

REVELATION – SERMON 73

A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 19:7-9

INTRODUCTION

- The preeminent social event in almost every culture is the wedding
- Even the darkest heathen societies, though perverting many elements of marriage, still hold the marital union as an underpinning bedrock of functional society
- From the opening chapters of the Bible, God himself established marriage, defining it as the union of one man and one woman
- The Lord has used the marriage union to represent his relationship with his covenant people
- Israel is the wife of Jehovah (Isaiah 54:6; 62:5; Jeremiah 31:32)
- The church is the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:9; 21:2; 22:17)
- The devil, knowing that God not only instituted and blessed marriage, but designed it to picture his love for his people, has sought to destroy marriage.
- Divorce, sodomite marriage, and “de facto” relationships are all satanic attacks on marriage
- A successful and happy marriage is sometimes called “a marriage made in heaven”
- But in the near future there will be a literal “marriage in heaven”, when the Lamb and his wife are united

- This chapter records the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the preparations in heaven that precede it
- There will be many tremendous events that take place at Christ's coming
- But amongst all the upheavals of that day, there is a joyous event that will make heaven and earth ring with Alleluias: it is the marriage feast in honour of the Lamb and his redeemed bride

I. THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE WEDDING

A. The Lamb

1. The Lord Jesus repeatedly referred to himself as "the bridegroom" (Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29)

B. The bride

1. This is not the nation of Israel
 - a. Israel is already wed to the Lord (Jeremiah 3:14)
 - b. Though God has put her away for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 2:2), he will restore that married state when she returns to him and dwells in the land during the millennial kingdom (Hosea 2:19-20; Zechariah 12:10)
 - c. The Old Testament saints will not be resurrected until after Christ returns to the earth (Daniel 12:1-2), but this wife is married to Christ in heaven and will descend to earth with him
 - d. Israel is depicted metaphorically in Revelation 12 as a woman clothed with the sun, on earth during the tribulation
2. This is not all the redeemed from all ages

- a. While all of God's people are loved by him and united to him, they are not all the bride
 - b. John the Baptist indicated that he was not part of the bride, but rather "the friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29)
 - c. The bride is a select group within the number of the elect, while those not part of the bride will be guests at the marriage supper (v.9)
3. The New Testament portrays the church as the espoused wife of Christ
- a. Paul described the church at Corinth as an espoused (engaged/betrothed) virgin who would one day be presented to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2)
 - b. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:25)
 - c. Christ is sanctifying his church to present it to himself holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27)
4. The church is local and visible in nature, not universal and invisible
- a. The word *ekklesia*, denotes an "assembly" or "congregation"
 - b. At times the term "church" is used in the generic singular form, denoting churches generally (eg. Ephesians 5:23)
 - c. All the metaphors for the church are local in nature
 - i. Body (1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18)
 - ii. Building/temple/house (1 Corinthians 3:9-10,16; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Timothy 3:15)

- iii. Flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)
 - iv. Bride (Revelation 19:7-9)
 - d. Many wrongly equate soteriology (doctrine of salvation) with ecclesiology (doctrine of the church)
 - e. Many have confused the *family* of God and the *kingdom* of God with the *church* of God
5. Revelation is primarily a church epistle
- a. It was written to seven churches (1:4)
 - b. The Lord's intimate love for his churches is displayed, as he walks in the midst of them (2:1) and holds her ministers in his hands (1:16)
 - c. The word church/churches is used 20 times in Revelation, always referring to local churches

C. The guests

- 1. As well as the Lamb and his wife, there are those "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb"
- 2. Hebrews 12:22-24 lists who will be in heaven at the marriage of the Lamb and the church
 - a. An innumerable company of angels
 - b. The general assembly (all those in the kingdom)
 - c. The church of the firstborn
 - d. God the Judge of all
 - e. The spirits of just men made perfect (Old Testament saints awaiting resurrection)

- f. Jesus the mediator of the new covenant
- 3. At his coming, Christ will be “admired in all them that believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:10)
- 4. The parable of the ten virgins describes the coming of the Lord with his bride, as believing Israel (five wise virgins) join the celebration of the marriage feast (Matthew 25:1-13)

II. THE PROCESS OF THE MARRIAGE

A. Betrothal

- 1. The marriage was arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom
 - a. In this present age, the Father is drawing (John 6:44), and calling (1 Thessalonians 2:12) sinners, giving them to Christ (John 6:37)
- 2. The dowry is paid (2 Samuel 3:14; Genesis 34:12)
 - a. The church was purchased with Christ’s blood (Acts 20:28)
- 3. The betrothal/espousal was legally binding (Matthew 1:20)
- 4. This time would prove the fidelity of the couple to each other
- 5. The bride used this time to prepare for her wedding day
 - a. The Lord is presently sanctifying the church in preparation for the marriage (Ephesians 5:26; John 17:17)
- 6. The groom would use this time to prepare a home for the them

- a. Jesus said to his church, “In my Father’s house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2)

B. Presentation

1. At the father’s appointed time, the groom would fetch the bride and take her to his father’s house
 - a. The Father knows the day and hour of Christ’s return (Matthew 24:36)
 - b. At the rapture, all believers, including the church, will be caught up to be forever with the Lord (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
2. The bride is ritually cleansed before the wedding ceremony
 - a. After the rapture, the judgment seat of Christ will take place (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
 - b. The bride will be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white (19:7-8)
3. The private wedding ceremony takes place, and the marriage is consummated

C. Wedding Feast

1. After seven days, the groom and bride would then proceed together to the place of the marriage feast, with attendants lighting their way
 - a. This corresponds with the second advent when the Lord returns to earth with His bride and the millennial reign of Christ begins
 - b. The parable of the ten virgins places the marriage supper on earth at Christ’s coming, not in heaven

- c. The Lord promised at the Last Supper that he would not drink with the church again until his Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29)

III. THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE

A. The wife makes herself ready

1. Sanctification is a work of God's grace in the life of the believer (Ephesians 5:26; Philippians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
2. Yet the believer has responsibility to labour and strive to be holy (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 3:3)
 3. The righteous works of believers will be judged and become an adornment of fine linen in glory (cf. 14:13)
3. The undefiled saints in the church at Sardis were promised that they would walk with Christ in white (3:4-5)

CONCLUSION

1. What unspeakable blessedness it will be for those who are privileged to partake of this marriage supper
2. If you would sup with him in the kingdom, you must first sup with him here by receiving him by faith (3:20)
3. There are some who claim they love Jesus, but hate the church
4. It is impossible to be right with the Lord, while dishonouring his wife
5. Our attitudes and actions to the church are in reality towards Christ (Acts 8:3; 9:4)
6. We manifest our love for Christ by our love for the church (1 John 5:1)

7. All of the churches in the New Testament had their faults, yet they were still espoused to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2), and loved and nurtured by him
8. Do I value and love the church as Christ does?
9. There is no other institution on earth today through which God promises his abiding presence (Matthew 18:20; 28:20), his enabling power (Acts 1:8), and his overcoming success (Matthew 16:18)
10. Not all groups that call themselves a “church” are true churches
11. The true churches are those who have maintained the apostolic doctrine and practice throughout history, and continue to do so today
12. The church will give glory to God both in this age, and “throughout all ages, world without end” (Ephesians 3:21)
13. Am I preparing myself for the coming wedding day, in being justified by faith in Christ’s blood, united with the church in membership, and walking in holiness, yielding to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit?