

**Revelation 21:9-11** *Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*

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When it comes to modern weddings, it seems that there are an endless number of things that have to be reserved, picked out, and planned for. But surprisingly, with all the elaborate modern traditions of marriage, one thing almost universally still remains the most important thing of all in the wedding planning of brides-to-be. What is that? The dress.

Brides-to-be have ideas of exactly what they want to wear even before they start to shop. And then the magazines are brought out. Brides-to-be gaze dreamingly into the pages of those magazines imagining exactly how beautiful they would look in this style or that style of dress. And then finally the bride-to-be enters into a bridal shop which seems as inviting as a well-stocked candy store to a young child. Dress after dress is tried on. The dress must be just perfect. The dress must not only be beautiful, it must almost radiate beauty outward from itself on that special day.

Yes, the bride in her dress. The husband is not to see it before the actual wedding. The doors of the church are closed to hide this image of beauty from the eyes of the congregation until just the right time. The revealing of the bride in her wedding dress is an event in itself.

Our text agrees. John, the apostle of God, was taken up in the Spirit to a high place. And then the doors of heaven swung open. Down the aisle came a bride adorned for her wedding day. Talk about radiating beauty, this was it. Her dress, her adornment, radiating beauty, radiating the light of the very glory of God. The pure whiteness exuding forth from the bride in her dress causing all other wedding dresses worn before to look a pale dingy grey. Yes, this dress was special. It was so special that it appeared as if the entire dress was not spun from fabric but from pure crystals.

Who was this bride? Who is this bride? Well, John was told by the angel that the bride is the one being married the Lamb of God. And who is that? Well, it is the church. It is you and I. It is Betty and Delbert, Elda and Anita, Virgil and Erwin, Daniel, Ed and Helen. It is those that will come after us in the faith who names have not yet been chosen by their parents. We collectively are the bride with the exquisite dress.

And where did we, the bride of Christ, get such an exquisite dress to wear? Well surprisingly, the groom picked it out. While most grooms couldn't pick a wedding dress out to save their lives, this Groom, Jesus, knew just the perfect dress. Yes, it was costly, but he was willing to pay the cost. Yes, Jesus bought the dress for his bride at a very high cost. He wanted to make sure that on his wedding day he could present his bride to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

And so he did everything that was required to assure that the day of his wedding would be just perfect. Long before the actual wedding, Christ placed upon himself the sin-stained clothes of his bride, us, his church, and suffered the humiliation of wearing such clothes. In fact, he suffered not only the humiliation of such clothes, but the very death that such clothes demanded. He even suffered his Father's disapproval because of wearing our clothes. But by taking upon himself our clothes, he was able to purchase for us, his bride, the church, that beautiful pure white dress which we will wear on our wedding day. By removing our sin and giving to us his own righteousness he made it possible for us to wear white on our wedding day despite all of the past indiscretions of our life. Yes, he made it possible that we might wear his righteousness on that day and might dress it up with the good works that he would work in us through his Spirit as well.

In the imagery of our text for the day, we stand this day as ones engaged to Christ Jesus. But we should not think of it like modern engagements which often end before marriage is ever consummated. For in Jesus' day engagement was taken just as seriously as marriage. If you were engaged, you would be married. There was no backing out of an engagement. So also Jesus promises to us, his bride, that he will not break off the engagement but will bring it to completion on that last day, our wedding day.

It as if through baptism, God has promised to marry us one day. Through his Word and Supper again this day he continues to prepare us for that day. By His spirit he keeps us ever in the faith waiting with great anticipation for that day.

Even now, during our engagement, it is true that we already possess the righteousness of Christ, the glory of God, by faith to wear. And by the power of the Spirit working in our lives, we many times do wear that righteousness in the actions of our lives. But we also confess that at times we do things that are not befitting of the righteousness given to us in Baptism, not fitting for ones who gather at the table of our Lord,

things that no doubt bring embarrassment to the One who has promised to marry people such as us, Christ Jesus.

But on that last day, all of those indiscretions of our life will no longer be present. When the marriage feast of the Lamb, Christ and us his church gets underway, we will no longer only reflect the glory of God, but we will radiate his glory. For no longer will our flesh, the sinful world, or the devil be able to stop the glory of God given to us by Jesus from shining forth in all its glory. Yes, we will walk down the aisle with radiating beauty given to us by our groom, dressed in righteousness that shines like crystals. The veil of sin will be removed and we will see our Groom as he is.

Today, on All Saint's Day, the truth that we truly celebrate is that all who believe in Christ are saints, holy ones, because God has given to them his own holiness to wear. And what makes our celebration even more special is the knowledge that this engagement of righteousness that we live in now will one day give way to a wedding beyond all comparison in heaven.

As we remember those that have gone before us, that have fallen asleep in Jesus, today, we should rejoice because we are assured from our Old Testament Lesson that those that are dwelling in the dust on that last wedding day will indeed awake from their sleep and sing for joy. Why? Because they also are part of the host of people that comprise the bride of Christ. They too will walk down the aisle covered in the righteousness of Christ. They too are integral to the celebration that will take place on the last day when the body of Christ becomes the bride of Christ.

Our lives now are to be spent getting ready for our wedding day. And how do we do that? Well, we repent of the times when our lives are an embarrassment to our groom-to-be, Jesus. We stay close to him through his word and at his table so that he might continue to forgive our sins and make us holy. And as we abide with him, he will cause his righteousness that dwells within us to shine forth from our lives. He will cause that inner beauty ours by grace to become our outer clothing even now.

Yes, our wedding day is coming. And it will be beyond all comparison. Just wait until you look in the mirror and see the dress. Even better, wait until the veil is lifted you see the groom, Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.