



YOU'RE INVITED TO THE WEDDING

One of the toughest things that a bride and groom have to go through is to make a list of the people that they want to invite to their wedding. This is especially true when they have a limited budget for the wedding reception. The mental and emotional gymnastics that they have to go through to finalize their guest list is enough for them to want to elope and be married by an Elvis Presley impersonator in a small Las Vegas chapel.

It is a rare occasion when everyone is invited to a wedding. That has been the case for every wedding that I've been invited to. Some of my friends were not sent an invitation. When we were younger, my wife and I used to feel privileged and honored to be invited to a wedding, especially when the guest list was short. But the years of hundreds of wedding sponsorships have taken their toll. Nowadays we don't feel offended when we don't receive a wedding invitation. In fact, we feel relieved. We don't have to worry about what we will wear or what present we will give. Does that mean that we're really getting old? Please don't tell me that. I'm too old for your opinion to matter to me anymore.

The Bible teaches that weddings are important to God. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding by turning water into good wine. He also compared the Kingdom to a wedding where everyone was invited. Actually, the ones the king invited were no-shows, so he invited everyone (**Matt. 22**). Jesus also talked about the bridesmaids who missed the wedding because they did not have enough oil for their bridal lamps (**Matt. 25**). The Bible refers to Jesus' Second Coming as the coming of the Bridegroom that we should all be prepared for.

Most people consider the book of Revelation as the most confusing part of the Bible. Even those who profess to understand it see it as a fearsome book. It talks about wars, tribulations, the antichrist and seven last plagues. This is the only part of the Bible where no two card-carrying theologians can agree on almost anything. Recently, as I read Revelation, I discovered a theme that I didn't know was there in my previous studies. It had been there all along, but I didn't connect it to Gospel of the Kingdom.

The truth is the entire Bible has this main theme: God created humankind for love. The one thing that God desires from man is what He created us for. He made us for a love relationship with Him and with one another. When sin separated us from Him and disqualified us from being His rulers on earth, God didn't change His purpose and destiny for us. We were predestined to be God-lovers and earth rulers. We could not fulfill His plan for us if He stopped loving us. And we could be in a right relationship with Him only in response to His love. So He could not coerce or manipulate us into

loving Him, for that would not be our free choice. We were meant for love and we could only be redeemed by God's proactive loving act.

The Apocalypse is Christ's letter to His beloved church. He writes a letter to each of the seven congregations in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). These were actual churches in Apostle John's day. In fact, John was quite familiar with these congregations and their locality (He was pastor of the church at Ephesus). If you first set aside all the fearsome prophecies that you have always tried to understand, you will see that Christ wants His church to be prepared for His return. Revelation is really about the church being prepared for the final closing event of earth's history of sin. Christ reveals what's ahead for His church before the end. But it's important to understand that before those events come, the church must be in a condition to face that future.

So, the letters to the seven churches are more important for believers to understand than for them to know who the antichrist will be and what the mark of the beast is. If we don't take to heart the messages to the seven churches, our precise knowledge of the last-day events will be useless when they finally come. Revelation was not given to Christ's church merely for our information. Just like the rest of the Bible books before it, Revelation, in its essence, is about our relationship with Christ.

Jesus is the Bridegroom who longs to be with His church – His Bride. Revelation is really about the wedding of the Lamb. God's enemy will do everything he could in order to prevent this marriage from happening. He wants to stop it because it will spell his doom. The marriage of the Lamb to His Bride is the final proof and demonstration of the power of God's love and grace. The wedding happens because sinful man responded to God's love as demonstrated by His Son – the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world (**Rev. 5**). God's grace works!

Revelation is really Christ's love letter to His Bride. As the seven churches' conditions show, there's still a lot to be done before the wedding. There are problems and setbacks. But Jesus is not deterred by all of these things. He loves His Bride and He is not cancelling the wedding. Instead, He will do everything to make sure that the Bride becomes ready and glorious.

We who received Jesus as our Savior and Lover of our souls are invited to the "Wedding of the Ages." The invitations have been sent out at great cost. Jesus wrote it with His own blood on Calvary. There is no longer any doubt about the Bridegroom's intentions. He can't wait to marry His Bride. You're invited to the marriage of the Lamb. So don't fail to show up! You are the Bride.