

Summary

Are you ready for the marriage of the Lamb? In this new series, *The Right Way to Get Ready*, we'll explore what true readiness looks like—not striving in willpower, but transformation through union with Christ and the Spirit's enabling grace.

In this first message, we'll focus on the call to get ready and the eternal reward for readiness. Revelation 19 shows us that every act of faith, obedience, and love will be remembered and woven into the fine linen garment of the bride.

We'll also consider what it means to “begin with the end in mind,” applying it to our eternal destiny. The choices we make today are preparing us—either clothing us in white garments of righteousness or leaving us unprepared and exposed.

This series will help you partner with the Holy Spirit in sanctification, live as an overcomer, and make yourself ready for eternal union with Christ.

The Marriage of the Lamb and the Prepared Bride

a) A New Series

- I'm starting a new series called *The Right Way to Get Ready*.
- *The problem*: After hearing a message on the need to get ready, many respond like an old covenant Jew. They double down on willpower, trying to obey God's commandments by self-effort alone. They try to reform the old self through more prayer, fasting, service, and sacrifice.
- *The solution*: New covenant sanctification is something entirely different. It's not about striving; it's about transformation through divine life, a new nature, and a fruit-bearing union with Christ. It flows out of loving God and others, receiving and responding to the Spirit's enabling grace, and living from your new identity.
- I will talk about the *how* over the next several weeks.
- Today, I will talk about the *what*—the need to get ready—and the *why*—the eternal reward for readiness.

b) Begin With the End in Mind

- Stephen Covey used this phrase as the second of his seven habits of highly effective people.
- Covey taught that highly effective people live and work with a clear sense of purpose and direction.
- To “begin with the end in mind” means:
 - *Clarify your ultimate goals first*: Before starting any project, task, or even shaping your life, define what success looks like at the end.
 - *Live intentionally*: Your daily choices should be guided by your ultimate goals rather than by impulses or external pressures.
 - *Use the future to shape the present*: When you picture the outcome—whether that's a finished project, a career trajectory, or even how you want to be remembered at your funeral—you can reverse-engineer the steps needed to get there.

- Covey was urging people not to drift through life reacting to circumstances, but to define their desired destination and then align their actions, relationships, and priorities to reach it.
- This principle should be applied to our eternal destiny; else we will never be ready for it.

c) The Marriage of the Lamb

- Read Revelation 19:7-9.
- Over nineteen hundred years ago, the apostle John saw a vision of the marriage of the Lamb to His prepared bride.
- This wedding is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.
- For centuries, believers have awaited the moment when heaven will declare: "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).
- The Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world, will receive His prepared bride.

d) The Righteous Acts of the Saints

- At that moment, God will remember every righteous act, every moment of faith, and every hidden sacrifice.
- These will be woven into a radiant garment, bright and clean, adorning the bride.
- The redeemed from every nation, tribe, and tongue will be readied as one bride for Christ.

e) The Invitation and the Garment

- The invitation to marry the Lamb is freely given, but preparation is required.
- The fine linen garment is not an automatic gift for all who are justified; it's an eternal reward for the remnant who are completely sanctified.
- It is the eternal reward for devotion, obedience, and righteousness.

White or Defiled Garments

a) Overview

- The fine linen garment is not Christ's imputed righteousness but what we do from it. They are the righteous acts we do from justification and regeneration, as led by the Spirit.
- Some believers in heaven will be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean—because they made themselves ready.
- Other believers in heaven will be naked and ashamed because they lived for themselves.

b) The White and Bright Garment for the Prepared

- Revelation 3:4–5: "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments."

- Revelation 6:11: The martyrs under the altar “were given to each of them a white robe.”
- Revelation 7:9: A great multitude before the throne “clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.”
- Revelation 7:13–14: Their robes “have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”
- Revelation 19:14 : The armies of heaven follow Christ, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”
- Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”

c) The Defiled and Naked Garment for the Unprepared

- Revelation 3:4: Some in Sardis “have not soiled their garments” (implying others had).
- Revelation 3:17–18: Laodicea is “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” and is counseled to buy white garments.
- Revelation 16:15: “Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”

d) Revelation 16:15 Explained

- In Genesis 3:7, 10, Adam and Eve’s nakedness after sin symbolized exposure, guilt, and shame. They tried to cover themselves, but only God could provide true covering (animal skins).
- To be naked in Revelation continues this theme: it is the believer uncovered by Christ’s righteousness or found unfaithful, standing exposed in spiritual poverty (compare Rev. 3:17–18, Laodicea: “you are wretched... and naked”).
- Nakedness represents having nothing to cover selfish living and unfaithfulness to Christ, leaving shame revealed.
- To “keep his clothes” means walking in purity, vigilance, and obedience.
- Losing garments: living selfishly, carelessly, compromising, neglecting watchfulness.
- “Men Will See His Shame”: In biblical thought, shame is not just inner guilt but public exposure.
- To “see his shame” means:
 - Ultimate exposure at Christ’s judgment seat before all of heaven—God, all the saints, and the angels (Rev. 3:5).
 - Openly being exposed as a hypocrite—losing testimony, honor, and eternal rewards when one’s selfish lifestyle and unfaithfulness is revealed (Luke 12:2–3).
 - Unfaithful believers who are not spiritually alert will face open disgrace when Christ appears suddenly.
- For a believer, to be naked means spiritually unprepared—exposed in compromise, hypocrisy, selfishness, or unfaithfulness.

- The call in Rev. 16:15 is urgent: stay awake, keep your garments, walk in purity, so when Christ comes suddenly, you are not found unprepared and shamed, but clothed and honored.

e) The Unprepared Bride: Naked and Ashamed

- Before the fall, Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, because they were clothed with innocence and God's glory.
- The Unprepared Bride (end of the age): Naked and ashamed, because though she had the opportunity to be clothed in righteous acts, she did not prepare herself.
- In Eden, nakedness without shame means purity with nothing to hide.
- At the judgment seat, nakedness with shame means exposure of wasted opportunity, compromise, selfishness, unfaithfulness, and lack of preparation.

f) The Garments Summarized

- White/linen garments symbolize purity, victory, and readiness for Christ.
- Soiled or lacking garments symbolize compromise, shame, or being unprepared for Him at His coming.

The Bema Seat

a) The Bema Seat of Christ

- 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat (bema) of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
- This is not condemnation (Rom. 8:1 assures no condemnation in Christ).
- If we are in Christ, our sins will never be counted against us in terms of eternal judgment. But our sins and selfishness can result in loss of eternal rewards at the judgment seat.
- The judgment seat is an evaluation of works, faithfulness, and motives.
- Rewards, commendation, or loss of reward are determined here.

b) The Bema Seat in the Ancient World

- The *bēma* ("step" or "raised platform") was a tribunal seat or judgment platform in Greek cities.
- In the Olympic and Isthmian Games, after the contests ended, victors would appear before the bema seat of the city.
- The judges sat there to review the competition, confirm rules were followed, and award crowns (wreaths).
- Victors were honored publicly before cheering crowds.
- Heralds announced their names, family, and city, spreading their fame.

- Conversely, contestants who broke the rules faced public disgrace—shamed before all for their failure or disqualification.
- Paul directly borrows from this imagery when describing the believer's future evaluation before Christ.

c) Rewards for the Overcomers

- Just as athletes received laurel wreaths, believers receive eternal rewards:
 - Crowns (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10).
 - White garments (Rev. 3:4–5; 19:8).
 - Authority and proximity to Christ (Rev. 2:26–27; 3:21).
- Overcomers will receive praise from Christ Himself: “then each man’s praise will come to him from God” (1 Cor. 4:5).
- This is the true glory—eternal honor before the Lord and all creation.

d) Saved Through Fire

- Like athletes disqualified for breaking rules, unfaithful believers will face loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:12–15).
- Their works may burn up as wood, hay, stubble.
- They will still be saved, “yet so as through fire.”
- The imagery of shame comes into view:
 - Rev. 16:15: those found naked have their shame exposed.
 - 1 John 2:28: some will “shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”
- In the public setting of the bema, this loss of reward and exposure will not be hidden—it will be known before all the redeemed and angelic hosts.

The Script and the B-Roll Example

a) The Forgotten Pastors Video

- When we worked on the Lifeschool video, we had a clear script—a story of God’s work through Lifeschool: the mission, the impact, the transformation of forgotten pastors in Africa.
- To bring that script to life, we needed b-roll—real-life footage, testimonies, and lived experiences that matched the story.
- In some places, we had plenty of b-roll. Faithful mentors and pastors we captured in video and photos who had lived the story, so their actions filled the screen with vivid shots.
- In other places, we struggled to find footage. The story was written, but the supporting visuals were thin or missing.

b) How This Relates to Eternal Rewards

- God, before time, wrote the script for our lives—His eternal purpose in Christ (Eph. 2:10).
- He designed good works in advance, a story of faith and obedience meant to glorify Him.
- When we yield to the Holy Spirit and obey Christ, our lives generate “b-roll footage.” These are the righteous acts of the saints (Rev. 19:8)—the lived-out works that match God’s eternal script.
- At the bema seat, this obedience will result in praise, honor, and reward—our story will be full and worthy of celebration.
- When we live selfishly or neglect obedience, we don’t produce b-roll.
 - The script is still there, but our lived obedience is missing.
 - At the bema, we’ll still be saved (1 Cor. 3:15), but our lack of footage will bring loss and shame before the King.

c) The Takeaway

- *Faithful saints*: Their story is complete, accompanied by abundant b-roll of obedience and sacrifice, leading to public praise and reward.
- *Unfaithful saints*: Their story is written in God’s eternal purpose but thin in lived obedience—like a script without footage. They’ll enter the kingdom, but with loss, exposed in shame before all.

The White Garment and the Invitation to the Wedding Feast

a) Blessed Are the Invited

- Immediately after the bride makes herself ready and wedding garments are given to her, the angel says, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper” (Rev. 19:9).

b) Who Are the Invited?

- The immediate context suggests that the “invited” are the same ones who made themselves ready—the faithful saints who received white garments.
- Not every believer in heaven will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb—only those who prepared themselves for Jesus.
- This lines up with Jesus’s parables of the wedding banquet (Matt. 22:1–14) and the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–13); only the ready enter into the wedding joy.
- Readiness → results in white garments → which secures a place at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- The invitation is indeed a reward for faithfulness and preparation, not a blanket guarantee to all who are justified and regenerated.

Partner with God in Sanctification

a) The Meaning of Readiness

- Readiness is about becoming, not just believing.
- It is sanctification completed, not merely justification at the beginning.
- Though some will be saved through fire, readiness requires transformation:
 - Full conformity to Christ's image.
 - Refinement and purification.
 - Radical devotion to Christ.
- Readiness is every act of faith, obedience, and sacrifice woven into your bridal garment.

b) The Nature of Sanctification

- Sanctification is not a self-improvement project but a work of the Holy Spirit in which you actively participate.
- Those who will marry Jesus are those who make themselves ready.
- Sanctification brought to completion involves both divine initiative and human response.
- The Holy Spirit is the Helper, not the doer—He won't do your part and you can't do His.

c) Avoiding Passivity

- Some mistakenly believe sanctification is solely God's work, requiring only "resting in the finished work of the cross."
- Resting, abiding, and believing are essential, but they don't remove responsibility.
- Paul wrote: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you" (Phil. 2:12–13).
- Sanctification is not God alone, nor self-effort alone—it is a partnership.

d) Living as an Overcomer

- Sanctification is Jesus the Overcomer living His overcoming life in and through you.
- Your role: draw from His indwelling life, relying on His strength to obey fully.
- Only God can sanctify you, but He requires your cooperation.
- On the journey of readiness, you must pray fervently for grace to overcome.

Make Yourself Ready

a) The Bride's Readiness

- Readiness equals sanctification brought to completion.
- John described the bride clothed in fine linen—"the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8).
- The Greek word *dikaiōma* means an act of righteousness, a concrete expression of justification.
- These acts are plural—Spirit-empowered fruit, works, behaviors, and choices of faith.

b) The Process of Preparation

- Like an ancient bride stitching her wedding garment, every righteous act becomes a thread of readiness.
- The threads of the bridal garment are Christ's imputed righteousness in justification and imparted righteousness in regeneration.
- But we have to weave this into our own wedding dress through lived out sanctification—what we do from our justification and regeneration. Else we will be naked and ashamed when we stand before Him at the bema seat.
- This is not legalism, but a Spirit-transformed lifestyle flowing from grace.
- Sanctification expresses itself through motivations, thoughts, choices, emotions, and actions.

c) The Expression of Justification

- Righteous acts are more than outward works—they reach into inner motivations.
- Readiness is expressed in:
 - Love for God and others.
 - Faith working through love (Gal. 5:6).
 - Spirit-led obedience in daily life.
- Works don't earn salvation but express it.

d) The Garment of Readiness

- Each act of Spirit-empowered faithfulness becomes a thread in your spiritual garment.
- Preparation is a Spirit-led response to grace.
- By relying on the Spirit, you weave together a life that reflects readiness for eternal union with Christ.