

THE TWO MARRIAGES OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:6-10—And I heard as a voice of a great crowd, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of strong thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for [the] Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power. Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. And he says to me, Write, Blessed [are] they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb. And he says to me, These are the true words of God. And I fell before his feet to do him homage. And he says to me, See [thou do it] not. I am thy fellow-bondman, and [the fellow-bondman] of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God. For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 21:1-3, 9-10—And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of the heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God...And there came one of the seven angels which had had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in [the] Spirit, [and set me] on a great and high mountain, and shew me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, it is the longing of Thy people throughout the ages crying unto Thee, "Come, Lord Jesus." Will You not answer our prayer and come—and come quickly? Thy people are waiting for Thee. If we are not ready, prepare us, work in us, do not allow us to drift along, but lay Thy hand upon us, transform us, conform us to Thy own image until Thou are able to come. Lord, this is the cry of our hearts: "Come, Lord Jesus, come." We ask in Thy name. Amen.

God Wants A Helpmate for His Son

As we read the Word of God, we find that the Bible begins with a marriage and it also ends with a marriage. It seems as if God's purpose for man is represented by the idea of a marriage. When God created Adam, He said, "It is not good for man to be alone, let Me make him a helpmate, his like" (see Genesis 2:18). In the right sense, Adam represents Christ, and it is God's purpose that His only beloved Son Christ Jesus should have a companion, His like.

We remember how God led all the animals to Adam, and he named each one of them. Even though he gave each animal a name, he could not find his like. So God put him to sleep, and out of his side, God took out something and used that something to build a woman. Then He led that

woman to Adam. Adam said, “This is me,” and the two were united into one. So from the very beginning of creation, God already had that thought. He does not want His Son to be alone; He wants to give Him a helpmate, His like. And that is what the church is to be.

Two Marriages

Towards the end of the Bible, we will find marriage again being mentioned—the marriage of the Lamb. It happened in Revelation 19 and again in Revelation 21 and 22. As we look at the two times this is mentioned, can we say there is one marriage or two? From the description it seems to say very clearly that there are two. Why do we say so? Because if you read carefully, you will find they are a thousand years apart. The first mention of the marriage of the Lamb occurs at the beginning of the millennium and the closing of this age. But the second mentioning in Revelation 21 and 22 happens in eternity after the millennium. So we can see that time-wise the marriage of the Lamb is mentioned twice.

Also, there is a difference between the composition of the wife and the bride of the Lamb. As we read the whole book of Revelation, we find that the difference in composition is due to the failure of the church; therefore in chapters 2 and 3 there is the call to overcome. To every church the Lord says, “He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes ...” In other words, because of the failure of the church as a whole (men may fail but God never fails) He has an emergency measure. Through the overcomers of the church He will eventually bring the whole church into the fullness of Christ in eternity.

Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation occurred towards the end of the first century. We know that of the twelve apostles only John was still alive, and because of the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. There he was given a vision of the seven churches in Asia Minor which he had served in his old age before he was exiled. Naturally, when he had opportunity, he would be thinking of those seven churches. Then he was given a vision in which he saw seven golden lampstands and one like the Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. And we know this is a picture of the heavenly ministry of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus Laid the Foundation for the Church

When Jesus was on earth, He was our Apostle; He was one sent by God to accomplish a certain purpose—the work of redemption and salvation. On the cross of Calvary He said, “It is finished!” He has done it, thus laying the foundation for the building of the church. After His ascension, He became the High Priest, but it was not only to the individuals. We thank God that we can know our Lord Jesus as our personal High Priest; otherwise we are not able to live our Christian life. We may struggle and try hard, but we will always fail. But thank God, we have a High Priest. He is there interceding for us without ceasing, and He is able to save us to the uttermost. However, He is not only our High Priest individually; at the same time He is the High Priest of the church. He is there ministering to His church and looking to see how much within the church is an expression of Himself. But because of the failure of the church, He calls for overcomers. Now overcomers of the church are not separated from the church; they are part of it. But thank God, they are those who respond to the call of God. They are those who allow the grace of God to work in their lives to deliver them from themselves and to build up within them

the full stature of Christ. So in chapters 2 and 3, we see the overcomers of the church at the end of the first century.

The Overcomers Throughout the Ages

Then Revelation 7:9-17 says this: “After these things I saw, and lo, a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands. And they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood around the throne, and the elders, and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and strength, to our God, to the ages of ages. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed with white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I said to him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sits upon the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall not hunger anymore, neither shall they thirst any more, nor shall the sun at all fall on them, nor any burning heat; because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Who are in the multitude that cannot be numbered? We know they are all clothed in white. They are washed in the blood of our Lord Jesus, and in their hands they all have palm branches. That is a symbol of victory. In other words, these are the people that came out of the great tribulation. Now the great tribulation here is not the three and a half years of tribulation that we read of (see Revelation 12:14). So far as the Word is concerned, God’s people always live under great tribulation because the enemy of God is out against those who are the Lord’s. But through the great tribulation they came out victoriously through the blood of the Lamb. For the sake of the Lord, they have hungered and thirsted. The sun fell upon them in burning heat, but now the Lamb is shepherding them. These represent the overcomers throughout the ages. Thank God, in every century, there have been overcomers. No matter what the condition of the church might be, God has His overcomers, those who are faithful to Him.

The Woman in Travail for the Manchild

In Revelation, chapter 12, John was given a vision. He saw in the heavens: “And behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems; and his tail draws the third part of the stars of the heaven; and he cast them to the earth” (vv. 3a-4a).

Of course, we know who that dragon is; it is Satan. He drew away one third of the angelic hosts to follow him, and then they were expelled from the third heaven. Now they are using the air that surrounds the earth to be their headquarters for their work which is upon the earth. So what was this red dragon doing?

The Bible tells us: “And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, in order that when she brought forth he might devour her child” (v. 4b).

It is very strange that the dragon was standing before the woman. That woman represents the church throughout the centuries; or to put it in another way, it is the church before the coming of the Lord. Or we may put it still another way; this is the church in our time. The church is like a woman, gloriously clothed by the grace of God; but unfortunately, she had sadly failed. The dragon should have been against that woman because she is supposed to be his enemy. If the woman had been standing with God, she would have been the target of the attack of the enemy. But strangely, even though the dragon stood before the woman, his attention was not upon her. In other words, the woman could do nothing to him, for she was already in his hands, in a sense. So his interest was no more upon that woman but upon her womb. She was in travail, but this is not a vain travailing; it is the suffering of a birth. The woman was in travail to give birth to a manchild, and this became the target of the enemy. He was waiting for that manchild to be born so that he could swallow him because he knew this manchild would mark the end of his life.

Who is this manchild? Some people say it refers to Jesus Christ; but that cannot be so. After our Lord Jesus was born, He was on earth for thirty-three and a half years; He was not immediately raptured to the throne. So then, who is this manchild?

The Manchild—The Overcomers at the Coming of the Lord

When this child was born, immediately he was caught up to the throne of God. In other words, this manchild is a collective term. It is not just one person. It represents a group of people—those Christians who are overcomers living at the coming of the Lord. And as soon as this manchild is born, he is caught up. He is able to get through the air which is the headquarters of Satan. That means he has overcome Satan and was able to arrive at the throne. These are the overcomers at the end of this age, and they become the welcoming party for the return of our Lord Jesus. In a sense they prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. So as soon as the manchild is taken into heaven to the throne, then Michael and his angels fight with Satan and his followers. There is no more place for Satan in the air. He and his followers are thrown from the air to the earth, and the air is clear for the Lord Jesus to come from the throne to the air; it is invisible.

So this manchild is none other than those who have been caught up to the throne. They are the overcomers at the coming of the Lord, and if by the grace of God we are in the rank, thank God for that. We have mentioned that from the throne to the air is invisible. The Lord Jesus is coming like a thief taking that which pleases His heart, and these are the overcomers in our time. In one sense, it is joyful news, but in another sense, it is a warning. What if we are left behind? What will happen to us if we are left behind? When Satan is thrown from the air to the earth, the great tribulation of three and a half years begins. What can you expect other than that when Satan is upon this earth? But thank God, those who are faithful to the Lord are already gone. Those Christians who are left on this earth will go through great tribulation; but in one sense it is still the grace of God because the Lord will give them a second chance, another opportunity to be faithful to Him.

But those who are raptured to the third heaven are ones who have overcome the enemy. How did they overcome? It is not because they are better than anybody else. The Bible tells us in Revelation 12:11: "They have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, by reason of the word of their testimony, and they have not loved their life even unto death."

They Overcame By the Blood of the Lamb

They overcame the enemy not by their own strength; it is by the blood of the Lamb. In other words, they treasure the blood of the Lamb. They know they are not perfect and need cleansing. They trust in the blood of the Lamb to cleanse them. As some people say, even the tears of our repentance need to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. He is so holy and we are so unclean. But thank God, they believe in the blood of the Lamb.

I love to tell the story of Martin Luther. We know that he was the Reformer and God used him mightily. He had a dream, and in it he saw Satan coming to him showing him a scroll written inside and out and it listed all his sins. So Satan challenged him and said, "Dare you to be the Reformer? Look at yourself; these are your sins." Martin Luther took up a pen and wrote over it: "The blood of Jesus cleansed me from all sins." And Satan disappeared.

So we can see that there is nothing to be proud of. It is not because we are any better than anyone else. We need the blood of the Lord Jesus constantly. So they overcome by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

They Overcame By the Word of Their Testimony

Secondly, "by reason of the word of their testimony." They have a testimony; it is the testimony of Jesus. They have the word of testimony. In other words, they speak out; they declare it. It is not hidden; it is open.

You will remember in the book of Acts, chapter 19, that Paul went to Ephesus. In that city there were seven sons of the high priest who were exorcists, and they went around casting out demons. They had seen how successful Paul was in casting out demons in the name of the Lord Jesus, so they adopted the same way. But when they tried to cast out demons by using the name of Jesus whom Paul preached, the demons said, "Paul I know, Christ I know, but who are you?" And the demons overcame them and they fled naked. This was known all over Ephesus.

If we want to speak the word of our testimony, it has to be true. If our life is not under the testimony of Jesus, if our life does not testify that Jesus is Lord, He is our Lord, then our word will be worthless, useless, and powerless. But because the overcomers put themselves under the rule of Christ, allowing Christ to be the head, to be all to them, therefore, when they say, "Jesus is Lord," it is powerful. So they overcome the enemy by the word of their mouth.

They Do Not Love Their Soul-life Unto Death

Thirdly, they do not love their soul-life even unto death. They are willing to lay down their soul-life for the sake of Christ. And by this they overcome the enemy.

In Revelation, chapter 19, we have already mentioned they were able to attend the wedding of the Lamb because they have been clothed with the wedding garment. In their individual lives, they allowed the Holy Spirit to work in their lives to get rid of anything that is not of Christ and let Christ be woven into their lives. But chapter 12 tells us that they overcome the enemy. We not only need to overcome our self, we also need to overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony and we love not our lives even unto death.

The Overcomers in the Great Tribulation

In chapter 15 it says, “And I saw another sign in the heaven, great and wonderful: seven angels having seven plagues, the last; for in them the fury of God is completed. And I saw as a glass sea, mingled with fire, and those that had gained the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over the number of its name, standing upon the glass sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses bondman of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true [are] thy ways, O King of nations. Who shall not fear [thee], O Lord, and glorify thy name? for [thou] only [art] holy; for all nations shall come and do homage before thee; for thy righteousnesses have been made manifest” (vv. 1-4).

These are overcomers in the great tribulation. Thank God, even during the great tribulation, God gives His people another opportunity to be overcomers, and they will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

We are living on the verge of a great change. It will be changed from the age of grace to the age of righteousness because Christ shall reign upon this earth for a thousand years. And those who are faithful to Him will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Even before our eyes these things are happening all over the world and the rapture of the overcomers can occur at any moment. Nobody knows when our Lord will come back; only God knows. But when He shall come, those who are prepared are ready, but those who are unprepared, it will be unexpected. After the Lord has come to the air with the overcomers, there will be the great tribulation on the earth—a tribulation that the world has never experienced before because Satan is upon the earth.

The Last War of Armageddon

At the end of the great tribulation, the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus will come back with His overcomers from the air to the Mount of Olives. At that time Jerusalem will be surrounded, and the Lord will come and deliver them. When His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the mountain will be cleaved into two parts leaving a way for those to flee from the city. Then there will be the last war of Armageddon, which is a war of Christ and His followers against Satan and the world. But of course, by the breath of the mouth of our Lord Jesus, the enemy will be destroyed. Satan will be bound and put into a bottomless pit for a thousand years, and there will be the judgment of the nations as we find in Matthew 25. The nations will be gathered before Him as the sheep nations or the goat nations. The sheep nations will go into the millennium as the nations on earth, but the goat nations will be destroyed.

The Bible tells us that during the thousand years righteousness will rule over the whole earth. But after the thousand years, Satan will be released temporarily, and he will try to entice the nations again. Unfortunately, you find that some of the nations will still follow him. But Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire. The old heaven and old earth will pass away and the new heaven and new earth will come, and the tabernacle of God will descend on this new earth.

Repent for the Kingdom of God Is at Hand

When we are considering what the Word tells us of what is going to happen, what should be our right reaction? Do we take this as hearsay, as nothing? Are we still able to go on as usual? Or will we repent and really turn our whole heart towards the Lord and seek Him, love Him and serve Him?

This whole thing is now before you, dear brothers and sisters. You cannot say you have not heard. You have heard, and it is your decision now. What will be your attitude towards the Lord? So may the Lord awaken each and every one of us and by His grace we may be among those in the manchild raptured to the throne!

Let's pray:

Dear Lord, we do bow our heads in worship. We praise and thank Thee that Thy promise is true. Even though we may think Thou hast delayed because the church is not ready, yet Lord Thou hast a way to overcome and to fulfill all that Thou hast promised. Dear Lord, we do offer ourselves to Thee afresh and say, Lord, work in our lives until we are prepared for Thee and may be taken by Thee. Oh Lord, it is the cry of our heart as we sang in the beginning, "Come, come quickly, Lord Jesus." Amen.