

Revelation 19:1-10 – The Marriage Supper

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 May 2023

Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

- [0 : 0 0] I just wanted to follow up on some of the announcements that Norma let us in earlier. And for those of you who are regular, cast your mind back three years ago when we had something called a book table.
- And in fact, we had three book tables at once, right? So the book table has come out for today and today only. Right?
- So there's some books at the back and everything on that table is free. We're not charging anything. And the offering box on the table is purely coincidental.
- So there's even DVDs on there, which I know like what's a DVD? Keep it a few years, it'd be a collector's item. There's some CDs on there as well.
- So there's books on the table and I wanted to highlight four. That I think every Christian should read. Okay. Three that every Christian should read and one that you should read.
- [1 : 0 6] Oh no, just don't go there. The first is Ian Bounds' Power Through Prayer. How many people have read this? Yeah, it's like a classic. So this is Ian Bounds, a Methodist pastor in America during the Third Great Awakening.
- And known not really for his preaching, but for his praying. And this will, if you ever feel like the need or the lack of motivation to pray, which I think is often a common thing, this book will help.
- There's about four copies on the back. This one, if you know me at all, you'll know this is in my top three books of all time. This is Jim Cimbala, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire.
- It's his story of how God moved in a revival of the Brooklyn Tabernacle there in New York.
- And it is inspiring. It is a book I try to read every single year. So there's a few of those at the back. This one, again, for the same reasons, it's a classic Life Together.
- [2 : 1 2] This is short but dense. Take your time. So that one. And then this one, this is the only copy.
- Right? So, and I don't like the cover. But anyway, that's just the original. The original version was a lot better. Anyway, I won't go there.
- So this is, how many people have read this? Yes, my friend. This is, most, many people come to Calvary and they go, oh, they have modern songs and yet they spend an hour preaching.
- How does that work? And what's the difference between Pentecostal, charismatic and then Calvary? And this goes some way to explain that.
- All right? So this is by Chuck Smith, who was the founder of the Calvary Chapel Movement. And it's, you can get this online for free actually as a PDF. Send it to your Kindle and it will work.
- [3 : 1 5] But this is the only copy left. If you've ever kind of figured out what's the deal with spiritual gifts, why don't we really kind of practice the spiritual gifts in a really kind of overt, kind of visible way on a Sunday morning?

What do we think about that? That's the book for you. All right? Great. Revelation chapter 19 is the most important book as we turn to the Bible.

And we're nearly there, right? We're nearly there finishing the book of Revelation. Okay? And we have come, we're coming out of the difficult stuff.

The difficult stuff because the content is difficult. But also the subject matter is pretty difficult in chapter 17 and 18 and actually from chapter 6 onwards, right?

It's been pretty hard going. Now we get to chapter 19 and I'm hoping you're going to agree as we go through the text, our souls are going to be lifted because we kind of, for the first time, it's fairly straightforward.

[4 : 27] All right? And I want to say thank you to the worship team this morning because it is clear that you've already read the text and you've chosen songs to go with our text this morning, which is really, really helpful.

So I'm going to read our text this morning. It's Revelation chapter 19 verses 1 to 10. So if you're thinking, oh, this is the day Jesus is coming back. Today might be the day Jesus is coming back, but not in our text.

You have to come back next week to get that. So this is the build up to that. All right? So our text says this. After this, I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God for his judgments are true and just.

For he has judged a great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. And once more they cried out, hallelujah.

The smoke of her goes up forever and ever. And the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne saying, amen, hallelujah.

[5 : 33] And from the throne came a voice saying, praise our God. All you servants, you who fear him, small and great. And then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude.

Like the roar of many waters, like the sound of great peals of thunder crying out, hallelujah. For the Lord our God, the almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.

And it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb.

And he said to me, these are the true words of God. Then I fell down at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, you must not do that. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Let's pray really quickly. Father, thank you for your word. And Lord, we ask now as we come to meditate on it and to think about it, Lord, that you would help us.

[6 : 49] Lord, help us, Lord, to know you through the word, Lord. Lord, that this wouldn't be just an academic thing, Lord. But Lord, your spirit would be at work in our hearts and minds, Lord, to draw us closer to you.

Lord, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So what do we do? What we do here at Calvary is that we go through the text verse by verse. And so we're going to go back to the beginning of verse one.

And we're going to deal with kind of each phrase as it comes. I'm going to give you an outline in a minute. If you're taking notes, you might want to take notes. But first of all, John says this. He says, after this.

And we've seen previously in Revelation that whenever John uses that phrase, he's really saying there's going to be a scene change. So we're going to go from earth to heaven.

And in this section, we're going to see all that has represented chaos in the world has been destroyed.

[7 : 50] Like that's worth celebrating, right? You know, like the things that we pray about, the things that we prayed about this morning, Lord, the things that need, you know, the things that need praying for will no longer need praying about.

Right? Because the world chaos system has ended. And so that's what we're looking at this morning. And in this section, just as an outline coming on the screen, you'll see we are introduced.

This is where we were introduced a few weeks back about some characters in our story. This morning, we're introduced to three characters in this story. So we're introduced to the prostitute in verse two.

And we're introduced to the prostitute and our problem. Then in verse seven, we're introduced to the lamb and his solution. And then later on in verse seven, we're introduced to the bride and what we can be.

So that's our outline for this morning is the prostitute and our problem, the lamb and his solution and the bride and what we can be. And if you haven't kind of followed along with us over the last few weeks and months, that will make little sense to you.

[9 : 02] Prostitute, lamb, bride. Childhood shouldn't go in the same story. And yet they do. So if that makes little sense to you, let me tell you the story of Natasha.

So Tolstoy's War and Peace. How many people have read Tolstoy's War and Peace? How many people have read the Bible? More people have read the Bible than Tolstoy's War and Peace.

That's amazing. I've just read the Cliff Knights. Does that count? So in Tolstoy's War and Peace, there is a woman called Natasha and she's engaged to Prince Andre.

And the marriage is delayed for about a year. But on the night before Andre returns, she is wooed by a player.

And his name is Anatole. And he is only out to ruin her life. Now, of course, Natasha doesn't see it that way.

[10 : 04] And Natasha is completely swept away by his charms and agrees to run away with him. As with every good story, right at the last minute, she is rescued from certain destruction.

And Prince Andre returns. Now, the tragedy is that Prince Andre cannot forgive her. And they never marry.

And Natasha's hopes and dreams for knowing and being known are shattered. It doesn't take a genius to see Tolstoy is painting Natasha as humanity that has been deceived by Anatole, the corrupt world system.

And the reason that Prince Andre, the picture of Jesus the rescuer, is no longer in this story, is that Prince Andre no longer wants Natasha, is because of infidelity.

In this section of Revelation, we get to see the true story. The true story that has a better ending. Really, Tolstoy could only finish the story in tragedy.

[11 : 18] But John sees the same story, the true story. And he sees it ending in comedy. In this section of Revelation, we get to see the true story.

The prostitute represents all that is wrong with humanity. We're going to see a lamb who represents the solution, what God has done to put that right. And we're going to see the bride, what we can be and have in Jesus.

And so John says in verse 1, after this. And what he's saying is, after the destruction of the prostitute chaos system that we read about in chapters 17 and 18.

After the destruction of all of the problems, all of the struggles, all of the tragedies, all of the trials, all of the hardships.

After the destruction of all of that. That would be a great day, wouldn't it? He said, after that I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven.

[12 : 34] Now he's going to describe a song. What's going on in this 10 verses is a song. And it's a song in four verses.

All right. And so in verse 1 and 2, we see the great multitude sing. And actually they sing three of these verses.

And it's intersected by the 24 elders and the four living creatures actually just singing a refrain. Two words. Amen. Hallelujah. That's as they get Pentecostal on us. Right.

And that's what they sing. But each time, each verse, we have this word. Hallelujah. Now, if you've been around church very often and depending, obviously, if you kind of more Pentecostal background, maybe you would have heard that phrase.

More often. Okay. What does it mean? Well, it means praise the Lord. And yet, it's in our Christian vocabulary.

[13 : 39] And yet, it doesn't appear in the Bible very often at all. Right. You know, we talk about the law of first mention when we're talking about understanding what the Bible means. And we go back to the first time it's mentioned.

And more often than not, where do they appear? They appear in the first 10 chapters of Genesis. Right. The first time Hallelujah appears is in Psalm 104. You would think that's such an important word.

It would appear way earlier. It doesn't appear until 104. The last time it appears in the Old Testament is Psalm 150. Right. Between those two times, it appears 24 times.

You know how many times it appears in the New Testament apart from this point in Revelation? Zero. Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't use this word, but it's not a common word in the Bible.

What it does tell me is that this word is reserved for a very special occasion. Right.

[14 : 41] And the fact that we see it so many times in this chapter tells me that this chapter is highlighting, again, a very special occasion. The first time it is mentioned in the Bible actually has some bearing on what we're seeing in this chapter.

So Psalm 104 verse 35 says this. Let sinners be consumed from the earth. This is like a happy verse. Let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. And so that is what's happening here in this chapter. This is the response to wickedness and sin and the bringer of that sin being judged.

So our first verse in this song appears in verse one, which is the only time that's helpful, because otherwise now we're going to get verse two appears in like verse three.

I know. Helpful. So in the verse one, he sees a great multitude in heaven and they're crying out. He says there in verse one. Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God for his judgments are true and just.

[15 : 57] For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. There is praise to God because he has judged the prostitute, the world, the chaos world system.

That's the right response to being saved from that, isn't it? They say praise the Lord. And then the multitude say salvation and glory and power. Don't belong to the prostitute.

They belong to our God. It's a good reminder. It's a good reminder when we're watching the news or when things turn sour in our own lives, that salvation and glory and power don't belong to anyone else but God.

It's a statement that is directly opposed to the prostitute that's been painted in 17 and 18. There is no salvation in the world.

Salvation belongs to God. And whilst it's really good that we should and we can do all that we can to alleviate the world's problems and help people as much as we can, salvation only comes from God.

[17 : 10] There's no salvation in the world. There's no glory there either. Glory can be translated honor or respect. The world system only has one agenda and that is to destroy you because it's a world system dominated and governed by Satan.

No matter what it says. The world system is a world system. The world system is like Anatole. They're seeking to woo you and to tempt you and to promise all of these things that are not true.

Salvation and glory and power belong exclusively and uniquely to our God.

And here's the reason for the praise in verse 2. For his judgments are true and just. For he has judged a great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.

Now that verse is interesting. Why? The verse is interesting because it tells us three things. It tells us what sin is. It tells us what sin does.

[18 : 12] And then it tells us what the result of sin is. So it tells us what sin is. It tells us what sin does. And it tells us what the outcome of sin is. Look what he says.

He says that the great prostitute corrupted the earth with her immorality. That's what sin is. Immorality. Immorality. So immorality. You know we kind of again throw around as a synonym for sin.

But what does it actually mean? What it actually means is that immorality is loving something more than loving God.

This isn't got to do with obedience. It's got nothing to do with worship. Although they're kind of wrapped up in the same idea. In the context of these ten verses, this only has to do with love.

It is loving something more than loving God. Look at the context. The context is the bride and the groom. Right? Immorality is Natasha and Anatole.

[19 : 21] Is Natasha being wooed and tempted by him? And going off with him? What did Jesus say to Peter three times?

Do you love me? Do you love me more than these? He didn't say do you love me. He says do you love me more than these? Jesus is saying I want you to love me as I have loved you.

Jesus was asked the question in Matthew 22. What is the greatest commandment? I.e. How can I obey you more than any other way of obeying you?

And Jesus' answer was like a poke in the eye to the scribes and Pharisees. When he said this is the greatest commandment. You should love the Lord your God with everything that you have. With more than anything else.

What is the greatest commandment? Love. How do we obey God? Love. God wants us to relate to him. Or God wants to relate to us.

[20 : 28] In a way a good husband relates to his wife. We've talked a lot in the past about how Jesus is the king. But listen. He's not just a king.

It's not just about God relating to us as king over us as subjects. Or a shepherd over sheep. Or a master over servants. God wants to relate to us as a good husband and a wife.

As a bride. God wants to relate to us as a good husband and a wife. The prostitute tempts us to love anything other than God. And this verse says that that's sin.

But it also tells us what sin does. The great prostitute who corrupted the earth. That's what sin does. Sin corrupts. That word corrupt also means spoil.

It goes off. Right? In this area of love. Look. I think we have to. We have to confess.

[21 : 33] That humanity. And probably us as well. We're pretty dysfunctional when it comes to love. This idea of love. We have spoiled God's intentions around love.

Haven't we? And you know. I think that runs deeper than just calling out society. For its lack of sexual ethic. I think we should. But think about this.

If the Bible. Is right. And just for the record. I think it is right. But you know. If the Bible is right. And your heart.

God says. In Jeremiah 17. Is deceitful above all things. Desperately wicked. Who can understand it? That's your heart and my heart. How do you know what you love?

You might be sitting there. You might be sitting there. And going. Well I love God. No two ways about. How one question. How do you know? You might say. Well. You know. I just. Common vernacular.

[22 : 33] It's in my heart. It's loving with all my heart. Yeah. But the Bible says your heart is wicked. Desperately wicked. You can't understand it. Oh yeah. But I understand my heart. Well hold on a second. We just said we believe the Bible.

So how do you know? Causes a problem. Doesn't it? How do I know? I'm not Natasha getting. Getting duped. How do I know that? Well I like how William Temple.

Answers the question. He says this. Your religion is what you do with your solitude. Like I don't have time to unpack that.

But. That is. It's unpackable worthy. Let me just. Like that's meditating worthy. Like what he's saying is that. That what you love. Is what you think about.

When there isn't anything else to think about. I mean maybe you're there this morning. Right? I don't take it personally. Maybe you're thinking about something else other than the sermon. I don't take that personally honestly. But what are you thinking about? Like there's nothing else to think about while you're sitting here.

[23 : 39] Apart from how boring the sermon might be. You might be thinking I'm okay with that. Right? What are you thinking about? What do you think about in those moments. You know when you're picking up the kids. And the kids are like I'll be 10 minutes.

And an hour has passed. What are you thinking about? What are you thinking about when there's nothing else to think about? Where does your heart run? Where does your mind run? Where does your mind habitually run to?

Or put it like this. What are you thinking about when you find yourself daydreaming? Now I know none of you daydream at work.

None of you ever do that. Sitting at your desk and you find your mind floating. But what are you thinking about? What are you thinking about most? Temple says whatever that thing is.

That's your God. That's the thing that you love. Your religion is what you do with your solitude. Now that's pretty convicting, isn't it?

[24 : 41] If your love is somewhere else other than with God. If you love something else more. You know you're not trampling on his rules. That's not the deal.

That's not the issue. You're not disobeying God. That's not the issue. You're trampling on his heart. That's the issue. And that's the result of sin.

Now verse 2 of the song comes in verse 3. And the multitude sing this. Once more they cried out, Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. The judgment of the chaos world system that has caused all of the problems.

Goes up forever and ever. So, this verse has caused some theological nightmares.

[25 : 45] If you're not into theology, take a nap. Think about loving God. And come back in about 30 seconds. Right? Because I need to mention this.

I need to talk about this. The question is this. If the smoke of her goes up forever and ever, does forever and ever mean forever and ever?

Specifically, does it mean eternal punishment? Right? Or, is the language more about permanency and therefore annihilation?

Hmm. Now, I know that some of you will already have an answer to that. So, let me just throw a couple of grenades in and then leave. Is God's vengeance against the prostitute going to be forever ongoing, even when the new heaven and earth descend and paradise is restored?

Right? Will God still be taking revenge against the prostitute and those who don't follow Jesus forever and ever and ever? Or, does the language just mean it was permanent and irreversible?

[27 : 00] Now, if you land on the first, that it lasts forever, write this down somewhere. What do I do with the death of death?

I've just gone quiet all of a sudden. What do I do with the death? So, look. Revelation 20, verse 14, says this. That death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

This is the second death, the lake of fire. Anyone's name not found and written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. So, this raises a problem. Same problem.

Should we take it metaphorically, death is a metaphor for something else, or is death really destroyed? See the problem? The writer of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 2.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, you can just ignore that part, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

[28 : 05] So, if the one who has the power of death is destroyed, what do we do with death itself? Paul said this in 2 Timothy 1, verse 10, that Christ Jesus abolished death.

Now, interestingly enough, when you get to verses 6-10 in this chapter, which depicts the marriage supper of the Lamb, it draws on Isaiah 25. The whole context for this in the Old Testament is Isaiah 25.

Isaiah 25 says this, opens with this, he will swallow up death. For how long? Forever. Forever. All right. So, catch those grenades, and chew on those for a little while, we'll move on into verse 4, the third verse in this song.

The 24 hours, and if you were thinking about just loving God, you can come back. Right on time. Perfect. I'm doing it.

I'm getting on with it. It's like one of the church trustees calls time on your sermon. You start to worry, right? The 24 elders, verse 4, the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne saying, amen.

[29 : 25] Which is basically shorthand for, we agree. Come on. Praise God. Right? So, they're astounded. They're happy about this.

Right? The 24 elders, the four living creatures, we've said before, are some kind of your highest order, angelic being unique. Right? And so, they fall down, and they say, amen, hallelujah.

And then, from the throne, so not them, not the multitude, from the throne came a voice. We're not even going to worry about who that, where that voice is coming from.

I don't think it matters. It's a voice. It's come from the throne saying, praise our God. So, whoever that is cheerleading, they're bringing it as well.

So, praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great. And the idea, praise our God, is the idea is, be continually praising God.

[30 : 33] Then verse 4, in verse 6, then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude. Again, they come back and sing another verse, like the roar of many waters, like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Hallelujah, because He is finally reigning. The day that we've been waiting for has come, is the idea.

The day that the prophets wrote about. the day that the prophets saw is here. It's the day that we prayed, your kingdom come, your will be done, has arrived.

And the idea is present. He has finally taken His throne and He is reigning. And so again, look, just to revisit this really quickly, the prostitute represents all that is wrong with humanity.

And let's not divorce ourselves too far from that. The prostitute represents all that is wrong with us, all that is wrong with me. And the song that is being sung is praise to God because God has done something to fix that.

[32 : 07] He's done something to solve that problem. So as we move into verse 7, we're going to see the solution to what God has done.

Right? That He hasn't just left us on our own. How has this victory been accomplished is the question. That's what we get the answer to in verse 7.

So we've seen the prostitute and the problem, now we see the lamb and the solution. Verse 7, for, excuse me, sorry, it doesn't, there's four isn't even in the verse. What am I talking about? Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory for the marriage of the lamb has come.

How many people like food? Some people do not. We will fix that. We've got a picnic in a few weeks time, right?

Yeah? Yeah, good. Looking forward to that. I was reminded that, I don't know whether we've actually announced this, but let's announce it now.

[33 : 19] No time like the present. after we teach free revelation, the next book of the Bible that we're going to go through is Leviticus. Come on.

And there is a sermon in Leviticus some way through, I think chapter 11 or chapter 12 that's entitled Calvary, Calories, and the Glory of God.

That's just a great title, right? That's why I share that with you. That's just something to look forward to, Calvary, Calories, and the Glory of God.

Because like we know that eating is redemptive. Eating together is redemptive.

We've talked about this lots and lots of times before. When God's people to gather and they gather around a table, whether actual or symbolically gather around a table, we are inviting people into God's family as a redemptive thing.

[34 : 23] Really, really powerful. In a way, I kind of like wish we did that more as a community, as a church. And all the way through the Bible, you can trace, and I think there is a study somewhere that we did a while back, on what God has got to say about eating together.

Right? I mean, it starts in Genesis chapter 2, right? What does he do? He plants a tree and he says, go eat. Right? And the way that God kind of fellowships with us oftentimes is that we just eat.

Like, there's that beautiful moment in the Gospel of John where the disciples had betrayed Jesus and it wasn't just one or two of them. They'd all kind of fled.

Right? And they all go fishing. Do you remember that? And they're like, we don't know what to do. And one of them says, let's go fishing. And they go, you know, let's go fishing.

And they're out on a boat. And what's Jesus doing? Resurrected Lord Jesus is on the beach cooking breakfast. And Jesus and Simon jumps out of the boat.

[35 : 35] He's not even waiting for the boat to come into shore. He's like, I'm at it. Breakfast with Jesus on the beach. There's no better thing than that, right? And it's just like this constant thing about this table.

Come to the table. And it's all a picture of this here in Revelation 19. It's the marriage supper. This is the party to end all parties.

The feasts to end all feasts. all the way through the Bible, God is described as a bridegroom. Isaiah 62, for as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you.

And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. Isn't that incredible? That the way that God relates to us is as a bride, he rejoices as a bridegroom, he rejoices over us.

I know some of you guys are short circuiting right now, it's like bride, I ain't a bride. How does that work? Well, Galatians says we're all sons, so ladies, you've got to get over that, and guys, you've got to get over the fact that you're a bride, so I'll leave that nugget with you as well.

[37 : 00] Just work on it, just deal with it. That's what we are. But look, Ezekiel 16, Jeremiah 2, Isaiah 2, all those places, God reveals himself to be the bridegroom of his people.

Not just a king over citizens, not just a shepherd over sheep, not just a master over servants, but as a bridegroom over a bride. And in Matthew 9, there's this crazy section in Matthew 9, runs into Matthew 10, where the scribes and Pharisees are basically trying to catch Jesus out.

And they say to Jesus, hey, Jesus, your disciples don't do it right. Right? They don't fast like our disciples fast.

They don't have the rituals like our rituals are. And Jesus' response was this. He said this. Imagine this as a response, right? He just says, how can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he was with them?

The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, then they will fast. It's a crazy statement, but what it means is that there is one day coming when Jesus is coming back and that's the time to pig out.

[38 : 25] Right? That's the time to have the party. It's going to be a glorious time. I wonder if this is the reason that the first recorded miracle of Jesus in the Bible is at a wedding feast.

John chapter 2. That's an even more bizarre story, isn't it? When he was there with his mom, which I've got issues about, but still, he was there with his mom at a party and they ran out of wine and so Mary turns to Jesus and says, we have no wine.

And Jesus says to Mary, I'm not ready to die yet. Which is basically how the dialogue goes.

The Talmud teaches, which is part of the Jewish law, that there is no joy without wine. Now, it's not like an invitation just to go and stock up on bottles this afternoon.

The point is that they said that wine gladdens the heart of humanity. And the whole context for that in John chapter 2, you run out of wine, you run out of joy.

[39 : 37] At a marriage feast, you should be joyful. That's what Jesus was saying in Matthew 9. When the bridegroom is there, it's a big party, everybody's happy. It seems a strange response for Jesus to say, woman, what does this have to do with me?

I'm not ready to die yet. My hour has not yet come. It seems a strange response, but it was enough of a response for Mary to turn to the servants and say, whatever he tells you, you need to do it.

Because there's something going down. Like, I've hung out with Jesus a long time. He does say strange things. This is one of them, but he says strange things for a reason.

He's saying you're right. There is no joy at a wedding without wine. And if my bride is going to have joy, I'm going to have to die.

That's what he's saying. And later on in the gospel, this turns out to be true, doesn't it? Because there is Jesus in a room having another feast, interestingly, the night he was betrayed, what did he choose to do?

[40 : 52] Eat with his disciples, even eat with his betrayer. And he takes a cup of wine and he says, this cup is my blood.

Later that evening, he went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and he says, if this cup can pass from me. Jesus knew for there to be joy at the feast, he would have to drink the punishment of our immorality, of our loving someone more than loving God.

That's the solution. How do we get to a place where God has had victory over the world chaos system that it is? by the blood of Jesus, by him going to the cross for us and drinking of that cup so that we might have joy.

Now let's finish by looking at the bride and what we can be. Verse 7, at the end of verse 7, and his bride was made herself ready. Verse 8, it was granted her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Okay, question, who is the bride? Now, people do really get upset about this. I don't think we need to get upset about this theologically because this is the, and the problem why people get upset about this is because this is the only time in the New Testament where the Greek word is translated as bride.

[42 : 36] Let me just put that in context because that's not necessarily a problem, but it might be in this instance. So let me put it in context for you. The Greek word that's used there for bride appears 214 times in the New Testament.

You're welcome. This is the only time it's translated bride. So you have to consider why, don't you? Like 213 times in the New Testament is translated as other words.

Predominantly, actually 130 times is just a generic term for woman. All right? And 83 times is the word for wife. Once here is the word for bride.

So this is the only time it's translated bride and it's got that definitive article. attached to it. So it's the bride, which also is pretty unusual. Right? Because, well, men, you don't walk around going, that is the, well, maybe you do, that is the wife.

Maybe you do, I don't know. You might get in trouble if you say that. You might not. It has a definitive article attached to it. So for me, look, clearly the context is about a wedding that hasn't taken place yet.

- [43 : 55] And in ancient cultures, it's a lot different from how we would, like in our Western culture, have a wedding feast, right? We normally show up to a wedding, and then there's a ceremony, and then there's like everybody's happy, and everybody goes back to some hotel or whatever, and they eat, and then there's a party in the evening, and then that's it.
- Is that pretty much right? In ancient cultures, and certainly kind of Middle Eastern cultures, that doesn't happen, okay? Feasts last for seven to 21 days.
- Let's go, yeah, right? Okay, so that's a lot of eating, right? And that's a lot of happiness for one room, okay? So feasts were days, sometimes even weeks long, and they span both the time before the wedding, and after the wedding.
- For the most part, the bride and the groom aren't even around. It's just the parents throwing a party, right? So that's kind of the context of John chapter 14, which you can look at, but the context says it's a bride waiting to become a wife.
- So it's totally valid for it to be interpreted bride, in this instance. And then in Revelation 21, after the wedding, just check this out, verse 9, then came one of the seven angels who had seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and you're thinking, I thought we got rid of those guys.
- [45 : 33] I thought we were past all of that. And we are, it's just a description of those. John is saying, oh, remember that guy? He comes back, and he says, come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.
- The bride and the wife are the same thing, okay? So it's clear that the bride, at that point, becomes the wife of Jesus. Without problem in my mind, it is the church in the New Testament that is Christ's bride.
- Ephesians 5, 32. That's why Paul refers to the church as the bride of Christ, both in Ephesians 5 and in 2 Corinthians 11. Even stronger support is found in Revelation itself.
- Revelation 3, verse 20, Jesus says, behold, he's talking to the church, behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice, opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. He's talking about the marriage supper.
- So I think that the bride is the church, it's you and I, but more importantly, it's a picture of intimacy and belonging. That's the point. We're not to get hung up on the picture. This is about intimacy and belonging.
- [46 : 46] And notice that John sees the bride as she has made herself ready. Made herself ready. 2 Corinthians chapter 7 says this, since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.
- That's like a scary verse, isn't it? Right? Since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement, corruption, spoiling, sin, of body and spirit, bringing holiness and completion to the fear of God.
- 1 John chapter 3, John wrote that and he wrote Revelation, says this, everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. So we as the church, as the bride of Christ, as Christians, have a responsibility to make ourselves ready.
- to make ourselves ready for this day. Well, how do we do that? Well, again, I think the answer is in our text in verse 8.
- It says that it was granted her, and notice how that is phrased, it was granted her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and pure.
- [48 : 18] Full of fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. So we don't have to figure out what the fine linen, bright and pure is. We're told it's righteousness, it's Christlikeness, godliness.

It was granted her is known as a divine passive. So it's something that God does as we do the work. Right? So it's something that God does as we do.

There is, the idea that we can sit back and God is just going to do a work irrespective of what we do is found nowhere in the New Testament.

Like in terms of sanctification it's becoming like Christlike. It's not like we just go to sleep and we wake up the next day more Christlike. Right? The idea is that it is something that God does in us as we do the work.

It's talking about the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, his work in you to not only bring about righteous deeds through faith, but when we do those righteous deeds that are done in faith, they in turn produce righteousness.

[49 : 37] Greed turns to generosity. Lust gives way to contented joy. Laziness is turned into zeal.

Anger becomes patient longing. Envy is replaced by satisfied happiness. We all want the second part of those sentences to be true about our own lives, don't we?

That's the Holy Spirit's work in us. but we must meet the Lord at the crossroads. We have to meet him where he said those blessings are found.

And the angel said to me, verse 9, let's wrap this up. He didn't say that. I'm saying let's wrap. You know what I mean. The angel said to me, he probably is actually, he's probably like Lawrence and that's gone on far enough.

The angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Like it is a blessing of God to be one of his.

[50 : 59] Isn't it? You ever thought about that? When was the last time you just sat down and went, you know what? It is good to be God. It is good to have a God who loves me.

And he said to me, these are the true words of God. God and I fell down at his feet to worship him.

Whoever John saw figured what the heck he probably should be worshipped. But he said, don't do that.

I'm just a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. And that's the answer, isn't it?

That's our call. To worship God. To follow God. To love God. To obey God. To walk with God. Let's ask God to help us do that.

[52 : 17] Father, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you that you have provided a way for us not just to be loved by you, but to love you back.

Thank you that you love us so much that you died for our infidelity. You died for our spiritual immorality so that we could not drink the cup of wrath, but a cup of joy.

So this morning, Lord, we ask that you would help us to be the bride that you have won, to be the bride that you are expecting when you reach the altar.

Lord, we pray, Lord, that you wouldn't be disappointed. Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would be by your grace everything that you do expect. And help us today by your spirit.

Lord, not to just agree, take notes, tick things off. Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would learn to love you.

[53 : 48] We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.