

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Revelation 19:6-10

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-06-03

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Text

Revelation 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders saying: "Hallelujah! Because the Lord our God reigns, the Almighty! 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself." 8 And it was granted to her to be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And he says to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb'." And he says to me, "These are the true words of God." 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him, but he says to me, "Don't! I am your fellow slave and among your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Introduction

It's good to be back with you. In my last message I showed how the church of Jesus Christ must learn how to rejoice in the real God of the Scripture - not only the God of love and grace but also the God of wrath and judgment, and not try to make God into something He is not. When we are able to rejoice in God's historical and eternal judgments, we begin to change. We begin to hate our sin more, and we begin to fear God and tremble at His Word much more. And we looked at numerous other benefits that come from not being embarrassed by God's judgments or embarrassed by the doctrine of hell.

I. The timing of the wedding feast - AD 70

But starting in verse 6 we find the church rejoicing in something positive - they are rejoicing that the wedding celebration for Jesus and His church has finally arrived. Verse 7 says, "Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself."

That is an incredibly wonderful statement of the closeness that the church can have with Jesus. It is similar to the metaphor of Jesus being the head and the church being the body. When you meditate on what His redemption accomplished, it is truly wonderful. It showcases the spiritual union between

Christ and church¹, the intimacy they can have,² and the deep love Christ has for the church.³

But before we get into the significance of this passage, we need to deal with the timing because the timing has mystified people from every viewpoint of eschatology. Some people think that the wedding can't take place till the end of time, when all the redeemed have come into the bride. And there is a certain logic to that. But they have a hard time throwing these verses to the end of time, because nothing before or after this passage fits that time slot. Others think that the wedding happened at Pentecost when Christ and bride were united to each other in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And there is a certain logic to that. But that interpretation also seems to contradict the context. And there are others who point out that God the Son was married to His people in the Old Testament. In fact, there are Scriptures which seem to indicate that He was married to us before time began. So what is going on here? When you study this passage deeply you begin to realize that people from all viewpoints of eschatology have struggled to reconcile this passage with other passages. As you will see, even on my view there is some tension, even though there are no contradictions.

As you know, I think it is always best to first of all let the text itself dictate where we should go, and only then try to reconcile it with other passages. If we try to force the text to say something it doesn't say, I think we can easily misapply the passage. So let me start by briefly showing the obvious - that verses 6-10 happen immediately after verses 1-5, which happen immediately after chapter 18. It all takes place in AD 70. Let me list just a few reasons.

A. Immediately after the burning of temple and city of Jerusalem (18:1-19:5)

First of all, I will assume that you have heard my sermons on chapter 18:1 through chapter 19:5. We saw that those events were very clearly rooted in AD 70 when Jerusalem and temple were destroyed and when the international banking system collapsed. So that is the context.

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- 1 Beckwith, Isbon T. The Apocalypse of John. New York: MacMillan, 1919; reprinted, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001; Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. The Book of the Revelation. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990; Ladd, George Eldon. A Commentary of the Revelation of John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; Bratcher, Robert G. and Howard A. Hatton. A Handbook on The Revelation to John. New York: The United Bible Societies, 1993; Thomas, Robert L. Revelation 8–22 An Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995.
 - 2 Beale, G. K. The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
 - 3 Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. The Book of the Revelation. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

B. But before the corpses from the slaughter are all consumed (19:17-18)

But these verses can't occur too many years after that destruction, because verses 17-18 make clear that the corpses that fell in the previous judgment are still strewn around the land, and the carrion birds are called by God to eat those corpses. I know that is not a very pretty backdrop for a wedding, but that is the backdrop God presents. It all happened in AD 70. So the immediate context shows that these events are smack dab in the middle of the seven year war against Israel.

C. Confirmed by Matthew 22:1-10 (and by the only other two passages that speak of this marriage supper)

And this dating is confirmed by Matthew 22:1-10. There are other passages that allude to the wedding banquet, but they speak of what happens after the marriage supper is finished, and when the groom returns from the wedding. But let me read from Matthew 22:1-10, and I think you will see that this passage lays out exactly the same order of events as Revelation 19 does. Matthew 22, beginning to read at verse 1.

Matt. 22:1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, So this is God the Father arranging a marriage for Jesus. There is nothing wrong with an arranged marriage if the father is godly. The Bible gives flexibility in how to get married, but the fathers were usually involved. They are imitating God the Father. Well, in this passage the wedding has not happened yet. Verse 3:

3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" 5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

So this is a reference to Israel refusing to recognize Jesus, and killing the apostles, prophets, and other servants who had been sent to call them to graciously invite them to the wedding. Verse 7:

7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

That happened in AD 70 - the burning of the city. And look at what the very next verse says:

8 Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

So immediately after the city of Jerusalem is burned, there is a feast that is ready, and new guests keep getting added to this feast. That figure of speech would not be hard for Jews to understand since their wedding feasts often lasted one to two weeks.⁴ There was time for new people to be added all through those weeks of festivities. If you couldn't come on week one, you might come on week two. And the feasting would continue. Now, keep that in mind, because it explains why I believe people are still being invited to the feast. One commentary who ties Revelation 19 together with this passage says,

With God's unfaithful old covenant people destroyed, the time has come for Jesus to marry his new covenant bride (v. 7). The old covenant wife has been cast out and it is time for the new covenant bride to receive her inheritance (cf. Gal. 4:21-31). As with many sections of Revelation, this narrative has shown up earlier in Scripture. The same storyline - the destruction of a persecuting city by fire followed by a wedding - is given by Jesus in Matthew 22. This parable is so obviously speaking about the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem that skeptics say it has to have been written after AD 70.⁵ In other words, even unbelievers recognize that Matthew 22 has to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. But that means that the wedding takes place in AD 70.

D. How can this be reconciled with the fact that Christ was already the bridegroom and had a bride (John 3:29)? My tentative proposal:

And the first objection that might come to some people's minds is, "How can this be reconciled with the fact that Christ was already the bridegroom and had a bride?" In John 3:28-30, John the Baptist says of Jesus, 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before Him." 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease. So in some sense Jesus was the bridegroom even while John was alive and John was the friend (or the groomsman of the groom).

Other images of the bride show that the wedding had not happened yet (2 Cor. 11:2)

But there are other people who acted in the capacity of a friend for the groom. For example, in 2 Corinthians 11:2, which was written in AD 55, Paul says to the church, "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

4 See Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963.

5 Duncan McKenzie. [The Antichrist and the Second Coming: Volume II: The Book of Revelation](#) (Xulon Press, 2012), p. 288.

to Christ.” Even at that late date, the bride was still a virgin who had not yet been presented to Jesus, which means that she had not yet consummated her marriage. She was betrothed to Christ, but not married.⁶ So there really is no contradiction with Revelation 19. According to 2 Corinthians 11:2 the wedding was imminent, but it had not yet happened.

Cross - Christ legally dies to marriage with the Old Covenant people (cf. Rom. 7:1-2)

In your outlines I have laid out a sequence in the life of Christ that shows how His relationship to the bride all fits together. At the cross, Christ legally died under the covenant of works and we legally died with him. Our union to the Covenant of works was broken by death. That alone enabled him to marry the church. Romans 7:1-2 says that until death happens, a person is not freed from marriage. You and I were in Adam and the only way we could be saved is if our old identity with Adam (what Paul calls the Old Man or the Old Adam) died with Jesus. That’s only a legal transaction - it legally freed us from the Old Covenant. And because Jesus died in place of Adam, it freed up Jesus to marry the new covenant people and for the new covenant people to marry Jesus.

The same truth is illustrated in a totally different metaphor in Galatians 4 with Abraham’s two wives. Sarah represents the elect who are part of Zion, the true bride of Christ, and Hagar represents the non-elect who are part of earthly Jerusalem, and who were cast out. Hagar wasn’t the legitimate wife. Now, it is true that the symbols of Scripture can only be pressed so far, but those two symbols beautifully illustrate what is happening in Revelation 19. Hagar symbolizes the false wife of chapters 18-19 and Sarah symbolizes the true wife of chapter 19. So the cross is where the legal trade-off happened.

Pentecost - Betrothal where Christ gives gifts

But Pentecost was where the true betrothal happened - at least historically. Obviously in God’s decrees He can apply the benefits even before it happened. But Pentecost was the time of betrothal. At a betrothal there are gifts that are made. The Groom pays the Father both a bride-price and a dowry. But it is especially a time when gifts are lavished on the bride, just as Jesus poured out gifts upon His people and gave the Holy Spirit as the seal

⁶ Ephesians 5:25-33 may seem to contradict this since the church and Christ are likened to a woman and her husband. However, the language used in even that passage is consistent with a betrothed woman: He died “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 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.” (vv. 26-27)

of the church's inheritance in heaven. From that time on, invitations were sent to Israel to come to the wedding feast, but most refused.

AD 70 - Christ initiates the wedding ceremonies and continues to invite to the feast

Then in AD 70, the Old Covenant ends, Hagar is cast out, the Old Covenant people are destroyed, temple is ended, and the wedding happens.

AD 70 till the Second Coming - people filling up the bride

But since Matthew 22 continues the invitation to fill up the wedding feast hall after Jerusalem is destroyed, there are more and more people who are coming to this feast from AD 70 until the Second Coming. Now, there is an initial feasting that Pentecost starts, just as there was with betrothal. From Pentecost on there was leaven in the bread to symbolize the leaven of the kingdom replacing the leaven of sin. But communion especially takes on the symbolism of Tabernacles from AD 70 and on, and Tabernacles stretches from AD 70 to the Second Coming.

Second Coming - Christ “will return from the wedding” (Luke 12:36; cf. Matt 25:1-3; etc)

And at the Second Coming, the wedding feast will end and Jesus will return from the wedding. Let me read Luke 12:36 to you. This is a key to distinguishing the wedding language in Matthew 22, which we have already looked at, from the wedding language in Matthew 25, which is at the end of history. And this has confused a lot of people, but I think Luke 12:36 is a key to showing the difference.

You will notice in Revelation 19, that the wedding has started, not finished. People are being invited to the feast, so it is still happening. And the bride is prepared for the wedding. But in Luke 12:36, which is parallel to Matthew 25, it says of Jesus, “when he will return from the wedding...” It isn't describing Jesus going to the wedding, but returning from the wedding after the wedding feast had finished. Let me read the whole context and show that it is different than AD 70. It is the end of history. Luke 12:35-40.

Luke 12:35 “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour

the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

That is Second Coming language. That is what the ten virgins were dealing with in Matthew 25. It was the bridegroom coming back from the wedding after a long time of waiting. So we currently in 2018 are in the time when the wedding feast is still being enjoyed in the Lord’s Supper - till He comes. We are in the time of evangelism, when the wedding hall is getting filled up more and more. So there is no contradiction.

E. How can this be reconciled with the fact that God has only one bride spanning the elect of all time?

But a second objection that could be raised is, “How can this be reconciled with the fact that God has only one bride spanning the elect of all time?” And that is a legitimate objection because the Scripture is crystal clear that God has only one people, one church, one olive tree, one temple, one vineyard, etc.

Just as Christ’s death occurs at one point in time, yet its effect spans all time (cf. Rev 13:8), so too the bride is purchased, betrothed, and married in the first century, yet the elect of all time fill her ranks (cf. Gal. 4:21-31; Rev. 21:12,14; etc.)

Well, I’ve already hinted at the answer - Hagar never was the true bride. When Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham she violated God’s law. The unbelieving Israel that claimed to be God’s wife never was the true bride. There always has been only one bride, one olive tree, one vineyard, one people of God. Certainly branches were broken off of the olive tree, and certainly the images of divorce and execution of a false bride are used in Scripture.

But we have already seen that the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven constitutes the people of God from both the Old Testament and the New Testament times. Look at Revelation 21. This is so critical to understand. The first two verses establish the fact that just as the harlot was likened to a city, the true bride is likened to a city.

21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; also, the ocean was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

Well, who makes up this bride? Is it only people from AD 70 and on?

No. Look at verses 9-14.

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me saying, “Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb’s bride.”

10 So he transported me in spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the splendor of God. Her radiance was similar to a most precious stone, like a crystalline jasper stone; 12 she had a tremendous, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, namely the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel; 13 looking from the east, three gates, and from the north, three gates, and from the south, three gates, and from the west, three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names, of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

It is crystal clear that the elect of the Old Testament are in this city (or in this bride) every bit as much as the elect from the New Testament. The twelve tribes of Israel are in there just like the apostles are. It was not the Old Testament elect who were cast out. They were not symbolized by Hagar. Hagar represents unbelievers in every age. Turn to Galatians 4. This is a very key passage for reconciling these themes. In the first eleven verses it says that Jesus was born under the law to redeem those who were under the law. He had to face the penalties of the covenant of works so that He could place us into a second fulfilled covenant. The covenant of works is Hagar and the covenant of grace is Sarah. Christ's active and passive obedience relates to both. Look at the intriguing imagery in verses 21-31:

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.”

Gal. 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

And his conclusion in chapter 5:1 is,

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

The thing I want you to notice is that Ishmael was in the Old Covenant (the covenant of works) even though Abraham was his father. He was in the Old Covenant because he didn't place his faith in Jesus. But Ismael's brother, Isaac, was in the New Covenant long before the covenant was ratified. Why? Because he looked forward to Christ and put his faith in Christ.

But you still might wonder how it is even legally possible to be in a

covenant before that covenant was even ratified? Well, Revelation 13:8 is a passage that shows how God thinks on these topics of already/not yet. It says that Jesus is “the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world.” In God’s decrees His death was so certain to be accomplished, that God could provisionally apply the blood of Christ to believers long before He was incarnate. But there still had to be a time in history when he died. Likewise, the Holy Spirit was not given till Pentecost, but that historical event was so certain to happen in God’s decrees from the foundation of the world that God could provisionally give the Holy Spirit to saints in the Old Testament even though the Holy Spirit had not yet been given at Pentecost. The same is true of the bride. The Old Testament elect were provisionally placed in the bride even though the marriage supper of the Lamb had not yet happened historically. They experienced it through symbols and types that foreshadowed the marriage of Jesus and bride (that’s what the Old Testament descriptions of bride were about), but the historical reality had not yet happened.

But it was most appropriate to wait till the resurrection of AD 70 (the end of the first harvest - see Rev. 20:4-5; Daniel 12:1-3) to have the wedding ceremony so that Old Covenant saints would not miss out

But another reason why it was so appropriate to wait till AD 70 for the wedding feast to begin is that we have already seen that this was the date when the last of the Old Testament saints were raised from the dead. AD 70 was the end of the first resurrection harvest. What better time to incorporate the Old Testament elect in a special way with the New Testament elect than to bring them into this wedding feast via the resurrection? But the wedding feast hall is getting filled up with guests in the meantime. Hebrews 12 says that every time we partake of the Lord’s Table, we are ushered in as guests with the heavenly saints who are rejoicing in Christ’s presence. It is beautiful imagery. But the wedding couldn’t happen till the Old Covenant was ended.

There are almost 100 metaphors of the church, and the bride image is a minor one. Yet even there, Zion mixes imagery of it being a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2) and being a mother (Gal. 4:26)

Now, it is hard to get previous presuppositions out of our heads, and if you still struggle with the imagery, just realize that you can’t push images too far. There are almost 100 metaphors of the church in the Bible, some of them masculine, some feminine, and some neuter. The bride image is actually a minor image compared to some, though it is a powerful image. But we

shouldn't think of it as a contradiction to see the church portrayed as a betrothed virgin in 2 Corinthians 11:2 and to see her as being the mother of us all in Galatians 4:26. Both are true. When I look at a picture of my mother when she was nine years old, I say, "That's my mother." People know what I mean. She wasn't a mother at that time, but she was my mother. And the complicated topic of the already/not yet can be thought of in the same way. Every time a person gets converted, there is a sense in which the church has birthed a new child. But looked at from another perspective, the church has not yet been perfectly united in glory.

Matt Clark's analogy of a woman having a set number of eggs which cannot be increased or diminished, and this woman growing from infant

This past week pastor Matt Clark sent me a note that looks at it from a different angle. He said,

Meditating upon Zion as the mother of a soul. The heavenly Zion, with every one of the elect written there from before the beginning of the world. That heavenly Zion giving birth to each of the foreordained saints throughout the course of human history.

That made me think of reproductive physiology of the woman. Did you know that every woman is born with all of the eggs that she will have for all of her life? Finite number from the beginning, once the ovaries are formed. Genetic material of each egg set and completed. Beautiful how God teaches us about the heavenly Zion via every single woman ever born....

I believe that history will be finished when the last of the elect is conceived - or at least shortly thereafter. So, using Matt Clark's imagery, all the elect were in mother Zion from the beginning of time; they were in her ovaries (so to speak). Is there a historical period when formalities are started? Yes. In terms of redemptive history, it has to be after Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. And this passage and Matthew 22 clarify that it had to be in AD 70, when the Old Covenant was definitively terminated. But because that event was so certain to happen because of God's decrees, God allowed it to be provisionally enjoyed even in Old Testament times.

The Old Testament figures of marriage were types of the real thing

And even the Old Testament figures of the New Covenant marriage show exactly the same sequence. The Passover meal that Israel had in Egypt represents Christ's death. Three days later they crossed the Red Sea in new life on the Festival of Firstfruits. Forty days later God commanded Moses to establish the synagogue system of leaders and members of the churches just as Jesus did in Matthew 28. Fifty days later God betrothed Israel to Himself

on Mount Sinai, and Jeremiah 2:2-3 makes it clear that this was the time of betrothal, as did Ezekiel 16:8. And as many scholars have pointed out, Christ betrothed the church to Himself at Pentecost, giving gifts, or a dowry and inheritance. Forty years later Israel began to enter her inheritance just as the church entered her inheritance in this wedding feast exactly forty years later. So that's how I tentatively reconcile the passages. Others do it by saying God had two wives and that Israel was destroyed and the New Covenant bride married. That's a possibility, but it seems to contradict the passages in Revelation that place Old Testament saints in the New Covenant bride. Well, enough on that.

II. Verse-by-verse exposition of verses 6-10, with hints of how this corrects much bad theology

With those controversies behind us, let me very quickly go through the text. Verse 6 says,

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderings saying: "Hallelujah! Because the Lord our God reigns, the Almighty!"

The bride is already a great multitude by AD 70 - innumerable. Their worship and praise is so loud that it is almost deafening, like many waters or like mighty thunderings. And it is a hint at how joyful and how celebratory our weddings need to be. Even when there is the carnage of war all around, you can't let that dampen the joy of a wedding. Those negative things need to temporarily be put aside so as to honor the new marriage.

They use the Old Testament name of God again. Hallelujah means "Praise Yehowah." This is the fourth Hallelujah in this chapter. They are praising Yehowah for His reign and for His might. Certainly a worthy theme for praise. But especially so for this bride since He is a mighty warrior who has just finished defending her. He cares for her. He has rescued her.

Verse 7 says, "Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself." Prepared herself for what? For the wedding.

Also notice that though the multitude makes up the bride, no one person in that multitude is the bride. Notice the 'us.' Each of them is talking about Christ's wife as something objective to themselves. Likewise, verse 8 does not refer to the individuals (who make up the corporate church), "brides." He calls them saints. Likewise, in verse 9 the members of the church are guests at the marriage of the bride and not a bunch of mini-brides. They love

Zion. They love the New Jerusalem, but each one does not constitute a Zion or a city or a bride. There is an institution (the bride) that can be distinguished from the individuals who make it up.

Why is this important to notice? Because this verse is a correction to the heresy of bridal mysticism - the heresy that makes individuals think of themselves as a literal bride of Jesus. This heresy started with Bernard of Clairvaux (who lived from 1092-1153), but who wrote a lot of stuff that evangelicals are reading today. He taught that every individual Christian (both body and soul) was a bride of Jesus. He taught that Jesus was polygamous and had billions of brides. And very weirdly, he taught that his soul was female and he saw himself as a woman. He self-identified as a woman. And many other bridal mystics have taught male Christians to think of themselves as females. He thought, "How else could he individually be a bride of Jesus?" So the heresy of transgenderism is nothing new. And this nonsense not only swept through the Roman Catholic Church, in more recent years it has swept through various Pietistic Protestant circles and charismatic circles. I have even known some reformed people who have bought into this heresy.

In modern times some of these charismatic movements make each individual take marriage vows to Jesus and go under the marriage canopy or shawl to become a wife of Jesus. It is wrong. It is blasphemous. Lee Grady, in Charisma Magazine, describes a worship service "in which one of the musicians simulated sex while stroking a microphone and whispering sensual phrases to Jesus."⁷ Now, that is extreme, granted, though it is more common than you might expect. Some of the Roman Catholic nuns of the middle ages who were mystics sound erotic in their descriptions of their relationship to Jesus. Their writings are revolting blasphemy, yet they are being promoted by Evangelicals. But even the milder versions of Bridal Mysticism are incredibly dangerous and are very widespread. For example, it can be found in some Promise Keepers publications. And not surprisingly, it has led to a feminizing of the clergy. If a person sees himself as a female wife of Jesus, he is going to lose his masculinity.

Podles says, "The transfer of the role of bride from the community to the soul has helped bring about the pious individualism that has dissolved ecclesiastical community in the West."⁸ This is just one of many things that

7 See <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/fire-in-my-bones/18454-strange-fire-in-the-house-of-the-lord>

8 Leon J. Podles, [The Church Impotent](#) 74bb5d35-1a86-4166-a6fa-074bc4118530, (Leesburg, VA: Spence Publishing, 1999), p. 118.

is fragmenting the church of every branch and making it weak.

Let me assure you, that you as an individual are not the bride. And by the way, the bride image is only one image. Another image of the church is that of a warrior. Yes, the church is called a warrior. The church is called Jacob, and Israel, and a tree, and a temple, etc. Don't overdo any one image or you may end up with an unbalanced Christianity at best and heresy at worst. Well, let's move on:

Verse 8 says, "And it was granted to her to be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." Notice again that the clothing of the bride is different than the bride can be distinguished from the bride, though not separated from her.

Also notice that God gives the corporate bride the fine linen and yet it also includes the actions of the saints. They as individuals beautify the church with their righteous deeds.⁹ But no one individual is the church. The church is an institution distinguished from saints, yet made up of saints.¹⁰

Another implication of that clause is that their sanctification is only possible as God gives it to them. Galatians 3 indicates that even sanctification comes from the Spirit and is received by faith. We can only work out what God has worked in. Ultimately, they must give glory to God because God is the one who enables them to do anything of lasting value. Nevertheless, it is possible for the bride to do righteous deeds, and it is imperative for her to do so. God brought redemption (according to Paul's epistle of Titus) to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a special people who are zealous for good works (Tit. 2:11-14).

Verse 9 says, "And he says to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb'.'" Not every one can come to the Lord's Table. And even those who outwardly come are not always caught up to the banquet above. This verse not only pronounces blessing, but distinguishes those who belong from those who do not belong at the feast.

9 "At this point an interpretation is given: (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) This identifies not only the fine linen but also the woman who wears it. If the bride's fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints, then the bride herself represents the saints, the people of God whose blood has been avenged (18:24; 19:2) and who have joined in the chorus of rejoicing (18:20; 19:5)." J. Ramsey Michaels, Revelation, vol. 20, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Re 19:1.

10 For more on this see Beale, G. K. The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999; Bruce, F. F. The Revelation to John. A New Testament Commentary, edited by G. C. D. Howley. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969. In contrast, Dispensationalists are forced to make two totally separate identities for guests and bride - see Thomas, Robert L. Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995; Walvoord, John F. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Chicago: Moody, 1966.

Not everyone is invited by God. And even the Lord's Table, which is a symbol, is somewhat exclusionary. The passage I read earlier from Matthew 22 goes on to describe people who are eating at the banquet but who do not belong and who were not invited and who are not wearing the white garments that Jesus provided. In other words, they are coming to the Lord's Table, but because they are not truly saved they are not truly part of the banquet above. What does Matthew 22 say about those who have been partaking of the earthly counterpart to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, but who are not regenerate? Let me read it for you.

Matt. 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." This is why Scripture calls elders to examine the qualifications for coming to the table. We are looking for evidence of both faith and garments of righteousness. Of course, even then, we can be fooled like the apostle Peter was fooled by Simon Magus' profession of faith. But Jesus makes clear that there are those who are outwardly Christians, who partake of the Lord's Table, but they have come in another way than through the door of salvation. They are fakes. Jesus said that they will be cast into outer darkness.

But in this passage there is a blessing pronounced upon the elect who are truly invited to the real banquet. There is a tremendous blessing that comes to us in the Lord's Table. It feeds our souls, strengthens us, seals the covenant to us, promises all that we need for life and godliness, links us to Jesus and brings a flow of His blessings. But Hebrews is quite clear that it is only by faith that we can come to the celebration in the heavenly Zion.

Verse 9 continues, "And he says to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" What God promises in this marriage supper of the Lamb He always fulfills. He is good for His Word. This is why the Lord's Table is such a precious meal - it is more than nourishment. It is the pledge of the covenant from a God who cannot lie.

Verse 10 says, "And I fell at his feet to worship him, but he says to me, 'Don't! I am your fellow slave and among your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

Beale says, "This passage presents an example of how easy it is to fall into idolatry..."¹¹ Even the apostle John unwittingly fell into that sin. What did

11 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek

he do? The Greek word simply indicates that he bowed before this angel to revere him. The Roman Catholics do this with the pope. They bow down before the pope in much the same way that John bowed down here. Here is an angel far greater and far more powerful than any pope, yet he refuses to receive the homage that is regularly given to the pope. What a rebuke to Rome! In fact, Matthew Henry points out that it rebukes the reverence of the elements of communion, saints, and angels,¹² because bowing before those things confuses the vehicle that God uses with God Himself. Yes, Jesus is present at this table, but to bow before the table is a form of idolatry. Barnes points out that if even an apostle can unwittingly fall into idolatry it is a warning that any of us can easily fall into that same sin.¹³ Even sincere people are sometimes sidelined from devotion to God into devotion for something else.

The angel says, “I am your fellow slave.” That too is a hit against idolatry of men. Just because God used prophets like John to bring Scripture did not mean that the man himself was anything. Like this angel, he was a fellow slave. And it is high time that Christians took on the moniker of slave and rejoice in the privilege of being a slave of God. Yes, God elevates us to the privilege of sons and daughters, but we are still slaves. Keep in mind that Galatians 4:1 says that a child who is underage does not differ at all from a slave, even though he is master of all and has an inheritance. He is under authority and owes submission to the father. This is why it is no contradiction for all the apostles to keep calling themselves slaves of Jesus. We need to get used to doing the same and having the humility to think of ourselves as slaves.

Another doctrine we see here is the doctrine of prophecy: The angel speaks of himself and John as being “among your brothers who hold the testimony

Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 946–947.

- 12 “This fully condemns both the practice of the papists in worshipping the elements of bread and wine, and saints, and angels, and the practice of those Socinians and Arians who do not believe that Christ is truly and by nature God, and yet pay him religious worship; and this shows what wretched fig-leaves all their evasions and excuses are which they offer in their own vindication: they stand hereby convicted of idolatry by a messenger from heaven.” Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2482.
- 13 “This may be regarded as an admonition to be careful in our worship; not to allow our feelings to overcome us; and not to render that homage to a creature which is due to God alone. Of course, this would prohibit the worship of the Virgin Mary, and of any of the saints, and all that homage rendered to a created being which is due to God only. Nothing is more carefully guarded in the Bible than the purity and simplicity of worship; nothing is more sternly rebuked than idolatry; nothing is more contrary to the divine law than rendering in any way that homage to a creature which belongs of right to the Creator. It was necessary to guard even John, the beloved disciple, on that subject; how much more needful, therefore, is it to guard the church at large from the dangers to which it is liable.” Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Revelation*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 411.

of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” There are three things that are once again reiterated in this verse that directly address the controversy of prophecy. The first is that all prophecy, whether angelic or human, should lead to worship of God, not the instrument God uses.¹⁴

Second, all prophecy is Jesus Himself speaking or testifying through those prophets. Their will and opinions are not mixed in. What the prophets say is Jesus speaking. This phrase, “the testimony of Jesus,” should not be interpreted contrary to the meaning of the same phrase in the immediate context and throughout the book. As one commentator said,

Now if “the testimony of Jesus” in verse 10 means the same as it did in verse 9, then ... it means that only when Jesus’ human servants proclaim the same message that Jesus taught and attested do they truly prophesy. ... The negative of this statement is equally true: those who do not proclaim the same testimony ... do not have the true spirit of prophecy.¹⁵ When I preached on chapter 1, verses 2 and 9, we saw that the phrase, “the testimony of Jesus,” is a reference to the very words of Jesus being spoken. Thus it is not the prophet’s authority, but Christ’s authority that is being communicated. This again, should cause people to reverence the Words that come from Christ through the prophet, rather than the messenger himself. Of course, the apostle John already showed how all prophecy ceased in AD 70, so the only way we can listen to the testimony of Jesus is in the Bible.

Third, prophecy comes by the spirit, which I take to mean the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

14 “Behind the message and behind the messenger stands the Spirit of God himself. He is the one who should be worshiped—not his agents.” Christopher A. Davis, *Revelation*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 2000), 342.

15 Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, vol. 12, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 352. See also Ramsey Michaels: “The angel offers one last interpretation: For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (v. 10). The form of the pronouncement matches exactly that of the interpretation given in verse 8 (literally, “for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”). The apparent meaning is that those who have the testimony of Jesus—the angel, John and John’s brothers (fellow believers)—are all prophets. Prophets are bearers of the word of God, and in this book “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” are inseparable (see 1:2, 9; 20:4). We learn now that the testimony of Jesus is not only a message about Jesus but also a message from Jesus the risen Lord. His is the one voice behind the many prophetic and angelic voices echoing through the pages of this book. So the testimony of Jesus is the spirit or essence of Christian prophecy. Whether it is also “the spirit of the prophecy,” referring to the book of Revelation itself (1:3; 22:7, 18–19), is more difficult to say (it does have the definite article in Greek). If it is, then the testimony of Jesus is virtually equivalent to the title “revelation of Jesus Christ” at the beginning of the book (1:1). In any event, we have finally come to know the “angel” so mysteriously introduced in the opening verse of the book. Angels and humans function together here as prophets, just as their voices join together in John’s visions in the worship and praise of God.” J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, vol. 20, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Re 19:9.

16 There are two ways commentators tend to take the phrase, “spirit of prophecy.” The first is that it means the Spirit of God inspires the prophet to speak. The second is that it means that the prophetic Spirit inspires prophets to prophecy. For the former, see Caird, G. B. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. Black’s New Testament Commentaries, edited by Henry Chadwick. London: Adam

Mounce's commentary says of that phrase, "John's readers would certainly understand his reference to 'the spirit of prophecy' in terms of the Holy Spirit as the one who inspired all prophecy."¹⁷ Or as Christopher Davis says, "The phrase 'Spirit of prophecy' refers to the Holy Spirit of God, who enables prophets (such as John) to speak."¹⁸

So all three persons of the Trinity are involved in this revelation. The passage says that these words are the words of God, the testimony of Jesus, and the communication of the prophetic Spirit. That's why the command to worship God and focus on God rather than the messenger comes in the middle of this doctrine on prophecy.

Now, we have already seen in previous sermons that the whole book of Revelation is also the testimony of Jesus. Yet Revelation 19:10 says that all prophecy of all prophets is the testimony of Jesus. If A=B then B=A. Logic tells you that this makes all prophecy equal to Scripture. It is God's very word to man through Christ.

Wayne Grudem says that he doesn't know what that verse means. That's convenient. He should have just said that it contradicts his view that prophecy continues. But I think it is quite clear. This verse makes prophecy clearly parallel with the rest of Scripture. This is why the book of Acts uses the Greek word for "prophet" and "prophecy" to describe both Old Testament infallible prophecies of Scripture and the words of New Testament prophets in the same verses. Thus, just as 2 Chronicles 9:29 speaks of Scripture as a book of prophecy, Revelation 22:7 speaks of "the words of the prophecy of this book." Prophecy equals Scripture. Wayne Grudem says that the New Testament Scriptures are not prophecy, but since Revelation 22:7, 22:10, and 22:18 all speak of "the words of the prophecy of this book," he says that Revelation is an exception. But it's not an exception. It is the pattern for all Scripture. Romans 16:26 speaks of the New Testament as the "prophetic Scriptures" which reveal a mystery kept secret in the Old Testament.

& Charles Black, 1966; Bratcher, Robert G. and Howard A. Hatton. A Handbook on The Revelation to John. New York: The United Bible Societies, 1993. For the second view see Aune, David E. Revelation. Word Biblical Commentary, Vols. 52a and 52b, edited by Ralph p. Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998. A couple others take it as a reference to "prophetic spirit" or "prophetic Spirit."

17 Mounce, R. H., [The Book of Revelation](#) 74bb5d35-1a86-4166-a6fa-074bc4118530, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 350.

18 Christopher A. Davis, Revelation, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 2000), 342. He adds a footnote: "See Rev 1:10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 4:2; 14:13; 17:3; 21:10; 22:17. Compare 1 Corinthians 12-14 (where the ability to "prophecy" is a gift that the Holy Spirit gives to some Christians), as well as Eph 2:20 and 3:5 (where the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" as those who carry out a ministry of "prophecy" or proclamation)."

In contrast, Grudem said, “To my knowledge, nowhere in the New Testament is there a record of a prophet who is not an apostle but who spoke with absolute divine authority attaching to his very words.”¹⁹ Even with all those qualifications, he is still wrong. Peter insists that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2Pet 1:21). Prophecy never came by the will of man. There are no exceptions in Peter’s inspired definition of prophecy. According to Peter, there are definitely not two kinds of true prophecy. Prophecy was always inspired without exception. That’s why in Matthew 7 Jesus told his hearers that they could test true prophets from bad prophets on whether they had any failed prophecies. He claimed that New Testament prophets were good trees that never ever bore bad fruit. They were always 100% inerrant when the Holy Spirit moved upon them to enable them to speak as prophets. And he also said that those who claimed to be prophets who brought bad prophecies deserved the death penalty - just like in the Old Testament. And we demonstrated that Agabus was no exception. He was inspired and perfectly accurate in his prophecies.²⁰

I won’t cover that material again. It would take too long. But I will just make one more observation that should be obvious - if only apostles could produce New Testament Scripture (as Grudem claims), how on earth did Mark, Luke, Acts, James, Jude, and Hebrews come into existence when they were very clearly not written by apostles? And the answer is easy for me - they were prophets and all prophecy is inspired. Romans 16 says that all the New Testament Scriptures were written by prophets - they are “prophetic Scriptures.” Grudem disagrees. He insists that each of those authors wrote something true under apostolic oversight, and once the apostles approved the writing, it became inspired. But that’s not how inspiration works according to 2 Peter 1:21. Inspiration works on the author of the book, not on the supposed overseer of the book. It was Luke, James, Mark, and Jude who were moved by the Holy Spirit so that nothing of their prophecy was moved by their own will.

Well, if the prophets were merely passive vehicles of God’s revelation in the New Testament just like they were in the Old Testament, it is no wonder then that their words always led others to worship God and to reverence God

19 See Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy In the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), p. 56.

20 See sermons on [\[\[web/Sermons/New Testament/Acts finished/Acts 20_22-25.md|Acts 20_22-25\]\]](#), [\[\[web/Sermons/New Testament/Acts finished/Acts 21_1-14.md|Acts 21_1-14\]\]](#), [\[\[web/Sermons/New Testament/Acts finished/Acts 21-4,11-14.md|Acts 21_4,11-14\]\]](#), and [\[\[web/Sermons/New Testament/Acts finished/Acts 21_27-40.md|Acts 21:27-40\]\]](#).

rather than the messenger. It's no wonder that the bride is focused on the Lamb. And the guests are focused on the Lamb. It's no wonder that verse 9 speaks of the prophetic words being given as inerrant: "And he says to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" We can trust the words of New Testament prophets just like we can trust Jesus. The bride prepares herself for Jesus and completely entrusts herself to Him and submits to Him. We are called to do the same. May we do so with the faith and the joy that these multitudes did. Amen.