

Transcription of 21ID3515

Revelation 19:1-10

"The Lamb and His Bride"

September 22, 2021

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to Revelation 19 as we continue our study through God's Word and especially this last book.

I think I've said it before, but it bears repeating - in fact I'll probably say it quite a bit more before we get to the end of the 22nd chapter. The further you go in the book of Revelation, the less information you get. So, for example, when we get to the 1,000-year reign of Christ, it is covered in six verses. Now you would think 1,000-year reign would, I don't know, get more coverage. But it doesn't. There are two chapters, literally, towards the end of your Bible that cover the New Jerusalem - the new heaven and the new earth. But I think when you get there with us you're going to find that you'll have more questions than answers. It's not nearly so straightforward chronologically and laid out for us as it is everything to this point, and so far we're fine. We're at the end here.

The judgment of God has fallen, and the Lord is ready to come and to rule. A lot of people say, "Well, how's it all gonna end?" Well, it's the question of the century, but it's also the answer in this book of Revelation. And we've been at it for months. God bless you all for being so faithful and showing up every week. I'm glad to get to chapter 19, to be honest with you. I enjoy these last chapters a whole lot because this is where we're headed, right? With the Lord to rule and reign. Every generation that has looked with great expectancy - every church generation - for the coming of the Lord is finally going to see it come to pass. And this millennial reign of Christ will be unlike any other.

Notice, and we're going to look at just the first ten verses tonight (we're going to slow down a little bit), but the first ten verses of John, and notice he starts with the words, "After these things." And it is one of those catch phrases or often-used phrases of John where he separates one vision from another. So this is, again, a new vision, familiar words. But this one he must have written with great sense of relief and joy because he had been told, starting back in chapter 10:7, that at the end of this last bit of judgments, the trumpets will sound, and the mystery of God will be finished. He was told that again in chapter 15:1, in 15:8, in chapter 16:17. "It's almost here, John." Well now it's here. "After these things." As God's wrath has been poured out upon an unbelieving world and the time of

Jesus' return to the earth has arrived. I mean, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's what the name of the book is. And that really is what the focus is, besides all of the stuff we've been kind of wading through to try to understand. The very first words in this book, chapter 1:1, it's "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." And it starts that way. Right? John is able to see the glorified Lord in chapter 1. We get His message to the church in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. We get the Lord gathering His church together in the rapture in chapter 4. We get the church in heaven in chapter 5, watching Jesus be handed the title deed to the earth; and as He begins to unpack or unroll the scroll, the judgments of God begin to fall. And from chapter 6 through chapter 17, known as the Great Tribulation - and we've been, like I said, going through it very meticulously - I hope you've learned a lot. But at the same time, when we get to that end, then, in chapters 17 and 18, the Lord gives us, especially, the fall and the overthrow, if you will, of the political ways of man, the religious ways of man, and the Lord kind of stops the moving forward and the chronology just to tell us what now has taken place.

Which brought us to chapter 18:20 last week with great joy because there is a declaration that says, " 'Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!' " (of the world). So, the stage has been set. We know that the nations of the earth have been gathered together by the Lord - even though Satan has gathered them, the Lord has allowed it - for a showdown. The earth has been brought to its knees, and soon His last opposition will be as well.

Tonight ten verses - the preparation for the Lord's return, the preparation in heaven, if you will. And then next time, as we begin in verse 11, the second coming of the Lord; certainly the most dramatic event in history because it ends the downward spiral of man's sin in historical settings. From this point forward, the upsweep of His story is it's going to get better, not worse. It'll get worse until here, but it will no longer be worse from here. In fact, though there is sin, and there is even death during the 1,000-year reign of Christ, there won't be much. The punishment will be due for the sin; it won't be waited upon. There is death. We don't know for what, but some people die. Isaiah 65, beginning in verse 20 through verse 25, explains the situation, if you will. And it talks about, "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days... at a hundred," and many people, I think, will live through this entire 1,000 years. We'll look at that in depth when we get to it here in a few weeks. But, needless to say, from this point forward, the rest of history has an upward

path in terms of the Lord is now in charge, He's the Judge. Even for that little time when Satan is released, it won't be long.

So, from this point forward, there will be an upsweep in history, and we'll discover that in these last few chapters, which might explain why we run into these words in verse 1, "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!'" "Alleluia!" It appears four times in this chapter alone. It's not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It is found here.

So tonight we gather to worship. The church gets ready to leave. It packs its bags, if you will, to depart from heaven as the bride of Christ, headed for the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Lamb of God, who we met in chapter 5 and who has been designated as the Lamb of God twenty-eight times since, now shows us His bride. You are His bride. The church is His bride, who is in heaven with Him.

Verse 1, "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia!'" This is certainly a gigantic praise service. We have worship services on Thursday once a month here so that we can practice for this day. Right? I can't imagine anyone mumbling the words at this meeting. This will be the Jesus rally, won't it? There'll be a lot of Jesus chants, I think, in heaven. And it precedes the Lord's return to the earth, and everyone is involved. Everyone is mentioned here as you go through these verses: the Old Testament saints, the church is there, the Tribulation saints, the angels in glory. It is a big rock and roll festival. I don't know if it's rock and roll, but it's gonna be good. It's gonna be good.

And I love the words "a loud voice" and "a great multitude." People say, "Oh, the music's too loud." No. It can't really be that loud, can it? And maybe because I'm gettin' older, I'm goin' deaf, but I like loud. I don't know. It gets me up and movin'. Doesn't it get you up and movin'? There's something about "loud" and "a great multitude." Back in chapter 7, we had seen these Tribulation saints coming out of the Tribulation, having been killed for their faith, and they were, in their faith, singing loud praises to the Lord. They were asking, "How long do we have to wait?" But in chapter 7, they had already begun this praise service, knowing what God was going to do.

They're in glory still waiting. And I think we've mentioned to you before, but we'll mention it in a couple weeks again - these saints who had died in the Great Tribulation will receive their bodies when the Lord returns, along with the Old Testament saints, according to chapter 12:1-3 of Daniel. The only people who get their glorified bodies early are the church, is you and I, at the rapture of the church. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52). So we're going to have our glorified bodies, and all of these other saints are waiting to get theirs real soon now, like verse 11. We're real close for them.

But there is this song being sung, and notice, as they sing about " 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments,' " (which have just ended, haven't they?) " '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.' Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!' And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! Alleluia!' " So, the singing, at least at this point, in glory, is to say God's judgments have been right; this is a righteous act of God. God is holy, He is fair, He has been patient. But now He has overthrown the "Babylon," if you will, the religious and commercial deceptiveness that has robbed a lot of people of their spiritual life. And He's avenging the blood of the saints killed by this last worldly demon-filled government. No doubt these Tribulation saints are singing loudly. Can you not imagine? Don't you think you'll be singing loudly? You know, sometimes we listen to worship, and I know it's the end of the day, and you've been at work all day, but, man, I wish we were louder. Shouldn't we be singin' at the top of our lungs? I know you can't all sing. (Laughing) I can't either, but I think God's tone deaf. He's just heart tuned in. Right? So as long as the heart is right, it's not like the voice.....where you have to have one. You just have to have a heart for God. So maybe we can practice on the way out tonight, singing loudly.

Alleluia. It's a Greek for the Hallelujah in Hebrew. It's pronounced, by the way, Hallelujah, the same way in literally every language in the world. Everywhere you go, this word and "Amen" are literally the same. It's amen or amen or amen (Pastor Jack pronounces them differently), but it doesn't matter. Everyone gets it right. And it's really a combination of two words. The word "*Hallel'*" is the word for praise, and the contraction "*Jah'*" is used to denote the LORD Jehovah. It is used twenty-four different times in the Bible. It is mostly translated "praise the Lord"

if you go through the Old Testament. But here is the first and only place it is found in the New Testament - four times in six verses. Praise the Lord. That's what we're gonna be singin'. Praise the Lord for who He is. Praise the Lord for what He has done. Praise the Lord for what He is going to do. Praise the Lord for Him being so righteous and holy and bringing judgment at the right time. And the praise flows at the end of the Lord's dealings with the ways of man and His retribution for the treatment of His own. And let's face it, "Praise the Lord" is one of the church's favorite expressions, and it's been like that for 100 years. You look back through any kind of biblical writing, commentary, from the 1910's or the 1890's, and you will find a lot of this "Praise the Lord," even in the commentaries, where people didn't know Israel would be a country, and they couldn't use that as understanding. But there's a lot of "Praise the Lord." And you say to people, "Hey, how are things going?" "The Lord's good." "Oh, praise the Lord!" We almost mouth the words. It's one of our favorite expressions. And by the way, it's true in most every culture, again, amongst the church in one form or another. It's kind of the "amen." Amen, isn't God good?!

So, that's the song that we're singing. But notice, in verse 3, that we make the declaration in heaven that the judgment of the harlot, the corrupter, the one who took the lives of His saints, will arise..... "Praise the Lord! Their smoke will arise forever and ever!" So, this eternal judgment that we cannot fathom....right? Back in chapter 14:9-11, the third angel warned that anyone who would choose to take the mark of the beast or of his image, or to take the mark on their forehead, and then he describes what would become of them in these exact same words. They would go down to the pit, that the smoke of their torment would rise forever. And so praise the Lord that God has done what He says. He's come through. He hasn't left these things dangling.

And as we go through these verses, you are given by the Lord lots of things to sing about. First of all, we sing about His salvation. Right? Notice glory and honor and power, the salvation of the Lord. His deliverance is now complete. The full victory is in sight. There's not much left to go, if you will. He has faithfully done what He has said. The word "glory" or "*doxa*," in Greek, is a word that means the estimation of things. When you use the word "glory," if we sing "praise the Lord," it literally says God is who He is, and we recognize who He is. It's the estimation of His people about the character and of the nature of the Lord. So, we sing about His glory. We sing about His "honor;" the word "*time*" (pronounced tee-may) is a word that means to value something or to put a price on something. And when we stand

before the Lord, and when we get ready to come back, we're going to realize how valuable the Lord is, His worth as the sovereign Lord. We'll understand Him better than ever before. And we sing of His "*dunamis*," His "power." No one can do what He has done. Praise the Lord for His strength. So we sing of His "power," if you will. And throughout history, we have worshipped the Lord, the church has. It's going to be like that in heaven. And on the precipice of His return, before we hit the horses and ride out, so to speak, all of heaven will sing, "Praise the Lord for His sovereignty, His worth, His power, His deliverance, His salvation."

But second of all, notice, in verse 2, that they also sing - and we will sing - of the severity of God's judgment. Because one of the things that you come away with from the book of Revelation is this is pretty serious stuff. Right? I mean, God has been patient. He has stayed His hand for so long that, at times, we might have even questioned whether He took concern for the evils that we see or the wrongs that are done. And ages rolled by and nothing seems to have changed, and wickedness seems to sometime flourish and multiply. But now God acts very decisively, and His patience is spent, and His longsuffering is at an end. And the severity of His judgments resulted in the total destruction of everything that stands against God. And in heaven's eyes, this is right, and this is true. In heaven, the justice of God is sung about as the Lord wipes out the religious and commercial ways of the world that opposes God. And the system that has led so many astray, God has now rectified. And so we sing of His salvation, of His power, of His worth, but then we also sing of His judgment. "God, You were right! You were right to bring judgment." And as this final empire of the Antichrist - who kind of embodies the evil that man has always tried to accomplish - is put out of business for the blood that he has shed of God's people, God, in His wrath, confronted and overcame it, and heaven rejoices. Praise the Lord! Psalm 104:35, the psalmist wrote, "May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!" Same thing. Lord, may You wipe out everything that stands against You. So, we sing of His salvation, of His person, but also of the severity of what was coming for those who have stood against Him.

I don't understand the patience of God, but I'm very thankful for it. But I don't get it. I don't get it in my own life, I don't get it in your life. I don't get it in the life of the world. Peter, in the garden, when Jesus was being arrested, swung a sword at a guy to try to defend the Lord. Bad move. But I can understand that. I can relate to that. All right. Good for you. You know? You love the Lord, and you wanted to help. And the Lord said, "Well, put away the sword, Peter. If you live by

it, you're going to die by it. If I wanted, I could call twelve legions of angels." Now a legion, from a Roman standpoint, 6,000 men. So the Lord literally said, "I could call 72,000 angels at this moment to just come to My defense" (Matthew 26:53). When one angel was able to wipe out 185,000 Assyrians in one night. But, "I could get 72,000 angels." Yeah, that's probably gonna work. Right? But He doesn't call them. Why? Because He came to die and to give His life. So I don't understand the patience of God, but I'm so thankful for it. If the Lord had come back forty-five years ago, I'd have been left behind. I'm surprised the Lord isn't back yet. I grew up in the Jesus movement. We thought the Lord would be back any day now. We took ads out in the paper. We had people that quit their jobs, sat on the corner waitin' for the Lord. It was dumb, but I get it. I mean, it made sense.....to us young kids. But He told us He would wait long for the latter rain (James 5:7-8), that He wasn't willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). But you get to chapter 19, and the time has come, and His actions are final, and that's all that there's left, and He's right, and He's just. This is it. And we sing His praises. He is, what we read here, "right" and He is "true." He is "righteous and true." Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Amen! Because of His judgment.

We should never, I think, interpret the patience of God or the silence of God for His approval because He doesn't approve sin. He doesn't approve rebellion. But He will wait patiently for His Spirit to work. And God has been, certainly, patient with us. It was the mistake that Solomon warned us about in Ecclesiastes, when he wrote in chapter 8:11, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Or, in other words, because God doesn't reach down and slap you right away, you go, "Well, He must not care too much" or "Maybe I'm all right." And so you take another little step, you know? And still no slap from the skies. "Okay, I'll just take another little step." And eventually you make your decision. In the days of Noah, when the longsuffering of God waited, we read that He waited for the world to come to their senses for 120 years. And Noah preached and cried out and shared God's Word. He worked and built a boat, and it got bigger, and pretty soon he was standing up, yelling down to the people. For 120 years, God waited. And then one day it was just too late for the people standing outside, and that generation died in the flood. It's gonna happen again one day. In these last days. Because we read in Genesis 6:3, "God will not always strive with man." He's not always going to be here to just kind of win us in. There comes an end to it. And like getting to the end of your Bible, there is a day coming when the scoffers will scoff no more. So, as these martyrs had cried out back in chapter 6, "How long are we going to wait

before You even the books, You settle the score?" they were told to wait until there were many more to come. Now, notice that in heaven there is a singing of the severity of their judgment, and the singing is the smoke from their judgment rises up forever. This is an eternal judgment against sin. This doesn't change. There's no way out of this. This is too late. But all of heaven agrees. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord that He has the final word.

We read, in verse 4, "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! Alleluia!'" Now here're two groups that we have met before, if you've been with us. The twenty-four elders represent the church. We looked at that from Pentecost in Acts 2 until the rapture. We first met them in Revelation 4 after the rapture of the church in heaven before the Lord. And I would encourage you, if you weren't there, go listen to that study so you can get a good feel for who these twenty-four elders are. But, needless to say, in chapter 4 you will find them singing a song that only the church could sing. The words of the song only apply to you and me. This is, by the way, the last view that we have of the church in heaven because from now on they'll be with Jesus to rule and reign.

The four living creatures we also ran into in chapter 4 when the church found themselves before God's throne. And we learned from the Old Testament these are very high-ranking angels. They are sometimes called, in the Bible, cherubim and sometimes seraphim. They have the responsibility of leading worship around God's throne. They are described in Ezekiel and other places. They're weird lookin', but they have some significance in their appearance. Again, we went over those in great detail. But, needless to say, the church and the angels that were in charge of the worship, I think, and overseeing it, were also gathered with all of those who are singing about God's goodness and His deliverance and His grace and His faithfulness to the word that He has been made.

And so notice the body of Christ, the angelic leaders, the "Amen," the "Alleluia" - they sing of God's sovereignty in verses 4 and 5 and 6. They worship Him who sits on the throne because after all, when all is said and done, God's the only One ruling. Isn't that good to know?! You've chosen to stand with the right Person. When everything falls over and you look and the dust clears, the Lord sits on His throne. And we're gonna go, "Ha, that's what we want. That's what we need to see." Worshipping Him who sits on the throne. To them and to us, the salvation of the

Lord is to be honored, His oversight, His word. He is a sovereign Ruler who will rule forevermore.

And notice, in verse 5, that, "A voice came from the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!' " So, a call to worship. Come and worship. And it does seem like maybe there was an angel of high ranking there inviting us to come. The Tribulation saints are there, thankful that God is making things right. The church is there. The main worship leaders amongst the angels are there. The Old Testament saints are there. Everyone is raising their voice to honor the King. And, by the way, the call to praise here is in the present tense, at least in Greek, which would mean that the entire host of heaven or the choir is prepared to see Jesus return and begins to sing before He goes. Everyone is involved; not just those with good voices, just those who are rejoicing. They sing of His salvation, of the severity of His judgment, of His sovereignty.

And then, verse 6, they also sing of His supremacy. We read this, "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!' " (Again, "Praise the Lord!") " 'For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!' " To John, the millions of voices that he is hearing in worship sounded like a big waterfall. It just overwhelmed him. It was deafening. Remember I said we should sing louder? Sometimes we sound like somebody left the tap open just a little, like we hear a dripping. But here there's a thunder. Right? I mean, there's singing that you can't contain. There's a raging river and a rumbling that lifts up to the throne. John had never heard this type of singing before, I think. It just seemed to impress him to no end. He said, "It just sounded like everything was just going off." Like I said, we should practice.

The word "Omnipotent" is the word for "Almighty" or "over all." And the Lord is now coming. Right? This is the end of the book. To establish Himself over all and to possess the earth as Jesus has now fully unrolled that scroll from early on in the book, and He is now coming to claim His possessions. Isn't that what we've been waiting for? Haven't you been praying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? That's what's coming now. And so Psalm 97:1, "The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad!" The Lord's coming to reign. We sing of His supremacy. There's no one like You. Omnipotent. Nothing can be withheld or frustrated from Your hand. You're Almighty God. Job, when he was done arguing with God and really realized who he was standing before,

said in Job 42:2, " 'I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.' " "You can do whatever You want. You're Omnipotent. There's nobody more powerful than You." Jeremiah, in chapter 32:17, said to the LORD,

" 'Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.' " He came to the understanding of who He was. Jesus said to the disciples, in Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And Isaiah wrote, in chapter 40:12-15, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing." That's our God. Omnipotent. We're going to sing about how our God is bad! Bad, bad. Lord. He's in charge of everything, and nothing will stand in His way. He reigns. Right? All that remains from where we're sitting tonight is that the beast and his minions have to be overthrown, and that will be taken care of in a couple of sentences, and then we'll move forward.

Verse 7 says, " '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.' 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. 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.' And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' " Verse 7, " 'Let us be glad and rejoice.' " Translation: let's go nuts. Let's make some noise. The waiting is over. The Lord is coming.

And the time of the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Throughout the New Testament, God has described His church - the believing church - as His bride-to-be. Engaged to be married, faithful to Him. Paul said, "a chaste virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul said, "I really want to present you as a chaste virgin to your one Husband, betrothed to Him." That's how God

sees you and me tonight, spiritually; that we are a bride-to-be in waiting for a marriage that is yet to come.

When Paul wrote about that relationship of a husband to a wife in an earthly setting in Ephesians 5, (and I'm sure you've read that before), starting in verse 22 or so, by the time you get to get to verse 32, you've read ten or eleven verses, Paul will end up by saying, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." And yet, for ten verses, he talked about husbands loving their wives, and wives submitting themselves to their husbands, and just being the covering and all. He spoke in a physical sense, in an earthly sense. But then He took and He said, "This is the way it is between Me and the church," and He took it forward.

There were - and are, in many ways still - three phases to Jewish weddings, at least in biblical times. The first dealt with a marriage contract, which is oftentimes entered into by the parents, where they would find somebody that they wanted their child to marry, and there would be a deal made. In fact, we've been in Israel in a hotel downtown where these kids who've been promised - especially by these Hasidic Jews - in marriage by their families meet together for the first time, and they're 20 years old, 25 years old, and they sit as awkwardly as possible. "How are you doing?" "How are you?" They've been contracted to get married, and they just look like deer in the headlights. It's just so uncomfortable. But it's still, in some ways I guess, practiced amongst the Hasidics. But going back to the 1st century, when the contract was established and it was binding at some point, the couple became, in the eyes of the law, legally married. It was an agreement. It was a contract that was signed. And during the first year of that espousal period, there was no sexual relationship, no consummation of the marriage, but they were seen as legally married. It would take a divorce to separate them. They were treated as just one couple. And that was kind of the first step in that marriage history, if you will.

From a secondary standpoint, the formal occasion would come when, after that year, the bridegroom would come with his friends and take his bride from her home to their home. So he would - joyfully, almost as a parade, I guess - go to get her. You can read about it in Matthew 25. And the marriage would then be consummated, and they would be one flesh. But that was the second part of one year of marriage without consummation and then bringing her back to their home or his home, if you will.

The final step of the marriage supper, though, took place when the bridegroom returned to the bride's house for a weeklong celebration with family and friends. Everybody now gets to gather together and go, "Man, this is awesome!" You can read about the wedding feast in Cana, for example, in John 2. That's that celebration, if you will.

Well, those three phases - the contract, the husband coming to pick up his wife and take her to their home, and then the return of the bridegroom to the bride's home for the party, the celebration - have spiritual counterparts for us as well. Because the wedding contract, that first part, would certainly correspond to our salvation. The Lord sent His Son. He made a contract, a deal. If we believe in Him, we would never perish. He would finish the work that He started. He would take us as His own. He would give us the Holy Spirit, the Bible says, as an "*arraboni*" (Ephesians 1:13-14). "*Arraboni*" is the Greek word for engagement ring. The Holy Spirit would be a down payment so we would be married to Him. We haven't been with Him. We're still separated from Him, but we're legally committed ourselves and our lives to Him, and the Holy Spirit is the down payment in our hearts of the finished works that the Lord promises to do. And so when you read (Jude 24), "He'll one day present us faultless before His throne," that's God's fulfillment of His promise. He's going to finish the work that He began. He's going to present us faultless with great joy. So, when you read in Ephesians 1:13-14, you'll read, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." So, that's the first part that we find ourselves in. Today, we wait for our wedding day when Jesus will come to us at the rapture to take the bride to heaven, to consummate the marriage in the sense that we will now be able to be with Him. And then, at the end of the Tribulation, we will do that third part. We will return with Him to our home, where the bride grew up, and He will reign and rule, and then the marriage supper of the Lamb will be held here upon the earth at the bride's house (Matthew 26:29). But it says this. The Lord said to the disciples, "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." That's really that looking forward to the marriage supper that will then one day be down the road for us. So, it is no wonder that the Lord uses the wedding relationship of a husband and a wife as the single most used example of His relationship with us because here the wedding of the church is taking place, and now the dinner is to come. So we're at that third step when we return with the

Lord to the earth, and the wedding supper will be here. Do I know anything about the wedding supper? No. I don't. Where? In Jerusalem. Big halls? I hope so. Yeah. Not sure how it all works out. I don't have any answers for you. I just know it's gonna happen. That's all I know. And I think beyond that we'll be grasping at straws, except we have a couple of other verses.

So, we read here, verse 8, that the bride's dress is of "fine linen," and it "is the righteous acts of the saints." Bride's dresses are always of interest at a wedding. It used to be - I don't know if it still is - that no one could see it. Right? It was a surprise. Do they still do that? No, I don't know if they do or not. But usually brides look high and low to find that perfect dress. Right? "This is the one. This is the one!" And sometimes it costs more than the entire wedding and you never wear it again, and you can't give it away - it's too expensive. But the wedding apparel for a wedding is very important. When Jesus told that parable (you might remember) in Matthew 22 about this wedding, He said the servants were sent out into the highways and the byways to invite folks to come to the wedding because the wedding hall was not filled with guests as He hoped that it would be when the invitations were sent out. And so, when the king saw the guests, then he looked around, and he found a man there that was not wearing a wedding garment. It's not a bride, but he just wasn't properly dressed, if you will. And the king said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. And the king said, "Bind him hand and foot, take him and throw him into utter darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." But the whole impetus of the example was the kingdom of heaven is likened to a marriage supper which a king gives for his son. When the invitations are sent out and not everyone comes, the invitation goes to anyone who will come. Whosoever will, let him come. But to come you need a wedding garment and, at least in that occasion, you need a relationship with the Lord. He needs to clothe you in white. And the description of the fellow who tries to get in without that is he ends up in Hell; the description of Hell is the same everywhere that you turn in the Scriptures, or oftentimes repeated, if you will, that way. But here the wedding apparel for the church is "fine linen." It is "clean," it is "bright," and it is described as the good deeds that have come from her life as the result of her salvation. If you will, her righteousness, the things that she does well, the things that we do well, are made possible because the Lord has come to live in us. So He gets the credit. I'm in a white dress, so to speak, by the righteousness of my God who has cleansed my life. And so He dresses me. Right? He provides for that which I can offer to Him. His righteousness makes mine

possible. Our works will always, though, reveal our relationship to Him. So we read here, "It is granted her to be arrayed in fine linen." It was given to her. So dining with Jesus, our Bridegroom. And the invitation was given. You remember in Revelation 3:20 where the Lord said, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." No doubt a reference to this time. Not only just coming in to live in your heart but it is used by the Lord in writing to the Laodicean church.

After the rapture and before the return to the earth and this wedding feast, there will be what the Bible calls the judgment seat of Christ. That will take place in heaven. It is found in 1 Corinthians 3, and I'll just summarize it really quickly. At the judgment seat of Christ where all of us will appear, as Christians, God will take everything we've done in our lives and throw it into a fire. And it says this, "If the fire burns up what we've done, we'll suffer loss, but we'll still be saved." In other words, there'll be no reward. Maybe you helped someone out, but you really weren't helping them out to help them; you really thought they could do you some good, so you thought you'd help them out. And the Lord goes, "I know what you're up to," and then He takes it off the list. And then one day the fire goes "psssh" like that paper that just flies up. But if your life and your service to the Lord go through the fires, and you get a reward on the other side, then you get that reward, and you get to wear it to the wedding feast, and eventually, like the crowns, I think you'll throw it at Jesus' feet to worship Him because He was the One that enabled me to do these things at all. So that's kind of the idea here in terms of our being arrayed, if you will, in "fine linen." So the clothes of the righteous are an outer garment, and the church comes to the feast dressed up in the righteousness that God has provided for her as they've looked to Him.

Verse 9 says that the angel that was speaking then said, "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.'" The wedding feast of the bride will take place, like I said, when Jesus returns. And on the guest list: everyone, Old Testament saints. Jesus said, in Matthew 8:11, "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." So this is going to be quite an affair. But you're going to be the guest of honor. You're going to be the bride of Christ. Very unique position that God gives to the church. The patriarchs will come. The kings who ruled in the name of the Lord. The prophets. The Tribulation saints who lived and died under God's protection these last awful seven years. But attendance at the marriage

supper is equivalent to entering the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who enter into God's kingdom. Luke 14:15, "Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things" (that Jesus was saying), "he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' " Really just the same reference to the same time. We're going to be with the Lord in glory. Blessed are those who make it here because this is where you want to be, for sure. All of this, and then we're told, "Blessed are," notice, verse 9, "Blessed are." This is the fourth beatitude of the seven found in this book; so three more coming between here and the end of the book. "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper." It is the call of God who will gather there. "God is faithful who has called us into fellowship with His Son." That's what Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:9).

So, John is overwhelmed. And I don't know if maybe he stuttered or stumbled or just kind of balked. But the angel just.....I don't know if he reacted to what he saw in John's demeanor, but he said, "Look, write it down. These are the true statements of God. This is the truth, man. You gotta know it. This is all that we know, but this we know. You can count on it." And I think John was a little stumbled because notice, in verse 10, that he just, overwhelmed, feels like he should worship something. (Pastor Jack laughs) "I'll just worship this guy. It seems like he knows what he's doing." And it's a blunder for sure, and he will make the blunder again in chapter 22. But poor John. He's taking all of this in. We're just reading it, scratching our heads, going, "Man, this is gonna be something! I can't wrap my head around it." But John just feels like he needs to worship. And notice the angel stops him, admitting that he, too, is a fellow bond slave of Jesus and that Jesus is the only One that should be worshipped, not His angels.

And then he says, and I love it, "The testimony of Jesus is what the spirit of prophecy is all about" or, if you will, all of God's Word is designed with one purpose: to reveal Jesus to man. That's truthfully all that the Bible is interested in. The prophets who spoke in the Old Testament, the saints who spoke in the New Testament. David wrote, and led of the Holy Spirit, we read in 2 Samuel 23:2, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." It has to be.....the only thing God cares about for even you and me in sharing what God has done, is that we point people to Christ. Right? That He's the Hero, He's the Savior, He's the Omnipotent One. He has the last word. He sits on the throne. He marries the church. He's going to be the One that we honor.....and only Him. It's gonna be quite a time. So all of the prophets all led to this one thing, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is just to point men to Jesus. "When the Spirit has

come," Jesus said in John 16:13-15, "He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." But the whole work of God's Spirit is focused on Christ, and give Him the honor He deserves. Prophecy centers on Jesus, who alone is to be worshipped. It's going to be a good, I think, day, isn't it? Are you excited about this? Really excited or just excited? (Clapping and yelling) I need you to be really excited.

All right. So we're gonna try this song. Next week, by the way, we're gonna come back on the horses. So don't miss next week. I will be furious if you don't show up next week. We're gonna finish the next chapter. So, Gerard, come up, and let's do something lively. You have something we can sing loud? Or did you plan something already? (Pastor Gerard laughs) Am I throwin' you off here? All right. Let's stand, shall we? Let's practice for heaven. I want to hear you. I don't care who you are. I'll be walkin' around. No I won't. Sorry, buddy, I should have talked to you earlier. (Laughing) Just throw him under the bus. Poor man. (Pastor Gerard says) All right. Well, we'll do familiar, but you can be loud about it. (Then he leads the congregation in the song that begins, "Your praise will ever be on my lips.")

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
September 26, 2021