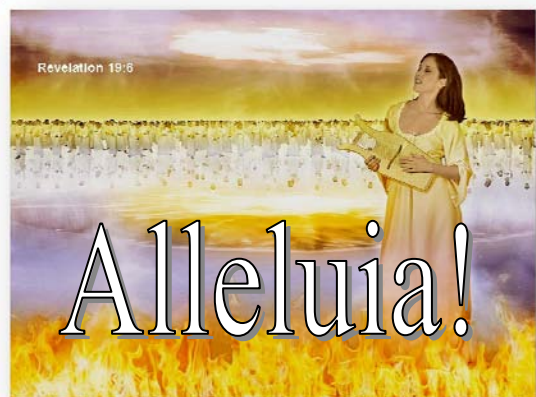


INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- This is the culmination of the entire book, what everyone has been waiting for so long. Heaven celebrates this moment. They are celebrating the destruction of the harlot, the wedding of the Lamb, and God's reign at last. We hear of a wedding, the return of a glorified triumphant King of Kings of the earth, the abrupt end of Armageddon, and a huge bird feast. Evil is decimated in this chapter.
- This chapter is a huge contrast to the ones before it. In chapters 17 and 18 we saw the horrors of the destruction of the harlot. Now it is time for the fulfillment of the ages, a time of celebration and rejoicing.

¹ After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!" ² For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." ³ Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" ⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

- "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!" This is the **beginning of the celebration**. God has fulfilled His perfect plan in its perfect time. This is the only place in the NT that the word "alleluia" (Hallelujah, or halle, praise - Yah, Yahweh) is used. There are 4 Alleluia's in this chapter. Because it contains the name of God, it is a sacred and holy call to worship. The "Hallelujah's" are sung here for three reasons: 1) God has judged the Harlot (evil, sin, opposition to Him), 2) God is reigning, and 3) the impending marriage of the Bride and the lamb. There is excitement in heaven because the end of the plan is near. There are thunderings, great noises, voices in praise, quite a sound!
- "For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." In Revelation 18:20 there was a command given to "rejoice" over the fall of this harlot. Here, in chapter 19, we have the obedient response to that call. All heaven rejoices!



- This is also a reminder of something we heard in Genesis 18, immediately before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as Abraham “bargained” with God. He also said *“...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Genesis 18:25) We are reminded again that God’s judgments are ALWAYS right.
- *“The great harlot who corrupted the earth...”* represents all evil, everything in opposition to God. Chapters 17 and 18 discussed the destruction of Babylon, this Harlot. This is necessary before the Holy One can take His throne.
- *“...her smoke rises up forever”* means **she isn't coming back!** Opposition to God, all evil, all sin, has been destroyed, for good, never to return. That is a great comfort to us, and something prophesied from thousands of years before: *“For it is the day of the LORD’s vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever.”* (Isaiah 34:8-10)
- The 24 elders and the living creatures are **once again praising God**. This is ceaseless for them, and will be for us. This is their last appearance in this book as the 24 elders. They represent the redeemed, who now become the Bride of Christ.

⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

- We then hear from *“the great multitude”* which are the “servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!” who are also praising God. The first 5 verses of this chapter is a **call for ALL of the redeemed to praise God**. It is a universal summons to praise and a progression of response. You can feel this wave of praise grow it as you read it. The excitement is building.
- The 4th “Alleluia” says *“For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”* Finally, and with no opposition! These first verses should sound familiar. You will find them word for word in **Handel’s Messiah**. All of Handel’s composition is taken directly from scripture.
- The word used here in Greek is *pantokrator*, which means omnipotent, or almighty. This is the El Shaddai of the Old Testament.



Photograph of the original sheet music by Handel

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

- Now we come to the mention of the **marriage of the Lamb**. This is an interesting passage. The Greek used indicates it has already happened, not happening in this verse. It also indicates a marriage, and not a betrothal, which is how the New Testament commonly refers to it. We are now (currently) betrothed to Him, and called the bride (intended wife) of Christ. In this verse, we are already married, and called the **wife** of the Lamb.

- The phrase *"His wife has made herself ready"* does not mean ready for the marriage - that has already happened. It means she is **now ready to be presented to the "general public."** The actual marriage *feast* does not happen here, but most likely later, in the Millennial Kingdom. To fully understand this passage, we have to know something about the Jewish wedding customs. (see additional information below).



- This is the **grand "unveiling" of the Bride.** She is ready for this. Traditionally the Jewish bride was veiled during the wedding ceremony, and not unveiled until the wedding feast where she is presented to the guests. (see the piece later on Jewish wedding customs).
- *"The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints"* - This is a phrase that is often misinterpreted and misleading in English. **It does NOT mean that we earn our pure clothing by doing good deeds or "righteous acts."** If translated literally it means "the fine linen is the legal right of the saints." This means that by believing in Jesus, we have the RIGHT to wear the clothing of the redeemed, but we did not earn it in any way. Notice also, the word "granted." This is a right given, not earned. We should recall the parable Jesus told of the man not dressed properly for a wedding, who was thrown out (Matthew 22:1-14). The proper dress for the Bride is the "fine linen" clean and pure that we are granted by our belief in our Husband, Jesus. This garment covers our sins, and is given to us, not earned.
- *'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'* Who are these who are called to the marriage supper? Are these guests, or are these the Bride? There is much speculation about this. If they are guests, then they are not the Bride. Some suggest they may be the Old Testament saints, or even tribulation saints, or both. Some also suggest that the actual feast (*which always followed the wedding ceremony, usually by as much as a week*) does not happen here, during the return of Jesus and the saints, but after He takes His throne in the Millennium. There are scriptures in Isaiah to suggest this. But the fact is, we just don't know at this point.
- This is the fourth of seven "beatitudes" (blessings) in this book.

¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

- John is overwhelmed with what he sees and *"fell at his feet to worship him"* (the one speaking). This "individual" immediately protested and told John never to do that, and indicated he was a "fellow servant." We do not know the identity of this "person." It could be an angel, but his description could also be one of the elders, even one of the redeemed (since he has the "testimony of Jesus.")
- This is a good reminder that **we never worship angels or anything or anyone except God alone.** John was so amazed here he could not help himself, but had to be reminded.

- There is a good test in the Old Testament about when we have had physical appearances of angels, and even Jesus (*the only one of the Godhead who appears in the flesh*). If the person visited worships **and the worship is forbidden, it is not Jesus**. If **the worship is allowed, it is Jesus**. The best evidence of this is in Joshua 5:14, when the One who appeared to Joshua did not forbid His worship of Him. This was the Captain of the Lord's Army, Jesus Himself.
- *"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"* - **Jesus is the very life, breath, essence, spirit and fulfillment** of prophecy. All prophecy relates to Him. At the top of each of these lessons are the Hebrew letters seen in the box here. These spell out the Name of Yeshua, our Messiah. All prophecy is about Him. This book is about Him. The entire Word of God is about Him. Our salvation is from Him, and our eternity is with Him.
- And now follows the great climax of this book, of this world.

ישוע

*¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

- **THIS IS THE MAIN EVENT!** The purpose of His first coming was to pay the price for our sins, to save us. The purpose of His second coming is to judge, and take His throne.
- *"now I saw heaven opened, and behold..."* Now we see what we refer to as the **"second coming of Jesus."** He is not named, but the rider of this white horse can be no other by His description. He is called "faithful and true" (Revelation 1:5, 3:14), righteous, and judge.
- The description of Him here is very **similar to what we saw in the beginning of the book of Revelation** in His first appearance to John. Other identifiers are his robe "dipped in blood," His name "The Word of God" (John 1, the Word), in command of the armies of heaven, name on His thigh King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This can only be Jesus. (Heaven opened also at Jesus' baptism.)
- *"...a white horse..."* A white horse is the horse of the conqueror. This is NOT the same horse as found in Revelation 6:2 (which is ridden by the antichrist).
- *"...Faithful and True."* In contrast to the lying, deceiving enemy, and the murderous harlot. The One here is genuine, the real thing.
- *"...eyes like a flame of fire..."* Penetrating, intelligent, righteous anger (see Rev. 1:14, 2:18)



- ***“On His head were many crowns...”*** The word for crown here is *“diadema.”* This is the crown of authority, royalty, kingship. This is the crown of the King, not the crown of the overcomer or victor (the *stephanos* crown of the believer.) These (not just one, but many!) are the crowns of the ultimate authority.
- ***“...name no one knew except Himself.”*** Scriptures tell us that no one can understand or really know the name of God. His name is a mystery to us, and we are told it is “wonderful” and beyond our understanding (see Judges 13:17-18) For this reason the orthodox Jews never write or say the “name” of God.
- ***“...clothed with a robe dipped in blood...”*** Now this One is the Slayer, instead of the Slain. His robes are stained in the winepress of God’s wrath. Some say that Jesus goes to Petra first (Bozrah) to meet the Jews who were preserved in the wilderness (chapter 12) and His robes are stained here, as He encounters the armies of the antichrist there and does a little “house cleaning.” (Isaiah 63:1-6) Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12) and He will return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-5), but that may be after visiting Petra (Bozrah, Edom). (Note, the more correct translation of the English word “dipped” is actually “sprinkled.” This aligns with Isaiah 63.)
- ***“...His name is called The Word of God.”*** Confirmation of John’s gospel’s opening statement: ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*** (John 1:1) This Greek word is LOGOS. It meant more than we can understand in English. It was the embodiment of something, it’s character and nature. When John referred to Jesus as the LOGOS, or Word of God, it was to indicate **Jesus is the embodiment of God, He had His nature, His character, His power.** In every way, He was and is God. He is the physical tangible way God communicated Himself to us. **COMMENTARY: To the Jews, “the spoken Word in Hebrew was fearfully alive. It was not merely a vocable or sound dropped heedlessly from unthinking lips. It was a unit of energy charged with power.”** (J. Patterson). Reading Psalm 29 here about the thundering power of the voice of God is helpful. Jesus, “the Word of God” IS this thundering power.
- ***“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.”*** Who are these armies? We have the answer in Jude 14-15: ***“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*** Also in Zechariah 14:5b: ***“Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You.”*** Jude and Zechariah call these armies “the saints.” Who are the saints? In scripture, all believers are referred to as saints. That could mean both old and new testament believers. Most likely it includes the Bride, the Church, but could also include old testament saints, as well as tribulation saints. This is ALL believers, and indeed a mighty army.
- ***“Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword...”*** This is the only weapon needed here, and previewed in Hebrews: 4:12-13: ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”***
- ***“...He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.”*** Definite reference to **Psalm 2**. A reminder that the Millennium is an “enforced” rule.

- **“He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”** We saw this event as a preview in Chapter 14:17-20. This is also a reference to Isaiah 63. This is a holy and righteous God in judgment. He is fierce in His anger against sin and rebellion to Him.
- **“On his robe and on His thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”** There are a number of possibilities for where this name appears. Could refer to a sword, His robe, or His actual thigh. It really doesn’t matter where it is written. It is the name that matters. This is our Savior’s mightiest title. He is the King of all Kings, the ultimate authority for everyone and everything. He is the Lord of all Lords, the mightiest and highest Master. **There are differences between Savior, King and Lord.** Jesus is all these things, but we need to differentiate the "Lord" title (*kurios* in Greek, meaning "Master.") He is to be our Master, as well as our Savior and our King. We are not in control, He is!
- NOTICE there is **no mention of the rapture or the resurrection here.** These are two events that are distinctly different, and prophesied. This is another argument for a pre-trib rapture. In fact this event **CONTRASTS** the rapture. We're headed in the wrong direction! In the rapture we go from earth to heaven. Here, in the return, we accompany Jesus from heaven to earth. We had to have been there already!

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸ that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

- **“...an angel "standing in the sun" -** visible and evident to ALL, a great call to the scavenger birds for another feast. Note the word "flesh" appears 6 times in these verses. Those who followed the desires of the flesh will have their flesh consumed. No exceptions.
- **Notice there are two opposing feasts in this one chapter.** We begin with the marriage feast of the Lamb, and end with the bird feast to cleanse the land. The “carrion” birds were created to clean up the garbage. They are classified as “unclean” in scripture. Here they are commanded to converge in the place of the final battle, Armageddon, where they will cleanse the land of all those slain here. This is the call for the birds to get ready.



¹⁹ *And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.* ²⁰ *Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.* ²¹ *And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

- Now comes the big battle - **Armageddon**. The Antichrist and the kings of the earth are gathered together *"to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army..."* Talk about stupid! There never was a more "vain thing" than to go to war against God. (Read Psalm 2 to see what God thinks of this!)

▪ **Commentary:** "This is the incurable insanity of sin, which wars away in spite of defeat after defeat, against a holy God." (Newell)

- Notice in verse 20 there is **no battle mentioned!** All of a sudden the "battle" is over! A verse in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 gives a clue: *"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."* The war is over even before it begins. All it takes is one word from Jesus, and the staggering view of His glory. There is no contest here.

- **Antichrist and the false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire** (alive!) and the *"rest were killed with the sword."* Perhaps some battle ensues, but not for long. This is great news for us. No one returns from the lake of fire. Those who die here are later thrown there to keep the Antichrist and false prophet company (Revelation 20:15). The enemy can't bother God and His people anymore. We see that those who shared the mark of the beast will also share the doom of the beast. Some say this is truly the end of the age of Gentiles, and it isn't over until this point.

- *"...lake of fire burning with brimstone."* There are only two places for eternal destination: heaven or hell (known by many names). The lake of burning sulfur was called *Gehenna* (Gehinnom). It was originally the site of a cultic shrine of human sacrifice, and became a perpetually burning city dump. This actual place became a symbol of the place of final judgment, the lake of fire.



- And the **birds finally have their fill**. God even cleans up the land from this mess!

▪ **COMMENTARY:** "...as the closing scene...behold the millions upon millions of flesh-eating birds clearing away the carcasses of the rebels against God and against Christ! One vulture or two feeding on some fallen creature is a hideous sight to our eyes. What, then, will be this awful line of corpses, of two hundred miles, covered with countless hosts of scavengers! Reflect anew on what sin brings! This scene will come to pass!" Don't cringe or despair! This passage should remind you of how faithful God is to his Word – He is completing the clean-up of sin from the world FOR US! ...

▪ **No interpretation is possible for this passage but the literal one: anything else is unbelievable, fantastic. And when we accept it as literal we see the necessity of it. God will not allow His Son's kingdom to begin with a plague, caused by the festering carcasses of slain multitudes.”** (Newell)

- **Note that there is no resurrection here.** This “second resurrection” does not happen until 1,000 years later, after the Millennium. When unbelievers die, they go to Hades, the temporary “holding” place for the dead. Believers go immediately into the Lord's presence (Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:19-23, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Hades is emptied of its dead in Revelation 20:13, in time for the Great White Throne Judgment.
- **It is time now for Jesus to take His Throne!** (*next chapter*)

SUMMARY: There is a lot happening in Chapter 19. Here's a recap:

- **The 4 Alleluias** - Solemn command to worship, proclamation of God's faithfulness, He has done just what He said He would do, and has finally destroyed the harlot. He is in final and full command now, and will be always.
- **Presentation of the Wife of the lamb** (already married!)
- **Blessings for invited wedding guests**
- **Announcement of wedding feast** (perhaps at a later time, in Millennial Kingdom)
- **Glorious Appearing** - coming of Jesus to earth, with His Saints, in judgment, to make war
- **Angel calls and prepares the birds of the earth** for a later feast
- **Armageddon finally occurs**, but it's over "with a breath"
- **Capture of the beast and false prophet**
- **Beast and false prophet thrown alive into lake of fire** (burning sulfur)
- **All others, in opposition to God, killed by sword from His mouth**
- **Birds feast on flesh, clean the land**

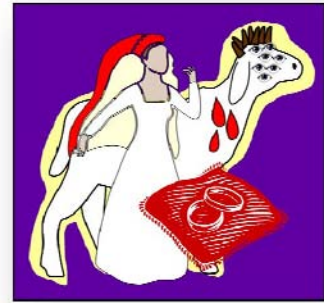
Some important scripture references for this chapter:

- Genesis 18:25
- Isaiah 34:8-10
- Matthew 24:27-31
- Isaiah 11:3-5
- Isaiah 63:1-5
- Zechariah 14:3-5
- Jude 14, 15
- Hebrews 4:12-13
- Psalm 2
- Psalm 29:3-11
- Isaiah 11:4
- 2 Thessalonians 2:8

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL ON THE BRIDE OF CHRIST AND JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS FOLLOWS.

The Bride of Christ

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS. These are referenced frequently in Scripture, both directly and indirectly, and are critical to our understanding of God's Plan for us.



The following is an edited combination of two articles:

"JEWISH MARRIAGE CUSTOMS: Behold, The Bridegroom Comes!" by Dr. Renald Showers, *Chairman of the Pastoral Studies Department, Philadelphia College of Bible* and *"Bible Prophecy and the Return of Jesus: The Rapture and the Jewish Wedding Model"* by I. Gordon (also *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*)

The Divine Romance

The heart of the Bible is a love story. It is the divine romance. It fills the Old Testament where the nation of Israel is seen as the wife of Jehovah, and it stretches throughout the new where the Church is shown to be the bride of Christ. God's intention, right from the Garden of Eden, is to have a people separated for Himself... a bride! John was given a vision of that wonderful day: ***"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"*** Revelation 21:2-4. To understand the Lord's plan in receiving a bride for Himself, we must understand the steps involved in the Jewish wedding. Jesus often spoke of these weddings in his parables and by gaining insight into this earthly Jewish marriage we can see wonderful truths and implications for our Heavenly union with the Lord.

The following table reveals the Jewish marriage customs as they richly apply to our relationship with Yeshua, our betrothed Husband, both now and in the future.

JEWISH MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Jewish Marriage Customs	The Bride of Christ
BETROTHAL: THE MARRIAGE COVENANT (Ketubah) AND NEGOTIATED PRICE	
<p>The first major step in a Jewish marriage was betrothal. Betrothal involved the establishment of a marriage covenant. By Jesus' time it was usual for such a covenant to be established as the result of the prospective bridegroom taking the initiative. The prospective bridegroom would travel from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride.</p> <p>There he would negotiate with the father of the young woman to determine the price (mohar) that he must pay to purchase his bride.</p> <p>Once the bridegroom paid the purchase price, the marriage covenant was thereby established, and the young man and woman were regarded to be husband and wife. From that moment on the bride was declared to be consecrated or sanctified, set apart exclusively for her bridegroom.</p> <p>As a symbol of the covenant relationship that had been established, the groom and bride would drink from a cup of wine over which a betrothal benediction had been pronounced.</p>	<p>Scriptures regard the Church to be the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-23). In addition, just as the Jewish bridegroom took the initiative in marriage by leaving his father's house and traveling to the home of the prospective bride, so Jesus left His Father's house in heaven and traveled to earth, the home of His prospective Church, over 2000 years ago.</p> <p>In the same manner as the Jewish bridegroom came to the bride's home for the purpose of obtaining her through the establishment of a marriage covenant, so Jesus came to earth for the purpose of obtaining the Church through the establishment of a covenant.</p> <p>On the same night in which Jesus made His promise in John He instituted communion. As He passed the cup of wine to His disciples, He said: <i>"This cup is the new covenant in my blood"</i> (1 Cor. 11:25). This was His way of saying that He would establish a new covenant through the shedding of His blood on the cross. Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom paying a price to purchase his bride, Jesus paid a price to purchase His bride, the Church. The price that He paid was His own life blood. It was because of this purchase price that Paul wrote the following to members of the Church: <i>"know ye not that...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and your spirit, which are God's"</i> (1 Cor. 6:19-20).</p> <p>Analogous with the Jewish bride being declared sanctified or set apart exclusively for her groom once the marriage covenant was established, the Church has been declared to be sanctified or set apart exclusively for Christ (Eph. 5:25-27; 1Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10; 13:12).</p> <p>In the same way that a cup of wine served as a symbol of the marriage covenant through which the Jewish groom obtained his bride, so the cup of communion serves as the symbol of the covenant through which Christ has obtained the Church (1 Cor. 11:25).</p>

SEPARATION AND PREPARATION

After the marriage covenant had been established, the groom would leave the home of the bride and return to his father's house. There he would remain separate from his bride for a period of twelve months.

This period of separation afforded the bride time to gather her trousseau and to prepare for married life.

The groom occupied himself with the preparation of living accommodations in his father's house to which he could bring his bride.

Just as the Jewish groom left the home of his bride and returned to his father's house after the marriage covenant had been established, so Jesus left the earth, the home of the Church, and returned to His Father's house in heaven after He had established the new covenant and risen from the dead (John 6:62; 20:17).

Corresponding with the period of separation between the Jewish groom and bride, Christ has remained separate from the Church for almost 2000 years. The Church is now living in that period of separation.

During the time of separation between the establishment of the marriage covenant and the coming of the bridegroom to take his bride, it was possible for the Jewish bride to commit adultery by giving herself to another man. In like manner it is possible for believers today to commit spiritual adultery against Christ before He returns to take His Church. Paul expressed concern over this possibility when he wrote the following to Christians:

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor.11:2-3).

James expressed the same concern when he rebuked Christians as follows: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4) The context of James' statement indicates that spiritual adultery is committed when a believer becomes more devoted to the godless world system and the things that please it than he is to Jesus Christ and the things that please Him.

Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom preparing living accommodations for his bride in his father's house during the time of separation, Christ has been preparing living accommodations for the Church in His Father's house in heaven during His separation from His Bride (John 14:2).

REUNION AND MARRIAGE

At the end of the period of separation the groom would come to take his bride to live with him. The taking of the bride usually took place at night. The groom, best man and other male escorts would leave the groom's father's house and conduct a torch light procession to the home of the bride. Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the exact time of his coming. As a result the groom's arrival would be preceded by a shout. This shout would forewarn the bride to be prepared for the coming of the groom.

After the groom received his bride together with her female attendants, the enlarged wedding party would return from the bride's home to the groom's father's house. Upon arrival there the wedding party would find that the wedding guests had assembled already.

Shortly after arrival the bride and groom would be escorted by the other members of the wedding party to the bridal chamber (huppah). Prior to entering the chamber the bride remained veiled so that no one could see her face. While the groomsmen and bridesmaids would wait outside, the bride and groom would enter the bridal chamber alone. There in the privacy of that place they would enter into physical union for the first time, thereby consummating the marriage that had been covenanted earlier.

In the same manner as the Jewish groom came to take his bride to live with him at the end of the period of separation, so Christ will come to take His Church to live with Him at the end of His period of separation from the Church (John 14:3).

Just as the taking of the Jewish bride was accomplished by a procession of the groom and male escorts from the groom's father's house to the home of the bride, so the taking of the Church will be accomplished by a procession of Christ and an angelic escort from Christ's Father's house in heaven to the home of the Church (1 Thess. 4:16).

Analogous with the Jewish bride not knowing the exact time of the groom's coming for her, the Church does not know the exact time of Christ's coming for her.

In the same way that the Jewish groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, so Christ's arrival to take the Church will be preceded by a shout (1 Thess. 4:16).

Similar to the Jewish bride's return with the groom to his father's house after her departure from her home, the Church will return with Christ to His Father's house in heaven after she is snatched from the earth to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:2-3).

The Bride of Christ to be safely hidden away during the 7 years of the Tribulation??

FEAST AND UNVEILING

After the marriage was consummated, the groom would announce the consummation to the other members of the wedding party waiting outside the chamber (John 3:29). These people would pass on the news of the marital union to the wedding guests. Upon receiving this good news the wedding guests would feast and make merry for the next seven days.

During the seven days of the wedding festivities, which were sometimes called "the seven days of the huppah," the bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber. At the conclusion of these seven days the groom would bring his bride out of the bridal chamber, **now with her veil removed**, so that all could see who his bride was.

In the same manner as the Jewish wedding party found wedding guests assembled in the groom's father's house when they arrived, so Christ and the Church will find the souls of Old Testament saints assembled in heaven when they arrive. These souls will serve as the wedding guests.

Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom and bride entering into physical union after their arrival at the groom's father's house, thereby consummating the marriage that had been covenanted earlier, Christ and the Church will experience spiritual union after their arrival at His Father's house in heaven, thereby consummating their relationship that had been covenanted earlier.

Corresponding with the Jewish bride remaining hidden in the bridal chamber for a period of seven days after arrival at the groom's father's house, the Church will remain hidden for a period of seven after arrival at Christ's Father's house in heaven. While the seven year Tribulation Period is taking place on the earth, the Church will be in heaven totally hidden from the sight of those living on the earth.

Just as the Jewish groom brought his bride out of the bridal chamber at the conclusion of the seven days with her veil removed, so that all could see who his bride was, so Christ will bring His Church out of heaven in His Second Coming at the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation Period in full view of all who are alive, so that all can see who the true church is (Col. 3:4).

OTHER NOTES

THE PROPOSAL

Every time the gospel of Jesus Christ is declared to you, Christ is proposing that you enter into this special relationship with Him. In essence He is saying to you: ***"I, Jesus, take thee, sinner, to be My Bride. And I do promise and covenant before God The Father and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful Savior and Bridegroom; in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in faithfulness and in waywardness, for time and for eternity."*** Just as the proposal that the Jewish bridegroom made could be accepted or rejected, so Christ's proposal to you can be accepted or rejected. If you reject it throughout this lifetime, then you never will be rightly related to Jesus Christ. The tragic result will be that you will spend eternity separated from God and Christ in the eternal lake of fire (Rev.20:11-15). If, however, you accept Christ's proposal, then your sins will be forgiven, and you will enter into that relationship that makes you part of His Bride, the Church. In addition, you will go to be with Him when He comes to take the Church, and you will remain with Him forever in great blessing. If you are a believer, honestly evaluate your devotion to Jesus Christ.

Do you love him as much now as when you took Him to be your Savior? Is He truly the Centre of your existence, the One who gives your life its meaning and purpose? Is your every attitude, action and lifestyle motivated and controlled by your devotion to Jesus Christ, or by a desire to have the friendship of the world system in which you live? If you have been unfaithful to your heavenly Bridegroom, confess this to Him and be assured that even "*If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*" (11 Tim.2:13) Then trust the Holy Spirit to renew your devotion as you wait for your heavenly Bridegroom to come at any moment.

THE BETROTHAL

The betrothal of Christ and the Church is taking place during the **present Church age** as people trust Jesus Christ to be their Savior (2 Cor. 11:2). Second, in the future Christ will take His bride, the Church, from this world to His Father's house in Heaven when He comes to rapture it (Jn. 14:2-3; 1 Th. 4:13-18). This will be the "marriage of the Lamb." Third, after the Rapture of the Church, the "marriage supper of the Lamb" will take place with the wedding guests who will have already been called and assembled.

THE PREPARATION

Christ indicated that after preparing living accommodations for His bride in His Father's house in Heaven, He would come from there again and receive His bride unto Himself so that His bride could be where He is (in His Father's house in Heaven) [Jn. 14:2-3]. Christ did not say that He would come and join His bride so that He could be where she is (on the earth). This established marriage custom and Christ's teaching in harmony with it indicate that the Rapture of the Church and marriage of the Lamb will not take place at the Second Coming of Christ, because at His Second Coming Christ will not return to His Father's house in Heaven. Instead, He will come to the earth. Thus, the Rapture of the Church and marriage of the Lamb must take place sometime before the Second Coming of Christ, and the Rapture of the Church and marriage of the Lamb must be separate events from the Second Coming.



ANOTHER MARRIAGE FEAST

The Old Testament teaches that during the Millennium there will be another marriage supper, different from the marriage supper of the Lamb. This millennial marriage supper will be associated with the second marriage of God and the nation of Israel. At the beginning of Isaiah 25:6ff, a passage describing the blessings of the future Millennium, Isaiah declared, "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees." The word for "feast" in verse 6 is the same as that used for the wedding feast in Judges 14:10, 12, 17. Isaiah's statement indicates that the wedding guests at this millennial marriage supper for God and Israel will be all the other people living in the world at that time. "Isaiah was speaking of a future time when (after God's worldwide judgment) His people in Israel and other nations will feast together in peace and prosperity. **This is the 1,000 year reign of Christ.**" The background behind this millennial marriage feast is as follows: The Old Testament teaches that God betrothed Israel (*bound the nation to Himself as His wife*) through the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai (Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8), but Israel repeatedly broke the covenant through spiritual adultery (Jer. 3:1-3, 6-9, 20; Ezek. 16:32, 59; Hos. 1:2; 2:2, 5; 3:1; 4:12, 18; 5:3-4; 6:7, 10; 7:4; 8:1; 9:1). God divorced Israel, but not permanently (Isa. 50:1; 54:7-8; Jer. 3:12). He did not regard the divorce as a termination of His marriage with the nation (Jer. 3:14; cp. v. 8).

God has been judging the nation for its adultery (Ezek. 16:38). Through this judgment He will stop Israel's unfaithfulness, calm His fury, and lose His jealousy and anger (Ezek. 16:41-42). When Israel repents in the future at the Second Coming of Christ (Hos. 3:5; 5:15-6:1; Zech. 12:10-14), God will cleanse the nation (Zech. 13:1), love it freely (Hos. 14:1-4), and betroth it to Himself forever (Hos. 2:19-20) through the establishment of an everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:4-5; Ezek. 16:60-62; 37:21-28). Israel will be adorned like a bride (Isa. 61:10); God will delight in and rejoice over Jerusalem as a groom rejoices over his bride; and the land of Israel will be married to God (Isa. 62:1-5). Thus, at the Second Coming God and Israel will go through betrothal and marriage a second time, and then their marriage supper will take place during the Millennium after the Second Coming.

In his book "[Footsteps of the Messiah](#)," Arnold Fruchtenbaum discusses the six stages of Israel's marriage relationship with Jehovah. Here is a quick summary:

Stage One – The Marriage Contract – Deut 5:1-3.

The prophets saw this covenant as a marriage contract and spoke of it in the words used of the wedding night. See Ezek 16:8 for example.

Stage Two – The Great Adultery – Jer 3:1-5,20, Ezek 16:15-34

Stage Three – The Separation – Isaiah 50:1

Because of the adultery, in the days of Isaiah a separation took place.

Stage Four – The Divorce - Jer 3:6-10

Stage Five – The Punishment – Ezek 16:35-43, Hos 2:6-13

Stage Six – The Remarriage – The Jewish prophets did not leave things hopeless! They spoke of a time when the nation of Israel will again become the restored wife of God. This required a brand new marriage contract, which is found in Jer 31:31-34, Ezek 16:60-63. It is also described in Isa 54:1-8, 62:4-5 and Hosea 2:14-23.

This future marriage of God and the marriage of the Lamb have two different brides. The marriage of God has the nation of Israel as its bride. As noted earlier, the marriage of the Lamb has the Church as its bride. It appears that these marriages also have two different grooms. As noted earlier, the marriage of the Lamb has Christ (the Messiah) as its groom. By contrast, one scholar asserts, "But nowhere in the OT is the Messiah presented as a bridegroom." This means, then, that the future marriage of God to Israel presented in the Old Testament has God the Father, not the Messiah, as its groom.

Since these marriages have two different brides and grooms, it must be concluded that the future marriage of God to Israel and the marriage of the Lamb are two different marriages. Since these marriages are different, the marriage suppers associated with them must also be different, and it is very probable that these different suppers will take place at different times. The marriage supper associated with the future marriage of God to Israel will take place during the Millennium.

THE RAPTURE: HIDDEN AWAY

It was customary for the wedding supper of Bible times to last for one week, or seven days. It is the conviction of this writer that, in relationship to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the seven years of the 70th week of Daniel 9 will correlate to that time period. According to this view, then, the Rapture of the Church and marriage of the Lamb will occur before the 70th week (Tribulation period), and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in Heaven during the 70th week.

The conclusion drawn from all that has been seen concerning the marriage and marriage supper of the Lamb is that the Church will be in Heaven with Christ, not on the earth, throughout the entire 70th week.

According to Revelation 19:9, wedding guests will be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and those who are called will be blessed. Since wedding guests are not the bride, it must be concluded that the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb will not be part of Christ's bride, the Church. But since the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb will be blessed and will be in Heaven (since that is where the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place), they must be believers (cp. Rev. 20:6). The fact that the guests will be believers, but not part of the Church, forces one to conclude that not all believers of all ages of history belong to the Church. God has groups of believers distinct from the Church. The souls of Old Testament saints will already be assembled in Heaven when the Church arrives there at the time of the Rapture and marriage of the Lamb. Those Old Testament saints will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

An interesting prophecy that relates to this is in Isaiah 26:19-21: *“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms (literally: chamber as in KJV & NKJV) and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer.”*

Verse 19 is a picture of the resurrection. *“Your dead will live... their bodies will rise.”* We know that at the return of Christ for His bride, there will be a resurrection for those that are alive will not go ahead of the believers in Christ who have died before He returns. No, the dead in Christ shall rise first and then the believers who are alive will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air! (1 Thes 4:17).

Verse 20 states perfectly what the model of Jewish wedding shows. That is, after the resurrection at the return of Jesus, the bride then enters the bridal chamber. The reason for this time of protection, as stated in the verse above, is because God's wrath is about to be poured out on the earth. Thank the Lord that we will never experience His wrath!

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 8:11)

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6-8)

“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (Rev 21:9-11)

He who testifies to these things says, **“Yes, I am coming soon.”**
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (Rev 22:20)