

# 85. The Book of Revelation—19:1-9

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
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At long last we have emerged out of the valley of the shadow of death and destruction called the Tribulation Period.

The Antichrist's capital (Babylon) has been destroyed and his kingdom is in ruins. The six-thousand year dark night of man's rebellion has finally come to an end and the glorious new day of Christ's reign has come in the Revelation narrative—and soon literally on the world scene.

The redeemed have waited for this day for a long time when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever!

That's what we are waiting for—that is our glorious hope!

## Revelation 19:1-9 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> 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!" <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" <sup>5</sup> Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" <sup>6</sup> 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!" <sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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."

This evening, I'd like to spend our time focusing on what has to be, besides the resurrection of Jesus Christ the greatest event in the history of the world—the marriage of Jesus to His Bride the Church.

Next time we'll look at Revelation 19 in its entirety—but for tonight let's look at the marriage of Jesus to His Bride. To fully understand and appreciate what is going on here we need to know something of Jewish wedding/marriage customs.

There were several steps or stages that were involved in the typical Jewish wedding.

## Jewish Wedding/Marriage Customs

First of all, I want you to understand that weddings were a big deal back in first century Israel—a major social event. Most of the weddings back then lasted a week—but if the family was wealthy, it could go on for a couple of weeks.

Again, to fully appreciate the spiritual lessons that we can glean from a Jewish wedding—we need to understand the stages that were involved in the typical Jewish marriage.

### **1. The Shiddukhin**

The very first step in the Jewish marriage process is known as the **Shiddukhin**. The Shiddukhin refers to the father choosing a bride for his son.

Most marriages back then were arranged by the father of the groom—a biblical example of this is found in Genesis 24:1-4. In that passage Abraham begins the process in the Jewish marriage custom by sending his eldest servant Eliezer (his name means “comforter”) to go back to Abraham’s homeland and choose a bride for his son Isaac.

While the father usually had the responsibility of choosing a bride for his son personally—if it was not possible (as in Abraham's case), it was acceptable for the father to delegate this responsibility by designating a representative called a *shadkhan* (a marriage broker or matchmaker) to choose a bride for his son in his place.

Now, after a potential bride was found, the next thing to happen was the **Ketubah**.

### **2. The Ketubah**

Ketubah means “*written*”. The ketubah was back then and still is today in Jewish culture—the “*marriage contract*.”

Before the marriage contract would be signed—the father of the groom would negotiate the dowry also known as the “*bride-price*” with the father of the bride. A portion of the bride-price would go to the bride (kept for her by her father) to be used as security in the event she was widowed or divorced (if he divorced her, it would constitute alimony in advance).

The remainder of the bride-price went to the bride’s father to compensate him for all the money he had spent raising her—which was the difference between raising sons as opposed to raising daughters. First of all, when it came to raising a son, a son would carry on his father’s name—whereas a daughter would take her husband's name.

Also, a son would ‘*repay*’ his father for all the years of ‘room and board’ he had given to his son raising him by staying on his father’s property and working on the family farm or ranch.

His daughter, on the other hand, would get married and leave with her husband to live and work on *his* father’s farm/ranch (including their children). After all, her father had spent a lot of money over the years raising her (food and clothing to name a couple of expenses)—and this dowry would help him ‘*recoup*’ some of these expenditures (‘*losses*’).

After the dowry or 'bride-price' was agreed upon and a down payment was given—a contract would be signed to validate the agreement (covenant).

### 3. The Mikveh

After that the couple, in preparation for the betrothal—would separately immerse themselves in a ritual purification pool known as a '*mikveh*' which signified they were now spiritually pure.

At this point, the next part of the marriage process would take place known as '**eyrusin**'.

### 4. The Eyrusin

The word *eyrusin* means '**betrothal**'—also called *kiddushim* which means to be "*set apart*."

This word really defines the betrothal period—a time when the couple would enter into the marriage covenant saying to the world that they were now separated or set apart from all other potential mates as they entered into the exclusive covenant of marriage with each other.

The couple would stand together under the *Huppah* (canopy)—and publicly exchange vows. This was considered the actual **wedding ceremony**—the joining of the two as one under the covenant of marriage. While under the *Huppah* the couple would exchange objects of value such as rings—and a cup of wine was shared to seal the betrothal vows.

At this point, the couple was considered *legally* married—so much so that if they later decided to brake things off—they would have to get a formal divorce. Or, if one of them should die during the betrothal period the other would be considered a widow or a widower.

During this period, even though the couple was considered legally married—the marriage wasn't consummated, and the couple didn't live together.

### 5. The Preparation of the Bridal Chamber

You see, in Jewish culture, even though the couple was now legally married, they knew they couldn't live together or consummate their marriage—until *he* went to his father's house and prepared a place for them to live known as the **bridal chamber**.

In those days a married couple would live with his parents, on their property—because that's where his inheritance (including and especially the land he would inherit) was located. So, during the betrothal period the man would prepare a place for them to live—and how he would do it was to simply add onto his father's house by making an addition—a *dwelling* place for them to live in.

This meant that for the next year or more he would be gone from her preparing this place for them. The bride also was to keep herself busy during this time in preparation for the wedding day—which among other things included the making of wedding garments for the guests (*see Matthew 22:1-14*).

Of course, she was going to miss him and be troubled he had to leave her—but he would encourage her by telling her, "*I'm going to go and prepare a place for us, but I will be back to get you and then we will never be apart again.*"

This promise was known as the **Matan**. The Matan amounted to a pledge of his love for and commitment to his bride.

Its purpose was to be a reminder to his bride, during their days of separation, of his love for her and that he would be thinking about her everyday they were apart—and that he was making her a solemn promise that he would return to receive her as his wife and they would live in the full covenant of marriage.

But guess what? When he finished the bridal chamber, the tradition was that the man didn't have the right to say, *"I'm finished, I'm going to get my bride"*— Oh no!

That right was reserved for his *father*—who alone had the authority to say when the bridal chamber was officially finished, and his son could go get his bride. This meant the bridegroom couldn't give her a date when he was coming back to get her since— that was a time appointed by his father and no one else—a time only he had the right to determine!

All the bridegroom could say to her was, *"I'm going to prepare a place for you and I don't know the exact day and hour I'll be back to get you because—only my father knows that—it's up to him."*

Now don't you know that these Jewish fathers were kind of rascals with regard to this—the son would get it all done and say to his father, *"Dad, it's done, I'm finished—can I go and get my bride?"*

The father would walk around and say, *"Well, I don't like the way you hung that door...I think you need to put a little more work in over there, it's not quite right after all this is where you're going to be living with your bride..."* "OK, dad, ok!"

So, he'd go around fixing everything making it perfect for his bride!

## **6. The Bridegroom Comes for His Bride**

Now there was a liaison appointed that would keep the bride updated and take messages back and forth between and bride and bridegroom called the *"friend of the bridegroom."* (In our culture the closest we have is the 'best man')

He would keep an eye on the progress of the bridal chamber and send progress reports back to the bride and her bridesmaids on how the work was going. Because of his input and encouragement (*"it won't be long now, stay vigilant and keep watching for his coming"*), the women knew it was going to be any time now—even though they didn't know the exact day and hour the bridegroom would come!

It was the custom of those Jewish fathers to wait until the middle of the night—and then for the father to wake his son and say, *"Son, it's time—go get your bride!"*

Now when the father told his son, *"It's time, go and get her"*—he would quickly round up his closest friends and they would go running through the streets of Jerusalem (or whatever village they lived in) with shouts of joy and excitement!

It was customary for one of the groom's men to go ahead of the bridegroom, leading the way to the bride's house and when he got close enough to shout, *"Behold, the bridegroom comes"*—which would be followed by the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn trumpet).

It was the job of the bridesmaids to be *watching* for the bridegroom's coming.

Again, they were getting progress reports and knew about when he was going to be coming for her—and when it looked like it was getting really close (in the next day or two), they began to hold a “*candlelight vigil*” (actually they used oil burning lamps) until he came.

The bridesmaids made sure their lamps were ready and they had enough oil for them because they knew it was the custom of those Jewish fathers to wait until the middle of the night—so they needed to be ready!

Any bridesmaid that wasn’t ready when the bridegroom came (if she fell asleep or ran out of oil)—she was excluded from the wedding feast and bore the shame of being a social outcast and not one who was worthy to enter in to all the festivities of the wedding feast.

This was considered an important social contract to be asked to be a part of a wedding back then—something the whole town saw as a commitment that had to be taken seriously and not lightly.

Anyone who wasn’t prepared or ‘dropped the ball’ was not worthy to be a part of the celebrations that would come when the bridegroom came for his bride.

This was confirmed to be absolutely true to life by Dr. J. Alexander Findlay as he tells of what he himself saw in Israel—

*“When we were approaching the gates of a Galilean town,” he writes, “I caught a sight of ten maidens gaily clad and playing some kind of musical instrument, as they danced along the road in front of our car. When I asked what they were doing, the dragoman (interpreter) told me that they were going to keep the bride company till her bridegroom arrived. I asked him if there was any chance of seeing the wedding, but he shook his head, saying in effect: ‘It might be tonight, or tomorrow night, or in a fortnight’s time; nobody ever knows for certain.’ Then he went on to explain that one of the great things to do, if you could, at a middle-class wedding in Palestine was to catch the bridal party napping. So the bridegroom comes unexpectedly, and sometimes in the middle of the night; it is true that he is required by public opinion to send a man along the street to shout: ‘Behold! the bridegroom is coming!’ but that may happen at any time; so the bridal party has to be ready to go out into the street at any time to meet him, whenever he chooses to come. ... Other important points are that no one is allowed on the streets after dark without a lighted lamp, and also that, when the bridegroom has once arrived, and the door has been shut, late comers to the ceremony are not admitted.”*

As the bridegroom and his friends came running thru town shouting with joy and sounding the trumpet—they would storm her house and “*snatch*” her away—it was literally an *abduction!!*

## 7. The Nissuin

This led to the final step in the Jewish wedding customs—the ‘**Nissuin**’ which means “*to carry*”. The bridegroom would ‘carry’ her back to his father’s house to the bridal chamber where the best man would stand outside the door while the marriage was consummated.

Why would the best man stand outside the door of the bridal chamber? He would stand outside to wait for word from the groom that the bride was a virgin.

If the bride was indeed a virgin, the wedding celebration would continue for seven days—if she was discovered not to be a virgin, the guests would go home, and the bride would face either divorce or death by stoning (according to Mosaic Law adultery was a capital offense—and under the betrothal period they were considered legally married).

After it was determined that she was a virgin, and the marriage was consummated—he would emerge from the bridal chamber with his bride by his side to the shouts and applause of all who were there—and he would present his bride to his family, friends, and to the whole community!

This would be the first time she would stand beside her husband and be officially presented as his wife!

I have read of a variation of this—that after the marriage was consummated—the bride and groom would remain in the bridal chamber for seven days by themselves while their wedding guests partied without them.

I find that hard to believe—but I'll share what one commentator said about this:

*“Although seven days spent in a room addition connected to the groom’s father’s house while friends and family partied just outside the door may not sound like the ideal honeymoon to us—in the Jewish culture, being waited on for a week was glorious. You see, this would be the only time in their entire lives when the bride and groom would do no labor.*

*During these seven days the bride would be hidden from the guests in the bridal chamber while outside all the guests were feasting and making merry. The groom, on the other hand, would occasionally come out and greet the guests before bringing back food and gifts to his bride.*

*After seven days she would emerge to the shouts and applause of the people and the groom would present his bride to all who were present. This would be the first time she would stand beside her husband and be officially presented as his wife.”*

This seven days of celebration was known as **the marriage feast** or **the wedding supper** and would be the *pinnacle* of this joyful celebration!

It was much more than just a sit-down dinner for all the guests (like our wedding receptions)—it included seven full days of food, music, dance, and celebration.

After this week of celebration at the marriage supper—the groom and his new wife began living together in their new home as husband and wife in the full covenant of marriage.

Now of course all of this parallels the stages of the marriage of Jesus Christ to His Bride the Church.

### Jewish Wedding Customs as Relating to Jesus and His Bride

#### **1. The Shiddukhin**

Remember, this was where the father arranged the marriage of his son by choosing a bride for him.

The Bible says that we have been promised to the Son (chosen to be His Bride) by the Father from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-6).

#### **2. The Ketubah**

This was where the price was settled upon that the bridegroom would pay for his bride—and a written contract was signed, sealing the marriage covenant.

As far as the “bride-price” went, Jesus paid for it Himself when He went to Calvary and gave His life as a ransom—a *dowry* if you will, to purchase His Bride with His own blood.

A mutual contract (covenant) was entered into—

#### **Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee [Greek—“down payment” or “engagement ring”] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

### **3. The Eyrusin (betrothal)**

The **Betrothal** was entered into when we pledged our love and commitment to Jesus at our conversion—and we were betrothed to Him as a spiritual virgin—even as Paul said: “...*For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 11:2)

And right after our commitment to Christ was made official and we were made one with Him—we were then ‘mikvehed’ or **baptized** in water in front of friends and family as the *symbol* of the marriage covenant, we had just entered into with Him.

To celebrate this stage of their relationship the couple would take a cup of wine and they would both drink from it—even as Jesus did with His men the night before the cross:

#### **Luke 22:20**

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

#### **1 Corinthians 11:25 (NLT)**

<sup>25</sup> ...Do this to remember me as often as you drink it.”

### **4. The Preparation of the Bridal Chamber**

Now, after the covenant was entered into—the next thing a young Jewish man would do would be to go to his father’s house and prepare a place for them to live.

His bride would be deeply troubled that he had to leave her—even as we see in the gospel of John:

#### **John 14:1–3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> “Let not your heart be troubled...<sup>2</sup> In My Father’s house are many mansions [“dwelling places”]; ...I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> 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.

This was our Bridegroom’s **Matan** or promise to us as His Bride.

### **5. The Bridegroom Comes for His Bride**

Again, no one knew when the bridegroom would come for his bride, not even the bridegroom himself—only his father:

#### **Matthew 24:36 (NKJV)**

<sup>36</sup> “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

When the father said, “*Son, it’s time to get your bride*”—the bridegroom would quickly come for his bride with his closest friends. They would go running through the streets of Jerusalem or whatever village they lived in blowing trumpets and shouting with excitement—this of course represents the Rapture:

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

At the time of the Rapture, the marriage will be ‘consummated’ in the sense that our oneness with our Bridegroom will be complete and permanent.

During this time, we will be hidden away from the world in heaven—until after the 7-year Tribulation Period comes to an end on earth.

And then our Lord will come back to the earth, with His Bride at His side where He will officially present us to the world as His wife—as we see in Revelation 19:

**Revelation 19:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> 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."

Ready to be presented to the world as His wife at His Second Coming and reign with Him on His throne as His Queen (Revelation 5:10).

When Jesus came to the earth the first time—yes, He came to save us—but save us to be His Bride!

His whole First Coming was about paying the ‘*bride-price*’ on Calvary’s cross. When He ascended back to His Father, He sent back the Holy Spirit, the ‘Comforter’ (remember Eliezar) to gather His Bride from all over the world—from every tribe and tongue and people and nation! (Revelation 5:9)

At His Second Coming He will return with His Bride (at the Rapture He will come for His Bride to snatch her off the earth to meet Him in the clouds) presenting Her to the world as His Wife and She will reign with Him on His throne.

Right now, Jesus is proposing marriage to the people of this world—those who agree will have their sins forgiven (no matter how many or how severe their sins are) and they will reign with Jesus over the whole earth!

However, those who refuse (not just rabid sinners but also very religious people who believe their ‘good works’ will get them into heaven)—will be cast out into the Lake of Fire (hell) forever.

It’s not too late to accept Jesus’ proposal!

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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