all... His servants."

"Small and great" might be a reference to those still on the earth and to other creatures in Heaven and on the earth and even inanimate things.

Revelation 19:6 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!

Four times in these six verses someone says “Alleluia!” It means “praise the Lord!” **This is its only occurrence in the New Testament.**

I especially like it being paired in verse four by the church with “Amen!” “Amen” is a word of agreement, sometimes translated *so be it.*

The Marines have “ooh-rah” - often barked when troops want to voice approval or a sense of esprit de corps. Its full meaning is primal and difficult to define, for it also echoes the hardships faced by those in uniform.

“Amen! Alleluia!” ought to be our daily rallying cry. Knowing all we know about eternity and the world to come; awaiting the imminent return of Jesus; facing incredible hardships as we head homeward to Heaven; we can shout “Amen! Alleluia!” - “So be it! Praise the Lord!”

We should think of the world around us, wherever we are, as if we were in the Red Light District of Amsterdam. According to one source,

De Wallen is the largest and best known red-light district in Amsterdam and consists of a network of alleys containing approximately three hundred one-room cabins rented by prostitutes who offer their sexual services from behind a window or glass door, typically illuminated with red lights.

I was sad to read that Amsterdam's Red Light District is a huge tourist attraction, even if you're not seeking sex.

An official Amsterdam tour site says, "Another familiar image of the Amsterdam Red Light District is of packs of men, young and old, couples holding hands and pointing in shock of it all, giggling groups of women celebrating a hen night, and busloads of Japanese tourists toting cameras (except not in the direction of the female entertainers! Strictly banned!). **This is proof enough that the RLD deserves a visit, if not a little look in.**"

If you've been removed from the brothel, it certainly doesn't deserve a visit, or even a look in. Look to Jesus.

#2 You're To Rejoice In The Betrothal To Be Becoming As The Bride

(v7-10)

On the night prior to His crucifixion and death, Jesus made an incredible promise to His closest disciples and, by extension, to all His future disciples.

Joh 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

Joh 14:2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

There's something in Jesus' words we may not catch; not at first. This idea of going to prepare a place, then returning to receive you, only to then return together to the Father's house, *are all part of a Jewish betrothal and wedding.*

Jesus' disciples - all Jews - would have immediately understood that He was comparing His relationship to them **as that of the Bridegroom and the bride.**

He was going to be crucified; He was going to die. But He was telling them to think of it as a Bridegroom getting things ready for His bride.

Marriages in those days were by arrangement of the parents. That isn't to say love had nothing to do with it; but there was a lot more involvement with family in a tribal culture than we have today.

The first step in a Jewish wedding was for the father of the groom to arrange the match with the father of the bride and pay him the bride price (dowry). From this point forward, the couple were considered legally married.

Afterwards was the period of the betrothal. It lasted for at least one year but could last much longer if, for example, the arrangement was made when the bride and groom were children. During the betrothal, the bride was prepared to be a fitting, or a 'becoming,' wife.

It was also the period of time in which she was observed for her purity, which is why the betrothal always lasted for a minimum of one year – to allow at least a full nine months to pass to make certain that the bride was a virgin at the time of the betrothal.

The bridegroom would busy himself preparing a place for the couple to live.

To increase romantic anticipation, the custom was for the bridegroom to come unannounced for his bride. On the wedding day, the bridegroom would fetch his bride back to the place he had been preparing.

Now that we understand it, we can see even more going on. **The marriage customs prefigure the Lord's return for us:**

- God paid the price for the bride, and it was nothing less than the death of His Son. John 3:16: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*
- The preparation of the bride corresponds to the church being in the process of being perfected for the Groom in His absence. In Second Corinthians 11:2 we read, *For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*
- The application to the fetching of the bride of Christ is the imminent resurrection and rapture of the church.

In chapter four of the Revelation, we were fetched, and taken back to the Father's house - to Heaven. We are going to emerge from there, to return to earth with Jesus, and celebrate our marriage with a marriage supper.

Revelation 19:7 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."

The word "marriage" is the same one translated "marriage supper" in verse nine. As I understand it, this is the celebration following the wedding - what we might call the reception.

The angel remarked that “His wife has made herself ready.” This is explained using the analogy of clothing. It’s really very powerful.

The lost and hopeless spiritual condition of the human race is often compared to clothing. Listen to this description from the prophet Zechariah:

Zechariah 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

Zechariah 3:2 And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Zechariah 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Zechariah 3:4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

Zechariah 3:5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.

If you were to look upon Joshua you would have seen him in his magnificent priestly garments. They were elaborate, exquisite garments. He was bedecked with precious gems. The high priest would look magnificent as he performed the tasks of the Temple.

But he didn't look that way to everyone! You're told in verse three that Joshua was clothed with “filthy garments.” The word “filthy” means *smeared with human excrement*.

Did he fall into sewage rushing to the Temple? Why would he enter the Temple in such stained and spoiled garments?

He didn't fall – **but Adam did.** You are being shown the same man, in the same garments, from two perspectives:

- From the natural and earthly perspective, his garments were fine.
- From the supernatural and heavenly perspective, his garments were filthy.

As high priest, Joshua represented and stood for all Jews. Their *finest* was *filthy*.

Joshua can also be seen as **your** representative. In a much beloved verse, Isaiah said “But we are **all** like an unclean *thing*, And **all** our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags...” (64:6). The entire human race is filthy when seen from the supernatural and heavenly perspective.

When you are saved God does for you what He did for Joshua. He exchanges your garments for His own - a robe of righteousness. Isaiah 61:10 says,

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...

OK, so why does the angel say, “His wife has made herself ready?” Look at verse eight of Revelation nineteen:

Revelation 19:8 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.

Something that Isaiah additionally said will help. The whole of Isaiah 61:10 reads,

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, **And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

You were “granted,” or given, a spiritual robe of righteousness when you received Jesus as your Savior. Afterwards you have the privilege of adorning your robe by your “righteous acts” as His “saint.” You don’t *earn* or *add to* your salvation; you simply earn rewards which will adorn your robe.

When the church is resurrected and rewarded we will individually come before Jesus at His reward seat. He will reward us based on our works and especially the motives for them. The apostle Paul described it thusly:

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The “gold, silver, [and] precious stones” Paul described sound a great deal like the “ornaments” and “jewels” Isaiah said a bride adorns herself with.

I desire rewards in order to be as beautiful as possible for Jesus.

It’s really wonderful when the bride emerges in her gown with her hair & face all in order, with just the right adornment. Though from a worldly standpoint we are not materialistic, every bride ought to want to look fantastic for her groom.

Rewards do matter. They represent my pure love for Jesus as His bride. I want everyone in Heaven and on the earth to see how much I owe to my Lord.

Revelation 19:9 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."

The marriage supper will take place on earth at the beginning of the Millennium. The church is the heavenly Bride; those who are invited guests are the rest of the saved from all of time - the Old Testament saints, as well as Tribulation martyrs and believers alive in earthly bodies at the Second Coming.

Revelation 19:10 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."

Cut John some slack. He knew better but was overwhelmed. The angel quickly corrected him.

At least he did react. Imagine our shock if he had a conservative response.

Angels consider themselves our “fellow servants.” That’s pretty amazing. Though from our perspective they are glorious, they consider themselves with proper humility.

“Of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus” is better translated, “I am [only] another servant with you and your brethren who have [accepted and hold] the testimony borne by Jesus” (AV).

It’s interesting that an angel would refer to the Lord as “Jesus.” He means to tell us that Jesus, in His humanity, is “the spirit of prophecy.” His coming as a man is the sum, the substance, of Bible prophecy. As God come in human flesh He came, died, rose, and ascended into Heaven. He is coming again as the eternal God-man.

It seems we are always talking about prophecy. In fact we are sometimes criticized for doing so.

As I point out weekly in our Prophecy Updates, the Bible is one-quarter prophecy. Thus every church that is teaching the Bible ought to average 25% of its time talking about prophecy.

Prophecy is not some secondary intellectual curiosity. When we study it we are looking at the wonder and the beauty and the mystery of Jesus, God in human flesh.

In our culture, it is customary to have a bachelor or bachelorette party prior to the wedding. I’m quoting the following from a true story:

STDs, broken limbs, and lost cell phones and wallets are really as bad as it usually gets, but when way too much alcohol comes into play and people start sticking their heads out of party buses, things really start to [go wrong]. A Detroit man died from injuries after he stuck his head out the emergency exit of a party bus in June 2011.

Salvator Tatullo, 24, was making merry... when he stood up to undoubtedly yell a long celebratory "Wooooo!" just as the bus was going under an apparently very low-hanging overpass.

Do you really want your future spouse to have a wild, debauched bachelor or bachelorette party? No; and neither does Jesus.

We are “called to be saints” by the Gospel. We are to be in practice what they already are in position. The apostle Peter said it like this: "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]" (1 Peter. 1:15).

Maybe this will help. Brides go shopping for their gown; but, in our case as the Bride of Christ, the gown has been provided.

We can go shopping, as it were, for adornments.

What do you have your eyes on, in terms of things you'd like to adorn your gown? In other words, are your desires spiritual, rather than carnal?

The harlot is still out there, on the prowl, using all the world as her brothel.

Don't visit her - not even from a distance, as a tourist. Keep yourself in the pure love of God.

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ 19:1-10
"O Brothel, Where Art Thou?"