

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/16/10 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 19 "The Applause of Heaven"--part 1

God will have the final word. I saw recently a news program doing an interview of a popular figure who was flatly challenging something that God says is wrong calling it right. And nothing happened. No response from God showing His displeasure.

But He is displeased. And He will show His displeasure, in His time. He will have the final word. So says the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The majority of the book of the Revelation has to do with the prophetic portrayal of the end times. The book begins in chapter one with an awesome description of the main character of the book, the Lord Jesus (this is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" --1:1). Then comes a series of seven letters from Jesus to seven local churches in Asia Minor (chs 2-3), followed by a vision of heaven itself in chapters 4-5, namely the heavenly throne.

Chapters 6-18 describe the period of time known as the Tribulation period. As we've been seeing for many weeks now, the Tribulation period will include the following:

--God will judge the rebellious world with a series of judgments (seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls).

--The world will respond to God's judgments with persistent rebellion. In fact, the world will unite in its rebellion by following two great "beasts" described in chapter 13, the first beast apparently representing some type of secular authority and the second beast representing some type of religious authority.

In chapter 17 this world-wide authority is referred to as "Babylon the Great" (17:5) and as "the great prostitute" (17:1). This future, vast, anti-God world system will be united by economics (it will be a global economy, 18:11-13) and fueled by a pseudo-religious, demonic system (18:23).

In chapter 18, we see the fall of Babylon the Great, and with it, the collapse of the world economy. This powerful, anti-God system that will lead the world in its rebellion of God and its attack on God's people will in the end come tumbling down. That's what we saw last time.

This week, in chapter 19, the spotlight moves from earth to heaven. In chapter 19, we hear heaven's response to the fall of Babylon the Great on earth. In essence, we hear *the applause of heaven*.

Let's read Revelation 19, and then we'll study the first ten verses...

In Revelation 19:1-10, John records the response of heaven to the final collapse of the anti-God world system. Notice the word "hallelujah"--it appears four times (1, 3, 4, 6). Ironically, this word appears nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a compound Hebrew word comprised of two smaller Hebrew words ("hallel"--to praise; and "jah" from Yahweh--the LORD).

What's the response of heaven to the events on earth? In a word--hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Let's notice who's getting involved in the praise...

I. In verses 1-8 John records the response of heaven.

In observing heaven's response John hears four parties participate in the applause. He records the first in verses 1-3...

A. Here's the response of what sounded like a great multitude (1-3).

Q: Notice, where does he say this sound came from? Verse 1--In heaven

Q: Who or what is this that sounds like the "roar of a great multitude?" See...

Rev 7:9-10--There John describes a scene where he saw a "great multitude that no one could count...wearing white robes..." Who were they? 7:14 says, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation..."

Is this the same group? Apparently (note: Ladd suggests it refers to a host of angels).

Q: What are they doing? "Shouting" is the word used in verse 1.

Q: What are they shouting? They are praising God for two things...

1. *They praise God because of what He is like (1-2a).*

Q: What is He like?

2. *They praise God because of what He did (2b-3).*

Q: What did He just do? John mentions two accomplishments. First, He "condemned the great prostitute." And secondly, He "avenged on her the blood of his servants."

Q: What's true of the fallen prostitute according to the end of verse 3? Her smoke goes up

forever. Does God receive honor from the judgment of the wicked? Yes.

B. Here's the response of the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures (4).

Q: Where have we seen them before? Rev 4:4-6

I tend to think these are angelic beings who have access to the very presence of God. The 4 living creatures are the ones who never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy... (4:8)." And the 24 elders are the ones who place their crowns before God's throne and say, "You are worthy...because you created all things."

1. *They worshiped God.*

Q: What posture did they take? We could learn from this...

2. *They cried, "Amen, Hallelujah!"*

Short and sweet, just two words. Amen--"That's right." They're agreeing with the assessment of the great multitude. And Hallelujah--"Praise the Lord."

C. Here's the response of a voice from the throne (5).

Q: What voice? Who is it? We're not told. Apparently, another angel. But who it is isn't the issue. What he says is.

1. *He called all of God's servants to praise God.*

Q: How many? ALL. Notice that "praise" is a command here. And to make sure there's no misunderstanding, he reiterates...

2. *No one is too small or great.*

Let this sink in. There is a God in heaven who alone deserves worship. Think of the implications of that. It's what should motivate us in missions. It should prompt us to go urge our unsaved neighbors to repent and believe in Christ. Why? Because they need it--yes, but that's secondary. The first reason is because there is a God in heaven who *deserves* it!

Are we gripped by the fact that God *deserves* praise, honor, and worship? I wonder sometimes. We tend to be so self-focused. We tend to think so little of God and what is due to Him. We tend to become so wrapped up in our agendas. And too often, when we think of God it's because we need Him to help us accomplish *our agenda*. And then when He does it's back to business as usual.

But this voice reminds us of this truth. God deserves praise for what God does. From *all* of His people.

Discuss: What are some practical things we can do to overcome the tendency to be self-focused, thus robbing God of what He deserves?

D. Here's the response of what sounded like a great multitude (6-8).

Is it the same group that praised God in verse 1? Apparently. Here they respond to the call of the voice in verse 5, and offer further praise...

1. *They praised God for who He is (6).*

Q: What's true of God according to verse 6?

2. *They praised God for what is about to happen (7-8).*

What? Two things...

The wedding of the Lamb has come.

This is beautiful. God's Word uses the image of a wedding to portray the hope of God's people for the coming intimate relationship they will enjoy with God (read Eph 5:25-27; also Matt 22:2-14 where we see the parable of the wedding).

The bride has made herself ready.

Q: Who is the Lamb? Christ

Q: Who is His bride? His people, namely the church. The word "bride" is literally "wife." Ladd comments (246), "An engaged woman can be called a wife in the sense that she is a betrothed wife, even though the marriage has not yet taken place." Remember how the angel told Joseph not to fear to take Mary "his wife"?

Q: Verse 7 says the bride has "made herself ready." What are the indications that the bride is ready for the wedding? see verse 8

II. In verses 9-10, John records his reaction to the angelic messenger.

A. Here's what the angel did (9).

1. *The angel gave John a personal message.*

Note: There are seven beatitudes ("Blessed are") in the book. This is the fourth one.

Q: What was the message? It had to do with the wedding supper that was about to occur...

2. *The angel verified the validity of his message.*

Q: How so? He said these are *God's* words. You can't top that!

B. Here's what John did (10a).

1. *John fell at his feet.*

2. *John began to worship the angel.*

Why? Everyone else in the chapter is worshiping! Perhaps John got caught up in the moment.

How did the angel respond?

C. Here's what the angel said (10b).

1. *Don't worship me! I'm just a fellow servant.*

2. *Worship God!*

Q: What does that last phrase mean, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"? That's the reason the angel told John not to worship him, but what does it mean? It seems to indicate that since what Jesus says will happen, worship *Him*! The messenger doesn't deserve worship. The giver of the message does!

In the rest of chapter 19, the focus will shift from heaven to earth again. Next time we'll explore the record of the Lord's coming on a white horse to reclaim the world that is rightfully His.

Discuss: What lessons do we learn about worship from the book of Revelation?