

Revelation 19 (2 of 5)

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the consequences of rejecting Him.

Duration: 1:03:45

Scripture: Revelation 19:7

Topics: "Revelation", "Spiritual Readiness", "Marriage Supper of the Lamb"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the significance of the marriage supper of the Lamb, urging believers to rejoice in the hope of this divine union. He reflects on the indescribable nature of this event and the importance of being prepared, as the bride must make herself ready. Ravenhill warns against the distractions of worldly concerns that can lead to rejection of God's invitation to the feast, highlighting that true preparation involves a personal commitment to holiness and righteousness. He stresses that the invitation is open to all, regardless of social status, and that rejecting it is a grave mistake. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper understanding of the eternal implications of our choices regarding faith and salvation.

Transcript

Glad and rejoice and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Let us be glad. It doesn't say let them be glad, but even in this very hour in which we live, we ought to be glad, because at least we're heading, and at least I trust all of us are, heading for the marriage.

You know, it seems to me that it's very significant here that neither the the names or the numbers of the guests invited to this wedding are mentioned here. No names, no numbers, just a statement. Give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come.

Now I'm not going to attempt to describe this, because nobody ever did. No one ever will, because to try to describe the marriage supper of the Lamb is putting a strain on all language. If you were able to switch from one language to the other, there is no way of describing the indescribable, any more than you can fathom the infathomable.

I think of the colored man who said one day, I've got such a text, I'm going to unscrew, the unscrew, inscrutable. Well, you can't even do that. This is beyond definition.

It is certainly beyond description. Let us rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. And his wife has made herself ready.

Now this presupposes something that I only discovered actually this morning. You know well enough that this person here described is the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. He has more titles than I can remember.

He is the King of Kings. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

He is the Bright and Morning Star. He is the Son of Righteousness. He is the Heavenly Bridegroom.

He is the First and the Last. He is described as a Lamb and a Lion. He's the Lamb of God.

He's the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is a Lamb because he is of course the King of Meekness, and he is described as a Lion because of his Majesty. Now a King like that is going to have a wedding.

He's going to have a marriage, and since he is the King of Kings, he's going to have the Bride of all Brides. It's going to be the Marriage Supper of all Marriage Suppers. And the man who had nowhere to lay his head at this time will have inherited the whole earth.

And the Word of God says that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. I think it is essential as we sang in that lovely hymn, and I certainly like that majestic hymn that we sang just a few minutes ago. Lo, he comes with clouds descending.

Now remember this, of course you know this, that no portion of the Bible is invalid. And yet it seems to me that when Jesus makes testament in himself, there's always an added luster to it. Remember how the Apostle Paul talks about the the many manifestations of the revelation of Jesus in his resurrection.

He was seen of five hundred brethren at once. He was seen of some going down a certain road. And then he says last of all he was seen of me also.

Now that's, that's a marvellous pyramid of truth. And then the capstone of it all is in the book of the Revelation where he says, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I'm alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hell. Well, if you weren't Quakers you'd have said hallelujah, but I'll excuse you.

Maybe you're quaking on the inside. That's all right. But isn't that a superb word that he gives us there? I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I'm alive forevermore.

So that speaks of eternal life, and he has the keys of death and of hell. Some people think an old bachelor in Rome has them. He says he has the keys of the kingdom, but he's a liar anyhow.

Jesus has the keys. And he's not going to surrender them anytime, anywhere, to anybody. But remember the background of this whole book.

In the first chapter of the Revelation it says in verse four, John to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto and peace from him. Notice the way that this is described, not which was, but rather in the present tense from he which is, and which was, and which is to come. Now surely we would have said he who was, and he who is, and he who is to come.

But here you've got it straight. He is the Christ who is. He is the eternal I am.

It is repeated again in the eighth verse. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come. Now keep this in your mind.

Will you remember that whoever wins the election on Tuesday, either of them are leading us down the road to world government. Mr. Ford said last night, you are the people who decide. Now he's lying, he knows.

He doesn't even decide. It's the insiders who decide, who decide what's going in America. That the president has no voice except to say yes and no, like the King of England, Queen of England.

The insiders are the authority, not the president. Now keep this as a background. Behold he cometh with clouds.

Now he won't not be wonderful. He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and also they which pierced him, and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of him. Now that is the constant background of the book of the Revelation.

It doesn't matter how puzzling it seems. It doesn't matter whether you're on a bloody battlefield like the battle of Armageddon or in some other sphere. Remember the background is that he is alive forevermore.

He has the keys of the kingdom, and that he's coming and every eye shall see him. Now don't think it means everybody living just now. It means everybody from Adam till the last person born, the final resurrection, the whole multitude which no man can number, like the stars of heaven for multitude, and like the sands of the seashore that you can't count.

Every eye shall see him. They didn't all get healed when Jesus was around, in case you don't know. If I'd have been like Jesus, I'd have gone and healed the whole bunch.

He went one day to a gathering of paralytics, and blind, and lame, and all the other bunch, and he healed one and walked away. We couldn't have done that, we'd have wanted a show. We'd have wanted a crowd to chase after us.

But you know one day every eye, it doesn't matter which fanny Crosby whose eyes were never opened, as long as she lived, it won't make any difference. One day every eye shall be open, the eyes of the blind shall be open, the ears of the deaf and stop, the lame will leap as a heart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. So I'll listen for you.

The tongue of the dumb are going to sing that day. All right, I'll watch you very closely. Keep my eye right on the lady singing in the middle there.

All right, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. Now I say again, remember this presupposes something. You see there are other weddings in the 22nd chapter of Matthew, there's a wedding.

In the 14th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, there's a wedding. Now again, no number is given here. I don't know who's going to be at the wedding.

And at least I don't know who the bride is. Well, I'll be generous and honest and tell you, I don't know who's going to the wedding even. Nobody's numbered, nobody's named, it just says there's going to be a fantastic marriage one day.

How long did you prepare for your wedding? Oh, I know some of you girls since you were six years old, but I mean, your parents, how long? Oh, she's going to get married, now let's put this away, let's save this, let's do the other. The mother lives for that day, the bride lives for that day. Do you know God has been picking people from the beginning of the world for this marriage? Isn't it great you can't buy a ticket? Isn't it great that God isn't going to choose us by our social standing, or intellectual standing, or theological knowledge? You see, do you remember that there's a feast made, it's called a supper.

And this man made a very elaborate spread. And he sent for people to come and, and eat at his feast, and what did they do? He said there was a certain man made a great feast, or a great supper, and he told many people to come. He sent his servants out at supper time saying, come for all things are now ready.

And they all with one accord began to make excuse. Boy, that sounds like today. Ask somebody in that, talk to somebody about Jesus, they'd more interest in the corn plaster.

Ask them to come to the house of God, where God furnishes a table, they're more interested in going to McDonald's. Ask them to get excited about the fact that one day he's going to put the key in every grave, and it matters not whether he's a Caesar, or a prostitute, or a bishop, or a bricklayer, that one day every grave is going to, because he has the keys of death and hell. And they couldn't get excited if you, if you put a firecracker under them.

But if somebody gets a touchdown, the cotton ball will rock with one side to the other with a thousand, oh, oh, oh, oh, I missed it, oh, oh, oh, I thought we'd have done it. Man, they sweat, they, they don't need to take something, you know, they don't need to go dieting, or they need to go football match, they can lose twenty pounds some of those guys, they sweat and fuss and carry on. You ask them to get excited about somebody being redeemed, and they say, so what, somebody got saved.

Well you can hardly blame them, and we don't get too excited about it anyhow, can you? Isn't it something that, that here is a man, he makes a very elaborate feast, and somebody says, hey come, the feast is ready, and he says, you know what, I'd like to come, but frankly, I bought a piece of ground, and it's the only chance I have to go see it. Well he was of the authority, at any rate, wasn't he? He bought a piece of ground. Say, the feast's ready, and here's your ticket.

No, I bought ten oxen, and I'm going to try them, that's buying a pig in a bag. Did you ever buy cattle you hadn't seen? He made a bid on the oxen, and he hadn't even seen the third man, I can understand him a He said he'd married a wife, and she wouldn't let him go. She wasn't in subjection, all right.

And she, he'd married a wife, and she said, you can't go. Now that doesn't mean very much, does it? It doesn't seem very much, except when you realize, that they not only rejected the host, they rejected the cast. The banquet is ready, the feast is spread.

No, no, of course I, I know I'll have to eat. Oh my, I wonder how fat you would be, pardon me. I wonder how overweight you would be, if you ate as much of the Bible as you eat of food.

Man, we can go days without reading the Bible, but we can't go long without food. What a bless, oh, it was another beatitude, blessed is the man who invented McDonald's. I mean, you know, when you're down the road, you can always slip in there, and if you can't get in there, you can get a Whopper a bit further down the road, and if you miss that, you can get a taco or something.

What a blessing, there's so much food, eh? We really dig our graves with our teeth, don't we? This man is going to eat all right, but you see, he's going to put it off. This man isn't going to be looking at cattle all his life, but it's, there's something more important just now than eating, I've got to go test those cattle. Well, apply it to the spiritual realm.

Again I say, he's not just rejecting the invitation. This man says, do those stupid people know what I paid for this? I didn't even have enough money, and so I went and borrowed money, and I spent it, and this is the gratitude you get for it. And so he said, listen, let me tell you this, not one person that I invited is coming to the feast, not one, not one of them.

Go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in. Now some people interpret this as the fact that of course, the select people of God were the Jews, and you remember what they did, they wouldn't accept the prophets. They stoned them.

God made the last effort, and he sent his only begotten son, and they said, this is the heir, come let's kill him. If we kill this one, you know, the old Pharaoh isn't going to bother with us anymore. And remember when those poor stupid people in Jerusalem thought that they'd rejected the Son of God, and he turned round and said, just a minute, just a minute, I want to tell you something, you haven't rejected me, I've rejected you.

Your house is left desolate. For 2,000 years the Jews have been kicked around the world, and nobody's bothered too much whether they were liquidated in Buchenwald and Dachau and elsewhere. They've suffered an awful lot for their rejection.

The 2,000 year bill that they've been paying, and the end is not yet, they're still going to get rejected. I think they'll still get kicked out of Israel once more before they stay there finally. And then the awful awesome battle of Armageddon, which isn't too far off as you read this book.

But all right, the man has made a feast and they reject it. They don't want to eat, they don't want to drink, they don't want to be married, they don't want to sing. I've got a lot of material things on hand, I must go see that piece of land.

I must go try that oxen. I mustn't hurt the feelings of my wife in this situation. And the Lord says, get out, the whole bunch of you.

You haven't offered one reason, only excuses. Now by the same token, how do you think God feels when men and women reject his redemption? See the Saviour long expected, now in solemn pomp of prayer. And these saints, by men rejected.

Could you see them popping out of the graves? Can you see a man saying, burn this hand first because I signed my recantation with this? Can you see him turning to Wrigley as Latimer and Wrigley are burned to death at the stake in England and say, cheer up master, this is very short, remember eternity is very long. All these saints are coming marching in one day. Why? Because they went to the banquet God prepared.

He'd given the law, he'd given the prophets, he'd given his only son and Israel rejected it, all the Jews rejected it. And so he brought in the Gentiles. And he's been spreading that feast ever since.

You see, if you reject Jesus Christ as he comes knocking at the door of your heart, remember this, you're not rejecting just the raw knocking of that door. Remember this, you're rejecting all the years of

preparation God made. You're rejecting a cancelled chamber in eternity before he put the stars together and before the trees of the fields clapped their hands.

Before the world was framed somewhere in eternity, there was a council meeting. And the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost said, let us make man. And at some point in that amazing hidden mystery, Jesus offered to be the propitiation for our sins.

And the man who rejects, rejects the sufferings of Christ. You reject all the teaching, the New Testament as well as the Son of God, but if you reject him, you reject his teaching. You reject not only his teaching, you, you, you reject, shall I say, his torment in the garden of Gethsemane and, and in the agony of the cross.

You reject his triumph because he rose again from the dead. You, you, you reject his promises, for after all, let's, let's think about this for a moment. The fact here, that the Christ here who is spoken of as the King of kings and lord, will you remember this? Look, the Son of God is going to terminate all history.

He's the fulfillment of all prophecy. He is the ruler of all eternity. Then why in God's name do you reject him? Hey, supposing Pontius Pilate could sit on that seat where you are this afternoon, what do you think he'd do? Supposing Caiaphas could rise from the dead and sit on that hard seat you're on, do you think I'd have to beg him twice to yield his life to Jesus Christ? Do you think I, if I could go to Judas and see him itching there, as he threw down that money and said, surely, surely I've shed innocent blood.

Or the Roman soldier that said, this is the Son of God. Do you know that seat that you're sitting in this afternoon is worth a million dollars times a million dollars? And more than that, you're right brother Herb, glad you woke up, I spoke up. Worth more than a million, million dollars.

Man, if old father Rockefeller, brawny old Rockefeller went to his grave at 95, if he could sit where you sit, he'd give it him down the other end to, to get redemption this afternoon. There isn't a man who hit it, as we say with success, whether he's a footballer or an inventor or a genius or some other kind. You can talk about Beethoven and Chopin and Mendelssohn and the whole rest of them.

And man, I wouldn't have mentioned half of what I mentioned this afternoon, they'd have been running to this altar weeping and wailing and saying, let me find him, let me know him unto know his life eternal. As I say, you can blame the modern preachers for a lot of things, but they've done one thing no other race of preachers ever done. They've managed to make Christianity dull.

Are professors poor, dead, dumb creatures they are? I'd be preaching to a whole bunch of them before long, all PhDs, you know they don't worry me a hill of beans. I don't care a hill of beans. If they're professors and they've gold medals as big as frying pans, they wouldn't worry me.

If God gives me a message, they maybe need it more than anybody, even a student sitting behind them. Man, the most electrifying thing in the world is the fact, that you and I, as we sing so often, I know in whom I have believed and I'm persuaded he is able to keep that which is not amazing, he's keeping that that you committed to him. It wasn't a million dollars, it was your eternal soul.

And do you know what? He's committed himself that he'll keep you in that great day of judgment when you stand before him. It doesn't matter if your records are mile long. You remember one of those days when Martin Luther had the depression, he was sitting in his cell, and he said the devil came in.

And he started writing on the wall. And he wrote, all my sins, I'd forgotten them. Sins of the flesh, sins of the spirit, sins of youth, sins of manhood.

And he wrote round the other wall, and he wrote round, and he went on, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote. He covered the walls, he covered the ceiling. He'd almost filled the whole place with all my sins, and he stopped.

And he said, I said to him, well Lucifer, why did you quit writing? Oh, he said, Mr. Luther, I, I, I, I couldn't dredge up any more sins you ever committed. Well, then he said, keep writing. I told him there's nothing to write, there's just one thing to write.

What is that? He said, write over all of them, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth us from all sin. There is no record. I know in whom I have belief.

And we're inviting people that they can escape condemnation, they can escape hell, they can escape all the final judgments of God for sin, and yet they say, no, no, no, no, no. Do you remember, like Felix, he said, some more convenient day. Almost persuaded.

I'm almost persuaded that you see, I may be promoted in the Roman Empire. You, you see there's so much hanging on this. If I step out of this sphere into this, I, I, I step out of splendor and, and, and all the success of life.

And I follow a man that you say died and rose again. It's incredible you even ask me. It's an insult to my intelligence.

And he says, wait a minute, sir, you belong to a kingdom that perishes and he has an everlasting kingdom. Your Caesar will die, but Christ will never die. There'll come a time when the Roman Empire is dissolved, but his kingdom never fails.

He rules over earth and he rules over hell. Almost persuaded now to believe. Almost persuaded Christ to receive.

Seems now some soul to say, go spirit, go thy way. Some more convenient day. Oh, you're too smart to go to hell.

You've made up your mind. You're going to get saved. You're going to, you're going to gamble.

You're going to get saved at 11 o'clock. You're going to, you're going to be like the dying thief. He got saved in the 11th hour.

I've got news for you. You'll die at half past 10. You think you're going to keep an eternal God waiting, knocking at the door of your heart? No, sir.

I pray thee have me excused. Why? Why don't you want to be saved? Come on, give me an intelligent answer. Why don't you want to be saved if you're not saved? You can't offer me one valid reason.

You might offer me 10 excuses. You can't offer me one sensible reason for rejecting the son of God. Not one.

Why do you reject? Well, do you remember what Pilate said? When he said, well, they said, we don't want this man. Pilate gave a very interesting answer there. And I've never heard anybody preaching it that I remember.

He said, but ye have a custom. I thought of it when Bobby chose that hymn today. Customs of life.

Fashions of life. Pleasures of life. They cheat us.

Amen. Good. Are you saved? When? You're back for it.

All right. Well, let's, we'll pray with you at the end of the meeting. Jesus, he's, Pilate says, ye have a custom.

What's a custom? I mean, you have a custom in the house, don't you? You say grace. Do you say it in the restaurant? Lady nods her head. Thank you.

It's convenient to wear glasses when in a restaurant. Notice how many people take their glasses off and do this just before dinner? Tell you of my friend who was out with a very famous man. You all know his name.

He wrote one of the great modern songs. He was in a restaurant in California. They sat down for this 10 or 15 dollar lunch.

And this very famous man just whipped off his glasses, wiped his eyes, started eating. My friend's friend said, hey, just a minute. I said it.

Well, didn't you see me just now? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a bluff. You wanted, you wanted people to think you're wiping your eyes.

Well, then he said, you say grace. All right, Jesus. All right.

So he took out his handkerchief and spread it on the floor in this fashionable restaurant. And he said, Heavenly Father. Shut up, shut up.

Shut up. Huh? Oh, you say, well, but don't embarrass me. I mean, you know, like whisper it.

Let's be very careful of it. I mean, it's an awful thing to say thank you, Lord. You know, it's disgraceful to offer a petition in a place where, I don't know, they might be drinking liquor at the next table or smoking.

And you say, well, and then you whisper it very slowly. It'd be nice if we stood up in some fashionable restaurant one day and said, just a minute. Let's everybody sing praise God from whom all blessings flow.

You might get thrown out, but it would be nice anyhow. Why aren't you a Christian? Because of a custom. Some, some, some habit that binds you, which is accepted with other people.

And yet it's that one thing that keeps you from the Son of God. Because of conscience. Do you remember in the, is it in the Holy War? I hope you're all reading Bunyan to your children.

If you aren't, you should be. And after that, read the Holy War after you've read Pilgrim's Progress. He calls the heart of man, the town of Mansoul.

He says it's under the, under the dominion of Diabolus, which is a, which is not the name for the devil. And he says there are times when Mr. Conscience gets so troubled that, that he begins to scream out, in terror. And when he does, he says, then Mr. Diabolus wants to, wants to gag him.

And put him down in a dark room. And keep him from crying out. But he has an awful job to do it.

He calls, Bunyan calls Conscience, he gives names to everything, doesn't he? Mr. Two-Face. That's for church members. And then he has another one he calls Mr. Recorder Conscience.

You know, Conscience, Conscience, Conscience. You try and dull it. You try and take the edge off it.

You get it to the place it doesn't trouble you as much as it did. You know, you can steal a penny, it doesn't trouble you. And then you steal a little more, and before long you're an expert thief.

You tell a little lie and cover it with a big one, and before long you're an expert liar. Conscience has been drowned. And yet I want to tell you something.

Your conscience will be the most alive part of you, if you should go to an everlasting hell. You know that? Why did a man in perdition cry out? Good, okay, hold your peace for a minute. Let's pray with the after.

But listen, what made conscience, what made a man cry out? Conscience did it. What made Ahab say, has thou found me, O mine enemy? Conscience did it. That little inward monitor in the soul of a man.

And you've got to struggle a long while with that. You know, we think a man commits suicide when he swings on the end of a rope or shoots himself. Do you know that a people commit spiritual suicide in nearly every meeting where God the Holy Ghost is? God has an obligation to come to you another day after this afternoon, not once.

He offered these people a seat at the banquet. They rejected it. He says, see this, bar the door.

Don't let one of them ever come in again. We say sometimes, well, some more convenient day. Do you know what the word of God says? Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

I'll tell you this, some men die in agony trying to find God, and God walks out and leaves them in hell before they get there. He has an obligation. Oh in mercy, he does come again and again to many.

But by the same token, he's an obligation to come. No, I can't come because I've married a wife. I can't come because I have some territory that I've bought.

I can't come because I have some yoke of oxen and so forth and so on. Until a man has made his peace with God, until he's been to that feast, which a hymn writer calls the feast of love. Until he's come as a sinner, broken, confessing he is a sinner, he can't go to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

He must first come to the supper which is open for sinners. And isn't it wonderful, when the select wouldn't come, the good master says, well do you know what? You don't think I'm going to waste a feast like this? Go after the harlots, go after the drunks, go after the lame. Go after everybody that will come and bring them in and tell them the feast is free.

Well if it hadn't have been, you wouldn't have got there, so cheer up. If you needed a sum of money, if you needed social standing, if you needed intellectual qualifications, you may have been as far off as I was, or

would be. But he says come and whosoever will, boy that's a big word.

When we were children we used to try and find the longest word in the dictionary. You play at that, you're more sophisticated. One lady must be as old as me, she isn't but she's not.

All right, do you know the longest word we found was anti-disestablishment-arianism. That's quite a word. We used to pick a lot of, that's not the longest word.

The longest word is whosoever, and wheresoever, and whatsoever. I like Paul's word in the second of Corinthians verse, well 2 Corinthians 5 17, where he puts a great big sign over the door. You see the Jews thought they had a monopoly of God, and that's why they got Jesus, they got mad with Jesus.

Jesus says whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely. And the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 17, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Whosoever, wheresoever, and whatsoever.

If any man be in Christ, not some men, any men be in Christ, be a new creation. All things are passed away, and all things have become new. Well then, having been to that wedding, and remember if you go to the 22nd chapter of Matthew, there's a wedding there, and somehow some man slipped in without a wedding garment.

Get out! And then preceding that story of the of the supper in the 14th of Luke there, it reminds us that when you go to a feast, it says take the lowest place. Did you ever go to a banquet and see how near you were to the head table? Oh I've seen people do that. Say, wait, did you happen, would you slip up there, and would you see if we're on the first table or the second table? And he says, sir you're on the end table.

The end table? Yes, there's another Williams, but I'm Mr. B.J. Williams, not Mr. J.B. Williams. Have you got it straight? And he goes and says, yes, Mr. J.B. Williams is up on the on the table of honor, Mr. B.J. Oh my, that's terrible. A man got there, do you know when we get there, all our self-esteem will be blown to smithereens.

No sirree, if you and I don't have a wedding garment, you may know all the theology in the world, and you know it may Bible texts, you may know them backwards way, and you may have prayed the church organ, not here, but somewhere else. And, but you won't get in because of that, you see. The only one that gets in is the one that has a wedding garment.

And that's the garment which is given to us, a garment of righteousness, which will match the crown of righteousness, Paul speaks of, which he says the Lord is going to give us in that last day. Now, what I'm interested in this afternoon, is to go back to the second chapter, or is it the third, it's the third I guess. He's talking to which church here, Philadelphia, let me go further, the last church.

Verse 14, unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, thou art neither hot nor cold, so then because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee, I'll vomit thee out of my mouth. Now notice this is to the churches, not to the sinners too.

Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and of need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me goat. Now this is to a church, will you remember this? This is the last church. The other church is, the church at

Ephesus.

We say so often, well the church at Ephesus had lost her first love. No she had not, no she had not. That's not what the Bible says.

The Bible says the church at Ephesus left her first love. She didn't lose it, she left it. She made up her mind to go second class spirituality.

She found another love, as well as a love for God. But when you come to the Laodicean church, it's the seventh, it's the last church. This is the Laodicean age in which we're living.

There is not a word of compliment to the church at Laodicea. Not compliment, complaint. Complaint.

Oh she doesn't say that. She lives in Laodicea. There were three things that made Laodicea rich.

One, they had the greatest gold exchange in the world. Two, they made the most beautiful clothes in the world. And three, they had something that they ground to a powder and it made ice of.

Do you see the irony of this? This church is starting and listen to what she says. I'm rich. I'm increased in goods.

I've need of nothing. Now that was a definition of herself. You see she got so lost in the materialism round about her.

Instead of the church affecting the world, the world had come into the church like it has today. It's materialistic, it's worldly. Because it doesn't have the joy of the Lord, you've got to have clowns and all the other trimmings and concerts in the house of God.

In God's name, let's be honest, the word of God says in my presence is fullness and joy. I don't think it means you're excited and you have a smile from ear to ear. There are times when I think the sanctuary should be filled with groans and sobs and sorrows.

We sang this afternoon one of the greatest hymns, Man of Sorrows, what a name. I can't get too thrilled about that in the sense of feeling joyful. I feel the awesomeness.

He was a man of sorrows. Why? That I might have joy. He was an outcast and I might be brought in.

He was poor but I might be rich. And this church says you see we live in Laodicea. It happens to be the gold capital of the world.

And we want you to know we don't take any offerings in our church because we've so many millionaires support us. We're rich and increased in goods. And we have need of nothing.

You know I can't get over a picture I got in prayer one day about that church. The church is always described in the New Testament as a woman, not as a man, as a woman because she should bring to birth. And she says to herself, well I'll tell you what I'm the last of the churches and I'll tell you something else I'm the greatest.

And there's never been a church as great. You should see my people come to church. Man they wear the finest clothes.

Nobody puts silver or copper in the offering. Everybody puts in gold. And my people, oh my people they have wonderful eyesight.

You see we have the secret. We wash our eyes like some of you put stuff in. They had anointment that was famous throughout the world.

In case you've forgotten they didn't have eye shaves to go down the dusty roads. The sun burned their eyes and when they rested at the end of the day they washed their feet or sometimes first they washed their eyes with ice salt. So this church says we're rich.

So here she paints a picture of herself as a woman. Can you see her hair? Wavy and beautiful. Can you see her eyes? Can you see her teeth? Can you see her neck? The scripture says her eyes are blue like the pools of Heshbon.

Her teeth are like sheep that have come up from the washing. Her neck is like a pillar of marble. Her cheeks are round and lovely.

Her eyes are blue like the pools of Heshbon. And she says there, there, there, there. As long as time endures people are going to say I wish I'd lived in the days when the church of Laodicea.

Oh she is the essence of perfection. She is so beautiful. She's so lovely.

And just as she's self-satisfied I say hold it lady a minute. Sit down. Let me pull this cord.

There's a picture of who? Of you. Of me. That's a picture of me.

That's a picture of you as you see yourself. Wait a minute. Sit down or you may fall down.

And I pull the cord and she sees not that gorgeous young woman that looks at 25 or 30 in the flush of life with rosy cheeks and flashing eyes and lovely teeth and a face that would startle angels. She sees a decrepit old hag whose head is bald and her teeth are decayed and her skin, her cheeks are in and her eyes are bloodshot. And it says underneath, what does she say? I'm rich and increased in goods.

I've need of nothing. And God says of the first same person, thou art naked and wretched and blind and poor and miserable. The same person seen from two angles.

One as she made a self-portrait, the other as God saw her. And therefore God says to this church, I counsel thee to buy of me. Buy what? You say you can't buy anything from God.

Well argue with God. I didn't write this. You can buy from Him.

But I'll tell you what stopped you from buying those very things. In that hymn we sang this afternoon, too many people come and want to fellowship with you and cheat you from having fellowship with the Father. You can't make fellowship with one another as such as you do for fellowship with Him.

You want to put some outward adornment or sacrifice a little more and give, look you can give a million dollars to missions tomorrow and not make God glad. If it's you that he's not getting, it's you that he wants. And he says I counsel thee to buy of me.

Buy what? Gold? No, no, no. Gold tried in the fire. Gold that's pure and it won't tarnish.

Be very sure that your gold is in order. And gold is a type of worship in the scriptures. That you worship Him without wanting anything out of Him.

You worship Him because He's God, because He's holy, because He's infinite and eternal. And you fall down in speechless adoration and meditation and concentration and adoration. Why I've seen people in heathen temples spend more time worshiping God than we spend.

I've seen people going to altars in the east with offerings they couldn't afford and shedding their tears and muttering their prayers. And before they got far away turning round to see if that God had stooped down, no somebody behind switches the plate away. And they thought mysteriously it went to heaven or somewhere.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold. Don't get too busy about investments down in Laodicea. Get the right kind of gold.

I counsel thee to buy raiment. No, no he doesn't say that. You see in Laodicea they had sheep.

A very unique type of sheep because their wool was just about as black as black could be. And it was as glossy as glossiness could make it. And people from the ends of the world wanted a rug or they wanted a garment.

For when they wove that wool it shone as though you'd sprayed it with something. It was radiant. And everybody coveted a garment that was made of that black wonderful wool.

Jesus changes that. And he says I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment. You've got enough blackness in you without adding to it.

I counsel thee to buy white raiment. And there is only one way to be white and that is to be washed white in the blood of the Lamb. David must know a bit about science.

He says wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Do you know in every snowflake there's one little infinitesimal spot of dirt? There has never been a snowflake fall to earth that isn't contaminated before it reaches the earth. And David says wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. And so Jesus says here I counsel thee to buy of me gold that's been tried in the fire. I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment.

I counsel thee to buy hyssop. You can't see this world never mind eternity friend. I may as well talk to a blind man.

I go to the end of my my little office there. Some night's night I shout Martha come look. And she knows why I say come a sunset.

My my. If the government could tax those they would too. But they can't thank the Lord.

Oh I look at some of those sunsets. They're just indescribable. What would you like to describe one to a blind man? Come on you folk.

You're pretty eloquent. Would you describe a black? You say well let me see. The first color is yellow.

And he says well what's yellow? Well yellow. It's like a well it's a mixture of white and well what's white? You don't know where to start. He's blind.

He has no idea of colors. You know. You know what came to me this week? I think funny things sure I do.

But you know those poor politicians are trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again. Say do you help a corpse by putting glasses on it? They can't see if you put glasses on it. Hey here's a beautiful here's a lady dead.

Do you help her by giving her a facelift and covering her cheeks? You put life into her? The politicians are trying to put glasses on a blind nation. Any politicians any country. Do you know there's only one person has life? Of course I like Charles Wesley as a good Englishman.

But I like that hymn Jesus you lover of my soul. Do you remember a phrase in it? I think of it so often. He says thou of life the fountain heart.

Freely let me take of thee. Spring thou up within my heart and rise to all eternity. Or the Scottish man Bonnard that wrote that lovely hymn.

I came to Jesus as I was weary and warm. He didn't come like that. But I'll tell you what he says.

I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream. My thirst was quenched my soul revived and now I live in him. You can't get it better than that can you? My thirst was quenched.

I don't want any I don't need to drink of any other system. I drank of him. My thirst was quenched my soul revived and now I live in him.

Life. Before we get the full manifestation of eternal life. I noticed recently reading an article of Criswell's where he said when he went to England the first time.

He didn't want to go to the Bank of England because he's a multi-millionaire he wouldn't need to. But he says I wanted to go to St Paul's Cathedral. I wanted to see that original painting of Holman Hunt.

I've seen it it's very beautiful. Christ with a lamp in his hand. The moon is away there through the trees.

It's very dark and he stands with the lamp and he's knocking at a door. An old door looks like this good old barn door here. And underneath Holman Hunt put the light of the world.

And when he finished it the picture was submitted to the critics. They all passed their opinions and then one man pushed through the crowd he said Mr Hunt you've made one serious mistake. What is that? Oh I know it's supposed to be a door of the human heart with weeds and and rushes and and big thorns and neglect.

That's typical of a heart. But sir that there's no latch on the door. It's on the inside.

Right you heard the story before. Don't cheat on me. He said it's on the inside.

Isn't it wonderful that God doesn't come and blast you and knock you down because you've rejected his son so many times. Isn't it amazing that he's omnipotent and yet it says that the people of Israel stayed the hands of God. Man if God had got out of patience with you as many times as you've got patience you'd have been dead when you were 10 years old maybe you're 12 or 14.

And he's put up with your monkeying. He's put up with your bad temper. He's put up with your disobedience.

He's put up with your rebellion. The latch is on the inside. I remember standing there with a crowd of people and I remember a man saying you know the original the the man the guide in the in the great wonderful church always says the same rigmarole he could say to sleep he said it so many times he says finally ladies and gentlemen the original this is actually a copy it looks real but the original of this picture was sold for 30 000 pounds.

A little old man stepped in front he said sir could I correct that the original of this picture was sold for 30 pieces of silver. Some of us have sold him for less than that. You sold him for a dirty habit.

You sold him because one day you didn't stand up against them godly friends. You sold him in a critical moment or maybe you repented I hope you did. But you we sell him so easily.

Jesus says to you and to me this afternoon if you're not cleansed come and get cleaned up. He says come and buy gold. What will it cost? It costs some of you your pride.

And that's awfully difficult stuff to get rid of isn't it. It'll cost some of us our self-righteousness. I didn't know self-righteousness is fool's gold.

You know what fool's gold is? I didn't know till I came to America. Looks like the real thing. Many a man has given an awful lot away for a load of fool's gold.

And self-righteousness is fool's gold. It satisfies us it doesn't satisfy him. All right the final thing.

What does it say about these people here in this? Oh. I stand at the door and knock if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in with him and will sup with him. Isn't this rather, oh I don't know how to say it now.

It's more than disturbing but you realize this that before the bible had finished, before they'd finished writing the bible that Jesus was already outside of his church. The only time he gets in is when there's a revival. We can function without him.

We're rich and we've lovely choirs. We've nice orchestras. We've comfortable pews.

We've a good bank balance. We've some of the nicest people in town coming to our place. Boy we can really really really fool ourselves.

And he's still saying listen I stand at the door and knock if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in and sup with him. You know people that Billy Graham has sup with they've kept that cup and put it away to show their children. They want anybody else use it.

Nobody keeps cups like that when I drink but that doesn't matter. You see really I think there's another picture here as well. Jesus says I stand at the door and knock.

Jesus says I will sup. He's indicating this is the final meal before the dawn. It's the last time they eat together.

The next time it'll be the marriage supper. We're going into the midnight of world affairs. He says if you if you'll open the door of your heart he will come in and sup with you.

He'll stay and talk. Remember those poor old men on that road so busy one morning. And it says when they had run down the road those two disciples he made as though he would have gone further.

But they constrained him. I wonder how often Jesus would have gone further with you and me and somehow you stopped him because you needed a meal or you could make a telephone call and you broke right off. And you say you know somehow when I went back it wasn't the same.

Of course it was. Doesn't say sat down on a chair at the door. He says I stand at the door.

Somebody brings a chair to your door and sits there and you look through the window. Oh boy I'm not going to get rid of them. They bought a chair they're sitting and going away.

You see somebody knocking you say hey they're just going to stay. And they knock and they go. You remember when David was here how he told us about the song of Solomon where the lover came and put his hand through the hole in the door to lift the latch and he said to his lady friend there hey come and she says well I've just washed my feet.

You know and they had wall to wall dirt they didn't have carpet. I've just changed my clothes and put on my night attire and I've washed my feet and I've got my hair and everything. And he says well darling I'm waiting.

Are you coming? And she says well oh well I may as well go. She says eventually I may just as well go and and see him. And when she got to the door he'd gone.

He doesn't stay knocking he comes and he says well let me in and you say no some more convenient day. Right okay dear brother we'll pray after. So here now the final aspect of this is this.

It says that they were at the wedding but a man has to have a wedding garment. You know one of the common interpretations is that when we go to the judgment seat we're going to be finally purified. Jesus as Paul says right into the Ephesians that Jesus wants a church what? A virgin church.

A church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And so finally the final act of mercy at the judgment seat is that God washes us clean and washes away our tears and irons out all the wrinkles and we're straightened up. Now I don't accept that at all not at all.

I don't accept it. Why? Because there you're saying that God is going to make you pure. Do you know what it says in this verse of Revelation 19 7? His wife had made herself ready.

All right then if he has to purify me when I get to the judgment seat then the blood of Jesus Christ God's son has not cleansed me from all sin. The apostle says he that hath this hope of the coming the sudden coming of the Lord Jesus he has what? He has made himself pure it says. He has purified himself.

And Peter says therefore having purified your hearts by faith. No no I don't believe that that's that that's the final judgment. You see here now this is the this is the school of preparation as I've told you so often.

The only thing that God is interested in right now in your life and mine is that we're preparing ourselves our garments because we're not all going to be the same in heaven. Let me remind you again in that final

judgment the last shall be first. So there's two kinds you've got there anyhow.

The last shall be first. Another kind two kinds some are going to rule over one city some are going to rule over five cities some rule over ten cities. So there's discrimination again.

Do you remember it says this is this is awesome. Man alive when you get under the weather sit down and think about this. You know it says we shall judge angels.

That takes your breath away doesn't it. If you will call to the supreme court tomorrow to decide something that's going to be on the law books of America should we say if it lasted for the next hundred years. You think you'd rush there unprepared and say oh pass it up yes I've got a pen with me here it is let me sign it.

And yet the word says we're going to judge saints some of us. Some are going to judge angels. There are four and twenty elders.

They're all very different. Do you remember that scripture surely you do that's quoted so very often from Isaiah when they say as people quote it so often all our righteousness is a filthy rag. I think if you look at it you'll find it's rather plural plural plural all our righteousness is.

That's that's righteousness with e s s on the end all our righteousness is. You see your righteousness is something you he gives you. Righteousness are the things you work out of that character he's given you.

Man I can remember my dear I didn't like to do anything. I certainly didn't like to work in the garden but I liked to coil up in a chair get my feet under me and read read until I wasn't even in the chair. I don't know what to say.

You're awake. I was in Minnesota with here Walter and Mimi haha. I was reading that story till I knew every feather on his head and little birds.

Man I used to get there and read and read and read and enjoy those things. You know we we we really ought to read about these things of God until they're tragic to that degree. After all it's true whether we like the things or not whether they're exciting or not.

Lo he comes with clouds of repentance. Every eye shall receive him. And you know everything you do in obedience to God I believe I'm going to say like my sister my sister was sitting in a chair and she she had some of the I don't know what they call them but she did an awful lot of reading work and she got married to a really exceptional beautiful little girl Abel Crosby.

You know I I never saw one of these paper what we call them we call them serviette napkins. I mean those weren't good on paper but anyhow I I'd never say I I've never seen a paper one. Good you did not name them.

You know tomorrow unconsciously or consciously you'll be working on the garment. You're going to wear the same thing. We're not all going to wear the same thing.

We're not all going to have the same time. We're not all going to have the same reward. Who are these? Or maybe we'll get to excuse me we've been nearly got to this place.

It's a dangerous place. We might get to excuse myself but we've been through all this. Something I knew that I was his name and he's a little mark of stone.

He's only six and a dying sheep and he got there on the last gasp. He's going to have the same reward as John Wesley. He put every penny earned into hymn books, printing bibles, building churches, building orphanages.

He fell in love with a verse of a hymn written by that little French woman. Nothing on earth do I desire but my pure love within my breast. This only this will I require and freely give up all the rest.

Well for my pleasure. Hey that was in that hymn. I'm gonna have to take Bobby for that.

That was in that hymn this afternoon. Pleasure of getting your way. Yeah.

Customs get in your way. Yeah. Fashions get in your way.

Don't look too close. Fashions other things get in your way. As A.B. Simpson says, perishing things of clay born but for one brief day.

Wesley says, nothing on earth do I desire but my pure love within my breast. Wealth, honor, pleasure and what else this short enduring road. You know it's not long.

Hey some of us are better speed up a bit. We better go do a bit more homework. We better do a little bit more embroidery in our garments.

When you get to heaven and see somebody resplendent in robes that will make the high priest robes look like sackcloth, you'll know that they were stitching away in the quietness. Sacrifice, love, gentleness, meekness, purity, graciousness, adoration, thanksgiving. Those will all be the jewels, the marvelous things that God's going to allow us to wear in our garments because it's going to be a great wedding.

I'll finish where I began. I don't know the names of those who are going. I don't know the numbers of those who are going.

And you know what? Pardon my ignorance. I don't know how long it's going to last. Maybe just a thousand years.

Just a thousand years. Worshipping and adoring the lamb, the heavenly bridegroom, the lover of our souls. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

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