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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation is divided into three simple parts. Jesus said to John, “Write the things which you have seen.” That was the vision of John in chapter 1. “Write the things which are.” That was the letters to the seven churches, because those churches are today as they were in the time of John. Then he said, “Write the things which shall be hereafter,” beginning in chapter 4 all the way to the end of the book. But from chapter 6-18, we focused on the time of terrible Tribulation where the wrath of God has been poured out upon the earth: The seven seals were broken, the seven trumpets were blown, and the seven bowls of wrath were poured out. When I come to chapter 19, I want to sigh with relief! From now to the end it gets good and the focus is no longer upon the judgement that takes place on earth. The focus from this point onward is what’s taking place in heaven where you and I are.

The title of the message tonight is, “A Marriage Made in Heaven.” You may be wondering what kind of marriage we are talking about. Is not an earthly marriage, it is indeed the original heavenly marriage.

Revelation 19:1-10. John says, “After this, I heard what sounded like a great multitude in heaven shouting: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries, He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’ And again they shouted: ‘Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.’

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: ‘Amen, Hallelujah!’ Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like the loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’ At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he [the angel] said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

I. THE WORSHIP IN HEAVEN

Notice three things about this “Marriage Made in Heaven.” First, consider the worship in heaven. This is a tremendous scene of worship in heaven. When you go to heaven, worshiping God is going to be our full time occupation. I wonder if some of you think as you see on some of the Hollywood movies that when you get up to heaven there is going to be a time of orientation

some kind of holding room. We hear jokes about meeting St. Peter at the pearly gates and there and having to be some kind of trial or orientation to get in, but the Bible says nothing about that. We have the idea that when we get to heaven we may spend a couple of years in “Worship 101” and “Worship 102.” Right now, here on earth, is when we are preparing ourselves to worship God in heaven for all eternity. What makes you think if you don’t worship him now that suddenly you’ll be transformed and you’ll worship him there? We need to worship the Lord right here so we’ll be ready to worship him there.

(1) Praise for God’s salvation

How are they worshipping? They are giving praise for two characteristics of God mentioned in verses 1-3. First, they are praising God for his salvation. There is a great chorus in heaven that says, “Hallelujah!” This is the *real* “Hallelujah Chorus.” George Frederic Handel composed the entire “Messiah” in only 21 days. Most of us have never heard the entire Messiah because it is a massive composition. We usually hear the Christmas section of it or certain movements. It was really an inspiration from God for George Frederic Handel to write “The Messiah” in 21 days. He hardly ate, he scarcely slept, he composed non-stop during that time as God, the Holy Spirit, seemed to pour this beautiful composition through him. It was performed for the first time on March 23, 1743, in the presence of the King of England and the famous Hallelujah Chorus was sung at the climax. The King was seated during the whole first part of it, but when it came to the climax of it and it said, “For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth” the King of England was so moved by those words that came right out of this passage of scripture that the King stood to his feet and when the King stands to his feet, everybody else stands to their feet—and that is why to this day when the Hallelujah Chorus is sung, people stand to their feet. It is not in honor of George Frederic Handel; it’s not in honor of the King of England; it is in honor of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As moving and as stirring as the Hallelujah Chorus is on earth, can you imagine what it is going to be in heaven when the real King of Kings and Lord of Lords is the one who is receiving this praise? We are praising God for salvation. “Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul!” and that day you will get to tell him personally.

(2) Praise for God’s supremacy

Another thing we are praising him for is his supremacy. It says in verse 2, “For true and just are his judgements. He has condemned the great prostitute.” The great prostitute is the Babylonian system, the world system we have been talking about. This is saying in the end, God wins! A lot of people have a faulty theology, what I call the “Star Wars” theology. In the “Star Wars” movie, there was the good side of “the Force” and there was the dark side of “the Force.” These two sides of “the Force” are fighting each other and it really was a question about who was going to win in the end. Finally, the good side of “the Force” barely wins. Some of us have the idea there is some kind of a cosmic struggle going on between God and Satan and it’s a real close match! It’s tied with two minutes left and what’s going to happen? It’s nothing like that. It’s not even close. It doesn’t go into double overtime. Jesus skunked the devil on Calvary. He won—it wasn’t even close. It’s not even a question of how close Satan ever came to winning. All throughout the Bible God’s word promised that God would be victorious in the end. You can go all the way back to Genesis, chapter 3 where God predicted it would happen. “Eve, your seed,” which was a prophecy of Jesus “is going to crush the head of the serpent.” There are a lot of people today who

go around moaning about the devil. But you don't need to fear the devil. He is *like* a roaring lion but ever since Calvary he has been a toothless, clawless lion and all he has left is his roar—he cannot harm you or hurt you. In the end we win.

When I was a kid, I used to read the Hardy Boys books. My mother would tell me to go to bed and turn out the light. But Joe and Frank Hardy would be tied down to some conveyor belt with a buzzsaw about to kill them and I would think, “I can't stop now!” So I would flip to the last page and there on the last page it would say something like, “Joe and Frank Hardy sat down to a nice dinner with their family.” I didn't know how it was going to happen, but I could close the book confident that in the end everything was going to be okay. Regardless of all the trials and struggles you go through, you ought to look on the last page of this book and realize God has won. From the beginning there never was a question about it. That's why there is worship in heaven.

II. THE WORSHIPERS IN HEAVEN

Number two, who are those worshiping in this scene? Look at verses 4-6. There are two groups; one is the 24 elders. Do you remember I told you that I believe and Billy Graham and others believe the 24 elders represent us? They represent all the Old Testament saints, all the New Testament saints, all the redeemed of all of the ages gathered around the throne. And these four living creatures the other group we believe these to be the cherubim who constantly surround the throne of God constantly obeying his beck and call and worshiping him for all eternity.

(1) Hallelujah!

Notice there are two words we are going to be using. Practice these words, because I promise you, this is literal practice for heaven. The two words that stand out in verse 4 are the words “Hallelujah” and “Amen.” They are two words that are the same in every language on earth. “Hallelujah” appears 24 times in the Old Testament and 4 times in the New Testament and you can count the New Testament instances right here! Because Revelation 19 is the only place in the New Testament they occur, in verses 1, 3, 4 and 6. “Hallelujah” comes from two Hebrew words with a particle in between. *Halal* is Hebrew for “praise.” *Lu* is a particle meaning “to” or “directed toward.” *Yah* is the syllable used to name God, as in Yahweh. *Halal-lu-yah*, praise to the Lord.

(2) Amen!

Then we are going to say, “Amen.” The word “amen” is a little different. It appears in the form of “amen” 64 times in the Bible but it is translated as another word many times in your New Testament. In the King James Version, every time you read where Jesus or anybody else said, “verily, verily” it is saying “amen, amen.” The New International Version doesn't translate it “amen, amen” either, it says something like “the truth I say unto you.” That's what the word “amen” means. The word “amen” means “that's right! I agree. That is true.” That's why when a preacher says something you think is true you ought to say AMEN. Saying “amen” while someone is preaching is like saying, “Sic 'em!” to a dog! It is like pouring gasoline on a fire. If you don't like me, just say “amen” a lot and I'll preach myself to death real soon and you won't

have to worry about me. But if you agree with it, you ought to do what the Bible says and say AMEN! It is translated 160 times and additionally translated as the word “verily” or “truth” so more than 200 times in the Bible we find that word, “amen.” Is it pronounced ah-men or ay-men? We have sung it ah-men, because it sounds better but it is the Greek letter *eta*, which is always “ay” in sound so it’s always correctly pronounced “ay-men” in the Bible. So if you like that you say, “ay-men” every now and then.

There were two Christians on a ship and they were from foreign countries. They discovered each was a Christian, because each one had a Bible in his own language, but they could not communicate with each other speaking either one of their languages. So one of them said, “Hallelujah,” and the other one said, “Amen.” They could talk to each other because in every language Hallelujah and Amen is the same thing. Are you ready to practice for heaven? I’m going to let this side of the congregation say, “Hallelujah” and I want this other side to say, “Amen.” Are you ready? Hallelujah! Amen! Hallelujah! Amen! Hallelujah! Amen! That’s practicing for heaven. Get ready, because the Bible says we’re going to gather around the throne and we’re going to sing Hallelujah to the Lamb!

As I was preparing for this message I wondered, “What must be the loudest offering of praise or the loudest music or the loudest sound man has ever created in terms of music?” I’m not talking about with amplifiers or Woodstock—I’m not talking about unamplified music. I began to study a bit and came across something from an old preacher named Dr. Dewitt Talmadge, who was a pastor in Boston after the Civil War. I never thought about this being from the South, but after the Civil War the South didn’t have too much to celebrate but up North they really celebrated because they won the war. In 1869 there was something in Boston called “The Peace Jubilee.” The nation was a Christian nation then, even much more so than it is today. So Christians from all over the North gathered in Boston for this “Peace Jubilee” in 1869. Dr. Talmadge writes there was a 10,000-voice choir, a 1,000-piece orchestra, which included seventy anvils for something called, “The Anvil Anthem.” They had all these anthems and even had the percussion section somehow connected to artillery and the artillery would fire in time with the music. One soloist was Madame Parepa Rosa (keep in mind this was totally unamplified) Talmadge says the music was unequaled on earth when in during “The Star Spangled Banner” Madame Rosa sang the high C with the fortissimo accompaniment of the full orchestra and chorus and with all the bells, cannons and anvils. Her note was so loud and clear it seemed to bury all the accompaniment. He wrote, “I am an old man now, but I am looking forward to the music of heaven where there will be music infinitely superior to the marvelous chorus I heard that day.” I’ll tell you what that must have been some singer for a single voice to be heard above a 10,000-voice chorus and a 1,000-instrument orchestra with no amplification. But that is *nothing* compared to the worship that is going to take place in heaven as we gather around the throne.

It says in verse 6 Verse, “It sounded like a great multitude like the roar of rushing waters.” It was like 100 Niagara Falls it was so loud, “like loud peals of thunder” as this multitude is shouting, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.” I can hardly wait how about you? AMEN!

III. THE WEDDING IN HEAVEN

Let’s talk about the wedding in heaven, because the whole purpose of all this worship and celebration is the celebration about a wedding. Verse 7 says, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”

There’s going to be a marriage made in heaven and a wedding in heaven—and you and I are going to be there. In fact you and I are going to be *part* of the wedding. I love weddings. I’ve always enjoyed performing them. Even when I do a wedding in here, I am standing right here and the groom is standing to my there with his hair slicked back so far he can’t even close his eyes. He is so excited, and when those back doors open and the organist begins to play the wedding march, every head in here turns to look, because the focus of the wedding is the bride. But I still look at the groom, because I want to see how he reacts as he looks up that aisle and sees his bride walking down. Do you know what’s going to be different about this wedding in heaven? In heaven, the focus is not going to be on the bride—the focus is going to be on the *bridegroom*—Jesus! He, himself, said he was the bridegroom. In Matthew 9:15, Jesus is asked, “Why don’t you and your disciples fast?” He said, “Well while the bridegroom is here, there won’t be any fasting but after the bridegroom is gone,” (he’s the bridegroom) “then they will fast.”

(1) The bride is the church

Notice that in this marriage the bride is the church. A lot of scripture talks about this, but look at 2 Corinthians 11:2. Paul is writing and says, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband,” [the word there literally means *I espoused*] “to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.” The church is the bride of Christ. That’s what it says in this passage of scripture. Revelation 19:7 says, “The bride has made herself ready.”

Let me explain a Jewish wedding. I wish I had time to preach on Matthew 25 today. It’s about the parable of the ten virgins who are part of this wedding celebration we are talking about here. “Five were wise and five were foolish.” There were three parts to a Jewish wedding celebration as opposed to the two parts we usually have in a western wedding. In western/American weddings, we generally have an engagement, then a marriage ceremony. However, marriages in the Middle East included another step that was very important and it was the engagement, but it was not done between the husband and his wife-to-be; it was usually done between the parents. The father of the bride and the father of the groom would get together and make a financial arrangement. The father of the groom would pay a dowry. He would give some money to the father of the bride so when the time came, his daughter could be the wife of his son. The second part, which we don’t have anything like it in our society, was the betrothal—when they were espoused. It’s not like being engaged; it was like Joseph and Mary were before Mary gave birth to Jesus. They are legally married and if either one of them goes off and has sex with somebody else, it’s adultery, because they are legally married. If they want to break the betrothal, they have to get a divorce just like they were married. The only difference is during this time of betrothal or the time they are espoused to each other, they do not live together and the marriage is not physically consummated. It is an “in-between time,” a time of anticipation, waiting. The bride has been paid for already. That’s the first step and then the bride has been betrothed.

The third part is the ceremony. Our marriage ceremonies here are so short and so sad by comparison, because to Jewish people when they had a marriage ceremony, it was a celebration.

After the betrothal, the groom usually went back to his father’s house to prepare a place for him and his bride to live in. Then, when it was ready, he came back to get his bride. It almost became a game between young Jewish people getting married. The groom really tried to sneak up on the bride and surprise her and get her when she wasn’t expecting it. So you know what the bride had to do? She just had to stay ready a lot of the time. You ladies may be thinking, “What a drag! You mean have makeup on all the time and hair fixed all the time and dressed up all the time?” That’s right! It also became a game among their friends, because the bride would get some of her best friends—like our attendants today—and they would help her. That’s who those maidens are in Matthew 25 were. Then the groom would get some of his friends to help him surprise the bride. The groom would try to come and get the bride when she wasn’t expecting it and all the groomsmen would come and shout, “Behold! The bridegroom comes!” Then he would come in and take his bride back to his father’s house and then the marriage celebration began. There was dancing, food, eating and then that night the marriage was physically consummated. What a time of celebration!

There’s a tremendous spiritual truth in that if you will dig below the surface to find it and here it is: From the foundation of the world, our heavenly Father paid the price for our souls with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. That’s what Paul says in Acts 20:28, “[Jesus] who bought the church with his own blood.” And you know what happened on Calvary. The price was paid and from the time of Calvary even through today, the church is the bride of Christ. We are betrothed to Christ. We are espoused to the Lord. That’s exactly what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2 “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I espoused you I have promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

The third stage is when the bridegroom sweeps in and takes his bride. That’s what Matthew 25 is all about. The Bible says when Jesus comes back there is going to be a shout of the archangel. I don’t know for sure what he is going to shout but don’t be a bit surprised if it is, “Behold! The bridegroom comes!” And that’s the rapture of the church. What has Jesus been doing all this time he has been ascended back into heaven? The same thing a groom does. He says, “In my father’s house are many mansions. I have gone to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, dear bride and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also!” Isn’t that beautiful? Right now we are the bride of Christ waiting for him to come.

But right now the bride is not ready. The bride is not in pure and spotless linen right now. Why? The church is not perfect. The church has faults and problems and he has to clean us up. So what’s going to be happening for the seven-year Tribulation on the earth? What’s going to be happening from the time between the church’s rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation until seven years later? Jesus is going to clean up the church. That’s the judgement seat of Christ. We read about that in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, where the Bible says our works will be judged and tried by fire for gold, silver and precious stones—all of that will be refined and cleaned up. He’ll be getting the bride ready.

Look at verse 8. Finally the bride has made herself ready. Those seven years of heavenly preparation as Jesus has purified his church his bride “Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear.” What is that? “The righteous acts of the saints.” We’re going to see a little bit later

that this is basically an outer garment. In the next two chapters, we'll see there is an inner garment of righteousness, which is the righteousness of Jesus. That is our true righteousness but this outer garment is our *practical* righteousness—those righteous acts we have committed for the Lord with the right motive and for the right reasons. That's the linen we are going to be wearing. The bride has made herself ready.

(2) The banquet is for celebration

Look at the banquet. The banquet is for celebration. The church, as I understand it, the New Testament Church—New Testament believers—will be the bride, but there will be other people invited to the wedding feast. In fact, Jesus said this about John the Baptist, that "he was a friend of the bridegroom." I don't believe Abraham will be a part of the bride, I don't think Jacob or Moses will be a part of the bride. I think they will be at the wedding feast as friends of the bridegroom and we are going to be there!

The amazing thing is at an American wedding the father of the bride comes down and presents the bride to the groom. There's going to be a little problem about that in heaven, because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are one and the same. Right? So doesn't that confuse things? No, because Ephesians 5:25 will make a little more sense to you, I hope! The Bible compares Jesus and the church to a husband and a wife. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself..." Wait a minute I thought the father presented the bride to the groom. Isn't this neat? Jesus is going to present the bride to himself! Because he IS God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. "and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Isn't that a beautiful picture? As I said, right now the church is not perfect. Right now the church as a bride has messy hair, no makeup, bruises on her face and tattered clothing. But by this time in Revelation 19, Jesus will present the church to himself as a beautiful, spotless bride without blemish and oh, what a time of celebration there is going to be! Verse 9 says, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper."

Amen! There's going to be food there! Right! You can't have supper without food. What's going to be on the menu? If you are invited to the White House, you're not going to ask them what's on the menu before you decide whether or not to go are you? I don't know what it is going to be, but I do believe there is going to be new wine there, because Jesus said to the disciples on that Last Supper, "I will not drink this fruit of the vine with you until I drink it new with you in the Kingdom." I think this time will be that time Jesus talked about when he sat down and he served them. What a wonderful celebration it is going to be!

CONCLUSION

C. S. Lewis talked about a dream of a vision of Hell he had. In his vision of Hell, people were seated at a banquet table. There were piles of food on it but he said in Hell their arms were tied to each other. And because everybody in Hell was so selfish, no one tried to feed the other person they all tried to feed themselves and consequently no one was eating. That was the eternity of frustration and selfishness C. S. Lewis dreamed about. Then he said he dreamed about Heaven.

In Heaven there was a banquet table, maybe the wedding supper of the Lamb—I don’t know, but he said the tables were filled with food and everyone had a long fork, really too long to feed themselves, but he said in Heaven it was so wonderful because everybody was using their fork to feed the person across the table! That’s basically the difference between those who are going to be in Heaven or in Hell: Those who are selfish and those who are unselfish.

As John sees this vision of this wedding in heaven he falls down at the feet of this angel and begins to worship the angel. The angel says, “Cut that out! Don’t worship me!” Verse 10 says, “Worship God!” Here is a key to the whole book of Revelation. He says, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” There are a lot of people who are really into prophecy; we call them “prophecy experts” or “prophecy nuts” or “prophecy buffs.” but this is a lesson we all ought to hear. If you get anything out of this prophecy except the preaching and testimony of Jesus Christ, you have missed the message of the whole Revelation!

This book is not the revelation of the future, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ and as you read this book if you don’t fall more in love with Jesus, you need to read it again because you have missed the whole point of it!

OUTLINE

I. THE WORSHIP IN HEAVEN (vs. 1-3)

"Hallelujah" appears only here in the New Testament

Praise for God's

(1) Salvation

(2) Supremacy

II. THE WORSHIPERS IN HEAVEN (vs. 4-6)

Two words that are the same in every language:

(1) Hallelujah! "Praise Jehovah"

(2) Amen! "Let it be so"

III. THE WEDDING IN HEAVEN (vs. 7-10)

Here the "groom" (Jesus) is the center of attention.

(1) The bride is the church. The white robe represents our positional righteousness (undergarment) and our practical righteousness (outer garment)

"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." *2 Corinthians 11:2*

(2) The banquet is for celebration