

Did You Get The Invitation

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[0 : 00] I invite you this morning to focus with me on just one line in the last book of the Bible. And whenever we do this, just focus on only one line, we need to make sure to read it in context.

The one line is found in Revelation chapter 19, verse 9. And the immediate context is Revelation 19, verses 1 to 10, which is the concluding scene of the fourth act of the five-act drama that Jesus put on for John on the prison island of Patmos in 96 AD.

If you are able, would you stand for the reading of God's word? And after this, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her idolatries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. And again they shouted, Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried out, Amen! Hallelujah! Then a voice came from the throne saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great.

[1 : 41] Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roaring of rushing waters, and like loud peals of thunder shouting, Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.

Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. Then the angel said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he added, These are true words of God. And after this, I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, Do not do it. I'm a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. This is the word of God. And I love John for his honesty.

[2 : 49] I mean, here's the beloved apostle, the one who shares this intimate relationship with Jesus, and he's down on his knees before a creature. Even he misses the whole point about worship.

You may be seated. The one line that I invite you to focus on with me this morning is the beatitude in Revelation 19.

Verse 29. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is one of seven beatitudes in the last book of the Bible.

One of seven. Are you surprised there'd be one of seven, given all the sevens throughout the book? Seven candlesticks, seven churches, seven cities, seven messages, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls.

Beatitude one. Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the word of the prophecy and heed the things which are written in it. Beatitude two.

[4 : 08] Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Beatitude three. Blessed are those who stay awake and keep their garments, lest they walk about naked and people see their shame.

Beatitude five. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years.

Beatitude six. Blessed is the one who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book. Beatitude seven. Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will have a right to the tree of life.

They will enter the gates of the city. And beatitude four. The pivotal beatitude. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb.

The lamb is getting married. Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, ascended, reigning Lord of life is getting married.

[5 : 19] And through one of his angels, angel simply means messenger. The invitation has gone out throughout the whole world. Did you get one?

In the mystery of things, you would not even be here today if you had not. In light of the rest of the revelation.

And in light of the rest of the biblical witness. And in light of centuries of theological reflection on the imagery in this beatitude.

In this one line we're going to focus on. I suggest that the invitation reads like the following. The Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit, the breath of life. The giver of life. Out of his sevenfold fullness. Invite you to the marriage supper of the Father's Son.

[6 : 21] The Lamb of God. Who has won the victory over sin and evil and death. Who takes away the sin of the world. R-S-V-P-A-S-A-P. The Lamb is getting married.

And you and I have been invited to the wedding feast. As guests. As those who will witness the exchange of vows.

But also. Well. We have to ask the question. Who is the bride? The Lamb is getting married. So who's the bride?

In chapter 21 of the revelation. John identifies the bride as the city of God. 21-2. I saw the holy city. The new Jerusalem.

Coming down out of heaven from God. Made ready as a bride. Adorned for her husband. 21-9. An angel says to John. Come up here. Come up here. And I will show you the bride.

[7 : 26] The wife of the Lamb. And then he's given this grand vision of this new city. Which turns out to be the new creation. The new city is the new creation. And the new creation is the new city.

And God so loves this new creation. God so loves this new city. That he chooses to speak of it in terms of a relationship. Between a husband and a wife.

The Lamb is getting married to the new creation. And we have been invited to the wedding feast. As guests.

As those who will witness the exchange of vows. And as the bride. You see it turns out that the bride is also those who live in the new city.

The bride is those whom the Lamb has purchased out of the dying world. To live in the new world. Chapter 5 verse 9.

[8 : 26] Worthy are you to take the scroll and break its seals. For you were slain. And you purchased for God. With your blood. Men and women. Boys and girls. From every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

14.3. The 144,000. The redeemed people of God. Have been purchased from the earth. The Lamb has bought people from all over the world.

And like a bridegroom in the first century. He has bought a wife. He's paid the purchase price. With his own blood. With his own life. His bride is all of those who are redeemed.

You and I. And millions more. We are the bride. We have been invited to this wedding feast. As the bride. I mean talk about self-esteem.

Talk about dignity. In the last book of the Bible. Jesus uses a number of images and metaphors. To describe the nature of the relationship.

[9 : 29] He has established with us. We are called followers. Who? Follow the Lamb wherever he goes. We are called citizens of the kingdom. Actually we are simply called a kingdom.

We are called priests. Over and over again. Priests to his God and Father. We are called son. Singular. Sons and daughters.

Yes. But he uses the singular term son. Because women and men. Have been included in his relationship with the father. In his son father relationship.

We have as Larry Hurtado puts it. Been enfranchised. Into Jesus status as the son. And we now participate in this father son relationship he has.

Those who overcome will inherit. It says in 21.7. And I will be his God. And he will be my son. Men and women. Loved by the father.

[10:27] In the same way the father loves his only begotten son. And we are called the bride. We are called the wife of the lamb. It's the dominant image.

The revelation of Jesus Christ uses to describe those who belong to Jesus Christ. Bride. Wife. Now the wonderful thing is.

This is not unique to the last book of the Bible. It's all over the place. I've had a lot of fun this week. Looking at all the different places where we see this.

There are more places than I had realized. For instance at the beginning of Jesus ministry. Early on in his earthly ministry. He finds himself in trouble.

And his disciples are in trouble. Because they're not obeying the Pharisees rules. That happened to Jesus a lot. And particularly not obeying his rule about fasting. And Jesus responds.

[11:23] Mark 2.19. While the bridegroom is with them. The attendants of the bridegroom do not fast. Do they? Jesus defends his disciples actions.

On the basis that they've been invited to a wedding party. And he is the bridegroom. He names him such. Right at the beginning of his ministry. Many of Jesus' parables are about wedding feasts.

I know of three of them at least. Where the wedding feast is in his honor. Matthew 22.2. Verse 2.

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man. A king. Who gave a wedding feast for his son. And goes on to tell about those who were invited. Not coming. And so the servants are sent out into the highway. And told to bring everyone in from the highway. And they come. And the house is full. Boy. You need to sometimes just follow that word. Full. Throughout the scripture. God wants to fill the house. One guy, however, sneaks in without wearing appropriate wedding clothes.

[12:26] And he didn't bother to prepare. In Matthew 25. Jesus tells a parable about his coming again. And he speaks to these ten virgins. Who were responsible for their lamps.

Five of them didn't bring oil. And they hear the joyful shout. Look. The bridegroom. Come out to meet him. Jesus' first miracle. Is at a wedding feast.

In Cana of Galilee. Now. Now. Why begin your public ministry. At a wedding. Unless you're hinting. At where it's all going to go.

John the Baptist. Is asked about his ministry. People want to know. About John's ministry. Relative to Jesus ministry. And John the Baptist responds. That I am the friend of the bridegroom.

John 3 29. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist.

John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. Jesus. As the husband. Of the people of God. And he himself. As the friend of the bridegroom. Whose job it is.

[13:24] To bring the husband and wife together. In the bridal chambers. And then. Jesus meets a woman. At a well. In Samaria.

Jesus. Meets. A woman. At a well. Now that ought to ring. All kinds of bells for us. It certainly did. For people.

Steeped in the Bible. In the Old Testament. For in the Bible. What happens. Every single time.

What happens in the Bible. When a man. Meets a woman.

At a well. A wedding. Is going to ensue. He's meeting his bride. Isaac's servant.

Meets Rebecca. At a well. Jacob meets Rachel. At a well. Moses meets. Sephora. At a well. Jesus says. To the woman. At the well. Go call your husband. She responds.

[14:18] I have no husband. Boy. I wonder how Jesus. Bit his tongue. On that one. Because I'm sure. He wanted to reveal. The mystery. Of what was happening. To the Samaritan woman. He wanted to say. Now you've got one.

In the upper room. Before he goes. To the cross. To purchase. Us. Jesus says. To the disciples. They need not be afraid. Why not be afraid? Because.

He's going to the father's house. To prepare. A room for us. John 14. Two to three. It's what a groom. Says to his bride.

In a first century. Betrothal service. Over a cup of wine. He speaks this new covenant. I. Go to prepare. A place for you. And when I prepared. That place for you.

I will come again. And take you. To where I am. That you may be. Where I am. This is why the first century. Spoke of taking. A wife. In his great chapter.

[15:15] On sexual ethics. In first Corinthians six. The apostle Paul. Asked. Do you not know. That your body. Is a temple. Of the Holy Spirit. Who is in you.

Whom you have from God. And that you are not your own. For you have been. Bought with a price. Glorify God. With your body. Bought with a price. That the bridegroom. Has come.

And he has. Bought us. We are not our own anymore. In second Corinthians. Paul reveals. He reveals.

That the source. Of his passion. In pastoral ministry. Eleven. Two. For I am jealous. For you. With a godly jealousy. For I betrothed you. To one husband.

That is to Christ. That I may present you. As a pure virgin. And then there is that. Moving section. In his letter. To the Ephesians.

[16:08] Where Paul calls. Husbands. To love their wives. Just as Christ. Loves the church. Ephesians 5. 31 to 32. For this cause. A man shall leave.

His father and mother. Cleave to his wife. And the two. Shall become one flesh. This mystery. Is great. But I'm speaking. Of Christ. And the church. Great.

Mystery. Indeed. Now. In speaking of Jesus. As the bridegroom. And we as his bride. The Bible. Is not only giving.

Great dignity. To us. He. The Bible. Is giving. Great dignity. To Jesus. This is one of the highest. Christological titles.

You can give to Jesus. Because. In the Bible. In the Old Testament. God. And God. Alone. Is the husband. Of the people of God. And now. The New Testament.

[17:01] Is claiming. A role. For Jesus. Of Nazareth. Which only. The living God. Should have. For example. Isaiah 54. God says.

To Israel. Fear not. For you. Will not. Be put to shame. Nor feel. Humiliated. For you. Will not. Be disgraced. For your husband. Is your maker. For the Lord.

Has called you. Like a wife. Isaiah 61. I will rejoice. Greatly. In the Lord. My soul. Will exalt. In my God. For he has clothed me.

With garments. Of salvation. He has wrapped me. With a robe. Of righteousness. As a bridegroom. Decks himself. With a garland. As a bride. Adorns herself. With jewels. And on it goes.

Jeremiah chapter 2. And 3. Ezekiel chapter 16. And then Hosea. Hosea is just this one. Long. Sustained. Opening up. Of God's love.

[17:54] For his bride. The lamb. Who stands. At the center. In the center. Of everything. As the center.

Of everything. Is getting married. The invitations. Have gone out. You and I. Have been invited. As guests. Yes. But more importantly.

As the bride. Which is why. I said early on. In our series. Of studies. In the apocalypse. Of Jesus Christ. That I call this book.

The last book. Of the Bible. A love letter. The whole book. Is one. Long. Love letter. To the church. In Ephesus. The church. That seemingly. Had. Its act. Together. Jesus says. But this. I have against you. That you. You've lost. Your first love. For all of their ministry. And all of their programming.

[18:48] And all of their orthodox theology. They were not. In love. With Jesus. To the church. In Thyatira. Which was under pressure. To compromise. Their loyalty.

To Jesus. Jesus warns. Of the real possibility. Of adultery. He speaks. Of giving into the pressures. Of powers. Around us. As adultery. And then.

To the church. At Laodicea. The church. That thinks. It has it all. But has left. Jesus. Out of the center. Of its life. Jesus says. Behold. I stand at the door. And knock.

If you hear my voice. And open the door. I will come in. And eat with you. And you with me. As I pointed out. When we studied that passage. Early in the series. Jesus here. Is echoing.

A text. In the song of Solomon. Which is that great love poem. In the Old Testament. Song of Solomon. Chapter 5. Verse 2. A voice. My beloved. Is knocking.

[19:42] Open to me. My sister. My darling. My dove. My perfect one. The whole of the last book of the Bible. Is one. Long. Love letter.

Telling us. That we are being seduced. That we are being seduced. By Babylon the harlot. Which is being fueled by the dragon.

Not only. Are we under pressure to compromise. We are being seduced. By a false lover. Who can never.

Satisfy. The longings of the human heart. Blessed. Blessed. Blessed are those. Who are invited. To the marriage supper. Of the lamb.

Now what does all of this mean. To live. In light. Of this beatitude. To live in light. Of this invitation. To live in light. Of this metaphor. I've already suggested.

[20 : 40] One implication. And that is dignity. To become. The bride of the lamb. Is to. Have great dignity.

I mean. To be a disciple of the lamb. That would be good enough. To be a sister. Or a brother of the lamb. That would be good too. To be a priest with the lamb.

Oh that would be good. To be his friend. Wow. But to be his bride. God. God. God. God. God. God. Another implication. Delight.

Knowing. That we are the bride. Helps us realize. The degree. Of delight. He takes. In us. The lamb. Really likes us.

Wrinkles. And all. Warts. And all. He really likes us. He delights. In us. He finds great joy. In us. Zephaniah. 318. The Lord.

[21 : 37] Will renew you. In his love. He will sing. Songs of joy. Over you. He delights. In you. And he delights. To give. Gifts.

To his bride. Gifts. Like wisdom. And patience. And endurance. And power. And joy. And peace. Another implication.

Intimacy. He wants us. To know him. You probably know. That the word. Know. In the Bible. That speaks of God.

Knowing us. And we knowing God. That that word. Know is the same word. Used of a husband.

Knowing his wife. And a wife. Knowing her husband. The lamb. Of God. Wants us.

To know him. Even as he knows us. Intimate. Knowledge. Not only intellectually. But emotionally. A total.

[22 : 32] Knowing. A deep. Knowing. I think this is why. The apostle Paul. Concludes. His ode to love. In first Corinthians. Thirteen. The way he does. Now I know in part. But then I shall.

Know fully. Just as I am also. Fully known. The bridegroom. Knows his bride. And wants the bride. To know him. To that degree. Of intimacy. Would you agree with me.

That all of our longings. Are really symptoms. Of our longings. For Jesus. Our longings. For intimacy. Our culture.

Is just. Our culture. That's one of the ways. To name our culture. The longing. For intimacy. It's all symptomatic. Of this longing. For Jesus Christ.

Christ. Which is why. I think. It is appropriate. To take songs. That are sung. To human lovers. And sing them to Jesus.

[23 : 29] I know this can be problematic. But are there not times. When you want. To sing to Jesus. A song that you would sing. To a human lover.

There's a new contemporary song. Going around. Right now. It sings to Jesus. These words. What a friend. I found. Closer than a brother.

I have felt your touch. More intimate. Than lovers. Are there not times.

When you want to join. People throughout church history. Who believe that the song of Solomon. Is this love poem. Of a relationship. Between God and his people. Don't you want to join them sometimes.

And actually sing that song to Jesus. Intimacy. Bride and bridegroom. Lover and beloved. More than a metaphor.

[24 : 45] A mystery. Of deep communion. And communication. Of union. And oneness. Throughout this week.

I found myself singing. Some of those songs. Loved with everlasting love. Led by grace.

That love to know. Spirit breathing from above. Thou has taught me. It is so.

Oh this full and perfect peace. From his presence. From his presence. So divine. In a love.

That cannot cease. I am his. And he is mine. I love you. I love you Lord.

[25 : 41] And I lift my voice. To worship you. Oh my soul. Rejoice. Take joy.

My king. In what you hear. Let it be a sweet. Sweet. Sweet. Sound. In your ear.

I forgot where I was this morning. And was singing that. As I got into the subway station. She looked at me funny.

I was too embarrassed to say. You can join the song too. Another implication. Security. He has claimed us for himself.

He has bought us for himself. He has sealed the relationship in a covenant. Over a cup of wine. And come hell or high water. He's going to stick with his wife.

[26 : 45] In plenty and in want. In joy and in sorrow. In sickness and in health. He's the relentless lover. And he will go to infinite lengths. To make sure we stay in relationship with him.

Because he's already gone to infinite lengths. He's already gone. Into the depths of our humanity. To take hold of us. He's already dived.

Deep into the abyss of our sin. To seize us. He's already become. One flesh with us forever. He will never let us go. He will never get up. Give up. He will never walk away.

He is in this marriage. All the way into the eternal city. Very secure. And another implication.

Readiness. Dignity. Delight. Intimacy. Security. And readiness. Revelation 19. 7. For the wedding of the Lamb has come. And his bride has made herself ready.

[27 : 44] And then 21. 2. Coming down out of heaven from God. Prepared as a bride. Beautifully dressed for her husband. The question is. Who does the preparing? Who does the getting ready?

Who makes us ready for this? God or the bride herself? Answer. Yes. Because God is at work in us. Enabling us to get ready.

Verse 7. Again. Fine linen. Bright and clean. Was given her to wear. Given by whom? By God. God gives us what we need to wear to the wedding.

God works in us. To get us ready for the wedding. I love what God says to Israel. To faithless fickle Israel.

In Ezekiel 30. 16. Read Ezekiel 16. Sometime later. The whole chapter. Verses 8 to 14. God says. I gave you my solemn oath.

[28 : 40] And I entered into a covenant with you. Declares the sovereign Lord. And you became mine. I bathed you with water. I washed the blood from you. And put ointments on you. I clothed you with an embroidered dress.

I put leather sandals on you. I adorned you with jewelry. You became very beautiful. And your fame spread among the nations. On account of your beauty. Because the splendor I had given you.

Made your beauty perfect. Declares the sovereign Lord. Which is what he's doing. With us. With you. With me. I see it happening to you.

I see him making you beautiful. He's adorning you. With all kinds of graces. I think you're beautiful. You're beautiful.

And I can see. How he's making you even more beautiful. How does that feel? Readiness.

[29 : 38] He's making us ready. Because. He doesn't want to find us. In the arms. Of Babylon the harlot. He doesn't want to find us. In bed with the harlot.

When he comes. So he wants us to be dressed. And ready. To meet the only one. Who loves us. To the depth of our being.

One more implication. We now have another way to understand. What is going on in the Lord's Supper. In this event.

We are renewing our marital vows. Each time we do this. Eat. And drink. In remembrance. Of Jesus. We are reminded of who he is.

And who we are in him. He is the bridegroom. And we are the bride. And at this table. He feeds us. So that we can endure. The journey.

[30 : 35] Toward that day. When he comes to take us. To his. And our. New home. The words of another. Old for him.

In the 19th century. Scottish him. Also have been going through my mind. This week. Here. Oh my Lord. I see thee face to face. Here what I touch.

And handle things unseen. Here. Grasp with firmer. Hand. Eternal grace. And all my weariness. Upon thee lean. This is the hour of banquet.

And of song. This is the heavenly table. Spread for me. Here. Let me feast. And feasting. Still prolong. That hallowed hour. Of fellowship with thee. Here. What I feed upon the bread of God. Here. Drink with thee. The royal wine of heaven. Here. What I lay aside. Each earthly load. Here. Taste afresh. The calm of sin forgiven. And then these verses. Too soon we rise.

[31 : 31] The symbols disappear. The feast. Though not the love. Is past and gone. The bread and wine removed. But thou art here. Nearer than ever.

Still my shield. And son. Feast. After feast. Thus comes and passes by. Yet passing. Points to the glad feast above. Giving sweet foretaste.

Foretaste of the festal joy. The lamb's great bridal feast. Of bliss. And love. Blessed. Are those. Who have been invited.

To the marriage supper. Of the lamb. For some of you today. This is the first time. That you heard. You were invited. And so today.

Is the day to say. Yes. I want to come. For others of you today. You've known. You've been invited. For a long time. But for whatever reason.

[32 : 25] You've been delaying. This is the day to say. Here I am Lord. No more delay. I want to come. For some of you here today. The invitation.

Has gotten lost. In a pile. Of to-do lists. And bills. And today. Is the day. To take that invitation. Out of the pile. And say to the Lord. Forgive me for my delay.

I want to come. And for others of you today. Here today. The invitation. Has been buried. In layers of guilt. And shame. And you do not feel.

Worthy to come. In fact. For some of you. I know. I've heard some of you say. You believe. That if the lamb. Really. Really knew you. He'd cancel. The invitation. I'm here to tell you.

That the lamb. Does know you. He knows you. Better than you know. Yourself. And he shed his blood. To cover. Your shame. And guilt. He shed his blood. And to take your guilt.

[33 : 18] And shame away. He's saying to you. I shed my blood for you. I purchased you. I know. Who I bought. And you are mine. And today is the day.

To shake off the gloom. To lift up your head. And say. Lord Jesus. I want to come. Blessed. Blessed. Are the poor in spirit.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn. For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle.

For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. For right relationship. For they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful. For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart. For they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers. For they will be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted. For righteousness sake. For theirs is the kingdom.

[34 : 15] Blessed are those who wash their robes. Blessed are those who stay awake. Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. And blessed are those who are invited to the supper of the Lamb.

So come. Come. Come.