

## Heaven's Hallelujah Chorus

### Revelation 19:1-10

**Introduction:** 1) Revelation has been called “a tale of two cities:” Babylon that represents the evil world system that focuses on earthly and temporal values (chs. 17-18) and the New Jerusalem that focuses on heavenly and eternal values (chs. 21-22). It could also be called “a tale of two women:” the prostitute of Babylon and the Bride of the Lamb. Interestingly the two come together in Revelation 19:1-10. Their future destinies could not be more radically different. The one you love and belong to is crucial.

2) There is a single word that captures the heart of this text; it is the word “Hallelujah.” It appears four times in verses 1, 3, 4, and 6. Surprisingly, the word appears nowhere else in the New Testament. In 1741 George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) wrote *The Messiah*. No one would question that its most famous oration is the “Hallelujah Chorus.” It is a tradition around the world that when it begins the congregation stands and remains standing until its completion. In heaven, however, they respond quite differently. There they fall down and worship (v.4). They fall down and worship “the God who is seated on the throne” because He has judged “the great prostitute” (vv. 1-5); prepared the Bride, the Church, for the marriage supper of the Lamb (vv. 6-8); and directed all of heaven and earth to keep their attention on Jesus (vv. 9-10). Heaven’s “Hallelujah Chorus” is a

response to the command of 18:20 and it anticipates the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus (19:11-21), His millennial reign (20:1-6), Satan's final judgment (20:7-10), the Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15) and the establishment of the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem (chs. 21-22). There has been a lot of bad news in the Apocalypse. Praise God, hallelujah, good news, great news, has arrived. The response of those who love and follow the Lamb is nothing less than unabated, unhindered, enthusiastic praise and worship. This is a day we have all longed for and it is finally here!

#### **I. Praise God for His Salvation      19:1-5**

- Verse one begins with the connecting phrase, "After this." In light of God's judgment of Babylon in chapters 17-18, the following celebration and worship takes place "in heaven." John heard "what seemed to be the loud voice (*phonen megalen*) of a great multitude." This multitude may be angels, or the church triumphant or both. Their worship is anything but quiet and reserved. It is loud and enthusiastic. They sing "Hallelujah" which means "Praise Yahweh" or "Praise the Lord." Mounce notes, "It is derived from two Hebrew words" and that "the Hebrew form introduces a number of Psalms (106, 111-13, 117, 135, 146-50)."
- Six items are noted in vs. 1-2 for this praise of Yahweh, this praise of the Lord: 1) His salvation, 2) His glory, 3) His power, 4) His true and just

judgments, 5) His judgment of the great prostitute (Babylon) and 6) His avenging the blood of His servants (Gr. *doulos*). Verse 3 records the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hallelujah as “a sort of heavenly encore that heightens measurably the dramatic quality of the scene” (Mounce, 342-43). God is praised because “the smoke from her [the great prostitute] goes up forever and ever.” God is not vindictive or capricious in his judgment of Babylon. He is totally true and just. David Platt is right when he says, “if God turned a deaf ear to sin and evil and injustice and suffering in this world, He would not be true, and He would certainly not be just. God here is rightfully and wholeheartedly praised for His justice” (Sermon Notes).

- Verses 4-5 records the 3<sup>rd</sup> hallelujah and adds to our heavenly choir “the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures.” Clearly angels and humans are of one mind and heart in their adoration and worship of God. Here they fall down and worship together the “God who is seated on the throne (chs. 4-5). They cry “Amen!” So be it! We agree! They cry “Hallelujah!” Praise the Lord! This, by the way, is the last we see of the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures.
- From the throne a voice speaks. It could be an angel, one of the 4 living creatures or even one of the elders. The text does not specify who but it records what: “Praise our God all you servants, you who fear him small and

great.” There is no discrimination or segregation in this worship! John Piper captures powerfully the praise and worship resounding throughout heaven for the awesome and all-encompassing salvation that belong to our God and all His servants, all His sons and daughters. It is the same praise and worship that should resound in our churches anytime we gather in the name of our great God. He says, “Corporate worship... is the declaration in the midst of Babylon that we will not be drawn into her harlotries, because we have found in God the satisfaction of our souls. In his presence is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. Corporate worship is the public savoring of the worth of God and the beauty of God and power of God and the wisdom of God. And therefore worship is an open declaration to all the powers of heaven and to all of Babylon that we will not prostitute our minds or our hearts or our bodies to the allurements of the world. Though we may live in Babylon, we will not be captive to Babylonian ways. And we will celebrate with all our might the awesome truth that we are free from that which will be destroyed.” (Worship God,” 9-15-91).

## **II. Glorify God for His Bride      19:6-8**

- In verse 1-5 we have glorified a God of Salvation, glory and power (v.1), a God whose judgments are always true and just, a God who judges evil,

corruption, and immorality, a God who avenges the blood of His servants (v.2), and a God who welcomes all who fear Him, small and great (v.5).

Now our text moves to glorify God for two additional reasons: 1) He is an almighty God who reigns as sovereign Lord over all things (v.6) and 2) He is “a God who arranged from all eternity for the marriage of his Son Jesus to a countless host of saved sinners, purified and beautified by his own blood” (vv.7-8) [Piper].

- John again (v.1) “heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude.” He further describes it as something “like the roar of many waters and like the sound of might peals of thunder.” The sound is deafening. It was like a mighty waterfall, an awesome cascade of thunders. They cry out or sing the 4<sup>th</sup> and final “Hallelujah.” And why do they shout as loud as they possibly can, “Hallelujah?” Because “the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.” Once again this great title, which appears 9 times in Revelation, is used (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). Mounce notes, “The previous “Hallelujahs” (vv. 1, 3, 4) pointed back to the destruction of Babylon in chapter 18. The “Hallelujah” of v.6 points forward in anticipation of the coming wedding of the Lamb.” He further notes that the title “Almighty” literally means “one who holds all things in his control” (346). This is an omnipotent, all powerful, God who is inaugurating His universal, visible and

permanent reign over all things. What is a reality in heaven is now about to become a reality on earth. The prayer of Matthew 6:10, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” has come!

- With the arrival of the reign of God comes also the long awaited day of the marriage of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, and His bride, the Church. This is the occasion for rejoicing, exultation and the giving of glory to “the Lord our God the Almighty.” The image of marriage symbolizing the relationship of God and His people appears several times in the Scriptures (Isa. 54:5-7; Hosea 2:19; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33). Providing helpful historical context Mounce again notes, “In biblical times a marriage involved two major events, [or three if you count the processional] the betrothal and the wedding. These were normally separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered husband wife and such were under the obligations of faithfulness. The wedding began with a procession to the bride’s house, which was followed by a return to the house of the groom for the marriage feast. By analogy, the church, espoused to Christ by faith, now awaits the parousia when the heavenly groom will come for his bride and return to heaven for the marriage feast that lasts throughout eternity.” (347).
- Verses 7-8 speak of the preparation of the bride for her wedding day. Through sanctification by the Word and Spirit, she has made herself ready

(cf. Eph. 2:10). This is the only time in Revelation where the saints are described as making themselves ready, preparing themselves as the Bride of Christ for His coming. How do we prepare ourselves and get ready for that Day? I believe the Book of Revelation, itself, provides the answer.

- The Bride prepares herself by remaining faithful to Christ in a fallen and evil world.
- The Bride prepares herself by enduring hardship in the midst of suffering.
- The Bride prepares herself by trusting in God in the face of martyrdom.
- The Bride prepares herself by obeying God to take the gospel to all tribes, tongues, peoples and nations.

Yes, we, as Philippians 2:12 says, are to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”

- But, don’t miss what Philippians 2:13 says, for it matches up perfectly with Revelation 19:8. Philippians tells us, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” And in Revelation 19:8 we read, “it was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.” “It was granted her,” given to her by who? By God! This is what is called a divine passive where

God is the implied agent behind the action. Ladd says it perfectly, “While the bride must make herself ready for the marriage, her glorious raiment is not something she can acquire for herself; it must be granted her, i.e., given to her as a divine gift” (249). He then adds, “The fine linen, bright and pure, stands in sharp contrast to the brilliant robes of the harlot. The wedding garment is a simple white garment which has been washed and “made...white in blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).”

### **III. Worship God for the witness of Jesus      19:9-10**

- John Piper is again spot on when he says,

“[Worship] is what the whole book of Revelation is about. That’s the point of all God’s judgments, all God’s dealings with the world. All God’s plans for history from beginning to end have this one goal—**WORSHIP GOD!** Don’t worship the wealth of Babylon, don’t worship the power of Babylon, don’t worship the pleasures of Babylon, and don’t even worship the holy messenger who brings you the news that Babylon has fallen forever. **WORSHIP GOD!**”

[The Church] is an alien outpost in Babylon. And we exist to reassert God’s rightful place wherever it has been prostituted to secular commerce or secular education or secular entertainment or secular media

or secular arts or secular sports. All the people of God, exiled in Babylon, are called to be filled with the Spirit of prophecy (acts 2:17f), and the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10)—the testimony that Jesus is the Lord of the universe and that means Lord over every area of secular life in Babylon.

Buts as an alien outpost in Babylon we know what’s coming. And we know what the worship of heaven is going to be like when Babylon comes down, and God stands forth to vindicate his Son. And we know from verse 10 that the reason this has all been revealed to us ahead of time is that we might WORSHIP GOD. God lets John hear the celebration of heaven so that in his exile and his suffering he might join in and worship God. And John wrote it down in a book so that we might listen to the worship of heaven and join in.”

- John is given a command by an angel to “write” (imp.). He is to record the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 7 “blessings” in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Those who participate in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb are blessed. This stands in striking contrast to those who are judged at the “the great supper of God” in verses 17-18 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus. The angel adds his own words of affirmation and confirmation, “These are the true words of

God.” There is no deceit, deception, falsehood or lying in these words. As is always true of God’s words, these words are true.

- John is overwhelmed by all of this. He falls at the feet of the angel to worship him (v.10). This is sin. This is idolatry, even if the being is an angel. John receives a quick and stiff rebuke, “You must not do that” (imperative). Why? First, “I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus,” who hold also to the faithful witness given by Christ. Second, “Worship God.” The clear implication is we are to worship God and only God. As 1 John 5:21 says, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Third, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The idea, I believe, is that the true spirit of prophecy always bears witness to Jesus. The true spirit of prophecy always points to Jesus. MacArthur says, “The central theme of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament preaching is the Lord Jesus Christ. Until the coming of His Kingdom, all who proclaim the gospel must be faithful to the testimony of Jesus, the saving gospel message, which was His message” (Vol. 2, 207). David Levy adds, “In this book, prophecy is designed to unfold Christ’s character, glory, purpose, and program. Therefore, “Worship God” alone (v.10)! With these words, the scene is set for the manifestation of Jesus Christ as the glorified King of king and the Lord of lords. *Hallelujah!*”

(“The Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” *Israel My Glory*, June/July 1998, p. 26).

**Conclusion:** Scott Duvall provides nine excellent theological observations that capture the key themes of Revelation 19. I believe they serve us well as concluding truths upon which we should meditate and reflect. Hopefully they will inspire even greater worship for “the Lord our God the Almighty.”

- 1) God’s people are called to rejoice at the demonstration of God’s righteous judgments.
- 2) Evil power centers are guilty of arrogance, deception and murder.
- 3) God will avenge the suffering of his people.
- 4) God is to be praised for his just and true judgments as reflections of his righteous and faithful character.
- 5) God deserves praise and glory for beginning his universal reign.
- 6) Jesus relates to his people like a husband to his bride.
- 7) God’s people, in contrast to the great prostitute, are clothed in righteous acts.
- 8) Angels, like believing humans, are fellow servants who hold to the testimony of Jesus.
- 9) God alone deserves worship, for he (by his Spirit) is the source of the prophecy [the prophetic message] about Jesus (Duvall, 245, 251).

Once more we see, it really is all about Jesus. That has always been God's plan.

Nothing will keep it from coming to pass.