



# MESSENGER

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

October 2018

Every eye will see Him.

# MESSENGER

## Magazine

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Throughout the new testament we see passages of scripture regarding the return of Christ. What will the nature of this return be, and what will happen during and immediately after it? Are all of these passages literal? Symbolic? A mixture? Join us as we explore various aspects of these critical prophetic passages in the first three articles in this issue!

### Featured Articles

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Q&A: Every Eye Will See Him | 2

How Many Comings? | 4

Marriage Feast Parables | 15

Thirst for the Living Waters | 21

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Q&amp;A

# Every Eye Will See Him

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 Rod Reynolds
 

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**Question: The statement “every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7), is it a literal statement? I always figured Christ’s return would be a big event that would shake the whole world. Of course he could come like lightning, he could come any way that he wants. He could take a day or it could be instantaneous. From Scripture it seems that there will be no doubt when His coming takes place. The statement “even they who pierced Him,” to what is it referring?**

**Do the armies of the world unite to fight Christ at his coming or do they just end up in Israel fighting each other? Is the Beast defeated militarily before Christ’s return?**

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Answer: 1. “Every eye will see him” means that his coming will be visible to all peoples dwelling on the face of the earth. Compare Mark 13:26; 14:62; Matthew 24:27, 30; 26:64; Luke 21:26-27.

This could easily be accomplished by circling the earth several times as he descends.

And yes, he will come suddenly, and at a time unexpected by most. Jesus spoke of himself returning “suddenly” (Mark 13:36). The Greek word translated “suddenly” here is ἐξαίφνης (*exaiphnes*). The same word is used in Acts 9:3 describing the sudden appearing of a light from heaven. Several Scriptures in Revelation refer to Jesus coming “quickly,” using the Greek word ταχύ (*tachu*), which could also mean suddenly.

Jesus compared his coming to that of a thief in the night. In other words, unexpected, and sudden (Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Revelation 16:15).

Jesus said his coming would be comparable to “lightning” (Matthew 24:27; Luke 17:24). Lightning comes suddenly, usually unexpectedly, and visibly over a wide area. Some understand these

verses to signify the breaking of the dawn when the sun appears over the horizon and suddenly lights up the whole sky from east to west. That is possible, but more often (yet not always) the term αστραπή (*astrape*) in the New Testament means lightning, or something comparable to lightning. Either way, the analogy is one of suddenness and wide visibility. Ezekiel saw a vision related to Christ’s second coming in which, “...the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory” (Ezekiel 43:2).

Scripture tells us, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The second coming of Christ occurs at the sounding of the “trumpet” (cf. Revelation 11:15). At the very same time Christ returns at the sound of the trumpet, the dead in Christ are resurrected. How long a period of time will it take for this to occur? “...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

There’s no indication Christ’s coming will take several days, or even a day. Nor will there be multiple “second comings” or “stages” of his second coming (see “How Many Comings?” and “Marriage Feast Parables”). The analogies used and other clear statements in the Bible ought to be sufficient to falsify such notions. Of course, the consequences of his coming will continue for the rest of eternity.

2. “They who pierced him,” refers to the Jews (Zechariah 12:10), as it was the leaders of the Jews who instigated under Satan’s influence Je-

Jesus' crucifixion. It may also refer to Gentiles, as it was a Roman soldier who actually thrust the spear through Jesus' side (John 19:34-37); he was condemned by a Roman official (Luke 23:23-24; John 19:16); and his garments were divided by Roman soldiers who beat him with a scourge and crucified him, nailing him to the cross (Matthew 20:19; John 19:1-2, 23-24; 20:25; cf. Psalm 22:12-18). Jesus was slain for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16-19; 1 John 2:2). The Scripture says, "all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Revelation 1:7).

3. The armies will be gathered to Jerusalem and vicinity and Christ will intervene and destroy them. More details with Scriptures are in our article "How Many Comings?"

4. While the "beast" will have no doubt suffered major reverses militarily before the end, it will not be destroyed finally until Christ's coming. The seven last plagues are aimed primarily at the beast power, and will culminate in its final destruction. See Revelation 16-19; along with our article "How Many Comings?" for more details and Scriptural references.

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*Lightning comes suddenly, usually unexpectedly, and visibly over a wide area."*

# How Many Comings?

Rod Reynolds

**Many have alleged that at the prophesied “second coming” of Jesus Christ, he will not in fact descend to the earth to establish his kingdom, but will turn around in mid-air, and ascend with his saints back to heaven. Later, according to this teaching, Jesus will descend again (a third coming). How many comings of Christ again are actually taught in the Bible?**

In the intervening period between the “semi-coming” and the second “second coming,” supposedly the saved will have been taken to heaven to be with Jesus. Some call this the “rapture.” Others, who claim to reject the “rapture” theory, teach essentially the same idea of a “two-stage” “second” coming, with the saints being taken up to heaven for some period of time, to later return with him to the earth.

In Hebrews 9:28 we are told that Christ was once offered for sin and “He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” No mention is made anywhere of a third coming. The noun used most often in the New Testament in reference to Jesus Christ’s return is *parousia* (from *para* and the present participle of *eimi*, meaning literally, to be alongside, or near; hence, presence). According to Vine’s it “denotes both an ‘arrival’ and a consequent ‘presence with’” [*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Nelson, 1985, “Coming (Noun),” p. 111, cf. 1 Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 10:10; Philippians 1:26, 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:9].

Everywhere this word is used of Christ’s second coming in the New Testament — a total of 16 times — the definite article is supplied in the Greek. (In 2 Peter 1:16 where the Greek is translated “the power and coming” a single article is used). The supplying of the definite article when considered along with the contexts of referenc-

es to Christ’s second coming signifies a singular, unique event — the arrival of Christ — with long term consequences — his abiding presence whence he has come. Only singular nouns — never plural — are used in relation to the second coming of Christ in the New Testament. The glorious return of Jesus Christ to establish his rule over this earth is a single event that shall occur only once, according to Scripture.

There are a number of acts or activities connected with the second coming of Christ. They are summed up in Romans 2:5-10. The day of Christ’s return is referred to by Paul as “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (verse 5). He says that at that time God “will render to each one according to his deeds,” some given eternal life with glory and honor, others to receive indignation and wrath. This general picture is associated in some way with Christ’s return virtually everywhere it is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

The coming of Christ occurs at the precise instant of the sounding of the seventh and final trumpet blast mentioned in Revelation. That very instant the dead in Christ shall be resurrected. “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; see also Matthew 24:30-31;

Revelation 10:7; 11:15-18).

The same moment shall mark the end of an age. “The angel...swore by Him who lives forever and ever...that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:5-7). The disciples asked Jesus, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). In Luke 21:24-28; Daniel 7 and elsewhere the coming of Christ is associated with the end of the times of the Gentiles, when Gentile rulers dominate world government.

The end of the age and the end of the times of the Gentiles coincide with the beginning of Christ’s rule — or the rule of the Kingdom of God. Note Acts 3:19-21: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Christ will remain in heaven until he comes to restore all things, beginning with God’s government. The beginning of the restoration of God’s government occurs at the very instant that the previous age of Gentile rule ends, i.e., at the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). The prophecy also mentions that the blowing of the seventh trumpet signals that God’s wrath has come, and the time to judge the dead (or more correctly, the nations, as some manuscripts have it), to reward the saints, and to

destroy those destroying the earth (Revelation 11:17-18, infinitives used in the Greek).

Also Daniel 7:21-22, “...the same horn [part of the Gentile world dominating system] was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.” Jesus said “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).

Zechariah wrote that when the Messiah saves Jerusalem at his coming (Zechariah 14:1-5), he shall begin his reign over the earth (Zechariah 14:9), and concerning Jerusalem, “The people shall dwell in it; And no longer shall there be utter destruction, But Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited” (Zechariah 14:11). And Joel prophesied that after God gathers the Gentile armies and destroys them, “So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again” (Joel 3:17). And there are several other similar prophecies that tell us from that time God will never again allow hostile armies to overrun Jerusalem.

So the resurrection, the end of the age, the end of the times of the Gentiles, and the beginning of God’s Kingdom all coincide at one event occurring at the blowing of the seventh trumpet — the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

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### Are There Two Stages to Christ’s Second Coming?

The idea that there are two stages to Christ’s coming is not new. Various writers have traced its history to the early nineteenth century, to the Counter Reformation era, and as far back as to the fourth century A.D. To circumvent the rather obvious Biblical teaching that there is only one second coming of Christ, proponents of the “rapture” theory have long suggested a two stage “second

coming” with the stages separated by varying lengths of time, usually three and a half or seven years. Mr. Herbert Armstrong addressed this question in an article published in 1958 entitled “Where Will the Millennium Be Spent?” And Dr. Herman Hoeh also in a 1958 article, “The Secret Rapture: Fact...or Fiction?” Both men presented evidence to show that the “two stage” theory is not taught in Scripture.

Yet the fiction of a two stage coming has persisted even among some in the Church of God. Among “rapture” theorists, it’s argued that Jesus will “come on the clouds of heaven,” gathering the elect “from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30-31).

Christ will descend from heaven at the sound of the trumpet and the resurrected saints “shall be caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). It’s assumed that these Scriptures indicate the saints will go to “heaven” (the third heaven) to be with Jesus. Ignored is the fact that these Scriptures are in the context of Jesus descending out of heaven to be present on the earth!

Another Scriptural thread is used as icing on the cake by rapture theorists. As a warning to be watchful for the signs of Christ’s second coming because “that day and hour no one knows” (Matthew 24:36), Jesus invoked a prophetic example. “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left” (Matthew 24:38-41). This Scripture is interpreted to mean that those “taken” will be “raptured” off to heaven in a “secret” return of Jesus. Those “left” will be condemned to the tribulation.

*“Christ will remain in heaven until he comes to restore all things, beginning with God’s government.”*

In the Companion Bible it’s said that the Greek for “taken” here means “taken to one’s side, in peace and for blessing.”

It is true that the Greek for “taken,” *paralambano*, means to take, or take to one’s side (the word is a compound of *para*: from, alongside, or near; and *lambano*: receive or take). But it does not necessarily mean taken “in peace, and for blessing.” In Matthew 27:27 the same word is used of the soldiers taking Jesus to be mocked and spit on just prior to his crucifixion. And in John 19:16 *paralambano* is used of them taking Jesus to be led away to his crucifixion. In Matthew 24:37-41 the context is one of destruction coming suddenly and unexpectedly, at the time of

Christ’s coming. As in the days of Noah, many will heedlessly go about their business, some working in the fields, others grinding grain, as examples. These are not watchful people fleeing to safety from tribulation (Matthew 24:16-21, Luke 17:31), but people upon whom the unexpected comes suddenly.

In a companion Scripture in Luke 17 we find the examples of those in the days of Noah and of Sodom, people living unaware until they were suddenly destroyed. So shall it be at the time of Christ’s revealing (Luke 17:30), “Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:35-36). Notice half — one of two — are “taken.” The disciples asked, “Where, Lord?” (Luke 17:37). That is, where are they to be taken? (Or possibly, “where shall all this occur?” implying as well the question “where are they to be taken?”) What was Jesus’ own answer to where those “taken” would be taken? Was it to heaven? Was it “in peace, and for blessing”? No. Jesus replied, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” Eagles and vultures gather where there are dead bodies (compare Matthew 24:28: “For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered

together”).

Jesus uses the destruction that shall come upon Jerusalem just prior to his return as a warning to all Christians to — while avoiding false suggestions — watch for genuine and reliable signs of his imminent return (compare Luke 17:31; Matthew 24:15-18), so as not to be caught unawares (Matthew 24:15, 43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Revelation 3:3). Because at that very time Jerusalem will become the focal point of an all out world war, and massive destruction will be visited upon the city. Christ himself will intervene to save it from utter annihilation. “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:2-3). Notice that half the city, just as in Jesus’ example, will be taken captive. And many of these, as Jesus indicated, will be slain. The eagles, vultures and other birds which feed upon carrion will be gathered near Jerusalem not only to eat the flesh of slain captives, but of the vast multitudes of the Gentile armies that Jesus Christ and his army will slay at the time of his second coming (Zechariah 14:12; Matthew 24:28; Revelation 14:14-20; 19:11-21).

Jesus himself warned us not to believe deceivers who would tell us of a secret coming. He indicated his coming would be of a spectacular nature, to be witnessed by all alive at that time. “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27). “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7).

In like manner he warned against believing those who would say that he had come and then remained hidden in a secret chamber. “See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you,

‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:25-26). Both the rapture theory and the two stage coming theory promoted within the Church of God have this idea in common, that Jesus will return only to immediately disappear within an “inner room,” as it were. Jesus said, “do not believe it”!

After his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus spent another forty days with the apostles and other disciples (Acts 1:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7). Then, as his disciples watched, he was taken up into heaven from the Mount of Olives, a cloud receiving him out of their sight (Acts 1:9-12). At that time angels said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” As we look at how Christ ascended at that time we find three features mentioned, which other Scriptures confirm will also apply to his second coming. (1) His ascension was visible to a wide audience. As we’ve seen, his second coming will be even more visible. (2) He ascended into a cloud. As we’ve seen, he will also return in clouds. (3) He ascended from the Mount of Olives. Scripture

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tells us that at his coming he shall descend to the very same Mount of Olives. “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.... Thus the Lord my God will come” (Zechariah 14:4-5). The prophecy continues, “And all the saints with You [or Him, as some manuscripts and ancient versions read].”

Note that none of the verses used by rapture theorists, no verse anywhere in the Bible, states that Jesus will stop in mid-air on his return to the earth, turn around and go back to heaven. This is an idea that has been read into certain Scriptures. The closest the Scriptures come to this idea is that “they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31), and that the saints will



be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The “winds” and the “air” is the first heaven, the atmosphere of this earth! That’s where the saints shall meet the returning Christ. And other Scriptures that fill in more details concerning Christ’s return clearly show that he continues his descent together with the saints to finally stand on the earth itself in the vicinity of Jerusalem, at the Mount of Olives.

So we see that the main features of the rapture theory are all directly contradicted by plain statements of Scripture. The coming of Christ is not secret. He is not coming only to be hidden from mankind in a secret or inner chamber. He is not coming to return to the third heaven, but to stand on the Mount of Olives, and, as we shall see later, to dwell bodily in Jerusalem. Except possibly for the first, these straightforward facts of Scripture are also contrary to the ideas expressed in the two stage coming theory promoted within the Church within the context of an imagined literal “marriage ceremony,” or “marriage supper,” in heaven.

Note that the idea of Jesus literally marrying untold numbers of his own brothers is absurd on its face. The “marriage” of Christ to the Church is a metaphor, to illustrate in certain respects the *spiritual* relationship of Christ to the Church, just as he was “married” to ancient Israel, from the time that they entered into the covenant with him at Mount Sinai (Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 16:8). From the moment one enters into the covenant relationship with God he is, in a spiritual sense, “espoused” (married) to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Romans 7:3-4). “For we **are** members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30; “we are” in this verse is translated from the first person plural **present tense** of *eimi* [*esmen*]). Those who claim there is to be a literal “marriage” in heaven do not know the Scriptures, or choose to ignore or pervert them, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage”

(Matthew 22:30). (For more on this subject see “Marriage Feast Parables”).

One argument that has been advanced to support the two stage coming theory within the Church of God is the fact that Matthew 24:30 mentions Christ coming in clouds and in Revelation 19:11 he comes on a horse. It’s argued that when Christ comes in clouds he will come to gather his elect and take them to heaven for the “marriage supper.” Then, afterward, he will leave heaven again on a horse leading an army of saints. Do the clouds, on the one hand, and the horse, on the other, really imply two separate comings — or two “stages” of a “second” coming?

Clouds are often associated in the Bible with the presence of God. God appeared to Israel at Mt. Sinai in the midst of a cloud, and the sight of his glory within the cloud was as that of a consuming fire (Exodus 24:16-17). God led Israel through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21). The Eternal in a cloud fought for Israel, and destroyed Pharaoh’s army (Exodus 14:19-28). In a psalm with prophetic implications the Eternal is pictured riding on a cherub, in the midst of clouds, coming to make war (2 Samuel 22:7-16). Psalm 68 is a prophetic psalm concerning God’s intervention to fight his enemies: “Let God arise, Let His enemies be scattered; Let those also who hate Him flee before Him” (Psalm 68:1). The psalm continues, “Scatter the peoples who delight in war” (Psalm 68:30). And in this song of battle we find these words: “Ascribe strength to God...His strength is in the clouds” (Psalm 68:34).

In Psalm 97, a Messianic prophecy relating to his coming, it’s said of the Eternal, “Clouds and darkness surround Him.... A fire goes before Him, And burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; The earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth” (Psalm 97:2-5). Notice that the Eternal’s coming in clouds is associated

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with both his destroying of his enemies and his presence on the earth. In Revelation 1:7 we read, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” The fulfillment of this prophecy is associated with both the destruction of “Babylon” and with the battle of Jerusalem (Isaiah 13:6; Revelation 18:9, 11, 15, 19; Zechariah 12:9-11). In a prophecy concerning Egypt which will be fulfilled completely only upon the return of Jesus Christ, we find that as he comes to punish Egypt, “Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud” (Isaiah 19:1). In Jeremiah 4:13 both clouds and horses are used as symbols of war.

The horse is often associated with war in Bible terminology (e.g., Job 39:19-25; Psalm 33:16-17; Proverbs 21:31, et al.). Revelation is a book of symbols. Christ is not literally a lamb (Revelation 19:9), a literal sword does not go out of his mouth (Revelation 19:15). These are metaphors intended to illustrate vital truths with an economy of language. Neither is the symbol of Christ coming on a horse intended to be taken literally, but it portrays the fact that Christ is coming to make war. Literal horses do not fly through heaven. Horses are used elsewhere in Revelation as symbols in connection with the armies of the east. Literal horses do not have lion’s heads, and do not belch fire, smoke and brimstone (Revelation 9:17).

The time order of events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ is found in Matthew 24, and the companion Scriptures of Luke 21 and Mark 13. It is not found in the book of Revelation. Revelation does not at all follow a strict chronological order. The seventh trumpet is not blown until Revelation 11:15, for example. As we’ve seen, the instant the trumpet sounds Christ descends, yet his descent is not specifically mentioned anywhere in chapter 11. But his return is mentioned in Revelation 1:7, long before the portrayal of the sounding of the

seventh trumpet. The resurrection is pictured in Revelation 14:14-16 and again in Revelation 20:4-5. Yet, in a “preview” of what is to come, a great multitude is found standing before the throne and before the Lamb in Revelation 7:9-10, 14-15 — long before the trumpet blast signaling the return of Jesus Christ is mentioned in Revelation 11:15 (which will be the time of the resurrection, also, see 1 Corinthians 15:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11:15. From there through the end of the chapter and in portions or all of Revelation 14 through Revelation 20:6 we find descriptions of events connected with the seventh trumpet and what it signifies. But no strict time order is followed in describing the various events, many of which will happen virtually simultaneously. Several events are described more than once in these chapters, with emphasis on different features of the same event.

So in chapter 14 we read, “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (Revelation 14:14). Here is Jesus Christ on a cloud, preparing to “Thrust in Your [Christ’s] sickle and reap,

for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Revelation 14:15). While angels will assist, Jesus is directly involved in the reaping.

In a parable using similar imagery, the parable of the tares, Jesus explained, “The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the

age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the

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furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:38-43). Notice that both the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the wicked one are "harvested" at the same time, the end of the age. And the "tares" will have been gathered, if anything, slightly ahead of the "sons of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:30).

A vast multitude of Christ's enemies will be there waiting when the saints with Christ and the angels arrive at Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2-5). Notice that the harvest led by Christ on the cloud (Revelation 14:14-16) includes the harvest of wrath on his enemies, as indicated in the parable of Matthew, in Joel 2:1-2; 3:12-16, and in the verses immediately following in Revelation 14: The angel is told to "gather the clusters of the vine of the earth" and throw them "into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs" (Revelation 14:18-20). Thus is described "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14), also portrayed in Joel 3; Zephaniah 1; Zechariah 14 and numerous other Scriptures. It's the same battle discussed in Revelation 19:11-21, where Jesus is portrayed symbolically riding a horse. There's simply no merit whatsoever to the idea that because Matthew 24:30 pictures Jesus coming in clouds and in Revelation 19:11 on a horse that they must be separate events. I could go on with further proofs along these lines, but I think I've made the point.

In the two stage coming argument promoted within the Church of God it has also been suggested that the seven last plagues are poured out at the time of the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and that Jesus will not stand on the Mount of Olives until after the "battle of Armageddon." It is during this "interval," as it's supposed, that the

saints will be taken to heaven to be "married" and then partake of the "wedding supper." When we see what the Bible says about the time it takes for the seven last plagues to be poured out and what Christ and the saints will be doing during that time we will begin to see just how far removed from the truth the "wedding supper" in heaven idea is.

First let's deal with the careless and baseless assumption that "the battle of Armageddon precedes the time when Jesus' feet stand on the Mount of Olives." The very term "the battle of Armageddon" is misleading. As Mr. Herbert Armstrong pointed out in a 1955 article entitled "What is Armageddon," the Bible nowhere mentions an end time "battle of Armageddon." Armageddon (from Hebrew *Har Megiddo* — hill of Megiddo, overlooking the plain of Megiddo) is the staging area where the armies will be gathered (Revelation 16:16). The battle is called in the Bible the "battle of that Great Day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). The apostle Peter equated the "the coming of him" with this same "day of God" (2 Peter 3:4, 12). And while the battle will be fought throughout the length of Palestine (Revelation 14:20, one thousand six hundred stadia is about the length of Palestine), the focal point of the battle will be the immediate environs of Jerusalem (Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12:2-3; 14:2; Revelation 14:20).

On the "day of God," the "day of the Lord," the day of Christ's second coming, God will "gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem.... Half the city shall go into captivity" (Zechariah 14:2). And the other half will be threatened with annihilation, along with the entire remaining population of the earth (Matthew 24:22). Is this an appropriate time for the saints to be feeding their faces at a banquet in heaven with Jesus? While millions are being slain in the horror of world war and massive, earth shaking catastrophes, and the remnant of Israel suffers unspeakably in a brutal captivity,

*"Revelation does not at all follow a strict chronological order. The seventh trumpet is not blown until Revelation 11:15, for example."*

and Judah is facing immediate extinction? The very thought is obscene. It bespeaks a selfishness and insensitivity to human suffering unworthy of God and Christ, “a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15). And the idea is likewise unworthy of those shaped in the image of Christ.

The testimony of Scripture is that on that day Christ is not going to be banqueting in heaven, but instead, “Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...” (Zechariah 14:3-4). Notice that Jesus feet is not going to stand on the Mount of Olives after that day, but in that day, the very day of the battle, during the midst of the battle. The Scripture goes on to say, “And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, And all the saints with You” (Zechariah 14:4-5). During the battle as Christ descends and stands on the Mount of Olives it shall split in two, making a way of escape for those trapped in Jerusalem. If the battle were already over when Christ comes there would be no need for anyone to flee. The testimony of this and many other Scriptures is not that “the battle...precedes the time when Jesus’ feet stand on the Mount of Olives,” but that his coming occurs at the very time of the battle. Jesus will end the battle by destroying his enemies (Zechariah 14:12-15; Revelation 19:19-21).

In Revelation 11:14-18 the third woe, the last trumpet, and the wrath of God are mentioned together in the same context. In the organizational plan of the book all of the events indicated by these symbols occur at the same time and are

— in a sense — synonymous. The three “woes” of Revelation are the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets (Revelation 8:13). The third woe is the seventh trumpet. The wrath of God is poured out at the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15, 18). The wrath of God is fulfilled in the seven last plagues. “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.” (Revelation 15:1; see also Revelation 15:7; 16:1). The plagues are aimed against the world dominating “beast” empire, “Babylon the great” (Revelation 14:10; 15:1-2; 16:1-2, 19; 18:4, 8). It is God’s judgment on this false religious and political system (Revelation 17:1; 18:8, 10).

We’ve seen that the seven last plagues are God’s wrath. Is God going to be absent, up in Heaven “getting married” and feasting on a “marriage supper” while his wrath is being poured out on the world-deceiving Satanic Babylonian sys-

*“On the ‘day of God,’ the ‘day of the Lord,’ the day of Christ’s second coming, God will ‘gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem.... Half the city shall go into captivity’ (Zechariah 14:2).”*

tem? Isaiah 13 is a prophecy concerning God’s judgment on Babylon. While it was partially fulfilled in type with the destruction of the ancient kingdom of Babylon, the primary and complete fulfillment will fall on modern spiritual Babylon, the Babylon of Revelation, and is yet future. Note that it is the “The Lord of hosts [who] musters The army for battle” (Isaiah 13:4). “Host” often refers to an army. The Eternal (Yahweh)

commands the host (Joshua 5:13-15; 6:2), and he leads his army to smite the nations (Revelation 19:15). “He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15). Jesus Christ himself is going to be leading his angelic host (along with the resurrected saints who will meet him in the air) in pouring out his wrath on the nations. “They come from a far country, From the end of heaven — The Lord and His weapons of indignation, To destroy the whole land. Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty” (Isaiah 13:5-6). Note carefully that this prophecy of

Babylon’s “destruction from the Almighty” tells us that from out of heaven will come both “The Lord and His weapons of indignation [or wrath],” to destroy “Babylon.” The wrath of God, remember — the weapons of his indignation — includes the seven last plagues (Revelation 15:1, 7; 16:1). These Scriptures show clearly that Jesus Christ will be acting directly in leading his host in pouring out his wrath — the seven last plagues — on Babylon and immediately afterward in battling the nations gathered at Jerusalem.

How long shall it take for God and his army to judge the whore — to pour out his plagues upon her? Isaiah wrote that the desolation of Babylon would come “in a moment [*rega* , a wink, i.e., a very short space of time], in one day” (Isaiah 47:9) and it “shall come...suddenly [*pith’owm*, instantly, suddenly, from a root word meaning a wink]” (Isaiah 47:11). “...her plagues will come in one day” (Revelation 18:8). Her judgment shall come and she shall be reduced to nothing — made desolate — “in one hour” (Revelation 18:10, 17, 19).

Remember, the seven last plagues are poured out at the seventh trumpet. In a very short time, as the trumpet sounds, the plagues shall be poured out in rapid succession. Much of the destruction shall be immediate. The indication is that the destruction of the city, the seat of “Babylon,” set into motion at the blowing of the trumpet shall be completed in one day. The rapidity and violence with which “Babylon” shall be destroyed is illustrated by the following: “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore’” (Revelation 18:21).

This will hardly be a time for banqueting in heaven, nor would there be time for that. Note that the destruction of Babylon will be accompanied by mourning, weeping, wailing and crying (Isaiah 13:6; Revelation 18:9, 11, 15, 19). Exactly the

picture given of Christ’s return in Matthew 24:30. Judah will also mourn at the same time, though for a different reason (Zechariah 12:10-14). Matthew 24:30 does not then picture a separate first coming — after which Christ will return to heaven to be “married” — it pictures the coming when these prophecies shall be fulfilled at the destruction of Babylon and the Battle of Jerusalem. Other prophecies show that God will at the same time execute judgment on other nations. All nations will meet his wrath, and the land of Edom in particular will flow with blood (Isaiah 34:1-6).

All nations shall be judged and the slain of God shall be from one end of the earth to the other (Jeremiah 25:15-33). The indication is that this period of judgment and destruction **may** last ten days, as the period from the Feast of Trumpets through Atonement is ten days, and the number ten is in Scripture associated with judgment. This period will culminate with Satan being cast into a pit, to be restrained there for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

*“We’ve seen that the seven last plagues are God’s wrath. Is God going to be absent, up in Heaven ‘getting married’ and feasting on a ‘marriage supper’ while his wrath is being poured out on the world-deceiving Satanic Babylonian system?”*

### To Where Shall Christ Return?

The Jews, believing the Messiah a redeemer to be sent from God, sometimes referred to him by the term *ho erchomenos*, “the coming one.” This term and similar ones expressing the same idea are found in Scripture a number of times. John the Baptist sent disciples to ask of Jesus, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19). He was inquiring as to whether Jesus was the Messiah, as is widely understood. A source of the appellation *ho erchomenos* is Psalm 118:26, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!” This psalm was composed for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, which pictures the Messiah’s reign on earth, as the Jews also understood.

Jesus was sent into the world, as promised. Jesus, who knew himself to be *ho erchomenos*, “the Coming One,” the Messiah, said to the Jews,

"I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 8:42). But he was rejected of the Jews and slain as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind, as God had purposed from the beginning. However, before his death he said to his disciples, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

Note that Jesus said he was going to "come again." When he spoke these words to his disciples he was on the earth, in Jerusalem in fact. The clear implication of his statement was that he was coming back to where he was, certainly to the earth, and possibly even to Jerusalem itself, and thence he would receive his disciples to himself and they would remain with him. We are not left to speculate about what Christ meant, because the Scriptures are quite specific concerning where the Messiah is to be upon his coming again.

Job, a man beloved for his righteousness (Job 1:8; Ezekiel 14:14) said, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh [or body] I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26). Notice that Job said that in the resurrection he would see his redeemer — not in heaven — but standing on the earth!

Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matthew 25:31-33). Where will the Son of Man — the Messiah — be sitting on his throne to judge the nations?

Isaiah wrote that at the time that the nations are gathered and disciplined, "...the Lord of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And

before His elders, gloriously" (Isaiah 24:23). And in Isaiah the Eternal God says to his people to be redeemed from national captivity, "...you shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13). God goes on to say through his prophet, "For behold, the Lord will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword The Lord will judge all flesh; And the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isaiah 66:15-16) Then God says, "It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the

nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord" (Isaiah 66:18-20). So the

nations will be gathered to Jerusalem to see God's glory. "And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the Lord" (Isaiah 66: 23).

On this same subject the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts" (Jeremiah 3:17). Through the prophet Zechariah the Eternal promised, "Therefore thus says the Lord: 'I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 1:16) And, "Thus says the Lord: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'" (Zechariah 8:3, also

*"Remember, the seven last plagues are poured out at the seventh trumpet. In a very short time, as the trumpet sounds, the plagues shall be poured out in rapid succession. Much of the destruction shall be immediate."*

see Zechariah 2:10-12; 9:9).

Can there be any doubt that Scripture teaches that when Jesus Christ, the Messiah, returns at his second coming, he is returning to dwell at Jerusalem on the earth? The Scriptures say nothing of Jesus “returning,” only to promptly turn around and go back to the third heaven. According to the plain teachings of Scripture, he is coming back to the earth, to Jerusalem, and will dwell there, establishing his throne in its midst.

*“Note that Jesus said he was going to ‘come again.’ When he spoke these words to his disciples he was on the earth, in Jerusalem in fact. The clear implication of his statement was that he was coming back to where he was, certainly to the earth, and possibly even to Jerusalem itself, and thence he would receive his disciples to himself and they would remain with him.”*

# Marriage Feast Parables

Rod Reynolds

**Are Christians going to literally “get married” to Jesus in heaven, as some believe? Find out the real meaning of the “marriage feast” or “marriage supper” Jesus spoke of in the marriage feast parables.**

In order to shed light on the message of the Kingdom of God Jesus used many parables. Among the parables used was that of a marriage supper -- or wedding feast. In the book of Revelation we're told “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:9).

What is this marriage supper of the Lamb? When is it and where is it? Is Jesus going to “rap-ture” the saints up to heaven to literally “get married” to him, as has been taught for a long while among some (but by no means all) Protestants and others? (E.g., see *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* on Revelation 19:1-10; cf. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* under “marriage”).

Some have also long advocated the popular notion that the saints and Christ will eat the “marriage supper” in heaven, too. An Internet search for “marriage supper in heaven” or something similar is likely to point to a number of sources promoting this idea (e.g., The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, [godwords777.blogspot.com](http://godwords777.blogspot.com); The Marriage Supper of the Lamb!, <http://powerpointparadise.com>; Where and When Does the Marriage Supper Take Place?, <http://www.eternal-cog.org>). Neither the idea of a literal marriage in heaven nor a literal marriage supper in heaven is anything new. To pretend otherwise is deceitful.

The book of Revelation was written in symbolic language. If one tries to take what is symbolic as literal he will miss the point of the real meaning behind the symbol. For example, if we understand

“Lamb” as in “marriage supper of the Lamb” to be a literal lamb, a four legged creature with a wool coat, we will miss the fact that the term “Lamb” as used here is really a reference to Jesus Christ, who is called “the Lamb of God” in John 1:29, 36, and is referred to by use of this metaphor in a number of other Scriptures in the Bible. As we will see, the terms “marriage” and “marriage supper” are also used symbolically in the book of Revelation. If we ignore the Bible's own revelation about the meaning of these symbols, and take them literally instead, we will miss the real meaning behind them. It's equally absurd to think of Jesus literally marrying untold numbers of his own brothers, as it is to think of him as a literal lamb. The “marriage supper” or “marriage feast” also has a far more profound meaning when properly understood than if taken literally as a brief sit-down meal or even a feast lasting a few days.

A great source of confusion and deception is men reading their own ideas into Scripture, rather than allowing the Bible to interpret itself. The book of Revelation has especially been abused in this way, with men reading into its symbols ideas conjured up in their own imaginations. But we are told in the book of Revelation that only the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is worthy to open the seals of Revelation (Revelation 5:3-4, 9).

The book of Revelation is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1). Jesus Christ himself is the one who reveals the symbols of the book of Revelation, and it is to him – and no one else – that we must look for the meaning of its symbols.

Christ reveals the meaning of the symbol of the “marriage supper” in the pages of his word, the Holy Bible.



Among the Scriptures where the meaning of this and related symbolism is revealed are the companion parables of Matthew 22 and Luke 14 having to do with a feast, banquet, or marriage supper. Each parable is different in certain respects, and was spoken at a different time under different circumstances, but they nevertheless complement one another.

What is it that Christ is teaching us in these parables? It's important that we understand the truth. How?

We must let the Bible interpret the Bible (Isaiah 28:9-13; 2 Peter 1:20). If anyone – out of his own imagination – makes up a fictional story to “explain” Scripture, he will be deceived. And if others are persuaded of the fiction, or fable, they, too, will be deceived (2 Timothy 4:3-4; “fables,” Greek, *muthos*, myth, fiction; cf. Jeremiah 23:25-28). Unfortunately, such is all too common. Make sure it does not happen to you. Prove the truth -- very carefully, honestly, and prayerfully -- from God's word, taking into account all the Scriptures on a given subject (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:15-16).

Jesus often used *parables* to teach spiritual lessons. The word “parable” is from the Greek παραβολή (*parabole*), from the verb παραβάλλω (*paraballo*) which means literally to throw alongside. A parable is by definition an analogy, where one thing is compared to another by way of metaphor or figurative speech.

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### Parables About God's Kingdom

In the parables of Matthew 22 and Luke 14 the subject is not a marriage feast, or feast, as such, it is the kingdom of God. In each the kingdom of God is *likened* to a feast. In Luke 14:14 Jesus makes mention of the “resurrection of the just.” Note the connection made between the resurrection of the just, and the subject of the parable, the kingdom of God.

“Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, ‘Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! ‘Then He [Jesus] said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many’ “ (Luke 14:15-16; “invited,” Greek, καλέω, *kaleo*, “call,” note that “many,” not few, are called; cf. Matthew 22:14). “Gave” (ποιέω, *poieo*) in some Greek manuscripts is in the imperfect tense, “was on the point of making” (*Word Pictures*, Robertson). In most Greek manuscripts it's in the aorist tense, which may apply to past, present or future events, depending on the context. Here the supper is clearly future (cf. Luke 14:15, where the Greek for “eat” [*phago*] is future tense), while the calling, or inviting, is ongoing and repeated (Luke 14:16-17; implies repeated calls, as *Barne's Notes* and Robertson's *Word Pictures* point out; cf. Matthew 22:3-4, 8-10). “Supper” is from δείπνον, (*deipnon*), in this context with the Greek *meGas*, a “great supper,” or a “great feast.”

Now let's look at the parable in Matthew.

“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son’ “ (Matthew 22:1-2). “Marriage” here is the plural of *gamos*: “A marriage feast (γαμους). The plural, as here (2, 3, 4, 9), is very common in the papyri for the wedding festivities (the several acts of feasting) which lasted for days” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*;

compare Matthew 22:4). The singular can also be used of the marriage feast or wedding celebration, as in Matthew 22:8 and John 2:1-2 [on which Robertson comments: “A wedding (or marriage festival) took place”]. See below for more on the typical custom concerning marriage in Biblical culture.

The subject here also is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is *likened to* a marriage feast. Many who come up with fanciful interpretations of the “marriage supper” overlook the fact that this passage

of Scripture is a simile by which the Kingdom God is likened to a marriage feast. Repeat, the subject is the Kingdom of God, not a marriage supper, as such. The Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom, with, as any literal kingdom, (1) a King, (2) territory, (3) subjects, (4) law.

Who is the King? It is the Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Jesus Christ is under the Father's authority (John 5:30). But Jesus Christ is also a king (Hebrews 1:4-5, 8). His kingdom is to be a world girdling kingdom given to him by the Father (Daniel 7:13-14).

What is the territory? While God rules the entire universe (Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3), the Bible clearly teaches that at the time of Jesus' second coming he will establish his throne on the earth. "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!' " (Revelation 11:15; cf. Daniel 2:35, 44; 7:27; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 5:10).

Who are the subjects? "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14; cf. Isaiah 2:1-4).

What is the law of the Kingdom? God's word (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 4:4).

### Servants Sent Forth to Call

Jesus' parable continues, "and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" ' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm,

another to his business" (Matthew 22:3-5).

Note that servants are sent forth to call people to the wedding festival. They are given multiple callings, multiple opportunities to be present at the wedding feast. Israel had been called, repeatedly, and would continue to be called (Isaiah 43:1; 45:3-4; 48:12; Jeremiah 35:17; Hosea 11:1-2; Matthew 10:6-7; Mark 1:14-15), along with the other nations of the earth (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Romans 1:5-6; 16:25-26; Revelation 14:6-7).

Who are the servants? Primarily, it is the prophets and apostles and their fellow laborers, and in a larger sense the whole Church (Jeremiah 7:25-28; Mark 16:15; Luke 10:1-3, 9; 11:47-49; Acts 1:8; Philippians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Peter 2:9). The Greek word for apostle, *apostolos*, means messenger, one sent.

"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them" (Matthew 22:5-6). Most who have heard the gospel have made light of it, and rejected the message. The servants of Christ have been persecuted and often

killed down through the ages (Matthew 24:9; Luke 11:49; Revelation 6:10-11). Note that some who were called simply ignored the message, but others who were called actively persecuted the messengers.

"But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matthew 22:7). The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was only a forerunner of a much more complete fulfillment of this prophetic parable. The primary fulfillment will occur in the period leading up to and including the time of Christ's second coming (Deuteronomy 32:22; Ezekiel 23:47; Luke 10:2-5, 9-12; 8-9, 18-20; Revelation 18:2, 8-9, 18-20).

*"In the parables of Matthew 22 and Luke 14 the subject is not a marriage feast, or feast, as such, it is the kingdom of God. In each the kingdom of God is likened to a feast."*

### The Wrath of the King

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy’ (Matthew 22:8). In the parable, **after** the wrath of the king has been executed (signifying the judgments poured out on the nations at the time of Christ’s return) the wedding feast is ready to begin. In Revelation 15 – 18 we read of the seven last plagues, filling up God’s wrath (Revelation 15:1), which are poured out on the “beast” empire characterized symbolically as “Babylon.” Especially he will destroy the seat of the harlot empire, Babylon the great, which has on its hands the blood of prophets, apostles and saints (Revelation 18:2, 8-12, 18-20, 24). These plagues will be poured out in conjunction with the second coming of Christ, and this will occur immediately upon his return, even before he sets foot on the earth (Isaiah 13:1-6, 9-10; cf. Matthew 24:29-30).

John had been in vision called up to heaven to see future events which were to occur primarily upon the earth (Revelation 4:1). The vision John was given in the first few verses of Revelation 19 occurs in the aftermath of the destruction of the plagues being poured out on the beast empire and the harlot city. The idea has been put forward that Revelation 15 somehow pictures a literal marriage ceremony occurring in heaven, with God the Father presiding over the saying of vows as a minister might in a modern western style wedding. But this is pure fiction, a fable spun from human imagination, such as God’s word warns us against (2 Timothy 4:3-4). No such custom is found anywhere in the Bible. “There was no formal religious ceremony connected with the Hebrew marriage as with us--there is not a hint of such a thing in the Bible” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1913 edition, “marriage”).

In Revelation 19 the subject of the “wedding celebration” (Revelation 19:7) and its feast (Revelation 19:9) is introduced only **after** the harlot city has been judged and burned with fire (Revelation 19:2-3). And it is placed in the context of the

reign of God (Revelation 19:6; cf. Daniel 7:25-27; Psalm 47; Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 19:15-16). “Marriage” (Revelation 19:7, translated “wedding celebration” in the New English Translation) is from γάμος (*gamos*), the same word as used for the wedding feast described metaphorically in Matthew 22. The phrase “the marriage of the Lamb has come [KJV ‘is come]” does not mean it has already occurred, but that it is imminent, or near. The Greek is ἦλθεν (*elthen*, aorist active indicative of the lexical form *erchomai*), “prophetic aorist” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Robertson). This form is used often by John. See Revelation 12:10, for example (cf. Revelation 12:12), and Revelation 14:7, translated “the hour of

*“Note that servants are sent forth to call people to the wedding festival. They are given multiple callings, multiple opportunities to be present at the wedding feast. Israel had been called, repeatedly, and would continue to be called.”*

His judgment has come,” meaning that it is near at hand (cf. Revelation 15:4; 16:7; 17:1; 18:10; 19:2). Similarly, “your [or his] wrath has come” (Revelation 6:15-17; 11:18; cf. Revelation 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19:15).

### The Feast is Ready

Only after the destruction of the harlot city and empire will the stage be set for the “marriage supper” or “marriage feast” to begin. In Psalm 45 it’s only after Christ destroys his enemies that the symbolic wedding celebration occurs. Keil and Delitzsch comment on this psalm: “The sequence of the thoughts and of the figures corresponds to the history of the future. When Babylon is fallen, and the hero riding upon a white horse, upon whom is inscribed the name ‘King of kings and Lord of lords,’ shall have smitten the hostile nations with the sword that goeth out of His mouth, there then follows the marriage of the Lamb, for which the way has been prepared by these avenging victories (Rev 19:7)” (*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*). The “daughter of Tyre” is there (Psalm 45:12). Clearly the wedding celebration is on the earth.

The common custom reflected in the Bible is that a couple were considered “married” or bound

to each other when they entered into the marriage covenant. Then there was a period of waiting before the wedding feast occurred and the marriage was consummated.

“Betrothal with the ancient Hebrews was of a more formal and far more binding nature than the ‘engagement’ is with us. Indeed, it was esteemed a part of the transaction of marriage, and that the most binding part. Among the Arabs today it is the only legal ceremony connected with marriage” And further “The betrothed parties were legally in the position of a married couple, and unfaithfulness was ‘adultery’ (De 22:23; Mt 1:19)” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1913 edition, “marriage”).

Israel was “betrothed” or “married” to Christ in a symbolic sense upon entering into the covenant at Mount Sinai (Jeremiah 31:32; cf. Ezekiel 16:8; Matthew 1:18-20). Then they entered into the long trek through the wilderness before they reached their inheritance in the promised land, a type of God’s Kingdom (Hebrews 3:5-19; 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). In a similar fashion we are “betrothed,” or symbolically “married,” to Christ when we enter into the covenant with him at baptism, but it’s only after the resurrection that the symbolic “wedding feast” -- picturing the kingdom of God on earth -- will occur, wherein we, if privileged to be there, will receive our reward (2 Corinthians 11:2; Matthew 16:27; 25:31-34; Revelation 22:12).

Typically, in Biblical culture a wedding feast lasted for seven days (Genesis 29:27-28). “According to the usual custom a great marriage feast had been prepared....” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil & Delitzsch, on Genesis 29:21). “The wedding feast generally lasted a week” (*ibid.*, on Genesis 29:27, cf. Judges 14:10-12). The Feast of Tabernacles is another seven day feast that is typical of God’s kingdom. Jesus said at his last Passover that he would not drink wine afterward until the time of God’s Kingdom

(Luke 22:18). His apostles will eat with him then, as they judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30; cf. Daniel 7:21-22; 25-27; Matthew 19:28; Revelation 5:10; 20:4). The time of the millennium will be a time of great joy for the whole earth (Revelation 20:4-6; Psalm 98:4-9).

“Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests” (Matthew 22:9-10). The “Bride” of Christ is the Church (Ephesians 5:23; 2 Corinthians 11:2). But the wedding will be furnished with “guests.” Who are the guests? Both bad and good are invited (verse 10). The poor, maimed, halt and blind (Luke 14:21-24). Those found are compelled to come. No one is being compelled – forced – to be a part of God’s kingdom now. When will such a thing occur? When Christ’s kingdom is established on earth, the lame and the blind, all Israel, will come

before God (Ezekiel 34:11-16; Micah 4:6-8; Jeremiah 31:8-9; Isaiah 27:12-13; Zephaniah 3:18-19; Jeremiah 16:14-16). The nations, even those who resist, will be compelled to come before God (Zechariah 14:16-19; Isaiah 66:18-19, 23; Psalm 45:12).

“And in this mountain [Mount Zion, Jerusalem; Isaiah 24:23] The Lord of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat

things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees” (Isaiah 25:6). The millennial reign of Christ will be a feast for all people. The veil of spiritual blindness will be removed (Isaiah 25:7; Romans 11:25-27; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16).

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will

*“Only after the destruction of the harlot city and empire will the stage be set for the “marriage supper” or “marriage feast” to begin. In Psalm 45 it’s only after Christ destroys his enemies that the symbolic wedding celebration occurs.”*

be weeping and gnashing of teeth' " (Matthew 22:11-13). Those who remain on the earth when Christ establishes his kingdom must repent, they will thence be clothed with righteousness (Isaiah 61:9-11; Ezekiel 36:24-35; Isaiah 4:3-4). Those who offend, refusing to repent, shall be sought out and destroyed (Psalm 68:15-21; Ezekiel 11:17-21; 20:34-38; Zephaniah 3:10-12).

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Jesus makes the point that many are called in this age through the gospel message, invited to be among those in the millennial kingdom, pictured as a marriage feast. Israel of old was called, as we've seen. Many others since have heard the gospel message, but few have given it serious consideration. Even fewer have actually believed the truth and repented, so as to be "chosen" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; cf. Mark 1:14-15; 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-40), making them eligible for the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6).

The wedding feast symbol of the Bible portrays the glorious rule of God's kingdom over the earth for 1000 years and beyond. It portrays a time of time of joy and rejoicing for Jesus Christ, and his "bride," and for all creation, as God's blessings are poured out in superabundance. Everyone of us can take part in it, if we will believe the truth, repent, and remain faithful to God and his word.

"No one is being compelled - forced - to be a part of God's kingdom now. When will such a thing occur? When Christ's kingdom is established on earth, the lame and the blind, all Israel, will come before God."

*Revelation 19:6-9, World English Bible*

*I heard something like the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns! Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." It was given to her that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

*He said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" He said to me, "These are the true words of God."*



# Thirst for the Living Waters

Rod Reynolds

**Without water you can't live. In fact, your physical body consists largely of water. And the supply of water in your body must be constantly replenished for you to thrive. Usually we rely on our sense of thirst to tell us when and how much water to drink. Sometimes, however, for various reasons, our sense of thirst may fail us. And when that happens individuals may become sick or even die from dehydration. At other times, people may thirst, but seek to satisfy their thirst with impure water that, either slowly or quickly, produces disease and death.**

The Spirit of God is analogous to water (John 7:37-39).

On the last day of the Feast, Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts." Israel thirsted in the wilderness for water. And God supplied their need, intervening miraculously to turn bitter waters into sweet, and causing water to gush forth from barren rock (Exodus 17:1-6; 15:23-26). Though God mercifully supplied them with physical water to keep them alive, they couldn't see beyond that to their need for the living water of God's Spirit. They thirsted for water to fulfill their fleshly needs, but they did not thirst for God.

Chances are, you experience thirst everyday. Every time you think about a glass of cool water, you ought to think about how that illustrates your need for God's Spirit. Think about the fact that as much as you need clear and pure life sustaining water, you need God even more, because the living water that he offers is the source not just of physical life, but of life for all eternity.

If one has the right relationship with God, he will thirst for him, for his righteousness, for his presence in one's life. David had that kind of relationship with God (Psalm 63:1). David thirsted for God because he had developed a relationship

with God. He studied the Scriptures, meditated on God's law, and prayed to God daily. When in trouble, he went to God for refuge. When blessed, he gave God thanks. He walked with and talked with God. God was in his thoughts continually. And so he thirsted for God as in a dry and thirsty land, as in a spiritual wilderness, which he was.

We're all in a spiritual wilderness. Whether we know it or not, we need God's guidance, his protection, his assurance, his comfort, his faith, his love, his hope and confidence, his strength, his righteousness. We need his Spirit dwelling in us and the fellowship with him that results. We need the life that only he can give us -- eternal life, God life. God tells us that if we thirst, and if we come to Jesus Christ to be satisfied, He will give us freely of the water of life, abundantly, all that we need (Revelation 22:17).

We need to make sure that our sense of thirst, spiritually speaking, is well developed. Like David, we need to seek God. We need to put God first, making sure we study God's word daily. Make sure you pray every morning. Pray at night and at other times during the day as well. Take your concerns, your cares, your needs to God. Give God thanks; pray for the needs of others. Develop your relationship with God, and you'll find that you begin to have the thirst for him that David had.

When the vast multitudes of Israel and all of mankind are resurrected at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, God is going to offer them the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). It's what he's offering to us, now. How thirsty are you for God, for his Spirit, for life? If you're thirsty, you'll be satisfied. If you're not very thirsty, you need to work harder at seeking God, so you can take full advantage of the abundant life that he has to offer!

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Psalm 42:1-7, World English Bible

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
so my soul pants after you, God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?  
My tears have been my food day and night,  
while they continually ask me, "Where is your God?"  
These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me,  
how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house,  
with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day.  
Why are you in despair, my soul?  
Why are you disturbed within me?  
Hope in God!  
For I shall still praise him for the saving help of his presence.  
My God, my soul is in despair within me.  
Therefore I remember you from the land of the Jordan,  
the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar.  
Deep calls to deep at the noise of your waterfalls.  
All your waves and your billows have swept over me.*

## IN THIS ISSUE

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Christ is going to return! But what is the nature of this return? And what will be happening during and immediately after it? Join us as we explore several aspects of this subject in the first three articles of this issue, beginning with a Q&A: "Every Eye Will See Him." After this, we analyze variations of rapture theories and see what the Bible says concerning the subject in "How Many Comings?" Finally, we explore some prominent Biblical analogies concerning Christ, the church, and the coming Kingdom of God in "Marriage Feast Parables."

"Thirst for Living Waters" – Water is widely known as one of the base requirements for life. The Bible utilizes water symbolically in relation to our spiritual life. See how this relates to you in this uplifting message from the author!

### **Looking for Answers?**

Find sermons and articles regarding these subjects and more at [cogmessenger.org](http://cogmessenger.org)!