

The Marriage of the Lamb & the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

A Brief Introductory Study

by Jonathan Perreault

Introduction

(7) “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for **the marriage of the Lamb** has come and His bride has made herself ready.” (8) And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) And he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to **the marriage supper of the Lamb**.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”¹ (Revelation 19:7-9)

In Revelation 19:7-9 the apostle John refers to “the marriage of the Lamb” (v. 7) and “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (v. 9). In this study the author will seek to answer some key questions regarding first the marriage of the Lamb, and second, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The Marriage of the Lamb

The Time of the Marriage: When does the marriage of the Lamb take place? The apostle John declares that the marriage of the Lamb “has come” (Rev. 19:7). The phrase “has come” is significant, for it tells the time of the marriage. J. Dwight Pentecost writes: “The aorist tense, *elthen*, translated ‘is come,’ signifies a completed act, showing us that the marriage has been consummated.”² Greek scholar William Mounce writes, “the aorist...describes an undefined action normally occurring in the past.”³ Hence, the marriage of the Lamb takes place before Revelation 19:7. Further, the marriage of the Lamb takes place after the rapture of the church, which occurs in Revelation chapter 4. The apostle John begins Revelation chapter 4 by writing: “After these things,” that is, after the church things of Revelation chapters 2-3, or after the church age. John R. Rice affirms: “Compare verses 1-3 [of Revelation chapter 4] with 1 Thes. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51, 52. The similarity could not be accidental. Notice the door opened in heaven, the trumpet, the call ‘come up hither.’ If chapters 2 and 3 [of Revelation] picture the church age, then obviously chapter 4 pictures the rapture.”⁴

Not only does the marriage of the Lamb take place after the rapture, but it takes place after the bema seat (or judgment seat) of Christ as well. Concerning the time of the bema seat of Christ, Pentecost writes:

The bema of Christ takes place immediately following the translation of the church out of this earth’s sphere. There are several considerations that support this. (1) In the first place, according to Luke 14:14 reward is associated with the resurrection. Since, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the resurrection is an integral part of the translation, reward must be a part of that program. (2) When the Lord returns to the earth with His bride to reign, the bride is seen to be already rewarded. This is observed in Revelation 19:8, where it must be observed that the “righteousness

¹ All Scriptures taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

² Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 226.

³ Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 177.

⁴ Rice, *Bible Lessons On The Book Of Revelation*, 11.

of the saints” is plural and can not refer to the imparted righteousness of Christ, which is the believer’s portion, but the righteousnesses which have survived examination and have become the basis of reward. (3) In 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8; and Revelation 22:12 the reward is associated with “that day,” that is, the day in which He comes for His own. Thus it must be observed that the rewarding of the church must take place between the rapture and the revelation of Christ to the earth.⁵

The bride in Revelation 19:7 “has made herself ready” at the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, the marriage of the Lamb must occur *after* the judgment seat of Christ but *before* Revelation 19:7. To cite specific events, the marriage of the Lamb occurs *after* the judgment seat of Christ but *before* the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (Revelation 19:11-16).

The Location of the Marriage: Where does the marriage of the Lamb take place? The location of the marriage can be nowhere else but heaven itself. In Revelation 19:1 John’s attention is drawn to heaven, and this is the stage for the marriage of the Lamb (in vv. 7-8). After the marriage the bride accompanies the Lamb as He descends to earth for the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-19; cf. Jude 14-15; Rev. 17:14).

The Bridegroom of the Marriage: Who is the bridegroom in the marriage “of the Lamb”? The Lamb is a reference to Jesus Christ. This is seen from John 1:29, where the apostle John writes: “The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him, and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” The Lamb is clearly identified with Christ in Revelation 5:5-10 as well. The Lamb can be none other than the person of Christ. The marriage of the Lamb is the marriage of Jesus Christ.

The Bride of the Marriage: Now that the Bridegroom has been identified, who is the bride? There are those who advocate that Israel is the bride, as she is called the “wife” of Jehovah (Isa. 54:6; cf. Ezek. 16; Hosea 2:19-20). However, Revelation 19:7 is not speaking of the wife of Jehovah but the bride of Christ. Concerning this Clarence Larkin states: “We must not forget that there are ‘Two Brides’ mentioned in the Scriptures. One is in the Old Testament, and the other in the New. The one in the Old Testament is Israel, the Bride of Jehovah; the one in the New Testament is the Church, the Bride of Christ.”⁶ W. A. Criswell writes:

The bride is not the Old Testament Israel. Old Testament Israel in Isaiah, in Ezekiel and in Hosea is described as the wife of Jehovah who is now a put-away wife. Israel is a forsaken wife, she is a repudiated wife. Because of her idolatries and her adulteries and because of her rejection of her great Maker to whom God married her, she is a divorced wife. The prophets say that some day she will be restored. But when she is restored, when she comes back, even then she will not be a bride. No restored wife is ever referred to as a virgin. But this bride in Revelation is a virgin.⁷

In Revelation chapter 19 Christ is not marrying Israel, for that nation is presently rejecting Him in unbelief (cf. Rom. 11:15, 20), and will continue to do so throughout the Tribulation. It is only when the Deliverer comes from Zion at the Second Advent (Zech. 12:10; Matt. 24:29-30; Rev.

⁵ Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 220-221.

⁶ Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, 168.

⁷ Criswell, *Expository Sermons On Revelation*, 5 Vols., 5:28.

1:7) that ungodliness will be removed from Jacob and all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). In other words, the salvation of Israel does not occur until after the marriage of the Lamb and after Christ's Second Coming to earth. Thus, it is impossible for the heavenly marriage of the Lamb to be referring to the union of Christ and the unbelieving (and may I add *earthly*) nation of Israel. It is clear that the bride of the Lamb can only be the church. Ephesians 5:22-32 speaks of the husband and wife relationship as simply picturing Christ and the church (v. 32). Paul, speaking to the Corinthians says: "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2). Pentecost writes: "The marriage of the Lamb is an event which evidently involves only Christ and the church".⁸ Larkin adds:

Many assume that the "Bride" is composed of all the saints from Abel down to the time of the taking out of the Church, but this cannot be so, for the Church did not exist until the Day of Pentecost, and only those who live and die in Christ between Pentecost and the taking out of the Church [at the Rapture] belong to the Church.⁹

It is clear that the bride of the Lamb is the church of Christ.

The Preparation for the Marriage: What is meant in Revelation 19:7 when the apostle John says that the "bride has made herself ready"? Has the bride made herself ready for the marriage or has she made herself ready for the marriage supper? It seems that the bride's preparation has more to do with the marriage than the marriage supper. The bride's preparation in verse 7 seems to be related to her wedding gown in verse 8. The fine linen of the gown is "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). It appears that the judgment seat of Christ (occurring immediately prior to the marriage of the Lamb) plays a part in readying the bride. It seems best to interpret the judgment seat of Christ as the means by which the bride prepares herself for the marriage. Lehman Strauss writes: "The wedding gown, then, will be made up of the good works that remain after the testing of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now you can see how the wife makes herself ready".¹⁰

The Participants in the Marriage: Who are the participants in the heavenly marriage of the Lamb? Scripturally, it seems that only Christ and the church actually participate in the marriage. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 indicates that only believers "in Christ" will be resurrected *and caught up to heaven* at the rapture. Since the Day of Pentecost, believers are placed into the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Old Testament and Tribulation saints are never said to be "in Christ," because they are not part of the church, Christ's body. Such passages as Isaiah 26:19-21 and Daniel 12:1-3, 13 show that the resurrection of Israel and other Old Testament saints will not take place until after the Second Coming of Christ to the earth at the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11), which occurs after the marriage of the Lamb. Likewise, Tribulation saints will be resurrected after the Second Advent and take part in the

⁸ Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 227.

⁹ Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, 168.

¹⁰ Strauss, *Revelation*, 321.

Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6). So there are several reasons why Old Testament and Tribulation saints will not actually participate in the marriage: 1) they are not part of the church, Christ's bride, 2) they are not resurrected with the church, so they are not rewarded nor prepared for the marriage, 3) they are not raptured with the church, so they are not physically present for the marriage – although they could observe since their souls are present in heaven. Referring to the marriage of the Lamb, Pentecost writes: “While it would be impossible to eliminate these groups [i.e. Old Testament and Tribulation saints] from the place of observers, they can not be in the position of participants in the event itself.”¹¹ Thus it is clear that only church age believers “in Christ” will participate in the marriage of the Lamb.

The Guests at the Marriage: Who attends the marriage of the Lamb? Here one should not confuse the marriage with the marriage feast. The marriage occurs in heaven, but the marriage feast occurs on earth. The marriage is wholly heavenly. First, “a great multitude” (Rev. 19:1) is seen in attendance at the marriage. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are also present at the marriage (Rev. 19:4). (Some believe that the twenty-four elders represent the church, and if this is so then of course they would not be guests at their own marriage!) Lastly, “servants” (Rev. 19:5, KJV) are seen to be present at the marriage of the Lamb. This is possibly a reference to the souls of martyred Tribulation saints. In Revelation 6:9 (Revelation 7:15 is possibly a reference to the same group) these souls are seen underneath the altar in heaven. The Tribulation saints are similarly referred to as servants in Revelation 6:11.¹²

The Duration of the Marriage: While the church is presently united with Christ spiritually (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:30), after the rapture when the bride is taken to be with Christ in the Father's house, she will then also be united with Him physically (Jn. 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17). While it may be impossible to know the exact duration of any ceremony that takes place when the bride is presented to the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:27, 32), the marriage occurs while the seven year Tribulation is unfolding on earth. Renald Showers writes:

As the Jewish bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber for seven days after arriving at the bridegroom's father's house, the church will remain hidden for seven years after arrival at Christ's Father's house in heaven. While the seven-year Tribulation period is occurring on the earth, the church will be in heaven, totally hidden from the sight of those living on Earth.¹³

The important thing to remember is that the marriage is an eternal union, for then “we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17b).

¹¹ Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 227.

¹² Literally, “fellow-servants” (Gr. *sundoulos*). The term “servants” (KJV) in Revelation 19:5 is from the same root word (Gr. *doulos*).

¹³ Showers, *Behold, The Bridegroom Comes!*, 9.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

In Revelation 19:9 an angel speaks to the apostle John, saying: “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” The subject now shifts from the marriage of the Lamb to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The Time of the Marriage Supper: When does the marriage supper take place? It almost goes without saying that the marriage supper takes place after the marriage (Rev. 19:7-9).

The Location of the Marriage Supper: Where does the marriage supper take place? While the announcement of the marriage supper takes place in heaven (Rev. 19:9), it speaks of an event which is about to take place on earth. The marriage supper itself takes place on the earth during the millennial kingdom, after the heavenly marriage. After the marriage of the Lamb, Christ descends to earth with his bride (Zech. 12:10, 14:1-4; Matt. 24:27-30; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19:11-19). Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice write: “the Marriage Supper of the Lamb does not commence until after the second coming of Christ, during the first part of the Millennium, when all believers throughout the ages will be present to enter into the festivities (Matthew 8:11; Mark 14:25; Luke 13:29; 14:12-15).”¹⁴

The Host of the Marriage Supper: Who hosts the great marriage feast? The host of the marriage supper is none other than God Himself! The prophet Isaiah identifies Him as Jehovah, saying: “And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain [i.e. on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23)]; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine” (Isa. 25:6). Although the feast will be given by the Father for His Son (Matt. 22:2), it appears that Christ will help serve at His own marriage feast. Luke 12:37 says, “Blessed are those slaves whom the master [equated with the Son of Man in verse 40] shall find on the alert when he comes [to the earth at His Second Advent]; truly I say to you, that *he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.*” During the Last Supper Jesus said to His disciples: “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? *But I am among you as the one who serves.* And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Lk. 22:27-30).

The Guests at the Marriage Supper: Who are the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Clearly, the bride is not a guest at her own wedding supper! She does not need to be “invited” (Matt. 22:4), for there could be no wedding supper without her. The guests are not to be equated with the bride. The guests at the marriage supper appear to be all the saints of all time – excluding church age believers – who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. These guests include Old Testament believers like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as all the prophets (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28-29, 14:14-15; cf. Job 19:25-26; Dan. 12:1-3, 13). John the Baptist considered himself a guest, saying that he was not the bride nor the bridegroom, but a “friend of

¹⁴ LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times*, 124.

the bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29). Those redeemed during the Tribulation period will also be guests at the marriage supper. Larkin summarizes:

Thus we see that the righteous of all the past Ages and Dispensations, and all the Saints of God who shall be worthy, and who are not included in the Bride (The Church), will be “Guests” at the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” Angels will be “spectators” of the scene but they cannot be “Guests,” for that honor is reserved for only those who have been redeemed by the “Blood of the Lamb.”¹⁵

As Larkin noted, it does not appear that angels will be guests at the marriage feast. Although the angels will probably be spectators, “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9) has special significance and reference to those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.¹⁶ Angels are not included in this group (Heb. 1:14, 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:9-12).

The Duration of the Marriage Supper: How long does the marriage supper last? In Old Testament times, the wedding festivities might last a day or longer (Gen. 29:22; Jud. 14:12; Est. 2:18; Jn. 2:1-2). In Matthew 22 the marriage supper seems to be equated with the millennial kingdom. It is possible that the marriage supper will extend the entire 1,000 years!

Conclusion

What a glorious future awaits every believer in Christ!

...just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.¹⁷

¹⁵ Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, 170.

¹⁶ Criswell writes that “the Lamb” is a description of Christ’s “blood-bought, redemptive relationship with us who have been saved by His grace.” (Criswell, *Expository Sermons On Revelation*, 5 Vols., 5:28.)

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 2:9-10