

The Wedding – Rev. 19:7-9

Read vs. • Play

1. 5-yr-old Christy is playing w/her dolls.
2. The weekend before, she went to a wedding w/her parents & now she's staging her own ceremony.
3. She role-plays the various parts.
 - a. 1st, she's the bride's mother, telling everyone what to do.
 - b. A teddy bear is the groom. One of the Disney princesses, the bride.
 - c. Raggedy Andy plays the part of the minister. She picks him up & says into his face, "Now you can read us our rights."
 - d. Then Christy **becomes** the minister who says to the teddy bear-groom,
 - e. "You have the right to remain silent, anything you say may be held against you. You have the right to an attorney. You may kiss the bride."

Weddings

1. I've had the privilege of officiating at many weddings.
 - a. I've performed them in churches, houses, backyards, in parks, at the beach, in a forest.
 - b. While most weddings are ultra formal, some are casual; w/shorts, sandals & Hawaiian shirts.
2. Regardless of the setting, there's 1 part of **every ceremony** that's the most exciting;
 - a. The groom, groomsmen & bride's maids are all standing in their places.
 - b. Then the music changes to the Wedding March, & the Bride begins her journey down the aisle.
3. This is the moment most couples have waited for, for months; sometimes **years**.
 - a. A lot of planning & preparation can go into a wedding.
 - b. But it all comes to that moment when the bride walks the aisle to meet the groom waiting at the altar.

The Heavenly Wedding

1. We're looking at a Wedding this morning. It's the marriage ceremony of Christ and His Bride.
2. It's different from the weddings we're familiar with.
3. In our ceremonies, the bride walks the aisle to the waiting groom.
4. It's the other way around in **this** wedding.

We, the Bride of Christ, wait for Him He comes down the aisle of the clouds for us.

Vs7-9

1. All Rev. to this point has been preparation & set-up for **this moment**.
2. The stage is set. All that's left is to start the service.
3. 2 wks ago in vs1-6 we read about the special music all heaven sings.
4. The heavenly host forms a massive choir singing loud strains of praise as a glorious Wedding March.

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." ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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."

5. Now: We need to pause here, because some of you who've been w/us since the beginning of our study in Rev. may be confused by the timing of this.

- a. If Rev is basically chronological, & chs 6-18 describe the Tribulation –
 - b. Why is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb here in ch19; a ch that ends w/the 2nd Coming?
 - c. That makes it look as though the Rapture takes place AFTER the Tribulation!
 - d. But we've repeatedly said the Rapture, which is found in ch4, comes **before** the Tribulation.
6. What's going on here? The answer lies in understanding the **Jewish Wedding Tradition**.

The Jewish Wedding

1. There were 3 stages in Jewish weddings: Engagement / Betrothal / Wedding.
2. 1st was the **Engagement**.
 - a. **Parents** arranged marriages for their children, not the children themselves.
 - b. Families would often arrange them *before* the children were born.
 - 1) Friends would say, "If I have a boy & you have a girl, let's agree they'll wed when they become of age."

- c. Most cultures of the ancient world considered marriage far too important to leave to the questionable wisdom of teenagers.
 - d. So parents arranged what they considered suitable mates for their children.
 - e. In the Bible, we do read of some men who chose their own mates. It rarely worked out well.
3. The 2nd stage was **Betrothal**.
- a. Women were usually betrothed btwn the age of 12 & 15. Men were usually a couple yrs older.
 - 1) That seems young to us.
 - 2) But when the avg age at death for commoners was only in their 40's,
 - 3) They wanted to get their families started as soon as possible.
 - b. At the outset of the betrothal, they couple were formally introduced to each other.
 - c. The groom's father negotiated w/bride's father for a suitable **bride-price**.
 - d. The Bride-Price was determined by 3 things ...
 - 1) 1st - Was the **wealth of the groom's father**. If he was rich, he'd paid more.
 - 2) 2nd - Was the **bride's worth**.
 - a) Women did much of the manual labor in that culture.
 - b) An industrious daughter added to the value of the family & home.
 - c) Her loss to marriage needed to be compensated.
 - d) If she was attractive & had developed special skills, the price went up.
 - 3) 3rd - Was **what the groom was willing to contribute**.
 - a) In some cases, the groom paid the bride-price.
 - 1) This was the case if his father was dead.
 - 2) Or if the groom was a bit older and had already established himself.
 - b) Even if they were young & their father was still alive, most grooms contributed **something** because it was more romantic. It was a way to **pursue** her & prove how much he **wanted** her.
 - c) We see this at in Scripture ...
- Jacob worked hard for 14 yrs for Leah & Rachel (Gen. 29)
 - David served Saul for the hand of his daughter, Michal (1 Sam. 18)
- e. Once the bride price was paid, a contract was signed.
 - f. Then the betrothed couple shared a single cup of wine. They were now officially **betrothed**.
 - g. Over the next year, they had only **limited contact**.
 - 1) The bride began wearing a veil, meaning she was "taken."
 - a) She changed her FB status to "In a relationship with ..."
 - b) And she cancelled her subscription to eHarmony.
 - 2) She then began preparing her wedding dress, using material given by the groom as part of the bride-price. (Eze. 16:10)
 - 3) The groom returned to his father's house & began construction on a new room called in Hebrew, a "**little mansion**."
 - 4) When the room was complete & his dad deemed the time was right, he told the son, "It's time. Go get your bride."
 - 5) The groom donned a crown, gathered his friends & made his way to the bride's house.
5. This brings us to the 3rd & final stage: **The Wedding**.
- a. As construction of the little mansion neared completion, word was sent to the bride the wedding day was getting close.
 - b. She gathered her friends & waited for the sound of the horns the groom's friends blew as they took the most roundabout way they could find to her house.
 - 1) It was a playful way to draw out the drama & excitement of what was coming.
 - 2) And it gave the bride ample time to get ready.
 - c. As soon as she heard the sound of the groom approaching, she put on her wedding dress, & run out the door to meet him.
 - d. Together they made their way **back** to the groom's house where they stood under a 4-pillared canopy

called a ***huppah***.

- e. The wedding contract made up a yr before was read & a blessing was given over the couple.
 - f. Then the bride & groom entered their bridal chamber where they spent the next 7 days enjoying one another.
 - g. The family & guests sat outside eating & drinking.
 - h. They doesn't sound all that exciting a honeymoon to us.
 - 1) How'd you like to have 50 people sitting outside your hotel room door the first night of your honeymoon?
 - 2) For the people of that time, a wedding was the peak of joy & a time to pull out all the stops in celebration.
 - 3) It meant the future was safe. People were getting married & having kids.
 - 4) Which is why the couple spent their first 7 days sequestered alone.
 - i. During that week, the bride was never seen.
 - 1) The groom occasionally came out to greet the guests
 - 2) & take food & gifts back to his bride.
 - j. Then, when after a week, the couple came forth.
 - k. And THAT'S when the real marriage feast began.
 - 1) It was all like cheese & crackers; horderves, appetizers till now.
 - 2) But now comes the Marriage Supper; the main meal.
6. In many weddings today, it ends with the bride & groom pronounced husband & wife.
- a. There's the wedding *recessional* as the wedding party leaves.
 - b. Then the guests exit & mill around as the wedding party comes back in for pictures.
 - c. To keep people occupied while the pictures are taken, horderves are served.
 - d. But what everyone is waiting for; what they are looking forward to, is the RECEPTION
 - e. To the food & fun of celebrating!
 - f. ***That gap*** btwn the wedding & reception feast is a picture of 7 days in the Jewish wedding.

The Church & Christ

- 1. The Jewish wedding gives us an incredible picture of the Gospel & our glorious future.
- 2. Just as the father ***chose*** who his child would marry, our Heavenly Father chose us for His Son.
- 3. Jesus ***started the betrothal*** by paying the bride-price at the Cross.
- 4. Remember the bride-price was assessed on 3 things -
 - a. ***1st*** was assessed the ***father's wealth***.
 - 1) How rich is God? He owns the universe. But it wasn't gold or silver He paid.
 - 2) The price the Father paid was that which was dearest to Him. He sent His own Son
 - b. ***2nd*** - the pride price was assessed on the ***bride's worth***.
 - 1) How much were we worth? How attractive were we to God?
 - 2) What gifts or skills do we have to offer Him?
 - 3) Yet consider the price God paid for us.
 - 4) Among the nomads of the ME, 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 1 camel; 2 if she's exceptionally beautiful & industrious.
 - c) The story is told of a nomadic chieftain who paid 5 camels for his wife.
 - d) Her tribe couldn't understand ***why*** he paid so much because she was quite plain w/no great skill.
 - e) They talked for weeks about why the chief offered so much for her.
 - f) After a couple yrs they returned for a visit.
 - g) The people of her tribe were stunned by her ***exquisite beauty***.
 - h) They asked, "How is she now so beautiful?"
 - i) The answer was simple. Because her husband ***saw her*** as ***worth*** 5 camels, a 5-camel beauty is ***what she became***.
 - 5) That's how God views us. God says, "I love you & want to spend eternity w/you."
 - 6) "You are so precious, I will give, not 5 camels, not even 5 galaxies! I will give ***Myself***."
 - 7) That lavish love beautifies us & makes us into something we could ***never*** make of ourselves.

- c. **3rd** - the bride-price was assessed on the ***groom's work***.
 - 1) Jesus has more than earned the right to claim us as His bride.
 - 2) He poured out His blood to save & make us His own.
5. LISTEN: 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 –
 “I will not drink again until I do so with you in the Kingdom of My Father,”
 Meaning at the marriage supper.
 - b. 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.”
 - c. Jesus used terms straight out of Jewish weddings.
 - d. The *cup*, the *little mansion*, *coming again to get them* –
 - e. All these the disciples understood as the language of betrothal & marriage.
6. Just as the betrothed woman donned a veil to show she was “taken”, Paul says in 2 Cor 11:2
 I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.
 - a. The veil protected the betrothed woman from the unwanted advances of others.
 - b. It marked her as under another’s cover; it made her safe.
 - c. It also ***reminded HER*** she belonged to her lover.
 - 1) Wearing it every day, the world was filtered thru the veil of betrothal.
 - 2) She saw everything & related to everyone based on her identity as the betrothed.
7. These are the days of ***our*** betrothal as we wait for Jesus to come for us.
8. ***Our veil*** is God’s Word & Spirit thru which see & relate to others.
9. And as the Jewish bride didn’t know the day or hr of her groom’s coming, only the general time,
 - a. So we don’t know the day or hr of Jesus coming.
 - b. But we ***are*** to be aware of the season; the general time.
 - c. This is the purpose of prophecy.
 - d. Scripture is filled w/*signs* pointing to the Return of Christ.
 - e. They’re like the horns sounded by the groom’s friends as they made their way thru to the bride’s house.
10. So what should we do?
 - a. Like the Jewish bride of old, let’s gather our friends & put on our wedding dress.
- b. Heb 10:24-25 says ...

²⁴ Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not 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.
11. Look at v7 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.” ⁸ 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, the bride made her dress w/material ***provided by the groom***.
 - b. Here the Bride of Christ is dressed in a glorious garment.
 - c. It’s described as being made of ***superior linen*** so pure it shines!
 - d. Linen is the material used in the ***priests’*** garments.
 - 1) God commanded the priests to wear linen because it ***resists perspiration***.
 - 2) The emphasis isn’t on ***our*** work; it’s on His grace that ***enables*** us to work.
 - e. The wedding garment of the bride of Christ is made of the highest quality linen.
 - f. V8 says “it was granted to her to be arrayed” in it.
 - g. It was granted by Christ! It’s by His work on the Cross we’re made righteous.
 - h. Faith in Christ sees His righteousness imputed to us.
 - i. Just as the Jewish bride fashioned a garment by material provided by her groom,
 - j. So by faith, we apply the righteousness of Christ to our daily lives.

- k. It takes shape in our words & works.
- 12. When the time of our betrothal is over & our little mansions are ready, the Father will say to the Son, "Go get her!"
 - a. Then Jesus will come & we'll rise go to meet Him in those clouds.
 - b. He'll then take us back to Heaven where we'll enter the bridal chamber w/Him.
 - c. There we will stay secreted for the 7 yrs of the Tribulation.
 - d. When those days are ended, as the Jewish groom emerged to present his bride, so Jesus will come forth from Heaven at the end of the Tribulation w/His Wife.
 - e. THAT'S when the real party begins.
 - f. Look at v. 9 -

⁹ 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."

CONCLUSION • A Turn Around

- 1. We are now in the betrothal period.
- 2. Just as the bride & her friends could hear the noise of the groom & his friends as he made his way to her house, so we see the signs of the Lord's soon coming.

The Signs

- 1. Many years ago, Pastor Chuck used this illustration for the signs of Jesus' Return.
- 2. Right after Halloween, the stores gear up for Christmas.
 - a. The decorations go up & they start selling Holiday wares.
 - b. You know what's ***next*** on the calendar when you see Christmas décor? THANKSGIVING!
 - c. Thanksgiving doesn't get near the "decorative mojo" Christmas does.
 - d. But you can't get to Christmas without first having Thanksgiving.
- 3. And you can't have the 2nd Coming of Christ without first having the Rapture of the Church.
- 4. The Bible has lots & lots of signs that point to the approach of the Return of Jesus.
 - a. Israel is back in her land, surrounded by nations Ezekiel says will attack her in the end times.
 - b. The world is united by global telecommunications.
 - c. The threat of WMD has moved many to press for a One World Government.
 - d. The rise of the EU & Euro. Buying & selling w/numbers.
 - e. All this & more look very much like the world stage being set for the Return of Christ.
 - f. But 7 years before that is the Rapture of the Church, which needs no signs.
 - g. The Rapture could happen at any moment.
- 5. Are you ready? Are you ready for the wedding?