

## Here Comes The Bride

*Revelation 19:6-9*

Imagine yourself sitting in a church building somewhere, waiting for a wedding ceremony to begin. The organ music being played while the people are ushered in adds to the sense of excitement which hangs in the air. Neither the bride nor the groom are in sight, but you know there is a lot of scurrying as they see about last minute details. You know they are nervous and you feel nervous for them.

But then, the organist begins to play the melody which signals that it is time for the ceremony to begin. She plays softly at first, as the groom comes in, accompanied by the best man and the minister. Slowly, down the aisle comes the maid of honor and the bridesmaids. The excitement builds!

When everyone is in place, the music suddenly grows louder. That is the signal! The eyes of all the wedding party are trained on the door at the back of the church, and everyone in the church knows that the bride is coming down the aisle!

A few will resist the temptation to turn around and watch the bride as she makes her way to the front of the church, but *you* can't resist. You turn your head to watch as the bride, arm-and-arm with her father, slowly makes her way to join her husband-to-be.

What is it you notice first? It isn't the man at her side, however handsome he is, or how smartly he may be dressed. You don't see the bouquet of flowers in the bride's hands, or the tears of joy in her eyes. What you notice first—what your eyes seem to be glued to—*is the wedding gown and veil*.

The Scriptures use many different images to help us understand what the church is and what the church should be doing. Among the nearly one hundred such images, we have examined three: The church is a Family, a Flock and a Body. What truth we would overlook if we stopped there!

Throughout the Scriptures, God's people are referred to as being the Bride of Christ. That concept is so important that we see it over and over again in the

Gospels, particularly Matthew and Mark. For Paul, the marriage relationship between husband and wife receives its supreme example from the relationship Christ has with the Church.

It is significant that the last book of the Bible refers to the Church as the Bride of Christ over and over again. As you turn to read the Revelation to John, you can sense the excitement building. From the time Jesus said, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”* you can feel the charge in the air. By the time you read through to the 19th chapter, all the attendants are in place, and the wedding is about to begin.

Suddenly, the multitudes in heaven begin to shout, *“Hallelujah! The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready”* (v. 7). What they are saying is “Here comes the Bride—the Bride of Christ!”

We turn to look at the Bride, and the first thing we notice is what she has on! Look with me at the wedding gown of the Church, for in that gown we see what we are to be doing as the Bride of Christ.

## **1 As the Bride of Christ, we are to be clothed in readiness**

Verse seven tells us *“His bride has made herself ready.”*

One of the first things which should characterize our church as we wait for the return of our Lord is that we should be ready. We should be absolutely prepared for the Coming of Jesus. There should be nothing which God has given us to do which we have left undone.

This is true of the individual Christian, and it is true of the Church. Jesus was speaking in Matthew 24 about various things, and among them was the subject of His Second Coming. He said, *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come....So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”* (Matthew 24:42, 44).

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, waiting for the Bridegroom, was taught by Jesus so we would know to be ready at all times for His return. In the parable, five of the bridesmaids ran out of oil for their lamps as they waited for the bridegroom to arrive. Jesus said, *“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the*

*bridegroom arrived. The bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10).*

Jesus also told us in Luke 12:35-36, *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.”*

We as the Church must be ready for Jesus when He comes. How do we do that? How do we get ready? By eagerly watching for His return. We get ready by being true to His purpose for us. We are not a social club. We are not merely a human family gathering for worship on a regular basis. We are the Church, and our lamps must be lit in a spiritual sense, waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom! Brother, sister: is your lamp lit?

**2** **As the Bride of Christ, we are to be clothed in righteousness**  
Verse eight reads, *“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”*

Out of all that could be said about the Church, this should be the most easily recognized. The Church is to be clothed in righteousness. You see here that the fine linen the Bride of Christ was given to wear in John’s Revelation was symbolic of the righteous acts of the saints. If we are going to benefit from God’s Word here, then it must become a personal word: Would our church be clothed in fine linen, symbolic of our righteousness?

We must remember where our righteousness comes from. It is not something we can manufacture ourselves. We cannot simply turn over a new leaf and expect to have this kind of righteousness. We don’t get it by going to church. We have no righteousness of our own. Isaiah 64:6 states very plainly, *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags ...”* You see, even our best—our very best—is not good enough to serve as the wedding gown for the marriage of the Lamb and His Bride!

We must submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and put on garments of light. Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, *“You were taught with regard to your former*

*way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:22-24).*

Perhaps we are afraid to be righteous. Perhaps we are afraid for the people around us to know that we are righteous. They say to us, “If you say you’re righteous, you’re saying you’re better than we are,” and we have believed them. We have allowed our fear of what they are saying or might say take the place of true, godly righteousness before God.

As Christians, and as a Christian Church, the Bride of Christ, we are righteous. Let’s affirm that, and not be ashamed of it. We can be proud of it with godly pride because this righteousness that we have is not ours. It is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ! Listen to what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi:

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God**” (1:10-11).*

### **3 As the Bride of Christ, we are to be clothed in faithfulness**

In the Scriptures, white, bright clothing is symbolic of purity and faithfulness to Christ. Look at the wedding gown, and see how white and bright it is! In Revelation 7 we find that glorious description of a “*great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb,*” and they were all wearing white robes! That is symbolic of their faithfulness and their purity.

We are told later in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter that these robes have been washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb (v. 14).

When you think of a bride, you think also of faithfulness. That bride is to be faithful to her new husband, and the husband is to be faithful to his new bride. In the same way, the Church is to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul was writing to the Church at Corinth, when he said, *“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”*

In Paul’s day there was a custom in which one man served in an official capacity as “The Friend of the Bridegroom.” He had many duties: carrying the invitations to the guests, delivering messages between the bride and groom, overseeing the details for the wedding feast. But he had one responsibility which was of utmost importance—he was responsible for guaranteeing the chastity of the bride. He would wait in the bridal chamber until he heard the sound of the voice of the bridegroom, and then he would open the door. He would not let anyone else inside.

Paul sees himself as the friend of the bridegroom, and the bride is the Church at Corinth. It was his responsibility to guarantee the chastity and faithfulness of the Bride, until the day when she would be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our day and time especially, the Church, as the Bride of Christ, must be faithful to the Groom! May it never be said of our Church, now or ever, that we have been unfaithful to Jesus, that we have chased after other gods, whether they be gods we actually bow down and worship, or gods in the form of taking first place in our lives. May it never be said of us as individuals that we have committed spiritual adultery!

## **4** **As the Bride of Christ, we are to be clothed in rejoicing**

Part of verse seven reads, *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!”*

When the bride comes down the aisle, she isn’t crying because she is sad. She isn’t crying because she is afraid of the man who stands there beside the minister. She is crying because she is so happy. She is joyful! The Bride of Christ needs to be clothed in rejoicing!

Too often in today’s churches there is so much frowning in the worship services, you would think that the Church’s Groom had just died. There is not enough joy in our worship services. Here and there you will see individuals who are really enjoying what they’re doing, and the joy of the Lord shines from their faces. But

by and large, we spend most of our time daydreaming, or sleeping, or thinking about someone else—when we come to worship. There is not enough joy.

There should be joy in our private lives as well. Perhaps the reason we do not have more people coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior is that they do not want to be as sad as we are! Have you ever thought about that?

What should cause us joy? First of all, we should be joyful because we anticipate being one with Christ when He returns. We are an imperfect Church now, but just wait until the time when we are united with Christ! All the imperfections will be removed and purged from our midst. That is cause for joy all by itself.

But then we should be joyful because others will share that joy with us. Look at verse nine of Revelation 19: *“Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’”*

In Revelation 22:17, the last time we see the Church in the entire Bible, she is referred to as the Bride of Christ. Do you know what she is doing? She is inviting others to the marriage feast!

Here we have the Bride and Groom, standing there, united, as one. Both of them are saying “Come!” *“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’”*

Come share in the joy and the forgiveness of sins. Come share in the truly joyful worship experiences we have here at our Church. Come share in a time of Bible study, when God can really speak to you. Come and prepare yourself to share in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

We’ve all received wedding invitations in the mail. Did you ever receive one that began something like, “Our joy will be made complete if you come to our wedding”? They are saying, this is a joyful occasion, but not as joyful as it will be if you join us for this celebration.

The church is joyful, as we anticipate the union with Christ. But we are to be busy sending invitations to the wedding! We should realize that we will be completely

joyful once we get busy about the task of seeing that others are invited, that others actually come to the Wedding.

We are a Family, a Flock, a Body, and a Bride. But praise to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—we are not all we shall be!

Have you read your invitation to the Wedding? It has been sent, and it is time for the RSVP. It is time for you to respond. Are you going or not?