

- I. At the very end of the last published work of the Heavenly Doctrines, we find this postscript: After this work was finished, the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world. The next day He sent all of them out through the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13-14) and in Revelation (11:15); also that "blessed are those who approach the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). (TCR 791).
 - A. This is the reason we celebrated the church's 251st birthday yesterday
 - B. The spiritual origins of the church come from this public announcement of two basic truths of the New Church: the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, and blessed are those who approach the marriage supper of the Lamb
 - C. Today we'll talk about these core ideas that were so important that the Lord was willing to send the disciples throughout the whole spiritual world to announce them, and to start a whole new dispensation to support them.
 1. We'll focus on the second one about the marriage supper of the Lamb, since it's the less commonly spoken of message
- II. First let's look at the statement that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns
 - A. The context of this seemingly obvious statement is that Christianity had divided God into three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 1. This led to all kinds of problems
 - a. It made God invisible, because the Father, the one with the real power, was not visible because He did not come to earth
 - (1) Jesus who was visible was seen as passive and saintly, but not really as God, merely as the son of God
 - b. Another problem is that it led to the blood atonement, the belief that you could get to heaven in a moment by saying Jesus died for you, and only by repeating this formula, not by how you lived
 - (1) And it made God harsh, because He was ready to damn humanity and does except for those who believe Jesus died for them
- III. So the Lord needed the disciples to proclaim that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns
 - A. Jesus who walked on earth is also the King who is in charge. Jesus and the Father are one, like the soul and the body are one
 - B. This means that Jesus Christ is God embodied in the flesh. The infinite power of the one God of the universe is manifested in Him
 - C. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
 - D. All the love we saw the Lord show on earth is a picture of the one true God
 - E. Jesus Christ can be thunderously and powerfully present with us like the voice of God giving the Ten Commandments, or deeply touching like the innocence of the Christmas story

- F. And Jesus Christ is also the quiet insight that comes when the inner meaning of the Word touches us with ideals about life after death and eternal marriage
 - G. Or the meaning we can see in a inner meaning of the Word that makes sense out of a story that is hard to understand
 - H. He is a God we can picture and yet is also infinite.
- IV. This is the first and central message of the New Church: A god we can see, come to know, come to love and serve, and who can touch us and protect us.
- V. And that God, Jesus Christ, calls us to the marriage supper of the Lamb, because He is that Lamb, as John the Baptist said when He saw Him: “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36).
- A. We are invited to a meal with Him
 1. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Rev 3:20).
 - B. But not just any meal; it is a marriage feast, a celebration of two people committing to each other, hopefully for eternity
 1. Let’s look at some of the many ways this marriage feast applies to us
 2. First of all, we not invited as guests to the wedding, but as participants: “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:2)
 3. Or as Isaiah says, “And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” (Is 62:5)
 4. We are that bride when we allow ourselves to be joined with the Lord in the deepest of covenantal bond
 5. This is the purpose of creation that all of humanity can receive the Lord’s truth into our hearts and souls, and bear fruit by serving others with love
 6. The Lord rejoices over our willingness to receive His love and wisdom as a bridegroom rejoices over marriage to His beloved
 7. He said to His disciples, ““With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:14). He calls us to a marriage feast, a sharing of goodness and connection, so that He can make us blessed, which really means happy, or possibly even blissfully happy
- VI. The one God, Jesus Christ, calls us to this marriage, and we respond to this call by responding to the truths of His Word
- A. When we respond, we live those truths, and in doing so we join love and wisdom together in a useful life is ourselves. When that marriage of goodness and truth exists, then we also allow the Lord to join Himself to us, so two marriages exist at once – goodness and truth is us, and our bond with the Lord
 - B. As we read, “Let us rejoice and leap for joy, and let us give the glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.”
 1. This is the reason we are here on earth, to become ready, to choose love, to choose integrity, to choose humility, to choose service

- VII. We commonly use the sentence, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” during Holy Supper, and this sentence is explicitly connected to Holy Supper (AR 816:4)
- A. This is because Holy Supper depicts the marriage of good and truth
 - B. We come toward the Lord to receive bread and wine, symbolic of receiving His love and wisdom. So we take into our bodies and our spirits the same thing – love and wisdom, and we’re told this has a transformational effect
 - C. We don’t have time to explore the details, of how this works, but the Lord’s clear and repeated teaching is that Holy Supper introduces us into heaven: “The chapter on baptism showed that it was an introduction to the church; and what has been said so far ... demonstrates that the Holy Supper is an introduction to heaven. The two sacraments, baptism and the Holy Supper, are as it were two gates leading to everlasting life. Every Christian is by baptism, the first gate, admitted and introduced to the church's teachings drawn from the Word about the other life. All of these are the means by which a person is prepared and can be guided to heaven. The second gate is the Holy Supper. By it everyone who has allowed himself to be *prepared* and *guided* by the Lord is *admitted* and *introduced* into heaven. There are no other universal gates.” (TCR 721)
 - D. The implication of this is that Holy Supper does not merely offer promise of heaven someday. How we live does that. It actually introduces us, as to your spirits, into heaven right now! It is the key to the door right now!
 - E. This happens when we present ourselves to the Lord, like a bride presents herself to her husband, when we enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb
 - F. The Lord is knocking on the door, and what He brings to His marriage feast is heaven—not someday, but right now, in our spirits. Heaven is each experience of innocence and trust, each moment of peace, each point of genuine connection with someone based in love and wisdom
 - G. A mechanism to receive that now is to regularly participate in Holy Supper!
 - H. This point is made even stronger because TCR 791 that we began with said, ““blessed are those who *approach* the marriage supper of the Lamb.” This was quoting our other reading from Rev 19, which actually said, “blessed are those who *come to* the marriage supper of the Lamb.”
 1. We “approach” the Holy Supper so the language was shifted to carry this connotation
 - I. The supper of the great God is a symbol for the New Church (AR 831). So the disciples introducing the New Church by saying blessed are those who approach the marriage supper of the Lamb was an invitation to those in the New Church to enter heaven right now, and to use Holy Supper as a gateway to do so.
- VIII. So far, we have been exploring our internal marriage of goodness and truth, and of ourselves with the Lord, that Holy Supper helps us make real
- IX. This marriage supper of the Lamb also brings to mind the institution of marriage, something that has always been precious and valued in New Church teaching and

tradition.

- A. We see this in the following teaching
- B. The marital union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of Christian religion.... Married love is the precious jewel of human life because the character of a person's life is such as the character of that love in him, that love forming the inmost element of his life. For it is the life of wisdom dwelling together with its love, and of love dwelling together with its wisdom, and thus it is the life of the delights of both. In a word, a person is a living soul as a result of that love. That is why we call the marital union of one man with one wife the precious jewel of human life. (ML 457)
- C. The marriage of a man and a woman is the *precious jewel of human life* and the *repository of the Christian religion*
 - 1. Those are such big phrases that we can pass them over
 - 2. Precious jewel we can comprehend. Weddings are moving. Finding true love touches everyone; it's why most movies ever made are about that
 - 3. Repository, a resting place, a place where things are put for safekeeping
 - 4. Christianity rests in marriage and the view of marriage that Christians hold
 - 5. That is a profoundly powerful statement, one that may be so strong that it's a bit hard to absorb
- D. We can see a bit of why this is so from the explanation that follows
 - 1. "Married love is the precious jewel of human life because ... it is the life of wisdom dwelling together with its love, and of love dwelling together with its wisdom, and thus it is the life of the delights of both. In a word, a person is a living soul as a result of that love."
 - 2. Married love is a mirror of the marriage of goodness and truth in us that we've been talking about, the marriage that is the marriage supper of the Lamb
 - 3. It is the societal mirror of that inner marriage, the public mirror of the inner world, because men and women are like truth and goodness to each other – different but complementary parts that can't really manage without each other, but together can create life and hold society together.
- X. Let's pull all these together to think about what it was that the disciples went throughout the whole spiritual world to announce 251 years ago yesterday
 - A. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one God, the perfect manifestation of infinite love and wisdom that we can see, comprehend, and love
 - B. With fervent desire He calls us to the marriage supper of the Lamb, which takes place in three ways.
 - 1. It is our marriage feast with Him, our conjunction with Him that takes place when we marry love and wisdom within ourselves by doing what He tells us to in the Word with affection.
 - 2. It is the Holy Supper, which supports this process by inviting us into actual heavenly life here today, a marriage feast we can participate in
 - 3. It is each marriage between a man and a woman based on true love and

spiritual principles that we foster and support furthers the spread this connective power in the world

XI. That simple statement the disciples made carries so much within it, and I'm sure you can think of any aspects of these teachings that we've hardly touched on

XII. How marvelous to think that when we embrace all the marriage covenants we've explored, we are helping to bring the Lord into this world a little more. This is the living Second Coming of the Lord

XIII. Let us rejoice and leap for joy, and let us give the glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." And it was given to her that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright; for the fine linen is the just deeds of the holy ones. And he said to me, Write: "Blessed are those who have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Opening sentence:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Readings, adult

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as it were the voice of many waters, and as it were the voice of strong thunderings, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and leap for joy, and let us give the glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." And it was given to her that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright; for the fine linen is the just deeds of the holy ones. And he said to me, Write: "Blessed are those who have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." (Rev 19:6-10)

After this work was finished, the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world. The next day He sent all of them out through the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13-14) and in Revelation (11:15); also that "blessed are those who approach the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). (TCR 791).

This new church is the crown of all the churches which have up to now existed upon earth, because it will worship one visible God, in whom is the invisible God, as the soul is in the body. In this way and no other is God's conjunction with people possible, because people are natural and so think in a natural fashion; and joining must take place in their thinking and so in the affection of their love, and this happens when a person thinks of God as a person. Joining with an invisible God is like joining the sight of the eye with the expanse of the universe, the bounds of which are not to be seen. Or it is like looking out in the middle of an ocean, when the gaze falls on air and sea and is frustrated. But linking with a visible God is like seeing a person in the air or the sea opening His arms and inviting you into His embrace. For any joining of God with people must also be a reciprocal conjunction of people with God; and this second reciprocity is only possible with a visible God. (TCR 787)