

## HE IS COMING ... AGAIN

The Lord's Supper

July 11, 2010

The chances of Jesus Christ returning to earth alive with a visible body are about as good as having Him rise from the dead.

He is returning.

He said He would ... and He will. He has always been a man of His word.

There are times when we might just plain not get what Jesus has done or said. We miss it by a mile.

We get bored, not because Jesus is a poor communicator, or that what He has to say is not worth listening to, but because we are rather clueless to what is being said or is going on.

... and when we don't know what is going on, we then do what everyone else is doing while we are shaking our heads and wondering, "What is happening?"

The Lord's Supper is often one of those times ... it is to be a serious, yet good event, but somehow it doesn't grab us.

Something is missing.

Again, the problem is not with what Jesus did ... that was right on the money. The problem is that we might not get the picture, literally, of what He was getting across.

*Key Thought:*

**If it is good to know that we are being loved, even when the One who loves us is absent.**

At times when the one who loves us is not present, it may be even more important to read the "signs" of care, concern and commitment.

Jesus participated in this "supper", what has come to be known as the Lord's Supper, that He initiated, only once. His concluding remarks on the meal do more than just tweak our interest.

At Valentine's people give cards.

... Jesus gave us, near the end of His life, this meal.

### **Matthew 26:26-29**

**While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."**

**Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."**

While we are directed to participate in the Lord's Supper, Jesus is abstaining.

The reason for Jesus abstaining from the “meal” that He started is somewhat clarified by what we read in the last book of the Bible.

#### **Revelation 19:1 – 9**

**After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:**

**"Hallelujah!**

**Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.**

**He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."**

**And again they shouted:**

**"Hallelujah!**

**The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."**

**The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:**

**"Amen, Hallelujah!"**

**Then a voice came from the throne, saying:**

**"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"**

**Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:**

**"Hallelujah!**

**For our Lord God Almighty reigns.**

**Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!  
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.**

**Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)**

**Then the angel said to me,**

**"Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' "**

**And he added,**

**"These are the true words of God."**

Much of what is recorded in God's Word takes place around a table with food involved.

As history gets wound up ... once again there is mention of a meal – **“the wedding supper of the Lamb”**.

There is an obvious “supper” theme through the chapters of God's Book.

Here is what appears to be in the big mixing bowl of world events ... that which we are reminded of as we gather today at this “meal”.

This **Revelation** section is a high-point, a culmination.

We jump into what is already in progress in the book.

Heaven erupts with a spectacular sound of thousands and thousands of people breaking out to honor God.

They shout – **Hallelujah! ... praise!**

This is the only place in the entire New Testament where the word “**hallelujah**” occurs.

Where we see this word most in the Old Testament is in the book of **Psalms**.

At the Passover, one of the .most important religious feasts of the nation of Israel, before the meal they would have sang **Psalm 113 and 114**. After the meal, **Psalm 115 through 118** (all or some).

These are the HALLEL PSALMS, the “PRAISE” SONGS.

Jesus, having the “last supper” with His disciples, at the time of the Passover Feast, probably sang one of these “PRAISE SONGS”.

The theme of these “PRAISE SONGS” is God’s deliverance from their then enemy – Egypt.

Fast forward into the future...

... **Revelation 17 – 18**. The scene is one where it is now “Babylon”, rather than “Egypt”, another enemy of God’s people, a bigger enemy.

Here is the enemy of God ... finally receiving its concluding and climatic judgment.

Finally, justice is being done.

Finally, wrongs are being made right.

Finally, what everyone knew ought to happen, is.

Finally, what was promised is occurring.

God had said that He was going to win ... and now it is happening.

... and that is why the “Hallelujahs” are being shouted.

But see how the message is put across.

Babylon is portrayed as that other “woman”.

God’s enemy was figuratively described as the “harlot”, the “prostitute”.

This illegitimate imposter – a system of evil with power centered in a city – is now replaced by God’s true partner – His bride – His Church – His people – the new city, the New Jerusalem.

The metaphors are mixed – city, bride, harlot are a reference to two groups of people – one for God, one against.

While **Revelation 17 and 18** talk about BABYLON, the prostitute, **Revelation 19:7 ff** speak of the Lamb and His bride.

**Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!  
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his  
bride has made herself ready.**

**Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to  
wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts  
of the saints.)**

**"... 'Blessed are those who are invited to the  
wedding supper of the Lamb!' "**

Let us once again move back to get the “big picture”.

### **Matthew 22:1 ff**

**Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying:**

**"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a  
wedding banquet for his son.**

God the Father has for centuries been getting ready for this **Revelation 19** moment - His Son's “wedding”.

All has been leading up to the greatest event of all time ... when His Son receives His “bride”.

So big is this event, so long in coming, so important, so significant ... that God is going to put on “the meal of the ages”. This is going to be the greatest wedding banquet ever.

None will even come close to what is going to take place at this wedding banquet.

This is when love will be “consummated”.

This is when the struggle is over.

This is when God and His people finally have peace.

Jesus loves His “bride”, His people, His church.

He always has.

This is the story line that has been woven all through God's Word.

Back again to this opening chapters of **Revelation:**

Here as God gives us snapshots of His “bride”, His church, these are some of His comments ...

The first of the seven churches:

### **Revelation 2:4**

**... I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first  
love.**

This is what “marriage” is about – faithfully loving your spouse deeply and truly ... and very importantly – always.

The last of the seven churches:

### **Revelation 3:19 - 20**

**Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.**

**Here I am!**

**I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.**

Here it is ... an invitation to ... we guessed it ... a meal; but not just any kind of a meal.

This is not just an off the cuff statement.

This is deliberate plagiarism; a copying of what was said centuries earlier.

These are not original lines.

They come, from all places, the Old Testament book of **the Song of Solomon** ... a book whose theme is love

### **Song of Solomon 5:2**

**I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking: "Open to me, ... my darling, ... my flawless one.**

**Revelation 3:20** is a love picture of a disappointed Jesus telling His distracted bride to come back into the richness of the marriage relationship.

We – each person who has been accepted by God and has personally accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior is a part of the “bride of Christ” ... is invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

We are a privileged people because Jesus “bought” us with His very life-blood.

When we gather at this table, we gather as His coming bride.

We are anticipating sitting down with Him, Jesus, who did it all for us, who lifted us up and brought us into this fantastic relationship with the sole God of the universe ... We are blessed!

... and that is why there are “Hallelujah’s” punctuating these paragraphs of **Revelation 19**.

We may have become distracted by all that is going on. We may treat our Bridegroom poorly, we may spiritually prostitute ourselves by going with others, rather than being faithful to Jesus.

... but Jesus keeps on loving us.

That’s the word that comes from this meal ... and lest we forget, it reminds us.

He keeps on knocking.

He keeps on inviting us out ... to eat together.

Marriage ... the custom back in Jesus’ day is a bit different than ours today. It is helpful to know it.

Marriage was made up of 3 “stages”

- **Betrothal – comparable to our “engagement”**
- **Wedding preparation**
- **Wedding Supper**

### **The Betrothal (Engagement) Ceremony**

“The prospective groom would leave his father’s house and travel, accompanied by his best man, to the prospective bride’s house.

There the groom would finalize arrangements with the bride’s father, in particular, settling on the ‘purchase price’. (In that day, a woman was ‘bought at a price’.)

As soon as the groom paid the purchase price, the marriage technically went into effect. The man and woman were legally husband and wife, although they would not live together for some time.

She was declared to be “consecrated” (distinctly and exclusively set apart) for the groom ...

A new covenant was established between them, sealed by drinking a cup of wine, over which a betrothal benediction was pronounced: ‘This cup is a new covenant.’”

### **Wedding preparation**

Then the groom would leave the bride’s house and return to his father’s house. He would be away from her for roughly twelve months.

During the period of separation, the groom would prepare a room for the bride in his father’s house. And during the separation period, the bride would prepare herself for the wedding.

... though they did not see each other during this time, and although they did not have sexual intercourse, they were legally and spiritually bound to each other.

‘So binding was this betrothal agreement, this covenant, that if the man died during the betrothal period, the woman was considered a widow. To break the betrothal agreement was the same as divorce.’

### **Wedding Supper**

At the end of the betrothal period, the bridegroom, dressed in festive attire, and accompanied by his best man and friends, would make his way back to the bride’s house.

Although everyone had a rough idea of when the groom would come, they did not know the exact day or hour. Usually, to add the element of surprise, he would arrive around midnight.

His arrival would be preceded by the shout. ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out. Come out to meet him’. Then, with great joy, the bride, veiled and accompanied by her maidens, who were carrying lamps, would come out to join the groom and his attendants. Then the wedding feast would begin!”

“First, there was a brief ceremony involving the word, ‘take.’ The groom would ‘take’ the bride from her home. ... After ... the whole bridal party would make its way to the groom’s father’s house. There they would find the wedding guests gathered and dressed in special robes. The feast would take off! It would last for seven days, sometimes fourteen days.”

*(Info from Darrell Johnson – Discipleship on the Edge)*

So when Jesus gathered with His 12 disciples around a table and He took that cup and said, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood ...**” I wonder if His words didn’t raise a few eyebrows in the room.

It was later He mentioned, “**In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**” (John 14:1-3)

These were not just words, but words that were filled with life as it was lived in that day. They were words that were serious, but encouraging words.

There were words of the deepest commitment that two people make.

At this Table we are being told - We are “engaged”, “betrothed”.

The relationship has been sealed.

Jesus is our Bridegroom. His Father is preparing for His Son’s “big” day. Jesus, has paid “the purchase price”.

This is no dry tradition.

This is no empty ritual.

This is an event filled with meaning.

This is an act that is loaded with “love”.

God cares for us deeply and wants to bring us into the thrill, joy and richness of relationship with His Son – the Bridegroom.

This TABLE tells us ...

- **we are loved ... Do we love back? ... or in other words, are we “faithful”?**

There are other “suitors” out there. Other people that would want to get us to come into their camp,

But we are in a covenant with Jesus Christ, who died for us.

We drink from this cup that has shown us that we have agreed to be His, and His alone.

... and this Jesus is coming back ... to fill out all the duties that a “husband owes to his wife”.

This is no dead tradition.

This Table is asking us, “Are you still in love with Jesus?” ... the One who bought you at a price?

If not, maybe we need to make personal adjustments.

- **Our bridegroom is returning.**

Let’s get ready.

This TABLE reminds us of what Jesus did for us – His death on a cross... but it also tells us what He is still doing.

He is preparing a place for us in His Father's house.

He has gone out of His way to make this marriage happen.

He hasn't forgotten about us ... and this "Supper" reminds us of Who He is and the reason we should stay "engaged" with Jesus, even though He is delaying.

This is not just the same old, same old ... This is going out for special meal to remember who it is that loves us like no one else.

He lived for us.

He died for us.

He rose from the dead for us.

He's coming back for us.

... because He loves us.

At present He is absent, but He is returning.

... just wait and see.