

Revelation 19

The call in Revelation 18:20 was for all heaven; the angels, the saints, apostles, and prophets to rejoice. Chapter 19 begins with an interlude that describes we'll respond with four great hallelujahs, giving praise to God as all heaven rejoices. Then it goes on to deal with the final defeat of the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation in connection with Christ's triumphant return in glory and power. God will bring judgment on the Antichrist and his armies and reign on earth with the believers.

A Hallelujah Chorus (19:1-2)

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments

This vision is introduced not by an angel but by the loud voices of a great crowd in a combined choir in heaven saying or singing a hallelujah chorus. Some take the singers to be the martyrs who are not yet glorified. Others take them to be the innumerable company of angels who are described in 5:11 as surrounding the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. Hebrews 12:22 also speaks of an innumerable company of angels, and the Bible often speaks of the heavenly hosts. But Revelation 18:20 calls for all heaven to join in.

Alleluia is from the Greek form of the Hebrew "hallelujah." (Hebrew *hallelu* is a command to praise. *Jah* is the abbreviation for Yahweh [Jehovah], the personal name of God, for which the Jews in New Testament times substituted the title "Lord." Thus, hallelujah simply means "Praise the Lord!") It occurs here for the first time in the New Testament, occurring four times in this chapter (vv. 1,3,4,6). The people begin by singing praise to God, recognizing Him as their God in a personal way, attributing to Him "salvation, and glory, and honor, and power." Then the people in heaven give praise and honor to God for His "true and righteous" judgments; that is, they are in line with His nature, always true, always righteous, always just.

A Second Hallelujah (19:3)

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

The second hallelujah also comes from 'much people in heaven.' It seems even more emphatic and dramatic.

A Hallelujah Response (19:4)

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

In heaven the twenty-four elders (probably representing the Church) and the "four beasts," that is, living beings, (representing all creation) respond to the hallelujahs of the "much people in heaven" by falling down before the throne of God and worshiping Him. They respond further by saying "Amen" and by adding their own "Hallelujah" (or "Praise the Lord!") as they join in honoring God for His justice and the righteousness of His judgment. They are still worshiping God in this last mention of them.

"Amen" is another Hebrew word, a great word of positive response that can be translated "truly" in most cases. It comes from a root word that carries the basic idea of certainty or support. It is the response of faith that recognizes that what has been said is sure, absolutely certain. Some today look at these prophecies as possible; however, they only hope God will fulfill them; they are not sure. The "Amen" of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures shows that they put their full approval on what God has done and on the certainty that His

judgment is just and all He does is right.

Keep on Praising God (19:5)

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

Again a voice comes out of the throne with the command that all the servants of God are to keep on praising Him. More likely it is another angelic voice.

"Servants" here is the ordinary Greek word for slaves. But they are further identified as those who "fear Him," that is, who reverence, worship, and serve Him. They are devoted to God.

The Fourth Hallelujah (19:6)

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Omnipotent means all powerful.

The fourth hallelujah comes in response to the command from the throne to praise our God. It gives praise to God because He is the Lord, because He is all powerful, and because He reigns. He is on the throne and about to begin the millennial reign on earth through Christ.

All those who are faithful will therefore be in that number who shout out their response to the angel's call to keep on praising our God. The praise here is louder and more joyful than the previous praise. God is to be praised for His righteous judgment. He is to be praised even more for the fulfillment of His promises as the believers enter the fullness of their inheritance. Consequently, this fourth hallelujah has a volume of sound equal to "many waters" and "mighty thunderings." He is worthy of praise, for He is the Lord, He is our God in a personal way, He is the Almighty. And although He has always been on the throne, He is about to manifest His reign in a new way.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:7-8)

'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

These verses are the continuation of the fourth hallelujah and its song of praise. Like the other songs, it celebrates the vindication of God's people. Only this time it is a further and a very important vindication of God's people. It will be the "marriage of the lamb" (that is, the wedding banquet celebrating the marriage). It will be a great wedding banquet, fulfilling the parables, prophecies, and typology of the relationship of the Church to Christ. This is a further reason for rejoicing. When this takes place, all the universe will know that the Church is what the Bible says the Church is, the bride of Christ. It will bring great honor and give great glory to God the Father as a culmination of His great plan of redemption. .

It will be a time for gladness that is full of joy and delight. There will be rejoicing expressed in jumping and shouting for joy. Although anticipation of this great event causes believers to rejoice even now, its reality will be joy beyond our present imagination.

The Bride here is called the "wife" as a recognition that she has already entered into an intimate and loving relationship with Christ. The same relationship is also symbolized by calling Christ the Head and the Church the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16). Now we see that when the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is ready, the "wife" (that is, the Church, the Bride, all believers who have remained in Christ)

of the Lamb (2 Corinthians 11:2) is in heaven with Him. Thessalonians 4 and 5 where the Church is caught up for a meeting with the Lord in the air. Notice also the emphasis that the "wife" has already made herself ready in heaven for the marriage of the Lamb. This, rather than the terminology, is the most important point of verse 7.

The Lamb's wife includes all the redeemed, including those martyred during the Tribulation.

Verse 8 explains how the Lamb's wife has prepared herself. In heaven the "wife" is already fully clothed in fine linen, clean and white, that is, pure, shining bright, and radiant-free from all impurity. The fine linen represents the "righteousness of saints." But the Greek for righteousness is plural here and therefore speaks of the "righteous acts" (NIV), or deeds, of the saints (all believers). That is, these robes do not represent the imputed righteousness of Christ in which we stand justified before God. They rather represent the acts of faith and righteousness that we do as a consequence of our relationship with Christ. They are the results of the gift of salvation and the gifts of the Spirit which we receive freely from Him. Although the gifts are empowered and administered by the Holy Spirit, we can minister in them only as we cooperate. (Compare Matthew 25:35-40; which shows we shall be judged by our works that flow out of our love for Christ and our love for those for whom He died. See also 1 Corinthians 14:12,32.)

This clothing of fine white linen is also a further indication that the saints are in heaven before coming with Jesus in His glorious, triumphant return to establish His kingdom on earth.

Write the Blessing (19:9)

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

This "blessed" represents the fourth beatitude. The word "called" here implies that these blessed ones have not only received the invitation, but have accepted it as well. The marriage supper celebrates the fact that the Church shall "ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4: 17). The love of God that sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins made it possible for us not only to be saved from the lake of fire, but also to respond to that love and enter into and share the joy and triumph of our Lord. But we can enter into a living relationship with Jesus only as individuals, not as a body or a group. Such are the "true sayings of God."

Give Attention to Jesus (19:10)

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do t not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The wonder, the glory, and the hope inspired by this vision so overwhelm John that he falls at the feet of the angel in an attitude of worship. The angel rejects this immediately. He, like John, is a servant: in this instance, sent to serve John (Hebrews 1:14). Only God is worthy of worship. All the attention should be given to Jesus, just as the spirit of prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments focuses its testimony, or witness, on Jesus.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" means that the purpose of prophecy is to bear witness to Jesus, to exalt Him, and to reveal His redemptive work. It does not exalt the prophet, or messenger. Nor is it intended merely to satisfy curiosity. It should make us see the glory and holiness of Jesus and encourage us to be ready. As Romans 5:5 indicates, our hope in Christ will never disappoint us, never cause us to be ashamed of our faith or of the trust we place in Him. The God who loved us enough to send His Son to die for us on Calvary loves us enough to make every provision necessary to see us all the way to glory (Romans 5:6-11; 8:18,26).