

A Marriage Made In Heaven

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Preacher: Mark Macleod

[0 : 00] Well, if you turn back to Revelation chapter 21, those eight verses, tonight I want, in a sense, to walk us through the gates of heaven.

If you like, peer through the gates of heaven as these gates open up for us in this particular chapter here.

And because here, and in other places in Revelation, we get a preview. Albeit a veiled preview, but a preview nonetheless.

A preview of the wonder, the splendor, the glory that awaits the Christian in the heaven that is to come.

You see, when we're converted, when we become Christians, when the Spirit of God comes in and regenerates us, at that moment, our salvation is absolutely secure.

[1 : 06] It is safe, and it can never be taken away from you. But having said that, it is not complete. The process of salvation continues.

As we live, as we live, God is making us more and more holy. He's conforming us more and more to his image.

And even as we die, even at that point, the Catechism tells us that we're made perfect in holiness and we're immediately taken into heaven.

But even there, even there, our salvation is still not yet complete. There is something beyond that. Even the saints in heaven today, the saints in heaven still are awaiting the completion of their salvation, the completion of God's work of redemption.

And when does that come? It comes on the last day, the day of the resurrection, when the body and the soul, when they are reunited together.

[2 : 23] And when we, as the church of Christ, we who are the bride, as we'll see later on, we will enter into the new heaven and the new earth.

And then, and only then, God's great plan of redemption finds its ultimate fulfillment. The final consummation of God's wonderful plan of redemption.

That's what lies ahead for the Christian. That's what lies ahead, even for the saints in glory tonight. Right. And God often borrows from the language of the marriage relationship to describe these things.

You find that throughout the Bible. He uses the marriage relationship. He uses the marriage relationship to describe the bond of Christ with his church.

And tonight, really, that's what I want to pick up on, this marriage imagery as we look at heaven. Now, God, you'll notice, in this particular book of Revelation, he uses this imagery of bride and bridegroom throughout really much of that last section of Revelation.

[3 : 40] Right from chapter 18, right through to chapter 22, you find these terminologies coming up, bride and bridegroom, as we, the church of Christ, the bride of Christ, is united to him.

And that's what I want to look at tonight. As we look at this particular portion of Scripture here in chapter 21, verses 1 to 8, I want to look at it in terms of the greatest marriage of all time.

A marriage, quite literally, made in heaven. God's plan to redeem his bride. And I've broken it up, you'll see there on your sheets, broken it up into three headings.

Three headings, I think that's important for any wedding. But three headings that's particularly important for this heavenly wedding that we are looking at tonight. They are the venue prepared, the bride arrives, and the vows fulfilled.

So first of all, the venue prepared. Now, venue is a very important thing when it comes to weddings. Alan will know, and Ruth will know all about that.

[4 : 52] Venues are very important. When we get a wedding invitation, one of the first things, well, not that I get to open them, but when my wife opens a wedding invitation, one of the first things that she'll look at, is after maybe the date, she'll look at the venue.

Where is this wedding going to take place? There's a great deal of excitement about the venue itself, and God here. He tells us that the venue, if you like, of this great marriage in heaven will be the new heavens and the new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth, they have passed away. Now, the first thing I want to recognize is that this place is described for us in the exact same way as we find at the beginning of creation.

In Genesis 1.1, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The very same terminology that we find here, in the future heaven.

It's described for us in those terms. He calls our new home the new heaven and the new earth. That means that the future state of glory is not going to be completely different, utterly unrecognizable to what we know now.

[6 : 09] What I mean by that is there's going to be a continuity. There's going to be a continuity between the two of them. It will be a physical place.

It will be a new world. There will be continuity. Yes, it will be unrecognizable in the sense of its beauty and its splendor and its majesty and its glory and the sheer holiness of this place.

But it's not going to be completely alien to the physical reality that we now live in. It's going to be a new world.

And something else quite interesting. There are at least two different Greek words that can be used or translated as new.

One of them is neos. And that means really something new with respect to time. So a few weeks ago we had a new baby.

[7 : 13] That is something completely new. New life coming into the world. Something new. But the other word is kynos. And that's something new with respect to quality.

Now say someone has got some kind of disability. And they go through a life changing operation. And the operation is successful.

And when they come out you look at them and you say, well, he's a new man. He's a new man. He's not actually a new man. But the operation has had such an impact, such a significance on his life that it is as though he is a new man.

His life has been so transformed by that operation. Well, when we read new heaven and new earth, it's the second word that's used here.

Kynos. That second word. The one that suggests renewal, regeneration, reworking, recreation. That's what we've got here.

[8 : 18] It's a recreation and a renewal of heaven and earth. And Isaiah 65, you'll remember, speaks of the new heavens and the new earth in that kind of way as well.

It speaks of them in terms of this idea of renewal. And as well as that, Ezekiel, really right through from 40 to 48, it speaks of this idea of a renewed land of promise.

This idea of renewal. Renewal. Renewal. And that is important because God doesn't just abandon his creation. God created this world.

God's not just going to walk away from it and disregard it entirely. No, that is not the picture that we have here. He takes it. He transforms it.

He reworks it. He regenerates it, if you like. He renews it in perfection and beauty that far exceeds anything that we see around us.

[9 : 26] Now, this wedding venue will be like a venue like you've never seen before. This new heavens and the new earth. It is going to be incredible.

Very often, these days, more and more people are getting into the idea of having their weddings in community hall settings.

And I think there's an added degree of anticipation and excitement with those kind of weddings when the people maybe think, Oh, I wonder what the venue will look like. I wonder what the hall will look like.

It's amazing how something, an area or a hall that's so plain and perhaps unspectacular, how it can be transformed into something so beautiful and elegant.

Perhaps you've had that experience, walking into these kind of weddings and being blown away by the transformation of the place, what's been blown away by what's been done with the space.

[10:32] Well, that is nothing compared to the transformation of this wedding venue. The transformation of this recreation, this renewed heaven and earth.

And verse 5 speaks of it there where it says, Behold, I make all things new. The sense of complete and total renewal.

A complete renewal. Not just a restoration of what we had in Eden, but a greater than Eden. You see, when you go back to Genesis, and you read the description there of Eden, well, you understand it.

The words are quite ordinary words used. They're words that help us to picture quite, quite clearly what Eden would be like. But see, the new heaven is on the new earth.

It's so glorious. It's so majestic that our words cannot, cannot convey the majesty of it. So God must speak to us through these symbols, through these visions.

[11:42] Oh, this is not going to be a restoration of Eden. And this is going to be a far exceedingly greater than Eden. And as we look around this venue, this new heaven and new earth, we notice something.

We notice that there's no sea here. No sea. Now, of course, that is a symbol. What does that mean? What does he mean here by no sea?

Well, the sea is often associated with evil. We touched on that briefly in Psalm 46, this idea of the roaring and foaming waters coming up against the psalmist.

It's a picture that you find, really, throughout the Bible. But maybe to take us to the immediate context of this particular book, I've given you two references there on your notes.

Revelation 13.1, which is, Out of the sea rose the wild beast. Very much a picture of evil. And the second reference there, 17.1, Babylon sat enthroned upon many waters.

[12:51] Babylon, of course, a great picture of evil. So, here you have this sea as a picture of evil. This division of evil will not exist in the new heavens and the new earth.

There will be nothing to separate the bride from her bridegroom in this new heavens and new earth. No sea to separate us ever again.

No evil to be seen in this place. So, this venue is set. God prepares it for us.

Do you ever wonder what heaven is going to be like? Do you ever just sit there and wonder? I wonder what it's going to be like. I mean, God gives us glimpses and symbols here in Revelation. And they're difficult to understand. They're difficult because the reality of what awaits us is so far above our comprehension. But he gives us these symbols.

[13:54] And I think one of the reasons he gives us these symbols, if you like, is to make us imagine. To make us wonder. To make us think, I wonder, exactly what it's going to be like.

It's good to think about heaven. And I hope that you do think about heaven. Are we excited about the prospect of what awaits us there? So, the venue is set.

And then, importantly, the bride arrives. In verse 2 there. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. So, the venue is set. And then we have this picture of this great city. New Jerusalem, descending down.

What does that mean? What's going on here? We maybe imagine New Jerusalem, the city of God with all its buildings, descending down in this rather bizarre picture, rather bizarre image in our heads.

[15:02] Well, that is a picture of the church of Christ. Not the buildings. Not our buildings.

The people. We are that city. We are that church. Ephesians talks about the Christians being built up into a spiritual building.

That is us. This picture of the building coming down, the city rather, coming down, is a picture of us. The church of Christ descending down.

We are that bride. The Bible often speaks of the church of Christ in those terms. As the bride of Christ.

That is us. And as we come down, we are adorned. Adorned. Adorned. For our bridegroom. And how well we are adored.

[16:04] You read it here. We didn't read the whole of the chapter. But you get some of the detail of that after verse 9. See, what you have here is 1 to 8 is kind of a snapshot. And then after that you

get more detailed account.

And in verse 9 you get a bit more detail here. Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues. And spoke to me saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain. And showed me that holy city, Jerusalem. Coming down out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God.

Its radiance like a most rare jewel. Like a jasper, clear as crystal. The bride goes on to be described in wonderful detail.

With her radiance. With all these wonderful precious stones. Pearls and gold. You see, this is not a description of the place that we will inhabit.

[17:12] If you are imagining walking through the streets of heaven. With pearls and gold pavements. And things like that. That is not really what is being captured here. This is describing us.

The church. The bride of Christ. He is not showing us the precious beauty of the venue as such. Although that is true. He is showing us the precious beauty of the bride.

Of us. The church of Christ. His people. You see, we have a beauty and a radiance up there. Or here.

Or wherever it may be. We have a beauty and a radiance in this new heaven. And this new earth. That cannot be described. So God uses the most precious stones that we have around us.

And he says, this is what it will be like. This is how beautiful my church will be. This is how beautiful my people will be. But see that radiance. That glory.

[18:11] It is not our. It is not our glory. It is the reflected glory. It is the glory of God. You have all been to jewellery shops.

I am sure. Even the men. I am sure you have been at least once in a jewellery shop. Even if it was just to buy your engagement ring. Perhaps for those who are a bit more romantic.

You have been in there more often than that. But you know what it is like. You know what these jewellery shops are like. And something that is very important. About jewellery shops.

Is lighting. Lighting. Because all these precious stones and diamonds. They are at their most impressive.

When there is a great amount of light. Because really. The stone itself has no beauty. The beauty is in how it takes in the light.

[19:08] And how it reflects. And how it diffuses this light. And makes it as it were. Sparkle. If there was no light. There would be no beauty.

If there was no light. A diamond would be no more beautiful than a lump of coal. So light is incredibly important. And that is what it is like in this picture of heaven here.

Without light. There would be no beauty in us. So where does that light come from? There is no sun there. Again we didn't read this particular verse.

Verse 23. But it says. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it. For the glory of God gives it light. And its lamp is the lamb.

The light is from God. God. The lamb is its lamp. It is his glory. The light of his glory that we reflect.

[20:04] So you see the picture you have here is the bride. Descending down. As it were walking down this aisle.

Adorned in the precious stones. And as she gets nearer and nearer her bridegroom. Nearer and nearer the source of that glory.

The source of that light. She reflects it like never before. As she comes face to face. With her saviour.

With our saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ. Remember Moses. Remember Moses when his face was shining. When he was up Mount Sinai.

Imagine what it will be like for us in heaven. Imagine. And Moses. He veiled his face didn't he?

There will be no veil in heaven.

[21:01] There will be no need of a veil in heaven. You see. We will see our Lord face to face.

Face to face. Not through a glass darkly.

Not through a veil. Not through a curtain. Not even through the eyes of faith. We will see him face to face.

Can you imagine. What that will be like. The venue is prepared. The bride arrives. And then.

Thirdly. The vows fulfilled. Normally in a wedding service. We make vows to each other. A husband will make vows to his wife.

And the wife will make vows to the husband. It's a two way thing. But these vows are quite different. Firstly.

[21 : 58] It is only God who makes them. This is a one way thing. This is all about God's promises to us. Not our promises to God.

But secondly. And what I want to really focus on. Is the fact that the vows are not new promises. We make new promises when we get married. But these vows are not new promises.

But they are fulfillment of the promises made long, long ago. Read verse 3. And I heard a loud voice from the throne say.

Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God.

This is the fulfillment of all the covenant promises of God. It's all happening right here. We touched on this. I can't remember now when.

[22 : 59] Was it on Wednesday or last Sunday? But this idea of God entering into covenant with his people long ago. Way back in the Old Testament. And he promised them three things. People.

He promised them that he would make them a great nation. He promised them a place. He promised them a promised land. And he promised them a personal relationship.

A special relationship between God and between us. I will be your God and you will be my people. You see these three covenant promises. They're developing right through the Old Testament. Right through the Bible. You see them developing and being partially fulfilled. But they never quite get there. They never quite reach their ultimate fulfillment.

Until now. Until here. In these very verses. Here. These promises reach their final fulfillment.

[24 : 01] They were promised a land. Right? Was that looking to the land of Canaan? No. Of course not. That was a partial fulfillment.

This was looking towards the new heaven. And the new earth. The great heavenly Canaan. That's what we find here. That's what it's looking towards.

They were promised a people. Was that promise ultimately looking to the establishment of Israel. And the building up of Israel as a nation? No. No. Of course not.

It was looking beyond that. It was looking to this moment. This day when the people of God would be together. Adorned as a bride for her bridegroom. Where the wheat and the tares are separated. Where the sheep and the goats are separated. And the people of God are together. In the new heaven and the new earth. Here. In these verses. That promise is fulfilled. They were promised a special relationship with God.

[25 : 01] What was that looking to? Was it looking to God dwelling with his people in the tabernacle? Was it looking to Jesus who tabernacled amongst them? No. These were partial fulfillments.

But this was ultimately looking to this wonderful moment. When the bride stands before her bridegroom. Face to face. In the new heavens and the new earth.

In this eternal marriage bond. An intimate fellowship that goes beyond anything we could ever imagine.

In a way in which it could never have been said before. Truly the dwelling place of God is with man. Here these promises are fulfilled.

And that's what we have to look forward to. In verse 6 there it says. It is done. It is done.

[26 : 00] It is complete. It is finished. The great unfolding. Of God's plan of redemption. As we trace it right through from the beginning of the Bible.

It is complete. Complete. God with his people. In the new heavens. And the new earth. In this wonderful.

Perfect. Relationship. Here. The vows of redemption are fulfilled. That is what we have to look forward to. That is what the saints in glory today.

Have to look forward to. Can you imagine. What that will be like. Can you imagine it. Does that not make you excited.

It should do. And then after these vows. Are fulfilled if you like. We have the picture of the bridegroom as it were.

[26 : 57] Wiping away our tears. In verse 4 there. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying.

Nor pain. Anymore. For the former things have passed away. We are used to seeing tears. At weddings. Usually tears of joy.

But the tears that we have here. Are tears of sorrow. And tears of pain. It's as though the Lord is saying. He's wiping away the tears. And saying.

There's going to be no more tears here anymore. There will be no more tears. No more sorrow. No more pain. No more mourning.

No more hurt. Friends. How much pain have you had in your life? How much suffering? How many sorrows?

[27 : 57] How many tears have you shed? Well here. In this new heaven and new earth. Not a tear. Will be shed.

As he wipes away. The tear. It's as though he wipes away. Not only. The potential for future sorrow. But he wipes away. The reality of past sorrow.

It's perhaps easy for us to think of. The new heavens and the new earth. Being a place where we. We won't sorrow again in the future. But it's hard for us. To understand this idea. Of God wiping away.

Past sorrow. Sorrows from the past. Never seem. To go away. We can maybe learn.

To live with them. But in a sense. They don't. Go away. Yet. God somehow. Wipes away. These sorrows. And what causes.

[28 : 55] Sorrow. More than death itself. You see. When death draws near. As it has drawn near. This. Community. Even this day.

When death draws near. It comes with a scar. And it's a deep scar. And the closer. The closer. The relationship. With the one.

Who has died. The deeper. That scar will be. And you never get over that scar. But you learn to live with it. In a sense. You learn to live.

With these. Scars. Yet. Our Lord. Wipes them. All away. How can that be? Does he erase our memories?

No. He doesn't erase our memories. That would be utterly. Absurd. We will remember. It's not as though we will forget.

[29 : 51] Life here on earth. But. Somehow. He will wipe away. These sorrows. Somehow. He will do that. We don't know how.

But he will. Imagine a day. When your past sorrows. Are wiped away. Taken away from you. That is what awaits.

God's people in heaven. That is what awaits us. In a new heaven. And a new earth. No. More. Death. We are used to hearing.

The phrase in our marriage vows. Until death do us part. There will be no such clause. In these vows. There will be no death here. There will be no.

Division. Here. No possibility of separation. No more pain. No more tears. No more sorrow. No more death. For all.

[30 : 46] Eternity. That's what awaits. The people of God. I hope you think. About heaven. Revelation is a difficult book.

I grant you that. And sometimes. We maybe feel like. Not going near it. Because it's difficult. But you see. It gives us little windows. Of what heaven will be like.

Windows that we peer through. And try. And almost. Get some sort of grasp. Of what awaits us. And as we. Watch.

As we look through. These. These windows. It's as though we realize. That. That we are not yet home. Looking through these windows. Of heaven. We realize. This is not our home here.

We are reminded. That we are not home. Perhaps. You friend. As a. As a Christian. Here. Perhaps you're struggling. With difficulties. In life.

[31 : 43] And maybe you're thinking. When I. When I was. When I. Became a Christian. I thought my life. Would be so different. I thought things. Would be so much easier. Is this it? Is this really. All I have to look forward to?

Well. This is not it. This is not it. If this is all. We have to look forward to. Then we should be disappointed. As we do battle with sin.

As we. Face the enmity. Of the world. As we go through. Hardships. And trials. And suffering. If that is all. That we have to look forward to.

We should be disappointed. But that is not it. This is not our home. We look forward. To that day. In the new heavens. And the new earth.

Where there will be. Complete. Tranquility. A day is coming. When these things will be true. When there won't be.

[32 : 39] Any tears. No sorrows. A place. That we call the new heavens. And the new earth. A place where we are as. The bride adorned for her bridegroom. A place where we will be face to face.

With our Lord. And our saviour. That. Is what we look forward to. And at this. Wedding banquet. If you like. There is only one drink on offer. One drink on offer. Middle of verse six there. To the thirsty.

I will give. From the spring. Of the water. Of life. Without. Payment. The drink. From the spring. Of the water. Of life. Not a drink. That we earn. Not a drink. That we. Work for. Not a drink. That we deserve. But the gift of God.

[33 : 40] And as we are there. In heaven. In all its. Wonder. And majesty. And splendor. We will drink. From this fountain. And it will be sweeter. Than anything. We have ever.

Tasted. Before. The water. Of life. Eternal. That's the drink. That awaits us. There. But. Revelation. Speaks of. Another. Cup. Another. Source. Of drink. And it's linked. To this chapter. And we'll find it. In Revelation.

14. 10. In fact. It's. Scattered. Throughout. Revelation. I've just chosen. One of them. To show you. And in Revelation. 14. 10. He also. Will drink.

The wine. Of God's wrath. Poured. Full strength. Into the cup. Of his anger. And he will be. Tormented. With fire. And sulfur.

[34 : 34] A very. Different. Kind of cup. And a very different. Kind of drink. But this ties in. With what we have here. In verse 8. Now we can't go into.

The last three verses. Really. In a great deal of. Detail. But I just wanted to highlight. This. Link here. Between the cup. And the.

What you find at the. In the end of verse 8. There. Because those who drink. From this cup. Their portion. Will be. In the lake. That burns. With fire. And sulfur.

Which is the second. Death. What is that? A second death? Well. It really is. A never ending death. A never ending death.

The polar. Opposite. Of what we have just been. Considering. The polar. Opposite. Of the new heavens. And the new earth. The place. With no sorrow. The place where there will be. No more death.

[35 : 32] And yet here. We read of a place as though. There was nothing. But. Death. Continual. Death.

A lake. Of fire. And sulfur. Again. Not literal. Not literal. But symbolic. But your imagination. Doesn't need to be particularly good. To tell you that. Anything that's described. In those kind of terms. A lake of fire. And sulfur. Even a child. Would tell you. That is somewhere.

I do not want to go. In a sense. That doesn't even need explained. It speaks for itself. It is a lake. Of fire.

And sulfur. That. Is the destination. For those who drink. From the cup. Of. Of God's. Of God's. Of God's. Wrath. Friends.

[36 : 29] As we consider. These two sources. Of drink. Tonight. The fountain. Of the water. Of life. That sweet drink. That we will drink. In heaven. And the cup.

Of God's wrath. Which drink. Will we take? We must take one. There's no saying. Oh no. Thank you. Please. We will take one.

Whether we like it or not. You see. Life is short. Supposing you. Everyone here lived until they were a hundred even. Life is still short.

When you compare that. Relative to the scale of eternity. And yet how you live. In these few. Short years.

Determines. How you live. For the rest of eternity. Friends. I hope. And I pray. That you will put your trust.

[37 : 26] In the Lord. Jesus Christ. There is nothing. Complicated about the offer. Of salvation. There is nothing.

Complicated about it. Mentioned earlier. A child could understand. The terminology of fire and sulfur. Well so can the child. Understand the gospel. Jesus has come.

And died. For his people. And he has done all the work. And he has offered it there. And he is saying. Take it. Take this drink. Of the water of life.

And all we must do. Is take it. Put our trust. In Christ. Embrace him. As our saviour. And we can be sure.

Of a glorious future. A future. In the new heavens. In the new earth. And when we are there. We can come together. And discuss it. And tell each other.

[38 : 23] How amazed we are. At what we are seeing. And how we never expected. Such a thing. Friends. May that.

Be the destination. Of every single one of us. And may it be so. In Jesus Christ. Our Lord. And saviour. Amen.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father.

We give you thanks. That. You are a God. Who saves. And that you are a God. Who continues that. Process of salvation.

As you. Lead us. Towards. That great day. When we will enter into the new heavens. And the new earth. A day.

[39 : 17] When we will be there. As a bride. Adorned for her bridegroom. A day. When. Your great. Covenant. Vows.

Your great covenant. Promises. Find their ultimate. Fulfillment. Oh. May that be. The experience. Of every single one of us. In here.

Tonight. May we put our faith. In Jesus Christ. Christ. And may we look. To a great. Glory. To come. Cleanse us.

Of our sins. And we ask it all. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.