

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb  
Easter 5  
Rev. Doug Floyd  
Revelation 19:1-9

Last week, I reflected on the titles of Christ and even the titles of His people.

The Revelation is a word of encouragement to the people of God, to the royal priesthood who worship the Lord in this life and will continue to live in His presence in the life to come. Jesus Christ addresses his church through a series of letters, through images and titles that unveil who He is and who they are, and through a grand epic story. The story is told in pictures of the opening of seals and the four horsemen, through trumpets sounding and scrolls unfurling, through a dragon and woman and her child, and through beasts of the sea and angels in the air. It is a tale of war and bloodshed, of terror and fire, of destruction and creation. It is a love story.

After the fall of Babylon and the rejoicing of the saints, we are taken to a great celebration the marriage supper of the Lamb, the bride adorned in fine linen. As I read through chapters 8 through 18 that we will not cover this week, I saw terrors that inflict the earth, the sea and rivers, and the sky. These images remind me of a similar pattern in the Old Testament. Then I consulted several experts to make sure I wasn't going reading into the texts patterns that weren't there. GK Beale, who writes extensively about the allusions to the Old Testament throughout the New Testament also noted this pattern, so I feel safe to share this way of helping us see the narrative today.

Think of the terrors that inflict the earth, the sea and rivers, and the sky. This sounds like the plagues in Egypt in Exodus. The people of God are living as slaves there. The Lord loves the Children of Israel not because they are better than other nations but because He has chosen to love them just as He loved their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He has chosen this family to reveal his blessings and healing for all the families of the earth. But this family is held captive in Egypt.

In fact, the Pharaoh views the Hebrews as a threat and has the midwives to kill all the Hebrew boys. Just as the dragon tried to kill the child in The Revelation, the Pharaoh is seeking to kill the future of Israel by killing all the young men. The Lord intervenes and raises up his servant Moses to rescue His people. Moses and his brother Aaron go before Pharaoh as witnesses of the Most High God. These are two witnesses. If we keep reading throughout the Old and New Testament, we see a common pattern of two witnesses going forth with the Word of God. In fact, the law requires the mouth of two or three witnesses to establish a word. So we see Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, the disciples being sent out two by two, and even Paul and Barnabas being sent out from Antioch.

When Moses and Aaron ask the Pharaoh to let the people go and hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness, the Pharaoh rejects their request and increases the burdens of the people. The Children of Israel are suffering at the hands of Egypt. Through a series of plagues, the Lord inflicts the waters, the earth, and the sky in such a way that all of Egypt suffers, but the children of Israel are preserved. These plagues bring suffering to Egypt but also expose the powerlessness

of Egyptian gods. I would suggest that the terrors that accompany the trumpets in Revelation are exposing the powerlessness of the idols of the age. In every age, even ours, idols turn our attention away from God and toward the creation. We live in a culture of abstraction, so our idols become abstract and yet influence organizations, government, family, education, and even church. In his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller exposes the idols in our culture such as money, sex and power, as well as political activism, doctrinal battles, family values, and religious communities.

Here's one incisive quote from Keller, "An idol is something that we look to for things that only God can give. Idolatry functions widely inside religious communities when doctrinal truth is elevated to the position of a false god. This occurs when people rely on the rightness of their doctrine for their standing with God rather than on God himself and his grace. It is a subtle but deadly mistake."<sup>1</sup>

The plagues in Exodus and the travails in Revelation expose and cast down these idols. This causes hopelessness in some, but it also drive sthe people of God to trust in Him alone. When the death angel comes to Egypt, the people must trust in the blood on the doorposts for God's protection and deliverance.

Moses and Aaron lead the people out of Egypt toward the wilderness for the great feast. Some Egyptians decide to join the Exodus and trust in the God of the Hebrews. Once again Pharaoh pursues. In the midst of terror and delight, the people cross the Red Sea, and Pharaoh and his army fall down into the depths of darkness. The people rejoice in the Lord with singing.

Just as Pharaoh and his army are cast down, the City of Babylon that persecuted the righteous is cast down and there is great rejoicing.

In The Revelation, the Dragon seeks to devour the woman's child the moment he is born, but the child is protected and the woman flees into the wilderness. In Exodus, the Children of Israel follow Moses and Aaron into the wilderness and go Mt Sinai for the great feast. The people of Israel hear the voice of God coming down from the mountain. And this exchange between the Lord and Israel is a covenantal ceremony. In fact, the prophets and Jewish Rabbis see this as a wedding between God and His people.

The Ten Words or Ten Commands is the covenant document. These words bind the people to the Lord and the Lord to the people, and they actually given a vision of an earthly paradise: a world where the people love the Lord, where parents and children love and honor one another, a world restored to the innocence of Eden, a world before Cain kills Abel, a world not based on the scarcity of coveting but on the abundance God. These 10 Words envision a true and glorious Promised Land.

But the children of Israel fail to enter the Promised Land. Yes, they eventually do occupy the land of promise, but Hebrews tells us that they never enter the rest of faith. They are always drawn away by the idols of the surrounding nations. Thus the prophets picture Israel as the unfaithful bride who is carried away by her seducers. She leaves the Lord who loved and redeemed her. Hosea literally lives out this prophetic story as he redeems his own unfaithful

bride. And the image of Hosea offers a promise of a restoration to come between God and his people.

Revelation picks up on this theme and now the great seducer Babylon is destroyed. The Bride is clean, pure, holy, dressed in white linen. In other words, she has become the image of her Bridegroom. The Bride of Christ reveals the glory of Christ. When we see her, we see the glory of God shining forth. Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3: 18, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” This sanctifying work in the bride is a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. As Jude writes, “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (vs 24-25)

The Revelation, which is often read like a horror story, becomes a love story where the bride is protected from all the villains that would seek to destroy her. In fact, the very attacks only serve to lead her into glory. These villains are eventually destroyed, and she enters into the fullness of God’s love.

I would suggest all our human love stories are mere reflections of this true and holy love story of God and His people. This love story encompasses all of history and ends with a great feast and great rejoicing.

In this story, the Son of God, pursues his people just as a Bridegroom pursues his Bride. He suffers for her. Fights the evil one to deliver her from sin and death. Overcomes the powers that would enslave her and destroy her. She is brought her to a great feast, not to Mt. Sinai but “to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Heb 12:22–24)

What might we see in this love story between Christ and the Church?

She has been clothed in white line, which speaks of righteousness. The Bride, the people of God have been transformed by the glory of God.

The Lord has loved his people and his love has changed his people into images of his love. As John writes 1 John 4:17, “as he is so also are we in this world.” And “we love because he first loved us.” This love that Jesus Christ pours upon us redeems and frees us, but also opens our eyes to truth and glory. Here is some of Jesus prayer in John 17,

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. <sup>20</sup> “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in

us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:15-25)

In this prayer, we see a glimpse of God’s people being washed and sanctified in the truth of God. We see the people of God beholding the depths of love within the Godhead, and this love changes and glorifies the people. They are led into the mystery of this loving exchange, this life poured out, and they begin to live in the love toward one another. The great and holy communion of God between Father, Son and Spirit is made manifest in a people who come to love one another a similar way. As they do, they become witnesses of God’s love and glory to the world.

The Revelation tells us that the story of ancient Exodus is part of the larger story of God leading his people across the ages back home to the heart of his love. It is both a spiritual healing, but also real food, real celebration, and the renewing of the physical world.

We eat the bread and drink the wine to celebrate and rehearse the redeeming, glorifying, and loving grace of God poured upon us in Christ Jesus. We ourselves are becoming images of this bread and wine poured out in blessing for a world in need of healing. And as we go forth from this place, our eyes are being restored, so that we might behold the glory and love and beauty of God all around us.

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<sup>1</sup> Keller, Timothy. Counterfeit Gods (p. 131). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.