

# THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS TO MARRY THE PREPARED BRIDE IN REVELATION 19

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“We have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19). As the night of the present age grows ever darker and the apostasy of the church becomes increasingly severe (Rom. 13:12; cf. Gal. 1:4), the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ should become more precious to the Lord’s loving seekers. These prophecies are not to be understood merely academically but should be heeded as a light dawning in the inner being of every believer to guide us through this dark night to the bright day of His return.

How sad it is that eschatology has long been a fount of division and strife among Christians as well as a distraction from Christ, leading many into a mire of supernatural imaginations, profitless predictions, and endless interpretative minutiae. In contrast, the proper eschatology—that is, an eschatology according to the economy of God, which is the unique content of the teaching of the apostles (1 Tim. 1:3-4; Acts 2:42)—does more than satisfy human curiosity and goes further than even providing hope to those who yearn for the righteousness, justice, and peace of the coming kingdom; it unveils the intrinsic significance of the second coming of Christ as the finalization of God’s New Testament economy, which is His eternal purpose to impart Himself in Christ as the Spirit into the believers to produce them as His corporate expression in Christ (Eph. 3:8-10). This corporate expression, denoted in Revelation as “the testimony of Jesus” (1:2; 19:10; 20:4), is the Body of Christ manifested in local churches in the present age, the overcoming believers as the bride in the next age, and the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth in eternity.<sup>1</sup> Seeing such a Christ-centered eschatological vision through the lens of God’s economy will make us sober concerning our present condition, motivate us to attain to God’s standard, and reveal how we may cooperate with Him for the accomplishment of His purpose in this age and the hastening of the Lord’s return.

The book of Revelation not only prophesies that our Lord will return (2:25; 3:3, 11; 16:15) and describes what will take place at the time of His coming (chs. 12—19); it also unveils the crucial reason for His delay. In the New Testament Epistles we can detect the eagerness with which the apostles expected the bright day of our Lord, which they believed to be imminent.<sup>2</sup> It was not revealed to them that, according to the prudence and sovereignty of God, the church age would last for millennia (cf. Matt. 24:36; Rev. 3:3). How wise of our Lord and how comforting to those suffering for His kingdom (1:9) that in the concluding book of the New Testament, indeed in the last chapter, He Himself repeatedly said, “I come quickly” (22:7, 12, 20). Through the generations countless saints have echoed the apostle John’s response: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (v. 20). Yet, after such a long time, we may join those many loving seekers of the Lord in asking, “Why is it that we have still not seen the fulfillment of our dear Lord’s promise?”<sup>3</sup>

The answer given in Revelation is that the believers as His counterpart have not yet been