

HWMR: THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE (Week 5)

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; 22:2; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 1:7, 9; Rev. 15:3

The Righteousness of the Bride

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the **marriage of the Lamb has come**, and **His wife has made herself ready**.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in **fine linen, bright and clean**; for the fine linen is the **righteousnesses of the saints**.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they **who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb**. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means **enter into the kingdom of the heavens**.

Matt 6:33 But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt 22:2 The **kingdom of the heavens** has become like a king who prepared a **wedding feast** for his son.

2 Cor 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him**.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is **faithful and righteous** to forgive us our sins and **cleanse us from all unrighteousness**.

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! **Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!**

Day 1

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

2 Corinthians 3:8-9 - *How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory? For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.*

Day 2

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Ephesians 4:24 - *And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness...*

Colossians 3:10 - *And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.*

Revelation 15:3 says, “*Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations.*” God’s works are His acts, whereas God’s ways are His governing principles. God’s ways are righteous in His principles. If you know God’s ways, you will not need to wait to see His works in order to praise Him. Although His works have not yet come, you will know they will come because you know the governing principles by which God does things. God’s ways are righteous according to His principles.

In Romans 1:16b and 17a Paul says that the gospel “*is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in it.*” In John 3:16 God’s love is the source and motive of God’s salvation. In Ephesians 2:5 and 8 God’s grace is the basic element of God’s salvation. But here God’s righteousness is the power of God’s salvation. Legally speaking, both love and grace can fluctuate, but not righteousness. This is true even the more with God’s righteousness. Because God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

According to John 3:16, salvation is out of God’s love, and according to Ephesians 2:5 and 8, salvation is by God’s grace. But in Romans 1:17 Paul says that salvation comes by the righteousness of God. Neither love nor grace is related to the law. No law forces us to love or to give grace. Whether we love or not we are still lawful, and whether we extend grace or not we are still legal. In a sense, God is not bound to love us. Furthermore, He is not legally bound to show us grace. Righteousness, on the contrary, is very much related to the law. Because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God’s law, God is bound to save us. If you say, “Lord Jesus, You are my Savior,” you can turn to God and say, “God, You must forgive me, whether You like it or not. You are righteous if You forgive me, but You are unrighteous if You do not forgive me.” We can say this to God because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, and, as a result, God is bound by His righteousness to save us. Righteousness, therefore, is a mighty bond God cannot escape—He must save us because He is righteous.

First John 1:9 says, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” God is faithful in His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son. His word is the word of the truth of His gospel, which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ, and the blood of Christ has fulfilled His righteous requirements that He may forgive us our sins. If we confess our sins, He, according to His word and based on the redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgives us, because He must be faithful in His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus. Otherwise, God would be unfaithful and unrighteous.

In Romans 3:21 Paul speaks a further word concerning the righteousness of God: “*But now without law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.*” To say that the righteousness of God has been manifested without law means that the righteousness of God is not based on our doing; that is, it is not based on our keeping the law. Although the righteousness of God has existed for ages, it was not manifested to us until we believed in the Lord Jesus and called on His name. Then the righteousness of God was revealed to us. When God’s righteousness is revealed, it is manifested. It is manifested to us when we believe in the Lord.

(Conclusion of the New Testament, Message 9)

I. The righteousness of God is what God is in His action with respect to justice and righteousness—Rev. 15:3; Rom. 1:16b-17a; John 3:16; 1 John 1:9:

- A. Our experience of Christ rests upon the foundation of God’s righteousness.
- B. The foundation is God’s righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God’s throne—Psa. 89:14.

II. There are **four aspects** of the definition of righteousness:

- A. **Righteousness** is to be **right with persons, things, and matters before God** according to His righteous and strict requirements—Matt. 5:20.
- B. **Righteousness** is the **outward expression of the Christ** who lives in us as the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:8-9:
 - 1. This is righteousness as God's image—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 - 2. The ministry of righteousness is a ministry of the Lord's image—2 Cor. 3:9.
- C. **Righteousness** is a matter of **God's kingdom**—Matt. 6:33; Psa. 89:14:
 - 1. God's kingdom is righteousness.
 - 2. Righteousness is related to God's government, administration, and rule.
- D. **Righteousness** is a matter of our **being right with God in our being**—2 Cor. 5:21:
 - 1. To be right with God in our being is to have an inner being that is transparent and crystal clear, an inner being that is in the mind and will of God.
 - 2. This is a matter of our being the righteousness of God in Christ—v. 21.

III. Righteousness is related to **God's outward acts, ways, actions, and activities**—Rev. 15:3:

- A. Everything God does is **righteous**—Rom. 1:16-17.
- B. **Whatever God is** in His justice and righteousness **constitutes His righteousness**.

Some Christians view the ministry of the Spirit primarily as a ministry of the Spirit as power. They expect that when they speak in the power of the Spirit, a large number of people will be gained for the Lord. But the ministry of the Spirit in **2 Corinthians 3** is a ministry of the Spirit as **life and life supply**. My ground for saying this is found in verse 6, where Paul says that God “*made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*” Here Paul does not say that the Spirit gives power, performs miracles, or imparts gifts. He declares that the **Spirit gives life**. Elsewhere in this chapter the Spirit is also related to life, not to power, gifts, or miracles.

This understanding of the Spirit as the life supply is confirmed by Paul's word in **Philippians 1:19**: “*For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*” In this verse Paul does not speak of the bountiful power or the bountiful ability. Rather, he speaks of the **bountiful supply of the Spirit**.

I emphasize this point because many Christians have a mistaken concept of the Spirit and think of the Spirit mainly as a source of power, ability, or impact. For example, some groups stress the matter of what is called being “slain in the Spirit.” One woman was especially well known in this matter. Is that the Spirit as the life supply? Certainly not.

In **2 Corinthians** Paul does not speak of gifts or miracles, but he does say that the Spirit gives life. In **1 Corinthians** Paul mentions tongue-speaking, for example, with the intention of limiting this practice in the church meetings. But in **2 Corinthians** he does not say a word about speaking in tongues. The emphasis in this book is on the Spirit as the life supply. The ministry of the new covenant is a matter of the Spirit as the supply inwardly and of righteousness as God's expression outwardly. (*Life Study of Corinthians, Chapter 27*)

Day 3

Romans 14:17 - For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:4 - That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

In *Romans 8:2* Paul says that the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and death. The key phrase in this verse is “the Spirit of life.” In *Romans 8:4* Paul goes on to speak concerning walking according to the spirit. This involves walking according to the Spirit of life mentioned in verse 2. We must walk according to the Spirit of life so that the righteous requirements of the law may be fulfilled in us. This does not mean that we endeavor to keep the law; it means that the law is **spontaneously** and **unconsciously fulfilled** in us when we **walk according to the Spirit**.

If we do not live in the Spirit of life and do not walk according to this Spirit and yet try to keep the law, we shall not succeed. Even if we are successful in keeping the law in an outward way, we still shall not have righteousness. But when we **live in the Spirit of life** and **walk according to the Spirit of life**, we shall keep the law automatically, even though we may not have the intention to do so. Spontaneously, **all the requirements of the law will be fulfilled in us.** (*Life Study of 2 Corinthians, Message 29*)

Day 4

1 Peter 2:24 - Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.

2 Peter 3:13 - But according to His promise we are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

IV. God is righteous in the **blood of Jesus His Son**—**1 John 1:7, 9:**

- God is **faithful in His word** (v. 10) and **righteous in the blood** of Jesus His Son.
- His word is the **word of the truth** of His gospel (Eph. 1:13), which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ (Acts 10:43); the blood of Christ has **fulfilled His righteous requirements** that He might forgive us our sins (Matt. 26:28).
- To **forgive** us is to **release** us from the offense of our sins, whereas to **cleanse** us is to **wash us** from the stain of our unrighteousness.

Day 5

Revelation 19:7-8 - Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Day 6

Revelation 3:4-5 - *But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy. He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments...*

V. Righteousness is related to the kingdom of God—Rom. 14:17:

- A. The church life is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is righteousness.
- B. God's throne is established with righteousness as the foundation—Psa. 89:14.
- C. Where God's righteousness is, there His kingdom is also—Isa. 32:1; Heb. 1:8-9.
- D. In the Old Testament, righteousness is often synonymous with the kingdom.
- E. Where there is righteousness, everything is headed up in a proper way; this is the kingdom.
- F. Righteousness first issues in the image of God, and then righteousness establishes the kingdom of God:
 - 1. In Romans 8 we have righteousness and God's image.
 - 2. In Romans 14 we have righteousness and God's kingdom.
 - 3. Both the image and the kingdom are based on righteousness.
- G. To say that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13) means that everything will be in order, headed up, and regulated:
 - 1. Everything will be governed, controlled, and under the proper rule, for the throne of God, the kingdom, the divine administration, will be there.
 - 2. The result will be peace and joy.

VI. In Revelation 19:7-8 we see the righteousness of the bride:

- A. There are two aspects of Christ being righteousness to the believers:
 - 1. The first aspect is to be the believers' righteousness for them to be justified before God objectively at the time of their repenting unto God and believing into Christ—Rom. 3:24-26; Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:24b, 27.
 - 2. The second aspect is to be the believers' righteousness lived out of them as the manifestation of God, who is the righteousness in Christ given to the believers for them to be justified by God subjectively—Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24a; James 2:24; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 19:8.
 - 3. As our objective righteousness, Christ is the One in whom we are justified by God—Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:25; 5:1, 9, 16, 18.
 - 4. As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God—Matt. 5:6, 20.
- B. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8:
 - 1. The righteousness we received for our salvation is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ—1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9.
 - 2. The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-12 signifies the Christ whom we live out and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.
- C. The Lord's bride, His wife, "has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the

saints"—19:7b-8:

1. **Revelation 19:8** clearly associates **clothing with righteousness**.
2. The word *righteousness* in verse 8 is plural and can be translated as "**righteous acts**."
3. The righteousnesses **do not** refer to Christ as our righteousness, whom we received for our salvation—1 Cor. 1:30.
4. The **fine linen** indicates our **overcoming life**, our **overcoming living**.
5. The **fine linen** is the **Christ whom we live out of our being**.

D. "Blessed are they [the overcoming saints] who are called to the **marriage dinner of the Lamb**"—Rev. 19:9:

1. The **marriage dinner of the Lamb** here is the **wedding feast** in Matthew 22:2.
2. To be **called** to the marriage dinner of Christ is to be **blessed**.
3. The **overcoming believers**, who will be called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb, will also be the **bride of the Lamb**—Rev. 19:7.

To be saved we only need to have **Christ as our righteousness** covering us in the presence of God. Concerning this point we must be very clear. Christ is our righteousness by which we are justified. However, we should not think that all the problems are now solved. To be **saved** is one thing, but to be **matured and saturated** with Christ is another. We must go on to **live by Christ**, and not only to live by Him, but to **live Him out**, to **manifest Him**. We need to express Christ by continually living by Christ. The very Christ whom we live out in this way will be our marriage garment, our practical righteousness. When we come to God for justification, we simply take Christ as our righteousness. However, at that point we have only received Christ; we have not yet experienced Him. In order to attend the marriage feast we need to **experience the Christ whom we have received**. Christ must become our experience. When Christ has become our experience, He will be the subjective, experiential righteousness which qualifies us to attend the marriage feast.

Matthew 22:14 says, "*For many are called but few are chosen.*" Here we see again the two steps. To be **called** is one thing; to be **chosen** or selected is another. To be **called means to be saved**. Whether or not we are **chosen**, that is, qualified for the marriage feast, is something **pending**. Christianity mostly preaches to people about being called, but hardly mentions anything about the Lord's selection. But both Matthew 22:14 and Revelation 17:14 mention the matter of being called and of being chosen. I have no doubt that all of us are called. However, I have a **real concern** as to how many of the called ones **will be selected**. We have been called for salvation, but we must be selected for the marriage feast. For example, all the students in a school may graduate, but not everyone will receive a prize. This does not mean that if you do not receive a prize you do not graduate. You may graduate and yet not have a prize. Whether or not we participate in the one thousand year marriage feast on that wonderful, universal marriage day depends upon one thing: whether or not we live out Christ today.

Once again we see that Christ is the center. Many people claim to be Christ-centered, but I am afraid they may be Christ-centered in a very shallow way. We need to be **Christ-centered** in such a way that Christ will be not only our **righteousness** for us to be **saved**, but He will also be **lived out** in us as our **subjective righteousness** to qualify us for His marriage feast. We all need to realize Christ, and we all need to experience Christ. We should experience Christ to such an extent that He will become our marriage garment. **Christ will then be our qualification**, and the Father will recognize us as qualified for the marriage feast. (*The Kingdom*, Chapter 30)