

Well, let's take our Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter 19, verses 1 to 10. I want to speak this morning on the subject the Royal Wedding. We're in a series on heaven, and here in Revelation 19:1 to 10 a future wedding is described for us. Keep your Bible open Revelation 19:1 to 10.

Everybody loves a royal wedding, don't they? And I can prove that, because it was estimated that well over 1 billion people around the world tuned in on the 29th of April, 2011 to watch at least part of a royal wedding, the royal wedding between Prince William and Kate Middleton. It was the wedding of the new millennium. It was estimated to cost around \$34 million in comparison to the average wedding that you and I see at \$27,000. Its popularity is measured in the fact that almost 3 million Facebook status updates talked about the event, and over 10 million tweets went out across Twitter talking about the event. Everybody loves a royal wedding.

But listen to me this morning. The best royal wedding is still to come. For as dazzling and as captivating as the marriage between Prince William and Kate was, it will come a distant second to a heavenly wedding described for us here in Revelation 19:1 to 10, a wedding on God's prophetic calendar regarding the Church. It's what's called the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

Look at verse 7 of our text. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give God glory for the Marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready, and to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

This is the wedding between the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and his bride, the Church. It's going to take place in heaven just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and it's going to spill over onto the Millennial Kingdom, and there'll be many guests who will join the Church during that festival and feast.

Listen carefully. You maybe put this together, but I'll remind you this morning in our series on heaven that there are three key future events that comprise the Church's distinct prophetic program: one, the Rapture; two, the Judgment Seat of Christ; and three, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. In the first, the Church will be caught up to the Father's house. In the second, each believer will be rewarded according to their works. We looked at that. And thirdly, the bride now made ready will be presented to her bridegroom. The Church will be presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle, right? Ephesians 5:29. And all this takes place, as I said, just prior to Jesus' return to Earth at his Second Coming.

Now, before I go any further, I don't know if you've noticed this, but the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. In the book of Genesis, we begin with a wedding between Adam and Eve as God institutes marriage within human history between a man and a woman. Then when we get to the book of Revelation, here we are bumping up against the very end of history. Here we are at the capstone of the Canon of Scripture, and we have another wedding. This time it's the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his bride, the Church in heaven.

If you study your Bible, the Bible tells us of some 20 weddings that were celebrated, and the Bible itself celebrates marriage in one book alone, the Song of Solomon. Now, before we look at the text of Revelation 19:1 to 10, I would remind you that the first wedding between Adam and Eve had this wedding between Christ and his Church in mind. I don't know if you've ever thought about that, but it's true. In fact, here's something else you need to think about. In a very real sense, every marriage has this

future marriage in mind. Why would I say that? Because every marriage is a reflection of the pre-existing love between Christ and the Church.

There are many purposes to marriage, right? Friendship, procreation, sexual purity, pleasure, companionship. But one of the purposes is to reflect the pre-existing love between Christ and his Church. I don't know if you noticed that if you've ever studied Ephesians 5, but if you go to Ephesians 5 and verse 32, as we get to the end of that wonderful chapter on marriage when men are told to love their wives as Christ loves the Church and women are told to submit to their husbands as the Church submits to the lordship of Jesus Christ, speaking about that relationship between the husband and the wife within marriage, in verse 32, we read, "This is a great mystery," talking about marriage. "For I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

Your marriage and my marriage should reflect the love between Christ and the Church. That's my argument. That's why every marriage anticipates this marriage we're going to look at in Revelation 19 verses 1 through 10. The love between believers within marriage is a visual expression of the love between Christ and the Church.

Think about that. Let that redefine your thinking regarding marriage. Let that bring an importance to the relationship between you and your spouse, or if you're in an engagement situation right now, let that feed your thinking about the relationship that's unfolding between you as a boy and her as a girl. Because marriage not only reflects the image of God in man and woman, it preaches and prizes the gospel.

I just want you to think about that. I have just made an argument that marriage is a gospel issue. Remember it's not just for procreation, it's not just for human fulfillment, and it is all of that. It is a projection and a reflection of the love between Christ and the Church. Every marriage speaks to this final marriage.

In fact, there will be no giving in marriage in heaven. I'll maybe answer this more fully in a coming sermon, but if you want an answer to the question will I be married in heaven if I'm married now, the answer is no. The one-on-one marriages that you and I enjoy right now will no longer exist. Jesus tells us that in Matthew 22:29 to 30. We would remind ourselves according to 1st Corinthians 7 in the letter to the Romans that death ends the marriage relationship. In fact, we've got that in our vows, "Until death does us part." So there will be no marriage in heaven. If you're now in a bad marriage, that's heaven. If you're in a good marriage, you're struggling with that thought of not being with your spouse anymore, but listen. It's not that there won't be marriage in heaven. It's just the one-on-one marriages will end and there will be this one marriage between all of God's people and the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, there'll be marriage in heaven, but it's between Christ and his Church.

Now let me say as a footnote, I do believe that I will know in heaven that I had a special relationship with June Elliot, that we married, loved each other, had children, and God blessed our marriage, and it was hopefully something that reflected the love between Christ and the Church, but that status, that institution will come to an end. I think I'll have a special relationship with June in the future, but it won't be as we define it now in terms of marriage. One-on-one marriage will end. There'll be one marriage between Christ and his Church.

Now, let me say this, too. This is all by way of introduction as we come to this final marriage in the Bible that impinges upon the issue of transgenderism and homosexual marriage. Let me say this in the light of what I've just said, and I say to you as Christians to think this out and defend this biblically. Marriage from start to finish, marriage as it's presented in the book of Genesis between Adam and Eve and in the book of Revelation between the last Adam, Jesus Christ, and His Church has always been displayed and defined as between one man and one woman, between a bride and a bridegroom. You don't get to redefine that if you're a Christian. You don't get to play with that. From start to finish, marriage is a fixed, unalterable state given by God for the sake of creation, human fulfillment, and to my point as a testimony to the gospel.

This is a great mystery, the mystery of marriage. It speaks of Christ and his Church. You don't get to play with that, because if you play with that, you're playing with Christ, his glory, and his majesty. Redefining marriage is not just a moral issue. It's a gospel issue. If you set out to redefine marriage, you're not only fighting the revealed will of God, you're distorting the glory of Jesus Christ that's bound up in that institution.

I like what Sam Allberry, an English pastor, says. I think he's spot on here. "This is why marriage in the Bible is between a man and a woman, not between two people of the same sex. For marriage to be a parable of Christ and the Church, it must be between like and unlike, male and female, bride and bridegroom. Change this arrangement and you end up distorting the spiritual reality to which it points. Alter marriage and you end up distorting the picture of the gospel itself." It's worth thinking about.

So let's come and look at our text for the time that remains. Let me just put the text in it's context. We're at a point in history for the world that is the beginning of the end. We're at a point in history for the Church that it's the end of the beginning. This is a transition point within the book of Revelation. You'll notice verse 1, "After these things." So there's something that has preceded and there's something about to take place. There's a transition.

You know what? Old Vernon McGee is very helpful here. Here's what he says. "Chapter 19 marks a dramatic change in the tone of Revelation. The destruction of Babylon, the capital of the beast's kingdom marks, the end of the Great Tribulation. The somber gives way to song. The transfer is from darkness to light, from black to white, from dreary days of judgment to the bright days of blessing. This chapter makes a definite division in Revelation and ushers in the greatest event for this Earth, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's wicked reign on Earth, man's rebellion in the face of God is being brought to an end in the destruction of Babylon, both the religious and political elements of man's rebellion. That will bring about a transition towards Jesus' coming, his reign, his rule, and righteousness."

It's a wonderful turning point in the book, so let's come and look at this. If you're looking an outline: the prelude, the wedding, the dress code, the guest list, the bridegroom. I know it's not alliterated. That might be a sign of the end times right there that I didn't alliterate my sermon, but here it is. The prelude, the wedding, the dress code, the guest list, the bridegroom. Let's move as quickly as we can.

I'm going to spend a little bit of time on verses 1 through 5. It's what I call the prelude. Every wedding service begins with a prelude, usually a musical prelude. There's usually a playlist, a song list that the couple have decided they want to be sung or heard during their wedding, and it's the same here. The wedding between Jesus Christ and his Church begins with a magnificent musical prelude, a playlist of songs that celebrate God's sovereignty, power, glory. It celebrates the judgment of Babylon as an evil

empire. It celebrates the avenging of the blood of God's people that has been shed in persecution across history by Babylon and its religious forms and political forms.

Remember what Babylon is? Takes us right back to Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel, man rising up in rebellion against God. That's all coming to an end. Man's rule, let's say misrule of the Earth, is ending, and Jesus Christ is getting ready to come back to establish his kingdom, and that's a fact to be celebrated. In fact, there's a call goes out here in verse 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.'" So the texts contrast the lament of the losing side and the destruction of Babylon, chapters 17 and 18, and then it celebrates those on the winning side, the Church triumphant in heaven, as they anticipate the Marriage of the Lamb that is to come.

So here's the contrast in terms of wedding terms or marriage terms. You have the destruction of the prostitute with her lovers, the whore of Babylon, contrasted to the Wedding of the Lamb and the followers of Jesus Christ.

Now, a little footnote here. I do want you to notice that one of the things that Revelation teaches us is that worship is the heartbeat of heaven. What are you going to be doing in heaven? Well, you're going to be doing a lot of things, and I'll probably have a message on that by itself, but one of the things you're going to be doing a lot of is worshiping. So our time on Earth is where we get to clear our throats and tune our voices for the eternal song of the redeemed.

I hope you love singing. I love singing. George Whitfield when he preached said that his voice could be heard for a mile, and when he sung it could be heard for two. We need to be singers. The worship of God is the background music to Revelation. The thunder and lightning of God's holy anger visited on the Earth during the early parts of this book must not be allowed to drown out the sound of sacred songs that reverberate across heaven that marked life in the life to come.

Don't forget this whole vision of the future was received in an act of worship. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when he heard a voice from behind him. The book of Revelation is about worship. In fact, Robert Coleman, a very good writer, wrote the famous book *The Master's Plan for Evangelism*, he wrote a book called *The Songs of Heaven*. He outlines 14 of them in the book of Revelation. Let me give you a sampling. What about the creation hymn in Revelation 4 verse 11? What about the new song of redemption, Revelation 5:9 to 10? What about the martyr's canticle, Revelation 6 verse 10? What about the kingdom carol, Revelation 11 verse 15? Here we are in chapter 19, and we have two songs, the Hallelujah Chorus of verses 1 through 4, and then we have the song or the symphony of the marriage feast, Revelation 19:6 to 7.

That's the prelude, and before I leave it let's just notice that verses 1 through 4, maybe even including verse 5, comprise the Hallelujah Chorus. Did you notice or did you know that this is the only time in all of the New Testament where the word alleluia appears? There's four alleluias or hallelujahs in the opening verses of chapter 19. That's the only time you'll find that word in the New Testament, and it's an echo of the Psalms. In fact, many commentators believe what we have here is an echo of what's called the Halal Psalms, the Hallelujah Psalms, which are comprised of Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. They themselves are called the Hallel of Egypt, because if you read those Psalms, I commend that to you, you're going to see that there are many references to Exodus, to God's power and glory being put on display in the salvation of the nation of slaves in Egypt.

History tells us that these Psalms were sung during the Passover Feast. In fact, in Matthew 26:30 we probably are given a hint of the fact that on the night in which the Lord was betrayed during Passover, he sang the Hallel Psalms, because they are sung at the Passover Feast .

So why this theme? Why this Hallelujah Chorus that draws from the Hallel Psalms, the Hallel of Egypt Psalms? Because like them, thematically the people of God in heaven initially are going to celebrate the destruction of Babylon in its religious and political forms, and they're going to anticipate the coming triumph of Christ. "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns."

Now, I do want to make an application there. This is a song we need to clear our throats for. We will be singing this some day in the future in heaven, because we are looking at the future. This hasn't happened yet. Babylon hasn't been destroyed. Jesus hasn't come to establish his Millennial Kingdom. The Marriage Supper or Feast of the Lamb hasn't taken place. But here's what I would say. We need to anticipate this moment, and the kind of thought that's expressed in this celebration we need to incorporate in our worship.

In fact, John Piper's very helpful here, as he normally is. He would remind us to incorporate this kind of thinking into our own present and worship right now, because you see we're living in the midst of Babylon, religiously and spiritually speaking, false religion, political entities and nations rising up against the rule of God, someday to be destroyed. That's where we're at in redemptive history. We're living in the midst of Babylon so to speak. It hasn't been destroyed yet, but we're anticipating that destruction.

And do you know what? When you and I gather like this at 8:30 or 10:30 and we sing together, I want you to realize the significance of what you do when you sing in corporate worship. When the Church comes out of the world and gathers together to go back into the world to be a witness for Jesus Christ, do you realize that when we sing it's an act of defiance? Do you realize when you and I lift our voices in worship it's an act of defiance? We are not cowering to Babylon. We're going to exalt Christ, at least in one spot in Orange County. We're going to exalt him. We're going to love on him. We're going to remind ourselves that we are salt and light in the world. We're going to remind ourselves that we leave this hallowed hour together not just as a holy huddle, but we're going to break the huddle and go and play the game for Jesus Christ wherever life takes us. It's an act of defiance, and it's an act of devotion.

Listen to John Piper. "Corporate worship is the declaration in the midst of Babylon that we will not be drawn into her harlotries because we have found in God the satisfaction of our souls. In his presence is fullness of joy. At his right hand are pleasures forevermore. Corporate worship is the public savoring of the worth of God, and the beauty of God, and the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Therefore, worship is an open declaration to all the powers of heaven and to all of Babylon that we will not prostitute our minds, or our hearts, or our bodies to the allurements of the world. Though we may live in Babylon, we will not be captive to Babylonian ways." Amen?

That's why you can't afford to miss worship, because you're leaving yourself exposed to Babylonian ways. You need to come for the cleansing and the sanctifying affect of Christian worship as we act in defiance against Babylon in devotion towards Jesus Christ.

In fact, it was surprising to me as I studied this text, and I've had it in my mind for a while because I know where I'm going in this series, that just recently in reading some of the accounts of martyrs, it's the thought of the ultimate destruction of Babylon and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that allowed

them to act of defiantly, that allowed them to retain their commitment to Jesus Christ when they were being asked to renounce him.

Think about John Rogers, the first Protestant martyred by Bloody Mary during the English Reformation. As he went to his death, as he went to be burned, he was the first Protestant martyr in England, and people wondered would the Protestant Reformation hold up, and it did. If you read his testimony in the book *The Five English Reformers* by J.C. Ryle, which every Protestant should read, it is said that the French ambassador watched him go to his death, and here's what he said about John Roberts. "He went as a man to his own wedding." Because you see, he was going to a wedding. He wasn't going to submit to Babylon and her prostitution of spiritual things. He was going to die a martyr, knowing that someday he would witness her destruction and someday be married to Jesus Christ forever.

Scottish Covenanters from my wife's home country, they paid with their lives for their claim that the Queen of England or the King of England was not the head of the Church, but Jesus Christ was. They were hounded by the Redcoats, many of them butchered and killed on the hills of Ayrshire where I've actually preached at some of their grave sites.

One of them was a man by the name of Robert Bruce, 1631 sentenced to death for preaching the gospel. On the morning of his execution, his daughter cooked him an egg for breakfast. It was so nice that he asked her to cook him another one. Then he paused, and after she had cooked him breakfast, he said to his daughter on the day of his execution, "I have breakfast with you this morning. I will supper with Jesus tonight." We've lost that kind of thinking, but that's Revelation 19:1 to 10.

Let's move on. The prelude, the wedding. Having looked back at the destruction of the prostitute and her many lovers, our text moves on and looks forward to the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ, and before that the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Look at verse 6. "And I heard, as it were, the voice of great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings." There was a torrent of wonder, love, and praise.

I don't know if you've ever been to the Niagara Falls and taken that boat ride on the Maid of the Mist. You come under the falls, and the noise is deafening. Six million cubic feet of water every second. That's the idea here. There's just going to be the noise, the crescendo, the building up of the worship of the Church in heaven regarding the destruction of the harlot and the Marriage of the Lamb. We're told here, "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." The Marriage Supper of the Lamb has come.

Now, we need to paint in some background here, because this is the moment according to Ephesians 5:27 where Jesus presents to himself the Church without spot or wrinkle. This is the presentation. This is the marriage. But to understand the significance of this and the timeline and why this is coming late in Church history, you need to understand the four stages of a Jewish marriage. Now, time doesn't allow me to dig deep into this, but if you study the commentators as I have, there's unanimity it's roughly three or four stages.

Number one is the selection of the bride by the father. Marriages back then were arranged and chosen by parents, and so a father will set his eye on a bride for his son, someone fit, beautiful on the outside and inside. Then there'll be the betrothal, something like our engagement. For widows, it was a month. For young virgins, a year. A contract was signed between the two families. Dowries were exchanged.

Gifts were given during that period of time. The fidelity of the couple, especially the bride, was under review and challenged. Although not officially married yet, they were bound to each other, and if that girl was with someone else, divorce would take place.

That's the Joseph issue in Matthew's gospel, right? He's betrothed to Mary. They're not yet married, but Mary's pregnant, and he's going to put her away. He's going to divorce her until he finds out this child's of the Holy Spirit. She's still being pure to you. This is the betrothal. Very serious time when the fidelity of the bride is being tested.

The selection of the bride, the betrothal of the bride and groom. Then you have the presentation. At the end of that year, the father says to his son, "Go get your woman. Go get your wife. Go get your bride," and you have a processional, often taking place at night with great festivity and lights. That's kind of the 10 virgin parable where they go to the home of the bride and he gets her. Really, when she's presented to him by the father, that's the marriage, because as I say there has already been agreement for over a year and that's been tested. Then after that presentation, the son takes the bride home to the father's house, and then there's the marriage feast.

Now, can you connect the dots a little bit? See, God the Father chooses a bride for his Son, the elect, those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. That bride is purchased, ironically in the death of the bridegroom, in the gospel. Gifts are exchanged. Dowries are given. We are given the Holy Spirit as we put our faith in Jesus Christ and become part of his bride. Then at the Rapture, Jesus will come from the Father's house to collect his bride and take her home to the Father's house, and then comes the marriage feast. That's the wedding. That's where we're at.

The wife has made herself ready. This is where we're at, just prior to Jesus' coming. The Church has been raptured. She's been dressed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and now she's been presented. The marriage is taking place and the feast is about to begin.

Now, before I leave that thought, if you've been listening carefully, where are we in those stages? We're in the betrothal stage, correct. We're in the betrothal stage. Jesus hasn't come yet for his bride to take us to the Father's house for the marriage feast. No, we've been betrothed to him, which means what? You and I have got to remain loyal. We've got to be faithful.

Listen to what Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 11, "Oh, that you would bear with me a little folly and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." That's what I want you and I to think about. Right now in our lives, in the midst of Babylon with sin as a suitor coming to seduce us to spiritual adultery, you and I have got to remain pure, holy.

The means by which Jesus keeps his Church pure, read it in Ephesians 5 verse 25 to 27, is the Word which cleanses us. And we're not alone. We've been given the dowry of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13 to 14, to help us fight the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, with the pleasures that we find in Jesus Christ, which are forever.

You know the story I believe. I've told it. When June and I got married in Scotland, after the ceremony we headed to the airport. Things had run a little late. We were the last two to get there, and so as we were checked in, we were told that we were separated. The girl at the desk said, "Hey, I assume

someone will swap seats," but she was assuming too much in Scotland. We got on the plane. June was at the front. I was at the back. I was with the party crowd at the back. It was crazy. Two of them got arrested, put back on the plane when we arrived in Corfu. It was nuts back there, and no right-thinking person halfway up the plane was coming back, so I was stranded at the back with all these party goers.

We got off the plane. It was on a tarmac in Corfu. It's a Greek island where we went for our honeymoon. She came down one set of stairs at the front and I came down another set of stairs and we waved at each other, "Still married!"

Then we get onto a bus to go to our hotel, which her father had picked for us, and we got there after doing an anti-clockwise tour of the island going to every other hotel before our hotel. You know, it's our big night. Don't forget. You understand what I'm talking about. We get to the hotel at 3:00 in the morning. Open the door and there's two single beds. I'm kind of going, "Is this meant to be or not?"

But here's the point. We've often laughed at that, and you've laughed with us, but listen. Here's the point I make when I tell that funny story. June and I found in a humorous way from the moment we said I do, there were forces at work to pull us apart, and that's just true of any marriage. The moment you say I do, this Babylonian culture and it's king, Satan himself, will do all that they can to pull you apart. In the spiritual realm, they'll do the same between Christ and his Church. He'll seek to make us unfaithful to the master, to our bridegroom, to our precious Savior who laid down his life for us.

Let me move on. The prelude, the wedding, the dress. You've got the musical prelude. You've got the wedding, and ladies, you want to know, well, how is the bride going to be dressed? Because that's the big issue at a wedding. Okay. The guy's just chump. He just turns up. The girl, she's been thinking from when she was a little girl, and as the day approaches, how is she going to look? What's she going to wear?

A lot of time goes into choosing the dress, and then the shoes, and then the jewelry, and then the hairdo, and then the manicure and the pedicure. I've been there. I've seen it with my oldest daughter, Angela. Everybody's enjoying it but me. I'm thinking, "Ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching." All right, and you're going nuts.

In fact, Carol McAllister, Doug's wife here at the church, she could see it. She took me aside one day and give me ... She says, "I've got a piece of advice. Shut up and sign the checks." I'm going, "Good Lord, that doesn't help!" But she was right. Just shut up and write the checks, because this is the big day. This is Angela's day. This is every bride's dream.

It's interesting in our text, the wedding dress is mentioned. Look at our text. Go back to Revelation 19 and look at verse 8. "And to her," that's the wife made ready now for the marriage, "And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous actions of the saints." Wow.

So what's this text telling us? We're kind of going back to our study last time on the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here's what this text is saying to us. This isn't talking about the righteousness we receive from Christ, imputed to us by faith at the moment we get saved, what theologians call justification. No, this is sanctification. This is the righteousness that comes practically in acts of obedience as you and I increasingly look more like the Lord Jesus, and we put off sin and we put on Christ.

There are two kinds of righteousness in the Bible, positional righteousness and practical righteousness, imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. We're dealing with the second here. "And to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." We'll be dressed in the deeds we have done. I'm not sure how that works or what that looks like, but it's saying, do you want to know how the Bride of Christ will look like? She'll be dressed in her deeds done on Earth as she has made herself ready and prepared herself, as she has been a faithful bride espoused to the bridegroom. This is a dress cut to size at the Judgment Seat of Christ where our works will be judged.

Listen to these words by Lehman Strauss, an old commentator who I've still found helpful after so many years. He said this. I want you to think about this. "Has it ever occurred to you that at the marriage of the bride to the Lamb, each of us will be wearing the wedding garment of our own making?" Now, there's an idea. Many of you wore a wedding dress you made yourself. Probably not many. Some maybe. But we'll actually be wearing a dress we made ourselves. Our covering will be our righteous life as we seek for our lives to reflect our love for the bridegroom.

Your works are important. You're not saved by works, but you're saved unto works. I realize that grace produces those works, but you and I have been ordained to certain good works, Ephesians 2 verse 10. You'd better discover what those good works are, and you'd better be doing them, both generally and particularly. There's works we all should be doing, but then you have gifts, and opportunities, and talents, and circumstances you need to fulfill to the full for Jesus' glory.

Let me finish this thought and move on with this thought, talking about that kind of thinking, getting ready for the wedding, dressed in our righteous acts, the life we've lived. Hopefully we won't be threadbare. We'll be well-dressed, reflecting Jesus' life in us.

In 1812, Adoniram Judson, age 23, sailed for Burma with his wife. They married just 12 days earlier. Think about that. Anybody up for that? There's a honeymoon in Burma, missions the rest of your life. Before they were married. Adoniram, who had fallen in love, was smitten by Ann Hasseltine. He writes to her father and asks for her hand in marriage. Here's what he said. Again, picture this. This is a young woman who's being asked to be married to a young man. They're in their early 20s, and if he says yes, within a month she'll be gone.

Here's what Adoniram said to that father. "I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world whether you can consent to her departure and her subjection to the hardships and suffering of missionary life. Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India, to every kind of want and distress, to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps violent death."

Think about that. "Hey, would you give me your daughter? I might be taking her to a place where she'll get killed." Let's read on. "Can you consent to all of this in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory and the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall rebound to her Savior from heathens saved through her means from eternal woe and despair?"

We're back to he went to his death as to a wedding. "This morning I have breakfast with you. Tonight I supper with Jesus." Adoniram says to that father, "Hey, I want to marry Ann. I love her, and both of us love Jesus Christ. You know what? We're going to leave our wedding and go straight to Burma, because

we're thinking about that marriage in the future, and we want to be dressed in righteous actions, and we want to wear the crown of righteousness. We want to live a life that reflects his love for his bride, and we want to take an invitation and scatter it across the world, inviting people to the wedding." You know what? The father couldn't bring himself to say yes, and so he let his daughter make her own mind up, and she said yes.

The prelude, the wedding, the dress, the guest list. Not going to spend a lot of time on this, because I don't have a lot of time, but it's pretty simple. You'll notice in verse 8 this arraying of the Church, and then notice verse 9. This is the fourth of seven beatitudes. Think about that. There are seven Beatitudes in the book of Revelation. This is a book written to bless.

I want you to hear that, because I hear it all the time. "Oh, I haven't read the book of Revelation. It's too hard to read. You know what? I'm just going to stay away from that. I hear pastors hardly ever preaching on the book of Revelation." That's crazy. That's a mistake. This book was written to bless, seven blessings. If you go back to chapter 1 and verse 3, it says, "Blessed is he who reads, keeps, and does this book." Read and understand the book of Revelation. It's about your future. It's a blessing. Here's one of the blessings. "Blessed are those who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." This is a true saying of God.

So who's invited to join the bridegroom and the bride, Christ and the Church? Because remember, in our theology the Church has been raptured, taken to the Father's house. Our dress has been cut at the Judgment Seat of Christ out of our good works, the practical righteousness produced by the grace of God in our lives. But who else joins Christ and the Church, the Father, the bridegroom Christ, the bride the Church?

It's Old Testament saints and tribulation saints. It's Old Testament saints and tribulation saints. I mean if you go back to Daniel 12 verses 1 to 3, it talks about a time of distress on the Earth that's unparalleled. That's the Great Tribulation. Right at the end of that, we read about those who are raised to righteousness to shine as the stars. That's the Old Testament saints.

We read in Revelation 20 of those who are part of the first resurrection who've come out of great tribulation and being martyred, and so it seems to me that just before Jesus Christ comes back to the Earth, the Old Testament saints will be raised and so will the tribulation saints. They'll join us at the marriage, and that marriage feast, that celebration will spill over onto the Earth, and the marriage feast will last for upwards of 1,000 years.

So who are the guests that join the Church? All others who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. And I hope this morning you have RSVP'd, because you can be part of this wedding. You can be part in this time within history. You can join the bride. You can be part of the Church by putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

Here's a final thought as the team gets ready. The bridegroom. Now, in a western wedding, the focus is on the bride. In this wedding, in the East, the focus is on the bridegroom. It's interesting. This is where our kind of exposition ends, because look at verse 10. "And I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'See that you do not do that, because I'm your fellow servant.'"

Now, here's what we believe is going on here, because if you read the rest of the book of Revelation, this vision given to John was given to him by an angel or a messenger. As the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is described and proclaimed, John is so captivated by what he has heard that the messenger of this message, he starts to worship the messenger. He starts to worship the angel. In fact, he'll do the same thing. He'll make that same mistake in Revelation 22, verses 8 and 9. It said, "And I, John, saw and heard these things, and when I heard, I saw and fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, 'See that you do not do that.'"

The implication is John makes a mistake here. Bowled over by the greatness and grandeur of the wedding feast, the coming Kingdom, he begins to worship the angel, and the angel says, "Hey, cut it out. Only God is worshiped." Jesus Christ is the central figure of worship in the book of Revelation. In fact, don't forget this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Revelation 1 verse 1, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. We're given an unveiling of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation that ties all of prophecy together.

Notice how Jesus is described here at the end of verse 10. "Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Jesus is the fulfillment of every prophecy in the Old Testament and the New, and it all comes to a glorious climax and crescendo in the book of Revelation. Here we have an unveiling of the Son of God and all his power and glory in the Marriage of the Lamb.

Now, as I close, John is chastised for turning worship into an act of idolatry. Now, you and I hopefully today won't fall foul of worshipping angels. We know that that's forbidden in Colossians 2:18 to 19. But as we close, we need to get a vision of Jesus Christ as we find him revealed in the book of Revelation, lest we worship Jesus Christ in a manner that's less than he truly is. That would be idolatry.

Listen to these words by Phil Moore, a British expositor whose writings I've enjoyed. Listen to these words and let them sink in. "There is a real danger that unless we see Jesus in the pages of Revelation, we will worship him as he walked on the earth yesterday and not as he reigns in heaven today." That's the great tragedy when Christians treat this book like a fantasy novel or a secret code for someone other than themselves. They have missed the point, as much as a person who watches Jaws and thinks it's about the seaside. Jaws is a movie about a shark. Revelation is a book about Jesus Christ. You know, what you can get lost in the maze of prophetic theology and miss the subject of prophecy. That's the point.

Let him go on. "We need the book of Revelation to save us from the sin of idolatry, from worshipping Jesus as something less than he is. It takes the baby who sleeps in Bethlehem's manger and reminds us that he's grown up, coming back to judge the Earth in his wrath. It takes the great teacher and healer from Galilee and tells us he's now riding out to victory wearing a robe dipped in blood. It reminds us that Jesus Christ is not just the weak and suffering Savior depicted on a crucifix, because he is also the one who holds the keys of death and Hades and who rules over the whole Earth with irresistible strength."

Hopefully you've got the right picture of Jesus this morning. Oh, you won't worship an angel, but are you in danger of worshipping a Christ concocted in your own mind? The meek and mild Jesus, the one who teaches the golden rule, not the sin bearing, sin judging, returning Christ of the book of Revelation, and if you're in his way, God pity you?

Let me finish with this story. I was visiting my home country in 2009. We were in what's called Stormont, which is the government building in Northern Ireland just outside the city of Belfast, and there was a

wonderful painting that we were shown by our guide of the opening of Stormont. It's a beautiful building, and it was opened by King George V and Queen Mary.

The man who was commissioned to draw the picture was a man by the name of William Conor, and he was commissioned 200 pounds to do that, which was quite a sum of money back then, but they only paid him 131, and here's why. There's several theories, and our guide told us theory number one, the hats that he had put on the heads of the ladies were too big obscuring their faces, therefore upsetting their husbands. Theory number two, the backs of the heads of too many important people were in the painting, and they were ticked off. But theory number three, and I think this is the right one, Queen Mary looks bigger and taller than the King. Now, she was. Physically she was taller than her husband, but you never show that in a royal painting. The king must always be bigger and biggest. That's the theory why he didn't get all his money. The queen was too big and the king was too small.

My friend, let's never have Jesus smaller than he should be, less than he is. Let's not be falling down and worshiping something less than him.

Father, we thank you for our time. We love this series on heaven. It is our future. We need to learn it. We need to live it. Thank you for this study on the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which will take place in heaven and spill over onto the Earth. Lord, help us not to belittle marriage. Help us not to stain it with divorce, infidelity. Help us to remember that our marriages reflect the love of Christ for the Church. He would never divorce the Church. He would never be unfaithful to the Church.

Help us to realize that marriage is a gospel issue. Help us to realize we're in the betrothal stage of the Church's history, and help us therefore to, like Paul, be jealous that we give ourselves completely to Christ who gave himself completely for us. Help us to reject the suitors of a Babylonian culture that seeks us to be spiritually adulterous.

Lord, we pray that we would be cutting our dress for that future day by living lives of righteousness marked by righteous acts. May those who are not in the bride or with the bride RSVP. May those who are unsaved get saved and come to be loved in this spectacular manner. Lord, help us to make sure that when we worship Christ, that it itself isn't an act of idolatry because we've got a wrong view of him, we've got him less than he is.

Lord, help us to be mindful of Samuel Rutherford, that the bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Savior's face. Help us to realize the Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land. So help us to look for our bridegroom, live for our bridegroom's coming for us to take us to the Father's house, and then the festivities that will be forever. For we pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.