

The destruction of Babylon, the false religious system of the False Prophet, is sudden, and it is complete. Interestingly, Babylon is also described as being a *city*; those who lament her destruction (the leaders of the earth) will stand some distance away from her “for the fear of her torment [*basanismos* – torture; *basanos*, the root word, is a metal used to test the purity of silver and gold], saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty [powerful] city!” (Revelation 18:10).¹ As we saw earlier, the woman riding the scarlet beast is “that great city, which reigneth [is holding dominion] over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18).² At the time that John wrote the Revelation, Rome was that city and, although it was then thoroughly pagan, it was not many years hence that it transitioned into the center of a political-religious power that became known as the Roman Catholic Church – it was still pagan but now it sported a Christian façade. Earlier we noted that this powerful Ecumenical system (that *sitteth upon many waters*) has extended her influence over all of the religions of the world (Revelation 17:1), the world leaders have all succumbed to her extravagant influence, and she holds great control over the economy of the world (Revelation 18:3). The Lord’s destruction of this false religious system will come suddenly (Revelation 18:10b), and it will bring the economic collapse of the world (Revelation 18:11). As we have also observed, this false religious system (the *woman*) can be considered to be the bride of Satan.

It is commonly noted that for whatever the Lord has, Satan will undoubtedly have an antithetical double. As Paul likened the physical marriage of husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and His *ekklesia*, he made this observation: “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth [*is nourishing* (present tense)] and cherisheth [*is caring for* (present tense)] it, even as [also] the Lord the church [*ekklesia*]: For we are members of **his body** ...” (Ephesians 5:29-30). The Body of Christ (the *ekklesia*) is also referred to as His eternal kingdom: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting [*aionios* – as pertaining to God, it means eternal, without beginning or ending] kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11).³ Jesus also referred to His followers as a *flock*, and testified that there would be **one** flock made up of Jews and Gentiles with one Shepherd (John 10:16). The writer of Hebrews has assured us that the OT saints would not be made complete until all of the New Covenant saints had joined them (Hebrews 11:40). Christ was in place before the creation of the world to make the payment for the sins of mankind (1 Peter 1:18-20), and, therefore, we understand that His *ekklesia* (made up of all saints from all ages) is an eternal Bride.

¹ Vine’s “torment”; Friberg Lexicon.

² Strong’s Online.

³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Jesus said: “I will build my church [*ekklesia* – called-out ones]” (Matthew 16:18), and He taught His disciples that even though His flock would include more than Israel (John 10:16), that not everyone will qualify to be a part of His *ekklesia* (Matthew 7:21): they have to obey His commands (John 14:15), maintain a living connection to Him (John 15:4), make Him their highest priority (Luke 14:26), and remain faithful to Him unto the very end of their days on earth (Matthew 24:13). Clearly, no one can accidentally become a member of the Lord’s *ekklesia* – it is a deliberate act of faith (having been persuaded that the Lord is the Truth, we are believing; He is our choice) and calls for a strong commitment to remain as part of His Body. Satan also has his following, but there are no standards that have to be met to keep him as your leader; as a matter of fact, he takes particular pleasure in having deluded “Christians” within his fold – anyone who is not walking that narrow Way to life eternal is a member of Satan’s band (Romans 8:1). Jesus said: “He that is not with me is against me ...” (Matthew 12:30), thereby revealing that everyone who does not stand with Him (as noted above) is actually numbered among Satan’s followers – there are no other options open for those who might like a little religion in their lives. Satan loves religion and has duped millions through his many custom-designed religions (many having a “Christian” flavor).

King David established Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel, and it was here that Solomon built the temple of the Lord – a permanent place for His presence. However, as Solomon departed into apostasy during his later years, the Lord told him that when his son took the throne, He would split the nation of Israel and “give one tribe to thy son for David my servant’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake **which I have chosen**” (1 Kings 11:13). Jerusalem was the city where the Lord chose to put His name and where His presence was in the Holy of Holies of the temple, and it was in this inner chamber that atonement was made for the people once each year (Hebrews 9:6-7) – Jerusalem was the center for spiritual cleansing before Jehovah. It seems that Satan has his city as well. In His message to the elder at Pergamos, Jesus spoke of that city as being *where Satan’s seat is* and *where Satan dwelleth* (Revelation 2:13). Even as Jerusalem was known as the city of Jehovah down through the centuries, here was a city that is described as having a strong Satanic presence. The dominant hill within the city boasted three pagan temples, an altar to Zeus (ruler of all gods and called “Father”⁴), and a massive library of human wisdom that fanned out from an impressive 10,000 seat theatre that was carved into the steep hillside.⁵ This was clearly a city that was committed to paganism in many forms.

⁴ <https://www.greekmythology.com/Olympians/Zeus/zeus.html>

⁵ <https://www.visionpubl.com/en/cities/pergamon/theatre-of-pergamon/>

As the writer of Hebrews explains the New Covenant that was established through the death and resurrection of Jesus, he declares in the light of the Old Mosaic Covenant that we no longer come to Mt. Sinai (as Israel of old) but “unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ...” (Hebrews 12:22). Mention is made here of a *heavenly Jerusalem*. Jehovah put His name on the earthly Jerusalem, but we see that that ended with Christ on the cross – the torn veil signaled the end of the temple activities, and the significance of an earthly Jerusalem was gone. Jesus ascended to heaven with a particular work to do: “In my Father’s house are many mansions [places to live; rooms]: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go [am going] to prepare [make ready] a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*” (John 14:2-3).⁶ From this we understand that Jesus ascended to heaven in order to prepare a dwelling place for His *ekklesia*, His Bride.

We come then to the matter of the marriage of the Lamb of God to His Bride, the *ekklesia*; as already mentioned, one of the metaphors that Paul used for this relationship was that of the husband and wife (Ephesians 5:22-32). There is little mention made of this event; as a matter of fact, only Revelation 19:7-9 brings together the words *marriage* and the *Lamb*: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted [*it was given* (passive voice)] that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [expressed righteousness – Romans 8:4 (faithfulness)] of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The setting for these words is heaven, where God is sitting upon His throne, and the words sounded like they came from a *great multitude*, *many waters*, and *mighty thunderings*: a great throng (*multitude*) of people from many nations (*waters* – Revelation 17:15) in the presence of God (*thunderings*). The Lord told Moses that He would descend upon Mt. Sinai in a thick cloud and speak to him in the hearing of the children of Israel (Exodus 19:9), and when He did so, He came with “thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud” (Exodus 19:16); when John was taken in the spirit into heaven, he beheld the throne of God and wrote that “out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices [sounds]” (Revelation 4:5).⁷

This explains that, from the heavenly perspective, the Lamb is ready to be married; He is ready, and the Bride has made preparations for this occasion. What is

⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

⁷ Strong’s Online.

very different about this is that *the Bride* will be made up of the faithful saints of the Lord from the OT, the NT, and from the millennial kingdom; this is not a single person preparing for her marriage, but is a host of people from all ages coming together to be the Bride of Christ. In other words, each member of *the Bride* must make the appropriate preparations (faithful obedience) within their time on earth so that they may be included among those who are the *members of His Body* – “That he [the Lord Jesus] might present it [*her*, His Bride] to himself a glorious church [*ekklesia*], not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish ... For **we are members of his body** ...” (Ephesians 5:27, 30). Within the phrase *his wife hath made herself ready*, as found in Revelation 19:7, the Greek verb (*hetiomazo*, *hath made ready*) is in the active voice, which means that every *member* of His Bride must be both believing and obeying when they finish their time on earth – i.e., they must have remained faithful to the Lord. Jesus said that it is the one who will remain faithful through the trials of life unto the very end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); faithfulness is a life-time commitment to the Lord that must not wane: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – *no faith*, unfaithfulness], in departing [*becoming apostate*] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).⁸

Let’s take a moment to consider two parables that Jesus told that relate to the matter of wedding celebrations. The first is in Matthew 22:2-14 (a very similar parable recorded in Luke 14:16-24 does not include this as being wedding celebrations, it is simply a *great supper* or banquet; a consideration of the more detailed parable in Matthew will cover for the other, as well).

In the parable, a man (a man king: *anthropos basileus*) prepared wedding celebrations (*marriage* – plural) for his son; this is generally accepted as referring to God the Father preparing marriage celebrations for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the *ekklesia* being the Bride.⁹ The King sends His slaves to call those who had been invited to the celebrations to tell them that all was now ready – the time had come; the celebrations were anticipated because many had been advised to prepare for that coming day (v. 3). This also bears a simple application to the Jews; they had received notice of this coming day beginning with each of the Patriarchs (Genesis 12:3), through the prophecies of the OT (Isaiah 7:14), and finally through John the Baptist (John 1:29). However, they (the invited ones) had no desire to come; the religious Jews, who had read the numerous invitations and prophecies of their Scriptures telling of the coming Messiah, refused to accept Jesus as being anything more than

⁸ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁹ Strong’s Online.

the son of Joseph (John 6:42). When it was God's time for the celebrations to begin, some of those who were invited had other things that were of greater priority to them (*made light of*, v. 5), the rest seized [*took*] the King's slaves and either mistreated (*entreated spitefully*) or killed them (v. 6).¹⁰ The King's response was to destroy the murderers and burn their city – a warning concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD and the decimation of the Jerusalem Jews at that time.

The King then told His slaves to go to those who were not initially invited and bid them to come to the celebrations; this is accepted as being the Gospel message going out to the Gentiles (vs. 8-9), and the place of the celebrations was filled. However, Jesus goes on, in this parable, to make it clear that not everyone who accepts the open invitation will be permitted to join in the celebrations; the one who is not properly attired will be cast into *outer darkness* – Hades (v. 11-13).

Let's review this parable to be sure that we understand it correctly. Those who were invited to the celebrations are called to be the Bride of the Son – they are not the joyful observers of someone else's nuptials; they are active participants. The children of Israel are likened to an unfaithful wife of Jehovah (Jeremiah 3:20), but this would refer to the time of betrothal when the man and woman were considered to be husband and wife (and the relationship could only be broken by divorce), even though they had not come together in marriage. The spirits of the OT saints who remained faithful to the Lord, awaited their redemption in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19-26) or paradise (Luke 23:43) – a pleasant place of rest that was separate from where the unrighteous languished. Under the New Covenant, that was established through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, the spirits of those who now remain faithful to the Lord will go to be with Him (Philippians 1:23) to await their day of redemption. However, even after mortal has donned immortality, the relationship of the saints with the Lord remains as His betrothed. A marriage will not take place until the Bride is fully prepared – until all who are faithful to the Lord have passed out of time (those whose names are in the Book of Life when they pass from this earthly scene [Matthew 24:13] or when this earthly scene departs [Revelation 20:11]).

However, the terms of acceptance for the celebrants is carefully laid out for us in God's Word – we do not dictate those terms; they have been formulated by God from eternity past. From Genesis 3:15 came the promise that God would one day defeat Satan through a male Offspring of the woman, and the promises of God throughout the OT continued to refine this promise until it was fulfilled in Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but

¹⁰ Gingrich Lexicon.

by me” (John 14:6) and thereby He limited the pathway to eternal life to Himself – this is the *narrow way* that leads to life and which only a few will find (Matthew 7:14). The selection of saints that the Lord made from eternity past is all who are *in Christ* – this is not a predetermined list of names of those who will be saved, but rather a single name (*Christ*) in Whom everyone must be found in order to be saved. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus ...*” (Romans 8:1); what should be evident to us is that outside of the Lord Jesus there is condemnation. Accordingly, we must realize that being found *in the Lord* is very important and holds eternal consequences. Jesus said that it is the one who is doing the will of the Lord (living in active obedience to His Word) who will find his place in heaven (Matthew 7:21), and so it is not surprising that Jesus clarified: “But he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful even through trials] unto the end, the same [a demonstrative pronoun in the Greek that means *this is the one who*] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).¹¹ It was James who wrote that unless faith yields a life of faithfulness, that faith is dead (James 2:17). Therefore, concerning the Bride of the Lamb, we are told that she is clothed with *fine linen*, which is the *righteousness of saints* (Revelation 19:8); *righteousness (dikaionia)*, as it is used here, speaks of the fulfillment of the righteous requirements of God – i.e., obedience to His commandments, and is another way of identifying the faithfulness of those who are *in Christ*.¹²

What we understand from this is that the Bride is clothed in faithfulness to the Lord; the one whom the King found without a *wedding garment* is someone who thought that they were prepared for the celebrations but their faithfulness to the Lord was missing. Perhaps he had prayed a prayer for salvation and thought that that was all that was required; now he finds that the *wedding garment* of faithfulness was needed. We are assured that if we are *in Christ*, then we have every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3), and that includes the resources required to remain faithful to the Lord – if we so choose. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him* [Christ], that the body of sin **might be** destroyed, that henceforth we **should not** serve sin” (Romans 6:6); “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe [are believing (present tense)] that we shall also live with him: Knowing [having known (perfect tense, what follows is what we come to understand once, when we come to faith in Christ)] that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ... Likewise reckon [be accounting (present tense, imperative mood (it’s a command!))] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive

¹¹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹² Strong’s Online.

unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:8-11).¹³ The Resources that God places within everyone who comes to Him in faith are: 1) His Spirit – “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9); 2) His Ten Commandments – “This *is* the covenant [the New Covenant in Jesus’ shed blood (Luke 22:20)] that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more [the double Greek negative with a subjunctive, aorist verb make this the strongest negative possible]” (Hebrews 10:16-17).¹⁴ We have received the Resources of God to *ground* us in the faith and to guide us through life (Colossians 1:23), yet there is still the possibility that we might become faithless and lose it all (Hebrews 3:12) – that is our choice.

The other parable that Jesus used was that of the ten virgins who went out in anticipation of the arrival of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). As Jesus explained to His disciples the events of the days prior to His kingdom being established on earth, He charged them to *watch*, and He used two different words: *gregoreuo* (Matthew 24:42; 25:13) and *agrupneo* (Luke 21:36).¹⁵ The first (*gregoreuo*) speaks of a commanded, continual moral alertness (it is in the present tense and imperative mood) lest, through becoming inattentive or lazy, we should miss the Lord’s coming; in other words, we must carefully attend to being faithful to the Lord so that we are ready for His coming – this is the word that is used at the end of this parable.¹⁶ The second word (*agrupneo*) means to be awake (a mental alertness), and it is to be combined with petitioning the Lord so that we might be considered worthy (through Him) to escape those things that are about to be coming.¹⁷

We recognize, then, that the culmination of the parable of the ten virgins is that we are to be continually alert as to how we are living so that we can be assured that our lives are pleasing to the Lord. Jesus said, “If ye keep [should attend carefully to; *tereo*, subjunctive mood] my commandments, ye shall abide [will abide; future tense, indicative mood (a statement of fact)] in my love ...” (John 15:10)¹⁸ – if we are to be pleasing to the Lord, then it is understood that we must **choose** to live in obedience to His commands (John 14:15).

¹³ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm.

¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁸ Strong’s Online.

Immediately before this parable, we have the record of Jesus telling His disciples about a slave who had been given responsibilities while his Master was away (Matthew 24:42-51). If that slave performs his duties as prescribed, Jesus says that he will be favored (vs. 46-47), but if he should lose sight of the return of his Master and become inattentive to, or slothful concerning his assignments, his Master will find him thus and he will be destroyed (vs. 50-51). With this as a background, and the warning given at the end of this parable, it is clear that its purpose was to underscore the necessity for those who will be a part of the kingdom of heaven to be living in a state of continual readiness to meet the Lord.

In this parable, Jesus says that the *kingdom of heaven* will be compared to ten virgins who, having taken their lamps, *went forth to meet the bridegroom*. The comparison that is drawn is not between the Lord's *kingdom* and a typical Jewish wedding; such a wedding would have one *virgin* with her attendants going to the bridegroom – therefore, we must be careful not to strain to make it fit the usual wedding scenario. In this case, we have ten who had made themselves ready to be the Bride – they had completed their preparations and they went out in purity to meet the Bridegroom. Although they all went forth in apparent purity, for they are all *virgins*, there was a subtle difference among them: five were prudent (*wise*) and five were stupid (*foolish*).¹⁹ Even though to the outside observer they would all have appeared to be the same, they were not; even though they were all waiting together, there was a difference.

You will recall that early in His ministry, Jesus spoke of a *wise* and a *foolish* builder: the one (*wise*) built his house upon a firm foundation and the other upon sand (Matthew 7:24-27). After construction, the houses may have looked very much alike, yet, when the storm hit, it became very obvious that there was a significant difference. The *wise* builder was the one who heard the Lord's words and set about doing them; the *foolish* heard but did not do. Similarly, the *wise virgins* went out to meet the Bridegroom with additional oil for their lamps because they did not know exactly when He would appear; the *foolish* were sure that they would be just fine, and it was far easier to not carry extra oil.

While the bridegroom tarried, we are told that the ten became drowsy (*slumbered*) and were sleeping (*slept*). *Tarried* (*chronizo* – delaying) is clearly from the perspective of the ten,²⁰ for Jesus explained His coming this way: “But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). There is no delay in the coming of the Son

¹⁹ Gingrich Lexicon.

²⁰ Strong's Online.

because the Father knows exactly when it will take place; the appearance of delaying, or tarrying, is from the perspective of those who are waiting – so, too, for the ten virgins. As they waited, they became drowsy and slept.

With the announcement that the Bridegroom is coming, the ten wake up and begin making sure that their lamps are burning brightly for the occasion. The *foolish* discover that their lamps are going out (*gone out*) and that they will need more oil in order to keep them burning; the *wise* refuse to give them oil lest they should come up short, and so the *foolish* go to the market to buy more. Even though the coming of the Bridegroom has been announced, there is still no surety of precisely when He will make His appearance; all of the signs suggest a soon coming but they still did not know the moment of His arrival.

While the *foolish* are gone, the Bridegroom appears, takes the five *wise* into His dwelling and *the door was shut* (v. 10); it was not just closed, the door was locked and barred – it was closed and secured!²¹ When the *foolish* finally arrive and ask that the door be opened for them, the response of the Bridegroom is: “I know you not” (v. 12); literally, *I have not known you* (*know* is in the perfect tense); i.e., the Bridegroom has never known the five *foolish virgins*.²²

As we have already noted, *watch* (v. 13) means to be living in keeping with the Lord’s requirements for us – remaining faithful to His commands through all things. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus said: “Many will say to me in that day [the day of reckoning], Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you** [*I have never come to know you*]: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).²³ The rejected ones have *prophesied*, *cast out devils* and performed miracles [*wonderful works*] in the name of the Lord, yet Jesus says that He has never known them; to the outside observer they may well have appeared to be righteous, yet they were simply deceived into believing that they were prepared to dwell with the Lord. Millions today cling to the false doctrines of *eternal security* and *the perseverance of the saints* as their assurance that they are ready for the kingdom of heaven – not all who appear to be righteous are wise. The warning that Jesus gave to His disciples is for us as well: because we do not know the moment of the Lord’s return, we must live faithfully in accordance with His requirements. The one who will remain faithful to the Lord all through the trials of

²¹ Friberg Lexicon.

²² Strong’s Online.

²³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

life, this is the one whom the Lord will save and, because of His name, we can expect to be hated by all (Mark 13:13) – a life that is pleasing to the Lord will not be easy!

Now we must think through the timing of the marriage; obviously, it will not occur before the Bride is complete. It is commonly held that the marriage will take place right after the rapture, but is this correct? Let's consider this for a moment.

As John opened his writing of the Revelation, he penned: “Unto him [the Lord Jesus Christ] that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5b-6). If we are among those who have been washed from their sins in the blood of the Lord, then we have been made *kings and priests* unto God. Keep in mind that it is the one who remains faithful to the Lord Jesus unto the very end of their time on earth who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); therefore, these same faithful ones are those whom John identifies as being *kings and priests* unto God. A king's role is to govern, or rule, over his dominion, and a priest is a mediator between the people and God (in this case); those who are included in the *first resurrection* (which we have seen includes both the wave offering [OT saints] and the full harvest [NT saints] – the *rapture*, as it is commonly called) will be “priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). It is evident from this that those who are with the Lord when He establishes His millennial kingdom, will *reign with Him*, but they will also fill the role of *priests* to God. Therefore, during the Millennium, these saints of the Lord (now in their glorified bodies) will be priests to those who are born during the time of Jesus' reign upon the earth. As the priests of the Lord, they will present what He has done to redeem mankind out of sin and provide those who are born during the Millennium (who will also bear the sin nature of Adam) with the opportunity to place their faith in the Lord and live faithfully for Him during their time on earth. When Satan is released from his millennial prison in the abyss, he goes into the world and gathers together a host without number who then surround the dwelling place of these saints – Jerusalem, the center of the Lord Jesus' reign over the earth (Revelation 20:9). God's judgment falls upon this host, Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, and the old heaven and earth vanish (Revelation 20:10-11).

Suffice it to say that there will be saints of the Lord who come out of His millennial kingdom, and these saints have lived faithfully for the Lord Who died to pay for their sins – they are a part of His *ekklesia*, His Bride. With the vanishing of the old heaven and earth, all of those who were alive at the time of its disappearance will die and stand before God Who is on His great white throne of judgment, along with all of the unrighteous from all of the ages (Revelation 20:12-13). Notice that

the books containing the records of the works of the dead are opened **and** the Book of Life; as the unrighteous dead stand before the Lord, their works will be sufficient to condemn them but the Lord will also check the Book of Life as the final point of judgment (Revelation 20:15). However, among those standing before God at this time are the millennial saints and, as the Book of Life is consulted, their names will be found, they will be given glorified bodies and enter into the glory of God's presence that the other saints of the Lord are already enjoying. At the end of this judgment, the Body of Christ, the faithful saints from all ages, will be complete; indeed, each member of His Body will have made acceptable preparations for marriage to the Lamb of God – the *fine linen*, with which they will be clothed, is *the righteousness* (faithfulness) *of the saints* (Revelation 19:8).

As John is led by the angel to behold the Bride of the Lamb, he observes the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven onto the new earth (Revelation 21:9-10). We are then given a lengthy description of this amazing city, but it is not the Bride; finally he declares that God and the Lamb are dwelling in this city, and the multitudes (*nations*), whose names are in the Book of Life, have the freedom to access the city and walk in the light of God for eternity (Revelation 21:24-27) – the Bride, made up of the saints from all of the ages, is with the Bridegroom forever. The *marriage supper* of the Lamb may well be nothing more than heavenly fruit from the tree of life and refreshing water from the river of life; the greatest celebration will be that the Lord is abiding with His own! “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life ... And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:14a, 17c). Faithful obedience to the Lord is central to enjoying the blessings of eternal glory with Him one day as a member of His holy, spotless Bride (Ephesians 5:27).