

Session 12 Jesus the Bridegroom King: Hosting a Wedding

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

During this session we will look at Revelation 19. As I've mentioned before, this is one of the most significant chapters in the Bible revealing Jesus and what His heart is like. We'll look at verses 1-10, the first half of the chapter—which is very different from the second half, verses 11-21. The first half is about a wedding; the second half is about a war. Jesus the Bridegroom is hosting a wedding. He paid for it with His own blood. He's even the One who presents the bride to Himself. He's the honored guest at the wedding. In that sense He's hosting a wedding.

We find in the second half of Revelation 19 that He's waging a war. There's no contradiction between the Bridegroom who hosts a wedding and the King who wages a war. It's the same Man. Because He goes to war for the sake of the wedding, or another way to say it is for the sake of love. He goes to war because He wants to see love fill the planet. He wants love to fill planet earth in righteousness and never to be hindered again. That's why He goes to war.

In this passage, verse 1-10, there are so many dramatic details—just like in the second half. There is so much more than that what meets the eye on a cursory reading. We won't really look at so many of the details, as much as I would love to. The implications are very dramatic. What I want to focus on in this session is the Man behind the plan, the Man behind the drama: the nature of His personality and His heart—the kind of Man He is, the kind of King He is.

AT THE CORE OF HIS PERSONALITY, THE UNCREATED GOD IS A BRIDEGROOM KING

He's a bridegroom king. In His heart, He thinks and feels like a bridegroom because He is one. From eternity past, this is what His nature is like. He thinks, He feels, He reasons like a bridegroom, and He relates to us that way.

Most believers can't really connect to that. They maybe theologically agree with it. I'm talking about right here at IHOP-KC. It's an easy point to agree with, but a difficult point to really connect with: that the uncreated God, at the core of His personality, is a bridegroom. That's a most remarkable fact. The implications of that are absolutely stunning: that the One who has the power to create, the One who has the authority to judge, the One who gives leadership over all of history forever and forever, at the core of His being, is a bridegroom. He's planned a wedding from eternity past. You're the bride.

NATURAL HISTORY ENDS WITH A GLORIOUS WEDDING AND A GLOBAL WAR

Paragraph B. Natural history ends with a glorious wedding and a global war. It ends with both. That's why it's so dramatic. The most glorious day and the most terrible day happen simultaneously. Natural history ends with a glorious wedding. That's what the Spirit is preparing you for.

It also ends with a terrible war. The wedding and the war, they both point to the same reality. I've already said it, but it bears emphasizing: Jesus wants to fill the planet with love. The reason I stress this is that some believers see Jesus the King who judges as a contradiction to the One who loves. He goes to war because of love. We need to read both halves of Revelation 19 to understand both halves. We have to read about the

wedding to grasp the motive behind the war. We have to read about the war to see the intensity and the zeal that He has for the wedding. We have to read them both together.

GOD WILL CONFRONT REBELLION ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

Paragraph C. As you read Revelation 19, particularly at the very end, all the kings of the earth are killed, and all their armies. The blood flows up to a horse's bridle (Rev. 14:20). The blood flows three, four, five feet throughout the land. That's the most shocking thing. Jesus the King openly confronts rebellion on a global level. God will confront rebellion on a global level at one time. The rebellion of the earth, He'll confront in one day. That's a remarkable, shocking fact.

GOD IS BINDING HIMSELF TO US FOREVER IN A MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Even more shocking than the war is the wedding. My prayer is that the wedding would shock you: that the uncreated God binds Himself to you forever as His eternal companion. That's shocking. I mean, the war happens in a short period of time. The uncreated God of transcendent power, power to which none other can compare, binds Himself to us forever in a marriage relationship. He didn't have to do that. That, to me, is shocking, when I really let that truth touch my heart. Don't be content to hear just a few sentences of language; ask the Spirit to absolutely radically revolutionize your heart with this truth. It's beyond measure. It's beyond anything we can grasp. The uncreated God with infinite power binds Himself to you forever in a wedding, in a marriage, as His eternal companion. This is unthinkable to the natural mind. So much so, it can just become a piece of information that doesn't move us: because it's so big that it just doesn't even seem real. That's what the enemy wants.

“THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME, AND THE BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY”

Paragraph D. Here's the key passage in the first half, the core passage in Revelation 19. We're looking at the first half of Revelation 19.

“The marriage of the Lamb has come” (Rev. 19:7). There's the key sentence. Beloved, see yourself in that sentence. You'll really be there on that day. The marriage of the Lamb has come, but it's more than that: the bride, the wife, has made herself ready (ibid). The bride, the wife, has made herself ready. The Church will respond in wholeheartedness, globally, before the Lord returns. This doesn't mean that just the Church in heaven by virtue of the resurrection is now made ready. That's not what it's saying. It's not saying the Church lived in compromise and then by virtue of the resurrection they have such a perfect body and mind that everything is ready for the wedding. It's different than that, although that's a great truth. I love the resurrection! Natural history is going to end, globally, in every nation, where the Church responds in such a way in this age—where she's prepared and walking in wholeheartedness.

This is the mission statement, not only for God creating the heavens and the earth. This is God's mission statement for creation, but this is the Holy Spirit's mission statement for your life. He wants to prepare you so that you're ready. If you're alive in that hour when He comes, when the Lord returns, the Holy Spirit wants a church worldwide to be ready in this age.

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB!”

Verse 9. John is told to write, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9)! Right now, if you've said yes to salvation, to the grace of God, you're called to the marriage supper.

Even now you're blessed. That blessing is to impact your mind and your heart even in this age, not just wait until then to see how awesome it is. We begin to see ourselves in the light of this grand mission statement: that God created the heavens and the earth in order to provide a bride for His Son.

THE FATHER'S PLAN FROM AGES PAST

Imagine what the Father is like. It was His plan: "Son, together We will create the heavens and the earth. We will create a new race of beings called *humans*. Out of this new race, I will give You an inheritance. I'll give You an eternal companion and You'll rule the earth forever with her."

Jesus smiles: "Father, I like it. This is wonderful."

This was the Father's plan from ages past. It tells us what kind of God He is. Who would plan to create the earth with this in mind on the front end? His goal in guiding history is to raise up a prepared bride for a worthy Son. That's His goal. All the nations are in turmoil throughout the generations, but God has a guiding principle for which He's steering human history. He wants a prepared bride for a worthy Son. You can study the philosophers and historians. Because they don't have that piece of information, they can't make sense of history. They say, "Where is God at in history?" He is strategically leading history so that the context is set, so it's the right context—the optimum context for the bride in this age to be prepared for the worthy Son. That's how God is leading history. That's how He's leading your life.

GOD'S FIRST PRIORITY: PREPARING A BRIDE FOR HIS SON

You might say, "Lord, why are You letting this happen?"

The devil gets involved, and we need to rebuke the devil when he gets involved. Don't bless God for the devil's work. Rebuke the devil and shut the door in his face, but we ask of the Holy Spirit's leadership, "Why are You doing this? Why are You not breaking in and doing this and that?"

He could say something like, "I do want you blessed in this age, but I have something bigger on My mind. I have a bigger agenda for your life. I want you to be a prepared bride for a worthy Son."

I call it God's mission statement. Without understanding this mission statement, you can't understand His leadership over history and you can't understand His leadership over your life. If you miss this one sentence, verse 7, you're a bit mystified by what's going on in your life. He isn't out to make our lives easier as the first priority. He does make our lives easier sometimes. Sometimes He doesn't. His first priority is to prepare a bride for His Son. That's what He's after in my life, your life, that's what He's after at IHOP-KC and in the Church and in the kingdom and in the nations across the earth.

THE FATHER WANTS JESUS TO FULLY POSSESS THE HEARTS OF THE NATIONS

Paragraph F. Again, we will get to Revelation 19 in a minute, but we won't spend that much time on it. I really care about the Man behind the plan, not just the drama and the plan itself in these first ten verses, but we will spend a moment on them.

The Father promised Jesus an inheritance. He didn't just promise Him real estate. Psalm 2:8 is the famous promise where the Father says, "The nations are Yours" (Ps. 2:8, paraphrased). He wasn't just saying, "You'll own the real estate of the nations," although Jesus will. The Father had something bigger on His mind than

Jesus just owning real estate. He wants Jesus to fully possess the people in the nations. That's what's on the Father's heart. That's the Son's inheritance: that He would fully possess the people in the nations. I mean, many will say no to Him. Of those who say yes to Him, He will possess them in this age, and then possess them in fullness in the age to come, in the millennial kingdom.

Jesus' inheritance includes the mandatory obedience of every single living being. Demons and angels will all bow their knee to His lordship. The demons will bow their knee in hell, but they'll still bow their knee. The unbelievers will go to the lake of fire in obedience to Jesus' word. They'll obey Him. Believers in the New Jerusalem will obey Him. Everyone will obey: every demon, every angel, every living being. The inheritance that the Father has promised the Son is the obedience of all living beings. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess (Phil. 2:9-10). The Father says, "I have more for You than that, Jesus. It's not enough that they obey in a mandatory way." No one has a choice. If we obey in this age, we're blessed. We will obey in the next age if we don't in this age. Everyone will obey Him. You just get to choose which age to do it in.

The Father says, "I have more for you Son. I want the voluntary love of people, voluntary lovers of God." That's what the Spirit is doing now: He's raising up a bride who chooses to love Him as His inheritance.

"THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TOWARD US WHO BELIEVE"

Ephesians 1 is the prayer that we pray so often at IHOP-KC, that we would have the spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17-18). There are three specific requests; I'll only mention one: that we would have the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we would know—or experience, because the word *know* means "know by experience," "experiential knowledge"—the riches of the glory of being Jesus' inheritance. Beloved, the Spirit wants us to feel the power of this truth. This truth is so big: the riches of the glory, the vastness, the wealth of the glory that's associated with you being what He wants.

Do you know how wealthy you are because you are what He wants? Do you know what that makes you? You have the wealth of the glory of God in your destiny. I don't mean a little measure of glory; the wealth of the glory is yours. You'll experience it. The goal is to walk in it to the fullest measure we can in this age.

We see a twofold revelation here. We see the riches of His worth to us, but we also need to see the riches of our worth to Him. Many in the Church don't get locked into focused on the worthiness of Jesus and His worth to us. His worth to us is indescribable in its glory, but there's more. Do you know what your worth is to Him? Paul was praying that the saints at Ephesus would feel the power of this. Both of these are essential.

A MANDATE TO ENCOUNTER AND PROCLAIM THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

Paragraph G. One of the key points that the Holy Spirit has emphasized in our history, the history of this IHOP-KC young adult singer/musician prayer movement, as the Lord called it years ago, is that we were to emphasize this reality of the Bride of Christ or the Bridegroom God, the Bridegroom revelation. The Lord spoke this to me audibly in July 1988. I've told the story a number of times. When I first learned this, it wasn't that interesting to me—I'll say it that way. I just couldn't relate to it. In July 1988, when the Lord made it clear that in this movement, this future youth movement, this would be one of the premier things we would emphasize, it was a truth I had never thought about. I thought, "How are we going to emphasize it? I don't understand it, or even know if I like it. Technically I'm sure I like it, but what does it mean? The Bridegroom God?"

I was into Jesus the King with power; I wasn't thinking much about the Bridegroom with desire. This is part of our mandate. The Lord really wants us, not just to sing about it and say it a little here or there; He wants us to see the riches of the glory of this truth. He wants it to mark our heart, not just to be part of the IHOP-KC rhetoric: that it would mark us and change the way we think and feel. Beloved, this truth deeply affects the way Jesus thinks and feels. He thinks and feels like a bridegroom—not just like a king, but a bridegroom king; a king with power and a bridegroom with desire flowing together in perfect unity.

JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM: THE HEART BEHIND THE KING

Top of page two. I'm going to spend a few more moments on who He is: the Man or the heart behind the King. We've looked at the King and the great battle that He wages, the war that He wages, but it's the Man, the God, fully God and fully Man, the person behind the King: the core identity, the Bridegroom heart. It's remarkable, His commitment to the wedding.

I just gave a few simple little points here. I've taught several classes on the Bridegroom revelation. In other words, there's so much to say on this. Here are a few little snapshots to show us the remarkable truth of how committed this Man is to the wedding. He's really committed to this. This isn't something He does so He can say, "OK, I've done the wedding. You're saved; you're in the family. Now don't bother Me! I'm running a universe!"

It's not like that. This is no shotgun wedding. He gave Himself because He wanted the wedding. He poured out His life for this relationship. He organized history. He created the earth with this in mind. He acted with the blueprint clear, that He wanted an eternal companion who would be His bride forever to rule the earth with Him.

HISTORY BEGINS WITH A WEDDING IN A GARDEN

Paragraph A. History begins with Adam and Eve in the garden joined as bridegroom and bride. We find out from Paul in Ephesians 5 that it's a prophetic picture. Adam and Eve, joined to one another in the garden, is a prophetic picture of Jesus and His church. Here's my point: from the very first day of the human race, it was on God's mind.

HISTORY WILL END WITH A BRIDE AND HER BELOVED IN AN EARTHLY PARADISE

Paragraph B. History began in the garden of Eden. It ends in an Eden-like city called the New Jerusalem. A bride and bridegroom are joined in the eternal Eden like they were in the original Eden in Genesis 2. Natural history begins and ends with a bride and bridegroom in the garden city. It's not an accident; it's what was on His mind because it's the way His heart is. It's how He thinks; it's how He feels. It's very natural for Him to plan a wedding, because He's a bridegroom in His heart.

JESUS BEGAN AND ENDED HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY WITH WEDDINGS

Paragraph C. He began His ministry at a wedding. He ended His preaching ministry, in His last sermon to the nation of Israel, by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like My Father preparing a wedding for His Son" (Mt. 22:2, paraphrased). That was His final sermon to the nation of Israel. He began it at a wedding and He ended preaching on the kingdom like a wedding. That wasn't an accident. In terms of His apostles, at the very beginning, back in Matthew 9, at the very beginning of the three and a half years He began to invite them, saying, "I'm a bridegroom" (Mt. 9:15, paraphrased).

I'm sure their eyes got big: "You are? We thought You were a single man from Nazareth!"

"Well I am, but I'm much more than that." In the very beginning, He told them, "I'm a bridegroom. I'm the Bridegroom."

I don't think they got it. Then at the end, in one of His final messages to the apostles in private, He said, "Cultivate the oil of intimacy before Me as the Bridegroom God" (Mt. 25:1-13, paraphrased). There are a number of comparisons or parallels like that. Here's the point: He's a bridegroom in His heart. It's not just His plan, but the heart behind the plan—the Man behind the plan.

POWER IS WHAT HE HAS; LOVE IS WHAT HE IS

He's a bridegroom. God's nature, His core identity, is love (1 Jn. 4:16). His core identity isn't power. He has power, but His identity is love, of which the twin virtue is humility. That's who He is. He uses His power for love. Power is what He has; love is what He is. The reason I say that is because some people think of Jesus, think of the Father, mostly as power. They're mostly awestruck by His power. Beloved, we will be awestruck by His power forever—no question! Power is what He has. He says, "I'm more than what I possess. I am love. I'm the very fountain of burning desire." Love is relational. My point is this: we can't understand this Man, we can't understand His kingdom, we can't understand His leadership; we can't understand how He views us until we know He's love that expresses itself in relationship.

LOVE REQUIRES EXPRESSION IN ORDER TO BE REAL

He doesn't want to be remote from us. I mean, He is in the sense that He alone is God. We're not God. We will never be God. In His nature, He bows down to bring us near. He says, "I'm love, I'm relational." Love requires expression in order to be real. "I won't go forward without you. You'll be with Me." It really matters that we view Jesus through this, and the Father and the Spirit—because they're all the same personality. Three persons, one God: the mystery of the holy trinity. It really matters how we view Him. He isn't just power and splendor; He's love. He's relationship. That's what's in His mind. That's what's in His heart.

Some people see Jesus as if He were a distant king. They think that His primary reason for creating us was so that He could save us, that we could praise Him and work for Him. Those are true: He saves us. We will praise Him forever in an extravagance beyond anything we can imagine, and we will work for Him. He had billions of angels already awestruck by Him. He didn't say, "Billions, that's not enough. I need billions more! Humans, let's do it that way. I need more people telling Me things about Myself."

That's not what was on His mind. He wasn't looking for more people to be awestruck, though they can't help but be awestruck by Him. He was looking for relationship. He created a different race of beings, different than the angels, who would be His eternal partner forever. This is different. He wants relationship. He wants us to be with Him where He is, forever. This is different. Some people, believers, don't have a view of Jesus like this. So they get confused in relating to Him. The Spirit is preparing us as His bride, but that's not even on their minds. They think they're supposed to be a more effective worker and that's the bottom line. "If You would hurry up and give me more power, more money, and make me a little more famous, I could be more effective as a worker."

The Lord would say, "I'll give you a little here and there, take a little back, and give a little more to you, but what I'm really after is that you would be a prepared bride forever. That's what I'm really after."

“Oh, You’re kidding. You mean we will talk to each other with tenderness forever?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, I guess I should start talking to You now then. I thought I was a workforce. I’m just mystified by the fact that I’m not wealthier, more powerful, and more famous. I’m trying to work for You. What’s the deal?”

“I want you to talk to Me. I want you to love Me. I want us to be together at the heart level forever. Yes, you’ll work for Me because I want you with Me in My work.”

A MESSAGE THAT WILL GIVE US CONFIDENCE IN OUR WEAKNESS

Paragraph F. The Bridegroom message. I won’t go into this. I put this paragraph in lots of my notes, so you’ve seen it. Here’s the point. It’s about His emotions—His desire. We want to study how He feels. The message starts with understanding His heart for us, and His heart for us doesn’t just mean He winks at our compromise. My point is, I’ve taught this over the years. There are a good many people who distort the application: “If He loves me, then I can compromise and He’ll be nice to me. Sounds like a good deal. He loves me even in my weakness!”

It’s not to give us boldness to compromise; it’s to give us confidence to draw near in our weakness because He loves us so much. It’s not about getting away with stuff; it’s about having confidence to have a new beginning every day and to draw near to Him; not to wait for ten or twenty years until we mature and then draw near. Because He has such desire, we can go near Him now. Because He desires us, we want to give everything to Him. We want to give everything to Him.

HE DESIRES THAT WE CELEBRATE THE DIGNITY AND VALUE THAT HE GAVE US

Paragraph G. I love paragraph G. It’s very simple, but I love it. He wants to make us feel loved. He desires that we celebrate the dignity and the value that He gave us. Beloved, He gave you tremendous dignity and value. He gave it to you. It’s the value we have in His eyes and He wants us to celebrate it. He finds pleasure in relating to us. He really likes being close to us. He wants us more responsive because He delights in us. Again, the message of His delight isn’t that we can be careless; it’s that we can be careful in our obedience.

WE MAGNIFY HIM WHEN WE BOLDLY BELIEVE AND RECEIVE HIS LOVE

Top of page three. Paragraph I. I take the analogy of a man and his wife and his children. The man wants his wife and children to have everything he has. He has joy in seeing his family observe his extravagance. He says, “Everything I have is yours.”

“Well, we don’t want to bother You, so we’ll stay out of the way.”

“No, no. Everything I have is yours and I want you to be overwhelmed by My extravagance. I want it to touch you and move you.”

“I just want to be so little so I can get out of the way.”

“I don’t want you out of the way. I want you in the center of My heart.”

Beloved, we don't want the false humility that minimizes that He loves loving us. He doesn't grit His teeth and love us. "OK, I'll hang in there for another few decades. In the name of the Father, I love you, I love you."

That's not what He's doing. He loves loving us. He really delights in it. He loves loving us. He loves us enjoying being loved. "Oh, You love me? I smile—oops, I had better repent of that. What if I steal Your glory in enjoying You loving me?"

Beloved, His glory is magnified in that context. It's not minimized. Some people stumble into false humility, becoming so nothing. He says, "Quit disappearing! Stand before Me in confidence. You can't ever disappear. I created you for Me, no matter how much you try in your false humility."

That's not most people's problem. We magnify Him when we boldly believe and receive His love.

Paragraph J. Here are a few simple statements. As a king, He manifests His power. As a bridegroom He shares His heart. As a king He wants service. As a bridegroom, He wants partnership. As a king, He gives mandates. As a bridegroom He wants conversation. He wants dialogue with us. As a king He rules over us. As a bridegroom we rule with Him. There is no contradiction in any of these.

THE DAY OF HIS WEDDING, THE DAY OF THE GLADNESS OF HIS HEART

Roman numeral III. We won't really get into the details of this dramatic passage in which this verse 7 mission statement is found. It's the wedding day. It's the day when the wedding of the Lamb has finally come. Again, verse 7 is the great statement: the marriage of the Lamb has come and the wife is ready. What a massively important, glorious statement. The fact that He wants a wedding is the point I've been focused on for the last few moments here: the fact that He wants a wedding. The fact that this is His mission statement is what I wanted to highlight most.

To give you a little context, without going into the implications, like the rest of Revelation 19, every phrase is a title of a book, or it could be. Every phrase is so filled with implications. We get a snapshot in verses 1-10 of the wedding day. Then we get a snapshot of the war in verses 11-21. The two go together.

"ALLELUIA!" THE RESPONSE OF THE BRIDE ON HER WEDDING DAY

Revelation 19:1. "After these things, I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven" (Rev. 19:1).

The multitude cries, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God" (Rev. 19:1b)!

Why? Why are we saying *hallelujah*? *Hallelujah* and *Alleluia* is the same word. One translation uses one and the other uses the other. It's the same word. Praise be to God. Verse 2. Why are they saying *hallelujah*? *Hallelujah* means, "Thanks be to God," "Praise be to Yahweh," but in essence it means, "We agree with You. We agree with what is happening." That's the essence of what's being said here. It's interesting that four times the *hallelujah* statement, "We agree," is mentioned in the New Testament, and all four of them are mentioned here on the wedding day. Four out of four are all here in one passage: "We agree. Salvation, glory, and honor belong to You."

Why? Verse 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” (Rev. 19:2). When it says *avenged*, you can write the word *judged*.

What’s going on here? Verse 1 tells us: “After these things.” This passage is the response of the bride on her wedding day. That’s the key point you need to keep in focus. The first order of business, so to speak, the first thing recorded of the bride’s response on the wedding day, is that she is in full agreement with Jesus’ leadership, particularly in the area of His judgments.

It’s like they’re all there on the wedding day.

I’ll just make up a scenario. The Father says, “Will you have this Man? Do you believe in His leadership? You’ve seen what He has done. You’ve seen His end-time judgment,” the judgments described in the book of Revelation. “Do you trust His leadership?” All the multitude, which is the bride, from every tribe, tongue, and nation, says, “We agree! We agree with His leadership.”

JESUS WILL CONFRONT SIN AND OPPRESSION ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

This phrase in verse one, “After these things,” means after the judgments that are described in the book of Revelation—particularly chapters 17 and 18, but essentially the whole book. All the judgments have been poured out. You understand when you read the book of Revelation, these are the most severe judgments ever in history. I mean, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven bowls, are all so severe. Let me tell you how severe: Over one-third of the human race will die an unnatural death. They will die before their time. I’m talking about two, three, four, five billion people. Not a million: several billion die.

It creates a crisis on the earth. The earth is angry at Jesus: “We don’t like Your leadership!”

Right now the Church doesn’t much like Jesus the Judge. They want Jesus the Savior, the Provider of money, the One who anoints them in power, the One who heals, the One who forgives. They don’t want the Judge. No. The most controversial point of Jesus’ personality is that He confronts boldly on a global level. He’s going to confront sin and oppression.

The devil is already speaking into the Church right now. The Church is offended at Jesus. They have no grid for this part of His personality. Beloved, on the wedding day, the first order of business, with all the multitude gathered, is the Father’s question: “Will You embrace Him in the leadership that He’s just demonstrated?”

They say, “Yes! Hallelujah!” Every single believer says, “We’re in. We see it now.” There is no accusation in their hearts against Him. This is massive. Could you imagine the entire Body of Christ with no accusation in their heart about Jesus’ leadership at all?

You might say, “Well, that seems normal.”

No. I would say the normal is this: most believers have an unperceived accusation in their heart, or mistrust of His leadership. They don’t know it and they can’t define it. You push the right buttons and they say, “Oh, I don’t like that.”

“That’s what Jesus is doing.” “No, no, that’s not very American! He had better be more American than that.”

We know He isn't American. Praise God! He's not a Westerner. He's not a Republican. So the most offensive part of His leadership is His judgments. Notice, there's no accusation on the wedding day. Everyone is in perfect agreement.

Here's what they say in verse 1: "Hallelujah! Salvation belongs to You. Now that the whole story is out, we can see. The salvation grace of God actually increased because of Your judgments. Your salvation wasn't minimized; Your salvation was maximized by Your judgments. We see it now."

Because if you take a poll of Jesus today, His judgments will hurt the cause of the kingdom. On the last day, they'll say, "No. The cause of the kingdom, the way of salvation was amplified and expanded. More people said yes to salvation. Amazing! Who would have guessed?"

They say, "Glory. We won't resist You, Jesus. We will love You, praise You, adore You. Everything! No resistance anymore. All to You." Honor. "We will obey You. We will honor everything that You want." Power. The Antichrist's power over the nations is over. All the power of the nations rightfully belongs to that Man.

"For true and righteous are Your judgments. For He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth and avenged on her the blood of the saints" (Rev. 19:2, paraphrased).

CORRUPTION AND OPPRESSION: IMMORALITY AND MARTYRDOM

Paragraph B. The two main reasons for judgments. Not the only two, but they're highlighted in verse 2. Corruption and oppression: those are the two issues. Or you could call it, in a more poignant way, immorality and martyrdom. That's what's going on. The Antichrist's kingdom and the systems of the world became more and more corrupt in their immorality—
not only in immorality, but that's the one that's highlighted. And they became more oppressive, killing the saints.

The reason we care about verse 2, these two things, corruption and oppression, is because they give us the key to understanding His heart. These move Him. It's not OK to live in immorality. This moves Him. It's not OK to oppress people. Of all the lists of sins the earth is filled with at the time of His coming, those move His heart in a special way. Those two are the top of the list of Satan's strategy to defile the nations. The real issue is that both of them are attacking the bride's love for Jesus. Because His real agenda is to give our hearts fully to Him in love. Immorality defiles our love. That's what the devil wants. He doesn't want us to love Him that way. He doesn't want us to love Jesus, to be empowered in love. To murder the saints cuts off the love. Satan has a two-pronged strategy. One, the saints participate in the immorality. The oppression is something done to the saints. He wants to undermine the love of the Church, because the prepared bride in verse 7 is where this thing is going.

THE MOST OFFENSIVE ISSUE OF JESUS' LEADERSHIP

Notice, in verse 3 they yell another *hallelujah*: "Her smoke rises up forever and ever" (Rev. 19:3)!

In verses 1 and 2, they said, "We agree with Your temporal judgments—the judgments You've released in this age." Then they bring it up a notch. Now that they see the whole story, they say, "Hallelujah, the judgment lasts forever and forever." The issue of eternal judgment is the most offensive issue that Jesus is charged with, both

in and outside the Church. There is coming a day when every one of God's people, for the first time in history, 100 percent of God's people will 100 percent agree with Jesus' leadership. That's on the wedding day. This is a glorious thing. I want to agree with His leadership now.

The reason judgment is emphasized is because it's the most offensive part of His leadership. There are many facets of His leadership that are easier to handle that we still wrestle with. If we can accept His leadership in the most extreme area of judgment, we can accept His leadership in every area.

THE HUMAN AND ANGELIC REALMS ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH JESUS

Now in verse 4, we see the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. These are the highest. I believe the elders represent the humans that are redeemed. The four living creatures represent the rank of the angels, the angelic beings. Here's the point: the highest beings in the government circles of heaven, who represent the human and angelic realms, agree. They're overwhelmed. Look at what they do. They see the saints all in agreement with Jesus for the first time in history. One hundred percent of God's people agree with Him 100 percent.

The angels and the elders fall down. They're absolutely overwhelmed. They fall down before Him. They say, "Hallelujah! This is amazing! Look at it. It has really happened like the Father said."

THE MYSTERY OF GOD WILL FINALLY BE COMPLETE

Paragraph C. What has really happened? Here's what God promised before the return of Jesus: that the mystery of God would be finished or completed (Rev. 10:7). What is the mystery of God? What is the secret plan of God that no one knows about, except for by the Word and the Spirit? It's revealed in the New Testament.

Number one: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We will have a new heart.

Number two: in a moment, we will receive a resurrected body.

Number three: Jew and Gentile, all the people of God, will be totally unified (Eph. 3:1-7). Unified people.

Number four: the great mystery of Christ and the Church as bride and Bridegroom. That's the fourfold mystery, as Paul lays it out—new heart, new body, deep unity with one another, unity with Jesus' heart. These twenty-four elders, these four living creatures, say, "Look at it. The whole of the redeemed, several billion, are in perfect unity with one another and perfect unity with Jesus. What the Father promised Jesus has happened: voluntarily, they've all said yes to Him. Look at it." They fall down overwhelmed that the Father kept His promise to the Son. It's openly manifest to them. It's not like one day this will happen; the mystery unfolds right before them. The Father proved Himself true.

The Father said, "I will give My Son a people. They'll love Him by their own free will. They'll be unified. They'll have a new body, a new heart, and they'll be His forever." The elders and the living creatures see it in front of their eyes. They're awestruck on the wedding day.

"LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE AND GIVE HIM GLORY"

Top of page four. Verse 6. "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude" (Rev. 19:6). There they are again! Twice the bride is called "the multitude"—in verses 1 and 6. The multitude is the bride from all nations.

Notice this: she sounds like many waters and like mighty thunderings. Then she shouts a fourth *hallelujah*: “We agree!” “The Lord has power. He’s Omnipotent. He has all power. His power is infinitely superior to anyone else who has power. There is none like Him. He reigns.”

Then the great statement: “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” (Rev. 19:7).

Paragraph A. The bride is celebrating because God’s reign is manifest. His reign isn’t just His reign in heaven; He’s reigning in heaven right now. They’re saying more here. It’s Revelation 11:15: “The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ forever, and He will reign upon the earth” (Rev. 11:15, paraphrased). They’re talking about Jesus’ return and taking over all the governments of the earth. They’re talking about His earthly reign. They’re not for the first time in the book acknowledging His heavenly reign; His heavenly reign is in place right now. The thing that moves everyone is that there is a man who is now going to reign on the earth. On the wedding day it all comes to pass. All He has left is the great war to wage, the last part of chapter 19 that happens very quickly.

They say, “Hallelujah! We agree. We agree with Jesus’ leadership. We agree with the Father: His power being manifest through His Son to control all the earth.”

HER VOICE IS LIKE MANY WATERS AND LIKE MIGHTY THUNDERINGS

Notice the voice of the multitude: her voice is like many waters and like mighty thunderings. Wait a second! In chapter 1:15, Jesus’ voice is like many waters. Several times in the Word of God, the Father or the Son’s voice is like thunder. Wait, she sounds like Him for the first time in history! When she talks in unity with His heart, it’s lightning and thunder, just like He talks.

I tell you, the Church, the bride, is saying, “We love His leadership. He’s omnipotent! He reigns on the earth!” She sounds like He sounds with the same authority.

Whoa! Who are we anyway? The ultimate statement for which God’s authority is being manifest is verse 7: “For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7).

“YOUR PEOPLE WILL OFFER THEMSELVES . . . FREELY ON THE DAY OF YOUR POWER”

Paragraph B. She made herself ready. That’s a very important statement. She isn’t saying, “Holy Spirit, I don’t need You; I did it myself.” That’s not what’s going on. It’s emphasized that she made herself ready. This is a statement of her desire to fully cooperate. She knows it’s the grace of God. She knows it was granted to her by God’s grace, but even with the power of God, until we say yes with all of our heart, it doesn’t take root.

It’s amazing that on the wedding day, the Holy Spirit highlights that the free will of the people of God was actively engaged because of love. That’s to the glory of God that Jesus doesn’t want a shotgun wedding. Jesus doesn’t want anyone in the marriage who doesn’t want to be in the marriage. “Father, does she want My leadership? Does she want the relationship? Will she obey Me?”

It says here by the Spirit, she has said yes in those years leading up to His return. God is raising up a people who voluntarily obey with all their heart.

Yes, the power is the grace of God, but there is a point in the grace of God where God will not violate our free will. If we don't say yes, He won't make us obey. He doesn't want a bride who doesn't want to be married and a part of the relationship on His terms.

JESUS WILL MAKE KNOWN THE WAY HE FEELS ABOUT THE WAY WE LOVED HIM

Paragraph C. It was granted. Now we have the grace of God, the sovereignty of God. She has garments. She has these supernatural garments that Jesus gives her to reward her for the way she loved Him. As I've said over the years, eternal rewards aren't about us strutting in front of people; they're about Jesus making known the way He feels about the way we loved Him. Beloved, we will all have the free gift of salvation, but we will all have different measures of degree of glory in our garments and in crowns and in spheres of rule. We will all have a different measure of the glory of God. It will be related to not how big our ministry was, but how big our heart was: our responsiveness to Him on the earth in this age.

Every single one of you in this room who is born again, you'll have the free access into the city because of His blood, but your place in the city and the measure of glory that He gives you is related to your responsiveness to Him in this age. Because He's saying this: "I will give you garments that tell you how I feel about the way you loved Me." You'll wear your love forever. You'll wear it. Not to show off, but because of the affirmation that Jesus has in giving them to you.

"WHOEVER HAS THIS HOPE PURIFIES HIMSELF AS HE IS PURE"

Paragraph D. "Blessed are those who are called the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9)! There are two ways to interpret this passage. The first way is that among the resurrected saints, some of them are called to the marriage supper and some of them are not. Many interpret it that way. Among the several billion in heaven, whatever the number might be, some of them who were more obedient go to the wedding supper, and others don't.

I don't think that's the right interpretation, but I understand how people arrive at that. I don't think we're just blessed when we get there as distinguished from others who don't participate. What I think is that the Spirit is giving this message to John for the persecuted saints in his day. They're in prison. They're walking in costly obedience. He says, "John, tell them to endure. Don't give up; don't give in. They're blessed. They're going to the wedding supper. Tell them the blessing is to move them now even in this age."

Oh yes, they'll be happy in the age to come. The blessing will touch them there, but the blessing is to shine on our heart now and to purify us by the hope of that day. I believe all the saints will be at the wedding supper. Isaiah talks about the wedding supper. There are several verses; I don't really want to go into the details. I just wanted to give a snapshot of these ten verses.

WE WILL DRINK OF THE MARRIAGE WINE ON THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

Look at this. It's a great passage. I'm bringing it to an end here. Paragraph E. In the passage just before, Isaiah is describing the mountain on which Jesus reigns in the millennial earth. This mountain of verse 6 goes back a few verses. Verses 23 and 24 are all one big context.

Jesus will make a feast forever on Mt. Zion (Isa. 25:6). All the saints, the redeemed as well as those on the millennial earth, will be part of a great feast. On this mountain, He will destroy the covering, the veil, that's spread over the nations (v. 7). The veil between the spirit realm and the natural realm will be lifted. When Jesus

comes and brings the New Jerusalem down to the earth, the veil between the two realms is destroyed forever. There will be angels, the visible presence of Jesus, saints with resurrected bodies, and people with natural bodies: the veil is lifted and death is swallowed up forever. The Lord hosts a great feast on that mountain.

JOHN WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE SCOPE OF REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

Paragraph G. When John saw the revelation of the bride, he responded so extravagantly that he stepped over the line. He worshiped the messenger. He said to the angel, “I love you! I love you! I love you!”

The angel said, “Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! I’m a messenger!” John was so overwhelmed. He saw all of redeemed history bowing down in perfect unity before Jesus. They saw the glory of God on the bride and the Bridegroom, and to John it was personal. Here is this elderly man in a prison on the isle of Patmos. He’s overwhelmed. I believe he sees his destiny in it. He says, “This is personal to me.”

My point is this. Yes, he did get rebuked for responding to the angel in an inappropriate way, but I want to point out that he was overwhelmed by the revelation. That’s how powerful this revelation is if we get it. Beloved, who are we do Him? Who is He? What kind of God is He anyway? He’s a bridegroom God and you’re His eternal companion. You’re His bride forever. That’s the worth you have to Him. Amen.