

Sometimes I can get sucked into reality tv dating shows. My favorite one is one where couples date and get engaged without ever seeing each other and just talk through walls. Then after they get engaged, they can see each other and spend some time together before their upcoming wedding in a few weeks. That might be silly, but you know what that show, many fairy tales, and the book of Revelation have in common? They all end in a wedding.

The end of Revelation here is somewhat controversial and often forgotten. But the Bible tells us we are heading towards a wedding. And any wedding requires great preparation. From the invitations, food, music, picking colors, dresses, decorations, what is the budget, who can be invited, and much more. And if we have to prepare that much for our worldly weddings, how much more should we prepare for the final wedding?

Revelation 18:21-19:10 is going to tell us how to prepare.

I. Get ready for the wedding by ceasing worldly distractions (18:21-24).

We need to turn our devotion and our hearts and our love away from the things of the world.

Revelation warns us not to be distracted by what the world wants us to worship.

And I want to frame that idea of worship here in terms of our love and our devotion.

Because so often when we hear worship, we think of music.

Or we can get confused and think that you know if we enjoy a sunrise and don't pray afterwards, that's a distraction

Or if we feel sad after rooting for our team and they lose, maybe that's false worship.

But we are worshiping Babylon and we're worshiping the things of Babylon when it gets a hold of our hearts and our love.

When we love those things more than we love the things of God.

When we love the things of Babylon so much that we're willing to sin to get more of them.

Or when not getting that thing causes us to sin against others.

It's not false worship to enjoy sports and cheer for your team.

It becomes the worship of Babylon when your team loses, and now I sin against others by yelling and screaming and cursing people.

Because my love for something has turned my heart away from God.

We don't need to be become monks in the desert.

And so we are not to love the things of Babylon nor be distracted by them.

Verse 21, **"Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;"**

We are reminded not to love these things because they are ending and they are empty.

They will not last.

The greatness of Babylon is like a sandcastle

In God's ways will come and wash it away.

And so a great millstone comes, and all of Babylon is just thrown into the sea to disappear under the waves.

Which is what Jesus says, should be tied around the neck of anyone who leads the little children astray.

Babylon has many little children, astray, and so Babylon will have one around his neck and throw to the sea and judgment.

Babylon and will be violent because Babylon has been violent.

And if this is the end of Babylon, it should tell us not to worship her or love the things of Babylon.

Verse 22, **"and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more,"**

That's where it tells us who reminds us the things that we worship in Babylon and the things that distract us will end.

The music of Babylon is going to stop.

The things that bring joy and celebrating and worship, and Babylon will soon be no more.

The crafts of Babylon and their great works, and their great art will be finished.

The things that they bow down in front of because they were so amazing will be destroyed.

And they are that we are so tempted today to look at and to take all of our devotion will fade

And the industry of Babylon will be no more

The materialism the things that we long for and that pull our hearts that will be gone.

The money and the stuff we want disappear.

Verse 23, **"and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery."**

All of the lights go out.

Picture a blackout or when electricity is out.

We lose power every now and then here in town.

It can be really inconvenient when you have young kids or babies that need sound machines and fans to sleep.

And it only takes an hour without power to realize how dependent on it we are.

Here all of the power and lights of Babylon will go out.

And because the lights are out there is no more joy.

Here the wedding of Babylon is compared to the wedding of Jesus in the bride.

The weddings of the world will cease.

Most weddings that happen today are not Christian weddings. Plenty of things are called weddings that do not fit God's plan for marriage.

But the key here is all the joy and sins of Babylon will go away.

And we get two reasons why.

First, because of the merchants.

The materialism of Babylon has mistreated the poor.

It has taken advantage of the weak.

Instead of honoring God in their work, they have done whatever it takes to get more money.

And Babylon is also judged because it has deceived the world.

It has fooled people with its false worship.

It has tricked and deceived like the serpent.

People have fallen for Babylon's sins and things.

And sin always leads to death.

Verse 24, **"And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."**

Babylon has killed plenty.

Babylon has persecuted and killed the saints.

First, though Babylon will try to lead us astray.

It will tempt us with sin and delights.

It will tempt us with all the trappings and glories of the world.

Hoping that we will love those things.

And those things will pull away our love for God.

All the while it will do this praising us and saying it does it in order to bring us glory.

Or for our good or to set us free.

But it just a trap to lead us away from Christ.

And if the trap does not work, then it seeks to kill the saints.

This is why we cannot fall for the world.
We cannot engage with Babylon.
We have to put aside the cares and distractions of the world.
We have to put aside the sins of the world.
It is trying to kill us.
We have to turn from Babylon if we are going to be ready for Christ.

If you are getting married, there are plenty of ways to prepare.
But there is really one big thing you have to do.
You have to stay faithful to your future spouse.
You cannot go out to bars and start flirting with everyone you see.
You shouldn't be putting yourself out there on dating apps.
You cannot be going out on dates, or kissing other people.
You're about to make a commitment to one person for the rest of your life
in sickness and in health, so you need to act like it.

Ultimately, Babylon and the distractions of the world are like other lovers.
They are trying to get us to commit adultery.
They are trying to pull our love and devotion away from Christ.
Sin is trying to get us to cheat on Jesus.
It is trying to make us break our baptismal vows.
Or to break the promises we have made to Christ.
This image might seem strange, but it's the one the Bible often uses.
And it can help us see how serious our sins are.
After all, on the wedding day when Christ returns, we want Him to find us
faithful.
We don't want Him to find us in bed with idols and Babylon.

II. Get ready for the wedding by worshipping God (19:1-5).

This one's a little easier, we're turning our attention positively.
We get ready by worshipping God.
And we worship him with everything that we have.
We do not just worship Him in song and with poems and with praises and
prayer, whether on Sunday or in our prayer closets.

But we worship Him in all that we do with all of our time with all of our hearts.

Verse 1, **"After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,"**

We see this is what heaven does in response.

We saw before an 18 that the world response to the destruction of Babylon with weeping and wailing.

But God's people respond with worship.

When the casino and gambling and the prostitutes' house and the drug den are no more, the people of God do not weep, but they worship and they celebrate.

So here's the voice of the multitude in heaven of all of the Saints together with all of their voices cry out.

And their cry is one of worship towards God.

Look at what they say.

"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 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."

It is always good to begin worship with a hallelujah.

It always sounds like praise.

But they also declare that Salvation, glory, and power belong to God.

Because worship is a moment of acknowledging the truth.

It is admitting that God is the only one who brings salvation.

He is the only one who can save our souls.

He is the only one who can provide us what we need.

He is the only one who is truly glorious.

The glory of creation and every created thing only reflect His glory.

And He is the only now who is powerful.

All things are in His hands.

So, we can worship God when we tell the truth about God.

When we acknowledge who He is and His character.

We can also worship God when we praise Him for what He has done.
Because His judgment on the world is just.
The world will spend lots of its time doubting God.
It will declare there is no God because look at the bad things that happen.
How can God be good when children die of cancer?
How can God be loving when people go hungry?
How can God be all-powerful when genocide and war go unchecked?

We can respond with worship.
Not with knowledge of the answers to those questions.
But we can worship and know that whatever God is doing is true.
And it is just and right.
And especially His judgment of Babylon on the final day will be right.

It will be right because Babylon led the world astray into idolatry and sin.
Those who have deceived and increased the sin of others will face increased judgment.
And we should praise God for that.

Here is how I have done this practically.
When I read a story that makes me angry.
Another unjust law is passed.
Some criminal got away with murder because of a loophole.
A cop is misusing his power to oppress others.
Or anything wrong and I can't figure out how it can be made right.
I just stop and pray and worship.
Sometimes I literally just say, "Thank you God that you are a God of justice. I am trusting that one day you will make this right even though I don't know how or when."

Because one day God will avenge.
He will avenge those who wrong the saints.
He will avenge all those who do wrong.

Verse 3, **"Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."**

So they continue to worship.

This is not a praise that the eternal punishment of Babylon is great.

Or that they are happy the wicked will be tormented forever in hell.

It is a praise for justice.

It is worshipping God.

Because He will avenge injustice.

The wicked will not escape unpunished.

Babylon will pay for every single last sin.

And it will be right.

Verse 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!"**

Here again we have the 24 elders.

And the 4 living creatures.

The heavenly court returns and they are worshipping God.

They are prostrating themselves before God.

Because worship usually has this idea in the Bible of falling on your face.

Of adopting a physical posture that says this person is above me.

This is the heart of worship.

It is moving our hearts, our bodies, and our souls in a way that reflects God is worthy of our love.

Acting as if God is worthy of our devotion.

Acting as if God is worthy of all of our praise.

And this is what all of humanity owes God.

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

All of us should praise God.

Everyone of us needs to worship Him.

Whether we are small in stature.

Whether we think we are the meekest believers or the least.
Or whether or not we think we are the greatest.
Whether we are elders, or pastors, or great kings on the earth.
All people great and small must worship God.
He is worthy of all of our worship.

This is how we prepare for His coming.
We do so by worshipping Him.
By praising His name through songs.
By praising Him with our words and our prayers.
by praising Him through our actions.

III. Get ready for the wedding by doing righteous deeds (19:6-10).

This section is really the heart of the passage.
If we are going to prepare.
If we are going to be ready for the return of Jesus.
Then we have to actually do righteousness.
We do not just believe righteous things.
We do not just think the right stuff.
We have to actually live out our faith.

Verse 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,"**

The voices again rise.
But now something is with all the voices.
Because the roar of many waters and the sound of peals of thunder is God's voice.
His voice seems to cry out among the multitude.

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,"

They continue the praise and worship.
But we see something key in verse 6.

God the Almighty reigns.

This is not just talking about God reigning in the heavenly throne.

At this moment now, God reigns on the earth.

The wedding day is the day Christ will take His seat on the throne.

And because He is reigning we should rejoice.

The wedding day is here.

And we should we rejoice, praise and glorify God.

Wedding days and weddings are times of joy and celebration.

The last wedding should be no different.

"for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;"

Here is explicit.

This is the day of the marriage of the Lamb of God and the Bride of Christ.

The marriage day is here.

The countdown to the wedding is over.

And we need to back up and talk about the wedding for a moment.

I do want to clarify that this is not a literal wedding.

I warned you that I do believe Revelation is true and describes what will happen in the future.

But it often describes it in non-literal language.

It uses apocalyptic and metaphorical language to describe real things.

This verse here talks about the Lamb and the Bride.

Christ is not literally an animal nor is the church literally a woman.

It is descriptive language.

So, this does not mean one day we will actually go through a wedding ceremony with Jesus.

But it is describing something important.

And we should ask why is the Bible using this language.

Why in Ephesians 5 does the Bible describe marriage as an image of what Jesus does for the church?

Because one day, when Christ returns.
All things will be made right.
And we will finally be reunited and united to Jesus.
We will be resurrected and glorified.
All sin is removed.
And all those who have given their lives to Jesus.
Who have turned from their sins and have been faithful.
They will once again have their relationship with God restored.
As Adam walked in the garden in the cool of the day with God, so will we
one day again.
And the beauty of what it will be like when Jesus returns.
The joy that we will experience.
The celebration that the world will follow.
And the party we will have to throw.
It can only be described as a wedding feast.
That is why.
It will be the best thing that you can imagine.
Whether you like that the Bible uses this image or not.
I promise you on that day you will see it.

And the important thing we see as well is that the Bride is ready.
The church of Christ is prepared for this day.
That is what we want to see.
That is what we need to see.

**"it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous
deeds of the saints."**

Because no wedding can come until the bride arrives.
In our weddings today the groom is there early.
Before the service even starts he is often standing on the stage.
But nothing begins until the music swells, the people stand, and the bride
enters.
But she won't come in until she is ready.

Until she is dressed and adorned with everything befitting of a bride.
And here, the bride is ready when she is dressed.
And the Bible tells us what being dressed means explicitly.
To be dressed and to be prepared is to do deeds of righteousness.
It is to act and live like saints.
To do what Jesus did.
To not just say we are Christians.
But to actually live like Christians.

If we want to be ready for that day.
If we want to be prepared for the wedding day.
We have to do deeds of righteousness.
And these deeds are in verse 10.
The most important thing we do is hold to the testimony of Christ.
Which means we hold the faith.
We continue to believe the essentials of our faith.
So, we have to hold the faith.

I also want you to see where the clothes come from.
They are granted and given to us.
This phrase always means that God is the one acting.
God is the one who dresses us and makes us ready for the wedding.

This is the gospel.
We put our faith in Jesus.
We turn from our sins and ask for grace.
And He makes us ready.
He is the one who actually prepares the bride and makes us ready.

And then, because of what God has done for us we also want to prepare.
We don't sin more that grace may abound.
We work and do righteous deeds.
But we do so because we know God has clothed us.
We don't do so because it all depends on us.

Verse 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."**

Then we get this word from an angel.

Who tells us that everyone is invited to the wedding is blessed.

Anyone who can come to this feast.

Those who are invited and the bride seem to be the same people.

If you look at the people of God corporately as a whole community we are the bride of Christ.

If you look at individual believers, then we are invited to the wedding feast.

It's the same event just described differently.

This is the wedding feast from our call to worship in Isaiah 25.

It where we celebrate not just our salvation, but Christ defeating death once and for all.

And who has been invited to this feast?

Think about how wedding guests are decided.

It is often a big deal and a lot of negotiating.

At least it was for our wedding.

We have to decide which family to invite.

How many people can the venue hold?

Who do we need to cut in order to make room?

I remember at my sisters wedding they had a fancy dinner and a big party planned.

So, it was really hard to figure out who to invite.

Because they would get fined for every person over their venue.

And she told me she just had to think about whether am I willing to pay \$200 to see this person at my wedding?

And most of us when it comes to parties, especially one like our wedding.

We don't want to invite people we don't like.

We only want to invite those that we love.
Those who we really get along with and want to spend all our time with.

But who does Jesus invite?

Who does Jesus invite to the wedding feast?

He invites everyone.

He invites His enemies.

He invites those who hate Him and killed Him.

He invites the poor, the weak, and the people no one wants.

The gospel is that even the worst sinners are welcome.

Jesus invites all the people we would never want at our weddings.

And He invites us.

Everyone in this room has been invited to the feast.

I hope we respond.

Verse 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."**

Why do this?

This is such a strange part of the passage.

John tries to worship an angel and is told not to do that.

Here is my interpretation and what I think this means and why it is here.

Even when we are invited.

Even when we respond and we are saved.

We can still worship the wrong things.

Just like earlier we saw John get seduced by Babylon.

Now he tries to worship an angel.

He sees a good thing of God and glorifies it too much.

Which is a trap we fall into all the time.

The American church, especially, is filled with celebrity culture.

We can look up to our leaders and Christian influencers so much we may as well bow down to them in worship like John does.

Or we can take the good gifts God gives us like food and drink and turn them into idols.

God wants us to see how easy it is.

Even when we think we are getting ready and doing a good job.

Even when we think we are worshipping the right things,

We can still get distracted.

So, what do we do?

We listen to the angel and God's Word.

Hold to the gospel.

Hold to the testimony of Jesus and His words.

His Words are true.

His Words are the ones we have to remember.

And we have to remember the prophecy of Jesus in this book.

All the things of the world will pass away.

Don't be fooled by them.

Worship God instead.

And cling to Jesus and the gospel.

Then we will be ready.

Where have we been this morning?

We need to prepare for the wedding by ceasing worldly distractions, by worshipping God, and doing righteous deeds.

The wedding party is coming.

Jesus is coming.

We need to prepare.

We need to live as if that day is in our future.

So that when the glorious day comes, we can enjoy it forever.