

The Wedding Of Weddings

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Date: 01 May 2011

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[0 : 00] Well let's turn back to the reading of Revelation 19 and we'll focus our attention on verses 7 to 9 and we'll think of these verses in terms of the wedding of weddings.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage or the wedding of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready.

The wedding of weddings.

It was watched on TV by hundreds of millions the world over and it will be regarded doubtless as the wedding of the year for sure.

Maybe once the pundits have trawled it over it will be the wedding of the decade or something like that. But it was quite exceptional in its own way.

[1 : 45] Although we are assured that there were many other weddings on the 29th of April and as somebody said the couples felt in their own wee way like a bit like royalty themselves.

Those of us who watched the thing, who were able to watch the thing and all the pomp and ceremony and all the dazzling colour of clothing and of jewellery and so on saw quite some splendour.

But when we read in Revelation and we read of the wedding of weddings, the wedding of William and Catherine simply cannot compare.

And this wedding of weddings as John sees it by the Spirit is a wedding that we don't want to miss. We want to be involved in it. We want to be participants in it. I think some of us will know from the media that there were people disappointed and the journalists speculated on who were particularly disappointed for not being invited to that wedding.

[3 : 04] And they'll feed on that I'm sure for a few weeks in speculating and quizzing and so on. But the wedding of weddings is one that we ought to have a serious interest in.

It's future. But it's certain. And we ought to be concerned as those who profess the Christian religion.

We ought to be concerned that we will have a direct part in it. We will be involved in it. We will be guests, yet more than guests, in that wedding and at that wedding.

And it's interesting, you see, that although Revelation 19 has a lot of heavy stuff about judgment, about the final judgment, yet there in that context we read about the wedding of weddings.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give him the glory for the wedding of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready.

[4 : 13] I want us to think about four things concerning the wedding of weddings for our encouragement. And the first is that the Father planned it in eternity.

That is to say, he and his eternal Son, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, planned that wedding in eternity and planned it in every detail to perfection.

And John is looking forward to the point when this reality will come to pass.

For the marriage or the wedding of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. It's important to see here that what has taken place and takes place in time regarding the royal bridegroom here called the Lamb and the bride, Jesus, was planned from time's eternity.

It's not about God having to move and shake in time. God has planned from everlasting whatsoever comes to pass. And that includes the period of waiting for the marriage of the Lamb or the wedding of the Lamb.

[5 : 50] We sing in the Psalms many verses that have to do with the plans of God. For example, we sing in Psalm 89.

God's mercies I will ever sing, you remember in the metrical version. I, with my chosen one, have made a covenant graciously. And to my servant David I have sworn that I will establish your seed

and your throne forever.

And we never really think, I suspect, that that at heart has to do with the arrangements made in the eternal counsel concerning the marriage or the wedding of the Lamb.

Everything in between and up to and into the wedding. It's all there. God the Father covenanted with his son.

And all the arrangements to bring this to pass were planned in the councils of the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[7 : 08] And he will ensure that in his time the wedding of weddings will take place. If you think about it with that emphasis I'm bringing out here, you will remember that Paul, writing to the Ephesian Christians, tells that we were loved and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

1 Peter chapter 1 from verse 1 talks about those who were elected by God the Father from livingly foreknown in times eternal and so on.

So the plans for the wedding were laid from everlasting. And everything that happens in the history of this world moves towards God's time for the wedding.

And John is lifting our eyes as it were and encouraging us to look forward to what the Father planned in eternity. Now in this connection, the Lord Jesus himself spoke of those given to him by the Father.

This catacross, of course, Jewish thinking, the Jewish rabbinical thinking of the day, because they thought it was all about being connected to Abraham and therefore having a right to be of the number of the children of God.

[8 : 47] But Jesus says that this business was done in eternity. All that the Father has given me, he said, John 6, 37.

All that the Father has given me, given me in times eternal, will come to me in time. They'll be gathered down through the ages of human history.

And so Jesus is, as it were, opening up our vision to the fact that the wife of the Lamb was given to the Lamb by the Father in times eternal.

All that the Father has given me, will come to me in time. And those who come to me, I will in no wise cast out. And therefore, John says, let us be glad and rejoice and give him the glory as we anticipate what will happen because of the sovereign and eternal arrangements of the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

That's the first thing we want to highlight about the wedding of weddings. The second thing is that the Son came to betroth the bride to himself and to pay the dowry as it were.

[10 : 27] To betroth the bride and pay the dowry. The Son came. The Lamb came into this world. The first thing I want to observe here is the whole business of betrothal from a biblical perspective.

Betrothal in the Bible is far more than engagement in the modern sense. Or even in the less modern sense. It's far more than that.

Because at betrothal, the terms of marriage are accepted by the man and the woman. They're accepted.

They accept the terms of the marriage in the presence of witnesses. And then the Lord's blessing was pronounced upon the union.

And your classic example, I hope you're thinking about this, but your classic example on this, of course, is Mary and Joseph. You remember in Matthew's account of the Gospel, when Joseph is concerned about Mary being with child.

[11 : 42] We're told that Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Now most folk think of that in a somewhat superficial arrangement.

But it was not. She was effectively his wife. And if you look at verse 20 of Matthew 1, where Joseph has now discovered Mary is with child.

And they haven't come together in relations. And here she is with child. He's minded to put her away. And the Lord comes through his messenger. Don't be afraid to take your wife.

That's what's said. So the betrothal, in the betrothal, the arrangements, the terms were agreed and accepted in the presence of witnesses.

And the blessing of God was pronounced upon the union, which had to be consummated in its own time. And it's interesting, you see, to push this a bit further on the spiritual side.

[12:53] In 2 Corinthians 11, 2, the apostle Paul says about the Corinthians that he wanted to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ.

As those who were betrothed. And therefore what we're saying here is the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom came to betroth his bride and to pay the dowry as it were.

Now you see, we haven't time to go into the background, the Old Testament background. But it's interesting that the apostle John in his gospel account refers to Christ, or Christ himself, refers to himself as the Bridegroom.

Remember there's an issue on fasting. And the time will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away and then the bride can fast.

But while he's there, they can't fast. So you get this notion coming through of the Bridegroom, the Lamb of God, Jesus, and the Bride, his people.

[14:18] And so he is pictured as coming into this world, at least this is one aspect of his coming, to betroth his bride to himself, to betroth the church to himself.

And secondly, within that, to pay the dowry, so to speak. And the custom, of course, of paying the dowry to the father of the bride is not unknown to us.

And you may recall, I said a moment ago, in the first point, that the father gave to his son, in the councils of eternity, a people, the bride, known only to God.

The given were given by the father to the son. And in this point, we're reminding ourselves that the dowry, so to speak, was paid by Jesus himself, by the Lamb, to his father.

In the service he rendered. And this service he rendered is not unknown to us in the Bible. And those of us who know very well the story of Jacob, you will recall, I'm sure, that he was outsmarted by Laban.

[15:50] And he was made to serve seven years, he thought, for Rachel. And it turned out to be Leah that was thrust upon him.

And he served another seven years for Rachel the second time. The point I'm making here is this notion of paying the dowry in terms of time served, or of service rendered.

And that ties in, if we view it like this, from this angle, we can think about the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom, undertaking to keep the commandment of his father to lay down his life.

It was the dowry payment, in that sense, viewed that way. I know very well that it was, of course, a ransom, that he met the law's demands.

But we're not looking at that at the moment, and that's not in focus here. What we're thinking about is in the dowry sense, he bought his bride, the church.

[17:05] I came across a verse from the hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church, from heaven he came and sought her, to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died. Kathy Fraser knows this one, up by heart. But it's true, you see.

That's exactly it. That crystallizes it. That's why I'm quoting it. From heaven he came and sought her, to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died. Oh, let us then make it our own business to receive him by faith, and to glory in his work of service on our behalf.

For her life he died. That's the second thing. The son came. He came.

[18:15] And he came specifically to betroth his bride. And all down through the ages that is having, the ages of this history, of this world, it's happening.

And we look back to his death on Calvary as a pain of the dowry. The third thing we want to look at is the age of betrothal will conclude.

The age of betrothal will conclude. We read there in the second part of verse 7, And his wife has made herself ready, unto her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen.

And so on. Now, as we've been more or less saying, and we'll say it again, human history is driving on towards the wedding of weddings.

All the ages that are passing since the work of Christ was completed outside the city wall of Jerusalem, human history is driving on to when the history of this world will be wound up and the wedding of weddings will take place.

[19:47] But here in this world, the guests, inverted commas, so to speak, are being gathered together. The bride is making ready for the wedding of weddings.

The bride, we read there, has made herself ready and it was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. We'll look at that in a moment. But she's been making herself ready and is making herself ready as here follows here. But notice to her it was given or granted is the version here. but given to be arrayed in fine linen. It's something that's given to us. That's part of the good news that it is given to us in the first place to be arrayed in fine linen, to be right with God. Hengsten Bergen in his commentary on this notes that we must be cautious, extremely cautious, with the claim of sin that the notion here is given a reward by God for doing righteous acts. [21 : 13] It's not about that. That's not the good news because all our righteous acts are as filthy rags. what is happening here is that the impartation if you like of this complete glory, this pure and shining white linen has regard to what God does.

It's given. And it is regard if you go back to Revelation 7.14. You remember in the picture of them arrayed, the innumerable multitude arrayed in white robes.

How did they become white? They washed them in the blood of the Lamb. It was given to them of God, of God and his grace.

It was granted to them. It was given to them. Sometimes the word dieme can mean to be gifted to us. And then, you see, from there on we remind ourselves that we are reckoned righteous for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the bridegroom himself.

And we are set apart, we are sanctified to God in him. and what follows on from that is that we seek to work in our lives at living lives that are conforming to the righteous standards of God.

[22 : 59] We thought just the other week on this, 1 John 2.29. Those who are righteous in Christ practice righteousness.

righteousness. And as he says, 1 John 3.2, those who have this hope of seeing him as he is, purify themselves even as he is pure.

In other words, we have a spirit. Having been united to the bridegroom, betrothed to him, receiving him by faith, we work out our Christian lives in a way that keeps to his word.

The great tragedy today, not only in the nation, but more alarmingly in the church, is that people are not keeping to the righteous standards, the path of righteousness.

righteousness. They're going with the flow at their peril. But you see, all this is going on, and on, and on, until the bridegroom comes, until he comes in power and glory, or it may be until he calls us home, to await in the grave the resurrection to the wedding.

[24 : 26] But it's all going on in a way that is certain. It has been planned in eternity, as we've seen. The son has come to betroth his bride and pay the delivery.

And the work is going on. And the truth of the matter is, the betrothal period will conclude, and he will return.

And when he returns, it will be to present to himself his bride. Remember, the passage is often read at weddings, Ephesians 5, where Paul says in verse 27, following on from Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, he is washing it in order to present it to himself, a perfect church, without spot or wrinkle, without any blemish, but it is to present it to himself at the wedding of weddings. And he will make sure that his bride then will be perfect. and lastly, the wedding of weddings and the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Because there are two thoughts there, rejoice and be glad, and give him the glory, for the marriage or the wedding of the Lamb has come. And then verse 9, write, blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper, to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

[26 : 24] And the focus here is on, of course, the bridegroom and his bride, the whole number of the people of God, of the given of the Father to his Son.

They will be there. But they'll be more than guests. They will be from all the nations, Jew and Gentile, and all the nations of the Gentiles.

They will be there. And I suppose if we were to pick a passage that sees that, the great wedding, it would be in Psalm 45, the psalm we were singing a moment ago, where verses 13 to 15 depicts under the scene of a royal wedding, an eastern wedding.

depicts the daughter, the bride, accompanied by the virgins around her. Usually interpreters think about it in terms of Jews and Gentiles, united as the bride of the bridegroom.

And John says, blessed are those who will be there. Blessed are those who will be there in that capacity, who are called to the wedding in the first place, and to the wedding feast, who are invited

there.

[27 : 59] And surely there is a reminder to us here that the truth is to be responded to. We are to take this to heart, we are to want in prospect to be there.

It's in a way of little consequence to us that this prime minister or that former prime minister never got an invitation. What are these things in the great scheme of things?

What are these things in comparison to being at the wedding of weddings? And you see, as that bears in upon our thinking, our minds, we want to be urged by the prospect of this wedding of weddings, to seek by the grace of God, to call upon Him in His grace, that we may be so blessed as to be there.

Blessed are those who are invited. who are called to the wedding feast. And I suppose, again, if we were to pick a passage from the Bible that speaks to us about the wedding feast, it would be Isaiah 25, verses 6-8, where you've got the Lord of hosts will provide a feast of wine on the lees well refined, depicting God's provision for his people, gathered together, feasting with him at his table. And an interesting slant on this is that Jesus himself said at the Passover, that last Passover before he suffered, you'll find it, among other places, you'll find it in Matthew 26, 29, verse 29, he said to them when he had given them the cup, the cup of redemption, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it anew in my Father's kingdom.

[30 : 16] And I am compelled to say that they are right to suggest that he was thinking about this very thing that we are looking at, the wedding of weddings and the wedding feast.

He was thinking on towards the time when he would gather his bride to himself. He was thinking about the great messianic banquet, which will celebrate the marriage of the bridegroom to his bride.

And for sure it will be no drunken orgy, modeled on ancient Rome or modeled on modern times.

The enjoyment of seeing him as he is will be delightful to our spiritual taste.

Of entering in upon seeing him as he really is, we will enter in upon a whole new face of spiritual pleasures in the Lord.

That will be ever deepening and widening. Our vision will be far beyond what we can imagine. Our sense of fulfillment and satisfaction beyond anything we can reckon here.

[31 : 41] Doesn't the scripture tell us Psalm 16 verse 11 at your right hand father there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore and who is at his right hand but the bridegroom himself.

And in the very next psalm we are told Psalm 17 verse 15 I shall be satisfied when I awake with your likeness and the people of God will awake to a glorious resurrection and to enter in upon the wedding of the lamb of the bridegroom to his bride and will partake of his heavenly banquet and will be satisfied with his likeness.

Surely we must say from our heart of hearts Lord grant me in your grace a place at that table.

Amen.