

Revelation 19 pt 2  
The Marriage Supper

Weddings are supposed to be times of rejoicing and gladness. They are so important that the end result of the relationship of Christ and the church is seen as a marriage, which is celebrated at the Marriage supper of the Lamb.

There is no marriage in heaven because of this spiritual reality – we are married to Christ.

BUT WHAT ABOUT XMAS???

This is what the Incarnation, the first advent was for...to launch the process of Jesus giving his life for His bride.

Christmas is not just about a manger and shepherds and wise men. Ultimately it is about a Marriage Feast

6 Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,  
“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he *said* to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ” And he *said* to me, “These are true words of God.”

10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he *said* to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Royal Weddings are big draws on TV. This is the ULTIMATE ROYAL WEDDING.

We touched on this passage two weeks ago with the fourth Hallelujah, but we need to come back to it today to get a deeper sense of the meaning of this Marriage Supper and the eternal marriage of Christ and His Bride.

\*\* NOTE

Sadly, we live in an age where the biblical concept of marriage that has been the foundation of human societies and human flourishing for thousands of years has been changed and distorted. This has been going on for quite some time. But just recently we’ve even seen Congress pass and the President sign a law that reshapes marriage into whatever any state wants it to be.

What makes this so important is that it distorts that which is the foundational relationship of culture, that which was designed by God from the beginning, that which is a picture of Christ and the Church, that which is pictured here at the consummation of the ages in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Some may say, “Well, we can’t impose our theological view of marriage on society.”

SOMEONE’S view is going to be imposed, so why not stand for the view that has worked throughout human history. Every view carries a theological meaning with it, and the biblical meaning offers the best option for pro-creation and personal and cultural flourishing. The bible does not apologize for its view of marriage; neither should we.

Fortunately, God’s plan will not be thwarted and in this text, we see the end result of why Jesus came – to purchase for Himself a Bride.

In chapters 17-19 The harlot Babylon is removed, and the Bride of Christ takes center stage.

Let's look at what the wedding of the ancient world of the Bible teaches us about the Ultimate Wedding of Christ and His Bride, the Church.

*The Wedding in the Ancient World* WM Hendriksen gives some helpful background on this

Let's review a few aspects of a regular wedding in antiquity in order to draw the points of comparison to the wedding of the Lamb. Then we can pull them together and see how it applies to our lives.

Basically, the marriage revolves around two major events. **The betrothal and the wedding feast.**

**The first major event, the Betrothal, is similar to our engagement.** But with far greater legal ramification. As we learn in the Christmas story.

*When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to divorce her secretly (Matt. 1). 2*

Mary is betrothed to Joseph who desires to secretly divorce her. To break a betrothal is essentially a divorce even though the wedding has not yet occurred. Betrothal is what validates the marriage according to the law. It was the ancient world equivalent of a marriage license. From the day of the betrothal, the groom and bride are legally husband and wife. "*Joseph her husband, ...desired to divorce her secretly*". Betrothal is what legalizes the marriage. It doesn't consummate the marriage, but it does legalize the marriage.

**The second major event is the wedding feast.**

The feast includes the wedding supper during which the vows are exchanged. Yet the wedding is not a 30-minute ceremony followed by a reception that last a few hours. Rather, the feast is a week-long party, sometimes lasting as long as two weeks. The feast is considered a community holiday. Which explains the crisis at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, when the host runs out of wine.

In his first miracle, Jesus provides what is needed. Such is the magnitude and intensity of the wedding feast. It was a multi-day party to celebrate.

**In between the betrothal and the wedding feast there is an interval, a time of separation during which the bride and groom prepare for the wedding.** During this interval, the groom pays the dowry to the father of the bride. Sometimes the dowry is money or goods like clothes, cattle.

Often the dowry is service rendered. Like the dowry for Rachel: Jacob labors seven years to pay the price for her.

**After the dowry is paid and the long wait finally over, there is a wedding procession.**

Ex: a great scene in *Fiddler on the Roof* depicts this

The groom, decked out in his finest clothes and joined by his best friends goes to the home of the betrothed. He receives his bride, then takes her—at the front of this wedding parade—to his house. Then the wedding supper begins.

That event—the wedding supper—is what is announced in the text. It is a symbolic wedding, not a wedding of any human couple. The wedding is to consummate the kingdom of God. Verse 7, *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come.*

**The Wedding of Christ and the Church**

At this point, we would do well to remember the *Revelation* is a pastoral, apocalyptic, prophetic book of symbols intended to be read symbolically. When we read of Jesus as a *Lamb*, we should not think of Him as a small woolly creature with four legs.

Just as we don't interpret *Lamb* literally, nor should we interpret *marriage* literally. The *marriage* of the Lamb is a symbol, a metaphor, used to convey a profound mystery.

The apostle makes this clear in his letter to the Ephesians when addressing husbands and wives.<sup>32</sup> *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.* (Eph 5:32 NAS). 3

The mystery is Christ's marriage to the Church. Let's notice a few elements about Christ's marriage to the Church then compare it to the traditional wedding in antiquity.

#### First element. The Church is the bride of Christ.

This metaphor of marriage isn't new to the people of God. In the Old Testament, there is a preview of this marriage. God's relationship to Israel is compared to that of a husband to his wife. Israel is described as the bride of Yahweh. To Israel, God says, *I will betroth you to me forever* (Hos. 2:19). Since there is continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament—one big idea—so the marriage metaphor carries over to the New Testament. Christ is described as the Husband of God's people. A messianic claim that declares His deity and authority. Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church.

EX: last weekend I did a wedding and I spoke to the groom about the counter intuitive reality of being a good husband...He must first learn to be a BRIDE of Christ.

For the bride to be a good wife, she must first give her heart to the True Groom, Jesus. She must look to another man to meet her deepest needs.

#### The second element. The dowry.

Paul states, *25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.* Christ gives Himself to buy His bride. The dowry is His own life. He purchases her with His own blood. *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (Rev 5:9 NIV).

The dowry is paid by Christ's death on the cross. He took our place in order to pay the bridal price to the Father. This is a living portrayal of redemption. To redeem is to buy back. Like you might redeem a coupon to exchange for something of value. As Redeemer, Jesus comes to buy back His people, to pay the ransom price, to purchase them as a people for Himself. This is the underlying message of the Bible, the meta-narrative. The biblical story is the progressive unfolding history of redemption.

#### Third element. The interval between the betrothal and the wedding feast.

The era of the New Testament. This present age. Since Christ's ascension, the Church has anxiously awaited the bridegroom to come and take her to His wedding Feast. Meanwhile, what is the bride doing? Verse 8, *it was granted to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.* The bride is getting ready for the wedding. Putting on her beautiful wedding dress. Symbolic of what? Good works. Stated explicitly. *for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

So here we are back to what we saw two weeks ago in Titus, that we are to adorn the profession of the gospel by being zealous for good deeds.

While not being meritorious, good works are indispensable to the life of the Christian. Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.

It is by our works that we show or work out the salvation that we have received.

The Church is not saved by good works, but saved for good works. As Paul expresses to the **Ephesians 2:8** *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them* (Eph 2:8-10 NAS).

The original audience of this letter faced persecution for standing up for Jesus and his kingdom values. John commends them for their faith. We, who don't face such opposition, yet are also called to stand firm for Christ.

In this interval or this time of Advent, waiting for Christ to return, we are called to be about the work of God which includes bearing witness to Jesus. The mission of fulfilling the Great Commission is our calling as we await His return. "As you are going, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

<https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>

In a 2018 survey, 51% of church goers did not recognize the term "The Great Commission." Only 17% of those who'd heard of it could tell you where it is found in the NT. (Matt 28:18-20)

Finally, the wonderful and glorious day arrives. *Verse 9, And the angel said to me, "Write this: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'*

Throughout the Bible, the final climax of redemptive history is portrayed in the imagery of a feast. *Isaiah 25: 6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. ... 9 In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation" (Isa 25:6-9 NIV).*

It is encouraging for us as believers to compare this vision of an eternal relationship with God in which we know Him, and He knows us with the end of life vision of other religions and the secular religions..

In the biblical worldview, we are created in the image of God with a built-in dignity and value. We are loved by a personal divine being who has revealed Himself in creation, scriptural revelation, and the Christmas incarnation of His Son.

This personal relationship is unique in Christianity. No other religion has this vision or promise. In Islam, the best you can hope for is the status of a faithful servant, not an invitee to the marriage supper of the Lamb as a beloved Bride.

In our technocratic materialistic world, people are valued as consumers to be targeted, or even worse, we are the product to be sold.

EX: you go online and look at some product and within minutes you are receiving pop up ads, emails, or texts promoting a product like the one you were looking at. This happens because YOU and your information are the product that is sold to various companies. You have become the consumer and the product.

Doesn't that make you feel loved and valued?

*In a man-centered worldview, the final goal isn't an eternal marriage feast with the Lamb and His Bride, it is a vision of the machine as Messiah.*

EX: Henry Ford's book, My Philosophy of Industry, has a chapter entitled "Machinery, the New Messiah."

*When naturalism is our basis for reality and scientific materialism our source of authority, when consumerism becomes our purpose and product our identity, then what is Man but a number?*

*...Not only will Man subdue the forces of evil that are without; he will also subdue those that are within... he will obey the laws that are written in his heart; he will worship the divinity within him... Man then will be perfect; he will then be a creator; he will therefore be what the vulgar worship as a god. (Winwood Reade, The Martyrdom of Man 1887 Teichrib, Carl. Game of Gods: The Temple of Man in the Age of Re-Enchantment (p.77- 78).*

Is that a vision that grips your heart and makes you want to shout Hallelujah?

Friends, we are not numbers, products, or consumers. We were created by and for God to reflect His glory and to be partakers of that glory for eternity. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. He has made us His Bride.

**This biblical vision expressed in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, is so much bigger and more glorious than any secular materialist vision that could be imagined.**

Here in chapter 19 is the feast that occurs when death is swallowed up forever. When does that occur?

On the New Earth in the New Jerusalem. The feast to which Isaiah refers is the wedding supper of the Lamb, now announced by the angel to John.

This is the focus of our Advent Hope as we await His return.

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