



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 19:1-10

"The Harlot Judged and the Lamb United With His Bride"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The reading today, verses 1 through 10 of chapter 19. Our topic is "the Harlot Judged and the Lamb United With His Bride." As you can see from reading the 1st five verses, Babylon and its story is not concluding until the 1st half of chapter 19 is over. For here, we have the celebration in heaven, and among the saints, for the fall of that great city, the source of collective evil in God's creation. Verse 1, John writes,

"After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God because his judgments are true and righteous: for he has judged the great harlot, who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and had avenged the blood of his bond servants on her. And a second time they said, Hallelujah. Her smoke rises up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came from the throne, saying, give Praise to our God, all you his bond servants, and you who fear him, the small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

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Now, there are four occurrences of the word Hallelujah. That is a transliteration of Hebrew words that mean, "Praise Yah," translated sometimes in the Old Testament by simply, "Praise God." This is the first time that it has occurred in the New Testament, and what is striking about it is the first occurrence of the term hallelujah in the Bible in Psalm 104 and verse 35 is a passage in which there is praise over the destruction of evil. The same thing is true in the New Testament.

It's almost as if the one who wrote this book, who happens to be ultimately the Lord God in heaven, well acquainted with the Scriptures that he has written through the Holy Spirit, makes the specific connection with Psalm 104 and verse 35, where we read, "Let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord Oh my soul, Hallelujah." In other words, the "Praise ye the Lord," that's hallelujah in the original text, is the hallelujah of heaven and earth over the overthrow of Babylon and Babylonianism. We generally think of hallelujah as being celebrating something that is a spiritual experience of something like heavenly bliss. Well it so happens, there is a heavenly bliss when evil is destroyed on this earth.

Verse 7 continues, "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride," (perhaps wife is better as a rendering of the Greek word *gunē* here, and I like to take it that way, his wife) has made herself ready." One of the great themes of the Old Testament, and the New, is that Jehovah has made the people of God his wife. We won't go into the details of how that is true, but I believe that the way we should render this is, "and his wife has made herself ready." I'm looking at the New American Standard Bible. The theology of those who translated it made it difficult for them to render it that way. So they modified "his wife has made herself ready" to "his bride has made herself ready," but being godly men, I know most of them, they put in the margin, "wife, literally." So we'll keep it as wife. It so happens that that, to my mind, is better.

"And it was given to her to cloth herself in fine linen, bright and clean: for the fine linen is the righteous act of the saints. And he said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are true words of God."

Something I didn't intend to say anything about, I'll say something about it now, the term invited is literally called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. That verb refers, in this case, to the effectual grace of God, and therefore refers to those who not only have an invitation, but have responded to it.

Verse 10, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, do not do that: I am a fellow-servant of yours and of your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." And again, I'm not going to say anything in detail in the exposition about this, but the testimony of Jesus is capable of being understood in two ways. We can understand this, a testimony to Jesus, is the spirit of prophesy. And understand by that, that the whole of the prophetic word is in one important sense a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ, Old and New Testament. It's a testimony to him. Unfortunately, for that interpretation, that is not harmonious with the general sense of this particular book.

For this particular book, the book is a book that comes from God through the Son and the apostles to us. So the testimony of Jesus is not testimony to him, but testimony that he has given us, testimony born by him. So I'm rather inclined to the interpretation that, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy," means the testimony born by the Lord Jesus is the true spirit of prophesy. In other words, it is the prophetic word that is truly the prophetic word, that that is born by him. I could say more about that but that's sufficient, at least, for you to realize that there are two ways to take it. If you like to take it the other way, well that's alright because that's a truth. But the other, in my opinion, is more harmonious with the usage in this book.

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May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and particularly for this great unfolding of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the completion of his work which began in the ages of eternity past and will be only completed as the ages of eternity unfold. We are so grateful, Lord, that by Thy marvelous grace Thou hast included us. How marvelous it is to know that Thou has touched our sinful hearts, freed them from sin, brought them to freely trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the blessings of life now and throughout the ages of eternity.

We are indeed grateful Lord, on this the Lord's day. We exalt the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ and upon Believers Chapel and its ministries. Bless the preaching of the word, the messages that were given in the Sunday school, and our meeting this evening, as we remember our Lord around the Lord's Table.

We ask Thy blessing upon the outreach through the radio ministry and the written ministry and other forms of testimony to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray for our country, for our president, for others in human government and ask that by Thy grace the sovereign providence of God may enable us to continue to preach the gospel. We look forward to the completion of the church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And then Father, we look forward to the future and the magnification of the grace and wisdom and power and might of our saving God. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] Marriage, according to the encyclopedia, seems a very drab affair. Encyclopedia says, "State or status in which persons of opposite sex are united to form a new family." We make a great deal of fun over the relationship, joshing over the state,

the wife and the husband. There is an old story of a bachelor who was once asked a question, "Who is the happiest someone who is not married or someone who is?" And he is reported to have said something like, "Sometimes I think there is as many as is that ain't, as ain't that is." "By whom?" said the man, who had said his wife was outspoken, takes a little time to get there [Laughter].

There is a story also about an Arch Bishop, by the name of Ryan. And Arch Bishop Ryan was at one time attending confirmation in a small parish. The local pastor was giving preparatory instruction, and questions, really, as to the questions that she was supposed to know. She was very frightened, and the pastor asked her to define the state of matrimony. And she replied, "It's a state of terrible torment, which those who enter are compelled to undergo for a time to prepare them for a better world." [Laughter] "No, No!" shouted the Rector, "That's not matrimony, that's the definition of purgatory." "Leave her alone," said the Arch Bishop, "Perhaps the child has been shown the light." [Laughter]

Yet on the other hand, marriage, according to Scripture, is the most perfect and the most exclusive bond among human beings and provokes the most complete obligations. Duty and delight go together in marriage. This past week I was reading some comments in a book on the subject of couples, and Gloria Steinem had several. In fact, she had four. The person who compiled these comments seemed to like to add hers to the others. The next person who stood with the most comments was Zsa Zsa Gabor, she had quite a few on the subject of couples too. [Laughter] Gloria Steinem's were very interesting because every one of them was anti-male. "A woman without a man," she said, "is like a fish without a bicycle." [Laughter] It's pretty good, I must admit, but, [Laughter] but only from a certain viewpoint. [Laughter] "The surest way to be alone is to get married. Marriage makes you legally half a person, what man wants to live with half a person?" And then she had one about Jacqueline Onassis, which I won't repeat, you can look that up. It's not really bad, it's kind of funny. But we don't have time for it.

I'd like to lay stress upon what the Scriptures say about marriage. It is the place of blessing, the place of privilege, and it's the place of parentage. And the blessing of marriage is so remarkable and so marvelous when the two parties are in harmony, that it's one of the greatest of blessings that God has given us. That a woman or a man may say, "I am my beloved's." And then be able to say, "My beloved is mine," is surely a most remarkable blessing, and those who have known that know how remarkable it is. It's a remarkable privilege, marriage. For one person to be so united to another that their thoughts and actions and lives may be called one is really remarkable.

We, of course, in our experience, more or less, realize these things at times. It is true of us. At other times, it is not. Sometimes it's our fault, and sometimes we think it's our partner's fault. But nevertheless the ideal held before us is one of the greatest of the privileges that any person could possibly have. Marriage truly is a duty and a delight. And then the final, of parentage, is also one of the great blessings of life. To be carried out in order that others also may ultimately experience the same blessings that we do.

Now there comes to me a sense of awe when I see God's people called, "the Bride of Christ." The place of blessing, the place of privilege, "the Bride of Christ," and I am also not only told that the church is the Bride of Christ, but I am pointed, specifically, to the marriage supper, at his Second Advent. No topic could be more exciting, in the truest sense, more glorious than the topic of the marriage supper of the Lamb and his wife, his bride, his wife.

Well that's what we are looking at in our verses in chapter 19. Someone has called this the *te deum* of the righteous judgment of God. That too is true to this context. What we do have is the *te deum* of the righteous judgment of God. We have the praises of heaven over Babylon's fall in verses 1 through 4, and then, in verses 5 through 8, we have the praises of the saints over Babylon's fall, and finally an epilogue in verses 9 and 10. We're still in the section on Babylon at the beginning of chapter 19, and what we have here is response to the command that was issued in chapter 18 and verse 20, where

we read, "Rejoice over her, O heaven and you saints and apostles and prophets because God has pronounced judgment for you against her," a fourfold halleluiaah of response, a fourfold halleluiaah of rejoicing. In the New Testament only here, incidentally, halleluiaah, remarkable isn't it, that when this great expression, halleluiaah, a transliteration of the Hebrew, "Praise Yah," should be used only here, and it's the celebration of the destruction and fall of great Babylon, the harlot, the source of collective rebellion against the Lord God in the earth. So halleluiaah, heaven shouts. It's interesting, as I mentioned that judgment is the context of its first occurrence in the New Testament in this last book.

Now John says that he, "Heard this loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God." I'd like to suggest to you, not arguing the point in detail, we don't have time to do it, that when he uses the term salvation, and he's not speaking primarily of the salvation of our souls, though of course, it is true that that kind of salvation belongs to our God. His view point here is much broader than that. He's talking of the purpose of God for the creation.

And so, when he sees finally the fall of Babylon and is getting to announce the advent and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, he's thinking about the ultimate purpose of God and the deliverance of this world from the evil authority that Satan has exercised over it up to this point on, in anticipation of the kingdom of the one thousand years, to which we come to not too far away from now. So the salvation is the salvation of deliverance of the whole creation, from the Babylonianism that has characterized it since the days of ancient Babylon, then glory and power are to be understood in the same general way. Salvation, glory and power belong to him. One awakens gratitude, salvation. Glory awakens reverence, and power awakens trust.

Now he gives us the reason why there is occasion for hallelujah, salvation, glory and power belonging to our God. Notice the first word of verse 2,

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"Because his judgments are true and righteous: for he has judged the great harlot, who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and he had avenged the blood of his bond servants on her. And a second time they said, Hallelujah. Her smoke rises up forever and ever."

Two cardinal sins have characterized Babylonianism down through the years, first corrupting the earth. He says, "Because his judgments are true and righteous: for he has judged the great harlot, who was corrupting the earth with her immorality," frustrating the purpose of the creation. So that's the first reason for the hallelujah of Babylon's fall. The frustration of God's purpose through Babylonianism will come to an end. The second reason, and the second of the cardinal sins, is that in fighting against the saints, Babylon and those who stand behind it have really been fighting against heaven, for he says, "And he had avenged the blood of his bond servants on her."

Now you might think that when we have such a thing as the fall of Babylon that there would be great mourning, and there is mourning, there is mourning on the part of those who were subservient to great Babylon. We read, for example, of the merchants who were involved in the materialism, the anti-God materialism of the time. We read in verse 15 of chapter 18, "And the merchants of these things who became rich from her will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment weeping and mourning." In other words, great weeping over the face of the earth over the fall of Babylon, but in heaven, great rejoicing, hallelujah.

Now, that may seem to underline the fact that God, at least for once, is not a God of love. No, No. He's still a God of love, but love defined by the propitiation which our Lord offered on Calvary's cross. Men may mourn, but heaven makes merry. Things, you see, looked at from the human stand point, are not real things, ultimately. Things as heaven looks at them are the real things. What we see in our society today is illustrated by this great principle. In our society today, the moral law has little effect upon our

universities, upon our political leaders, upon our social leaders, upon our society, the moral law. The moral law is largely forgotten. We have seen in the case of Mr. Havel, who's come from Czechoslovakia, a man who through his experience has learned at least that the moral law still prevails, and he has seen the collapse of civilizations in which the moral law was flouted. But as a society as a whole, our world, the world lies in the wicked one, and the world in fighting the moral law of God is fighting God.

Chapler once said, "The moral law can no more be broken than the law of gravity." It can only be illustrated, and what we are seeing in our societies today all over the face of this globe is the fact that the moral law still prevails. God's principles are the principles of human life and when we violate those principles, we are ultimately to suffer for it, and that pertains to the individuals as well. You Christians, when you engage in activity that is contrary to the word of God, plainly contrary to the word of God, you will also illustrate immoral law. Because inevitably what will happen is that you cannot break that law and therefore when you try to break it, it is you who suffer and not the law.

We've seen that so much in our society, in particularly in our churches where divorce has become rampant among professing believers, mind you professing believers, divorce, rampant. When the Scriptures make it very plain that except for one or two rare occasions, and all will agree at least that far, divorce is contrary to the law of God. Inevitably there has to be the suffering that results from it. Unfortunately, it's often our children that suffer. But every time there will be suffering sometimes unfortunately those things carry on in a family's life. You cannot break the moral law.

You can illustrate it however, and if you want to be an illustration of it then continue to break the moral law of God, but ultimately, as God and the saints in heaven illustrate, they celebrate the fact that God's law ultimately is fulfilled. "The smoke shall rise up forever and ever," John says, with reference to Babylon's fall. Incidentally that expression, "the smoke shall rise up forever and ever," is derived from Isaiah chapter 34. In some verses, if you were studying Isaiah chapter 34, we would say these verses are

taken from Genesis chapter 19 and the destruction of Sodom. So Isaiah was a student of Genesis and the author, the Lord himself, is the student of Isaiah and Genesis, and so we find it here again, so that Babylon reveals herself to be another Sodom. If you want to know how bad Babylonianism is, then reflect on Sodom and the moral law in connection with that vile city and you will have the perfect illustration.

Now, having said that, the saints are called upon to praise in verse 5 through verse 8, "And a voice came from the throne, saying, give Praise to our God, all you his bond servants, and you who fear him, the small and great," two voices from heaven in this section calling for God's praise and the celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb and the kingdom. And this is done incidentally, I'll use a technical word and try to explain it, because it's frequently used, proleptically, that is the passage anticipates a future event. That's why we read in the verse that Mark read about the fact of the reigning of the Lord God.

And when this term is used, I'm looking for it here. That's why I'm hesitating. Because when he says, "reigns," it's the last line of verse 6, "hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns," the meaning of that is "has begun to reign." That's why this is rendered in this way. For those of you who are a student of Greek, you will know that this is an ingressive Eris tense and it refers to the future event as beginning to come to pass. So it's a proleptic thing. The kingdom has not occurred yet. It will occur after the coming of our Lord, described in the very next section of the book that we're going to look at. But he looks at it as if it's happening now.

Now we read in verse 5, "And a voice came from the throne," commentators differ over this, and some think this is the voice of the Lord God, and there are reasons for that. We don't have time to go into them, but I would suggest to you, just as a personal preference of mine, I do not think that this is the voice of the Lord, but rather the voice of the living creatures and the elders who are around the throne. So we read then, "And a voice came from the throne," that is the voice of the living creatures and of the elders,

"Give Praise to our God, all you his bond servants, and you who fear him, the small and great." One of the reasons that I think this is not the voice of our Lord is the fact that he says, "Praise our God."

Now it is possible, of course, for our Lord to say that, but in one specific place where he could have said that, he carefully avoided saying that. In John chapter 20, after the resurrection, and Mary, after he had said to her,

"Mary, and she turned to him and said in Hebrew, Rabboni which means teacher. The Lord then said to Mary, Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brethren and say to them I send to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God."

He went out of his way to point out that there is a difference in the relationship that he has to the Father, to God, than the relationship that we have. He is the God man. He does say, "My brethren," so we can be united with him in the fact that he is possessed of full and perfect humanity, but there is a sense in which there is a difference when we talk about our Lord Jesus Christ.

P.T. Forsyth, who was the Barth before Barth, use to say that the difference may be likened to a thread which is just the smallest kind of difference but nevertheless it is as hard as a diamond, that is we cannot break that thread ever. Our Lord is the divine son. We are sons. He is the divine son who possesses, having assumed a human nature, as well as a divine nature. So I rather, look at these verses as referring to the praises of heaven and the voices that come from the throne are the voices of the living creatures and the elders who are about that throne.

In the 6th verse we read, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude," and this is what they said, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns," the omnipotent one, the favorite word of this Book, the Revelation, the one who has his hands upon everything. We now preach, as it were, in a corner. Few applaud our Lord. Here is a group of people, maybe three hundred of you, sitting in this

auditorium and perhaps some over looking at the TV screen, and around this city this great Metroplex, there are a number of groups like this, some much larger, some smaller. But when you put all of the people who make a profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and relate their salvation only to him, you have the smallest minority of the Metroplex. In fact, it is true we are preaching as if we are preaching in a corner.

This city does not hear our preaching. Oh, surely we are on the radio. There are a few people from WRR who listen who are not here. They write us letters. But basically we are preaching to very few people. The church that follows our Lord is composed of people who applaud the king, but others do not applaud him as a matter of fact, even when they do not know it, they are frequently opposing him. So the church looks as if it is a forlorn and forgotten body. But the time is coming when we will see what the church really was. When the time comes that our Lord comes and the kingdom begins to transpire, we will discover, when all the repentant sinners are gathered in the presence of the Lord just how great it is that God has, from the people of this earth, gathered to himself a people who worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and through him, the triune God.

H.B. Swete, in his commentary, speaks of the voice described here as the voice of a great multitude, and the sound of many waters, and the sound of mighty peals of thunder coming from the saints. He speaks of it as the den of a vast concourse, the roar of a cataract, the roll of thunder, and even heaven has its holidays, and one of the great holidays will be when we celebrate gathered together in heaven as the wife of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Reigns, he reigns. You look around and that would be the last thing that anyone would say, and even Christians have doubts about it when they read the things that happen among Christians and in the world. They ask the question, "Is God really reigning?" Yes, he's reigning. That's part of his purpose. He's reigning constantly, and he will reign and continue to reign because that's his person, the reigning omnipotent one. He hasn't lost his grip. You may be having difficulties and trials and

most of us have some of them, but God is reigning, and in his reigning, he is accomplishing his great purposes.

So he hasn't lost his grip, and as Mr. Spurgeon said, "The oceans are simply a puddle in his hand." I think of the Lord controlling things like a little boy playing in his sand box. And he plays in his sand box, and he builds a little castle. Then he doesn't like it, and he knocks it down. I use to do this, have a little car, and I would build some roads and various places where I would stop, and I would drive my little car in there. I built my little city. And then I could tear it down, this creations God's. We're like a sand pile as far as the greatness of our Lord in heaven is concerned. The ocean's the puddles. He's the omnipotent one. And so he is absolutely reigning and accomplishing his purpose. Incidentally that reigning is a clue to the time of the marriage supper of the Lamb, the time of his Second Advent.

Now coming to the marriage, in verse 7 we read, "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give the glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." Marriage. Love. Communion. Joy. Fidelity, fidelity, fidelity, we've forgotten that word, fidelity, no divorce. All of these things characterize marriage: love, communion, joy, and fidelity. Our society has lost that. And so there are many unhappy people in marriages, many unhappy people. Many people now divorced do not really know why they were divorced, their experiences or such. So let us not forget what Scripture says. And let us seek, if we happen to be affected by some things that happened before we came to know Scripture and want to believe Scripture that we seek, with God's help, to establish our lives now in harmony with the word of God.

Marriage supper of the Lamb, what a marvelous thing, I'm looking forward to that. I'm glad I have an invitation because the text of Scripture says, "Blessed are those who have been invited," called, effectual calling, that term suggests, effectually called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In the oriental marriages, there were several different steps. There were negotiations between

the parents. I've always wondered if we would do a whole lot better if father had arranged our marriages, than if we arranged them. What an absurd idea for the twentieth century, fathers to arrange marriages. Their marriages seemed to do at least as well, perhaps a lot better, than ours. At any rate, there was the stage of negotiations, and once those were completed, the two individuals were regarded as married even though they were not living together yet. The time came when the date for the consummation was to take place, and then at that point, the groom would come to the house of the bride, and take the bride to his house. Then they would have a marriage supper. They would celebrate. And they would celebrate the marriage that had already taken place by negotiations. And the celebration was supposed never to end. Now John is talking about the last two of those stages, the presentation and the celebration. Well, he calls it, "the marriage supper of the Lamb." I think that's so interesting because you see the bond that we share with our Lord, the bond that binds us to him is not the bond of his dominion. It's the bond of his death. It's the marriage supper of the Lamb, not the marriage supper of the Lord omnipotent. Although he is, of course, the omnipotent Son of God, but it's the marriage supper of the Lamb. The bond points to the vicarious sacrifice, the penal substitutionary sacrifice which is the ground of our salvation. The first of the hymns of this chapter is looking backward at the destruction of Babylon, but this one now looks forward to the marriage supper. Oh the enduring character of the cross of Jesus Christ, always, this book presents him, almost always as the Lamb, the sacrificial Lamb. For that bond is right at the heart of our relationship with the Lord God.

J. Gresham Machen was a magnificent professor on the factuality of the first Westminster Theological Seminary, and a study of his on the vicarious satisfaction of Christ made the point that in our day, in his day which was back in the thirties, that the Christian Church had forgotten that the Lord Jesus Christ was really the Son of God. And, therefore, if we are to have a saving sacrifice that will really save us, we must have a saving sacrifice of one who was God. Otherwise we could

never know that we knew God. If the Lord Jesus is not God, we have no Revelation of God. What other Revelation could we have, if God has not come down here in our midst? God could be some terrible being of whom we have no precise knowledge, no sure knowledge. So God came as the God man.

Then Mr. Machen went on to speak about the vicarious sacrifice that he offered, and to illustrate his point, he used three hymns that all have "cross" in them. And the three hymns were first, the hymn, the familiar one that they sang on the deck of the Titanic when it went down, "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee!
Even though it be a cross that raiseth me." Mr. Machen said that's a perfectly good hymn. It means that our trials may be a discipline to bring us nearer to God. The thought is not oppose to Christianity, but it's not a Gospel hymn. It's not a hymn by which we can come to know the one who saves sinners. The cross is not the cross of Christ in that hymn. The cross is our cross, true to people on the Titanic, but without the Gospel, hopeless in which to have trust.

Then he commented in Sir John Bowring's hymn, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory."
We often sing it, I believe we've sang it in Believer's Chapel. All have sung it may confess your sins if you thought it was a Christian hymn. But nevertheless it's got some good words in it and I don't object to singing it. I think in some ways, the hymn is better theology than Sir John actually knew. He was a Unitarian. But it has the stanza, "In the cross of Christ I glory, Towering o'er the wrecks of time; All the light of sacred story, Gathers round its head sublime." Mr. Machen said the cross in that hymn is celebrated, but it's not understood. It's not the cross of an eternal Son of God. He said we ought to sing hymns like Isaac Watts, "When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride." That's a Christian hymn. It's grounded in the vicarious sacrifice in the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners.

So the marriage supper of the Lamb, let us never, never, never forget that, and he

says, "The bride has made herself ready," the wife has made herself ready, not wives, the church is one, one body. We don't have the right arm, a Baptist arm, a left arm, a Presbyterian arm, the right leg, a Wesleyan leg, a left leg, a Congregational leg, [Laughter] and a few other different things in between, guaranteed to give you a bad feeling in your stomach. But what we have is one church of Christ, one bride, singular not plural, bride or wife of Christ. Denominationalism is not in the word of God. Why we yield to that I do not know. It's a wife of Christ, and when we're there all of those divisions are forgotten.

"And she made herself ready," you thought I would skip over that didn't you? I know. It's 12:00. Relax. [Laughter] Nothing else interesting is happening this afternoon. You'll just go home and snooze. The wife made herself ready. Now, you say, "Dr. Johnson, there you are." That's free will, isn't it. Isn't that free will? The wife made herself ready. Doesn't that indicate that our salvations partly from God and partly ours. She made herself ready. Well I grant you that this is a voluntary response. I grant you that. I grant you that the wife is no reluctant wife. But let me ask you a question. You think, perhaps, that there is some justification for saying we have a free will and of our own free will, we decide for Christ. I'd like to put it this way, of our own freed will, we decide for Christ.

What Scripture teaches is not doctrine of the free will, as if it lies within my power, of myself to make, unilaterally, a decision for or against God. What Scripture teaches is the doctrine of the freed will. That is that all of us are born in bondage to sin. That's what Scripture teaches. We are born in bondage to sin. "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." There is none that seeketh after God, no not one. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, it's not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We have a will in bondage, but what Scripture teaches is that by the magnificent grace of God, the effectual grace of God, the will in bondage, the will that is in slavery, is freed by sovereign grace to believe. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." That's the

freeing of the will, so that the unwilling become willing. That's God's work, totally God's work, and that's why we believe salvation is of the Lord.

All my Christian friends, if you could only grasp that, then I'll sit by my window when I'm an old man and sit in the sunshine and say, "I thank God that in his marvelous grace, the Holy Spirit enlightened that congregation so they too, as I, are rejoicing in sovereign grace. Nothing would give me a happier time by the window than that.

"She made herself ready". But notice it says, "She made herself ready" but verse 8 said, "And it was given to her to cloth herself in fine linen bright and clean." In other words, she made herself ready because it was given her by God to do just what she did. Be prepared. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Well it would be nice to finish up, but I cannot do it. I'll only say this, you can notice the difference between the raiment of the saints and the raiment of the harlot, Babylon. "The harlot, sitting upon the beast, was clothed with purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls and had in her hand a gold cup full of abomination and of the unclean things of her immorality," but "the saints of God are clothed in fine linen bright and clean," and the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. That's the holiness produced by deliverance of the will. This is what the freed will produces. Until the will is freed, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and continue to go on sinning.

The epilogue is very simple. There is a command to write. The called are the saints, I think, of both the Old and the New Testament. Israel and the Gentiles, we might say, the whole people of God. And John responds in a typically human way. He falls at the angel's feet to worship him, and the angel has to give him his final course in Christian Theology. "John don't do that." I think I can understand this magnificent Revelation has been given to him, just natural in the presence of the brightness of the angel and the magnificence of the apocalypse to fall upon his face before the feet of the angel.

But the angel tells him, "John don't do that. I'm a fellow-servant of yours and of

your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus, worship God." And when in chapter 5, you remember I commented on this same thing later on in the later chapters of this book chapter 22. John does it again. It takes him a little while to learn his lessons. We pointed out that the angel said, "Worship God." Worship God. But isn't it interesting, the angels worship the Lamb. They tell us to worship God, but they worship the Lamb. The Lamb you see is the second person of the Trinity. This is a great future event. I can appreciate John's worship.

There's a tribe of Indians in the south of us that used in translating their New Testament Scriptures, for worship was to wag the tail before God, and evidently was a tribe that liked dogs. So to wag your tail before God was to worship. We don't have time to talk about responsibility. I think I've added enough to do it. I intended to say more about it, maybe we can do it at another time, but our time is up. That clock keeps running.

If you're here today and you've never believed in our Lord, we point you again to the vicarious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb. All heaven worships the Lamb. May God in his marvelous grace touch your heart. Convince you of how hopeless your condition is if you do not have the Lamb, not invited to the marriage supper, without the Lamb. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him, and receive, as a free gift, eternal life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent words that have come to us through the apostle from our Lord Jesus Christ, and from Thee, the Father. What a marvelous thing it is, Lord, that Thou has given us such an apocalypse, and we look forward to the future with confidence. We need Thy help Lord. We are still human. We still fail, we are weak and we are still sinful, with the sin principle dwelling within us.

But by Thy grace, enable us to turn to Christ if we do not know him. And then through the Holy Spirit enable us to have the proper clothing for the marriage supper of the Lamb, the righteous acts of the saints. For Jesus sake. Amen.

“The Harlot Judged and the Lamb United with his Bride” by S. Lewis Johnson
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