

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST  
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INTRO: Today we commemorate the day of Pentecost. It was the middle of the seven feasts of Israel and fell between two sections of three feasts each. It is the day of the birth of the Church as recorded in Acts 2. I have taught much on this subject. Now, you will not remember this, but in 2014 I began to preach on the doctrine of the Church. So let me briefly tell you what we have covered from that time on. We began by identifying the Church, what it is and what it is not. Then we looked at the history of the Church. We looked at how Jesus foretold that it would come, and then at the birth of the Church in Acts 2. From there we looked at its growth, how it started in Jerusalem, spread to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. We then looked at the Church in the Epistles, and last, at the prophecies regarding the Church as shown in the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

We then began to look at the illustrations of the Church. We saw it viewed as a body, and then as a building. And that will bring us to consider the third illustration of the Church and it is that of the Church as a bride. So in your outline you will see we are in main point number 3 of the illustrations of the Church. We have looked at the Church as illustrated as a body and as a building. These are illustrations that help us understand the nature of the Church. Let me remind you once more of what I have said numerous times, and that is that the Church is God's greatest work on earth today, as it has been for the past 2,000 years.

The picture of Christ as a bride is one of the most encouraging pictures of the Church. Marriage, generally, is one of the most exciting times of life. There is usually a time of build up to marriage. Marriage is also one of the most important decisions in all of life. And so in life when people get married, as the stories go, they live happily ever after.

Well, here on earth that is not generally true. But in the most important of all decisions in life, that is absolutely true. When a sinner repents and turns to Christ in faith, he becomes part of the bride of Christ. And after the wedding, he or she will truly live happily ever after. And the "ever after" is forever and ever after. It will never end! What could be better

than that? Absolutely nothing! Surely it will be worth all the toils and trials of life.

### III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH

- A. As A Body
- B. As A Building
- C. As A Bride

#### 1. The biblical basis for this marriage

We want to begin then by looking at the biblical basis for this illustration of the Church as the bride of Christ. We begin with John 3, if you would turn there. Now before we read this let me mention something here. There are those who think the Gospels do not have anything to do with the Church. They were written for the Jews. But John 14:1-3 is one of the clearest references to the rapture in the NT. Matthew 13 is a very clear picture of the new age that was then about to come, the Church age. The OT does not speak prophetically of the Church, but the Gospels do, and in hindsight we can recognize those.

The passage we are about to read hints at Christ and the Church. We begin in verse 22:

22 *After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.*

23 *Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.*

24 *For John had not yet been thrown into prison.*

25 *Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.*

26 *And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"*

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

30 "He must increase, but I must decrease.

Now John likened Jesus to a bridegroom in this passage. Nothing is said of a bride, but no bride, no bridegroom. And John likened himself to the friend of the bridegroom. Now the friend of the bridegroom had an important job. We might liken him to the best man at our weddings, but he played a much more important role. Ellicott's Bible commentary says:

"The "friend of the bridegroom"—called by the Hebrews "Shōshbēn," and by the Greeks "Paranymp"—was charged with the preliminaries of the marriage. He arranged the contract, acted for the bridegroom during the betrothal, and arranged for, and presided at, the festivities of the wedding-day itself. It was a position of honour, in proportion to the position of the bridegroom himself, and was given to his chief friend. That friend then joyed in his joy, and there was none brighter on that day than he. This in John's thought is an illustration of his own position."

I have read others who said that if the marriage later ran into problems, this friend would seek to help the couple through those problems as well. Now a wedding is not about the best man. It is about the bride and the bridegroom. And in this passage we have Jesus pictured as a bridegroom.

We go next to Luke 5:32-35 which says:

33 *Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"*

34 *And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?"*

35 *"But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days."*

Here, Jesus Himself pictures Himself as a bridegroom. So far nothing is said of a bride, but no bride, no bridegroom. But Jesus does foretell here that the bridegroom will be taken away. This is prophetic of what would then soon happen, and that is that He would return to heaven. And in verses 36-39 He says this:

36 *Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old."*

37 *"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined."*

38 *"But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

39 *"And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"*

I will not take time to explain, as I have covered this in the parables of Jesus. But what Jesus is teaching here is that a big change is about to come and you cannot mix the new and the old. The Church will be the new, and the nation of Israel was the old. All of this fits perfectly with the picture of Christ as a bridegroom and we will see more of that.

Well, we know the history. Jesus was crucified, He was buried and then resurrected. And after His resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, the day we commemorate today, He ascended to heaven and we will see how that fits into the whole picture of Christ as a bridegroom.

Well, after He ascended back to heaven, the Apostles and prophets of that day penned the New Testament books. And so we go to Ephesians to see what Paul had to add to what we have seen already. So we go to Ephesians 5. We begin in verse 25 and Paul writes like this:

- 25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*
- 26 *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,*
- 27 *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*
- 28 *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*
- 29 *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*
- 30 *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*
- 31 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*
- 32 *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*
- 33 *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Here we have the very clear picture of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride. Christ gave Himself for the Church in order that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word. This was so that He might present her to Himself as a glorious Church. He wants her to be without spot or wrinkle. All of this speaks of preparation for marriage and thus the picture of a bride, preparing a beautiful white dress for the wedding day. This day is coming, and we are convinced it will soon be here.

Now Paul said, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." So we want to now see how this picture is fulfilled in the NT. To understand this we must understand Jewish weddings because it was in this culture that this picture was given. There were three stages to the Jewish wedding; there was the betrothal, the taking of the bride and then the marriage supper and we will look at those one at a time.

## 2. The steps to marriage

### a. Betrothal

#### 1) The selection of the bride

In the Jewish culture, when parents had a daughter, they would seek a marriage partner for her. This was usually done about a year before they were married, but it could be done much earlier. Ephesians 1:3-4 is interesting in this light. It says:

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

*4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

God the Father chose true believers in Christ before the foundation of the world. And He wants the

believer to be holy and without blame before Him in love. The selection of the bride in this case was done before the foundation of the world.

In Jewish weddings the bride was chosen by the parents.

Sometimes this was done even before the children were born but usually about a year before they were married. The Church was chosen by God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4).

We spoke earlier of the Jewish friend of the bridegroom, or best man. Listen to 2 Corinthians 11:1-2. Paul was concerned that the Corinthians were becoming unfaithful to their Lord and he said:

*1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.*

*2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

It seems that when a person leads anyone else to the Lord, he becomes the one instrumental in the betrothal of that other person to the Lord. And Paul was very concerned concerning the Corinthians, that they would have a white dress to meet the Lord with.

2) The payment of the dowry

After the bride was selected, the father and son would go to the bride's home and agree with a price for her. This became the dowry. The father of the bridegroom would pay the father of the bride and then they would make a legal contract.

When this contract had been made, the couple was married. In some sense, this is like our modern engagement. But it was much more binding.

To break this contract a divorce was required. In the time Christ was to be born, Joseph and Mary had made their covenant but they did not yet live together.

After the agreement was completed, the father and son would go back to the father's home and here they would begin to prepare a place for the son and his new wife to live after they were publically married.

Now it is important here to go to John 14. What we are about to read took place just before Christ was crucified and so it was not long before He went back to His Father's house. We begin in verse 1:

1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2 *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3 *"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.*

Here we have this precise time pictured in Christ's relationship to His bride. He will now pay the price and make the contract. 1 Peter 1:17-19 speaks to this. Peter writes:

17 *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*

18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*



19 *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

The Lord Jesus paid the ultimate price for His bride. He paid for her with His blood. And He did that so that she would be redeemed from her aimless conduct and be made holy as the verses before tell us.

And after Christ paid for His bride by His death, He was resurrected and went back to His Father's house. And what would He do there? He would prepare a place for His bride at His Father's house! And He left with this promise: I am coming back for you! I will receive you to Myself so that where I am there you may be also. That is the hope of every engaged person!

b. Taking the bride

And so we now live in the blessed hope of Christ's return. You see, there are those who say that Christ will come for His bride after the tribulation. In their view here is what happens. The tribulation ends. The Church is caught up into the air and then comes right back down to earth to go into the millennium. And here is the question: Where is the promise of going with Christ to the Father's house where He has prepared a place for them?

But it is not so. You see, the hope of Christ's coming for His bride is a blessed hope. It is not, as someone has said, a blasted hope. That is, we do not wait for the tribulation to run its course before He comes. We wait for Him to come before the tribulation begins. That is a blessed hope.

Turn now to Matthew 24. Here is the question: How did the bridegroom in Jewish weddings in Jesus' day come for His bride? Well, she did not know when he was coming. When the betrothal had taken place she began to prepar in order to

be ready for him to come at any time. There was no note sent ahead of time. He could come at any time. She had to be ready at all times. Listen to Matthew 24:36-44:

36 *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

37 *"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

38 *"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,*

39 *"and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

40 *"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.*

41 *"Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.*

42 *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*

43 *"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.*

44 *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

What is the message for the bride of Christ? Watch! You do not know when your Lord is coming. Be ready at all times! But the wedding does not take place when the bridegroom comes. It takes place after they get back to the Father's house. So we want to see the fulfillment of that now.

c. The marriage supper

So we come to third step in the Jewish marriage. It is the marriage supper. It is here that the real celebration begins. It is to this that the invited guests come. The Lord Jesus was invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee and He attended. And it was this part of the marriage process that He attended.

Now when the Lord Jesus comes for His bride, He comes into the air. He has come down to the bride's house to take her back to His Father's house. And when the bride is caught up into the air, from here the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, takes her to His Father's house, to the place He has prepared for her. This is what Jesus promised in John 14:1-3.

It is not possible to describe how glorious this time will be. It will be seven years in heaven. While the Church is in heaven, on earth the tribulation will run its course. You can read what happens during that time on earth in Revelation 6-19.

So let me now introduce us to the book of Revelation. Reading it you would never conclude that it is one of the most chronological books of the Bible, but it is. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the whole book. Chapters 2-3 picture the Church age in seven stages. Chapters 4-5 introduce us to heaven. In 4:1 the Apostle John is raptured to heaven. That means he is caught up to heaven. Listen to what it says:

*1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*

John then describes a most wonderful scene in heaven. And while he is there, he is shown what will happen on earth after the Church is caught up and we find that in chapters 6-19. But when we come

to chapter 19, the tribulation is coming to a close. Now let me mention this before we move on. You find the Church in chapters 1-3. And I think you can find the Church in heaven in chapters 4-5 as pictured by the 24 elders. But when it comes to the tribulation time, chapters 6-19 you do not ever once find the Church on earth again. And when you do find her in chapter 19, she is in heaven!

So we go now to chapter 19. This is in every sense of the word a truly "awesome" chapter. We'll begin by reading verse 1-10:

- 1 *After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"*
- 2 *"For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."*
- 3 *Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!"*
- 4 *And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"*
- 5 *Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"*
- 6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"*

The tribulation is coming to a close. The world systems are shutting down. The Lord is about to return to earth. We go on in verse 7:

7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

Now notice it says His wife has made herself ready. She was caught up a bride. She is now the wife. Verse 8:

8 *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

I want to point something out here. In Ephesians 5 the bridegroom gave His life for His bride so that she would be without spot or wrinkle. And here she is arrayed in a dress of fine linen, clean and bright. And what does it represent? The righteous acts of the saints. The KJV says, "the righteousness", but *righteous acts* is a better translation. She has made her own white dress. Verse 9:

9 *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

The bride has been chosen. She has been paid for. She has been brought back to the bridegroom's Father's house. The private marriage has taken place, and now we come to the last part of the Jewish wedding, the marriage supper. And who is invited to the marriage supper?

Now between this time and when the marriage supper begins, many things happen. Let us read the rest of the chapter to see what happens when the Lord comes down to earth. We continue in verse 11:

- 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
- 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
- 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
- 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
- 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
- 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
- 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;
- 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.
- 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.
- 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he

*deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

21 *And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

Now let me tell you what I see. I am not saying this is the way it will be but this is how I see it. When the Lord Jesus returns to earth He will destroy all of living mankind except for two groups of people; believers and professing believers. On earth, all war will stop. When once more life returns to a new normal, they will beat all warfare machinery into plowshares and the will farm, not fight. That is prophesied many times in the OT.

But the two groups left alive on earth will now be gathered together. And let us turn to Matthew 25 to see what happens. We begin in verse 31:

31 *"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.*

Here we have Christ returning all the way down to earth. And after He has destroyed all the unbelievers, a throne is set up. It is a judgment throne. Verse 32:

32 *"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.*

33 *"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

These people that are to be judged are called sheep and goats. The sheep, of course, picture the true Christian. But whom do the goats represent? All non believers, whether they profess to be

Christians or not? No. They represent professing believers who are not. We will see this in a moment.

We will now see the judgment of the righteous. Verse 34:

34 *"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

35 *'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;*

36 *'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

37 *"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?*

38 *'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?*

39 *'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'*

40 *"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

Now here is the question, who are these righteous, these sheep? They are those who Christians who came through the tribulation alive. They will replenish the earth with people during the millennium. You see, the Church has been resurrected, and they are now like the angels in that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, nor reproduce. Verse 41:

41 *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*



42 *'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;*

43 *'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

44 *"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'*

45 *"Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*

Earlier I mentioned that the goats were professing believers. Notice that they say in verse 44, "Lord, when did we not do right. We did right." They called Jesus Lord, but He was not their Lord according to Jesus. These are not rank unbelievers. Now the righteous inherited the kingdom that had been prepared for them. But these go to hell, a place prepared for the devil. And note now verse 46:

46 *"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Now, what happens after this, and before the wedding supper? We go to Daniel 12. And we will begin in verse 1:

1 *"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.*

This verse speaks of the tribulation time which is described in Revelation 6-19. Verse 2:

2 *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall  
awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to  
shame and everlasting contempt.*

3 *Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the  
firmament, And those who turn many to  
righteousness Like the stars forever and  
ever.*

This resurrection happens after the judgment of the sheep and goats we just looked at. All the saints from creation until the end of the tribulation who have died will now be resurrected and enter the millennium. Verse 4:

4 *"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until  
the time of the end; many shall run to and  
fro, and knowledge shall increase."*

Between the time of Daniel and the tribulation, many will run to and fro, and knowledge will increase. That is what is happening today. Verse 5:

5 *Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on  
this riverbank and the other on that  
riverbank.*

6 *And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the  
waters of the river, "How long shall the  
fulfillment of these wonders be?"*

7 *Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the  
waters of the river, when he held up his  
right hand and his left hand to heaven, and  
swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall  
be for a time, times, and half a time; and  
when the power of the holy people has been  
completely shattered, all these things shall  
be finished.*

8 *Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My  
lord, what shall be the end of these things?"*

9 *And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed  
up and sealed till the time of the end.*

10 *"Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*

It is the time of the end. Today we clearly understand the meaning of these things and that verse has spoken of the last half of the tribulation. I cannot deal with it all here. But we come to a verse most important to our topic now. Verse 11:

11 *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

The daily sacrifice is taken away exactly in the middle of the tribulation. And from there to the end of the tribulation is 1260 days and the book of Revelation speaks of those. But we have 30 days extra here. What are they about? Well, they are about setting up the judgment throne and that sheep and goat judgement.

Now look at verse 12:

12 *"Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.*

Here we have yet another time period mentioned which is 1335 days. Well, the last time period mentioned took us to 1290 days. Here we have an extra 45 days, or 75 days from the end of the tribulation until this new time period begins. And what is significant about it?

Well, I believe it will be the marriage supper of the Lamb. No wonder it says blessed is he who waits until this day! This will begin the most glorious period in man's history before the new heavens and new earth begin. Here I believe, the millennial kingdom will be inaugurated.

Oh what a wonderful time this will be. So we go to verse 13:

13 *"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."*

Daniel has written his last words, but what an incredible book he has left behind for us! And it ends with the marriage supper of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church the bride.

CONCL: So we conclude. We have now looked at three illustrations of the Church in the NT: The church as a body; the Church as a building and this morning, the Church as a bride. It is hard for us, being used to some of these truths, to rejoice to the extent to match the wonder of such great truths. If we could truly grasp the magnitude of such teachings, and believed them we ought to rejoice for a long time.

On our trip my wife and I listened to Joel Rosenberg and he spoke of some unbeliever who talked about how far beyond reason some of these prophetic teachings of the Bible were. I confess that what we had this morning is fantast almost beyond belief. We beheld very briefly the Church age pictured in the betrothal of Christ to the Church. This happened 2,000 years ago. Then we saw this age come to a close and the Church taken up to heaven. That is a story as fantastic as Noah's ark and the flood, but that happened and so will this.

We now stand at the very threshold of when the Lord will take His Church home. May I ask you, does life hold many difficult things for you? Take heart. Do not become bitter. Look up to the Lord. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Let me put those words to you in a new way: Trust in the Lord with all your mind! Soon and very soon we will see the King!