

## The Real Royal Wedding

### Introduction

ON APRIL 29, 2011, billions of people around the world watched the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton .IMAGE 1 It was the wedding of the new millennium. The cost of the wedding was estimated at around \$ 34 million, compared to the average wedding at \$ 27,000. Here are a few of the staggering prices: The royal wedding cake: \$ 80,000 (average US price: \$ 540) Kate Middleton's wedding gown: \$ 434,000 (average US price: \$ 1,099) The royal wedding flowers: \$ 800,000 (average US price: \$ 1,988) The ring: \$ 136,000 (average US price: \$ 5,392) The ring, which was originally Princess Diana's, was actually free for the couple. However, Prince Charles purchased it in 1981 for \$ 45,000, and it was estimated to be worth \$ 136,000 in 2011. Other costs that figured into the \$ 34 million budget included the church service, music, food, decorations, and additional security. Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding actually cost less than the marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Di, which cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$ 48 million. (Some estimate in today's dollars that could be over \$ 100 million!)

IMAGE 2 Can you imagine being invited to that wedding? Imagine having a seat of honor at that wedding? Like the wedding couldn't start if you were not there? What if that was your wedding? What if you were Kate? Imagine what that day would be like if it were all about you. As dazzling and detailed as William and Kate's wedding was, it pales in comparison to a heavenly wedding that is on God's prophetic calendar— the marriage of the Lamb. A day set for you and me. A day where we actually are the bride.

We have been talking about the rapture of the church. IMAGE 3 The stealing away of God's Bride and the timing of that event as it relates to the 7 years of tribulation. Last week we covered the first 6 reasons I believe in a pretrib rapture. You don't have to agree with me. But today we look at what I believe is the most compelling reason we have to be raptured prior to the tribulation. 7 Reasons for a PreTrib Rapture

So today we turn our attention to the Jewish Weddings. They occur in two distinct events. An intimate small wedding service and then 7 days later when the bride and groom return the call goes out and they hold a Wedding Reception that almost everyone they know is invited to.

It is important when we read scripture that we remember that these words were written first to a first century audience. They were written in the context of Jewish tradition, to be read by Jewish people, with an underlying theme of Jewish life and culture.

In order to fully understand much of what Jesus speaks about we must understand what the words meant first and foremost to a first century Jewish audience. Words have cultural context.

For example. If you told someone that you had a flat..In the USA you need a tire wrench. In England, it is your apartment. So cultural context is critical to understanding.

In the first century, the most celebrated event for Jewish people after the Feasts of the Lord was a wedding. Weddings were huge events. The entire process took over a year and the ceremony itself usually lasted for one week. Everyone in a community was involved. The whole town shut down. It was a huge celebration.

The Bible mentions at least 20 weddings. IMAGE 4

Let's look a bit closer at First Century Jewish Weddings.

First of all weddings were arranged. The groom would usually identify his bride and then go to her father for approval. Then the bride and her family would agree.

The acceptance of the proposal. There would be no wedding if the bride did not respond to the offer of marriage. The bride would be offered a cup of red wine. The young man would pour a cup of wine for his perspective bride. If she drank from the cup an unbreakable covenant was made. She has total autonomy to accept or reject the proposal but of course has to answer to their fathers who arranged it all.

The Father of the groom was the one who accepted the bride and often demanded some form of payment for her-a dowry. Once the Father of the groom gave his approval, the young woman accepted the offer of the relationship and the dowry was paid, the couple was considered betrothed. This was a legal commitment that carried the same weight as being married. Breaking it was considered adultery-an issue that faced Mary. The punishment of which was death.

The contract was sealed and would be operational as soon as the Father of the Groom determined that the groom had prepared for her. The young man would immediately being preparing for His fiance to join him.

How did he prepare? He had to build an additional to his Father's house where the new couple would live. This usually took about a year or so. Young men eager to get married, built houses very quickly. But it wasn't done until His father said it was done. That way the new couple would have a place to live and they generally stayed there the rest of their lives.

Once the room was built and the Father gave his approval, the groom was instructed by the Father to go and quickly get his bride. The groom with his wedding party would march through the town to the bride's house blowing a horn, playing cymbals, singing and dancing. The groom did not wait for daybreak and came as soon as permission was given.

The bride had been anticipating his arrival for some time and there was great expectation as to which day the groom would surprise the one he loved. The towns were relatively small. The bride could see that the day was getting closer. It was not a complete surprise, because there were signs. When the groom collected his bride and her party, the entire town joined them as they paraded back to his father's home for the ceremony.

Once the bride arrived at the Father's home she was given a special preparation room and told to prepare herself for her wedding day, usually the very next day.

She goes through a ritual cleansing similar to a baptism or to the process priests went through before they entered the temple.

Then she was dressed in white to represent her purity.

IMAGE 5 The wedding ceremony occurred on the first day Attendance at the wedding was for a few of the closest relatives and friends. A wedding feast would come later and many guests will be invited. The marriage was consummated that night. Proof of purity was demonstrated by blood on the sheets and these were presented to the Father of the bride to keep in case questions arose about her virginity prior to marriage. Once the marriage was consummated, the closest family continued to celebrate for a total of seven days or one week.

They did so without the Bride and Groom who would disappear for one week in the room that the groom had prepared for her. What we would call a honeymoon.

At the end of the seven days the couple would emerge and the invited guests would have a "marriage supper."

After that time the new couple lived in the Father's house and the bride was adopted into the family essentially as his daughter.

In Scripture Jesus is constantly referred to as the bridegroom and believers are referred to as His bride. It is the celebration and imagery of weddings that God used to show us our relationship with Him.

Let's look at some of the parallels that are fairly obvious and some that perhaps are not.

The relationship is arranged by the Father on behalf of the Son. The bride must agree to surrender to the relationship. A price must be paid to the Father and then the relationship is sealed and certain. Though the wedding itself is some time off, the relationship is established, sealed and guaranteed. It cannot be broken other than by death. The dowry is the promise that binds the covenant. A price was already paid for the relationship

Just as ancient Jewish grooms paid a purchase price to establish the marriage covenant, so Jesus paid a purchase price for the church

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV) — 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Next the groom must get ready for His bride. He begins by going to her and promising her that he would return for her as quickly as possible.

John 14:1–3 (ESV) — 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

The reference to Father's house and prepare a room was clearly representing the betrothal

They are legally bound.

She is betrothed to her husband. Legally bound to remain pure. From the time the commitment is made until the moment the marriage is consummated she is to make sure that she maintains her commitment to the groom and guards her purity. He does so as well.

We are living right now in that time. We have been betrothed to Jesus. Our relationship has been sealed by the Father. The price for us has been paid and we are given the Holy Spirit as the dowry. We are eagerly waiting for the return of Jesus and are in the process of becoming more pure.

Ephesians 1:13–14 (ESV) — 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians about being sealed in the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:1–5 (ESV) — 1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ...5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Also, just as a Jewish bride was declared sanctified or set apart in waiting for her groom, so the church is declared sanctified and set apart for Christ the Bridegroom

2 Corinthians 11:1–2 (ESV) — 2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

During that time, the bride must be ready. She and her bridesmaids must be on the lookout. They need to be ready to go.

Matthew 25:1–13 (ESV) — 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ 10 And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ 12 But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

She doesn't know the day or hour, but she can see the progress of the building.....there are signs that her groom is coming soon.

When everything is prepared, it is the Father who must give his approval for the groom to go and retrieve his bride.

Matthew 24:36 (ESV) — 36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

1 Thessalonians 5:1–2 (ESV) — 1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Matthew 24:44 (ESV) — 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

And just as a Jewish bride was unaware of the exact time her groom would come for her, so the church is unaware of the exact time that Jesus the Bridegroom will come, though it is an imminent event.

### The Rapture

The Rapture will occur at the moment that the Father says everything is ready. Once Jesus has prepared a room for everyone, since the commitment has been made, sealed and promised....it is just a formality for Jesus to come to get His bride and take her to the Father's house for the wedding ceremony and to consummate the wedding.

We have been studying about how in the blink of an eye Jesus come to the Brides location....earth....meet us in the clouds and take us to the Father's house.

Note that it is Jesus Himself who shows us the way home to the Father.

John 14:1–7 (ESV) — 1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus says you know the way to where I am going....The Bride doesn't need to know how to get to the Father's house...all she needs to know is to trust that her groom will come to get her.....He knows the way home...So Jesus tells them....all you need to know is that I am coming to get you.

John 17:3 (ESV) — 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

A few things to note here. Only those who have surrendered to Jesus....those who are in Christ...are wed to Him. In the Old Testament it is the Jewish People....Israel...who are portrayed as the bride. But they were unfaithful and broke the covenant....thus under the punishment of death.

The Bride of Christ are NT believers who are raptured by Jesus to go to the Father's house.

We know and will review in detail that Christ returns at the second coming with His Bride...Not His fiancée. Thus before the Second Coming, the wedding ceremony must be completed. The bride of Christ must be given their resurrection bodies, judged, rewarded and clothed in their righteous deeds; The reason that the church is raptured is to be wed in the Father's house. We arrive at the Father's house and prepare ourselves.

How does that happen?

The marriage ceremony takes place in heaven and involves the church. Since the church or bride is dressed in white linen, there must have been a moment where they were judged and declared righteous in Christ. This is the judgment of the just. Not regarding salvation but rather regarding crowns and rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (ESV) 10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

This means that all the wood, hay, and stubble has been burned away and all the gold, silver, and precious stones have been purified. Once we are raptured our works will be evaluated.

Revelation 19:6–9 (ESV) 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

This corresponds to the ritual cleansing of the Jewish wedding system. The bride is bathed and clothed in white linens signifying her purity.

The First Thing that will happen when we arrive at the Father's house is that we will be prepared for our wedding. This will occur at what is called the Judgment Seat of Christ- the Bema Seat.

Romans 14:10–12 (ESV) — 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, "As I

live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Matthew 16:27 (ESV) — 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:12 (ESV) — 12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

The idea of a judgment seat goes back to the athletic games of Paul’s day. After the games concluded, a dignitary took his seat on an elevated throne in the arena. One by one the winning athletes came up to the throne to receive a reward—usually a wreath of leaves, a victor’s crown. In the case of Christians, each of us will stand before Christ the Judge and receive (or lose) rewards.

I would also point out that not only are there different rewards for different behavior in Heaven, but the Bible also says that there are varying degrees of punishment in Hell based upon what an unbeliever did while on Earth. Thus, in contrast to the different rewards a believer will obtain for his works on Earth, an unbeliever will be punished (“rewarded”) for his works as well.

Mark 12:38–40 (ESV) — 38 And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

Matthew 11:23–24 (ESV) — 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

In the case of Christians, each of us will stand before Christ the Judge and receive (or lose) rewards. Christ’s judgment of us will not be in a corporate setting—like a big class being praised or scolded by a teacher. Rather, it will be individual and personal. “We will all stand before the judgment seat of God”

This judgment has nothing to do with whether the Christian will remain saved. Those who have placed faith in Christ are saved, and nothing threatens that. Believers are eternally secure in their salvation. This judgment rather has to do with the reception or loss of rewards.

It’s more like an awards ceremony for the Christian. Since we aren’t saved by our works, but by our faith, this judgment is not related to salvation, but to the things the Christian has done since becoming saved that have furthered the work of the Kingdom. The “race we’ve run,” so to speak. Those things done solely out of gratitude for the free gift of salvation that the Christian has received, with no thought for personal gain, will earn the Christian various crowns. Those things the Christian has done for earthly credit or recognition or in an attempt to earn points with God, will be disqualified.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV) — 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

How can we carry our crown in front of the one who carried the Crown of Thorns?

We will see in Revelation that our elders cannot. They cast down their crowns at the feet of Jesus.

Believers will be judged fairly, thoroughly, impartially, individually and gracefully. But our works will be judged...in a one on one session with Christ.

The Christian's judgment will focus on his personal stewardship of the gifts, talents, opportunities, and responsibilities given to him in this life. The very character of each Christian's life and service will be laid bare under the unerring and omniscient vision of Christ, whose eyes are like a flame of fire

In keeping with this, Scripture often describes the rewards Christians receive at the judgment as crowns that we wear. In fact, there are a number of different crowns that symbolize the various spheres of achievement and award in the Christian life. • The crown of life is given to those who persevere under trial and especially to those who suffer to the point of death • The crown of glory is given to those who faithfully and sacrificially minister God's Word to the flock. • The imperishable crown is given to those who win the race of temperance and self-control . • The crown of righteousness is given to those who long for the second coming of Christ ).

Is the judgment seat of Christ intended as an encouragement or a warning? Perhaps this judgment is intended to be both an encouragement and a warning. It is an encouragement to those who are consistently serving Christ with good motives. It is a warning to those who have fallen into carnal living. God will render perfect justice in the end.

Is it possible that some Christians may be ashamed at the judgment seat of Christ? It is entirely possible. One of the more sobering realities to ponder is that Christians who live a carnal lifestyle may subsequently experience a sense of shame and embarrassment at the judgment seat of Christ. Such Christians will forfeit rewards that could have been theirs had they been faithful. This seems to be what John urges: "Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward" (see also 1 John 2:28). A loss of rewards is here presented as a genuine possibility for the believer.

2 John 8 (ESV) 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

1 John 2:28 (ESV) 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

How can we be happy throughout eternity if we don't fare well at the judgment seat of Christ? While some will not fare as well as others at the judgment seat of Christ, we must keep all this in perspective. Christ's coming for us at the rapture and the prospect of living eternally with Him is something that should give each of us joy. And our joy will last forever



An analogy is that some high school students may receive better grades than others, but they're all thrilled to graduate. All are thankful for the future that lies ahead.

What should be our attitude toward the judgment seat of Christ? I am firmly convinced that Jesus delights to reward His people. He yearns to do it. It will bring a smile to His face to be able to hand you a reward at the judgment seat. That fact—in addition to the incredible salvation He has provided us—should motivate us all to serve and obey Him with joy and a sense of thrill for the future.

We spoke last week about the Rapture and why I believe that Scripture best supports a Pre tribulation rapture. I don't want to re preach that, but I do want to go back to a key point.

The church is not mentioned during the description of the tribulation in chapters 4-18. But in Chapter 19 we see her and learn about her.

Revelation 19:6–9 (ESV) — 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Note that the marriage of the Lamb has come and the Bride has made herself ready. Both past tense. Both before the second coming of Christ. It was granted to her (again past tense) to clothe herself in fine linen- the righteous deeds of the saints.

She has been brought to the Father's house, prepared for the wedding at the judgment seat, determined to be worthy and the marriage has come.

She is beautifully adorned in bright, fine linen.

Interesting that the Groom and Bride are together alone for 7 days or one week after the wedding. They are in the room that the Groom has prepared and they will live there from that point forward.

At the end of the seven day period, they emerge and the call goes out for the wedding feast. The wedding feast is a community celebration where everyone- all the friends of the bride and groom are invited to celebrate. Wedding ceremony small intimate group. Wedding reception huge invite and dinner.

Though the marriage of the Lamb to His bride (the church) and the marriage supper of the Lamb are closely related, they are separate events, just as the wedding ceremony and the wedding reception of our day are separate events.

In fact, these two events are often held at two different locations, just as the marriage of the Lamb will be in heaven right before the second coming (Rev. 19), while the marriage supper of the Lamb will commence with the beginning of the millennium. Perhaps some are confused and fail to make these distinctions because the word

marriage is used to refer to both events. By comparing Scripture with Scripture and distinguishing the things that differ, it appears clear that they are two separate events.

Show Timeline

Interesting that the time of tribulation is referred to as "one week" in Daniel. At the end of the week of tribulation, Jesus returns to earth with His bride (not his fiancé) to fight Satan at the second coming.

The Bride and the Bridegroom emerge after seven days and at that point the wedding reception is in order.

Revelation 19:14 (ESV) — 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

At that point, the call goes out and all the wedding guests are invited to the supper aka reception.

At the second coming, When Jesus returns to earth with His bride, the call goes out for everyone to join him for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. All the Old Testament Saints and the Tribulation Saints are called home and given their resurrection bodies. They are the guests at the marriage supper of the lamb that occurs right before the Millennial Kingdom.

The intimate wedding ceremony occurs during the tribulation after the rapture of the Bride of Christ. Once the Groom and Bride return after seven days, the call goes out for all the guest to come to the reception.

So the Wedding Ceremony is between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ, the raptured church. But the reception calls everyone home to celebrate.

These Old Testament saints will be in heaven and will have their rewards, but they are not the Church, not the Bride of the Christ. They are the friends of the Bride and Bridegroom, who at this point can be seen as the ones invited as guests to the feast. So then all the believing dead from Adam until the resurrection of Christ will be guests at this feast. In addition to them will appear those who have received the Savior during the Tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, many of who will have been martyred for the testimony of Christ. Not to imply that the Old Testament saints are inferior to the Church, or the body of Christ, but merely to point out that this is a special blessing for the Church.

So the Host is the Father. The Bridegroom is Jesus. The Bride is the Church and the Guests are the Old Testament and Tribulation Saints. Everyone has been called home to celebrate.

So completes the Wedding of the Lamb.

Jesus selected and paid the price for his bride the church. We accepted his invitation to join Him and unite with him in a covenant relationship forever. We mark that covenant through

communion...our drinking the wine symbolizes our acceptance. The Father accepted the price paid and we lived on earth sealed in the promise of Jesus's return for us.

When the Father determined the time was right and all was prepared, He sent the Son to the clouds to rapture His bride. All who believe in Christ will rise to meet Him in the clouds. We will then be given our resurrection bodies.

Jesus will lead away from earth to the Father's house to the place that He has prepared for us.

In order for God to remain just and righteous, we the bride, have to be judged, prepared and clothed in the righteousness of God. Jesus could never marry an unclean or unrighteous Bride. We are raptured, judged, cleansed, rewarded and married.

While we are in heaven preparing and celebrating our marriage with Christ, the world will be going through the tribulation.

At the end of the tribulation, we will emerge with Christ as He returns to earth to complete God's judgment and to bind and defeat Satan. When He returns, the Old Testament saints and martyred Tribulation saints will be resurrected and given their glorified bodies.

Those who survive the Tribulation as believers in Christ will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their human form and will replicate and populate the Kingdom.

Everyone at that point will be invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Which will usher in the Millennial Kingdom.

Thus the seventh reason the rapture will be, in my opinion, and you don't have to agree, before the tribulation.

How then shall we live? The Message is clear, the rapture should change the way we live. It should impact our hearts.

The reality of the rapture motivates those who are seeking to make a decision.

The reality of the rapture motivates believers to have a caring heart for the lost.

The reality of the rapture motivates us to be ready and in constant communication with God.....to confess our sins and have a cleansing influence on our sinful hearts

The reality of the rapture for believers who see the end approaching has calming influence on unsettled hearts

The reality of the rapture and being reunited with loved ones has a comforting influence on grieving hearts

The reality of the rapture focuses us on the things of God and has a motivational influence on serving hearts

Knowing the judgment seat of Christ awaits us should change the way we serve Christ. Have you thought about your wedding garments?

The marriage of the Lamb- Every believer will be present at the wedding feast dressed in the finest white linen, which the Bible says represents the righteous deeds we have done. These good deeds are not so we can enter heaven. God has already invited us and made the way. However, what we will wear to the wedding feast will be the garment we sew ourselves. I once heard a Bible teacher say, "Has it ever occurred to you that at the marriage of the bride to the Lamb, each of us will be wearing the wedding garment of our own making?"

How we are dressed on that day will depend on the life we have lived for Christ. Make sure that you will be beautifully dressed on that day by living for Christ today. The marriage of the Lamb is an event that is certain to happen.

How we treat other believers/ How we employ our God-given talents and abilities / How we use our money /How well we endure personal injustice and being mistreated /How we endure suffering and trials /How we spend our time / How we run the particular race God has given us /How effectively we control our fleshly appetites /How many souls we witness to for Christ / How much the Rapture means to us and shapes our lives /How faithful we are to God's Word and God's people /How hospitable we are to strangers (/ How faithful we are in our vocations/ How we support others in ministry/How we use our words and how we live out our deeds.

Someday the Bridegroom will come to take you to His Father's house. On that day, I promise you will want to be dazzling white.

Knowing that we are Christ's bride changes the way we see ourselves and the value He has placed on us.

Recognizing the price paid for us. The promise that He made for us...the Rewards that He has planned for us..and the destination He has awaiting us.

Closing...

There is a great deal that we do not know about the rapture, but we know enough. We don't know the day, but we can read the signs of the times. We can know the season and we can look ahead each day for the promise....we don't know every detail, but we know what God wants us to know and that is always enough.

I believe that Kate made sure that she was ready for her wedding day. No detail too small, no expense spared and all the guests gathered for the royal event. It was all anyone talked about for months. It was all that Brits thought about since the day was announced. Imagine the future King marrying his bride. The anticipation was off the charts.

Full disclosure here...I don't get the whole British Royalty thing. They seem as dysfunctional as the rest of us. I had no idea who William and Kate were or how invested people were in their wedding. They really know how to worship. Fully devoted, totally sold out, no hesitation.

Why aren't we like that? Why isn't the return of Jesus all that we can talk about, think about, and plan for? We have a King actually worthy of our worship. We have an

inheritance that is actually worth everything. We have the wedding of all eternity on our calendar and our participation is sealed. God told us to be prepared....to look forward to His great promise...and to live with eternity in mind.

It is later than it has ever been...He is at the gate...Soon the trumpet will blow....and...

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

Let's Pray