

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:1-10

Cathy and I had a terrible two years of dating before our engagement. I was in a period of spiritual rebellion. Cathy was not sure about marriage. We call it two years of “kicking each other in the shins”.

But we loved each other and by God’s grace in December 1983 we were engaged. Initially we thought it would be a twelve month engagement, but encouraged by the counsel of my father, we shortened it to four and a half. April 28th, 1984 we were wed. We then honeymooned on the central coast of California.

Dating, engagement, wedding and honeymoon are traditionally the four stages of our western wedding system. In Jesus’ day there were four stages as well in the Jewish wedding system: the arrangement, fetching, ceremony and feast. As the Bride of Christ, we will experience each of the four stages. In fact, we’ve already experienced the first stage – the arrangement. We’re looking forward to the second stage – the fetching. And then we’ll experience the third and fourth stages revealed in Revelation 19:6-10 - the ceremony and the feast. But before we get to this, verses one through five of Revelation 19 vibrate with heaven’s celebration at the fall of Babylon.

HEAVEN WILL REJOICE WHEN BABYLON FALLS (19:1-5)

Martyred Tribulation Saints Will Rejoice (19:1-3)

Revelation 19:1-5 (ESV)

¹ After ~~this~~ these things

After what things?

After the destruction of both *ecclesiastical* Babylon (one-world church) and *economic* Babylon (one-world economy) revealed in the two preceding chapters of Revelation 17-18.

I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

I believe this great multitude John heard will be the martyred Tribulation saints in heaven celebrating the destruction of Babylon by whose hand they were murdered. The Greek noun here translated *multitude* was used earlier in Revelation 7:9 to refer to the myriads of people who will be saved during the Tribulation.

Revelation 7:9 (ESV)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Over the course of the Tribulation, many of these dear people, including their children, will be murdered by *ecclesiastical* Babylon and by the False Prophet working through *economic* Babylon (Rev. 6:9-11; 13:15-18; 17:6). This is why they will be in heaven and not on earth at this point in the Tribulation. It is no wonder these saints will erupt with joy when they see Babylon finally destroyed.

Here is what they will cry out:

“Hallelujah!

Because of our songs, many of us are familiar with *hallelujah*, but may not know what it means. It is actually a transliteration¹ of two Hebrew words: *hallelu*, “to praise” and *yah*, a shortened form of God’s name, *Yahweh*. When we sing or say *hallelujah* we are calling out to one another to praise God and give Him glory!

In their joy and excitement, the multitude of saints will cry out, “Praise God!”. They will give God all the glory for destroying Babylon and declare Him just for doing so. Their praise continues in verse one:

¹ To write or print (a letter or word) using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language.

*Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
²for 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.”*

When they see the smoke of the city of Babylon rising to the heavens, they will have their justice; their blood will be avenged.

John heard them cry out a second time.

³ *Once more they cried out,*

“Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

Not only will the martyred Tribulation saints celebrate the end of Babylon; the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures will join in as well.

The Twenty Four Elders and Four Living Creatures Will Rejoice (19:4-5)

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.”

We can hear the high school football games from our house. Many times there will be an initial roar followed by a huge roar. That is what I envision John describing in verse 6. After celebrating Babylon's demise John heard an even greater roar from this same crowd as they celebrate another wonderful event.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY AND FEAST OF THE LAMB (19:6-10)

The Marriage Ceremony (19:6-8)

Revelation 19:6–10 (ESV)

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.*

What will these Tribulation saints be celebrating?

The marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) to His bride (the Church).

I stated earlier my opinion that the great multitude is made up of martyred Tribulation saints and verses 7 & 8 are the main reason why. When this great multitude speaks of the Bride they are not speaking of themselves, but of an entity separate from themselves.

In order to fully understand the the relationship between Jesus and the Church it is helpful to understand the four stages of the Jewish marriage system all four of which pertain to our relationship with Jesus. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains:

In the first stage, the father of the groom makes the arrangement for the bride and pays the bride price. This first stage might happen before the children are born, when they are very young or perhaps even a few short weeks prior to the marriage. But a long period of time could transpire between the first and second stages. Often the bride and groom did not see each other until their wedding day....

Eventually came the second stage known as the fetching of the bride. In this second stage, the groom would come to the home of the bride in order to fetch her and bring her to his home. This was often done in accompaniment with a wedding procession.

Next came the third stage, which was the marriage ceremony to which only a few would be invited.

Finally came the fourth stage, the marriage supper or feast, which would last for as long as seven days.²

We are the Church, the Bride of Christ and all four stages apply to our relationship with Him.

The first stage, the Father's arrangement, has already been complete. The Father determined that the Church would be the Bride of His Son. The bride price was the blood of the Lord Jesus. Ephesians 5:22-32 reveals that human marriage is a reflection of Christ's relationship to the Church.

Ephesians 5:22–33 (ESV)

²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶ *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* ²⁸ *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,* ³⁰ *because we are members of his body.* ³¹ *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* ³² *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* ³³ *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

We need to understand that the Church has a unique relationship to Jesus that is distinct from the relationship of the Old Testament saints, the nation of Israel and the Tribulation saints to Christ. None of these are the Bride of Christ. Only the Church is the Bride of Christ. The Church includes all born again believers in Jesus from Pentecost 33 A.D. to the moment of the Rapture. The Church and the Church only is the Bride of Christ. Old Testament saints such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not the Church. Moses and the nation of Israel are not the Church. Those saved after the Rapture and during the Tribulation are not the Church. Unfortunately many seminaries, Bible colleges and churches include all these as part of the Church and fail to observe the distinctions the Bible makes between these different groups. The Church and the Church only is the Bride of Christ and stage one of our marriage to the Lamb has been completed. We are waiting for stage two – the fetching of the Bride.

How will the fetching of the Bride be accomplished?

The *Rapture* of the Church is the fetching of the Bride!

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (ESV)

¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.* ¹⁴ *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁵ *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* ¹⁸ *Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

The *Rapture* further proves the unique relationship between the Church and Christ. Who will be resurrected / translated and caught up to meet Christ? Only those who have died “in Christ”. To whom does that refer? It refers to believers in Christ from Pentecost 33 A.D. to the moment of the *Rapture*. Neither Old Testament saints nor the nation of Israel will be resurrected at the *Rapture*. God made it clear to Daniel that Old Testament saints will be resurrected after the Tribulation, before the Millennial

² Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Wife of Jehovah and the Bride of Messiah*, Messianic Bible Study 015, Ariel Ministries.

Kingdom (Daniel 12). Obviously Tribulation saints will not participate in the *Rapture* because it precedes the Tribulation. Only the Church will be resurrected / translated and caught up to meet the Lord in the air because the Church is the Bride of Christ and the *Rapture* is the fetching of the Bride!

The third stage of the marriage process will be the marriage ceremony.

The marriage ceremony will take place in heaven just prior to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

It is the marriage ceremony that the great multitude in heaven is announcing in Revelation 19:6-8.

Revelation 19:6-8 (ESV)

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.

I imagine this great multitude in heaven staring intently at the smoldering city of Babylon and then turning and seeing the Bride of Christ adorned in her wedding dress. For a moment there is stunned silence and then an even greater roar shakes the heavens with the announcement of the Lamb's wedding.

We will be arrayed in fine linen, bright and pure which is said to be *the righteous deeds of the saints*. This will be the result of the *Judgment Seat of Christ*. After the Church is raptured, each believer will stand before Christ and give an account of our Christian lives (2 Cor. 5:2). It is at the Judgment Seat of Christ that each of us will be purified and rewarded

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (ESV)

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will leave only our righteous deeds to be seen. Obviously, the Church must undergo this purification before the wedding. This indicates the Judgment Seat of Christ will take in heaven between the time of the *Rapture* and the Second Coming of Christ right before the end of the Tribulation.

The wedding *ceremony* (the third stage of the Jewish wedding process) will take place in heaven just before the Second Coming of Christ to earth to end the Tribulation.

The fourth stage, the marriage *feast*, will take place on earth after the Second Coming. In verse 9 an angel shares with John that it will be a great blessing to be invited to the marriage *feast*.

The Marriage Feast (19:9)

Revelation 19:9 (ESV)

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."

These words of the angel indicate that the marriage *ceremony* and the marriage *feast* are separate events. Who will be invited to the marriage *feast* of the Lamb? It will be the Old Testament and Tribulation saints all of whom will be resurrected after the Second Coming and the end of the Tribulation. God revealed to Daniel that he (and by extension) and all Old Testament saints will be resurrected after the Tribulation.

Daniel 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who

sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The final verses of Daniel 12 give the impression that it might be the marriage *feast* of the Lamb that begins the Millennial Kingdom.

Daniel 12:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. ¹³ But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.

The Tribulation will end 1260 days after the offerings are taken away. For reasons known only to God, the image of the Antichrist (abomination that makes desolate) will be allowed to stand for 30 days after the Tribulation has ended. An additional 45 days will pass bringing us to day 1335. The angel says that one who makes it to day 1335 will be blessed. I believe day 1335 is the day the Millennial Kingdom begins and it will begin with the marriage *feast* of the Lamb.

In verse 10 we read of John's response to all he has seen, heard and received from this angel and his response is extreme.

The Apostle John Rejoices (19:10)

Revelation 19:10 (ESV)

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.

Why was John's response so extreme?

We cannot know for sure, but let me suggest it was the response of sheer relief and joy. Vision after vision of pure evil, suffering and judgment finally give way to triumph and beauty. John collapses in gratitude and thanksgiving at the feet of this blessed messenger. The angel rightly stops John reminding John that he, the angel, like John, is but a witness of Jesus. In fact, the ultimate focus of all biblical prophecy is Jesus in Whom all the purposes of God the Father are fulfilled.