

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 19:1-10

Topic

Four “Hallelujahs” are sung in Heaven
on the verge of Jesus’ return to Earth

Title

***“The Four Hallelujahs
of the Apocalypse”***

‘Coca-Cola’ is the second most widely understood term in the world. The first is ‘OK.’

Coke in 1993 launched a soft drink named ‘OK Soda’ so that it could own both the most recognized words. Coke discontinued it in 1995.

‘Hallelujah’ is a universal word understood all over the world.

In the 1980s, we took trips to Beijing to smuggle Bibles. The missionaries told us that if we got separated from our group, or otherwise found ourselves lost, to walk around in public calmly saying “Hallelujah,” and a Christian would hear and help us.

- “Hallelujah” resounds twenty-four times in the Bible where you’d expect it to, in the Psalms.
- It is proclaimed in only one other place, in chapter nineteen of the Revelation.

The Bible version you are reading might, like my NKJV, use the word "Alleluia" instead of "Hallelujah." Not to worry:

- "Hallelujah" is Hebrew.
- "Alleluia" is Latin derived from the Greek transliteration of "Hallelujah."

They both mean, *Praise the Lord*.

Why are we "hallelujah-ing" in chapter nineteen? I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Praise The Lord You Are Parted From The Brothel**, and **#2 Praise The Lord You Are Prepared As His Bride**.

#1 - Praise The Lord You Are Parted From The Brothel (v1-5)

The Revelation describes Tribulation Babylon as a harlot:

- Chapter seventeen identifies her as a religious system that is "a great harlot" (v1) and "the mother of harlots" (v5).
- In chapter eighteen, the city of Babylon is where "the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her" (v3).
- Chapter nineteen labels her "the great harlot" (v2).

The Old Testament portrays the nation of Israel as the wife of Jehovah, and exhorts the Israelites to remain faithful to the marriage. The writers of the New Testament consider the church the betrothed bride of Jesus Christ. We are exhorted to remain chaste virgins to Him as we await His coming for us.

Throughout the Bible, being unfaithful to God is illustrated graphically by comparing it to "fornication." It is the spiritual equivalent of infidelity and sexual sin by a spouse - like someone married or betrothed being with a harlot. Babylon will be a literal city during the Great Tribulation. It is true, nevertheless, that the world is a harlot and Satan the pimp. Believers in Jesus are bombarded with seductive solicitations to *material* and *spiritual* fornication.

Rev 19:1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in Heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God!

We rejoice that there will be a "great multitude" in Heaven:

- All the saints of the Church Age will be there, from the Day of Pentecost until the resurrection and rapture of the church.
- Multitudes of believers who were justified by faith in the Old Testament will be there.
- The Tribulation martyrs will be there.
- Angels, cherubim, seraphim, and other supernaturals will be there.
- Animals, too. Horses, at the very least.

"Salvation" belongs to the Lord. It is His to offer freely by grace to all, and He can because Jesus is "the Savior of **all** men, especially those who believe" (First Timothy 4:10).

He is coming in "glory." The Second Coming will be quite an unveiling. Jesus will break through the clouds, clothed to conquer, riding His great steed.

He will establish His kingdom, be honored by all, with "power" to rule Earth.

Rev 19:2 For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her."

We discussed the destruction of both *mystery* Babylon and *municipal* Babylon in chapters seventeen and eighteen, respectively. She is "the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication," making the entire world a brothel.

God has the undeserved reputation of being haphazard in His judgments. The things that happen to people don't seem to make sense. Good people, young people, suffer tragedies while the wicked prosper.

Those sufferings are not God's "judgments."

We live in a fallen world. Sin is responsible for the seeming haphazardness we witness. God is busy providentially forwarding His plan to redeem sinful men and restore ruined creation.

Bad things happen to good people and God's people while God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all would repent and come to salvation.

When God does judge, He is always "true" to His holy and loving nature. His judgments are always just right.

Nonbelievers scoff at the Second Coming. There are something like eight times as many references to the Second Coming in the Bible than there are to the first coming. Ready or not, Jesus is coming.

Rev 19:3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!"

The atmosphere on Earth isn't going to be smokey "forever." This is a way of saying the destruction is final.

The world *is* quite seductive. Perhaps more so than ever, now that technology has advanced, just as morality is hitting rock bottom.

Rev 19:4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

We've previously encountered this combo of "twenty-four elders" and "four living creatures."

Nowhere in the Bible are we told the identity of the twenty-four elders. Nowhere. Any theory is just that. Our take is that it is not some secret way of referring to the church, but rather a divine council of supernaturals that appear several times in the Bible assisting God.

“Amen” is a statement of agreement. The creatures and elders agree with God’s judgment, praising Him for it.

Rev 19:5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”

The “voice,” probably of an angel, gives instructions for worship.

It is time for “His servants and those who fear Him” to sing. What an honor and joy to be identified as servants who fear the Lord. Think of it as a job description, and it will help you discover the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life.

“Small and great” reminds us God is no respecter of persons. He saves those who seem “great,” and He saves those who seem “small.” There might be more “small” in Heaven because the “great” have difficulty appearing foolish and humbling themselves.

Allow me a short rabbit trail. Whenever we see worship in Heaven around God’s throne in this book, it is carried out orderly. It is not spontaneous in the sense of humans or angels going off-script shouting or running around or being slain in the Spirit. Yes, there are times when worshippers fall. They do it together, on cue, when appropriate, as part of a very precise liturgy. Think about it the next time someone tells you that God the Holy Spirit came upon them and they could no longer control themselves.

You are constantly being seduced. The devil has the world set up in such a way that it appeals to your fleshly lusts.

- He entices you with *material* things that you covet.
- He entices you *mentally*, e.g., by the world’s false religions, psychologies, and philosophies.

The bride has no place in a brothel.

Jesus brought you out from the brothel. Set your affections on things above, bringing your every thought captive to Jesus.

#2 - Praise The Lord You Are Prepared As His Bride (v6-10)

There has been a great deal of singing in the Revelation. One commentator points out, "This [is] the last song of praise in the Apocalypse, [and it] is a divine *epith-ala-mium*." Huh? It means *a song celebrating a marriage*.

Rev 19:6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" This sequence is the Bible's Hallelujah Chorus. It involves falling more than standing.

Our God is "the Lord God Omnipotent." It is a title that ends all discussion. Who is like Him? No one.

God "reigns" now and forever. In the Revelation, we read about Him establishing His reign on Earth.

Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

"The Lamb" is the Revelation's favorite title for the risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

- He offered Himself on the Cross as the sacrifice for sin, as our Substitute.
- Jesus crucifixion occurred exactly when the lambs for the annual Passover were being slain and offered in the Temple.
- He let us know that He was the last Lamb, the last sacrifice, crying out with a loud voice, "It is finished!"
- In the Temple, the thick veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, signifying the way into God's presence was open to all through a relationship with Jesus.

Out of seemingly nowhere, there is a 'Save the Date' for a wedding. "The marriage of the Lamb has come." The word "marriage" is the same one translated as "marriage supper" in verse nine. The supper is the celebration following the wedding - what we might call the reception.

There is a great deal of Bible teaching on the Jewish wedding customs in the first century. In my opinion, some of it is far too rigid and detailed. I consulted an organization of Messianic Jews. If anyone is going to get it right, it's completed Jews who minister to Jews.

The barebones of the first century Jewish wedding were as follows:

1. The father of the bridegroom either selected or approved a bride for his son.
2. In the betrothal that followed, the bridegroom gave the bride money or a valuable object such as a ring, and a cup of wine was customarily shared to seal their covenant vows. They were legally married, but they did not live together or engage in sexual relations for at least nine months.
3. The groom busied himself preparing a place for his bride. The bride focused on her preparations.
4. Although the bride knew to expect her groom anytime after about nine months, she did not know the exact day or time. He could come earlier or later. The father of the groom gave final approval for his son to return for his bride.
5. The bridegroom came to take his bride home, where a joyous marriage supper ensued.

The parallels to the relationship between Jesus as the heavenly Bridegroom and the church as His bride are wonderfully obvious:

1. "God so loved the world that He [the Father] gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
2. Jesus is gone to prepare a place for us.
3. He gave us the Holy Spirit as our engagement guarantee.
4. We prepare for His coming for us by patiently waiting.

5. Jesus is coming to resurrect and rapture the church, His bride. His coming is imminent.

Later in chapter nineteen, when Jesus returns *with* us to Earth, we - His bride - will already be clothed in wedding apparel. The marriage must therefore be in Heaven between the rapture and the Second Coming.

Both the one-thousand-year Kingdom of God on Earth and Eternity constitute the marriage supper.

The words, "His wife has made herself ready," are amplified in verse eight:

Rev 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Illustrating God's gift of salvation using clothing is my absolute favorite. Anyone can understand it.

Let's start by explaining how we are dressed without this garment. A passage in the Old Testament book Book of Zechariah will explain what I mean.

The High Priest of Israel, at the time, Joshua, was on Earth in the Jewish Temple performing his duties. God was looking down upon Joshua.

Zec 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD...

Joshua would have been wearing the garments of the High Priest. They were beautiful and costly - covered with precious gems. You've probably seen a version of these garments. At the end of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, when the Nazis open the Ark, Belloq, the Nazi archaeologist, is dressed like Joshua the High Priest.

Listen carefully to how the Bible describes the High Priest:

Zec 3:3 Now Joshua [the High Priest] was clothed with **filthy garments...**

No matter how costly and beautiful Joshua looked on Earth, in Heaven he looked as though he was wearing "filthy garments."

The Bible describes every human being that way. "All of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."

In *Robin Hood - Prince of Thieves*, the Kevin Costner version, there's a scene in involving filthy rags. A master of disguise, Robin Hood robed himself with the torn and tattered outer garment of a beggar to avoid detection while visiting Maid Marian in the church. To make it even more believable, he picked up dung from the road and rubbed it all over his robe. He was filthy.

This filthiness is how every human being is robed. None of us are righteous. We all fall short of the glory of God. We are all sinners.

The Lord didn't leave Joshua in his filthy rags.

"Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

The exchange was a free gift. It illustrates God's grace in salvation. It is made possible by the death of Jesus on the Cross. He takes your filthy garments upon Himself and exchanges them for a robe of righteousness. Thus you are prepared by Him for Heaven.

Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Rev 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Something that Isaiah said about our clothing is insightful. Isaiah 61:10 reads, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of

righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, **And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."**

- The wedding garment is "granted" to us. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus. It is a gift. There are zero works of righteousness involved.
- Simultaneously, we "[make ourselves] ready" by the "righteous acts" we perform serving Jesus on Earth.

You don't *earn* or *add to* your salvation; you earn rewards that will adorn your robe. You want to adorn your robe to look beautiful for your Bridegroom.

Rev 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

The church is the bride; the guests are the rest of the saved from all of time - the Old Testament saints, as well as Tribulation martyrs, along with believers alive in earthly bodies at the Second Coming. Those who get saved in the Millennium will be fashionably late-arriving guests.

Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Seeing an angel is terrifying. Think, too, of everything John had seen to this point.

The angel quickly corrected John for his wrong reaction. *At least he did react.* I'm not suggesting wrong enthusiasm and zeal without knowledge is OK - only that it wouldn't hurt us to be more excited about Jesus.

Angels consider themselves our "fellow servants." That's pretty amazing. From our perspective, they are glorious, but they consider themselves with proper humility.

“Of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus” is better translated, “I am [only] another servant with you and your brethren who have [accepted and hold] the testimony borne by Jesus” (AV).

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” It is popular today to read the Revelation as what scholars call “Apocalyptic Literature.” It is a type of writing that isn’t meant to be taken literally.

The Revelation is *not* Apocalyptic Literature.

The angel speaking to John calls it “prophecy.” In chapter twenty-two, the Revelation is categorized as “prophecy” *four more times*.

From chapter four through the end the Revelation is future prophecy.

A

|| this talk about bridegrooms and brides and betrothals should suggest a romantic mood.

Sadly, the Lord’s coming in the clouds for His bride is sometimes used as a rebuke. You’re sternly warned that you don’t want to be caught doing certain questionable things when He comes and be scolded.

That approach turns a believer into a bridezilla.

Jesus’ attitude toward you is more like that of the beloved in the Song of Solomon. I’m going to read a passage from it. For our purposes today, Jesus is the Bridegroom and you, His betrothed bride.

Song 2:8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes Leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills.

Song 2:9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, Gazing through the lattice.

Song 2:10 My beloved spoke, and said to me: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away.

Song 2:11 For lo, the winter is past, The rain is over *and* gone.

Song 2:12 The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing has come, And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

Song 2:13 The fig tree puts forth her green figs, And the vines *with* the tender grapes Give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away!

Song 2:14 "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret *places* of the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice *is* sweet, And your face *is* lovely."

The more you understand that Jesus is your Bridegroom, and you His beloved bride, the better prepared and ready you'll choose to be.