



theme: End Times #1 – A Marriage

materials: Paper, pencils, bowls, matches, incense, bibles

This month the cells will all focus on “End Times”. What does Scripture mean by End Times? Can we know anything about the end of the world for sure? How much of what we think about the End Times come from Scripture, and how much from other popular sources?

welcome

Describe your ideal wedding. Where would it be, what would happen, what songs would be played, etc... (A lot of people already have their ideal weddings planned out, and most of these people are not guys. Guys, feel free to get very creative with this one).

interact

Have someone read Revelation 5 out loud. Get some pieces of paper and write down your prayers of praise to Jesus – write down what you think of Jesus, what you would like to say to Him. Put the prayers in a bowl, and if you are in a place where this is acceptable, burn the papers. If you can't do that, try to get some incense to burn, or even just some sweet smells to fill the room (ask about allergies first though).

There is nothing magical or even mystical about this action. It is just a symbolic recognition that the smell of our prayers is sweet to Jesus.

read

Read out Revelation 19:6-10, and Revelation 21:1-11

Why do you think a wedding feast is used so often in Scripture to describe what the “end times” and heaven will be like?

Who is the Bride?

What does a wedding suggest about how God wants to be with His people?

Why would God want to marry His people, especially given how unfaithful this Bride has been?

What about this description of heaven excites you? Is there anything that scares you?

Who is excluded from the wedding feast? Is this fair?

Why does John try to worship the angel? Why is this so wrong?

think

Create some wedding invitation cards for some friends (or party invitations). On it, write the verse from Rev. 19:9. See if each cell member will give a card to a friend, and be prepared to explain something of what it means to them. We've suggested hosting banquets or parties before, but it might be a good time to plan another one for friends to come to.



live & pray

Put a bowl beside your bed and write down all your prayers of praise this week to put into it. See how the bowl fills up with “incense”, and imagine the beautiful smell of all the Christians praying in the world, and throughout history.

useful resources

Book: *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, by Richard Bauckham

Book: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Kingdom of God*, by Russell Rook and Aaron White

leader's guide

The wedding feast is a recurring theme or picture of how God will be with His people for eternity. It is a readily understandable experience of joy, celebration, community, family, hope and promise in most people's lives, so it is a very potent image for heaven. The marriage of God with His people suggests an incredible promise of intimacy and the eternal presence of God. This is reinforced in chapter 21, as it states that God himself will dwell with His people, that they will need no sun or moon or temple in their eternal city because God will serve as all of these things. The Bride is usually identified as the people of God, sometimes as the Church. Here, in Rev. 21:9-11, the Bride is identified as the holy city of Jerusalem. Again, this is symbolic of the redeemed people of God, the central place of worship, and looks forward to the time when God will truly and forever dwell with his people.

There are many instances throughout Scripture when the unfaithfulness of the Bride is spelled out in detail. That God still wants to marry this Bride is stunning. But He has made her pure and beautiful through the death and resurrection of His Son, and she is now wearing fine linen, which represents righteousness.

In 21:8 it lists the people who will not be attending the wedding feast. These are people who have not accepted the fine linen of the Bride. They will not be married to God, and God will not force them to.

It is not clear why John would try to worship the angel. He may have mistaken the angel for Christ, as the angel was holding to the testimony of Christ. The angel would also probably be pretty impressive. But it is clearly wrong for John to be doing so, as only God is worthy of worship.