

The Rapture As Taught In Revelation

Part Seven

The Sealing Of The Saints, & The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

The Works Of Angels

Every spiritually minded Christian is interested in revival! When the subject comes up between myself and friends, I try to explain the biblical teaching that, until the time of the Rapture of the Church, there will be a falling away, apostasy, a decline in the moving of the Spirit of God, so much so that the Lord Jesus said of those days, "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:8). Then Paul speaks of those days:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Though the greatest revival the world has ever known is yet to come, the true church continues to have revival in the midst of *that* falling away. The greatest time of revival on earth probably will not occur within the Church Age but during the Tribulation period. This coming worldwide revival is prophetically described in Revelation 7, appearing right after the seal judgments to indicate that it will take place during the early months of the Tribulation. Evidently, while the Antichrist is making his political advance, the Holy Spirit will move in the hearts of millions of people, leading them to a saving knowledge of Christ. The *millions* are those who wash their robes white during the Great Tribulation.

A basic study of the work of angels in the book of Revelation reveals they are the special ministers of God, administering His plans for the earth in judgments, protection of the saints, and delivery of messages (ministries) to those who are lost, to include the preaching the gospel to all those who have determinedly rejected the Lord Jesus as Savior. For instance, in chapters two and three they are the assigned messengers to the churches. In chapter seven, the angels supervise the administration of two things:

- I. They control the wind from the four corners of the earth:** "*After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree*" (Rev. 7:1);
- II. They seal the righteous servants of God:** H.A. Ironsides commentary on the following:
 - A. In the Old Testament**—"Then he cried in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house (The Temple): and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And Jehovah said unto him, *Go through the midst of the city (Jerusalem), and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over the abominations that are done in the midst thereof*" (Ezekiel 9:1-4).

A voice is heard calling from the sanctuary for those who are in authority in Jerusalem to draw near with the swords of judgment in their hands.

To this call six men responded in the vision, each one armed to deal with offenders against the law of God. Among these was a secretary, or recorder, robed in linen, the symbol of righteousness, and having a writer's inkhorn by his side according to the custom of those days. All these men took their positions before the brazen altar, which speaks of the cross work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the light of which the whole world of the impenitent is to be judged. The prophet sees the *glory of the God of Israel* which

had gone up from its accustomed place between the cherubim over the mercy-seat, now hovering over the threshold of the house. The throne of God is no longer a throne of grace but of judgment, for grace has been spurned and God's holiness defied (See Insert 2 of this series for full commentary of God's Glory).

The voice is heard again, and is identified as that of Jehovah Himself. He commands the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn, to go through the midst of the city of Jerusalem, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of those who manifested exercise of soul by sighing and crying because of the manifold abominations being practiced on every hand. One is reminded of the Church as sealed by God's Holy Spirit, the 144,000 out of all the tribes of Israel who are to be sealed in their foreheads just before the great tribulation bursts upon the world in all its terrible fury, and those who refuse to take the mark of the beast during the tribulation. We think today of those who, having turned to God in repentance and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, are sealed by the Holy Spirit and thus marked off from those who are to be Anathema Maranatha—devoted to judgment at the coming of the Lord.

"And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye through the city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and little children and women; *but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at My sanctuary.* Then they began at the old men that were before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and smote in the city"—verses 5-7.

As we read these words we cannot fail to connect them with the solemn message of 1 Peter 4 : 17, 18 : *"For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear ?"*

The armed executors of justice were commanded to go through Jerusalem and smite down all who did not have the seal on their foreheads, and the word was, *"Begin at My sanctuary."* Thus the judgment commenced with the priest of the Lord who had profaned His name. Even so, God will deal in stern retribution with all who profess His name today but who have only a form of godliness while denying its power. The Lord will not spare the professing church if its members spurn His Word and trample on His grace, turning that grace into lasciviousness.

Because the people of Judah had profaned the temple by their idolatries, God would give it up to further defilement by the dead bodies of those who had rebelled against Him.

"And it came to pass, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord Jehovah! wilt Thou destroy all the residue of Israel in Thy pouring out of Thy wrath upon Jerusalem? Then said He unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of wresting of judgment: for they say, Jehovah hath forsaken the land, and Jehovah seeth not. And as for Me also, Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way upon their head. And, behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as Thou hast commanded me" —verses 8-11.

Stirred to the depths of his being by this vision of the slaughter of priests and people (so soon to be accomplished by the Chaldean armies), Ezekiel fell down on his face before God and pleaded that He would not destroy all the remnant of Israel when He poured out His wrath upon Jerusalem. God answered by declaring that conditions were such that judgment could no longer be delayed, and inasmuch as the whole people had departed from Him, and had refused all entreaty to repent and seek His face, judgment without mercy should be meted out to them.

But this did not mean He had forgotten the few in the land who sighed and cried because of conditions which they could not remedy. He had commanded the destroyers already, saying, "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark." This indicated clearly His care for the faithful remnant.¹

As the first part of the vision came to an end the man with the inkhorn reported, saying, "I have done as Thou hast commanded me." This was to reassure the prophet concerning those who had humbled themselves before God and mourned because of the sin of Judah.²

B. In The New Testament Church: The Church was sealed by the Holy Spirit, not by angels

1. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father **sealed**. (John 6:27).
2. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this **seal**, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2 Timothy 2:19).
3. Who hath also **sealed** us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1:22).
4. In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13).
5. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed** unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30).

C. The 144,000 Tribulation witnesses: Since the sixth seal takes place toward the end of the first quarter of the Tribulation, we find that the destroying angel is ordered to wait until the work of sealing is finished. This indicates that at the beginning of the Tribulation, the 144,000 servants of God will be sealed and begin their ministry of preaching the gospel, attended by a mighty worldwide soul harvest that will culminate in a time of severe persecution for believers, inspired by the Antichrist. This accords with the breaking of the fifth seal; at this time the sealing angel will have finished his work and the destroying angel will be permitted to hurt the earth and the sea, ushering in the sixth seal (Revelation 14:1).

III. They Preach The Gospel To Those Left On The Earth:

- 6) "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7) Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (verses 6, 7).

Therefore, what I attempted to reemphasize here so far in part seven, is the presenting of Biblical proofs showing the eternal character of the Glory of our Lord—in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and especially during the Great Tribulation. Our Savior has never—nor ever will—subject His own righteous people to that which is lethal to them—no matter what the source. Yet, His judgment always begins in His house. That's awesome...so

...If you are still in doubt concerning Christ's protection of His own body, you should complete an in-depth study on the plea of Christ to his churches in Revelation, chapters two and three.

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¹ See Insert 2 of this series. Also note that in this commentary of Ezekiel 9 supports strongly that the "sealed" church will be protected, (raptured) prior to the revealing of the antichrist in Revelation six.

² Expository Notes on Ezekiel. Pages 56-60; Loizeaux Bros. Publ. Neptune, N.J.; ©None; 1920.

The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10)

*“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 righteousness 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.”

At this I (John) fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! For I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:7-10).

The main source of information about this event in heaven is the above readings in Revelation 19: 7-10, which falls into two main divisions: 1) the marriage of the Lamb, and 2) the marriage supper of the Lamb.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Jesus spoke of the marriage supper many times. For instance, in the parable of the ten virgins, He told about the preparation for the coming of the bridegroom. In Matthew 22:1-14, He spoke the parable of the marriage of the king’s son. At this festive occasion the king sent out servants to invite people to come to this blessed event.

Who is The Bridegroom?

There’s only one answer to this question. It can only be “the king’s son” of Matthew 22:1-14, the Lord Jesus Himself. In John 3:29, long after John the Baptist had introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29), John was asked to identify himself. He made it clear that he was not the Christ; in John 3:29 he referred to Christ as "the bridegroom," to himself as "the friend who attends the bridegroom [and who] waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice." Clearly Christ is here referred to as the Bridegroom as well as the Lamb. Thus, Christ is the Bridegroom at the marriage of the Lamb.

Who Is the Bride?

The answer to the question "Who is the Bride?" presents a difference of opinion. Some say that the Bride is Israel, because in Revelation 19:7 she is called "wife," as in Isaiah 54:5 Israel is called the wife of God. But the Bride cannot be Israel because a bride is not called a wife until after the marriage has taken place. Besides, there are two wives in Scripture. The Old Testament wife was "cast off" because of the spiritual adultery committed in the worship of other gods (Jer. 3:1-20; Ezek. 16; Hos. 2; 3:1-5). It is this very difference that Paul had in mind in 2 Corinthians 11:2: "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." The Church has been guilty of many sins in her nearly two thousand years of existence, but spiritual adultery is not one of them. Spiritual adultery is defined in Scripture as the worship of other gods. One cannot be a Christian, with the Holy Spirit as the witness in one's heart, and worship anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. This fact, of course, automatically becomes the test as to the genuineness of salvation.

Another verse of importance to consider here regarding the identity of the Bride is found in Ephesians 5:32. The Apostle Paul, speaking to husbands and wives of their relationship together, likens the husband to Christ and the wife to the Church. He sums it up in verse 32 by saying, "This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church," indicating the perfect picture of the relationship between

the Lord Jesus and His Church is that of a bride and a bridegroom. Therefore when a person accepts Jesus Christ, he or she becomes a member of the Church, the true invisible Church, and is automatically espoused or engaged to Christ. This engagement will be finalized at the marriage of the Lamb.

When and Where Will This Marriage Take Place?

The marriage of the Lamb must take place in heaven, for in Revelation 19:11, after the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the Lamb, we find the Lord Jesus coming in what we call "the Glorious Appearing" to set up His kingdom. For this reason we must conclude that the marriage and the supper have occurred in heaven. Their location in Revelation 19 shows these events to have taken place at the end of the Tribulation, just before the millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

Ephesians 5:27 indicates the manner in which the Bride will be presented to Christ: "*a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*" This condition will exist only after the judgment of Christ when believers have been completely cleansed and the Church is made whole. For that reason we believe that the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will take place during the Tribulation, will precede the marriage supper of the Lamb, and immediately after the judgment of reward has been presented to the last believer, the marriage of the Lamb will take place. All Christians who have trusted in Christ during the age of grace, from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church, will make up His Bride.

How Does the Bride Make Herself Ready?

Years ago a bride usually made her own wedding dress; in fact, it is not uncommon for brides to make them today. The wedding dress of this Bride, made of fine linen (Rev. 19:8), is defined as "the righteous acts of the saints." That is, the Bride makes herself ready through her righteous acts. Inasmuch as this marriage comes after the Judgment Seat of Christ, most likely the position of the individual as a member of the Bride of Christ is determined by the outcome of the judgment by fire, when his works will be judged. Therefore Christians in this age must be careful to do good works (Titus 3:8). The Lord Jesus challenges Christians, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). Although Christians are reluctant to consider working for rewards, we should remember that our relationship to Christ as members of the Bride of Christ will be determined by faithful service today.

The devil is a master liar. He tells the unsaved, "Work for salvation." If his lies fail and the individual accepts Christ, the devil immediately whispers, "Now that you're saved freely by grace, you don't have to do anything." That perspective does not agree with Ephesians 2:8-10; most Christians forget verse 10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The purpose of the Christian is to be available to the Lord for "good works."

We ought properly to take periodic inventories to see if we are truly serving Christ. In that Day all unfaithful Christians will rue their unfaithfulness, for it will not only keep them from the position with Christ they might desire, but will limit the extent to which they rule and reign with Christ during the millennial kingdom. The attitude of the Apostle Paul should characterize every Christian: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22: 10). That kind of attitude will provide such motivation in believers that they will not only receive a "full reward" but hear the Savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matt. 25:21).

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The marriage supper, of course, is not the marriage, but the marriage feast of the Lamb. It seems a particular honor to be invited to this feast, for John was instructed to write, "*Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!*" (Rev. 19:9). "Blessed" means "happy" or "honored." In other words, "Happy (or honored) are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb."

The Identity of the Guests

That guests will appear at this marriage supper can be deduced from the fact that some people are invited to attend the marriage ceremony. Obviously, a bride is never invited to a wedding supper, nor is a bridegroom. Those who are invited are the friends of the bride and groom. Now who are these friends or guests? There are some differences of opinion here. It cannot be the Church, for the Church is the Bride. Some try to identify the parables of the ten virgins and of the marriage supper of the king's son as illustrations of the guests at this wedding supper. But these two parables only serve to illustrate the prominence of a marriage supper in the thinking of the Lord Jesus. Note that both the foolish virgins and the guest who did not possess a wedding garment are left outside the wedding feast, whereas there is no place for anyone to be left outside at the marriage supper of the Lamb. These two parables are "kingdom of heaven" parables, teaching that one should be prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom.

John the Baptist, one of the last Old Testament saints, indicated that he was a friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29). These Old Testament saints will be in heaven and will have their rewards, but they are not the Church, not the Bride of Christ. They are the friends of the Bride and Bridegroom, who at this point can be seen as the ones invited as guests to the feast. So then all the believing dead from Adam until the resurrection of Christ will be guests at this feast. In addition to them will appear those who have received the Savior during the Tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, many of whom will have been martyred for the testimony of Christ.

These will comprise the guests at the feast. Some would suggest that perhaps angels will be among the guests. However, I do not feel this is probable. Angels may be spectators at the marriage supper of the Lamb, but it should be noticed that the supper is distinguished by the use of the sacrificial name of the Lord—Lamb. Angels have never been the recipients of the blessings of the redeemed. Only those who have lived a human existence, have sinned, and have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb will be in that number, either as the Bride of Christ or as the invited guests of Christ. I do not wish to imply that the Old Testament saints are inferior to the Church, or the body of Christ, but merely to point out that this is a special blessing for the Church. Now Israel, or the guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, have promises and relationships to Him in which we shall not share; however, the marriage supper of the Lamb is an experience reserved for the Church.

THE HONEYMOON OF THE LAMB

After weddings on this earth, the wedding party customarily has a celebration or reception, which has replaced in the modern era of the old-fashioned marriage supper. But after the marriage supper, the bride and the bridegroom usually change into their traveling dress and slip away on a wedding trip. It is more than just coincidence that immediately after the marriage supper of the Lamb, John tells us, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse" (Rev. 19:11a). From this point he launches into a description of the Glorious Appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth to set up His kingdom, when He will come with His Bride, the Church. The earth—the former abode of the raptured Church—will then become the place of the thousand-year honeymoon.³

THE BELIEVER AND THE MILLENNIUM

Immediately after the descent of Christ to this earth, the millennial kingdom will commence. Christ will set up His kingdom and believers will reign with Him. Second Timothy 2:11-12 clarifies this prospect. That reigning is based on the works of the believers, for Paul said, "If we endure, we will also reign with him."

—end of part seven—

Blessings from Tom and Linda Stephens

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³Revelation Revealed. Tim LaHaye; Pages 294-297; Zondervan Publ., Grand Rapids, Mi.; ©1999 by Tim LaHaye.