***The Bride of Christ is the Church

RV228-01***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 19:7-10. Our subject is "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb," number two. This is an awesome, awesome topic indeed.

**Three Groups of Humanity**

One of the things that the Bible reveals to us is that over the period of human history, God deals with three separate and distinct groups of humanity. This is taught us in 1 Corinthians 10:32. This is a very simple verse, yet one that presents a principle of truth that it is very important for you to understand. Not everybody in the human race is lumped into one group in God's dealings, either in time or in eternity. There are three distinct groups of humanity. "Give no offense, either to: the Jews (number one); to the Greeks (number two; that is, the gentiles); and, to the church of God (number three)." There you have them: the Jews; gentiles; and, the church (the Christians). These are three distinct groups of humanity.

**Angels**

The only other group of rational creatures that God deals with are the angels. Those four constitute all the rational creatures that are on the face of the earth. Each of these groups has a beginning point in history; a special divine purpose; and, a particular way of life, and it continues intact into eternity. It is very important that you understand that you never run out of gentiles; you never run out of Jews; and, you never run out of out of Christians. Wherever they appear (at some point in history), when you get to the book of the Revelation, you still have Jews; you still have gentiles; and, you still have Christians. They go right on out into eternity.

So, these groups are very important in order for us to rightly apply Scripture. We don't take Scripture, which belongs to one of these groups, and try to apply it to the other. That is the great tragedy of biblical interpretation today, and why the Bible seems like a jumbled-up book which is senseless and pointlessness in the minds of so many people.

**The Gentiles**

The first group is the gentiles, which began with Adam as the main stream of humanity. This is the group that received all the original revelation about God, which the book of Romans tells us that they did not appreciate. So, in time, it was lost. This group continues to the end of what the Bible calls the times of the gentiles.

**Israel**

The second group here is Israel, which began with Abraham, the first Jew, as God's special earthly people, governed by the Mosaic Law, which required great personal effort to obey. The third group is the church of which we are apart, and they are God's special heavenly people, made up of believers from Pentecost to the rapture, living under a grace way of life, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**The Church**

It is particularly important that we distinguish between the church and Israel. The reformers of the Reformation never got this straight. Every one of them missed the boat. It was centuries later that this was finally untangled, that the church had not become Israel, and that the church was not a body of believers which was substituted for the other. These groups are always kept separate. They are never mixed together, and one is never substituted for another. So, when you mix Israel and the church, you have lost a lot of sense out of the Bible, and you are enormously misdirected in your understanding of the Word of God.

**Differences between Israel and the Church**

Let me point out a number of differences, because most of the people who are in church today will tell you that what I have just told you is entirely wrong. They will tell you that the Jews forfeited their special place with God, and that the church became the new Israel. And that everything that God had planned to do with Israel, He is doing with the church. That is wrong. The two are entirely separate. I stress this so that you understand the distinctive position that you are in as believers. When we pick up and study the concept of the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the Lamb, you will realize how dramatic; how marvelous; and, how privileged you are to be part of that group. You are not just second-grade Jews. You're not just Jew substitutes. You're not just Jewish retreads. You are a distinct species of believers.

**Promises**

First of all, four-fifths of the Bible deal with the nation of Israel, and it is very clear when it is doing that. One-fifth of the Bible deals with the church. Every promise for Israel is earth-centered, while promises to the church are heavenly-centered. Israel is told, "You're going to be rich. I'm going to give you great prosperity. You're going to have a really good life." But the Christians are never told that. The Christian's spiritual enrichment is in heaven. You may be rich; you may be well-off; and, you may be blessed out and prospered and graced out in that way, and that may be your power to do great things with. But that's not a promise to the church.

**Seed**

Then both Israel and the church are Abraham's spiritual seed, and Israel is described in number as the dust of the earth; and, the church as the stars of the heavens. That is interesting. Earthly people are as the dust of the ground. Heavenly people (the church) are as the stars in the heaven in number.

**Birth**

Another difference is that the Jew holds this position in Israel by physical birth from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the Christian holds his place in the church as the result of a new spiritual birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Abraham is the head of the Jewish race, while Christ is the head of the church.

**Nations**

Israel is made up of one nation here on earth, while the church is drawn from all nations. You can see difference after difference.

**The Earth**

Israel resides on the earth from Abraham's call to the Second Coming of Christ. But the church is resident only from Pentecost to the rapture. It is a different group of people.

**Worship and Service**

Israel faced inward to its own worship and service while the church faces outward to reach the world with the gospel as God's ambassadors.

**Father**

God was not known as Father to the individual Israelites, but He is Father to each Christian.

**The Kingdom vs. the Body of Christ**

To Israel, Christ is Messiah, Emanuel, and King; but, to the church, He is the Savior, Lord, and head. That's why we as Christians do not say that we're bringing in the kingdom. We're not. That is a Jewish activity, and it is a Jewish related thing. What we are bringing in is the body of Christ.

**The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

Then the Israelite was never permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but the church is.

**The Mosaic Law vs. Grace**

Israel functioned under the Mosaic Law as its way of life. But the Christian is free from the Mosaic Law requirements. He lives under the grace of doctrine. Israel had no divine enablement for obeying the Mosaic Law, but the church has the power of the Holy Spirit to do right. A poor Jew tried, and he failed. He knew what was right to do. As Paul says, "The law was holy and right and just, but it was weak through the sin nature of the flesh." But the Christian comes along, and he has the capacity to do right, and he is amazed at himself that he has it.

**The Olivet Discourse vs. the Upper Room Discourse**

The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 is Christ's farewell message to Israel, while the Upper Room Discourse in John 13:17 is His farewell to the church.

**Christ's Return**

Christ Returns as King of the Jews to regather Israel from every part of the earth into her Promised Land. But He returns as Lord to gather the church into heavenly glory. That is quite different.

**Servants vs. Family**

Israelites were servants of Jehovah, while Christians are members of the family of God.

**Subjects**

Israelites will be subjects of the King (Christ) in the millennium, while Christians will reign over them with Christ. That is a big difference. The Christians are going to be the rulers of the Jews. The Christians are not just substitutes for the Jews.

**Priesthood**

Then Israel had a special priesthood, while the church is a priesthood. Every believer is his own priest.

**The Wife of Jehovah vs. the Bride of Christ**

Israel will be will be the restored life of Jehovah. But the church is the virgin bride of Christ. This is a very different picture.

**The Tribulation**

Israel will pass through the tribulation agony, but the church will be removed before it at the rapture.

**Just Men Made Perfect vs. the Church of the Firstborn**

Israelites in the new Jerusalem are called just men made perfect, while Christians there are called the church of the Firstborn, referring to Christ.

**The Tithe**

Israel was required to give a child of one's possessions to God, while the church has no specified amount except the leading of the Holy Spirit in the sacrifice of substance. That is a very big difference. Many of you can relate to this. There are always preachers who are famous, and known near and wide, who have their annual marvelous tithing sermon, where they beat the Christians with the principle of the Mosaic Law to tithe. That is never imposed upon the Christians. This is a great evidence of the difference between being a Christian and being a Jew under Judaism.

**Abilities**

Israel serve God with mere natural abilities, while the church serves with a variety of permanent spiritual gifts.

**The Old Testament vs. the New Testament**

Israel functioned under the revelation of the Old Testament, while the church functions under the expanded revelation of the New Testament.

**The Sabbath Day vs. the Lord's Day**

Finally, Israel is commemorated by the Saturday Sabbath day, while the church is commemorated by the Sunday Lord's day. That is a big difference.

Those who make the error of trying to mix Israel and the church are those who talk about the Christian Sabbath day. And suddenly, Sunday becomes Saturday, and everything gets jumbled up, because they have forgotten the testimony of Scripture – that there are three distinct groups of humanity that God deals with: gentiles; Jews; and, Christians. They each have their separate dealings with God, and they're never mixed.

**The Relationship of Christ and the Christian**

One of the most marvelous relationships, of course, is that between Christ and the church, which is of interest to us. There are a variety of comparisons, as God the Holy Spirit tries to make clear, how absolutely out of this world is the relationship between a Christian and Christ. And it is almost impossible for us to get anywhere near grasping this on this side of eternity, but here are some of the attempts that the Bible makes. It makes certain analogy comparisons.

**The Shepherd and His Sheep**

Christ, for example, is called the shepherd, and the Christians are His sheep in John 10. That is one relationship.

**The Vine and the Branches**

Then there's another one. Christ is called the vine, and the Christians are the branches (John 15:1-17).

**The Cornerstone and the Building**

There is the relationship where Christ is the chief cornerstone, and Christians are the building (Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5, and 1 Corinthians 3:9).

**The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests**

Then Christ is described as the high priest, and the Christians are His kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:5-9, Revelation 1:6, Revelation 20:6).

**The Head and His Body**

Christ is the head, and the church is His body (Ephesians 4:11-16).

**The New Creation and its Members**

Then Christ is called the new creation, and the Christians are members of that creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Colossians 1:13, Colossians 3:1-4, Ephesians 4:21-24).

**The Bridegroom and His Bride**

Then there is the one that concerns us today. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is His bride. This is taught in Ephesians 5:25-33:2, 2 Corinthians 11:2, and Revelation 19:7-8.

All of these analogies are fraught with enormously exciting information comparisons. It's a thrill to go through them. You will have to get the series of tapes if you want to go through those in detail, for we have covered each of them in considerable degree.

In Revelation 19:7, we read, "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give the glory to Him, for the marriage supper of the Lamb has come. The bride has made herself ready." So, we come here to this analogy of Christ as the bridegroom, and the church as His bride. Here, John hears his angel messenger call to him, and to the company in heaven, to be happy and euphoric, and to glorify God the Almighty. The reason for this, he says that: "The time has come for the marriage supper of the Lamb to be celebrated."

This means that the time has come for the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. This coming marks the end of centuries of domination on the earth of the kingdom of man, which reached its pinnacle under the antichrist. The marriage supper indicates that the marriage of Christ and His bride, the church, has already taken place in heaven, and now they have come to the earth to celebrate that event in the marriage supper. Be sure you keep those separate. The marriage of Christ and the church is one thing; and, the supper is a celebration (it's another thing).

The church bride, we're told, has made herself ready for the happy event of celebrating her marriage. The church bride, again, I remind you, does not include the saints of Israel, which is viewed in the Bible as the faithful and repudiated wife of Jehovah, but which is yet to be restored. This is indicated to us, for example, in Isaiah 54:5-8. I cannot stress enough the difference between Israel and the church. Do not fall into that trap, or you'll have a lot of nonsense in the Bible.

God says to Israel, "'For your husband is your maker, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, and your redeemer is the holy one of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken in greed and spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,' says, your God." God is speaking to Israel, the unfaithful wife who was unfaithful by turning to idolatry: "'For a brief moment, I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger, I hit my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting loving kindness, I will have compassion on you,' says the Lord, your redeemer."

So, God makes it clear that Israel his wife (the relationship in the Old Testament) has been unfaithful to him. He cast her off, but he said, "I'm going to take you back." And he's going to do that when He returns, and Israel turns to Him back in faithfulness.

In Hosea 2:7, we also read, "And she (Israel) will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them. She will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I'll go back to my first husband, God, for it was better for me then than it is now."

**Betrothal**

Then in Hosea 2:19, we read, "And I will betroth you to Me forever. Yes, I'll betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice; in loving kindness and in compassion." Here again God is saying, "I'm going to take you back." In the Hebrew language, this word "betroth" means "to woo a virgin." So, here God is saying, "I'm going to take this unfaithful wife, and I'm going to woo her as if she was My virgin potential bride all over again." Now, that's grace toward Israel, but it is *to* Israel, and it is not the church.

**Isagogics**

In order to understand the Bible, one of the techniques that preachers ought to use is the HICEE technique. The "I" in the HICEE stands for the word "isagogics." ... This means the background; the customs; and, the situation when a Scripture was written. If we're going to talk about marriage, we can't go thinking about marriage as we do it today, and understand the analogy in Scripture. Isagogics comes in and says, "Give us some background. Tell us how they used to do it." Then, when we know that, we will understand the analogy. So, isagogics has to do with the background. It is very important that your preacher gives you a background of the times for certain Scriptures, so that you'll comprehended it. We're not dealing with little, trivial things. We're dealing with the deep things of the Spirit of God, but they're the thrilling things that are your heritage.

**The Marriage Contract**

So, in the Old Testament world, the marriage procedure include, first of all, the marriage contract. That was the first step. At some point, at some age of the potential couple, a marriage contract was drawn up and this was done by the parents. When this contract was drawn up, this was called the betrothal. We call it the engagement. But the engagement today and the betrothal of New Testament times and Old Testament times are not the same thing. They're considerably different. When the contract was drawn up, a suitable dowry was paid by the bride's parents to the groom. At this point, the couple are now, in effect, married, even though they are too young to enter a marital relationship. They might just be children.

Very often parents do this when their kids were just young. They said, "We want them to grow up and to be husband and wife." And they would draw up the contract, and the parents decide: "The two of you are going to get married." Most of you seem to recoil from that. But I've noticed that when parents pick people for you to marry, the outcome is much better than when you do it yourself, because parents have a perspective. They know you, and they know they can get together.

They might say, "My daughter has this terrible characteristic about her," or "My son has these splendid, noble qualities about Him. We'll have to try to get these all together, and sort this out." And they manage to pick people who are pretty compatible. They examine the wife's sin nature and the husband sin nature, and want to get compatible sin natures. That's very important. And there are a lot of factors, but parents do have a lot of insight. If your parents have some reservations about somebody that you want to marry, you ought to pull back and think about it. They have perspectives and insights that they can't exactly explain to you. Many a person has gone into a marriage when they knew their parents had reservations, only to find how right the old folks were.

In any case, here we have this couple who are brought together in this contract by the parents, and they now have a legal relationship. At this point, there's the obligation for full marital faithfulness, just as if they were fully married. There is no more dating. There's no more going around. You are in a marital relationship. At this stage of the marriage custom, you are considered to be husband and wife, though the marriage itself has not taken place. That's what's different about how they used to do it in ancient times.

**Mary and Joseph**

This was illustrated, for example, in Matthew 1:19, in the case of Joseph and Mary. Now you'll understand this verse much better. Mary and Joseph are at this stage of the contract. Mary is betrothed to Joseph. That means that they are not married. They have not entered a marital relationship. They have a contract which has been drawn up by their parents. Yet, in Matthew 1:19, we read, "Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly." When Joseph discovered that his betrothed (future bride) Mary is pregnant, he thinks that she has been unfaithful to him, which was violating their marriage contract. Because he was a man of sensitivity and a godly man, he didn't want to make a big public humiliation for her. So, he was just going to quietly break the thing off.

Though they were not married, he is called her husband. In Matthew 1:20-21, you have the actual marriage ceremony which had not yet taken place between them: "But when he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

So, Joseph is told: "Go to the next stage, to the marriage itself, and make her formally your wife." Following the marriage ceremony, we're told in Scripture that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until Jesus was born. Matthew 1:24-25: "And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife." There's the ceremony completed: "And kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus."

This goes back to ancient times. This is the way the Jews dealt with the marriage relationship. First you had the contract, but the contract was viewed as a binding marital relationship.

Back in Genesis 29:21, this is illustrated by Jacob, who has worked seven years to get Rachel. The contract has been drawn between Laban and Jacob that Rachel would be his wife at the end of the seven years. Verse 21: "Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife (not my fiancée). Give me my wife for my time is completed, that I may go into her." He said, "Now I'm ready for the second stage, the marriage ceremony itself. Give me my wife."

This is also illustrated in Deuteronomy 22:23-24: "If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city, and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city to get help; and, the man because he has violated his neighbor's wife (not his fiancée)." You notice in verse 23 that they are just engaged: "Thus you shall purge evil from among you." In the theocracy, adultery and fornication was an evil to be removed from the nation by capital punishment (death).

So, the picture here is that betrothal is tantamount to being husband and wife. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul speaks of the church as being betrothed to Jesus Christ, her husband. So, now you can understand Paul's statement, because what he is talking about is that the contract has been drawn up for Christ and the church as His bride: "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." With the betrothal having taken place, Christ is the husband.

So, this marriage contract between Christ and the church is made at the point when the sinner trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior, and is redeemed. A binding legal relationship is thereafter in force.

So, each of us now stands in a relationship of being betrothed to Christ, and therefore you should be true to Him. You should not be running around on Christ in relationships out in the world. You should not be running around in sinful relationships that are insulting to your relationship to your husband. A wife who runs around on her husband, or who acts in a way that is unbecoming a wife, is a disgrace and a shame to her husband. We are betrothed to Christ. That in itself demands a level of conduct and of relationships with other people just because of that. So, please remember your marital obligations to, of all things, the Second Person of the Trinity.

Anytime you do witnessing work, you are betrothing a person to Jesus Christ. That's what Paul did in 2 Corinthians 11:2. He said, "I have brought you people to salvation, and when I did that, I betrothed you to Jesus Christ.

**The Presentation**

The second stage of marriage in the ancient world is called the presentation. This will help you understand a little more as we read about these events. At this point, the bridegroom now goes to the bride's home. He is accompanied by his friends. The time has come for the marriage ceremony. And he goes to receive his bride. He arrives at her home, usually with his own father. The bride and her father are standing there waiting. And usually a very simple ceremony takes place, which basically consisted of the bride's father taking her hand and putting it into the hand of the groom's father. The groom's father then takes the bride's hand and puts it into the hand of the groom. And the ceremony was completed. They had now performed the wedding ceremony, and the marriage itself was now in force.

**The Supper Celebration**

At this stage of the marriage custom is the background of the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The bridegroom has gone to the home of his bride to receive his bride. The thing, as we shall see that comes next, is the supper celebration. So, the ten virgins are waiting for the bridegroom to arrive with the bride and his friends, to go into the banquet hall. The ten virgins represent Israel, not the church. Five of them have oil in their lamps, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, indicating that they're born-again. Five of them are trying to muscle into the party who do not have the oil requisite for coming into the banquet hall. They are turned back, because in the tribulation, many of the Jews will reject Christ.

So, here they are, waiting to enter the hall. Some are prepared to enter the Millennial Kingdom, and that's the picture of the ten virgins. Five go into the Millennial Kingdom, and five are left out because they're unsaved. The church, as the betrothed of Jesus Christ, is presented to Him as the bridegroom at the rapture. That's when he goes to get his bride. He comes down from heaven into the air, and he brings the bride up to meet him there. Then he takes her to his home in heaven. That is the marriage ceremony that takes place between us and Christ – exactly in pattern of the Old Testament and New Testament custom.

Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water of the Word; that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle in any such thing, but that she should be holy and blameless." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the one who prepares His bride for the wedding. He is the one who beautifies her. That, of course, is what he did upon the cross so that she comes into heaven as a real beauty.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 also tells about the marriage to Christ: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we Christians, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord." This is the event of Christ coming at the rapture to get His bride, comparable to the second stage of the ancient practice of the presentation.

This is also the background for you to understand John 14:3, where Jesus says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again (at the rapture) and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3 is a reference to the rapture event, and Jesus Christ is telling us that He is now in heaven preparing a suitable place for His bride to reside. That's a nice thing to do. It's always nice to marry a man who has prepared a place for you to live, and who has not misinterpreted the Genesis admonition to Adam, where God says, "You will live by the sweat of your brow." This has been misinterpreted by most men to mean, "You will live by the sweat of your Frow."

A girl ought to think seriously before she marries somebody who going to put her out in the workforce. I think that is scriptural, and I think that's the way it should be. What greater horror can you imagine than when children come into a marriage, and Grandma Moses down the street rears them all their lives – all those happy, exciting, thrilling moments that go through childhood; and, those little memories that you have?

My little granddaughter Megan and her family were having a picnic, and they were drinking some of this juice called Hi-C. She has just been learning to read. She said at the picnic, "This is so lovely, and I especially like the 'Hic.'" That's a memorable occasion that you will not forget.

My son-in-law, Captain Meredith, was acting out the story of Jesus and the temptation in the Garden of Eden. My little grandson, Seth, was acting as Jesus, and getting the temptation. His father said, "Would you like something to eat? How about making yourself something?" He said, "No, I don't want to." His dad said, "Is there anything at all you would like?" He said, "Well, a Twinkie would be nice." These are memorable occasions because you are rearing your children. You're living with them.

To go and get a bride, and then stick her out to be in a workforce so you can have things – you want to think about that. Find a man who, in the tradition of God, will care for you, and who will permit you the freedom to do what you want. You might like to do things as your children get older. You might like to engage in things that are profitable, because certainly Proverbs 31 talks about that superb wife who keeps making money on the side in her enterprises, but she is first and foremost wife and mother. These other things, as life permits her to do, she does.

**The Marriage Supper Itself**

Well, be that as it may, Christ comes, and the marriage supper is next in line, and that's the next thing that comes in the ancient world. That was the supper itself where the people gathered for the celebration. The bride and the bridegroom enter the banquet hall to celebrate the marriage now with family and friends. How long the wedding reception lasted depended upon the financial status of the groom. It could be a day or longer. This stage of the marriage custom was the background of the Cana Galilee incident, which Christ attended in John 2:1-12, where He performed His first miracle of creating the grape juice that they had run out of for serving at the marriage supper. But that's what was taking place. This was the marriage supper celebration.

Matthew 22:1-24 is based on the marriage supper custom. Now you can read this passage, and it makes a whole lot more sense when you have the background of the times: "Then Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for His Son.’" The contract has been made, and the presentation has been made. Now it's time to celebrate with their friends: "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come." The analogy here is Israel. "Again, he said out other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner and my oxen, and my fattened livestock are all butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'' But they paid no attention, and went their way, one to his farm; another to his business. And the rest seized his slaves, and mistreated them, and killed them."

Now, here you're invited to the wedding feast. This is a great event. This man is very excited. His son has a bride. They want to celebrate, and these people are saying, "Ah, hang it on your ear," and going on their own way, ignoring them: "But the king was enraged, and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready. But those who are invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' And those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good. And the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests." Now the gentiles are brought in.

But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes." When you came in, you also had to have the appropriate garments to qualify to attend this wedding feast. The analogy here is that you had to be born-again or you don't attend the wedding feast, which is going to be the celebration of the millennium:

"And he said to him, 'Friend, how do you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few are chosen." The invitation was widespread, but those who did not prepare with the trust in Christ at salvation (which is the analogy) are out. The few who did are the chosen.

So, this is the marriage supper. You had to come to it, and here in Israel's case, they rejected the attending of the Millennial Kingdom. Therefore, God in anger destroyed Jerusalem (as the king did); destroyed their temple; and, dispersed the Jews. Now God sends his servants to extend the invitation to the millennial supper to the gentiles, and they do respond. The guests at the supper had to wear the appropriate garment of salvation, which is provided by the host himself. The one who was not properly attired was thrown out of the hall. The marriage supper of the Lamb and His bride, the church, takes place on earth following His return to earth at his Second Coming with her.

This feast takes place throughout the millennium. The whole millennium is going to be celebrating the marriage of Christ and the church. Can you imagine that? When was the last time that somebody has run a party for you that never ended – a party that goes on for 1,000 years? Can you get the little sense of what privileged people you are, to be related to God the Son in such an intimate relationship? I don't think you would feel comfortable being unfaithful to Him. How often, through our day, we are unfaithful to such a superb husband?

In Revelation 19:7 (our passage), Jesus Christ is honored here for keeping His vows to His betrothed bride, the church, and He has come back for her at the rapture. The marriage has taken place, and at the end of the tribulation, the time has come for the marriage supper to be celebrated, and the people in heaven rejoice. The nature of the marriage supper of the Lamb is not revealed, but it is going to be a time of happy celebration for all. Who are the guests? The guests at the marriage supper are all of the Old Testament and tribulation era believers – all those who are not part of the body of Christ. That's why I stressed to you at the beginning that the body of Christ, the church, is a specialized group – those believers from Pentecost to the rapture, and that's all. Nobody else is going to be related to Jesus Christ the way we Christians will be.

The heavenly saints rejoice at the fall of Babylon because that signals the time for the marriage supper of the Lamb to celebrate His marriage to the church. The bride, the church herself, we are told, has readied herself for the wedding feast. In 1 John 3:2-3, we read, "Beloved, we are the children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure. This is what we, the bride, are doing now. We are the children of God. We are the bride of Christ, and we are not perfect. It's important to remember that. Christians are not perfect.

I'm amazed at how much perfection we demand of each other when we're far from being capable of having that kind of perfection: "What we shall be, indeed, we can only faintly imagine, because what we shall be is exactly in the image of Christ: "When He appears, we shall be like Him." That's when we shall be perfect.

So, in the meantime, give each other a little slack. Give each other the realization that you are not perfect in Christ, but that you are developing more perfection as you are a student of the Word of God, and you are true to the Word of God, and you are true to Christ. You develop. But when see Him, you will become that perfection. In the meantime, since He is pure, that's the way we are.

It's a terrible thing to have a pure husband, and a slut for a life. It's a terrible thing to have a pure husband of integrity, and have an unfaithful woman married to him. The world does it all the time. One has only to look at the entertainment world. All the people who are the opinion makers look at the government realm, and all the lowlife, when it comes to marriage, are those who are in the forefront of the public eye. They are the pacesetters, and this is a great disgrace.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, we may add this: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This is the bride making herself ready.

**A Garment of Fine Linen**

Then in verse 8, John goes on to say a little more about how she makes herself ready: "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." Here we come to the bride's adornment at her marriage supper. It was given to her. It is something that she has received. It's not something she secured. It was something that God enabled her to receive, and that is to be clothed – to have a garment that she prepares. This garment is one that she prepares for her own benefit. It is described as a material which was very costly in the ancient world – fine linen.

**Bright**

It is described as bright. The Greek word there means white, in effect and it is clean, which indicates that it is holy. So, the church, as the bride of Christ, is sewing up a garment that she is going to wear at the supper celebration. It is her own special wedding supper celebration gown. It is made up of costly material, and it is compared to something being white and clean.

The harlot of Babylon also wore fine linen, and she wore gaudy jewelry on her fingers. She also wore colorful scarlet and purple robes. But in her hand was held out a cup, not of celebration of purity, but filled with abominations and of wickedness. You have this rich woman. That's the thing you want to remember about rich people. They have an external sophistication because they have money to put on, and good clothes to be surrounded by luxury items so that they move through an esteem in society that makes you think that they are significant people, but they are trivial nothing. Here is the contrast. It is the same material, fine linen. But on the bride of Christ, she becomes a ravishing beauty. Compared to the harlot of the Babylon, she's a disgusting sight.

Specifically, this is a spiritual analogy. The analogy is this: What is this fine linen? The fine linen is called the righteous acts of the saints. The word is the "dikaioma." "Dikaioma" is a concrete expression of righteousness. "Dikaioma" is an expression of the absolute righteousness that is imputed to you as a Christian. "Dikaioma" is what you do. "Dikaioma" is these acts of our daily life.

Now, we wake up. We have a certain box of time, energy, and potential for the day, and in that we have already given to us, by the imputed, absolute righteousness of Christ, the capacity to be in temporal fellowship; to function under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Word of God; and, to produce acts of righteousness. It is in the plural. In the Greek Bible, it's one word, and its "righteousnesses." Our translation has smoothed it out by saying "acts of righteousness." And it is the acts of righteousness of the holy ones; that is the saints, referring here to those who are church-age believers. So, the fine linen of the bride is the spiritual garment produced by the divine good works of the bride while on earth.

I have noticed that ladies who like to sew clothes like to go down to the place that sells material, and they find a material that they like. And it may just be the remnants on the bolt of material. It's wrapped on the bolt. And they unwrap the bolt, and there isn't enough. Then they work around, and they try to squeeze it in, and maybe they're foolish enough to try to make it smaller, so that they can make it out of the material that's left on the bolt, and they end up looking like a stuffed sausage, which is squeezing out of the skin when they try to put on a garment like that. That is a terrible condition. They don't like not to have enough material.

While we speak about the bride of Christ being dressed in this wedding garment as a whole, we are going to be there as individuals, and each of us in our own wedding garment. What we are going to wear is what we have made up out of our own acts of righteousness. So, those of you who are looking to make a magnificent black tie tuxedo are going to have to have the materials to do it. Those of you who are going to want to come out in a flowing gown looking like Elizabeth Taylor, with this stuff trailing behind you (the more worldly type), you're going to have to have enough material to be able to do that. The fulfillment by the church bride of God's program of Christian service designed for each believer is how you get these righteousnesses that form the material for this garment.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that: "For we (believers) are His (God's) workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works." God saves you to serve: "Which (good works) God prepared beforehand, preordained, that we should welcome in them:" "I'm saved. And when I'm saved, there is a list of divine good works that I am saved to execute. My whole life is to carry out these divine good works. For me to do that as a Christian, God provides me with one of the nine operational spiritual gifts. As I use my spiritual gift, whatever it is (or gifts), I keep adding to the bolt of material out of which my garment will be made – the righteousnesses from which I will leave my garments for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Here again, we have a husband in Christ, and He has brought us into a new creation of salvation. And He has taken us to His heart as His bride, because He wants us to be His helpmeet. That's what women are supposed to be who are married to their husbands. They're not supposed to be a helpmeet to some corporation. They're supposed to be helpmeets to their husbands. Consequently, He has an agenda for where her, where He needs her help. These are the works beforehand, that we should walk in them. So, it's not just OK to do any good thing that comes along. It is not just OK for a Christian to be a do-gooder. And there are whole denominations that are nothing but do-gooders, and they slip off into the social gospel, so that the gospel is getting to heaven by doing good things: giving people food to eat; houses to live in; and, clothes to wear who need it. But that is not the gospel, and that does not necessarily qualify as God's works for you. Whatever God has for you to do is very specific, and it is between you and Him to know what that is. And it's a day-by-day project. It'll expand; it'll change; it'll change direction; it'll restrain itself; and, it'll move back and forth as time goes along.

Since the bride here prepares her own garments of righteousness, this cannot refer to the garment of righteousness of salvation given to the believer as a gift from God. There is a garment of righteousness with which God clothes those who trust in Christ as Savior. We call that imputed righteousness. Isaiah 61:10 describes it in this way: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord. My soul will exalt in My God, for He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom, decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." So, the picture here is there is an absolute righteousness which God puts on us as a garment. This is the absolute righteousness of justification for salvation. This is given to those who trust in Christ as personal Savior.

Philippians 3:89 say, "More than that: I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order, that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." This righteousness, which comes on the basis of faith in Christ, is the righteousness that is a garment that God puts on us – imputed righteousness. This is not the righteousness of which the bride makes her gown.

**Sanctification**

We are talking instead about the righteousness of sanctification, not justification. This is the righteousness of a spirit-filled believer who is producing divine good works with his life. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who is at work and you, both to will and to work His good pleasure. It is our working, the good pleasure of God, fulfilling His plan of works for us, which is our righteousnesses. That's what's behind Revelation 19:8: "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." This is her own Christian service good works. The righteousness of justification provides the bride of Christ with the basis that enables her to perform these righteous acts. We are saved to serve. The righteous acts of the bride are the works of a believer who is in temporal fellowship, and is able to produce these good works, because he has imputed righteousness.

Obviously, then, the Christian who is out of temporal fellowship with God cannot be led by the Holy Spirit in performing acts of divine good to produce righteous material for his wedding garment. The time which we live out of temporal fellowship is a waste of our allotted lifespan, since no righteous acts of divine good are produced. That is the great tragedy. That is what is meant when the Scripture says, "What should it profit of man who should gain the whole world and lose his life?" That's the translation: "life." This is when you're wasting your life as a believer out of temporal fellowship. You may be the greatest, richest person here, but what do you have there?

The church, as the bride of Christ, has a wedding supper garment made up then of all the righteous acts of Christian service of the saints. I think that a wise Christian should make a career of serving God to accumulate acts of righteousness for his wedding supper garment. That would be the course of wisdom. How great it is to be part of that body. How great it is to be intimately related to Christ. You have to push it that far. When you talk about someone being a husband and wife, that's intimacy. And when you talk about Christ being our husband, we being His wife, that's intimacy for.

The fullness of that we cannot even comprehend. At least we ought to be true to Him, and at least we ought to look forward to that happy celebration of that great event of our relationship to Him, in front of all the saints of all the ages. Millions of people will be there as guests. You and I will be the focus of attention.

Wouldn't it be terrible to sit up there with a skimpy garment? You've come to your own wedding feast celebration, and you have a skimpy garment because you did not secure the righteousnesses that when you got up there, there was a gown befitting your position as the bride of Christ.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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