**The Return of Christ**

Revelation 19



 Yes, I can say without any bias - that is the most beautiful bride ever in history.



The guy with her…? Well, some guys win the lottery. And he is one of those, for sure.

When you think back on your own wedding day, or on the last wedding you were a part of, how does it make you feel? It’s a **celebration**, right? It’s one of the most joyful events in life. It’s ***the culmination of a relationship*** - sometimes one that has been filled with ups and downs, starts and stops - but ***the couple came through those challenges*** and made it to the altar to say their vows.

And in that miraculous moment, when a husband and wife stare so naively into each other’s eyes and say, “I do,” ***God takes two independent people and makes them ONE***. It is the sealing of a covenant bond. And then they live together in wedded bliss - happily ever after!

Ah, if only that’s how the story went. The real story is often - “And they loved each other and fought like cats and dogs for 50 years until one of them finally gave up and died.” Marriage can be hard. It takes work.

***But marriage points us to the covenant union our souls were really made for - union with Jesus.***

Paul writes in **Ephesians 5** about husbands loving their wives sacrificially and wives submitting to their husbands respectfully - but just when you think he is done with that practical teaching on marriage he says, “This is a mystery, but I’m really talking about Christ and the church!” Marriage is one of our best pictures of the kind of relationship Jesus wants with us. Think about it! **A marriage relationship is:**

* ***Exclusive*** - one man, one woman for a lifetime.
* ***Holy*** - you have to work hard to protect the purity of your devotion and not pollute it by coveting your neighbor’s husband or wife.
* A marriage relationship is ***Intimate*** - the closest of all human relationships - where you know the good, the bad and the ugly, but still accept and delight in one another.
* A marriage relationship is ***Permanent*** - it should not be dissolved in this life but should weather all the storms of life.

That’s how it is between Jesus and us, His Church. ***We are the Bride of Christ, waiting of our Bridegroom to come back so we can celebrate our wedding supper!*** We are in an **exclusive** relationship. We must keep that relationship **holy**, pure and undefiled. It is an **intimate** relationship - a close bond of loving friendship. And, praise the Lord, it is **permanent** - nothing can change the love of Christ for us.

When we think of the return of Christ we should ***think of our wedding day***. Revelation 19 opens with **five HALLELUJAHS**. It resounds with joyful worship. If you didn’t have Revelation 1-18 you might think you had opened the Bible to the Psalms instead of the end of the world prophecy. Look at verse 6, the fifth Hallelujah.

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come.” Revelation 19:6-7

We will see **three reasons to worship Jesus** - three reasons to sing praise to the Lord for His return. But the main one is right there in verse seven - “the marriage of the Lamb has come.” Yes, Jesus will wipe out His enemies and establish perfect justice - but He does that ***so He can live with His Bride in joyful unity forever***.

Let’s walk through these three wonderful reasons to worship Jesus - our coming King and our loving Bridegroom!

1. Total **Victory** - He will **Conquer** all of His enemies

“Then I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.” Revelation 19:11

There was a ***rider on a white horse*** released when the first seal was opened - a Conqueror with a Bow, bent on conquest. But that was the **ANTICHRIST** - the devil’s mockery of the Lord Jesus, placing that blasphemous world leader on a white horse to appear holy and righteous and good, when in fact he is cruel, wicked and evil.

When Jesus appears, ***every eye will see Him at once*** and everyone will know in that moment - THAT is the true king! When the heavens open and the sky rolls back like a scroll and Jesus emerges on that shining white horse, “Every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will confess that He alone is Lord.” Believers will do so joyfully. Non-believers will be forced to that profession as Jesus rides forward in unopposable victory.

1. Total **Victory** - He will **Conquer** all of His enemies

“His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows.” Revelation 19:12

We’ll come back to the blazing, all-seeing eyes of Jesus for the second point. For now look at **the glorious crowns**, the many diadems, upon His head - and His unknowable name. This is ***supreme power, unapproachable glory***. This is the unveiling of the Shekinah Glory of God.

**The transfiguration** of Jesus on the mountain before Peter, James and John was a glimpse of this event, a small preview of the main attraction. When Jesus comes back there will be no more covering over His glory. In HIs first coming, the glory of Jesus was heavily veiled. He was born in the humble anonymity of a stable to an obscure Jewish couple. Some angelic choirs, yes, but his welcome came first from lowly shepherds. The King sought him only to kill him.

And ***Jesus’ life and ministry were mostly obscure too*** - a small, rag-tag band of followers, wandering the northern regions of Israel in the backwater region of Galilee. Everyone knew that no one important would come from Nazareth in Galilee. World-shaping events happened in Jerusalem, not Capernaum.

But when Jesus comes back it will not be small, quiet and obscure. It will be **huge, glorious and visible**. What we know by faith will then be sight.

* We believe that Jesus is the fully ***divine Son of God*** - then we will see His glory revealed.
* We know from Scripture that Jesus ***sustains the universe*** with the word of His power. Then we will see His supreme power unleashed.
* We trust in Jesus as the ***all sufficient Savior***, who made the ultimate sacrifice to pay for our sins.

**The Lamb of God** who went humbly to the cross will return as ***the Lion of Judah***, wearing the crown of David and leading the armies not just of Israel but the armies of heaven.

1. Total **Victory** - He will **Conquer** all of His enemies

“And the armies of heaven… were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.” Rev. 19:14-15

2,000 years ago Jesus ***rode into Jerusalem on a donkey*** with no army beside him. His disciples were proud of themselves that they had two swords. No military escort. Yes, the crowd cheered for him but a few days later they called for his crucifixion.

When Jesus comes back it will be on ***a powerful white horse***, with a full military escort. The armies of heaven, riding white horses, are the saints - dressed in pure white linen. Angels don’t need horses. And for this battle, the angels and the armies of saints don’t have a role to play. Jesus will win this battle with the sword from His mouth. He will win simply by speaking a word.

Just as Jesus brought the universe into being with three words, “Let there be light.” So He will conclude history with three words found in Revelation 16.

1. Total **Victory** - He will **Conquer** all of His enemies

“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came… from the throne, saying, ***‘It is done!’***” Revelation 16:17

That is actually one word in the Greek. ***Gegonen***. It’s a variation of what Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished.” ***Tetelestai.*** The point is not the exact words - but that the weapon Jesus will use is WORDS.

* He does not need a super cosmic flaming sword.
* He does not need angelic armies all equipped with light sabers.
* He does not need heavenly artillery to soften up the armies of the antichrist.

***All Jesus needs is a WORD.*** For when Jesus speaks, the whole universe must listen and obey. All authority - in heaven and on earth - has been given to Jesus. All of it. There are four names ascribed to Jesus in Revelation 19. The last one sums up the rest.

1. Total **Victory** - He will **Conquer** all of His enemies

“On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” Revelation 19:16

When we profess in our hearts and sing in our sings, ***“Jesus Christ is LORD,”*** we are proclaiming Him as the king over all kings and the Lord over all lords. This is the name emblazoned on Jesus’ thigh and the banner across His blood stained robe - king of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus reigns supreme. He is exalted above all gods, all rulers, all kings, all authorities. Jesus Christ is Lord.

***He proved His victorious power in the resurrection*** - triumphing over sin and death and hell when he walked out of that tomb. He is proving the power of His grace and the power of His Spirit ***as the Church advances*** upon the gates of hell as an unstoppable army - willing to joyfully die for the name of Jesus. And the final proof of Jesus’ power and supremacy will be His triumphant return.

Brothers and sisters, this should move us to joyful, overflowing, resounding **WORSHIP**. Hallelujah! King Jesus is coming and He is coming in glorious victory! Every knee will bow before Him. All of the enemies of God will be immediately overthrown by the Word of Jesus’ command. There is no answer for the sword of Jesus’ mouth. There is no corresponding weapon. It is the ***Thanos gauntlet*** with all six infinity stones. This is ***the finger snap*** of Jesus that brings all of His enemies to a dead stop.

Our first reason to worship Jesus is for His total victory. Second reason, back in verse 11.

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“Behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it… in righteousness he judges and makes war.” Revelation 19:11

This is ***the Conquering Messiah*** - the Divine Davidic King coming to judge and make war. Throughout Revelation the enemies of God have made war on the people of God, and now Jesus comes to settle the score. This is Aslan coming to face the White Witch. This is Captain Marvel blazing directly through Thanos’ mother ship. This is the end of the Lord of the Rings when Aragorn is finally revealed as the true King of Gondor, leading a terrifying army into the battle of the Pellenor fields.

This is ***total victory that sets up a lasting peace***, with a severe reckoning for those who have done evil. Whenever a movie or book ends and the bad guy gets what is coming to him, we celebrate. **Justice resonates with our souls** first because we so often don’t see it today and because we know deep down it ought to be. Evil should be punished. Good should be rewarded. When a criminal gets off on a technicality we shake our heads in frustration. When a co-worker advances beyond us by lying or cheating we lament the brokenness of the system.

But close your eyes and **picture this scene in Revelation 19**. Jesus, the King of Kings, on a white horse with the armies of heaven behind him. ***Justice is coming - and His name is Jesus.*** He is coming to defeat his remaining enemies - he judges and makes war in RIGHTEOUSNESS. In the end, God will do the right thing and be sure that justice is done. Jesus will be that final judge who makes sure it is so.

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“Behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True.” Revelation 19:11

The first of four names given to Jesus is right here - **Faithful and True**. The basis of justice is truth. ***The judge has to know the truth and be trustworthy*** to speak the truth and do justice based on truth. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. He is the unchanging One - the same yesterday and today and forever. God does not change like shifting shadows, as we do. God does not say “Yes” one day and “No” the next. God is perfectly consistent and absolutely reliable.

Listen to the first description of Jesus:

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“In righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire.” Revelation 19:11-12

***Blazing eyes.*** We’ve all experienced this with Mom or wife, right? “You went to Chili’s for lunch. You got the southwest eggrolls. And you didn’t bring one home for me?” First of all, I didn’t know you knew I was at Chilis. Also, how could you know what I ordered - do you have an elaborate spy network?

Now, that’s a fake example. I learned early on in ministry if I go out for lunch to bring something home. That’s pastoral ministry 101. I tell young guys, “Make your free throws.” Take the easy points. Don’t get fat having meals and let your wife starve at home! I’m not going to give you a real example at this moment, but I have seen those blazing eyes that see right through to my selfish, sinful heart.

If we know that feeling in a human relationship, imagine with the Lord Jesus. ***His eyes see EVERYTHING.*** They miss nothing. And they blaze with perfect righteousness, holiness and purity.

Now, we know from Romans 8 that there is “No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” **No CONDEMNATION**. No punishment. But that **does not mean no EVALUATION**. There will be an evaluation for every Christian. It’s described in 1 Corinthians 3 and it does involve FIRE.

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“Their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work.” 1 Cor. 3:13

**THE DAY** will bring it to light? What Day? The Day of the Lord! The Day that Jesus comes back.

We hear about justice and eyes flaming with fire and our hearts rightly rejoice that sinners and evil people will get what is coming to them. But let’s pause and remember that we, too, will stand before Jesus and each of us will give an account for what we did and did not do; what we said and did not say. It will not lead to condemnation but to ***the final purification***.

Here is how I picture it. Your whole life will boil down to ***a small pile of rocks, twigs and gems.*** You will stand before Jesus and present that to Him. He will take that mulch from you, already knowing exactly what is in it. Something will pass between the two of you - where you bow and kneel and throw yourself again on His mercy. But then Jesus will lift you up and show you what remains in His hands. All the twigs and leaves and dirt will be gone - Jesus will blow that away in one breath of His white hot justice. And what remains will be **a handful of precious gems** - those acts you did that no one ever saw, no one ever recognized.

* Times you stood up for the truth and it cost you.
* Moments when you sacrificed your will to serve someone else, and no one ever knew who did it.
* Some small actions and some major life-changing decisions.

Paul continues this lesson in 2 Corinthians, saying ***“Don’t judge each other.”***

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.” 1 Cor. 4:5, NIV

When Jesus comes He will expose the evil for the evil they have done. And He will also bring into the light for all to see the kind, loving, generous, brave acts of Christians. “At that time each will receive ***their praise*** from God.”

Jesus will take each of those gems and project it onto the big screen in the sky so all people from all time can see what you did.

We can’t be sure what all is involved in storing up **“treasure in heaven,”** but I think that moment of receiving praise FROM GOD - that ***public COMMENDATION from the Lord Jesus*** - will be the greatest treasure of all.

Those gems may end up in some kind of crown Jesus gives us - and do you know what people in heaven do with their **crowns**? They throw them down before the throne of God - giving Him the glory even for the best things they ever did.

When it comes to the JUSTICE Jesus gives out when He returns, there are two terrifying warnings, the one worse than the other.

1. The first, more scary warning is for **those who THINK they know and serve Jesus** but to whom He will say on that day, ***“Depart from me, I never knew you.”*** MANY, Jesus said, will protest in that day, “Didn’t I go to church? Didn’t I serve in Sunday School? Didn’t I give 10%... ok 3.5%? Didn’t I read my Bible once in a while?” Lots of people are just going through the motions. We can’t tell the difference - but Jesus, with His eyes flaming with fire, sees right through the pretense. To some, even some in this room right now, Jesus will say, “I don’t know you, and you never really knew me.” If you are not sure where you stand with Jesus, please stay and talk with me or Jason after the service.
2. **The second warning** is also scary and tragic but a little less than the first one where you miss out on heaven altogether. It’s back in 1 Cor. 3.
3. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“If what he has built burns up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved - even though only as one escaping through flames.” 1 Cor. 3:15

This is for Christians who did trust in Jesus - who are saved - but ***who have done NOTHING with what God has given them***. When they stand before Jesus they will have nothing in their hands but twigs, leaves and dirt - no gems at all. This is a variation of the parable of the talents. One guy had 5 talents, one had 2, and one had 1. The ones with 5 and 2 invested their money and got a return. The one with only 1 talent hid that money in the ground and dug it up when the master returned.

Don’t let this be your experience on that Day. Read John Piper’s ***Don’t Waste Your Life.*** He confronts the American idea of retirement and says (in my paraphrase): “Don’t you dare waste 15-20 years playing golf and collecting seashells. Jesus will not be impressed that you lowered your handicap a few strokes or that you found all 1,000 species of mollusk. Invest your days. Love people. Serve them. Share the gospel. Pour out your life for people. Don’t live in luxury and give meagerly. Live more meagerly so you can give more generously.

And ***don’t waste the opportunity to store up treasure in heaven*** by drawing attention to what you do. Jesus clearly taught that as soon as you pray or give or fast so people notice the value of that praying, giving and fasting disappears. Don’t do anything for applause from people - do it to please the Lord, your Master.

***Because Jesus is coming!*** And He is coming soon! His eyes blaze with all-seeing fire. And He brings JUSTICE with Him on that Day. Look again at verse 13.

1. Perfect **Justice** - He will **Judge** everyone in absolute righteousness

“He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood… He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of… the wrath of God.” Rev. 19:13,15

The blood here is almost certainly ***the blood of his enemies***, not the blood of Jesus. Isaiah foresaw the day when the Messiah would come in power and trample the evil nations under his feet like workers in a vineyard trampling out the grapes. Imagine how messy that was, especially if you were wearing a white robe. The blood or juice of the grapes would cover the bottom half of your robe as the grapes burst open under the weight of your feet.

What a picture of ***the conquest and justice of Jesus!*** How much of a fight do grapes put up against feet? They have no thorns, no defenses. Their skin is so thin that they crush easily. It’s not like trampling out walnuts or a cactus. It’s a trampling of grapes and the blood will flow as justice is done.

**If someone has hurt you** - whether long ago or recently - picture that person in your mind. Imagine that day when that person will stand before Jesus - his flaming eyes will see everything they ever did or thought; the sword of his mouth will strike them down, rendering them utterly powerless before Him; if they have not repented and called on Him to save them, they will bear the weight of their sin forever - which will be like a trampling under the feet of Jesus.

This is **why Christians don’t need to seek revenge**. “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. I will repay.” We need not - indeed we must not seek retribution. Anger and revenge is toxic to your soul. Holding onto someone’s sin and seeking to punish them will do you great harm. “Unforgiveness is the poison you drink hoping others will die.”

Forgive. **Love your enemies**. Pray for those who persecute you.

How? First by ***remembering how much Jesus has forgiven you***. Remember the justice you deserve from Jesus. And second, by ***knowing that justice is coming*** for that person who hurt you. Perfect justice. Based on absolute truth. You couldn’t give perfect justice even if you wanted to. But Jesus can. And Jesus will. Leave it in His hands.

***Stoyan story*** - Insanity of God. The guard who forced him to eat feces every morning...

Reasons to worship Jesus: 1) total victory; 2) perfect justice and 3:

1. Eternal **Union** - He will be **With Us** forever

“Let us rejoice and exult… for the marriage of the lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.” Rev. 19:7

For non-believers in the world, the return of Christ will be a **military conquest**. But for believers, the return of Christ will be a **marriage celebration.** We are now in the BETROTHAL stage - engaged to the Lord Jesus, pledged to Him. We are the bride of Christ waiting for Him to come so we can finally be together.

Some of us experienced this in our marriages. I graduated a year ahead of Kristin so we had a year apart before we could be together. She was only 200 miles away, so I was able to visit around once a month. But still we felt that separation and were obviously very excited to be married on June 12, 1999.

Don’t we feel the separation now with Jesus? Yes we know Him. Yes we love Him. Yes, His Spirit is with us. But we don’t yet see Him face to face. We aren’t yet together with Him physically, geographically.

In **John 14** Jesus uses this wedding imagery to describe His return saying, “If I go to prepare a place for you I will come back so you can be with me, where I am.” This is how it worked in the old days: the groom to be would work for several months building a house, or sometimes a one room addition above or beside his family home. Once that was done, he would come for his bride and the wedding would take place.

Obviously the expectation during this time of engagement was that ***the bride to be would keep herself pure***, not running around with other guys. When Mary was suddenly pregnant during their time of betrothal Joseph could have had her stoned publicly in the Jewish tradition. Certainly he could have had her publicly shamed and cast out of the local synagogue. But instead he resolved to divorce her quietly, assuming she had defiled herself with another man.

1. Eternal **Union** - He will be **With Us** forever

“His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure… the righteous deeds of the saints.” Rev. 19:7-8

By God’s grace we can be clothed in righteousness - this is first and foremost a gift of God’s grace by the blood of the Lamb. But on top of the righteous robes Jesus gives us we can dress ourselves in the righteousness Jesus helps us pursue. It’s another way of talking about those precious gems we store up for the Lord.

We are preparing for the wedding day - to be as beautiful a Bride as we can possibly be for the Lord Jesus. Again, the marriage analogy is relevant:

* Are we ***“getting in shape”*** spiritually to fit into that dress or are we “letting ourselves go”?
* Are we guarding our purity, ***keeping that white dress unstained*** or are we fooling around in the dirt, letting worldliness and idolatry pollute our hearts and minds and lives?
* Are we ***decorating our wedding gown*** with the precious gems of sacrificial service, bold evangelism and courageous mission?

Let’s not stand before Jesus spiritually flabby, in a filthy dress that has no gems. Let’s discipline ourselves and train with each other to give our very best to Jesus. Let’s be open and honest in our groups and huddles to make progress in our areas of sin and temptation to guard against idolatry. And let’s be about the work Jesus has given us to love and serve the saints and to make disciples of all nations! For:

1. Eternal **Union** - He will be **With Us** forever

“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Rev. 19:9

This is the greatest blessing - ***the most joyful hope*** - to be with Jesus forever, united with Him in the covenant bonds of a marriage union.

When Jesus comes back, we will finally be with Him forever. ***Nothing else will matter in that moment*** and from then on. The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

We can ***glimpse that glory from a distance in Revelation 19***. As we saw in chapter 1, this book is the Unveiling - the Revealing - of the full glory and power and holiness and goodness of Jesus. How amazing is it that the Almighty One - the King of Kings and Lord of lords; the Faithful and True; the Word of God; the One with a name no one knows - the Lamb of God who is the Lion of Judah. The blood soaked sacrifice who will stain his robes with the blood of his enemies.

That’s my king. Is he your king too?

Let’s pray.