

THE UNVEILING

Session 13

The Supper of the Lamb and the Millennium

Revelation 19–20

A Fourteen-Session Inductive Study for Young Adults

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9, RSV2CE)

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group hears heaven's Hallelujah declare the martyrs' prayer decisively answered concerning Babylon, receives the wedding invitation they hear at every Mass (blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb), watches the Rider win the last battle with a word and a robe dipped in blood before the fight, and learns to read the millennium the way the Church's mature tradition reads it: honestly, humbly, and without the calculators.

Catholic Touchstone. In the Roman Rite, the priest lifts the Host and says: Behold the Lamb of God... Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. The Church has placed Revelation 19:9 at the summit of her liturgy: the study's liturgy thread, planted at the Lord's Day reading of Session 1, resolves in the Communion rite.

What You Need to Know

Chapter 19 opens with the only Hallelujahs in the New Testament, four of them, and the first one states its reason: for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot... and has avenged on her the blood of his servants (19:1–2). There is the last echo of the study's longest thread: the how long? of the fifth seal (6:10), carried up as incense (8:3–5), declared just at the bowls (16:5–7), is now answered in full and sung. (A translation note worth giving your leaders: the RSV2CE prints Hallelujah here; the liturgy's traditional Latin spelling is Alleluia: one word, two spellings, no difference in meaning.)

Then the announcement the whole book has been arranging: the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready (19:7). The counterfeit catalog completes in reverse: over against Babylon's purple and scarlet stands the Bride in fine linen, bright and pure. And 19:8 carries one of the most doctrinally beautiful sentences in Scripture, worth slowing down for: it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen... for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Both halves at once: granted (the clothing is grace, given, never self-made) and yet the linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (the grace becomes really ours, woven into real acts). This is the Catholic doctrine of grace and merit in a single verse: our merits are God's gifts (CCC 2008–2009), and God's gifts become our deeds. The wedding dress is grace, tailored from a lifetime of graced choices. Then the beatitude the Mass quotes: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9): the supper glimpsed at the door of Laodicea (3:20), promised in the hidden manna (2:17), is now named as a wedding feast, and the Church sets it before the faithful at every Eucharist, the pledge and foretaste of this table (CCC 1329, 1402–1405).

The Rider on the white horse (19:11–16) is the book's full-dress portrait of Christ the King: Faithful and True, eyes of flame (Session 1's vision returning), many diadems, the sharp sword issuing from his mouth (his weapon is his word: compare Isaiah 11:4; Hebrews 4:12; he slays with truth, not steel), the rod of iron of Psalm 2, and the name written: King of kings and Lord of lords. And one detail your group planted three sessions ago now pays off: he is clad in a robe dipped in blood (19:13) before any battle begins. Isaiah 63's winepress-treader arrives with garments already stained: the tradition's instinct stands written on the Rider for many readers: the blood on the conqueror is, first, his own: Calvary his war record (Isaiah 63 itself speaks of enemies' blood; both readings live in the commentaries), and the armies of heaven behind him wear not armor but fine linen, white and pure: the wedding-garment fabric just given the Bride (their identity is disputed; the matching linen is the text's visual point). The battle itself (19:17–21) is over in a breath: no combat is narrated; the beast and false prophet are simply taken and thrown into the lake of fire, their armies slain by the sword of his mouth. Every Armageddon anxiety of Session 11 lands here: the armies gather for war (19:19), and no combat is narrated: the assembled war is over at a word. Note also the grim counter-image John frames deliberately: an angel summons the birds to the great supper of God, carrion on the field (19:17–18). The book sets two suppers

before every reader: the marriage supper of the Lamb, or the supper of the birds, at which the defeated are not guests but the fare. Every reader is confronted with the two.

Chapter 20 is the most disputed passage in the book; teach it with the Church's honesty. The text: Satan bound for a thousand years; the souls of the martyrs come to life and reign with Christ a thousand years (the first resurrection); Satan released for a last deception (Gog and Magog, names from Ezekiel 38–39), defeated by fire from heaven, and thrown into the lake of fire; then the great white throne, the books, and the book of life. The history, told straight: some early Fathers (Papias of Hierapolis, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus among them) expected a future earthly reign of Christ with the saints (chiliasm or millenarianism), and St. Justin himself records that many pious, orthodox Christians of his own day thought otherwise: the diversity is ancient and honest. The reading that became the Church's mainstream is St. Augustine's (City of God, Book 20): the thousand years is the age of the Church between the two comings (a thousand as ten cubed: completeness of time, not a calendar entry); the binding of Satan is Christ's victory restraining the deceiver so the gospel can reach the nations (the strong man bound, Matthew 12:29); the first resurrection is the soul's rising to life in baptism and grace (compare John 5:24–25: the hour now is when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live), while the martyrs already reign with Christ in heaven; and the release at the end is the final crisis the Church still awaits (CCC 675–677). What the Church has actually defined is narrower than either camp's full scheme and firmer than agnosticism: Christ will come again in glory; there will be one general resurrection of the dead and one Last Judgment (CCC 998–1001; 1038–1041); and the Church has rejected millenarianism, even in modified forms: the claim that the messianic hope will be realized within history in a visible earthly reign before the end (CCC 676). Within those rails, exegetical discussion continues lawfully; outside them, it does not.

The great white throne (20:11–15) closes two of the study's oldest accounts. The books are opened, and the dead are judged by what they had done (the deeds that follow, Session 10); and another book is opened, which is the book of life: planted in Session 3 (3:5, I will not blot his name out), it resolves here: the ledger of deeds is real, and yet inclusion in the Lamb's book is what saves. Then the sentence that ends death itself: Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The keys Christ held in 1:18 find, in the study's callback, their final turning: death locked inside its own grave: the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26), and this is the second death, from which the conquerors were promised immunity all the way back in 2:11.

Pastoral note. Two chapters, two suppers, one throne. Keep the evening's center of gravity at the wedding feast, where the book itself puts it, and let the millennium discussion be honest but brief: it is the classic place where study groups burn an hour on the one question the Church has deliberately fenced rather than answered. The lake of fire texts should be handled with Session 10's two hands already in the room. And end on 19:9: everyone in your group has heard this verse at Mass without knowing they were being handed a wedding invitation; tonight they know.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Isaiah 63:1–6: the winepress-treader with stained garments: the Rider's robe dipped in blood before battle (19:13) is this text arriving, read through Calvary. Payoff discovery tonight.
- Psalm 2:6–9: the King on Zion, the rod of iron, the raging nations: quoted at 19:15 for the third time in the book; the psalm's plot completes tonight.
- Isaiah 11:4: he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth: the sword-from-the-mouth (19:15) has prophetic ancestry: the Messiah's weapon is his word.
- Isaiah 25:6–9: the feast of rich food on this mountain, death swallowed up, tears wiped away: the marriage supper's oldest menu (leader background; read it aloud during Question 2 if time allows).

- Ezekiel 38–39: Gog and Magog, the last coalition against God’s people, and (39:17–20) the summons of the birds to a sacrificial feast: both reused in 19:17–18 and 20:8.
- Daniel 7:9–10, 22: thrones placed, court in session, books opened, judgment given for the saints: the grammar of 20:4 and 20:11–12.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Ignatius of Antioch · *Letter to the Ephesians*

Not long after Revelation, on its traditional dating, St. Ignatius called the Eucharist the medicine of immortality, the antidote against dying, that we should live forever in Jesus Christ. The marriage supper of the Lamb is not only ahead of us; its medicine is already on the altar. The martyr-bishop wrote that line on the road to the beasts, which is what it sounds like when a man knows which supper he is invited to.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Justin Martyr · *Dialogue with Trypho (summary)*

St. Justin, who himself expected a future reign of the saints, records with candor, in substance, that many Christians of pure and pious faith thought otherwise. Our earliest clear window onto the millennium question shows faithful Christians already differing by the mid-second century: a fact worth more than any scheme, and the model for how your group should hold chapter 20 tonight.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine · *City of God, Book 20 (summary)*

St. Augustine teaches, in substance, that the thousand years is the whole present age of the Church, in which Satan is bound so that the nations can be gathered, and the first resurrection is the soul’s rising from death to grace, so that the saints reign with Christ even now. His reading became the mainstream of the Church’s tradition: the millennium is not a future headline; you are standing in it.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 676: the Church has rejected millenarianism, even in modified forms: the kingdom will not be fulfilled within history by a visible earthly reign before the end; with CCC 668–670: Christ already reigns, and the kingdom is already present in mystery in the Church.
- CCC 1329 and 1402–1405: the Eucharist as the wedding feast’s pledge and foretaste: the marriage supper of the Lamb anticipated at every Mass.
- CCC 2008–2009: merit as God’s gift: the grace-and-deeds doctrine of the Bride’s linen (19:8).
- CCC 998–1001 and 1038–1041: the resurrection of the dead at the Lord’s coming, and the Last Judgment: the dead judged by their deeds, truth about each life laid bare: the doctrine of the great white throne.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

FURNITURE OF HEAVEN, CRESCENDO TONIGHT at 19:9: the inventory the group assembled at the Session 9 Assembly (from the Lord’s Day through the Sanctus, the incense, and the supper at the

door, to the ark) tonight learns what it has all been set for: the wedding feast the Mass quotes. When the group hears the Ecce Agnus Dei connection, walk the whole thread aloud; they built it themselves in Session 9, and tonight the liturgy they discovered is revealed as a wedding.

HOW LONG? THREAD: final echo at 19:2 (avenged the blood of his servants). One sentence connecting 6:10, 8:3–5, 16:5–7, 19:2, then let it rest: the thread is complete.

BOOK OF LIFE RESOLVES at 20:12, 15: connect back to 3:5 aloud.

Winepress payoff: the robe dipped in blood BEFORE battle (19:13): connect to Session 10's Isaiah 63 discovery explicitly.

Counterfeit thread: Bride's linen versus harlot's scarlet; marriage supper versus the birds' supper. Name both contrasts.

Second death (20:14) cashes the promise of 2:11: the conquerors' immunity. Final resolution of that clause next session (21:7–8).

Millennium discipline: honest, brief, fenced by CCC 676. Do not let the session become a chiasm seminar; the timed plan caps it.

Session Goals

1. The group hears 19:1–2 as the martyrs' prayer fully answered and can trace the whole how-long thread.
2. The group discovers the grace-and-deeds doctrine inside 19:8 (granted, yet the deeds are the linen).
3. The group connects 19:9 to the words of every Mass: the Furniture of Heaven thread reaches its wedding.
4. The group reads the Rider's robe through Isaiah 63 and Calvary, and the battle as a word, not a war.
5. The group can state what the Church has defined about the millennium (and what she has left open) in three sentences.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

- Opening prayer: 5 min
- Win questions: 10 min
- Build (Revelation 19–20, with discovery passages; cap the millennium question at 12 minutes): 45–55 min
- Send questions: 8 min
- Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer, distribute Take-Home 13: 7–10 min

Pre-chosen cuts if time runs short: drop the Dig Deeper box, and take Gog and Magog (inside Question 5) as one leader sentence: Ezekiel's last-coalition names, reused symbolically.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Father, you have invited us to the marriage supper of the Lamb: make us ready. Clothe us in the linen of graced deeds, seat us at the table we taste at every Mass, and write our names, in your mercy, in the Lamb's book of life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

1. What is the best wedding you have ever attended? What made the celebration what it was?
2. When you hear the words at Mass, Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb, what have you usually thought they meant, if anything?

Build

Read Revelation 19:1–5 aloud.

3. Four Hallelujahs: the only ones in the New Testament. Read 19:2 again: what exactly is heaven praising God for, and which prayer, carried through our whole study, is being declared answered? Trace the thread out loud as a group.

ANSWER · share after the discussion

His judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot... and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. The thread, complete: the martyrs under the altar prayed how long? (6:10); their prayers rose as incense and the censer's fire fell (8:3–5); the altar declared the judgments true and just as the bowls poured (16:5–7); Babylon's file recorded the blood of prophets and saints (18:24); and now heaven sings the Babylon case closed: avenged (the beast, the false prophet, the dragon, and death itself still await their sentences tonight). The New Testament's only Hallelujahs are sung over answered martyrs. (Translation note: our RSV2CE prints Hallelujah; the liturgy's Latin spelling is Alleluia: same word, same shout.)

Read Revelation 19:6–9 aloud, slowly.

4. The marriage of the Lamb has come. Look hard at 19:8: what was granted to the Bride, and what does the text say the fine linen actually is? Hold both halves of the verse at once: what does this teach about grace and our deeds? And where do Catholics hear 19:9 every single week?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

It was granted her to be clothed: the dress is a gift, grace from first to last; she did not weave her own worthiness. And yet: the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints: the gift becomes real deeds, really hers. Scripture refuses to choose between grace and graced works, and so does the Church: our merits are themselves God's gifts (CCC 2008–2009): the wedding dress is grace, tailored from a lifetime of graced choices. Set the Bride beside Babylon on purpose: purple and scarlet bought with blood, versus linen bright and pure granted and lived. Two women, two wardrobes, two economies.

And 19:9 lives at Mass: Behold the Lamb of God... Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb: the Roman Rite's invitation adapts this very verse over the raised Host. Walk the study's liturgy thread home as a group: blessed is the one who reads aloud on the Lord's Day (1:3, 10); the Sanctus of the throne room (4:8); the incense of the saints' prayers (5:8; 8:3); Christ knocking to come in

and eat (3:20); the hidden manna (2:17); and now the wedding feast, of which every Eucharist is the pledge and foretaste (CCC 1329, 1402–1405). Your group has been at this table all along; next Sunday they will hear the invitation with new ears.

Read Revelation 19:11–16 aloud, then 19:17–21.

5. The Rider: gather his portrait (names, eyes, weapon, robe, escort, title). Discovery payoff: three sessions ago we read Isaiah 63:1–3 and were told to remember it. Look at 19:13: when is the Rider's robe dipped in blood, and whose blood has the tradition therefore read it to be, first of all? Then look at how the battle actually goes: how long does it take, and what wins it?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Faithful and True; eyes like a flame of fire (the Christ of Session 1); many diadems; the sword issuing from his mouth (Isaiah 11:4: the Messiah slays with the rod of his mouth: his weapon is his word: truth itself; compare Hebrews 4:12); the armies of heaven in fine linen, white and pure (wedding-garment fabric: heaven's army dressed like the Bride, whoever precisely they are); and the name: King of kings and Lord of lords. And the robe: dipped in blood before the battle begins. Isaiah's winepress-treader arrives with garments already stained, and the reading the tradition planted in us three sessions ago now stands written for many readers: the blood on the conqueror is, first, his own (Isaiah's own oracle speaks of enemies' blood, and some read Revelation so; the pre-battle staining is the Calvary reading's strength). Calvary his war record, he rides out already victorious, and the rod-of-iron psalm the book has quoted three times (2:27; 12:5; 19:15) completes its plot.

Then the war that never becomes a fight: the armies gather to make war (19:19), yet no combat is narrated, no swing described; the beast and the false prophet are simply taken, and the rest fall to the sword of his mouth. Every kings-of-the-earth muster since Psalm 2 ends this way: he who sits in the heavens speaks, and it is over. And catch John's severe mercy in the framing: an angel summons the birds to the great supper of God (Ezekiel's carrion feast, 39:17–20). Two suppers are set in this chapter: the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the supper of the birds, at which the impenitent are not guests but carrion. The book is not subtle about the confrontation it sets before every life.

Read Revelation 20:1–6 aloud.

6. The millennium: the most argued-over verses in the book. Leader, give the honest picture in three layers: what some early Fathers expected, what reading became the Church's mainstream, and what the Church has actually defined versus left open. Group: which layer surprises you most?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Layer one, the early diversity: some Fathers (Papias of Hierapolis, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus among them) expected a future earthly reign of Christ with the saints; and St. Justin himself candidly records that many pious, orthodox Christians of his own day read it otherwise. The diversity is as old as the question. Layer two, the mainstream: St. Augustine's reading (City of God, Book 20): the thousand years is the present age of the Church (ten cubed: completeness of time, not a calendar entry); the binding of Satan is Christ's victory restraining the deceiver so the nations can be gathered (the strong man bound, Matthew 12:29); the first resurrection is the soul's rising to life in grace (John 5:24–25: the hour now is when the dead hear his voice and live), while the martyrs reign with Christ in heaven already. On this reading, you are standing in the millennium tonight. Layer three, the defined rails (CCC 676 with 668–670; resurrection and judgment at CCC 998–1001 and 1038–1041): Christ will come again in glory; there is one universal resurrection and one Last Judgment; Christ already reigns through the Church in mystery; and the Church has rejected millenarianism even in modified forms: no visible earthly messianic reign within history before the

end. Inside those rails, discussion is lawful and the Church has not canonized every detail of any scheme, including Augustine's exegesis; outside them, it is not. Three sentences for the road: Christ reigns now; Christ returns once, in glory, to judge; nobody gets a thousand-year earthly kingdom before that, and nobody gets the date.

Read Revelation 20:7–15 aloud.

7. The last deception (Gog and Magog), and then the great white throne. Two books are opened at the throne: what is each, which one have we been tracking since Session 3, and what finally happens to Death itself? Whose keys made that possible?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Gog and Magog are Ezekiel's names (chapters 38–39) for the last coalition against God's people, reused here symbolically for Satan's final, brief deception: fire from heaven ends it, and the devil joins the beast and false prophet in the lake of fire: the whole counterfeit trinity, disposed of. Then the throne: the books (plural) record what the dead had done: the deeds that follow (14:13; Session 10), for the judgment is truthful about every life (CCC 1038–1041); and the other book is the book of life: planted at 3:5 (I will not blot his name out), resolved here: deeds are weighed, and yet belonging to the Lamb, being in his book, is what saves. The two books together are grace and works in judgment form, exactly as 19:8 was in wedding form. And then the sentence the whole Bible has been waiting for: Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The one who said in Session 1, I have the keys of Death and Hades (1:18), here, in the study's symbolic callback, turns them at last: death locked inside its own grave: the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). This is the second death, and the very first promise to the conquerors (2:11) was immunity from it. Next week: what life looks like when death is dead.

BUILD, THEN PRESS: DOES REVELATION 20 PLAINLY TEACH A FUTURE EARTHLY MILLENNIUM?

Present this at full strength before answering. A thoughtful premillennial Christian argues: read the chapter in order and it could not be clearer: Christ returns (chapter 19), then Satan is bound and the saints reign a thousand years (chapter 20), then the last judgment. The earliest Fathers closest to the apostles (Papias, Justin, Irenaeus) read it exactly this way; came to life must mean bodily resurrection, since it is called the first resurrection alongside a second; and Augustine's church-age reading was a later spiritualizing retreat that flattens the text. Honest exegesis is premillennial, and Rome traded the plain sense for a system.

8. Concede what deserves concession. Then answer: what does the plain-sequence argument have to ignore, and where has the Church actually planted her flag?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Concede honestly: the premillennial reading is ancient, held by revered Fathers, and it is the surface order of the visions; anyone sneering at it as a modern invention is wrong, and St. Justin's testimony cuts both ways: he held it, and he testifies that faithful Christians did not. The question was open in the second century.

But the plain-sequence argument must ignore how this book has taught us to read it for nineteen chapters. Revelation recapitulates: it circles the same history in sevens rather than marching a timeline (we have watched the end arrive at the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet, and the bowls already); its numbers are pervasively symbolic (seven, twelve, three and a half, 144,000), which cautions against suddenly reading a literal calendar thousand; and came to life for the martyrs' souls sits beside our Lord's own words that the hour now is when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live (John 5:24–25), in a Gospel, from the same Johannine circle, that then speaks of one

hour when all in the tombs rise together to judgment (John 5:28–29): one general resurrection, which is also the Creed's. Scripture elsewhere binds Christ's return to the judgment and the new creation (Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Peter 3:10–13; CCC 1001), leaving no obvious room for an intervening earthly regime. And the Church has planted her flag with care: she does not anathematize the Fathers who hoped for a millennium, but she has rejected millenarianism even in mitigated forms: the kingdom will not be realized within history as a visible earthly reign (CCC 676), not because the Fathers' hope was the deception, but because its secularized, intrahistorical forms are: a messianism inside history is the beast's specialty, and it is those forms CCC 676 names. What chapter 20 gives the Church to live on is not a schedule but a location: Satan bound, the gospel running to the nations, the martyrs reigning, and the saints already risen in grace: the millennium as your present address, with the King's return as your horizon.

DIG DEEPER

The Ecce Agnus Dei. At Mass the priest says: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (adapting John the Baptist's words, John 1:29), then: Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb (a liturgical adaptation of Revelation 19:9). The Church has stitched the first chapter of the Lamb's story to its last, and she says it over the Host: because the Eucharist is where the two meet. Next Sunday, answer the invitation knowing both texts: Lord, I am not worthy... only say the word: which is, fittingly, how the centurion answered the Rider whose sword is his word.

Send

9. The Bride's linen is woven from granted deeds. If your wedding garment were woven only from this past month, what would it look like, and what one graced deed would you want added to the weave before we meet again?
10. Two suppers are set: the Lamb's and the birds'. What in your life is currently RSVPing to the wrong table?

Live It This Week

- At Mass this week, when you hear Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb, answer it deliberately as Revelation 19:9: you are being handed a wedding invitation.
- Add one thread to the linen: the graced deed you named in the Send questions: done, not planned, before next session.
- Read Revelation 21–22 for our final session.
- Memorize the memory verse below.

Memory Verse

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: make us ready for the marriage supper; clothe us in linen we could never weave alone; and when the books are opened, let our names be found written in yours. Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed. Amen.

Distribute Take-Home 13 as people leave.

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 13, in order:

- Revelation 19:1–5 (read aloud; connect 6:10; 8:3–5; 16:5–7; 18:24)
- Revelation 19:6–9 (read aloud)
- Isaiah 25:6–9 (leader background; optional read-aloud in Question 2)
- Revelation 19:11–21 (read aloud)
- Isaiah 63:1–3 (payoff discovery; planted Session 10)
- Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 2:6–9; Hebrews 4:12 (leader background, the sword of the mouth)
- Ezekiel 39:17–20 (leader background, the birds' supper)
- Revelation 20:1–6 (read aloud; Matthew 12:29; John 5:24–25 leader background)
- Revelation 20:7–15 (read aloud; Ezekiel 38–39; Daniel 7:9–10, 22 leader background)
- John 5:28–29; Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Peter 3:10–13 (steelman answer)
- 1 Corinthians 15:26 (Death destroyed)
- Memory verse: Revelation 19:9