

**The Return of Christ in Glory! (Revelation 19:1-21)**

**"The Hallelujah Chorus"**

**Revelation 19:1-10**

What John Heard: The Hallelujah Chorus {19:1-10}

"The scene in Revelation shifts from earth, where it has been since chapter 6, to heaven. The intervening chapters have detailed God's cataclysmic explosion of judgmental fury on the sinful world. That fury began to be poured out when the Lord Jesus Christ, the rightful heir to the universe, received the title deed to the earth from His Father (Revelation 5:1-14). As He unrolled that scroll and broke its seven seals, terrifying judgments struck the earth. The seal judgments were followed by the equally devastating trumpet and bowl judgments. The particular target of God's wrath was Antichrist's worldwide religious, political, and economic empire, symbolized by its capital city of Babylon. Babylon's destruction, which caused dismay and mourning on earth (Revelation 18:9-11, 15-19), now brings joy to heaven."<sup>489</sup>

*After these things* refers back to Babylon's destruction in chapters 17 and 18. It is a chronological marker noting that these events in heaven follow that destruction, yet precede the glorious return of our Lord to the earth. It is at this point that the scene shifts from earth to heaven. This shift emphasizes a dramatic change of tone. The transition is from devastating judgment to glorious blessing, from lament and silence to loud rejoicing. These 10 verses serve as a transition from the Great Tribulation to the Glorious Return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "The silence of the ruined city is replaced by the loudness of enthusiastic rejoicing. In the place of the woes of the mourners come the fourfold hallelujahs."<sup>490</sup> This passage provides us with five reasons for Heaven's rejoicing.

**Because God's Judgments Display His Power: {vs. 1}**

Notice first of all the focus is upon what John heard not necessarily what he saw, although we get the idea later in this passage that he was indeed witnessing a vision in heaven. John heard a loud voice. It was not a singular loud voice, but a voice of a great multitude in heaven. There is some question as to who is included in this great multitude. Some see it as the angelic host since believers are more specifically mentioned in verses 5 and 6. It is often referred to as a general term for the heavenly host and could include the entire host of heaven, both saints and angels. It is possible however that it is a specific reference to the Tribulation martyrs (cp. Revelation 6:9-10; 7:9, 14). This final view is somewhat convincing in light of the usage of the same Greek words in 7:9, yet it must be concluded that the specific multitude is not completely identified in chapter 19.

The words of this great multitude were words of praise as they exclaimed, "*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.*" "The Greek word *allelouia* is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase comprised of the verb *halal* (to praise) and the noun *Yah* (God). It appears only in this chapter in the New Testament (cf. vv. 3-4, 6)."<sup>491</sup> The appearance of the term in the Old Testament is in the Psalms. It is found at the end of certain Psalms (cf. Psalms 104, 105, 115, 116, 117) and at the beginning of others (cf. Psalms 111, 112). It is also noted at the beginning and end of other Psalms (cf. Psalms 106, 113, 135). What is interesting about this words occurrence is that it is usually used in connection with God's judgment upon the ungodly.

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Heaven is rejoicing over the fact that salvation, glory and power have come. The English inserts the word *belong*, which does not occur in the Greek text. In fact no verb actually exists in the text. In light of the occurrence of the aorist tense in verse 2, it seems necessary that the Greek verb *elthen* is implied here in verse 1. The Greek verb *elthen* is rendered "have come." This phrase is probably better rendered "*The salvation and glory and power of our God have come.*" The idea is that this rejoicing is upon the display of God's salvation, glory and power in judgment. Salvation is speaking of the deliverance of the tribulation martyrs from the tribulation. Glory is simply referring to God's glory in judgment, while power is an emphasis on God's might in judgment. The picture is that of rejoicing for God's wrath has been poured out upon the wicked inhabitants of the earth.

### Because God's Judgments are True & Righteous: {vs. 2}

The words of praise and rejoicing continue as they praise God *because His judgments are true and righteous*. Obviously since God's character is true and righteous, it follows that His judgments are as well. God is just for bringing judgment upon Babylon and avenging the blood of His servants. There is a two-fold reason for the praise over God's true and righteous judgments. First of all Babylon was corrupting the earth with her immorality. The destruction of Babylon was just because of the wicked, immoral and blasphemous practices of Antichrist's world system. It was a system that was corrupt, immoral, and idolatrous. It was a system that drove the world to reject the One True God and turn its worship to the beast. It was a world system that promoted widespread immorality. It was a system that promoted the killing of true believers. This is the second reason God's judgments against Babylon are true and righteous. God avenged the blood of His servants. This is a specific reference to the martyrdom of believers during the tribulation by Antichrist and his kingdom. Heaven rejoices over the just judgment of God. God's judgment is indeed true and righteous because of the corrupt practices of Babylon and because of the killing of the saints by Babylon.

### Because God's Judgments are Permanent: {vs. 3}

Once again the Hebrew term for "Praise the Lord" is repeated as the rejoicing in heaven continues. Once again the destruction of Babylon is in mind. The aspect mentioned here in verse 3 is the fact that this judgment against Babylon is permanent. The smoke of Babylon rises up forever and ever. "At the climax of her judgment, Babylon was "burned up with fire" (18:8; cf. 17:16), and sinners mourned as they watched the pall of smoke rise into the sky (18:9, 18). That the smoke rises forever and ever indicates that this judgment is final, permanent, and irreversible."<sup>492</sup> It provides us with the similar judgments upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:28), and upon Edom (Isaiah 34:10). The destruction of Babylon is final and its inhabitants doomed to eternal damnation for all eternity. Cf. Revelation 14:8-11:

### Because The Lord our God the Almighty Reigns: {vv. 4-6}

At this time, a third Hallelujah is echoed, this time by the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures. If you remember back to Revelation 4 and 5, the 24 elders represent the raptured church, while the 4 living creatures are best identified as cherubim. The 24 elders are representatives of the church and the 4 cherubim are angels of high rank who have a special responsibility of service and worship to God. We have seen these two groups consistently worship God throughout the book of Revelation (cf. 4:8-11; 5:8-12, 14; 7:11; 11:16-18). The activity of these two groups was that of prostrating

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themselves before the throne and crying out "*Amen, Hallelujah.*" *Amen* means, "so let it be," and indicates their agreement with the heavenly rejoicing over the destruction and judgment of Babylon.

At this time a voice comes from the throne. It is not the voice of God, since this voice refers to God as our God. It seems best that this voice is identified as an angel near the throne of God, although it is important to note that the text does not specifically identify the voice. This voice issues forth a command to the bond-servants of God. The reference to *His bond-servants you who fear Him, the small and the great* is a reference that includes all of the redeemed. It is a phrase that embraces all believers. All believers at this time are commanded to praise God. The response of the command is recorded in verse 6, "*6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.*" John MacArthur notes in his commentary: "When the redeemed obeyed the command from the heavenly voice and added their voices to the heavenly chorus, the dramatic sound John heard was something like the voice of a great multitude. The loud chorus of praise rose to a deafening crescendo, which the apostle likened to the sound of many waters (cf. 1:15; 14:2) and to the sound of mighty peals of thunder (cf. 6:1; 14:2). The fitting finale to the heavenly oratorio of praise is a fourth "Hallelujah!" followed by the motive for it—"For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."<sup>493</sup> The Antichrist's worldwide kingdom of wickedness, oppression, immorality and idolatry has been judged and destroyed. God reigns on high! God is in control! God is deserving of praise! Heaven rejoices over the victory of God and the soon coming institution of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

### Because the Marriage of the Lamb Has Come: {vv. 7-10}

The rejoicing in heaven continues with the fifth and final reason for this Hallelujah chorus, that being the marriage of the Lamb. The participants are clear. The Lamb is clearly the book of Revelation's reference to Christ. The bride of Christ is none other than the raptured church. "The New Testament pictures the church as a virgin waiting to be united with the bridegroom at His coming (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32)."<sup>494</sup> David Levy in his commentary gives us a clear understanding of the marriage of the Lamb by providing a nice overview of Jewish wedding customs:

"The marriage of the Lamb is patterned after the Jewish marriage customs of Bible Times.

**Phase one is the arrangement.** After the fathers of the bride and groom consummated a match, the bride's father was given the bride price as a dowry. The bride price for God the Father was the blood of His Son (Ephesians 5:25).

**Phase two is the preparation, or betrothal.** This phase would last for a year or longer, during which time the bride was observed to display her purity. During the year, the bridegroom would prepare a home for his bride, attached to his father's house. In like manner, Christ is in heaven preparing a place for His bride, the church (John 14:1-3). On the wedding day, the groom would leave his father's house to fetch his bride. After taking her from her home, the groom would then lead the bridal procession back to his own home. This is a beautiful picture of the Rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) prior to Christ's Second Coming.

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**Phase three is the marriage ceremony.** Before the marriage, there was the writing of a legal wedding document called the Ketubah, signed by two witnesses not related to the bridegroom or bride. The document was a marriage covenant, a willing agreement between the bride and groom that included obligations of the husband and rights of the wife. The bride was beautifully adorned like a queen (cp. 21:2), with precious jewels plaited in her hair and clothing and a long veil covering her face. In biblical times, the ceremony was conducted at the home of the groom, attended by the immediate family, two witnesses, and a few close friends... In biblical times, the couple would leave the guests to actually consummate the marriage. This is a beautiful picture of the church (the bride of Christ) consummating the marriage of the Lamb (19:7-8).

**Phase four is the marriage feast,** to which the friends of the bride and groom were invited to rejoice at the marriage. After a week of feasting, the couple would settle into their new home, which had been prepared by the groom."<sup>495</sup>

Heaven is rejoicing over the fact that the marriage of the Lamb has come. The bride (the church) has made herself ready. "The bride has made herself ready in the power of God, by the grace of God, through the work of the Spirit of God. Purged from all sin and impurity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15), she is a flawless, blameless, and unblemished virgin."<sup>496</sup> It was given to her (the bride hence the church) *to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean.* "Fine linen was expensive and beautiful cloth (cf. 18:12, 16), like that worn by Joseph (Gen. 41:42, David (1 Chron. 15:27, and Mordecai (Esther 8:15); lampros (bright) means glistening, shining, or radiant...katharos (clean) is translated "pure" in 21:18, 21."<sup>497</sup> This description of garments is used of the attire of angels (Rev. 15:6) and will be the clothing of the armies of heaven at the return of Christ (Rev. 19:14). The text goes on to explain in verse 8 that the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

At this point, John receives personal instruction from an angel. This is most probably the angel who was speaking to John in Revelation 17:1, 15. The angel instructed John to write, "*Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*" This is a fourth beatitude in Revelation. It offers blessing to those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Since the church is the bride of Christ the Lamb, then this must be a reference to other believers such as Old Testament and Tribulation saints. The angel goes on to say, "*These are the true words of God.*" It is possible that all this information was more than John could believe. Remember that in his day the church was being severely persecuted. Believers were being oppressed, imprisoned and martyred for their faith. The angel was likely providing this solemn affirmation for John to realize that indeed God will triumph over the wicked and evil world, which was persecuting the church. At this point John responds to what he has been shown. He is so overcome with emotion that he immediately falls at the feet of the angel and worships him. But John received a just rebuke, since the angel was merely a fellow servant. "The angel reminds John that he is to worship God only. Worship is the theme of redemptive history, and the purpose for which believers were redeemed (John 4:23). It will also be their occupation throughout eternity."<sup>498</sup> The closing words of the angel were, "*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" The idea here is that the theme of Old and New Testament prophecy is none other than the testimony of Jesus. All who proclaim the gospel must be faithful to the testimony of Jesus. "Prophecy at its very heart is designed to unfold the beauty and loveliness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."<sup>499</sup> Christ is the central theme of prophecy. It is Christ who should be worshipped!

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God has judged the wicked and brought total destruction upon the Antichrist's kingdom. The result is a Hallelujah chorus. There is rejoicing in heaven over the righteous acts of God. The transition has been made. The wrath of God has been poured out. The stage has been set. The time has come for the Glorious Return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with His heavenly armies to bring final judgment upon the world, to cast the beast and the false prophet into the Lake of fire, to bind Satan and to set up His Kingdom upon the earth. Hallelujah!