



## Part 20: Rival Lovers: Babylon or Jesus?

Revelation 19:1-9

*Jesus died to make us lovers more than believers.*

### JESUS' GOAL FOR US

A message to the men ...

***“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:6-7***

Biblical metaphors for our relationship with God in Jesus Christ include servant/slave, ambassador, friend, child, and bride. It's no accident that the metaphor used to describe the culmination of our salvation is that of the husband and wife.

The marriage relationship expresses the deepest love and intimacy possible between two people. The marriage relationship is based on a self-sacrificing love that puts the other first.

### ***“What do you want?” (Jesus) John 1:38***

*“What do you want? That's the question. It is the first, last, and most fundamental question of Christian discipleship. ... It's the question that is buried under almost every other question Jesus asked each of us. ... This is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because we are what we want. Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. ... Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.”*

*James K.A. Smith, “You Are What You Love”*

*“Jesus’ command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his - to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and create a world where he is all in all - a vision encapsulated by the shorthand ‘the kingdom of God.’”*  
James K.A. Smith, *“You Are What You Love”*

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## RIVAL LOVERS: BABYLON OR JESUS?

This life is a great battle for our hearts – for what will we give our ultimate love to?

- Babylon, the Mother of Prostitutes (Revelation 17-18, 19:1-2)

***“He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”***  
*Revelation 19:2*

***“There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ... The title was written on her forehead:***

*Mystery*

*Babylon the Great*

*The Mother of Prostitutes*

***And of the Abominations of the Earth.” Rev. 17:3, 5***

Babylon was code in apocalyptic literature for humanity seeking to build a society without God. Babylon represents the world opposed to God. Babylon was recognized as any nation or power seeking to destroy God’s people.

***“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” 1 John 2:15-17***

- Jesus the Slain Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8)

***“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” Revelation 19:6-8*** (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

- The Call to Loyal Love (Revelation 18:2-5)

***“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit ... All the nations had drunk the***

*maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries. Then I heard another voice from heaven say: 'Come out of her so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.'*" Revelation 18:2-5

*"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."* 1 John 3:2-3

Salvation is relational and personal before it is intellectual and transactional. Sin is spiritual adultery.

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## THE SHAPE OF THE GOSPEL

Behind the imagery of the Bride and Bridegroom metaphor is the Jewish custom of marriage. There were three steps that we also see give the Gospel its shape.

- The betrothal, in which the groom would leave his father's house, accompanied by his best man, to the prospective bride's house. The groom would finalize arrangements with the bride's father, setting a "purchase price." If the woman accepted, a new covenant was established between them, sealed by the drinking of a cup of wine – "this cup is a new covenant." The woman was now consecrated exclusively to the groom. At this point they are "betrothed," which could only be broken by divorce.
- The couple would remain apart for up to a year while the groom was preparing a home for them. As serious as the betrothal was, they would not consummate their covenant until their wedding night.
- At the end of the betrothal, the groom would make his way to the bride's house, dressed in festive attire and accompanied by his best man and friends. The bride, veiled and accompanied by her maidens, would come out to join the groom and his attendants. They would go together back to the groom's father's house where a wedding feast would take place that would last for 7 to 14 days!

*"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." Revelation 19:6-8* (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

*"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."*  
2 Corinthians 11:2

*More than anything Jesus wants lovers.*

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Look at the concept of rival lovers in Revelation. Specifically look at Rev. 2:4, 17:1-6, 18:4-5, and 19:1-9. What do these Scriptures teach us about our discipleship to Jesus?
- What is your response to the quotes by James Smith?
- How do you see "Babylon the great prostitute" operating in our culture today? What are the ways you are tempted to be seduced by her?
- Consider the main statement of the sermon – *"Jesus died to make us lovers more than believers."* What are the ways you are guarding your heart and love as well as your mind and thoughts? How do you cultivate your love of Jesus?