

XV. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

*What Does the Bible Say?*

“Passover to Lord’s Supper to Marriage Supper of the Lamb”

Revelation 19

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May 24, 2015 – Evening Sermon

Let’s start by looking at Revelation 19 where we’re introduced to a coming event that where we sit at the Lord’s Supper is anticipating. Revelation 19:1–10 says [1] *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, [2] for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”*

[3] *Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”*

[4] *And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” [5] And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”*

[6] *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] 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; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

[9] *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.” [10] 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 to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

As we come to the Lord’s Supper I want to set this in context for us. We are in a ministry theme called Thy Word is Truth for this whole year. The evening studies are a series titled, What Does the Bible Say; Timeless Truth about Timely Topics. Our first studies have covered what the Bible says about the end times. We’re on the fifteenth one in this study covering the marriage supper which the Lord’s Supper is connected and pointed to. After this I will look at what the Bible says about the relationship of Israel and the church, after my return from there and that will conclude our study of the end times.

As we come to the Lord’s Supper anticipating the marriage supper I want you to think backwards to the Passover Supper. I want to draw a line with these three as to how they exist and why they exist and what they are pointing to. Then I want to set the marriage supper in its context somewhat and what is being declared in that marriage supper text. When I was growing up the Old Testament was presented as these wonderful Bible stories and then the New Testament has the Gospel. What I didn’t

realize was that the Bible is actually a book of two covenants. One is the covenant of works that is established with Adam and when Adam sinned I was there with him, all of humanity was there with him. When he freely sinned, we freely sinned. Therefore we are born sinners with a sin nature because of Adam's sin. He violated the covenant of creation or the covenant of works.

Adam is told to do three things. He is to subdue the earth, be fruitful and multiply and he is to have dominion over the creation. He is God's appointed vice regent. The fourth command he was to do was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Upon your obedience you can have the tree of life but we are fully aware that Adam disobeyed in full complicity with his wife. When he sinned we sinned. He then spiritually died in his sin and ultimately physically died because the wages of sin is death. That sin brought three deaths into this world. That is one of the problems Christians have when they try to marry macro Darwinian evolution into Christianity because the fact is one of the tenants in Darwinian evolution is the development of species to species and it can only happen through the violence of death. Then through the violence of death would come this so called progress which in reality the Bible tells us death is not something that brings progress but it brings dissolution and disappointment. Death is not part of the creation but part of the fall that when Adam sinned death is introduced into humanity. Because Adam violated that covenant of works, now all of humanity stands under judgment.

Our God is gracious and He gave a second covenant. That is the covenant of grace and that is with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The first Adam is one who sinned and all are born under the curse of sin and the last Adam is the Alpha and the Omega. This second Adam comes into the world and is given His race, the elect of God. He comes into this world to accomplish their redemption. He does so by providing a salvation that is worthy of all humanity but that effectively redeems the people that God has given to Him. Jesus says "Father, all whom You have given Me, I lose not one but will raise them up on the last day." This Adam comes and establishes a covenant of grace. It is not a covenant of works because there is no works. It is a covenant of grace because God came to do the work for us.

Periodically I do things on twitter just to see how much discussion I can get going. One day recently I put in "Praise the Lord for salvation by works" and then that usually gets people's attention. I actually am saved by works for I'm saved by the work of the Father who gave His Son and the work of Son took my place and then the work of the Holy Spirit who brought me from death unto life. The great thing is, is that it is not my work but His work that has accomplished my redemption. It is not an act of God's unconditional love but it is an act of God's unmerited love where He gave His Son to meet the conditions for us. With His death He takes away our sins and with His righteousness He provides for us our acceptance into the new heavens and the new earth.

That covenant of grace comes to us beginning in Genesis 3, after the fall. That covenant of grace is promised to us as God says to Eve, "I will bring a Seed through the woman and he shall bruise the head of the serpent while he is bruised on his heel." He will deal the lethal blow to sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave but it will cost Him for He will be bruised. It will be a lethal blow upon Him because He will die, go to the grave and be raised again. This promise of the covenant of grace goes from Genesis 3 all the way to Revelation 22.

That is how you look at your Bible. Your Bible is not the Old Testament as a collection of Bible stories and then we get to the message of grace in the New Testament. Your Bible, beginning in Genesis 3:15 all the way through Revelation 22, is the progressive unfolding of the covenant of grace through a series of covenants. First is a renewed covenant with Adam with a promise of the evangel, the Gospel. Then there is a covenant with Noah, then Abraham, then Moses, then David, and then the renewal of the Palestinian covenant as the people are brought back to the land. Then God is covenantally silent for 400 years. Then those covenants that are like stair steps as God is unfolding His covenant of redemption, now brings us to the new covenant in Jesus Christ which is the fulfillment of all the types and promises. It is the fulfillment of the old covenant where everything is yes and amen in Him. Then the new covenant is explained to us in the New Testament.

You also see this in such things as the covenant meals. In that old covenant we are given a meal where God's people sit down with one another and with the Lord. As they sit down at this meal they do three things. They remember that the Lord brought them out of Egypt and set them free. They repent and call them to clean out the leaven of sin. Then they are renewed as they rise up and take their staff to follow the Lord. They are covenantally renewed in the Lord. One of the central pieces of this is the slaying of a Passover lamb. Every time it is slain they are reminded they need a Lamb of God and from God. The way God will accomplish that is that God Himself will be the Lamb, Christ Jesus the Son of God.

God has given two signs of this covenant that has unfolded in the Old Testament through this series of covenants. One is circumcision which sheds blood declaring there is no hope in generation for we need regeneration, a sacrifice. It is a symbolic sacrifice in loss of life which is the shedding of blood. It is pointing to the need of a Redeemer. Then there is the Passover lamb in the covenant meal which is also pointing to the need of a Redeemer. Our people were brought into that covenant through the sign of circumcision and initiated into the covenant which was saying we need a Redeemer. Then comes the Passover meal whereby they are continually reminded that they are utterly dependent upon God's saving grace in their life to set them free, not simply from the bondage of Egypt but from the bondage of sin.

Then comes Christ for Christ is our fulfillment. He is the One for our circumcision. Here is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. As He goes to the cross to accomplish our redemption the new covenant is established and a new covenant meal is given. This is what we've come to celebrate tonight, the Lord's Supper. This is the celebration, not of a Passover lamb anticipating the Lamb of God, but now we remember the Lamb, the body and blood. It is the body where He bore our sins and the blood He shed to pay for our sins. We remember Him and examine ourselves to clean out the leaven of sin in our life. Once you remember Jesus as your Redeemer you're free to be honest with your sins. You don't cover them up anymore because it's not you and your obedience that is getting you to heaven. Your obedience is honoring the One who came from heaven. Being free to confess your sins leads to renewal and this is similar to the old covenant of repent and renew.

So is the new covenant meal – remember, repent and renew, except there is no blood at this Table. No lamb is slain but a meal that doesn't anticipate and point to the coming of the Lamb for it's a meal that points back. For the Lamb has come and is now

standing risen as if slain. In other words, He bears the marks of our redemption but He is standing victorious. So we remember Him with this meal until He comes again. Then we'll be with Him for another meal and that's at the consummation. So we go from a Passover supper saying we need a lamb to the Lord's Supper that celebrates the Lamb of God who has redeemed us.

Now to the day we will be joined to the Lamb and I love the way the Bible mixes up metaphors. It's the worst thing to do in preaching but the Bible does it regularly because the Lamb is also the Bridegroom. We who have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb will go to be with the Lamb at the marriage supper of the Lamb to be joined to our Bridegroom, Christ Jesus the Lord.

I want you to see this flow that is the unity of the Scriptures. I get so excited when I read this that I can't sleep at night and I know that God must have written all this. Here is the Lord's Supper that anticipates the marriage supper to come yet both the Passover and the Lord's Supper lead us to the anticipation of the consummation where we will be with the Lamb, His bride and the Bridegroom now consummated. We will no longer be betrothed to the Lamb, Christ our Bridegroom but to the final consummation.

That is one of the reasons I fight so hard for marriage in our culture. I love to speak for marriage because the number one reason that marriage is here is not for human flourishing. It is not here to take care of human loneliness and not even for procreation. Those are all reasons for marriage but the number one reason the Bible reveals for the presence of the institution of marriage is for God to put in place a covenant relationship that will tell the world of His relationship with His people. It is that we are married to the Lord. What is marriage? A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one.

What is our covenant of intimacy? It is with Christ who left His Father and went to the cross to pay for His bride. Here is the real dowry. He pays the ransom for His bride. He doesn't pay it to Satan or the world. He pays it to the Father whom He has left. I have paid for her sins and then He brings us to Himself. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. What we have by faith on that Day we will have by sight. There is the marriage supper.

This gets very interesting when you understand the whole dynamic in the Hebrew world and life view. If we were living back then and I could somehow prevail upon Cindy to marry me again here are the three steps we would have gone through. One is the formal betrothal which would begin with a promise to each other as the man leaves his father and mother and the parents of bride hear it and receive the dowry that declares his commitment. Then would be an interval of time in which the fidelity of your promises to each other would be demonstrated. Here a Hebrew man would not even have to have military time for he would be fully devoted to his commitment and demonstrating it. She would also be demonstrating her purity from the betrothal through the interval of time until the ceremony. Then once the ceremony was through there is the consummation whereby the two become one.

Betrothal is legal and means you're married. People think this is like our engagement but really it's more than our engagement. Betrothal is a legal commitment to each other in which a dowry is paid and an interval of demonstrated faithfulness takes place. Then comes the ceremony and many times the marriage supper could last anywhere from two to seven days. Then would come the consummation. When we do

ceremonies we don't really marry anyone we just set up the covenant. That's why you hear me say at the end "Upon the consummation of this union before God I pronounce you man and wife." Legally it's all done but now comes the sacrament of the covenant of marriage. I didn't say marriage is a sacrament. The marriage bed is the sacrament that signs and seals the covenant of marriage. So we have set up the marriage bed with the covenant and now it's consummated.

Do you see what has happened as you come to this Table? The Passover said we need a lamb so the Son was sent and He left His Father and became the Lamb of God who died for our sins. The One to whom we are betrothed, at the cross, paid for our ransom and now what is happening? From His ascension to His coming again we are in the interval where the faithfulness of Christ and His people are being demonstrated. It is not our faithfulness that saves us. It is our faithfulness that demonstrates our God given desire to be faithful to the One who ever lives to hold us to Himself. Then He comes again. When He comes again we are received to the ceremony and the consummation of eternity and nothing can separate us from our Bridegroom because He has paid the price as the Lamb.

Thus what is that marriage supper? It is the marriage supper of the Lamb. As you think about what I've said I want to walk you through the text in Revelation 19. In the interval time of our betrothal to Him and before He returns what is happening? Two things are happening. One is that the Lord is working in us so that we are increasingly demonstrating our faithfulness to Him who is ever faithful to us. And our Lord is destroying the whore/prostitute of Babylon, while this prostitute of Babylon brings persecution on His bride but He is using this persecution in order to mature us and to demonstrate His grace at work within us as we not only have a legal righteousness but a growing personal righteousness in the pursuit of being faithful to our God. That is why He uses very interesting language here. So let's look back at Revelation 19.

Revelation 18 is His defeat of the prostitute of Babylon. Now we look up into heaven. Revelation 19:1-5 says *[1] After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! (They are worshipping in heaven because He has destroyed the prostitute of Babylon) Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, [2] for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."* (The prostitute would assault the bride but at the end of the age Christ has avenged on her the blood of His servants.)

*[3] Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her (the prostitute of Babylon) goes up forever and ever."*

*[4] And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" [5] And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."*

The expectation is that God's people have something operating of which is praiseworthy and that is the fear of the Lord. Do our ministries rightly teach the fear of the Lord or in our effort to preach grace have we made God so small that grace is meaningless? It is this glorious God whom we stand in awe of who has come descended to save us. He is no small God. He is a majestic God. So we give to Him reverence and

respect. All His people, small and great, the newest Christian to the oldest Christian, because of the love of Christ now have a fear of the Lord whereby we honor Him.

Revelation 19:6–7 says [6] *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, (now we have come to the consummation) and his Bride has made herself ready.* This does not say the Bride has made herself worthy. It is only the Groom that makes the Bride worthy but because the Groom has made her worthy, she has sought to make herself ready to meet her Groom. She knows she is only the Bride because the Bridegroom paid the price. She wants to come adorned not only with the redeeming grace of God but the transforming grace of God. Now here's the key phrase.

Revelation 19:8 says [8] *it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* Again it is looking to the progress of sanctification in the life of the Bride. This is not the formal wedding dress for the Bridegroom has purchased that. I want to show you this in Isaiah 61. Clearly, the Bride has a perfect dress that has been given to her by the Bridegroom.

Isaiah 61:10 says [10] *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* So it's not an either or, it's both and. Christ has provided as the Bridegroom the wedding clothes that make the Bride acceptable but the Bride based upon that grace that has granted the Bride clothes, now adorns herself by grace to present herself to her Groom.

What is the fine linen? It is the righteous deeds of the saints. That does not get us saved. It is the righteousness of Christ and the atoning blood of Christ that saves us but the same grace that gives us a right standing with the clothing Christ has provided, resting in what He has provided at the cross, but having made ourselves ready to meet Him by confessing our sins, killing our sins and pursuing obedience, not to be saved but because we want to prepare to meet our Savior. We want to mirror His faithfulness to us. Any and all obedience of believers never gets us heaven, for only Christ's obedience gets us to heaven but on the way to heaven we're seeking to adorn ourselves so that we might present to Him these righteous deeds that His grace has granted us the ability to do for our Savior.

So you are going to that supper but this Lord's Supper has been provided for you to identify the spots on the garments, confess our sins, trust in His blood that cleanses us and His righteousness that clothes us and then to consecrate ourselves that we might grow, not for grace but in the grace and knowledge of Christ and prepare ourselves to meet our Bridegroom. At that supper you're there amazingly because He invited you. You didn't invite yourself. The same grace that makes you ready, gives you the ability to make yourself ready and provided a spotless garment for you is the same grace that started it by inviting you from death unto life.

When did our Bridegroom do this that we're going to meet Him? He did it at the cross. Now come to the meal that brings you back to the cross and remember the price that was paid by our Bridegroom as He becomes the Lamb. Refreshed and renewed let's

consecrate ourselves afresh and anew to meet Him at the supper for the consummation to be with Him for all eternity. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word to prepare to come to this Your Supper that You have provided to anticipate the Supper that we will sit at with You in all eternity with all the saints both great and small. Father, we would never depend upon our obedience for a seat at that Table but neither would we come to that Table without rejoicing in the grace that makes us ready and then using that grace to prepare ourselves to meet our Savior, the Lamb of God, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Lord, we look forward to that Day. Now thank You for this provision in this day that we can remember the price that has been paid and we can recommit ourselves to confessing our sin, killing sin that we might pursue Your glory instead of falling short of glory. We might embrace Your glory and that is our joy, the glory of our God. May our garments reflect that glory on the way to the marriage supper for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.