

The Lord's Wedding Reception

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our service today singing in Psalm 21, Psalm 21 in the Scottish Psalter, page 225, verses 1 to 6.

The King in thy great strength, O Lord, shall very joyful be. In thy salvation rejoice, how vehemently shall he. Thou hast bestowed upon him all that his heart would have, and thou from him didst not withhold whate'er his lips did crave.

Kingship in the Old Testament was really a representation, imperfectly of course, but a representation nevertheless of the Lord Jesus Christ himself and his kingship.

And so we relate these verses to Jesus the King, and especially Jesus the King crowned in his exaltation, now following his work of atonement on earth.

So these verses 1 to 6, the King in thy great strength, O Lord, and the tune is Arnold. The King in thy great strength, O Lord, shall many joyful be.

[1 : 18] In thy salvation rejoice, how vehemently shall he.

Thou hast bestowed upon him all that his heart would have, and thou from him didst not withhold whate'er his lips did crave.

For thou with blessings him bevend, For thou with blessings him bevend, Of goodness manifold, And thou hast said upon his head, A crown of purest gold, When he desired life of thee, Thou light to him didst care, In such a length of days that he For evermore should live.

In that salvation brought by thee, His glory is made great.

Honour and comely majesty, Thou hast upon him said, Because that thou forevermore Most blessed hast in me, And thou hast with thy countenance, Made him exceeding glad.

[4 : 39] Let's now join together in prayer, Refleer prayer at this point, And the service is mostly focused on the Sunday school, And the young folks, So let's pray.

Lord our gracious God, We thank you that on this day, We are able to gather together as we do now, And we thank you that we have young ones and children with us, To be part of the service, And we thank you for them, For the way that you have brought them to be interested, And along with their parents to come, To attend upon the worship of God.

We thank you, Lord, Today that they participate in worship, And that they are taught thereby how important it is for us to worship you, And to be a worshipping people, Not only when we come to church, But also as we live out our days each day in all that we do.

We thank you today, Lord, for the children, Once again. We pray for them and ask that you would bless them here, And bless them elsewhere. We know that there are many of them, Lord, Away at this time.

We give thanks for them, And we pray that they may have a time of refreshment with their families. We ask that your blessing, Lord, Will come to rest upon them day by day, And they may come to know your word living in their hearts, And guiding them in their steps through life.

[6 : 02] Remember the young ones at Scalladale, We pray as well today at the youth camp. We ask that your blessing will be with them. You bless your word to them as it is explained to them.

And we pray that you would keep them safe and watch over them in all their activities. We pray now that you would go with us into the service and into the rest of this day. And we pray that in all of these things you would give great glory to your own great name.

And help us to be thankful that we have so many special things to enjoy that you have given us in this life. Receive us now we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Okay, the twinnies are getting a bit older by the look of it. I know there are other children elsewhere in today. So I'm going to say a word to the children at this point.

One word I want you to remember, It's easy enough to remember because you're very familiar with it. It's the word rain. I can hear the old ones groaning. Don't tell me he's going to talk about rain in church as well.

[7 : 04] Well, rain is very important, of course. And we're all very familiar with rain on the island, aren't we? Sometimes we complain about the rain. Sometimes we look out if it's raining in the morning and say, Oh, not another day of rain.

But you know, rain is so important. Sometimes when you have too much rain, of course, you get floods. And floods bring huge problems to people. And we find places in the world, even in our own country, where severe flooding at times follows if there's a lot of rain.

And that, of course, destroys people's possessions and homes and puts people in danger as well. And even some people sadly lose their lives when there are great floods in different parts of the world and even in our own country as well.

On the other hand, the opposite of that is when you don't get enough rain. And when you don't get enough rain, of course, you get drought, which means the ground dries up and things don't grow properly. And then sadly, in parts of the world, certainly, because of drought, you get famine, lack of food and people facing starvation and all the problems that have to do with drought.

So, we should be thankful that God has placed us in an island where we don't get severe weather. Sometimes we get severe gales. But apart from that, the weather is generally fairly balanced.

[8 : 22] Okay? We might get a bit more rain at times than we would like, but we hardly ever get drought and we don't really get severe flooding except a few low-lying places perhaps.

Like a little boy once said to his teacher to say something about the rain in Lewis. And he said, Well, we do get a lot of rain, but it flows back out over the edges.

And that's so true, isn't it? God has placed us in very favorable conditions even weather-wise. And we should be very thankful for that. But in the Bible, rain is used as a symbol or a picture of God's blessing, especially the blessing of God when He blesses His Word.

I'm going to read one verse to you or two verses from Isaiah chapter 55. And Isaiah chapter 55 is a chapter that speaks about various things including the rain.

He says here in verse 10, For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth.

[9 : 36] It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. And God is saying there that just like the rain comes down and the earth needs the rain for things to grow, so His Word is like the rain as it comes down upon our lives, it causes things to grow in our lives if we receive the Word of God as we should into our hearts and to our souls.

And as by God's blessing and as we receive God's Word and apply it to our lives, well, God is reminding us here that it makes things grow in our lives that otherwise wouldn't be there.

Love for God, love for one another, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of our sins and confession of our sins. All of these things grow when God comes to bless His Word, when His Word comes upon us like the rain on the earth.

So, when His Word comes into our hearts and lives, it produces all of these wonderful things for us. And just like the earth needs the rain continuously, not just once now and again, but in order for things to grow, the rain needs to keep coming.

And so, we in our lives today need the rain of God's Word to come into our souls. That's why we're here today. We're here to worship God. And you young ones are getting part of that as well.

[11 : 07] It's important that you're here to worship God with us as adults. You're a special part of the congregation. And as you receive the Word of God, I hope today that you'll listen to the Word of God, take it into your hearts, think about what it's saying, because the more you do that, the more these things will grow in your life as well.

Your love for God, your respect for God, your love for other people. All the things that we need to have as Christians that make us marked out as Christians, so that in our lives too we will bear that fruit, as the Bible puts it elsewhere, to grow to the glory of God.

So, we shouldn't really complain about the rain really, because it does such an important work. Ordinarily the rain, of course, is important, but spiritually the rain of God's Word is also very important for us to have in our lives.

So, let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[12 : 31] For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing again now to God's praise again from Psalm 45a.

And all our singings for the rest of the service will be from 45a in Sing Psalms. That's on page 56. First of all, singing verses 1 to 5.

And the tune is Warwick. A noble theme inspires my heart with verses for the king. My tongue's a skillful writer's pen composing lines to sing.

Psalm 45a, verses 1 to 5. If you're able to stand, we'll stand again to sing. A noble theme inspires my heart with words is Lord the king.

My tongue's a skillful writer's pen composing lines to sing.

[13 : 48] You, God, excel the best of men. Your lips are full of praise.

For God has blessed you evermore. His light shines on your face.

O mighty one, take up your sword, And bind it on your thigh.

With glorious splendor, O pure self, And with pure majesty.

Right forth and state victoriously, For meekest truth and right.

[15 : 06] Let your right hand display your deeds Of wisdom, power, and might.

Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts Of those who hate the king, And all the nations of the earth in due subjection bring.

We're going to read God's Word now. There are two passages today. We're going to read firstly from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5, from verse 22.

And then we're reading some verses in the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, chapter 19, and the first nine verses.

First of all, Ephesians, chapter 5, and beginning at verse 22. Verse 22.

[16 : 56] Verse 22.

shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. And if we turn to Revelation chapter 19, we'll read from the beginning down to verse 9.

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just. For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Once more they cried out, Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!

And from the throne came a voice saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great. Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, Write this. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God. Amen. May God follow with this blessing our reading again of his word.

[19 : 42] Let's again join together in prayer. Lord our God, we thank you for the reminder that you have given us and the teaching of your word that you are the Almighty One, that you are the one who has complete control and charge over our destinies and over the events of history through to the end of the world. And we thank you today that this is part of what makes you worthy of our praise, that you are God and there is none besides you. There is none worthy to be worshipped but you. And we give thanks, O Lord, today that we are called and take delight in your worship.

We pray that you would help us, O Lord, to fall down in your presence too. And as we come with bowed heads in prayer to you, and as we praise your name in singing your praises, and as we come to read and hear your word, so we give thanks, Lord, today that this is our great privilege, that you have been so favorable toward us as to place us in these favorable conditions. We can say with the psalmist, indeed, the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. We bless the Lord for his kindness and goodness today. We thank you, O Lord, for all that it means to us to join together in this way, and for all that it means to us to belong to your church in this world, to belong to that number of your people who worship you, who call upon you, and who seek to make you known in the world. And we thank you, Lord, in anticipation for all that is prepared for your people even throughout eternity. You've reminded us in your word of that great event that is coming at your return, the marriage banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb, when your people will enter into an eternal, everlasting celebration of your salvation. Lord, we thank you that as we anticipate that, that we can come and prepare towards it even during our time in this world. We pray that your word will be blessed to us once again. And we pray that as we gather together, your word might more and more flourish in our lives to give evidence of that fruit of righteousness and holiness by which we will be known as your people.

We thank you that your word is so relevant, O Lord, for our own personal needs, for the context in which our lives are set in this world, and for the needs even of nations as well as individuals. We pray, Lord, today that your word will go forth as we have been reminded from that great prophecy of Isaiah, when your servant Isaiah was used by you as an instrument to declare your word to the people of his day, and when you assured him that your word would not return to you empty, that it would accomplish the very purpose for which you sent it out. We pray that in our own experience, O Lord, it might be that your word today will produce in us that fruit of righteousness.

We pray that it may be so wherever your word today is sown in the hearts of human beings, wherever your word is heard. May we be like that good ground, O Lord, of which you taught your disciples in that great parable of the soils and the sower. May we never be like those who are close to your word, or those for whom your word is only just a formal recognition, and then overtaken by the cares and the deceitfulness of riches. O Lord, our God, we ask that your word may be constantly productive in our lives, that it may indeed be day by day for us a light which guides us through life.

May we be like the psalmist who could say of your word that it was a light to his feet and a lamp to his path. And we thank you, Lord, for the guidance and the instruction that your word brings to us.

[23 : 49] We ask today that the gospel will be blessed wherever it is proclaimed. Lord, we pray that your gospel will indeed bring many to know you, many to close in with the offer of salvation and the invitation that you extend in the gospel through your Holy Spirit. O Lord, may it come to us as well to be that your Spirit today is active in our midst. We pray that we may know that for ourselves, that we have met with God, that we have come to be guided into his truth by your Holy Spirit, and so that we ourselves may more and more grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray today for those of particular needs as they are known to us. Remember those of our number who are away at this time.

Keep them safe, we pray, protect them. Remember the young ones in Scaladale as they meet in the Presbytery Youth Camp. Be with them, be with their leaders. Remember also, Lord, those who have difficulties in their lives through afflictions and trials that have come upon them in your providence.

Remember those again today who mourn the passing of loved ones, for whom anniversaries and for whom this approach of the end of a year is a very poignant time. Lord, strengthen them, we pray, as they reflect upon times gone by and loved ones no longer with them. Lord, be pleased, we pray, to give to them in their hearts the consolation of your comfort and your presence with them. And we pray that you would bless all of us who remain to make the best use of our time, knowing that the years are fast passing us by, and that we ourselves, O Lord, more than we are possibly willing to admit, are finding that our lives are hastening past, and that we are nearer, many of us nearer, the end of our journey than the beginning of it. Make us wise, Lord, we pray, and to salvation. Teach us to number our days, to apply our hearts to wisdom, to receive the things of salvation, of the things of God and Christ, so that we may know that reconciliation with God that makes all things to work together for our good.

And we pray today for those who are ill at this time in hospital or at home. We pray that you'd bless them, those who are suffering issues of mental health. We pray for them too. We pray for those, Lord, whose faculties have begun to fail or have lost their memory and even unable to recognize loved ones as before. We pray for these families. We pray for those who care for them. We ask, Lord, that there may be an increase in compassion and concern throughout our land to provide for those who are in need. We pray for those who are in poverty, those who have difficulty during these times, O Lord, and struggle to provide for their families. Those who have lost jobs, who have come to be unemployed, those who need the services of the food bank, and those who give up their time to staff it, we thank you, Lord, for it. And we pray that as we hear from time to time of special needs like this in our society and in our community, Lord, help us, we pray, to do whatever we can to help those who are in distress, even if it means only to come alongside them and say that we're there for them and to assure them of our friendship and of our help whenever we can. Help us as a congregation to do so likewise. And Lord, we give thanks for the privilege of being able to serve you in our own community. And we ask that you would enable us to take every opportunity we have to present the love of God to those around us. So receive our thanks, we pray now. Continue with us here and pardon our many sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll sing once more just before we come to our study of this chapter or the passage today in Revelation 19. We'll sing in Psalm 45 again, this time verses 6 to 11. And the tune is Tiverton.

Your royal throne, O God, will last throughout eternity. Your kingdom's scepter will be one of truth and equity. Beginning at verse 6 down to verse 11 in Psalm 45a.

[28 : 31] your royal throne, O God, will last throughout eternity. Your kingdom's scepter will be one of truth and equity. Anointing you with oil of joy. Your God has made you great. Because you care for your righteousness and wickedness you hate. With a lozmer and cassia in fragrant groves you're glad. From

Hoglo Club and the Lord's Scepter will be one of your quarte, The women of your court, king's daughters take their stand.

The royal bride in finest gold appears at your right hand.

O daughter, listen and give ear, consider what I say.

You must forget your father's house, your people far away.

[31 : 14] And especially verses 11, verses 9 following.

The angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he said to me, these are the true words of God. We'll take account of the previous verses as well, from verse 6 especially.

Well, this is our eighth study of Scripture portraits of the church, and today we're going to a marriage because it brings us to the final state of God's people in heaven after the resurrection, after the judgment, when we'll find it described as gathered together, the church gathered together to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb.

As you know, the Bible uses the imagery of marriage fairly frequently to describe the relationship between God and His people, particularly so between Jesus and His church.

[33 : 01] For example, the book of Hosea in the Old Testament is really built about around that theme of marriage, the marriage between God and Israel, spiritually, that marriage which from Israel's side had broken down because they had gone after other gods, as it were, idols that they had imported into their practices from the pagan nations around them.

And, of course, that's why God described their behavior and their departure from Him and their faithfulness to Him as spiritual adultery.

They had gone after these other lovers, these other idols in place of God. They had broken the marriage that they had with God because they had set their hearts on idolatry.

And the book of Hosea is built around that. And, of course, you've got Hosea's own marriage as a means by which God illustrated that for the people as well.

It's a wonderful book in the Old Testament around that theme. And it's that really that defines for us, just in passing, it's that that defines, it's this relationship of God and His people that defines for us what human marriage is about or should be about.

[34 : 16] We read in Ephesians chapter 5 where Paul spoke there about marriage, the marriage of a man and his wife, and where that is based upon the relationship of Christ and His church.

It's not as if somehow at some point human beings or the church decided that it would be a good idea to take human marriage and make that an illustration of the relationship between God and His people.

It's the other way about. What God knows as the relationship between Himself and His people, the relationship between Jesus and His redeemed people, between Jesus and the church, that's the illustration for human marriage.

That's why Ephesians 5 says such things, such challenging things as, Husbands, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

That's the challenge. That's the demand made upon husbands. It's not just the wife that's seeking to imitate or mirror the relationship by being obedient, by having the headship of the husband acknowledged.

[35 : 23] That is the case, but the husband has an equally, if not more challenging role to be as Christ is and was to the church.

And so we're looking at this scene, a preview, really, of Jesus and the redeemed people of God in glory. We're going to look at the occasion. Then we'll look, secondly, more fully at the parties to the marriage.

And then, finally, the marriage banquet. The occasion, He puts it here, is the marriage supper, the marriage banquet, the marriage reception of the Lamb.

It's a culmination of salvation where the Lord and His redeemed people now have this eternity with one another in heaven to enjoy that unbroken fellowship in terms of a spiritual marriage that began here in this world, but that reaches its zenith, its peak in heaven in the state of glory.

That's really what's before us here. And, of course, in the Old Testament arrangement of marriage, you had certain stages, four stages, really, you might say, although the fourth one is really pretty much too brought together.

[36 : 41] You've got the arrangement of the marriage, first of all, where the parents were involved in the arrangement of the marriage. You've then got the betrothal, which we might say is equivalent roughly to an engagement.

That went on for a period. And then you have the marriage itself, where the bride made her way from her own home to where she was going to be married and eventually live with the husband.

And then it's celebrated in the marriage supper, the marriage banquet. So you've got these stages, which took some time in the Old Testament until finally the marriage took place and the marriage celebration was then entered into.

And that imagery is behind what you find in terms of descriptions of marriage, especially where you find this kind of imagery here. You also find elsewhere in the Bible, of course, Jesus spoke about marriage as an illustration, too, of the relationship between Himself and His people.

And you can see here the introduction is a great hallelujah chorus, you might say. I heard, He says in verse 6, Well, you know, when you hear that, whether it's a piper or whoever outside, just at the beginning of a marriage service, we're all familiar with that, and we hear that, the piping or whatever it is, and you think, well, that's it.

[38 : 20] The bride's about to come in. This is the introduction to the marriage service. And so we're all then just ready to receive the bride coming in. And then the marriage service gets underway.

And then, of course, you anticipate the following reception as well. And really, when you see that happening, you realize this is about to take place. And what Revelation is saying here is that John here, as he had this preview, if you like, of the final state for God and His people, this is what it was introduced by.

Before the bride herself appeared and the description of the bride is given, there's this hallelujah chorus. There is this wonderful introduction.

There's this great entrance music, if you like, for the bride to enter and for the marriage to take place or to be finally reaching its zenith, its culmination.

And that brings us to the parties to the marriage, because that's really what's mostly in the passage before us. The parties to the marriage are the lamb, the husband, called the lamb.

[39 : 32] That, of course, that, of course, is Jesus. And the lamb's bride, the church, his glorified, redeemed church, set out here as his wife or as his bride.

Now, the lamb is mentioned in 28 verses of the book of Revelation. Jesus is described as the lamb.

Why is he described as the lamb? You'll find it here, of course, as well in the passage before us. And all the way back to chapter 5 and verse 6, where you find the description there of Christ as the lamb, as praised in heaven as the lamb.

Where you find the praise of God by his people focused on the lamb, the lamb who's taken the scroll, the book of history, of the destiny of the world, of the universe.

And he took that and he began to open the seals of it. In other words, reminding us that Jesus is in complete charge of all that's going to happen between now and the end of the world.

[40 : 36] And the song that was sung there, of course, is all the believers between the throne and those standing in heaven. They saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain.

You see, that's a wonderful description there. A lamb as though it had been slain, newly slain. In other words, heaven is really about praising the lamb, praising God, praising the Savior.

But it's the same Jesus who lived on earth, the same Jesus who died the death of the cross, the same Jesus who suffered, the same Jesus who shed his blood for the salvation of his people.

That's the lamb. That's why he's described as the lamb. The lamb being the sacrifice that redeemed them. The lamb being God's offering of his Son in order to be the basis of our redemption.

And that's what's praised in heaven. It's not just Jesus, it is kingliness as if there was no reflection back upon the work of the cross. It's Christ the Lamb.

[41 : 38] The lamb and his bride. The lamb as the Savior, the redeeming Savior of his people. Now, the marriage focus is on the lamb and on his bride as well.

But the marriage in terms of revelation and the picture revelation gives us of heaven, the focus is more so on the lamb than it is on his wife, the bride, the church.

And I'm sorry to say this, gentlemen, but when you come to a marriage ceremony here in this world, the focus is not on the groom.

The focus is on the bride, isn't it? And when you come to attend a marriage service and you're sitting there waiting for the bride to arrive and the groom is up here at the front with his best man, well, with the best will in the world, however spectacular the groom looks, it's not going to be anything matching when she comes through that door with her wedding dress on and her hair all made up and everybody standing, especially the ladies waiting to see the bride coming in.

And when she comes in, there's usually a gasp and they're saying, oh, that dress is fantastic. Look at her hair, it's beautiful. Beautiful. And here's the groom up there. Well, he's maybe well-dressed.

[42 : 58] It's usually a higher suit, isn't it, compared to the bride. She's made a special choice of this wonderful dress and she walks in with a dress and the groom himself welcomes her. And, well, he's not supposed to have seen it before, but sometimes maybe it is.

He's never seen his bride dressed like this before. And to him as well, she is utterly beautiful. But in heaven, it's the beauty of Jesus that fills the bride's mind, that fills heaven's mind, that fills all the occupants of heaven are really more so focused on the Lamb than they are on the bride.

The bride is spectacular. The bride is pristine. She is perfectly holy. She's been redeemed. There is no sin attached to her. As the Ephesians reminded us, this is why Jesus died, so that He would wash His bride by the water of His Word, that she would be pristine, that she would be spotless, that she'd be holy, that He would present her to Himself as a perfect bride.

But He has the glory. He has the praise. As the hymn writer put it, it's a hymn taken by A.R. Cousin that she put together from the letters, especially of Samuel Rutherford.

And this is one of the verses. The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace.

[44 : 27] Not at the crown He gifteth, but on His pierced hand. The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land. The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land.

But you know, your privilege and my privilege today is we don't have to wait till heaven appears, till we have that dawning of heaven, till we actually are within the courts of heaven, to be able to see the beauty of Jesus.

And that's what the gospel actually presents to you. Yes, it presents to you the ugliness of sin and your own ugliness and my ugliness as a sinner, devoid of righteousness and of holiness and of beauty.

But it presents to us Christ and His beauty as God's answer to that, as God's antidote to that. And today, as you know yourself and the ugliness of your sin, God is inviting us today through the gospel to come to see the beauty of Jesus, the magnificence of Jesus, the wonderful, pristine, perfect glory of Jesus, His perfect righteousness and holiness, His suitability to be your Savior and my Savior, in His perfection, in His beauty.

What can be more beautiful to your needy soul and to my needy soul today than the Christ in His beauty, than this Jesus in all His magnificence, in His pristine beauty?

[45 : 50] Because that's what the gospel is saying to you. God is really saying to you, Yes, I know you're ugly. I know you're ugly in terms of your sinfulness. But I have found you so important to me, you mean so much to me, that I have given you my beautiful Son to be your Redeemer.

And I gave my beautiful Son to die the ugly death of the cross, to make you beautiful, to make you like Him, to make you the perfect reflection of His beauty in your own salvation.

Here is the bride, and here is her bridegroom, and what a magnificent picture He is, just as she is. What a wonderful picture they are together as the Bible presents the perfect, pristine glory of heaven to us.

The marriage supper of the Lamb has come, and He says, Let us rejoice and exult, and give Him the glory, for here it is, ready to be consummated, this wonderful Savior and His bride.

Psalm 45 is a marriage psalm. It's a psalm of the marriage of Jesus and His people, where we say as His church, You are more beautiful than all the sons of men.

[47 : 23] Grace is poured into your lips. And all the way through that psalm, you have different ways that describe the beauty of the King, the perfumed love and exquisite beauty that He exudes.

This is our Lord. This is our Savior. This is the one the world doesn't want to know. This is the one perhaps most of us in our hearts didn't want to know either until He revealed Himself to us.

And when He revealed Himself to us, we then began to understand what beauty really is. Because all beauty, real beauty, is the mirror of His beauty.

And wherever beauty is found in the creation or in the world, it's a reflection of the beauty of God, its Creator. And so it is in our salvation. He makes us beautiful in His salvation because He bestows His own beauty upon us, the beauty of His grace, the beauty of His salvation.

That's how we are made beautiful, and made beautiful with no less a beauty than the image of Christ, the beauty of the Savior Himself. This is the bridegroom.

[48 : 42] This is the husband of the bride, the church. This is what God is saying to us. He is like Himself. What you see in Christ is what you know is true of God.

And He is altogether lovely. He is the beautiful one. Let me put it to myself, and let me put it to yourself today as I seek to present the gospel to you.

How beautiful is Jesus to you? How important is He to you? Is there anything in your life, is there anyone in your life that comes near to matching or replacing the beauty of Jesus?

Surely not. Well, if there is, we're not in that right relationship with Him, are we? If He's not today the most beautiful person in your life, it's telling you that you need something that you still don't have.

Do you need this Jesus? Do you need His love? Do you need His forgiveness? Do you need His wonderful compassion? You need the salvation that's in Himself.

[50 : 02] There is the Lamb Himself, but here is the bride, because it goes on, the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.

This is the redeemed church, as we're saying, following the resurrection, following the judgment, everything is now in its final state. This is how things will be forevermore from this point onwards, that John is being told by God.

And she has made herself ready. Now, what does it mean? The bride has made herself ready. Well, it means that all the way through, her experiences in this life, this is what she's been aiming at.

This is really what she's been looking forward to. This is what the church in this world looks forward to. This is what every individual Christian should look forward to as belonging to this church of God.

They're looking forward to the day of the marriage supper of the Lamb, the day of their being made perfect in holiness, in heaven, together, not just individually. The bride has made herself ready all the way through our life in this world.

[51 : 12] What is it about? Well, it's about, by God's grace, being sanctified. There's a whole lot of other things too, but let's focus on that because being sanctified, being made holy, being set apart by God and the work of His Spirit going on in our hearts, that is making us more and more like Christ.

That's what really God is set on. It's not whether we imagine it to be so or not. That's what the Bible tells us God's work is about, to make His people ready for glory, to make them ready to be joined in marriage in its ultimate sense in heaven, to the Lamb Himself.

That's why John, 1 John chapter 3, I remember there how John is setting out the wonder of being loved by God. What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God and so we are.

And then he goes on to say, it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He, or where it shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And then what does it say? And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. Because it's part of the whole drive of your Christian life to become more and more like your Lord.

[52 : 38] I know that I do and you do complain so much that you find yourself so far short of that. You don't see yourself anything like that at the moment, but you still believe the Bible that says, when God has placed His Spirit in your heart, that's God's work going on to sanctify you.

And He uses all sorts of ways by which to sanctify us and make us ready for heaven. Well, this is what He's saying. His bride has made herself ready.

And He says, It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure. That's interesting, isn't it? She didn't produce this purity, this bridal dress, this garment, this wedding dress herself.

It was granted her, God granted her, to clothe herself with fine linen. She's got the most exquisite bridal dress you could ever imagine.

In fact, you can't imagine it because it is the perfect holiness that God by His Spirit's work produces. That is what she is arrayed in.

[53 : 50] That is her wedding dress. And it was granted to her. The dress is not her own creation.

We might say it's a designer dress, but it's got the Lord's label on it. He has created it. He died to produce it for her.

It's something that He was always set upon doing, and He came into this world to accomplish it. And when the bride appears there in her pristine glory on the day of the marriage supper of the Lamb, this is what she will be wearing.

She will be wearing bright linen, bright and true, perfectly pure and pristine in holiness. But it's even more specific than that because it goes on to say that the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And you might say, well, surely that's going against everything. You've said, if her fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints, that in other words, these are the good works that she engaged in, how come that's mentioned when you've just said it was granted her to clothe herself, when it is the production of God?

[55 : 11] Well, of course it is. The answer to that is fairly easy. The righteous deeds of the saints are the fruit of God's work going on in their lives. They haven't produced these works themselves.

It's a product of grace, isn't it? Anything that you're able to do for the Lord and the progress of your own Christian life, it's really ultimately not your work that begins it, that ensures it, that maintains it.

It's the work of God going on in your soul. He is the one who enables you by His Spirit to involve yourself and to be involved with righteous deeds.

Revelation itself tells us, chapter 14, verse 13, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth.

Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works to follow them. All the righteous deeds that they were enabled to do in this life, they follow them into glory.

[56 : 21] They don't buy themselves a place in glory because of what they have done. The Reformation destroyed that idea, I hope, once and for all, though it's still, sadly, in place in the world that you actually earn yourself a place in God's kingdom by your good works.

No, your good works don't earn yourself a place in God's kingdom at all. The place in God's kingdom and God's church and God's redeemed church has been bought by Jesus.

He paid the price of this dress Himself with His death on the cross. But the product of that, the outcome of that, the sanctifying work of His Spirit is a result of that.

And that enables you to engage in the righteous deeds of the saints. And they follow you into glory. They're part of your appearance there before God as God's redeemed people.

So there is the bridegroom and there is His bride. A marriage made in heaven.

[57 : 31] A marriage made for heaven. A marriage that will continue through eternity in heaven. A marriage, indeed, you might say, for which we were created.

To live in fellowship with God. As His people. And that's what the gospel is calling us to. That broken relationship with God that needs to be mended.

Jesus came into the world to fix it. To mend it. Put us in a right relationship with God. And the gospel is saying, I have done this for you.

And I have done it for you so that you would have the privilege of being my bride. Of sharing eternity with me as my wife.

What a thing for God to say. But as John was assured here, these are the true words of God.

[58 : 38] So there's the occasion and the parties to the marriage. Briefly, the marriage banquet. Where he says, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We're now at the reception. Heaven is the reception for this marriage of God and His people. We're not given the details. How could we be given the details? We wouldn't understand them fully anyway.

The details of this banquet. But we can say that this spiritual nourishment that begins here in this world goes on in eternity in perfection.

The spiritual nourishment, the delight we have in God, the satisfaction, the pinnacle of Psalm 34, verse 8. Oh, taste and see that God is good. Well, we're going to be tasting for all eternity at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And who are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Well, strictly speaking, blessed are those who are invited. They are those who are in Christ. Because here, at this final stage of things, it is those who have made their peace with God, those who are now in Christ, those who have Him as their Savior, those who are united to Him.

[59 : 44] God is saying to them, right, let's come in and enjoy the banquet. The marriage has taken place. The ceremony is over. The rest of eternity is yours to enjoy at the marriage banquet.

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Are you on the guest list?

Are you on the guest list? The gospel, in its invitation, invites us to Christ, invites us to come to Christ, invites us to receive Christ, invites us to come and willingly be joined in marriage to Christ.

And when you have that in place, then you are being invited or will be invited on this day, on this occasion, invitation to the reception, to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You will have your ticket.

You will have your entrance requirement. But meantime, we all have the gospel. We all have the invitation to come to Jesus.

[60 : 57] Here is the great question, the thing of critical importance for me and for you too. Am I today joined in marriage to Christ?

Is he my husband spiritually? Have I taken God at his word and said, Lord, I don't deserve to be invited by the gospel to be joined to you in marriage.

I am a poor, wretched, lost, ungodly sinner. But I thank you today that it is for my likes that you came into this world, that you suffered and died.

Because that's what you tell me in the gospel. I have not come to seek righteous, but to bring sinners, to repentance.

May God bless his word to us today. We're going to conclude our service now singing in Psalm 45 again, verses 13 to 17.

[62 : 13] The same version of the Psalm on page 58. Singing these verses from verse 13 to 17 to the tune Evan.

In glorious gold-embroidered robes, the princess waits within, in richly ornamented clothes she's brought before the king.

You see, there's the image of the bride just waiting and ready to go to where she's going to be married, and then she's brought in before the king to be married to him. Attended maidens follow her, and so to you are led they enter in, and with great delight the palace courts they tread.

These four verses in conclusion. Amen. In glorious gold-embroidered robes, the princess waits with him, in richly ornamented clothes she's brought before the king.

attendant maidens follow her, and so to you are led.

[63 : 50] They enter on with great delight the palace courts they tread.

In places where your father stood, Your sons will take their stand.

You'll make them princes of the realm to rule throughout the land.

I will perpetuate your fame through ever-lasting days.

Therefore the nations of the world will ever sing your praise.

[65 : 16] I'll go to the door here to my left after the benediction this morning. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen. Amen.