

## The Wedding – Revelation 19:7-9

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Play*

1. Five-year-old Christy was playing with her dolls.
2. The weekend before she'd attended a wedding with her parents and now she was staging her own ceremony with her toys.
3. She role-played the various people in the wedding.
  - a. first she was the bride's mother, telling all the other people what to do.
  - b. then she was the groom, represented by a teddy bear.
  - c. finally she picked up Raggedy Andy and having him play the part of the minister she looked into his face and said, "Now you can read us our rights."
  - d. then Christy became the minister who addressed the teddy bear,
  - e. "You have the right to remain silent, anything you say may be held against you. You have the right to have an attorney. You may kiss the bride."

#### B. *Weddings*

1. I've had the privilege of officiating at many weddings and noticed that while there are similarities, they're all different.
  - a. I've performed services in churches, backyards, parks, at the beach, near lakes, in the forest, and in houses.
  - b. the attire of the wedding party has been everything from ultra formal, to where even I wore a Tux, -
  - c. to super casual – with shorts, sandals and Hawaiian shirts.
2. Regardless of the setting, there's one part of every ceremony that's the most exciting;
  - a. the groom, groomsmen and bride's maids are all standing in their places.
  - b. then the music changes to the Wedding March, and the Bride steps out of her place of seclusion and begins her journey down the aisle to meet the groom.
3. For most couples, this is the moment they have been waiting for for months or even years.
  - a. a tremendous amount of planning and preparation goes in to a

- wedding,
- b. but it all boils down to that moment when she walks down the aisle to meet her groom who waits at the altar.

### **C. *The Heavenly Wedding***

1. We're going to be taking a look at a Wedding this morning.
2. It's the marriage ceremony of Christ and His Bride.
3. But it's rather different than the way *we* do weddings.
4. In our modern ceremonies the bride comes down the aisle to the *waiting* groom.
5. It's the other way around in the union of Christ and the Church.
  - a. we, the Bride of Christ, are waiting for *Him*,
  - b. and it's He who comes down the aisle of the clouds for us!

### **D. *Terms***

1. Now, I need to begin today by defining some terms.
2. I apologize to those who already know these things, but there's a good chance there are some here today who would be lost if we didn't begin with a quick set of definitions.
3. First of all – the Bible likens the church, meaning *all* those who have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ, to a Bride – The Bride of Christ.
4. It's the wedding of Christ and His bride that we're going to be taking a look at today.
5. We'll also be referring to the Rapture.
  - a. this is described in several passages but the main teaching is found in 1 Thess. 4.
  - b. the Rapture is that event in which Jesus comes *for* the Church.
  - c. it's not the Second Coming, when Jesus comes back visibly to the Earth;
  - d. in the rapture, He comes invisibly in the clouds and all those who are born again will be instantly caught up to meet Him.  
[elab.]
  - e. we believe this takes place at least 7 years *before* the Second Coming, and prior to the onset of what's known as the Tribulation.
6. So, with those definitions out of the way – let's proceed.

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 7-9

**<sup>7</sup>Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” <sup>8</sup>And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

**<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”**

1. The end of this chapter tells us about the *Second Coming of Christ*.
  - a. up to this point in the Book of Revelation it's all been preparation and set up for this moment.
  - b. but now, like all the prep and planning for a wedding, it's all done.
  - c. the stage is set, and all that's left is to start the service.
2. In vs. 1-6 we read about the special music all of heaven sings.
  - a. like the Wedding March, the heavenly hosts form a massive choir that sings loud strains of praise and worship.
  - b. they cry out “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.”
3. In v. 7 they sing –

**“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”**

4. Now, at first reading, this causes us to say, “Hold on a minute!”
  - a. if the Book of Revelation is basically chronological, and chapters 6-18 have been a description of the Tribulation –
  - b. then why do we find the Marriage Supper of the Lamb here in Ch. 19 which ends with the Second Coming?
  - c. this makes it look as though the Rapture doesn't take place until the END of the Tribulation!
  - d. but weeks ago I said the Rapture is found in ch. 4, *before* the Tribulation.
5. What's going on here?
6. The answer lies in understanding the *Jewish marriage tradition*.

## **B. The Jewish Wedding**

1. There were three distinct stages in Jewish marriages.
2. The first stage was *Engagement*.
  - a. Jewish *parents* arranged the marriages of their children, not the children themselves.
  - b. often times, families would even arrange these marriages *before* the children were born!
  - c. two friends would say, “Look, if I have a boy and you have a girl, let’s agree that they will wed when they become old enough.”
  - d. many cultures of the ancient world considered marriage far too important to leave it up to the decision-making skills of *teenagers*, which are often less than optimal!
  - e. so parents would arrange what they considered a suitable mate for their son or daughter.
  - f. we do find some men in scripture who *chose their own* mates
  - g. interestingly – these marriages usually didn’t work out so well.
    - 1) Esau chose his own Ishmaelite wife – she was a grief. (Gen. 28:8-9)
    - 2) Jacob pursued Rachel, and ended up with Leah, and a household of strife. (Gen. 29)
    - 3) Samson made the mistake *twice*.
  - h. the first stage of *engagement* was really just a formal agreement between the parents that a boy and girl would wed when they were of age.
4. The Second stage was *Betrothal*.
  - a. this was usually between the ages of 12 and 15 for a woman.
  - b. at this point they would be formally introduced to one another.
  - c. the father of the groom would then negotiate with the father of the bride for the *bride price*.
  - d. this price was determined by three factors –
    - 1) the first factor was the *wealth of the father* of the groom.
      - a) if he was a rich man,
      - b) it was expected that he’d pay more.
    - 2) the second was the *bride’s worth*.
      - a) if she was especially attractive or had special gifts, the price would be higher.
      - b) women also did the lion’s share of manual labor in that

culture

- c) so an industrious daughter added to the overall wealth of the home
- d) her loss to marriage had to be compensated.
- 3) the third factor in determining the bridal price was the *groom's work*.
  - a) in some cases, it was the groom's duty to pay the bridal price, *rather* than his father.
  - b) this was the case if the groom was a bit older and had already established himself.
  - c) his paying the bridal price made the whole arrangement far more romantic as the bride saw what he was willing to give to get her.
  - d) we see this arrangement at several places in scripture
    - Jacob paid the bride price for Leah and Rachel with 14 years of labor to his uncle Laban (Gen. 29)
    - David served Saul for the hand of his daughter, Michal. (1 Sam. 18)
- e. once the bride price or a part of it was paid, a contract would be signed, then the betrothed man and woman would share a single cup of wine.
- f. they were now officially *betrothed*.
- g. for the next year, they had only *limited contact*.
  - 1) the bride would begin wearing a veil, meaning she was "taken."
  - 2) she would also begin preparing her wedding dress, often times using material given her by the groom. (Eze. 16:10)
  - 3) after the betrothal began, the groom returned to his father's home and began construction on a new room which in Hebrews was called the "little mansion."
  - 4) when the room was complete and the father deemed the time was right, he would say to the son – "It's time to go get your bride."
  - 5) the groom would then don a crown, gather his friends and make his way to the bride's house.
- 5. This brings us to the third and final stage – *the Wedding*.
  - a. as the construction of the little mansion neared completion, word would be sent to the bride.

- b. she would then gather her friends and await the sound of the horns the grooms friends would blow as they took the most roundabout way they could find to her house.
- c. as soon as she heard the horns, she would slip into her wedding dress, and run out the door of her house to meet her groom in the streets.
- d. together they would make their way back to the groom's house where they would stand under the *huppah* – the 4 pillared canopy used in Jewish weddings to this day.
- e. the wedding contract made up a year before would be read out loud and a blessing would be given over the couple.
- f. at that point the bride & groom would enter their little mansion where they would spend the next 7 days enjoying one another.
- g. the rest of the wedding procession and guests would sit outside just eating and drinking.
- h. now, this may not seem like a very exciting honeymoon to us – having our family and friends sitting outside our door for the first days of our marriage giving knowing looks and chuckles to one another –
- i. but for the people of that time, this was the height of pleasure and joy!
- j. this week alone with nothing to do but relax and play was the only time in their entire lives that they would be released from the duty of labor.
- k. the one and only time people were allowed to relax and kick back was their wedding week.
- l. during that week, the bride would never be seen.
- m. the groom would occasionally come forth to greet his guests and to take food and gifts back to his bride.
- n. then, when the 7 days were complete, the groom would present his bride to his family, friends, and community.
- o. it was at *that* point that the real marriage feast would commence.
- p. if I can use a *modern* wedding analogy here –
  - 1) in most weddings today, there's the main ceremony when the bride and groom are pronounced husband and wife.
  - 2) there's the wedding *recessional* as the wedding party leaves.
  - 3) then all the guests exit and kind of just mill around while the

- wedding party comes back in for pictures.
- 4) sometimes the wedding party will set up a reception line as well and people will walk by shaking hands and giving their congratulations to the new couple.
  - 5) but what every one is really looking forward to is what? The RECEPTION; the food and fun of celebrating!
  - 6) but there's a time gap between the wedding and the reception, the feast.
- q. that's a small picture of what took place at the Jewish wedding.
- r. while the bride and groom enjoyed each other for 7 days, the guests waited, but when they emerged at the end of the week – that's when the party really began and the main course was brought out.

### **C. The Church & Christ**

1. The Jewish Marriage Tradition gives us an incredibly powerful picture of the Gospel and our glorious future.
2. Just as the Jewish father chose who his child would marry, so our Heavenly Father *elected* us to be the Bride for His Son. (1 Pet. 1:2)
3. When the time was right, God moved to *start the betrothal* by paying the bride-price.
4. Remember the bride-price was assessed on 3 things -
  - a. *first* – it was assessed by the *father's wealth*.
    - 1) how rich is God?
    - 2) He owns the universe – but it wasn't gold or silver that He paid.
    - 3) no – the price the Father paid was that which was nearest and dearest to Him.
    - 4) He paid the bride-price for us by sending His own Son! (John 3:16)
  - c. *second*, the bride price was assessed on the *bride's worth*.
    - 1) how much were we worth – how attractive were we to God? Not much!
    - 2) what gifts or skills do we have to offer Him? The idea is laughable!
    - 3) and yet, consider the price God paid for *us*.
    - 4) among the nomads of the Middle East, wealth is counted in

the number of camels one owns.

- a) all major purchases are done by exchanging camels.
- b) a bride-price for most women is usually 1 camel; 2 if she's exceptionally beautiful and industrious.
- c) the story is told of one nomadic chieftain who paid 5 camels for his wife.
- d) the people of her tribe couldn't understand why he paid so much; she was quite plain looking and showed no great skill.
- e) it was the talk of the camp for many weeks as they were wed and then she went away with him.
- f) after 2 years they returned, and the people of her tribe were stunned by her exquisite beauty.
- g) they asked - "How is she now so beautiful?"
- h) the answer was simple – because her husband saw her as worth 5 camels, a 5-camel beauty is *what she had become*.

5) that's how God views us!

6) we may not understand it but we can rejoice in it.

7) God looks at us and says, "I love you and want to spend eternity with you."

8) "You are so precious, I will give, not 5 camels – not even 5 galaxies! I will give Myself."

9) and it is that lavish love that beautifies us and makes us into something we could never make of ourselves!

d. *third*, the bride-price was assessed on the *groom's work*.

1) I think we'd all agree that Jesus has more than earned the right to claim us as His bride!

2) He poured out His blood to save us and make us His own.

5. Now think of it – the bride-price has been paid.

a. at the last supper, to seal the betrothal, Jesus lifted the cup, took a sip, then passed it round the table saying –

b. "I will not drink again until I do so with you in the Kingdom of My Father," meaning at the marriage supper.

c. then He said, [John 14:2-3]

**"In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I**

**am, *there you may be also.***”

- d. Jesus used terms and idioms that came *directly* out of the Jewish wedding tradition.
  - e. the *cup*, the *little mansion*, *coming again to get them* – all of these things the disciples understood in the perspective of betrothal and marriage.
6. And just as the betrothed woman then donned a veil to show she was “taken”, so now the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2

**I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

- a. the veil on the betrothed woman was meant to protect her from the advances of other men - it was meant to mark her out and make her safe.
  - b. it protected her from becoming an object of lust.
  - c. it also served *her* as a constant reminder that she belonged to her husband – she saw the world through the filter of the veil of betrothal.
  - d. in the same way, these are the days of our betrothal while we wait for *our* Heavenly Groom to come.
  - e. the Holy Spirit has come upon us and it’s through the lens of His truth that we see the world.
  - f. before we came to faith in Christ we were at home in the world, but we don’t feel that way now; we feel like strangers here – strangers who are awaiting our *real* homecoming!
  - g. as we read in 1 Cor. 13:12, now we see as in a dark glass, but one day we shall see our Groom face to face.
7. Just as the Jewish bride did not know the exact day or hour of the groom’s coming, only the general time,
- a. so we do not know the day or hour of the Lord’s coming for us.
  - b. but we are to be aware of the season and general time.
  - c. this is the purpose of prophecy – to focus our attention on the Lord’s sovereign control of history.
  - d. the scriptures are filled with *road signs* that forewarn us of the imminence of the Return of Christ.
  - e. they’re like those horns sounded by the groom’s friends as they made their way through the streets to the bride’s house.
8. So what should we do?

- a. like the Jewish bride of old – we should gather our friends and put on our wedding dress.
- b. in Hebrews 10:24-25 we read this -

**24 Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. [PROPHECY]**

- c. when the evidences of the Lord's return are abundant, the Word says we ought to give special place and priority to *fellowship & worship*.

9. Look at v. 7 again -

**7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” <sup>8</sup>And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

- a. during the betrothal period, the bride would make her wedding dress, usually with material provided by the groom.
- b. here we see the Bride of Christ dressed in a glorious garment.
- c. it's described as being made of superior linen that's so pure it shines!
- d. why linen?
  - 1) linen is the material that was used in the priests' garments.
  - 2) the reason why God commanded that the priests wear *linen* is because it's a fabric which resists the production and absorption of perspiration.
  - 3) in service to Him, God doesn't want the emphasis on our work, our toil & sweat – but on His grace. [To unbelievers]
- e. the wedding garment of the bride of Christ is made of the highest quality linen.
- f. and in v. 8 it says that “it was granted *to her* to be arrayed” in it.
- g. by Whom was it granted? By Christ! It's by His work on the Cross that we're declared righteous!
- h. our faith in Christ imputes His righteousness to our account.
- i. just as the Jewish bride of old took the cloth provided by the

- groom and fashioned a garment – so we by faith take the righteousness of Christ and apply it to our daily lives.
- j. His righteousness takes shape in the words of our mouths and the work of our hands.
  - k. as we wait for our groom to come for us, mindful of the signs of His imminent return, we stand with our wedding dress on – the righteousness of Christ.
10. When the betrothal time is over and our little mansions are ready, the Father will say to the Son, “Go get her!”
- a. then Jesus will come in the clouds and we will go forth from this world to meet him in those clouds.
  - b. He will then take us back to His Father’s house where we’ll enter the bridal chamber with Him.
  - c. there we will stay secreted with Him for the 7 years of the Tribulation period.
  - d. when those days are ended, then just as the Jewish groom would emerge from the room to *present* his bride to his family and friends as his WIFE! So Jesus will come forth from heaven at the end of the Tribulation with His Wife.
  - e. THAT’S when the real party and celebration begins!
  - f. look at v. 9 -

**<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”**

- 11. This doesn’t refer to the Bride! Of course the Bride will be *present* at the marriage supper – there won’t be a supper without her!
- 12. This blessing is to the *guests* who are invited to the celebration!
- 13. Keep in mind when this takes place – this is at the very end of the Tribulation.
  - a. the first half of ch. 19 is heaven rejoicing in the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth and the marriage of the Lamb.
  - b. the second half of ch. 19 is the Second Coming of Christ.
  - c. the verses that form the bridge are these verses which speak of the marriage *supper*.
- 14. As in the Jewish wedding, this feast took place 7 days *after* the wedding.

15. The guests invited to it in v. 9 are those Tribulation saints who have managed to survive.
16. Jesus, the Heavenly Groom, emerges from the Bridal Chamber in Heaven with His wife.
17. They come to earth, victorious over all their foes – and the Kingdom Reign of Christ commences with a feast – the Marriage Supper to whom the surviving Tribulation saints are invited to participate.
18. After the harrowing 7 years of deprivation and persecution they've just endured, imagine how great their joy will be.
19. No wonder John is told to write –

**'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'**

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. A Turn Around**

1. So this passage, which at a *casual first* reading seems to suggest the Rapture of the Church takes place at the *end* of the Tribulation,
2. Upon closer examination and with an understanding of the Jewish wedding traditions which form the backdrop of that time,
3. Makes an even stronger case for the Rapture occurring *before* the Tribulation.
4. We are now in the betrothal period – but just as the bride and her friends could hear the noise of the groom and his friends as he made his way to her house, so we see the ample signs of the Lord's soon coming.

#### **B. The Signs**

1. Have you noticed the Christmas decorations going up already?
2. Every year when I see the stores start setting out their Christmas wares, I know it's getting near Thanksgiving!
3. Thanksgiving comes *before* Christmas, but the signs of Christmas are far more abundant.
4. In the same way – the signs of the Second Coming are clearly spelled out in Scripture.
  - a. certain things have to be in place *before* the Lord can come again.

- b. and for the first time in history, as we look at Bible prophecy regarding the last days - we don't need to spiritualize or bend things to make them fit.
- c. they are right there in living color.
- d. Israel is back in her land and surrounded by the very nations foretold will attack her in the end times.
- e. *globalism*, which used to be the buzzword of the freaky fringe is now the main agenda item of the UN.
- f. buying & selling with numbers – the rise of the European Union – the population boom in and hostility of China toward the West – weapons of mass-destruction – and finally, the rise of militant Islam – all of these are road signs on the path of history proving we live in the generation that will see the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory.
- g. but just as Thanksgiving precedes Christmas by a month, the Rapture of the Church precedes the Second Coming by at least 7 years.
- h. that event could happen at any moment.
- i. the next exit is the Rapture of the Church.

### **C. Ready?**

1. Are you ready?
2. Are you part of the Bride?
3. Is your wedding dress on? What are you trusting in today?