

The Great Supper of the Lamb

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[0 : 00] For our scripture reading, before we hear the word of God preached, it's from Hosea chapter 2. And it's just two verses from Hosea chapter 2.

And these are verses of great hope and comfort of a future day. And it's a day that God spoke of initially to his people Israel here in the Old Testament. And we're looking at verses 19 to 20. This is the word of the Lord. I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord. It's a blessing to be here, to worship together, to consider Christ our prophet, priest, and king.

Christ the lover of our souls. We're going to be looking at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And you already heard that great text from the Old Testament that shows that God from eternity, that God from the Lord, who was in the Old Testament, had intended to have a people that would be his bride, to whom he would be a husband.

[1 : 25] Weddings. Wedding receptions. We like them. They're enjoyable. What comes to your mind?

What is it that's fun and enjoyable about a wedding? Love. The love of the bride and the groom. And in many weddings, you have a sight. You can kind of see the bride and groom, and you can see that eye contact.

You can see the love they have for one another. And those of you who are married often have a heart and a desire to renew your marriage vows and to say, yes, we want to love.

And if you're not married, sometimes you think, oh, I want to be in a loving marriage. And then there's feasting that's an integral part of a good reception.

[2 : 40] Sometimes weddings can be very expensive. Royal weddings. Location weddings. Often even the media will focus on a wedding.

The wedding of Princess Diana and Prince Charles way back when. These weddings, as heartwarming as they are, are not perfect.

Princess Diana and Charles showed that they did not have a full loving relationship. Sometimes somebody gets drunk.

There's jealousies. There's a lack of unity. Well, today, we are going to be looking at the greatest wedding of all.

The costliest wedding of all. The perfect wedding in which there is no spot and blemish and which is eternal in every way.

[3 : 56] I won't be able to go into every detail, but we will see this great wedding that God has for us.

It's found in Revelation. And to understand that wedding a little better, let's just remember the basic message of Revelation.

The churches in Asia Minor had heard the gospel, and they had heard God's wonderful promises about the kingdom of God, about God's love.

They had believed and were anticipating. But as they looked around, they don't see the promised kingdom.

They see Rome, the beast, Rome, and they would have easily have understood all the beast language as describing Rome.

[5 : 00] Gross immorality on every side. They were compromising. God reveals to them reality, the true state of affairs.

Things are not as you think as they appear. The reality is Jesus is the king, as Pastor Colin reminded us.

Not Caesar. Caesar. And the kingdom of God is ultimate. Not Rome, Babylon. That kingdom will surely fall.

And Satan, who is behind that beast kingdom, will fall. And God's kingdom will be eternal. And there is intimacy now with God, but there's a greater intimacy with God coming.

God is reigning now, but there is a consummation of his kingdom. God is being worshipped now, but a great and glorious day of fuller worship is coming.

[6 : 16] And that day is seen in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Right in the same passage of the marriage supper of the Lamb, is rejoicing that Babylon has been judged, and now the kingdom of God has come and is consummated.

And the original readers have already started to live in that great reality. And this whole letter, and this explaining the marriage supper of the Lamb, was to be an encouragement to them.

Live as the bride, and don't compromise. It was an encouragement and a call to them, and it is an encouragement and a call to us today.

Chapter 19, in which we see the marriage supper of the Lamb, is a pivotal chapter. And to understand it, it is helpful to see that great pivot from the whore Babylon, which is first mentioned in chapter 14, and then in chapter 16.

And by the way, we see the fall of Babylon being repeated, and so Revelation is not a linear book that describes one thing after another through history in the order at which it appears, but it describes something, then comes back and describes it again, and comes back and describes it again.

[7 : 56] So we have Babylon dwelt on, mentioned earlier, and the fall mentioned earlier, in chapter 17, we see Babylon, the great harlot.

And so that's going to be a tremendous contrast. In the world, we have the Babylon, the harlot, and her followers, but in Christ, we have the pure bride.

In chapter 18, there's great woe. There's a three-fold double woe.

Three times we hear the words, woe, woe, woe, woe, woe, woe, Babylon is fallen. And the sympathizers, those who belong to Babylon, are mourning and wailing and sad that there is no more Babylon.

And then, in chapter 18, we also see a startling silence. 1822, the sound of the harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpets will not be heard in you any longer.

[9 : 21] And no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer. And the sound, even of a mill, will not be heard in you any longer.

And the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer. And then there's even no marriage. And the voice of the bridegroom and the bride will not be heard in you any longer.

And so we have this serious and sobering look at the end of Babylon with woes and with silence. But then, we come to chapter 19 and we have a great connected passage where in verses 1 through 6 we see great praise and worship which leads to the great and climactic marriage of the Lamb.

and then we have a strange and startling incident which we're not going to have time to dwell on this morning. But having considered that context, let's now look at Revelation 9 verses 1 through 10.

[10 : 35] After these things, which things? The things about Babylon. After these things I heard something like a loud no more silence a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying hallelujah salvation and glory and power belong to our God because his judgments are true and righteous for he has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality and he has avenged the blood of his bondservants on her.

And a second time they said hallelujah her smoke rises up forever. And the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worship God who sits on the throne saying amen hallelujah and a voice came from the throne saying give praise to our God all you his bondservants you who fear him the small and the great.

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder saying hallelujah for the Lord God the almighty reigns. We've been building to a crescendo and now we see what is the end of all this rejoicing. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to him for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.

It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen bright and clean for the fine linen is the righteous acts or the righteousnesses of the saints.

[12 : 46] Then he said to me write blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb and he said to me these are the true words of God and then I'll just mention and we won't be opening this up but John is seeing this and he is so overwhelmed that we read then I fell at his feet to worship him but he said to me do not do that I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy this was so overwhelming the truth of the marriage supper and the one giving it that John bowed down but he's told not to do that which is a great answer to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches that say that we should bow down to saints but we're not going to get into that this morning what we are going to see is the marriage supper of the lamb our marriage supper but then after that our marriage supper there should be an exclamation mark but there can also be a question mark is this our marriage supper and

God would call you even now to know that you are in him and to come to him if you're not that you can say that this is your marriage supper We will consider the great worship and praise and rejoicing that specifically leads to the announcement of the marriage supper we will consider the marriage supper as a whole and then we'll look at the groom we'll look at the bride and then we'll finish and see this is the gospel this is the great purpose of history well first let's note the great worship that's associated with and that leads up to the announcement of the marriage supper here we find the word of hallelujah you all know what hallelujah means it means praise god and many many many of our songs have it and you've sung hallelujah many times it's found about 24 times in the old testament in the new testament this is very interesting where is it found in the new testament where do you find the word hallelujah in the new testament only here this is the only place in the new testament that you find the word hallelujah and we find it four times and so this is a special praise and worship the special praise and worship is rising to a crescendo in verse one it starts with a loud voice of a great multitude but then it is increasing and increasing in verse six it's like the sound of a great multitude and the sound of many waters like the sound of mighty peals of thunder within this praise and worship there is proclaiming

God's salvation there is rejoicing at the judgment of Babylon while the unbeliever is mourning God's people are rejoicing there's the proclamation that God is sitting on his throne he is the king not Caesar and then we have that great hallelujah that that handle picks on for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth the praise is building and building and then in verse seven let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory and then we have a great for for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready the marriage supper of the lamb is a pinnacle in

God's work and reality and revelation and there is unique and special praise that's associated with it it is so glorious and we're a part of it are we a part of it have you looked to Christ is he your bridegroom as he is this is great wonderful most excellent most magnificent let's consider the marriage and the marriage supper as a whole in verse 7 we have the Greek word for marriage that can also mean wedding and celebration in verse 9 we definitely have marriage and the supper marriage is something that God created and marriage was created to be a picture of our relationship with

God and Christ earthly marriage is Ephesians 5 husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her so that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that he might present to himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she would be holy and blameless and then at the end of that passage in verse 32 this mystery is great but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church marriage was given to show God's love to his people and a good marriage relationship that is the closest and most loving relationship that human beings can have apart from

[19 : 57] God but our relationship with God is that and so much more God uses other images vine and branch in John 15 and in John 17 Jesus prays that we would be one with him that we would be in that intimate union with him God has always intended to have a close intimate relationship with his people out of trinitarian love God the father loving God the son loving God the holy spirit God created man to experience his love and then God created men and women to experience love to be a picture of his ultimate love man fell into sin and was separated from

God and God uses all kinds of language to speak that he is working in history to redeem man and women to bring them to himself that that love relationship would be restored and one of the

languages that he uses is marriage language and pastor Colin read from Hosea 2 and the picture is one of great restoration of one who is a harlot I will betroth you to me forever in the Old Testament I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice in steadfast love and mercy I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord that's grace that's the gospel of people who have fallen away from God but God is going to bring them to be in intimate relationship and as we trace that promise and see it fulfilled that's biblical theology and

God's great purpose in history is fulfilled in this text the marriage supper of the lamb we see the most the best the greatest the costliest wedding the perfect wedding we see the greatest love the greatest celebration the longest lasting eternal we see a marriage without any spot or blemish nothing ugly only glorious and God has intended this from the beginning and we see in this great marriage on one hand we see the contrast with the world with Babylon the whore and then we also see the contrast later in Revelation 19 those who will not be part of this feast shall be part of another feast do you remember what that is the horrible feast of vultures on all men outside of Christ this is marriage that we have with God this is a description this is a picture of our relationship with him and the Bible says that if we've looked to Christ we are already engaged in 2 Corinthians 11 2 I betrothed you in Ephesians 5 we see the language that the church is already looking to Christ as the great bridegroom a certain consummation of this marriage is scheduled the Holy Spirit has been given to us as a promise as a ring if you will we have already started enjoying God's love and yet there's more to come already but not yet we already enjoy intimate relationship with Christ but more is coming so that's a look at the marriage a look at the groom as we noted throughout the Old Testament God has revealed himself as a husband to his people he is a husband and he will be a husband throughout the whole Old Testament and we looked at one passage from Hosea there are many passages but I'll look at another passage Isaiah 54 4 through 6 fear not for you will not be put to shame and do not feel humiliated for you will not be disgraced but you will forget the shame of your youth and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more for your husband is your maker whose name is the

[25 : 28] Lord Jehovah of hosts and your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel who is called the God of all the earth for the Lord Jehovah has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected says your God and here in the marriage supper of the Lamb we see this great truth fulfilled and here the groom is clearly identified as who the Lamb who is the Lamb it is Jesus in the Old Testament says Jehovah is the husband in the New Testament the husband is identified as the Lamb as Jesus Jesus is God the

Son and the fact that he is identified as a Lamb speaks to us of the Gospel John said behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in Revelation 5 it says and I saw between the throne with the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb standing as if slain the Lamb who makes his bride clean the Lamb who gives his life for the bride as we read in Ephesians 5 the Lamb who makes the bride clean without any spot or blemish because she was dirty she was filthy God the Father is holding the greatest wedding of all for his son God the son and

God takes pleasure in his bride God takes pleasure in you as you are looking forward to this marriage Isaiah 62 4 it will no longer be said to you forsaken nor to your land will it any longer be said desolate but you will be called my delight is in her and your land married for the Lord Jehovah delights in you and at the end of verse 5 it says so your God will rejoice over you God takes pleasure in you it's not just that God has saved you but God loves you and rejoices you and delights in you and the true

Christian life is experiencing that active love and rejoicing of God in us it is not that we've just been reconciled to an angry God no a loving God has sent the Son because he delights and loves us and that Son loves and delights in us that's the groom Jesus he gave himself for us he delights and loves us and then let's consider the bride just as God is revealed to be a husband to his people his people are revealed to be God's bride throughout the Old Testament and Pastor Colin read the Hosea passage I will betroth you so you're the bride to me forever and here in this glorious passage we see the consummation and we read the details of how that came to place in

Ephesians 5 here there's a focusing on the clothing of the bride and in ordinary weddings everybody's looking at how the bride is dressed and you know there's that tradition that most people don't see what the bride is wearing until she comes out and then it's ooh and ah and even in modern history there's certain bridal dresses that people remember and then become celebrity weddings mention princess Deanna again and then those dresses become patterns for other

dresses well this is the most glorious bridal dress fine linen bright and clean shining for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints this wonderful bridal garment the basic point here is that it is given to her verse 8 it was given to her to clothe herself

[31 : 03] God's grace God gives us righteousness God makes us what we are not and then we see that the bride who has been called and made righteous by God she makes herself ready and you can think of ordinary weddings and brides how much they do to make themselves ready and then how much more we who know that we are betrothed engaged to God we make ourselves ready we keep ourselves pure and holy with wonderful anticipation and even that which we do growing in sanctification we all do by the grace of God but it is mentioned here that the bride makes herself ready she's already the bride she doesn't get herself ready and then become the bride but God's righteousness is poured out upon us and then we love him and we grow in our waiting for him in preparation and faithfulness and we experience the bride experiences the delight that God has in us and so we have this marriage we have the groom and the bride and in the context the great contrast between the filthy poor

Babylon and the glorious clean pure bride of Christ this is the gospel this is the great purpose of history that we would come and glorify and enjoy God forever in the closest of relationships based on what he has done God out of his eternal love in the trinity father son and holy spirit created Adam and Eve created marriage and what started in the garden finishes here at the end in revelation history is a love story between God and his people do you know what the most popular best-selling genre of fiction is it's romance romance books do you know what the second one is mystery books those are those are the two great genres is Vicki going to correct me well in the Bible we have the greatest romance story of God calling his people to be his bride

God brings a sinful unclean people to be his pure clean bride God makes his bride glorious and clean God the father plans sends God the son and God the holy spirit moves our hearts and then we have the wedding feast and the eternal kingdom forever and ever and ever we're already engaged for I feel divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ says Paul in 2nd Corinthians 11 this is real Christianity a living loving relationship with God knowing that you're clean and that he has made you so our brothers and sisters in those seven churches were discouraging and they were compromising but this is written to encourage them and us

God loves his bride now God is with us now and there will be a yet greater future God has given us the Holy Spirit and we know God's love already but in the future more and more and this is something to consider this is something to meditate upon this is a great blessing then he said to me right blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb in verse nine don't get sidetracked in your love relationship with the lamb by the whore babylon okay and what do I mean by that who is the beast kingdom in revelation it's Rome and there would have been no doubt about that and why is Rome guilty of being the beast kingdom because Rome is usurping to itself what only belongs to God

Rome is claiming to be the ultimate authority the representative of Rome Caesar is calling for people to offer incense to him and Rome claims to have the final authority in all matters Rome does not recognize God as having ultimate authority over its citizens which country and which system is like that today which country is it that says we are the ultimate authority the government is the ultimate authority every government every country there is no single country on the earth that defers to God and so we need to be careful we're called to be responsible citizens that's not an issue but we need to be careful to find our place of love and acceptance in the world and in whatever political system as opposed to God the original readers had that encouragement

[38 : 01] God loves you don't worry about the beast kingdom and we need to hear that message as well God loves you don't worry about the beast kingdom as we close this is the great purpose of history a people married to God to enjoy and glorify him throughout eternity and we've already started do you know this love of God is this the marriage that you are looking forward to if not God is calling you this morning there is a great love to be experienced and it is in Christ you have sin that prevents you and that sin is dirty and it's ugly but God has dealt with that sin in Christ and God calls you to Christ to be made clean and then in that cleanness and purity to experience the love of Christ in fullness to start now and to look forward to the great marriage supper of the

Lamb and at the end of Revelation we have a general call the spirit and the bride say come to whom to everyone to all of you and let the one who hears say come and let the one who is thirsty

come let the one who wishes take of the water of life without cost and so God is calling you don't be satisfied with lesser loves come to Christ that you would experience his love which is greater than any man or woman or father or son or mother or daughter or anyone girlfriend boyfriend yes you have sin in the way but Jesus has provided for that sin and he calls you to look to him and he will give you to drink and if you haven't done that talk to somebody who has even today and you for whom this is your marriage supper and you're looking forward to it live in this love enjoy God's delight commune with him express your love to him in your devotions in your reading of scripture in your family devotions in your meditations and then live as a faithful bride making yourself ready and then one more wonderful truth be calling others isn't it interesting how revelation ends in the last chapter 22 17 the spirit and the bride say come so we as the bride are to call others and let the one who hears have you heard today let the one who hears say come to others and let the one who is thirsty come and let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost amen let's pray

Lord you are God Father Son and Holy Spirit we who know your love we rejoice and we look forward and help us to live in your life and Lord truly we pray that if there is anyone who has not experienced your love who has not looked to you help them to understand help them to come we pray in Jesus name amen