

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: Mr. George Stevens

The Marriage Supper and that of the Great God – Revelation 19

Everyone enjoys being at a wedding, especially the ladies! There is always great interest in what the bride is wearing. It is talked about for weeks afterwards. In the marriages we are accustomed to, the bride is the centre piece. It is her day and so it should be. In a Christian marriage the husband and wife-to-be have the assurance that what they are doing is ordained of God.

The marriage supper of the Lamb is to be the first part of our talk today. The focus of attention at this marriage is not the bride; it is the bridegroom. His name is given on a number of occasions in the book of Revelation. In chapter 4 the apostle John was caught up in spirit into heaven and saw the awe-inspiring sight of God's throne. In this book we read of things on earth being shaken, but this throne in heaven tells of absolute stability. We see a good deal of shaking going on among the nations even today. Christian friend, don't be dismayed; lift your eyes heaven-ward where there are *"things which cannot be shaken"* Hebrews 12:27. This sets the stage for the marriage supper.

In chapter 5 it is not a throne which is central; it is a book and no one was found worthy to open this book or to look thereon. John wept much! *"One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne... stood a Lamb as it had been slain"* (verses 5 and 6). We are going to take a good long look at the Bridegroom; He is the centre at this marriage. He is always in the midst! Did you know that He was even in the midst on the cross of Calvary? *"They crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst"* John 19:18. When believers meet together to worship Him, He is *in the midst*. Make sure He has the central place in your life. The apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 3:17, *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."* The expression used in Revelation 5 about the Lamb is *"as it had been slain"*. This tells us of His sacrifice. There was evidence of this that caught John's eye. Ever present to the hosts of heaven is the fact that He gave Himself. We might sometimes forget, but heaven never forgets!

Thinking again of the words, "the marriage of the Lamb is come," we must think of the love between the Bridegroom and His bride. To what lengths did He go to win her heart? The wife, or the bride, is the Church. Keeping this in mind, the apostle Paul writes words familiar to most believers, *"...Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* Ephesians 5:25-27. All will be perfect. He only could make it so. He couldn't have done more! The marriage has arrived. It is the day we are looking forward to. One thing is certain; the Lord Jesus looks forward to it. His love will then be satisfied. This event is the cause of great rejoicing. All that was distasteful to God will have been judged, and reality will remain. The only time the word Alleluia is actually used in the text of the Bible is here, and it occurs four times in our chapter. There is great rejoicing. Weddings are always happy events!

In Revelation 19 there is no mention of the bride. The wife is referred to here. The use of the word 'wife' gives the impression of her suitability to her husband. Away back in the Old Testament, when God provided a wife for Adam, it is said, *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* Genesis 2:18. That is what a wife is meant to be.

The closing words of Revelation 19:7 read like this, *"...and His wife hath made herself ready"*. This is different when compared with the passage we have read in Ephesians 5 where it is all what Christ has done; He gave Himself for the church and will present it to Himself perfect. However, here, the wife has made her own wedding garment, putting it together stitch by stitch. In verse 8 her wedding garment is described. *"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints"*. This verse could be translated as "the righteous acts of the saints". So we must distinguish between that which has been done for us and that which is the outcome of our faithfulness and service. This suggests that the marriage supper takes place after the judgement seat of Christ. It is at the judgement seat that the lives of believers are reviewed and rewards are given for faithfulness. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul, *"for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ"* Romans 14:10. It is through times of tribulation, in circumstances of sorrow and when we meet opposition that we weave our garment of practical righteousness. The Lord Jesus gives His assessment of our service; things which we

thought were of very little value He appreciates and rewards. There are times when we think we have done so much and He passes it by. It is happy to leave it all with Him. Let's get busy weaving our wedding garment!

The venue for this marriage supper is not on earth; it is in heaven. In Revelation 19, the four and twenty elders are mentioned for the last time in this book. When John saw this company for the first time in chapter 4 he was called to "come up hither", so we are assured that these events take place in heaven. When these events take place, terrible judgements are falling upon the earth; the day of grace is passed. Who are these four and twenty elders? When John saw the elders for the first time, they were sitting on seats, clothed in white raiment and they had on their heads crowns of gold. We believe they are figurative of all those who have been taken to heaven at the coming of the Lord Jesus. The completed Church will be there, also the Old Testament believers. None will be missing. In chapter 5 we read that they sing a new song saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation". Isn't that a wonderful picture!!

There are guests at this marriage supper. John is told to write, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" verse 9. We all like to be invited to a wedding; the men must have a new suit and the ladies will require a smart dress. And there is a wedding gift to be purchased. Sometimes a costly matter! The bride is not to be regarded as a guest; she is to be married to the Lamb. Who, then, are the guests? We have already said that the four and twenty elders are made up of both Old and New Testament believers. Those from the New Testament are the bride, all converted between the day of Pentecost and the Rapture. The Old Testament saints are the guests; they will be glad to be there! John the Baptist was an example; he didn't belong to the Church, he died before the cross and refers to himself as a friend of the bridegroom. Listen to what he said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" John 3:29. He will be one of the guests. Maybe you are thinking that this is all too good to be true! The speaker in verse 9 goes on to say, "These are the true sayings of God".

Before we start the second part of our broadcast today, there is an expression at the end of verse 10 well worthy of our attention. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". If we aspire to be prophetic students, never forget that Jesus is at the centre. He is its lifeblood! Prophecy can be a dull subject if we miss Him out.

The next part of Revelation 19 is taken up with the second advent of the Lord Jesus. It is His coming in power to execute judgement on all who set themselves against God. Jesus is not seen sitting upon a judgement throne but rather as a warrior whose coming results in the supper of the Great God. There are four names given to Him in this section, covering many aspects of His Person and of the offices He fills. The Apostle John writes of what he saw. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war". This is the first name to be given; He was always this when He was on earth as a lowly and obedient man. There are some words of a hymn greatly loved by believers,

*Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,
'Mid darkness only light,
Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,
And in His will delight.*

John also says, "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself." How solemn to consider that nothing escapes those penetrating eyes. On His head are many diadems; these are royal crowns. You may remember that when He was here on earth cruel men gave Him a crown of thorns. More wonderful than all, this Name is only known to Himself. It is His name as a Divine Person which we will never be able rightly to understand. Some of the words of the Lord Jesus when as a humble man, are well worth our notice, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" Matthew 11:27. As He comes as the judge, the glory of His Person is unchanged.

Another name is given to Him in verse 13. This is a familiar one, "and His name is called The Word of God". Going to John's Gospel this time, we read, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth". We are able to express our thoughts to one another by our words. Jesus was the Word to tell out God's thoughts, and we know they were thoughts of grace. The author of Psalm 139 writes, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" We needed grace because we are guilty sinners. Here, however in Revelation 19 He is about to make God known in judgement - how solemn for those who have neglected that grace.

There are armies seen here coming out of heaven riding on horses; they are clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Their clothing is the same as that worn by the wife at the marriage. No doubt this is the same company. Their role is vastly changed of course; they are warriors coming to share in the triumph of their victorious Lord. There are many references to this event in the Bible. One of these is in the small letter of Jude, right at the end of the New Testament.

In this letter we read a saying of Enoch who lived before the flood. Just listen to what he said! *“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgement upon all...”*

At the time of the betrayal and capture of Jesus, a very remarkable incident is recorded. Judas, the betrayer, with a band of men and officers from the chief priests came with lanterns and torches intent on His arrest. Jesus said to them, ‘Whom seek ye?’ They answered Him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. He said unto them, ‘I am’ and they went backward and fell to the ground. His word was sufficient! At the day of His coming, He will do the same. This episode helps us to understand verse 15, *“And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron”*. They may come with all their weapons, but these are no match for His Word. The passage goes on, *“and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”*. There is an Old Testament scripture which bears upon this verse, *“I have trodden the winepress alone...for I will tread them in My anger ... and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment”*. The blood has no reference to the “blood of His cross”. This great gathering of nations against God will come to a terrible end.

The fourth name given to Jesus in these verses is, **“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”**. There is a line of a hymn which goes like this, ‘How rightly crowned is Jesus’. Christian friend, does it not thrill your heart to read these words? What about this supper. The invitation is given to a very strange company: *“to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men”*. What a terrible day this will be!! Do you ever look around you in the world and say, ‘How much worse can things possibly be?’ Even the very existence of God is questioned. Don’t forget, God will have the last word.

In the closing part of this chapter, there are two men who will be the chief movers against God in those days. Both are described as beasts. Earlier in the book of Revelation, one is seen to be the head of a revived Roman Empire. The other is the Jewish antichrist. They are in league with one another and controlled by Satan and come to a frightening end. Both are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Their doom is eternal. Following up these events will be the setting up of the millennial kingdom of a thousand years duration.

*‘Jesus shall reign where e’er the sun,
Does its successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.’*

How thankful we should be that it is still the day of grace! While the clouds of God’s judgement loom ahead and men are stubborn in their refusal to bow the knee to Jesus, the door into the Gospel supper still stands wide open. The Saviour says, *“Come for all things are now ready”*. It is our prayer that if you have never done this, do it now! On the other hand, we who believe rejoice that Jesus is going to have His rightful place.

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