Hi,

Today’s updates:

* In March, when I took my three classes on-line, I used my personal Facebook profile for the Facebook Live Events. I’ve learned since that I really should have set up a “Facebook page” for this. (A Facebook profile and a Facebook page are not the same thing -- who’d guess). The problem I created for myself was that I’ve gotten an ever-increasing list of Facebook “friends,” including internationally. Now, I like friends, but my profile has become unwieldy. So . . . **starting Sunday, all three of my weekly on-line Facebook Live classes will meet** [**here at “Scott Engle - St. Andrew UMC”**](https://www.facebook.com/Scott-Engle-St-Andrew-UMC-110365790736617/?modal=admin_todo_tour)**.** You might go ahead and bookmark this link. **J**ust hit the “follow” button on the new Scott Engle-St. Andrew UMC page and all the updates will show up in your Facebook news feed. You can/should post comments on this page during class, just as you did on my profile.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* I am devoting only five daily emails to Revelation. But last year, I taught a twenty-week class on Revelation and all the sessions are [on my podcast site](https://scottengle.podbean.com/). The first was on Aug 20 2019 and the last on Jan 27 2020. You can listen to the podcast episodes via your browser ([here](https://scottengle.podbean.com/)) and through the Apple Podcast app and the Podbean player (iOS and Android).

Today, we zoom all the way forward in Revelation to the scene of the marriage supper between the Lamb (Jesus) and his bride (the Church) in chapter 19.

***Revelation 19:4-10 (NRSV)***

**And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying,**

**“Amen. Hallelujah!”**

**And from the throne came a voice saying,**

**“Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.”**

**Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,**

**“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”**

**And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”**

After the four horsemen of the apocalypse, we return again to the Lamb. This time, we prepare ourselves to meet the bride of the Lamb and pray that we will be invited to their marriage supper. Of course, between the horsemen and the bride lay thirteen chapters of Revelation! So, let’s take the briefest look at the story that leads us to the bride and groom.

*From horsemen to a wedding*

John’s visions tell the story of a cosmic struggle between the Lamb and those who oppose the Lamb. In the visions of chapters 6-11, this story plays out as a struggle between the heavens and the earth. As devastation rains down on the earth’s inhabitants, the question is whether any will repent and give glory to God. Some do. John sees martyred believers hiding under the altar of God. Later, John hears and sees a great multitude of faithful from every nation. Yet many (most?) resist, they do “not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood” (9:20). Finally, God sends two witnesses who testify to God. Though they are killed, their resurrection causes, at last, people to give glory to God.

After another scene of triumphant and joyous worship, John’s visions take a turn. The cosmic conflict is now cast as a struggle between Satan and God – and, yes, you can guess how this will end.

Beginning in chapter 12, Satan is seen as a great red dragon. After failing to devour Christ, who is depicted as the child of a heavenly woman, Satan is defeated by the forces of Gabriel, the archangel, and is cast down to the earth, where Satan is penned in, much like a caged animal. Satan is able to roam back and forth across the planet doing great harm. He forms his own little demonic trinity: Satan, a beast from the sea, and a beast from the land. They wage war on the followers of the Lamb, getting drunk on the blood of the saints. As John’s visions proceed, it soon becomes clear that the Roman Empire, Babylon as it is called in the visions, is the latest in a long line of Satan’s minions. Chapter 18 describes the fall of Babylon, after which all the heavens sing “Hallelujah!” to open chapter 19. After the worship scene which is today’s Scripture passage, there is a climactic battle in which Satan, the beasts, and all those who follow them are defeated by “the King of kings and Lord of lords,” hence, the triumphant Lamb of God in our rose window. But before racing on to the end of John’s visions tomorrow, we need to reflect on this staggering image of the Lamb and the bride.

*The bride and groom*

Marriage as a metaphor for God’s relationship with his people is one of the most enduring and profound of all biblical images. The power of the metaphor is grounded in the significance of covenant. The marriage of a man and a woman is a covenant, instituted by God, to which both are expected to remain faithful. The relationship between God and his people is lived out in a covenant – to which both are expected to remain faithful. Thus, just as adultery is forbidden in a marriage, even making the Top Ten list, the prophet Hosea uses adultery to describe Israel’s relentless chasing after other gods (Hosea 2). But Hosea also describes God determination to woo his bride anew so that “she shall respond as in the days of her youth” (Hosea 2:15).

Jesus is repeatedly referred to as the bridegroom. John the Baptist is a friend of the groom (John 3:22-30). When Jesus is asked by the Pharisees why his disciples don’t fast, he tells them that the disciples are wedding guests who won’t fast while they are with the groom (Mark 2:18-22). Numerous parables liken Jesus’ ministry and the coming kingdom of God to a wedding feast.

All this prepares us for the images in John’s vision. We are nearing the end of the story. The Lamb, Christ, is almost ready for his marriage to his bride, the Church. Jesus’ second coming will be the consummation of this marriage. An angel then arrives, bearing a message of salvation, the third of the book’s seven beatitudes: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,” recalling Jesus’ parable of a wedding feast that focuses on invitations rejected and accepted (Matthew 22:1-14). John is so overcome by all this, that he falls on the ground to worship the angel. He is, of course, scolded by the angel, for we are to worship only God.

*The marriage supper*

We often make the mistake of thinking of time as only linear. But we live post-Einstein. According to his theories, which have been borne out, time passes more slowly for an astronaut circling the earth at high speed than it does for us on the ground. The astronaut’s “after” is my “before.” If the astronaut’s “before” and my “before” aren’t the same, why should I assume that “before” and “after” have any fixed meaning with God?

We struggle to make sense of the New Testament’s perspective that God’s kingdom has come already, but not yet. We struggle to grasp that the people of God are not just waiting to be the bride, but are already the bride. In the glorious images of Revelation 21, God comes to dwell with his people. And yet God dwells already with his people. We are God’s temple. The Holy Spirit is God dwelling amongst us.

All this takes a massive feat of imagination, and Revelation is written for the imagination. John’s visions are meant to help us imagine the truth of a reality larger than we see and touch in our daily lives.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott