

SOUL FOOD

DECEMBER 28, 2016

REVELATION 19

PRAISE FOR JUSTICE AND GRACE

Revelation 19 is divided into two parts. In the first part, John hears the roar of a great crowd in heaven shouting out various lines of unrestrained praise, joined by various others in doxological unity. The first stanza of adoration praises God because He has condemned the great prostitute demonstrating the truth and justice of His judgments. This stanza leads to a responsive chorus: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever," and the elders around the throne join in adoration. A voice from the throne exhorts all God's servants to join in praise—"you who fear him, both small and great"—and again John hears a vast multitude in the bliss of worship. Now the focus is less on God's justice in condemning the prostitute, and more on the sheer glory of the reign of "our Lord God Almighty" and on the imminent "wedding of the Lamb."

The second part of the chapter shows Jesus in some highly symbolic ways. From chapter 5 on Jesus is referred to most commonly as the Lamb and is now presented as a warrior riding a white horse. This warrior is called "Faithful and True"; His Name is "the Word of God" and His title is "King of kings and Lord of lords." He leads the armies of heaven in the final assault on the two beasts and on all who bear their mark. His weapon is a sharp sword that comes out of His mouth. He only has to speak to win. After all, it is His Word that created and upholds the universe.

This chapter is a vivid reminder that God is in absolute control, that He is to be praised for his just judgments on all that is evil, and that the agent who destroys all opposition in the end is none other than Jesus Christ. Moreover, all of this is communicated not only in apocalyptic language, but with the tongues of enthusiastic praise.

As we read of this heavenly praise and adoration of God we cannot help but want to join in with this worshipping throng. God is the Lord of Hosts, which is the language of a Warrior God in charge of a vast army of angelic warriors. This warrior, who is called "Faithful and True," has and will ultimately defeat all of those who have made themselves His enemies, both in the physical and spiritual realms. Upon His return Jesus will be praised both for His complete and righteous justice as well as His glorious grace and mercy. The New Earth that He will usher in will be completely void of all vestiges of darkness, sin, and death. May our worship more and more reflect this reality and inform our joy and praise.