

ARE YOU READY?

Text: Revelation 19:6-8

Read: Matthew 22:1-14

1: A voice shouting

2: Praise God!

Why? For the Lord God Almighty reigns

3: Rejoice, give God glory!

Why? For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.

Are you ready?

And so: Praise God! Rejoice! For God reigns, and the wedding of the Lamb will come.

Rev 19:6-8

Dear Congregation

There are times each year that we love to celebrate as a nation - just think of New Years Eve, and Australia Day.

There are times that we love to celebrate as families. A week or so ago our family went out and celebrated. Another term had come to an end, the kids had good reports, and so we went out and enjoyed a good meal together at a restaurant.

And don't we all do that sort of thing, as individuals, in our families, as a church. We celebrate the good things in life, the milestones, the goals we achieve.

And doxologies in the Bible like the one in these verses are calls to celebrate too – to praise God, glorify him, to rejoice, and be glad. And these verses give us the reasons for doing that as well.

Point 1

The apostle John starts here by *describing the voice that shouts out this call* to praise God.

Have you ever heard the roar of a crowd of thousands shouting – maybe at a football game as Geelong wins the premiership, maybe at a concert. John says this voice was something like that.

And have you ever stood at the foot of a big waterfall – like the Niagara falls, or looked out over flood waters rushing over a dam wall. John says this voice sounded something like that too.

Have you ever had lightning strike near you during an electrical storm - jumped out of your skin at the loud

crack of thunder that followed it. Well John says this voice was something like that as well.

John has trouble describing this voice to others who haven't heard it themselves. But at least he knew a few things that it reminded him of.

And as you read through the book of Revelation, you discover that this is often the voice of God himself. In Revelation 1:15 it's the voice of Jesus. It's the same voice that prophets like Ezekiel heard already back in the Old Testament. At other times in Revelation it's the voice of an angel, or the great multitude of saints gathered before God's throne.

Point 2

And in verse 1 of this chapter, and again in verse 5, and then again here in verse 6, and also in the other doxologies in Revelation, you see the kinds of things that this voice shouts. *It shouts out a call to praise God* – you see that there in verse 5. And in fact, the “Hallelujah” in the other verses is a word based on the Hebrew for ‘Praise the Lord’ – it says the same thing. This is a call to praise God, to worship him. This is how we start each church service, with God's call for us to worship him.

I suspect that we've all been to a talent night, or a variety night. The MC introduces each act. And as he walks back on stage after each one, what does he say? ‘Let's give them a hand’ – let's acknowledge their ability, the skill they've demonstrated, the hard work and effort that's gone into putting this act together. And everyone does, and gives them a clap.

And that's the kind of thing that this call to worship is – a call to acknowledge the God that God is, and the things he has done.

And so what is it here that we're called to praise God for? And *we're called to praise him because he is the Lord God Almighty who reigns*. He is the Lord – the master of everything. He is the one and only God – there are no other Gods beside him. And he is Almighty – sovereign – everything is under his control. He

reigns – he is the ruler over the heavens and the earth.

In fact you get a sense of the God that he is as you look back to chapter 18 and his destruction of godless humanity generally, as it stands against him in stubborn rebellion. The symbol used there for that is Babylon.

Babylon is a name we're probably familiar with because the Babylonian Empire took Judah into exile in the Old Testament.

But go back even further and you come to the tower of Babel. That's where the name first pops up in the Old Testament, in a slightly different form. You'll remember that at Babel humanity in general decided to set themselves up against God in rebellion to him. Rather than fill the earth and multiply and subdue the earth the way God had commanded, they decided to settle down together and build a tower that reached to the heavens. They decided to make a name for themselves rather than glorify God and serve him.

And God dealt with that defiant shaking of their fist at him by confusing their languages and using that confusion to disperse them the way he intended them to. He continued to address humanity's sin and rebellion by calling Abram out of that area, and bringing him to Canaan as his covenant partner.

And you see from chapter 18 that at the end of time, God will end this rebellion by humanity in general once and for all. "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

And so, why praise God? Because he is the God that reigns. He is the God that has everything under his control.

Point 3

And then as well as praising God, *rejoice and be glad, and give him the glory!*

One thing you see here is that praising God and worshipping him isn't meant to be a boring and a dreary

business.

Some people and churches seem to think that worshipping God involves dutiful boredom and monotony and long faces. But that's not what praising, worshipping and glorifying God is about at all. Praising God and giving him glory goes hand in hand with rejoicing and being glad. This is a celebration.

On the other hand, that doesn't mean that we need to engineer and manipulate an artificial experience either. Praising God doesn't mean hype either. Both extremes are wrong.

But a heart-felt joy and gladness, as we praise and worship God, outwardly expressed in ways that are natural and appropriate, is good and right and what God is looking for.

And why can we to celebrate like that? And it's because *the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.*

We saw from Matthew 22 that this is imagery that Jesus used during his days on earth as well.

In fact, if you go back into the Old Testament – to books like Hosea - God regularly pictured himself as a husband to his adulterous wife Israel as she conducted her affairs with the idols of the nations. But you see that at the end of time, as Jesus the Lamb returns as bridegroom, his bride the church will be ready, and there will be a wedding celebration.

In fact, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning, this is a premonition of that eternal wedding reception that we'll enjoy with God in glory after Jesus returns. In fact it's more than a premonition, it's already sharing in it, by faith. At the table this morning, Jesus is the bridegroom, and we his church are the bride, in intimate, loving, faithful relationship with him.

Which should then also have us considering *what it takes to be eligible to attend this Supper.* How do you evaluate whether you should come to the table this morning, or not? How do you know if you're dressed for the occasion? You don't want to be the person in Jesus' parable in Mt 22 who wasn't wearing wedding clothes and was thrown out.

And verse 8 gives us the answer. Jesus' bride has been given linen, bright and clean to wear – the righteous

acts of the saints. And I know that the NIV translates ‘righteous acts’ here, but first of all the word simply means ‘righteousness’. God has given his holy ones righteousness to wear – the perfect righteousness that Jesus earned for us on the cross - a righteousness not our own, God’s gift to us, received by faith, as we turn from living lives of sin and instead live lives committed to him in obedience and service.

And so the first question to ask yourself is whether you have committed yourself to God through faith in Jesus, your Saviour, ruler of your life?

And then the other question to also ask is whether that commitment has translated into action – ‘righteous acts’ as the NIV puts it here. Are you living out the commitment to Jesus that you say you have?

Or are you just continuing to put up with unrepented sin in your life? Has your professed commitment had any impact on the way you live? Righteous acts are the proof of faith. As James says, faith without deeds is dead – it is no faith.

But if you have received, through faith, the righteousness that only God can give; and are living that out in practical righteous living by the power of the Holy Spirit; then you have the white robes of righteousness that are the prerequisite for attending the Lord’s Supper this morning; and Jesus welcomes you to his table as one part of the body that is his bride.

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And so,

as we worship God generally in all of life, as we worship him together during this service, as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper in a moment,

let’s praise God for the great and gracious God that he is, let’s do that joyfully, gladly,

because God is reigning on his throne over the heavens and earth,

and one day their will be a wedding for the Lamb that was slain and His bride.