

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 22 - 26, 2024

JESUS

REVELATION

Epiphany Series
Jan 7 - Feb 11





MONDAY

Read **Revelation 19:6–9**

That Thunderous Exclamation!

Can you hear it? I can, even now, after so many years. I was a young child seated next to my grandmother in a vast sanctuary when the soaring strains of Handel’s “HAL-LE-LU-JAH Chorus” literally swept us to our feet.

No one had to tell me what that glorious explosion of praise was about. My heart knew, and overwhelming emotion sent tears down my cheeks. Today, as I read Revelation 19:6, I feel again the wonder of that glorious moment that carried me beyond the limits of earthly time and space into the presence of Jesus.

The thunderous “*Hallelujah*” in Revelation 19:6 announces the long-awaited “*wedding of the Lamb*” (v. 7), hosted by God the Father in His eternal dwelling, the fulfillment of His promise in John 14:2–3. Jesus, in this scene, has finished His work of preparing a place for His bride—for you and me and countless others of all nations and tribes. At this point, we’re ready to take up our permanent, indescribably wondrous, in-person residence with the Lord.

The emotional impact of this event is so intense that Bible translators through the centuries have found no word or phrase in any language other than the original Hebrew to convey its magnitude. *Hallelujah* (spelled *Alleluia*, in Latin) combines two words and an

additional vowel sound to link them: *hallel*, which means “praise,” and *jah*, a reverent reference to God, with a “u” to bind them together.

Let’s reflect for a moment on the weddings we’ve attended, perhaps even our own. When does the drama reach its peak? It’s the moment when the bride comes into view and begins her walk toward the groom. In Jesus’ day, the celebratory noise of the wedding party and guests typically crescendoed after the group reached the groom’s home—which he had long been working to prepare for his bride. Then the partying really got started!

Aren’t you glad Jesus gave us such a beautiful, relatable illustration of the glorious occasion that awaits us? He wanted us to feel it, to be filled with anticipation that no amount of waiting and no earthly struggles can quell. If you’re a parent or grandparent, you may want to try a little game with the kids, or even with yourself: “Heaven will be even more amazing than ...!” After all, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

QUESTIONS

Today allow yourself a few moments to let your imagination soar to that moment when you arrive at your heavenly home. Perhaps you’ll want to listen to your favorite recording of the “Hallelujah Chorus” and let its notes lift you upward in praise to the Lord.

PRAYER

For Winter Camp for Glenkirk Students at Forest Home:

Middle School (January 26-28), Elementary and High School (February 2-4)

Pray for safety as the students travel up to Forest Home—for the roads to be clear and for them to not encounter any poor weather conditions, bad traffic, mechanical issues, or road closures as they drive up to the mountains.



TUESDAY

Read [John 3:29-36](#); [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)

Our Betrothal

Becoming engaged to be married is a very big deal. In Jesus' earthly days, the event was celebrated almost as joyfully and publicly as the wedding, and with good reason. Engagement was treated as a legally binding commitment. It could not be broken without great pain and social consequences, equivalent to divorce.

John the Baptist was the first to introduce Jesus as the betrothed "bridegroom" and himself as the bridegroom's "attendant" (John 3:29). We might say he served as Jesus' best man, and I can hardly wait to meet him at the wedding one day! John was the first to explain the basics of our "betrothal" to Christ and to refer to Jesus' "bride" as belonging solely to Jesus.

Engagement serves as a colorful metaphor for Christ's call and our response to it. Jesus says, "*Follow me.*" When we answer this call by "stepping out of the crowd" to commit ourselves wholly and exclusively to Him, we depict what it means to be "betrothed" to Jesus. The binding nature of this relationship is confirmed by Christ, our husband-to-be, with a valuable token which, even in Jesus' day, was often a cherished ring.

In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul describes our "engagement ring," a most precious and personal gift. This gift is the indwelling Holy Spirit, who

serves as a “*deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*” (v. 14) until the marriage takes place. That’s exactly what the engagement ring was—and still is—intended to symbolize.

Can those who’ve committed themselves fully to Jesus be cut off from His love? Never. Will Jesus remove His Spirit from anyone who has received Him? Never. It must be noted here that only God knows a person’s heart of hearts. God has perfect clarity on who belongs to Him and who’s still watching from the crowd (or ignoring); we do not. So, let’s leave that matter to Him.

For now, both the bridegroom and the bride must be about their preparations. And, like typical couples, we must remember that deepening the love relationship takes priority over planning the details of the wedding ceremony.

QUESTIONS

Today review the most memorable, relationship-deepening portion of your discipleship study last fall. Even if you did not participate in one of the discipleship groups, you may want to watch one of the sermon videos or look over your notes from one of these messages (e.g., “Re-Forming Our Desires,” November 12, or “Re-Forming Our Practices,” November 26). As you and I draw nearer to God, He draws nearer to us. That’s a promise!

PRAYER

For Winter Camp for Glenkirk Students at Forest Home:

Middle School (January 26-28), Elementary and High School (February 2-4)

Pray for the students’ hearts to be prepared to receive what the Lord has in store for them. Pray for them to seek first the Kingdom and grow ever closer to God. Pray for the students who may not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior; may they encounter Him and accept Him into their hearts.



WEDNESDAY

Read [John 14:1-10](#)

The Bridegroom's Preparations

What is your mental picture of our eternal home? Some of us may recall a reference to “mansions” and think of magnificent palaces in various parts of the world. However, I’m happy to report that what awaits us surpasses such places by far, but maybe in ways that differ from what you imagine.

Jesus kindly used word pictures in His teaching, pictures that could help people connect closely with His concepts. His reference to our future home as resembling the place where a groom would work to prepare “a place in his father’s house” is just one among many such examples.

So, let’s take a close look at what this expression meant to Jesus’ hearers. First, the role of the groom’s father was to oversee provision, protection, and well-being for his entire extended family. As a family grew, this “insular” style dwelling place expanded outward from a central courtyard, which would also be expanded to accommodate shared activities.

According to the Center for Holy Lands Studies (CHLS), archeologists have excavated dwellings near Capernaum, where Peter lived, large enough to accommodate as many as 100 family members. In Chorazin, a home was unearthed that had ample space for

150 people. CHLS scholar Wave Nunnally comments that Jesus emphasized for His disciples something more significant than a physical structure. He offered an illustration of “the close-knit, supportive, loving, extended families that ate, worked, played, and worshiped together. In this respect, it served as the ideal picture of heaven that Jesus sought to convey.” (Nunnally)

For most of us, this picture (as wonderful as it can be) may raise a hint of concern about privacy and personal space. It helps to remember that *all* our needs will be met once we’re whole and totally free from sin and shame, weakness and weariness, and anything/everything else that causes us to hide or withdraw from others. God’s perfect love will cover us all, continually, as we undertake our new and exciting activities in God’s kingdom.

QUESTIONS

Today question any thoughts or fears that cast even a tiny shadow over the contemplation of this glorious picture of God’s kingdom. Does anything hold you back from joyful anticipation of our future life with God? If so, confess it now in prayer and seek the Lord’s gracious help in removing it from your mind and heart. He will!

PRAYER

For Winter Camp for Glenkirk Students at Forest Home:

Middle School (January 26-28), Elementary and High School (February 2-4)

Pray for the leaders and staff from Glenkirk and from Forest Home to be well prepared by God. Pray for them to be encouraged, to be poured into by the Spirit, and to have hearts prepared to serve the Kingdom as they pour into the students they encounter.



THURSDAY

Read **Revelation 19:7–8; Ephesians 2:10**

The Bride's Preparations

Because the Bridegroom is, for now, physically apart from us, His ongoing preparations for our marriage remain somewhat mysterious, but not ours. God has graciously given clear guidance about “the how” to prepare for the day of our wedding celebration.

Given that Jesus' bride constitutes a *community* of believers, much of our preparation takes place *in* community, supported *by* community. This truth applies even to our individual preparation. Our relationships within the fellowship of Jesus' followers allows our preparation to be tested and refined. Yes, God knows our tendency to evaluate ourselves “*more highly than [we] ought*” (Romans 12:3).

The insights Jesus conveyed in His “Sermon on the Mount,” exemplified in His life and teachings and underscored in His apostles' letters to the bride-in-waiting, constitute His marriage advice. Our assignment is to allow the Holy Spirit to re-form us, and this re-formation is anything but a passive process.

We make choices every day that can further our growth in Christlikeness. We can engage in spiritual “privileges” (my favorite term for “disciplines”). We can invest our time and resources in caring for and encouraging others. We can share the Good News, the gospel of Jesus Christ, with those who have yet to meet Him.

We can do all these things, and more, as the Holy Spirit empowers us, both individually and collectively.

Here's the amazing and paradoxical "bottom line." Our good works become for us a beautiful wedding gown, "*fine linen, bright and clean,*" a gown that's *given* to us, according to Revelation 19:8. Did we fashion it with our own efforts, or did the Master Designer tailor it for us? The answer appears in Ephesians 2:10. "*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*" (emphasis added).

Are you facing a challenge today that seems too hard? Are you weighed down by a load of responsibility? Are you tempted to sit back and let others do what he's challenged you to do? Hear His invitation: "*Come to me ... My yoke is easy [fits well] and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28, 30, emphasis added).

Not only has Jesus prepared righteous acts for you to fulfill—even the most difficult and weighty ones you can imagine—but He has also provided the power, by His Spirit, to accomplish them! Take joy in this promise.

QUESTIONS

How do these truths impact us as we prepare ourselves to be with Him?

PRAYER

For Winter Camp for Glenkirk Students at Forest Home:

Middle School (January 26-28), Elementary and High School (February 2-4)

Pray for students, leaders, and staff to be healthy as they travel to Forest Home, while they are at camp, and when they return. Pray that they won't have any illnesses, elevation sickness, or injuries during their time at Winter Camp.



FRIDAY

Read **Revelation 19:6–9, 21:10–27**

The Ultimate Celebration

Today let's begin by recalling the greatest celebration, the most fabulous feast or party, we've ever had the privilege to enjoy. What made it so good? Was it the people, the music, the food and drink, the atmosphere, or what? The Bible guarantees that the celebration of our heavenly union with God's One and Only Son will be better than any of those earthly celebrations.

Now let's think about what constitutes the best marriage a person could ever possibly experience. What's the relationship like? Let's contemplate at least a few of its characteristics. The husband and wife would find each other endlessly interesting. Each would feel known and cherished. The two would understand each other's questions and value each other's responses. They'd love shaping plans together for ongoing adventures. They'd always be successful in their efforts to say and do what's loving and kind.

No envy or jealousy would ever cloud these partners' hearts. Nothing would distract them from paying close and careful attention to each other's dreams and ideas. No selfishness would be expressed or experienced, only pure, honest, self-giving love. Truth would always be treasured and never used as a weapon.

Perhaps the greatest wonder of wonders is that this kind of relationship will be shared among every person, simultaneously, in the realm where God reigns. Each of us whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be part of this experience! (Revelation 21:27). God guarantees it.

You may want to ponder for a moment the description of the bride in Revelation 21:10-27. We're pictured as the Holy City, radiant with God's glory, as brilliant as "a very precious jewel" (v. 11). Nothing impure or shameful or deceitful is or ever will be in us. Revelation 22:3 tells us the curse will be wiped away!

Let's just try to imagine life beyond the curse—beyond even the boundaries of the world as we know it. "Mind-boggling" hardly begins to describe such an exercise, and yet to do so is an act of worship.

How else can we respond to God's glorious Revelation of Jesus? The Apostle John tells us: "*The Spirit and the bride [can] say, 'Come!'*" (Revelation 22:17). Let's all get more actively engaged in extending this invitation to others.

QUESTIONS

Find someone with whom to discuss your thoughts and ideas about heaven this week? You'll both be uplifted when you do.

PRAYER

For Winter Camp for Glenkirk Students at Forest Home:

Middle School (January 26-28), Elementary and High School (February 2-4)

Pray that this year's Winter Camp will be a truly memorable time, filled with joy, growth, and fun. Pray that the things these students learn while at camp will be retained and applied at home.



Sources

- Glenkirk Church Website, “Re-Forming Our Desires” (<https://www.glenkirkchurch.org/sermon/november-12-2023-re-forming-our-desires-message-only/>) and “Re-Forming Our Practices” (<https://www.glenkirkchurch.org/sermon/november-26-2023-re-forming-our-practices-message-only/>).
- Wave Nunnally, “What Did Jesus Mean by ‘Many Mansions?’” Posted March 2016: <https://news.ag.org/en/articles/news/2016/03/what%20did%20jesus%20mean%20by%20many%20mansions>.

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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