

Beyond the Clouds

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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.

~ John 14:3 ~

For centuries, millions of believers have been taught that they go directly to heaven when they die. However, the Bible repeatedly explains that no one ascends to heaven at death. The Scriptures powerfully proclaim that those who die remain lifeless in the grave, and that an afterlife can only be obtained through a resurrection which is yet to come (Psa. 146:4; John 3:13; Acts 2:34; Heb. 11:39-40; 1Ths. 4:15-17; Rev. 20:5).

Perhaps as an overreaction to the false doctrine regarding heaven, God's true Church has published very little about this subject. In fact, some ministers have zealously taught that the saints will never go to the third heaven. They claim that those who are resurrected will only rise to the clouds, and that the bowl plagues will be poured out from this location. This has led many to believe that the marriage supper will also take place in the earth's atmosphere. In their view, the elect will not see the Father, but will remain in the clouds until Christ returns to the earth.

Is this teaching correct? Will those who attain the first resurrection be incapable of ascending beyond the clouds? Will they not be allowed to visit God's throne? Where will the Marriage Supper take place? Does the Bible teach that the

saints will not go to heaven, or have we missed something meaningful in our reaction to the teaching of others?

In a continuing effort to grow in grace and knowledge, we must acknowledge that there is not a single scripture stating that Christ's future bride will NOT go to heaven. An in-depth study of this subject reveals that the Bible teaches the exact opposite.

The Captain of Our Salvation

In order to understand what will occur after the saints are resurrected, we must first recognize the pattern established by the Messiah. Christ was the first to be raised from the dead as a spirit being. Before ascending to heaven, He told Mary Magdalene

Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God' (John 20:17).

These words indicate that Christ had not yet ascended, but would rise to be with the Father in heaven later. On that Sunday morning, at the same time the wave sheaf was offered, the Savior fulfilled the meaning of this unique offering by ascending to heaven (Lev. 23:10-14; Dan. 7:13). Christ returned to earth later that day to give further instruction to the disciples. He appeared numerous times over a period of 40 days and taught them. Then, before the disciple's eyes, Christ was taken into the air and disappeared in a cloud:

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up

from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

The angels that stood by these men explained that the Savior would return in the same manner in which he left. He ascended into a cloud, and therefore He will also descend from the clouds. This does not mean that Christ has remained in the clouds for hundreds of years. Other Scriptures explain that He continued on to the third heaven where He took His place at the right hand of the Father. One of the many verses verifying this was penned by the Apostle Peter, who wrote:

Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him (1 Peter 3:21-22).

Numerous Bible verses reveal that Christ was raised from the dead and is now in the third heaven with the Father. In addition, the Scriptures reveal that, when the elect are resurrected, they will ascend in the same manner. Consider the words of Matthew quoting the Messiah:

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:30-31).

It is clear that Christ ascended to the clouds and continued beyond to be with the Father. The Bible also states that, when He returns, Christ will be seen coming from the clouds (Rev. 1:7). What is important to recognize is that the Messiah is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). This

means that He is the one who leads the way. Therefore, the saints will follow the same pattern He established.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon of the New Testament explains that the Greek word translated as "captain" means "the chief leader, one that takes the lead... a predecessor" or "pioneer" (G747, p. 77). In other words, the Savior is the forerunner who blazed the path. Therefore, the elect will be raised in a similar way and return in the same manner as Christ. Paul documented this truth, writing:

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. 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 (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

These verses state that God's chosen will ascend from the earth into the clouds where they will meet Christ. But, they will NOT remain in the earth's atmosphere. The clouds are simply a gathering place where the saints will assemble after being resurrected. From that time forward, the Scriptures state that the chosen "shall always be with the Lord." The question then becomes, where does the Lord go from there? The answer is that Christ will lead the saints to a place beyond the clouds!

The Apostle John recognized this truth. Consider a divine quote from his gospel which reveals exactly where the Lord will take the saints:

In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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 (John 14:2-3).

Exactly where did Christ "go to prepare a place" for His bride? The answer is that He went to be with the Father in

heaven. In this place, He “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2; Rev. 14:1-3). Christ is still in heaven at this time, and this is where He will take the saints after gathering them in the clouds.

The Timing of the First Resurrection

Further evidence that the Saints will ascend to the third heaven is found in the timing of God’s wrath during the seven trumpet and the seven bowl plagues. These plagues reveal that the first resurrection will take place at the sound of the seventh trumpet. As Paul prophesied:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

The “last trumpet” is the seventh trumpet blown during the “great and terrible day of the LORD” (Joel 2:1-11). John foresaw these events and wrote:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:15-18).

This final trumpet announces the resurrection of God's chosen. They will rise to meet Christ in the clouds, but the question remains. Where do the Scriptures show them going after this remarkable event? John recorded the answer after seeing them before God's throne in heaven:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. **These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.** And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God (Revelation 14:1-5).

The saints are obviously the ones "redeemed from the earth," and at this point they become the "firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." James was another faithful servant who understood this truth and confirmed that the elect would be "a kind of firstfruits" (Jam. 1:18). What must be admitted is that these Scriptures clearly show that the resurrected saints will be in heaven where they will stand "without fault before the throne of God."

Additional proof comes from the term "God" used in the New Testament which refer to the Father. The verses above depict the resurrected saints, at the base of the heavenly Mount Zion, singing before God the Father.

Timing of the Bowl Plagues

The Bible reveals that God's vengeance will last for a full year (Isa. 61:2; 63:4; Rev. 6:17). A truth that has been overlooked is that this year is divided into two distinct parts. The first portion consists of seven trumpet plagues. At the last trump, Christ takes the resurrected saints to heaven where they sing songs of triumph before the throne of God (Rev. 14:1-5).

However, the trumpet plagues are not the end of God's vengeance. While the final trump signals the time of the resurrection, it is also designated as the third woe which consists of seven, even more destructive, bowl plagues (Rev. 11:14). Thus, the elect will be taken to heaven before the bowl plagues begin. John wrote that these final bowl plagues will complete God's wrath:

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete (Revelation 15:1).

After seeing the elect before God's throne, John witnessed seven angels come forth with "the seven last plagues." These last plagues will be poured out while the saints are "before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:5).

This final round of plagues will not be unleashed over just a few days. They will take several months to complete. During this time, where are the resurrected saints? Are they in the clouds? No! The next series of verses describe them standing in heaven on a magnificent sea of glass:

And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your

ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.” After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed (Revelation 15:2-8).

The resurrected saints are shown “standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.” There they will “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb...” At the conclusion of these hymns, seven angels will be given “seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.” As John continued to write:

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth” (Revelation 16:1).

While these final plagues are poured out, the saints will not be suspended in the atmosphere of the earth. The book of Revelation plainly depicts them in heaven, standing on the sea of glass, before God’s throne.

Further, the Apostle Paul wrote that the resurrected saints “shall always be with the Lord” (1Ths. 4:17). John also stated that the saints “are those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” After gathering the elect in the clouds, Christ will ascend to Mount Zion—the place He has long been preparing for his bride (Rev. 14:1-4).

Therefore, when the saints are raised, Christ will meet them in the air. He will then return to heaven and the elect follow Him. It is from the vantage point of heaven that God's faithful watch as the seven terrifying bowl plagues are poured out.

The Chronology of the Seven Bowl Plagues

1. "So the first went out and poured his bowl upon the earth" which will produce grievous sores on those who have the mark of the beast (Rev. 16:2).
2. "Then the second angel poured out his bowl" which will cause the entire sea being turned into blood, and everything in it dies (Rev. 16:3).
3. "Then the third angel poured out his bowl" causing the fresh water to become blood (Rev. 16:4-7).
4. "Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl" allowing intense heat from the sun to scorch people like fire (Rev. 16:8-9).
5. "Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl" which causes darkness on the kingdom of the beast; and his subjects will experience excruciating pain and sores (Rev. 16:10-11).
6. "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl" which will dry up the water in the Euphrates so that ungodly armed forces can cross over. Then demons will gather these armies to the battle at Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16).
7. "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air." God will state that "It is done," and there will be thunder and lightning, a great earthquake, cities around the earth will fall, mountains will be moved, and God will destroy Babylon the great while sixty-pound hail rain down on

the earth (Rev. 16:17-21). Finally, the devil will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3).

Faultless Before the Throne of God

Other Scriptures continue demonstrating that the firstfruits will be taken to heaven. Notice what Paul wrote regarding the qualities the saints must possess in order to be in God's presence:

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).

As a result of Christ's sacrifice, the saints have been reconciled to God. The gift of the Holy Spirit has enabled them to develop righteous character. It is these qualities that make it possible for the resurrected saints to be "blameless... before our God and Father." As the Apostle John wrote, the ones who follow the lamb will be without fault **before the throne of God** (Rev. 14:4-5).

Direct Contact with the Father

In the Bible, God the Father is never shown as having direct contact with people. Though He has always existed, no humans even knew of the Father until Christ revealed Him. The Savior made it clear during His ministry that He alone knew the Father, stating:

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him* (KJV, Matthew 11:27).

Christ was the God of the Old Covenant (1Cor. 10:1-4; Mat. 22:42-45). He made this clear to the Jews by telling them the profound truth that He existed before Abraham. He even referred to himself using God's name, stating:

Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was,
I AM (John 8:58).

There has been a consistent lack of direct contact between the Father and humans throughout biblical history. Prior to the Savior's birth as a human, mankind's relationship with God was actually with Christ. However, part of His ministry was to reveal the Father. As the Messiah stated:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him* (John 1:18).

A lack of contact with the Father may have led some to believe the resurrected saints will not go to heaven. However, part of Christ's ministry was to establish a relationship between humanity and the Father. The Scriptures then describe progressive stages that will give man direct access to God. The process begins with accepting Christ's sacrifice, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. This makes it possible for believers to have contact with the Father, but through Christ's name. As the Savior said:

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you (John 15:16).

At a later point, when Christians are changed to divine spirit beings, their relationship to the Father will also change. Christ spoke of this future relationship, saying:

And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name... These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father (John 16:23-28).

The Savior explained that, before His crucifixion, people dealt directly with Him as the God of the Old Covenant. After accepting His sacrifice, baptized members can receive the Holy Spirit which enables them to have access to the Father, but through Christ's name.

However, after being resurrected and becoming born again members of the divine family, the saints will not be required to ask anything in Christ's name. They will be like Christ. They will be able to go where He goes and speak face to face with the Father (John 3:3; 1John 3:2).

The Messiah revealed this process by praying to the Father as a human. But once risen from the dead, He left this world and went to the throne of God. He is now in the Father's presence. Therefore, the saints will follow this same pattern. Once resurrected, they will have direct access to the Father. Notice what Christ revealed to His disciples while in prayer, and also what John later confirmed:

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father (John 16:28).

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may

behold My glory which You have given Me...
(John 17:24).

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

Rewarded According to Works

Another point to consider is that works are a vital part of a Christian's life (Jam. 2:20). They serve as an invaluable ingredient in attaining both the first resurrection and our individual reward. What we do in life is so important that God keeps a record of our works. These records are contained in God's "books," and everyone will be rewarded according to what is written therein. As both Matthew and John wrote:

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works (Matthew 16:27).

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books (Revelation 20:12).

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work (Revelation 22:12).

This also generates an interesting question. Exactly where will the saints be when they are rewarded? By allowing the Bible to answer this question, it is clear that they will be standing before the judgment seat of Christ—in heaven. Notice Paul's words:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Christ's judgment seat is not in the clouds. The Savior stated where His throne is, saying:

Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God (Luke 22:69).

Christ's own words explain that His seat of authority is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The resurrected saints must appear in this very place where they will receive their personal reward. Therefore, when the saints are before the Messiah in heaven, they will also be in the presence of the Father. As the Apostle Paul also wrote:

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:10-12).

People in Heaven

Another point of interest is found not in something that John saw, but in something the apostle heard. John actually heard the voices of many PEOPLE in heaven, and wrote:

And after these things **I heard a great voice of much people in heaven**, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia (KJV, Revelation 19:1-3).

These voices emanate from the saints in heaven. They were once human which is likely why John referred to them

as “people.” The New King James Version of the Bible states that John heard “the voice of a great multitude.” This is a slight mistranslation. The word for “people” is the Greek *ochlos* meaning “a throng, *class* of people, company, number (of people) [*Strong’s*, G3793]. Thus, the King James Version is more correct by translating the word as “much people.”

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

John also heard another voice that came directly from God’s throne:

Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!” And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, and His wife has made herself ready.” 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. 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” (Revelation 19:5-9).

Chapters 15 and 16 of Revelation indicate that the saints will be in heaven for the duration of the bowl plagues. It is only after these seven bowl plagues that a most glorious event takes place. The wedding between the Lamb and His faithful Saints will finally occur. This ceremony will include a grand marriage supper in heaven. There will be rejoicing as the angels and saints sing out with excitement regarding what is taking place.

There are no Scriptures describing what this anticipated celebration will be like. It is likely that God purposely omitted the details of this wedding so that it will be a glorious surprise to all who are privileged to attend. What’s

important for us to understand is that John's vision is one in which everything surrounding this majestic celebration takes place in the third heaven.

A Divine Institution

Another point of interest is that there is always a spiritual parallel to that which is physical (Rom. 1:20). This is certainly the case when it comes to marriage. God designed matrimony to be a reflection of the future bond between Christ and the Church. Notice the Apostle Paul's words regarding the marital relationship:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies... "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-32).

Within this holy covenant a woman is not to make family judgments until married. She must first take her vows, participate in the blissful ceremony, and enjoy the celebration of this wonderful event before she can stand as second in command with her husband.

In like manner, God is calling certain individuals to become the bride of Christ. He desires a faithful bride to share His Son's authority while ruling over the earth. Before those

who have qualified can rule, they must first be married—to the Messiah.

This future event will likely be the most splendid ceremony in all history. For those who will be chosen, it will be the most significant event of their lives. For Christ and His Father, the marriage of the Lamb will be an experience of profound meaning and enormous joy.

Consider the time, dedication, and personal interest that the Father has invested in this future wedding. Think about the untold millions of years that God spent planning for this event. Consider the enormous effect that it will have on the rest of eternity. If we are honest while pondering the magnitude of this future wedding, it is inconceivable that the Father would not be present at the marriage of His own Son. In fact, it is likely that the Father will officiate. After all, who would be more suited to preside over the marriage ceremony of His Son?

This makes the truth even more obvious. The wedding between Christ and His Church will take place beyond the clouds, in the third heaven where the Father is—not in the atmosphere of the earth.

Armies from Heaven

After the bowl plagues and the marriage supper have concluded, the saints will return with Christ to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Only then will the saints inherit the earth to serve as His holy representatives (Mat. 5:3-5; Rev. 5:10).

John's vision included insight into Christ's second coming. As the apostle continued to write:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The

Word of God. **And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses** (Revelation 19:11-14).

If the resurrected saints will “always be with the Lord,” a correlation must be made between this statement and the armies that return with Christ. It is certain that the Messiah will return with an army of spirit beings (Joel 2:1-11). Revelation describes an army that is “clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (19:14). Interestingly, this army also rides “white horses” just like Christ does when He returns. Preceding verses show that this “fine linen” is the attire of Christ’s bride—the resurrected saints:

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. 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 (Revelation 19:7-8).

Another parallel verse describes Christ dramatic return from heaven with His saints. Notice the words of Jude, who quoted Enoch’s profound prophesy of this awesome event:

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “**Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints**, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14-15).

The Scriptures describe Christ returning to the earth with an army of spirit beings. When He does, the saints will accompany Him after singing before the Father, viewing the last plagues, and marrying their King.

A Mistaken Belief

Despite the mounting evidence, some may still cling to the idea that the resurrected saints will not go to heaven, and that the marriage supper takes place in the clouds. This belief may stem from a mistaken notion regarding a statement Christ made before He was crucified. John quoted the Messiah as saying:

Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you (John 13:33).

Some may read this verse and believe it proves that, while Christ went to heaven, the saints will not be allowed to follow Him. This is clearly not the case. To understand what the Savior meant, we must consider the context.

At the time of this statement, Christ was speaking to His disciples. He was telling them that He would depart. These men naturally desired to continue in His presence. However, Christ explained that He had to leave and ascend to heaven in order to send the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 15:26; 16:7). Therefore, because He was going to heaven, the disciples could not follow Him—YET!

The context explains that Christ was only referring to a particular period of time in which the disciples could not come with Him. This includes the time we are currently in. Two verses later, the Savior made a vital, incontrovertible point. No human being will be allowed to follow Him to heaven—until they are raised as spirit beings:

Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going **you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward**” (John 13:36).

It is obvious that the Savior was telling His disciples that they could not be with Him in heaven at this time. But He

concluded with words of great hope. The chosen saints will be able to join Him after they have been resurrected!

Two Different Prophetic Suppers

A final point that must be understood is that Revelation 19 speaks of two separate suppers. Verse nine speaks of “the marriage supper of the Lamb” while verse 17 addresses “the supper of the great God.” These are not the same event. There is a difference of timing, location, and purpose. Notice the words describing this supper of the great God:

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God” (Revelation 19:17).

This verse explains that an angel will cry out calling “all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven” to gather for a meal. These “birds” are not symbolic of angels or the resurrected saints, and this supper is NOT related to the marriage of the Lamb. It is “the supper of the great God” and will occur as a direct order from the Father. Notice the reason these fowl are gathered:

That you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great.” And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of

Him who sat on the horse. **And all the birds were filled with their flesh** (Revelation 19:18-21).

This is clearly not the joyous celebration mentioned in verse nine where the saints are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. In fact, this is not a festivity at all. What is the purpose of this supper, and where does it take place?

This particular supper will not take place in heaven. It occurs on the earth, and it is altogether separate from Christ's marriage supper. It is an ominous event having a specific purpose.

After the trumpet plagues, bowl plagues, and the end-time battle at Armageddon, an army of spirit beings will go through every building and eliminate any resistance to God and His Kingdom (Joel 2:1-11). Death will be everywhere. God will then call a cleanup crew of scavenger birds of prey to remove the flesh from the thousands of bodies that would otherwise rot and create an unsanitary environment. This is "the supper of the great God."

Finally, God will command an angel to imprison Satan (Rev. 20:1-3). The Savior will then descend to the Mount of Olives. He will powerfully reshape the area of Jerusalem, and begin the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth (Zec. 14:4).

At that time, the elect will have the privilege of working alongside the Messiah as a part of His government. Together they will plan, and implement, numerous projects that will spread the knowledge of God. They will assist Christ in restoring the earth to the way God intended. Every chosen saint will have an intimate role in bringing health, vitality, happiness, and prosperity to the nations.

In Summary

- At the sound of the last trumpet, the chosen saints will be raised and Christ will meet them in the clouds.
- From there He will go to Mount Zion and the saints will follow.
- The elect will sing a new song, the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb before God's throne.
- The elect will have direct access to the Father.
- They will be rewarded before Christ's throne according to their works.
- From heaven, the saints will witness the seven final plagues being poured out on a rebellious planet.
- They will be clothed in clean, vibrant, white, fine linen.
- They will marry Christ and attend an incomprehensible celebration known as the wedding supper of the Lamb.
- They will mount glorious, white, angelic horses and return with the Messiah to take over the earth.
- Carnivorous birds from all over will be gathered to remove the corpses from the battle at Armageddon.
- Christ will stand on the Mount of Olives and the landscape of Jerusalem will be miraculously refashioned.
- The divine Husband and Wife team will do "on earth as *it is* in heaven" (Mat. 6:10).

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