

26. The marriage supper of the Lamb

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My wife Karen and I have seen many weddings. Some of them are really fancy, some are so down-to-earth. Some of them are ungodly, some are absolutely Christ centered. When we leave the weddings that were Christ centered, we feel that we were blessed and ministered. But the same time, when we leave the wedding ceremonies and receptions were ungodly, even though they might have spent a lot of money, we were not impressed.

In my opinion, it is important to make sure that everyone who are invited to see what Christ has done in the lives of the bride and groom and show them how important Jesus is in their lives, since He is the One who made them and bringing them together.

This morning, we are going to see the ultimate wedding feast or also known as marriage supper of the Lamb. The groom is none other than Jesus Christ Himself and the bride is the church, the born-again believers from all ages. That is us, folks, if you are a born-again Christian. What a feast that would be!

A. HEAVEN REJOICES FOR THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

Here's the question: Would you rather have dinner or be dined? The question can be answered from our own hearts through the issue that raised here in chapter 19 in the account of "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb" in heaven, and "the feast of all the birds" at Armageddon which we are going to study next week. One is glorious and beautiful, the other bloody and brutal. Reservations are now being taken. You will be at one or the other. I highly recommend the first.

Revelation 19:1-4 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! 2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." 3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

The word 'alleluia' is the Greek form of the Hebrew word 'hallelujah', which means "praise the Lord."

The apostate religious system and the satanic economic-political system led the world astray and polluted mankind. Both were guilty of persecuting God's people and martyring many of them.

The focus of worship is on the great works of God, specifically, His work of righteous judgment.

The people on earth wail following the destruction of Babylon. But heaven rejoices. Why? Because, although the natural tendency of people is to say, "Wasn't that a bit brutal, Lord? Did You really have to drop hundred-pound hailstones? Wouldn't thirty-pounders have done the job? What are You doing, Lord? Why do You allow such difficulty, tragedy and pain?" Chapter 19 shows us there is no such questioning in

heaven. It's not because there's a "No Questioning Allowed" sign in heaven, but because in heaven, the full picture becomes clear to us. And that which seemed to be so terrible, painful, and unnecessary on earth will seem brilliant, perfect and righteous from the vantage of heaven.

The same is true regarding trials in our lives presently. Why doesn't the Lord just show us the whole story now? Because He is teaching you and me to walk by faith and not by sight. Why? Because He knows that developing faith in you and me is absolutely necessary in light of what we will be doing throughout eternity.

B. OUR GOD REIGNS

Revelation 19:5-6 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Handel's inspired and glorious 'Hallelujah Chorus' draws from this text. As a matter of fact, when I was in college in Seoul, South Korea, it was a kind of tradition for the Korean National Philharmonic Orchestra to perform Handel's Messiah on New Year's Eve evening. I still don't know why?

God has been reigning on the throne of heaven, but He is now about to conquer the thrones of earth as well as the kingdom of satan and "the beast." In His sovereignty, He has permitted evil men and evil angels to do their worst. But now the time has come for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

C. THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

At a wedding, it is customary to focus attention on the bride. But in this case, it is the Bridegroom Jesus Christ who receives the honor!

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

"What did the bride wear?" is the usual question asked by ladies who couldn't be at the wedding. The Lamb's bride is dressed "the righteous acts of the saints".

When the bride, the church of Jesus Christ, arrived in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ, she was not at all beautiful. In fact, she was covered with spots, wrinkles and blemishes according to Paul in Eph. 5:27. But now she is radiant in her glory. She has "made herself ready" for the public ceremony.

Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Today, the church is "engaged" to Jesus Christ. And we love Him even though we have not seen Him. One day, He will return and take His bride to heaven which we

know as 'Rapture'. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, all of our works will be judged and all of our spots and blemishes removed. This being completed, the church will be ready to return to earth with her Bridegroom at the close of the Tribulation to reign with Him in glory. We know this as 'the Second Coming of Jesus Christ'.

To understand this 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb', we must understand the Jewish culture and their customs regarding wedding ceremony and marriage supper.

1) The Engagement

Historically, Jewish children would often be engaged by the age of two or three – sometimes before they were even born. That is, families that shared the same values and social standing would say, "If you have a daughter and I have a son, let's agree right now that they will marry each other." The Jewish people looked at marriage as far too important to be left up to the decision-making skills of young adults. So it was up to the father specifically to arrange with other father to whom his son or daughter would be engaged.

2) Betrothal

The engagement led to the betrothal – usually between the ages of twelve and fifteen for a young lady. At this point, bride and groom would perhaps meet for the first time, as the father of the groom would negotiate the bride price. The price would be based upon three variables.

First, it would be depend on the groom's father's wealth.

If the father of the groom was a rich man, he would pay a high price, so he doesn't look like a cheapskate.

Just as the Jewish father chose whom his child would marry, it's mind-boggling to realize that our heavenly Father elected us to be the bride for His Son. As proof of this intent, He paid the bride price, based first upon His wealth. How rich is our God? Neither all the gold in the world nor all of the galaxies in the universe would begin to reflect His wealth. Instead, the "bride price" God paid for us was something of which He had only one: His Son Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Second, the price would be determined by the bride's worth.

If she was attractive or otherwise gifted, her bride price would be higher.

We are not worth anything as we are in God's eyes. But God sees those who are born again as the ones who have purity and righteousness of Jesus.

Thirdly, the price was based upon the groom's work.

That is, in some cases it was up to the groom to pay the price.

The price Jesus paid for us is everything from Him. He took our iniquity and sins and died for us without any reservation.

A portion of the bride price would go to the bride to use as security in the event she was widowed or divorced. We can consider it as an advanced alimony.

The remainder of the bride price went to the bride's father in compensation for the fact that, unlike a son, his daughter wouldn't be able to carry on his name, help defend him, or take over the family business.

After at least a portion of the bride price was laid upon the table, a contract would be signed to further validate the agreement. Then, the prospective bride and groom would sip from a single cup of wine, at which point they were legally betrothed.

For the following year, the couple would not drink of the vine nor live together. The bride would begin to wear a veil, signifying that she was "taken." She would also begin to prepare her wedding dress, sometimes from material provided by the groom.

Jesus promised to us that He wouldn't drink the fruit of the vine until He does with us in heaven.

Mt 26:29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.

Meanwhile, the groom would begin construction on what is called in Hebrew "a little mansion" – a room built onto his father's house.

Again Jesus tells us that He would prepare a place for us while He waits for His Father's order to come and get us.

John 14:2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

When the father decided the preparations were complete, his son, wearing a crown, would be sent off to his wedding.

3) Wedding

Although the bride didn't know the exact day of her wedding, she knew it would most likely be in autumn to allow for the completion of harvest, and that it would most likely be on a Wednesday. Wednesday was the day couples got married because Thursday was the day the courts were opened. If it was discovered on her wedding day that the bride was not a virgin, she could easily be divorced the next day.

The Word of God says that we may know the season of the rapture, but we don't know the day nor the hours.

Matt 24:32-33 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!

Matt 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

As the preparation of her "little mansion" neared completion, the bride would begin to gather her friends to await the arrival of her groom.

Jesus talks about five wise virgins who waited for the arrival of the groom and the five dumb ones who didn't.

Mt 25:1 Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

On the day of his wedding, the groom and his friends – particularly his best man – would walk through the streets with trumpets blaring, taking the most circuitous route to the bride’s house. Already attired in her wedding dress, when the bride heard the sounding of the trumpet, she would arise and receive a blessing from her father. Then she would run out the door to be met by the groom in the streets.

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Together, they would make their way to the four-columned canopy under which they would be married. The ceremony itself consisted not of vows, which were Roman and Greek in tradition, but simply a reading of the contract that had been drawn up years before, along with a blessing.

The procession would then continue on to the “little mansion,” where the best man would stand outside the door while the marriage was consummated. After seven days, the groom would present his bride to his family, friends and community – at which time the marriage supper would begin. This is where we find the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven begins.

Of course, we can relate that ‘seven days’ with the seven years of the Great Tribulation we have been studying.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) As the bride of Jesus Christ, we should not give ourselves to the temptations of this world, nor replace our love for God with something else. The first step of our purity is through the daily devotion in His Word.