

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Heavenly Hallelujahs, Part 1

Scripture: Revelation 19:1-6

Code: 66-66

And now for our study of God's Word, we come to the book of Revelation again and gratefully to chapter 19...Revelation chapter 19. It's time for praise in chapter 19. It's time for the Hallelujah Chorus to be sung. Jesus Christ is about to return to set up His glorious and eternal Kingdom.

We have been able over the last months to do something prophetically that we will never do historically and that is to pass through all the fascinating furies of the judgments of God yet to come. We've gone through it all prophetically. We have been through now the day of the Lord, the judgment of God in a final explosion of fury on the world of sinners. We have seen when it all started the Lord Jesus Christ, the worthy Lamb, take from the hand of God in heaven the title deed to the universe. And being the rightful heir to the universe begin to take it back from the usurper Satan and out of the control of fallen angels and rebellious sinners. Seal by seal the worthy Lamb has broken the scroll and unrolled it for us to see the seven phases of judgment which then led to seven trumpets of doom that pealed forth their divine announcement of wrath, followed by seven angels in rapid succession pouring out seven bowls of wrath, deluging the world with the last plagues.

All through these seven years of seals and trumpets and bowls the gospel of grace and the gospel of redemption will be preached by men and angels. Many will believe and be saved. The nation of Israel will be converted. People from every tongue and tribe and people and nation will bow their knee to Christ. Many of them will be slaughtered as martyrs by Satan and the forces of Satan in the Antichrist kingdom.

So, through it all we have seen the judgment of God and the salvation of God. Following the last of the seven plagues, Christ is ready to take full possession and establish His sovereign rule over the devastated earth and sky, to take the earth and now restore it and renew it to the glorious standard of His Kingdom which He will establish and over which He will reign for a thousand years. His Kingdom will begin soon. His coming is presented in this chapter. In fact, He comes down in verse 11.

But before that greatest of all moments in history, the moment when redemptive history reaches its culmination, the moment Jesus Christ returns in all His glory to the earth, before that moment actually happens in verse 11, we are taken to heaven for the first ten verse. This is the last of the seven visions of heaven in the book of Revelation. And we are ushered into heaven to hear the hallelujahs of celestial joy. And what are they rejoicing about? They're rejoicing about the final destruction of the world's evil and the glorious victory of the returning Messiah. This, in fact, is the moment that all

heaven was anticipating before this period of Tribulation even began. Remember the description of the Tribulation began in chapter 6.

Go back to chapter 4 for a moment. Before we ever got in to chapter 6 in chapter 4 in anticipation of what was going to come, verse 8 says, "Four living creatures day and night did not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty who was, who is and who is to come.' And when the living creatures gave glory...give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne and will worship Him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne saying, 'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou didst create all things and because of Thy will they existed and were created.'" They are glorifying and extolling and honoring and praising God in anticipation of His coming judgment and the return of Christ.

Down in chapter 5 that same anticipation begins in verse 6, When the Lamb stands up, takes the scroll, the book in verses 7 and 8 and then it says, "The four living creatures, who are angels, the twenty-four angels best seen as representatives of the church, fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book and break its seals, for Thou wast slain and did purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and Thou hast made them to be a Kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth.'" And that's the anticipation of the Kingdom. "And I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them I heard saying to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, 'Be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped."

That was what was going on in heaven before the seven seals were broken open and the judgments of the time of tribulation happened. Now when you come to chapter 19, after they've ended you go back to heaven and the same thing is going on again. Heaven is filled with praise. It is filled with hallelujahs. And we find here the word "hallelujah" used a number of times as we shall see in these verses...verse 1, verse 3, verse 6...one other time as well...verse 4. Four times the word "hallelujah" is used. And I might add quickly, it is the first time the word "hallelujah" is used in the whole New Testament. So it's almost as if there has been a pause in heaven to wait for the right moment to give the hallelujahs. All who belong to God on earth and in heaven, holy angels and men and women made holy in Christ have longed for this glorious moment when Jesus Christ returns to rule the world with justice, righteousness, holiness and peace. Heaven anticipated it seven years earlier and now as we come back to heaven seven years later, heaven is filled with rejoicing.

We can't help also but be struck by the fact that this rejoicing is in stark contrast to what we have just heard in chapter 8 which is lamenting and weeping and crying over the destruction of the system of the world. We find in verse 9 the leaders of the world weeping and lamenting. We find in verse 11 the merchants of the earth weeping and mourning because their system has been crushed. The destruction of the world brings this lament on earth but it brings joy to heaven. We've heard the wailings of royalty which gave themselves to the vile schemes of the policies of Antichrist and when Babylon falls, the city of Babylon which is the capital city, the brain center of the world system, the brain is dead. Or to look at it another way, the main artery of earth's glory is cut and its life blood is rushing out in the final throes of death. The world is gasping its last breaths. So these rulers so committed to and dependent on Antichrist and his system stand off in dread, terrified at the reality and the consequence of the ruin and they lament and they weep and they say, "Alas, Babylon...Alas, Babylon, the great strong city...woe, woe."

We've heard also the merchants, the business men who made their fortune in the materialistic madness and they're full of tears and grief over the collapse of the system of business, all commerce stops. The wheels are standing still. Everything fails. Alas, Babylon.

And then we heard those who distribute and transport the goods over the earth crying bitterly, casting dirt on their heads, "Alas, Babylon, that great city." And so, from every throne on earth, from every power behind that throne, from every leader, from every place of trade and business, from every place where people are employed to produce and distribute and sell the stuff, from every continent, from every island, every city, every sea, every ship as we have traversed the globe comes the voice of weeping over the destruction of Babylon and the fact that they all know that the death of the brain and the cutting of the main artery means the death of the rest. And so implied between chapter 18 and chapter 19 is the final judgment on all the rest of the world.

The head is cut. The main artery is cut. In chapter 18 Babylon the center is destroyed. And following Babylon comes the destruction of the rest of the world which has already been described for us at the end of chapter 16. It takes place at the Valley of Megiddo, the plain of Armageddon in the great and final battle, followed by flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and a great earthquake and the splitting of the great city in Babylon was remembered, before God, every island fled away, the mountains were not found. That is the leveling of the whole earth. I think it's restored back to a pre-Fall condition. Huge hailstones weighing a hundred pounds come plummeting down out of heaven. This is the severe final last plague. It is in that disastrous moment, of course, that the whole of the world is crushed in judgment. And then the final part of it is when Jesus Christ comes back to destroy what is left and to set up His Kingdom.

And so, at this moment heaven is rejoicing. Heaven bursts out in hallelujahs. And we might think it strange and somebody might think it loveless, insensitive and uncaring to rejoice over this

unbelievable and eternal calamity. But it is not. The people on the earth have had the greatest opportunity of any people who have ever lived. They have had enough judgment to awaken anybody...anyone, and they have had enough gospel preaching to cause anyone to understand who is willing to understand. People have had their opportunity to repent. They've had their opportunity to believe. But they are now hardened into absolute and irreversible unbelief. They are hardened into the hatred of God and the hatred of Jesus Christ.

And so heaven's joy is not because of their damnation but because of the righteous glory of Jesus Christ who will remove these obstinate hard-hearted sinners from the world and restore it to its lost glory. Heaven rejoices not because of damnation. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But heaven rejoices over the coming righteous glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven rejoices because God will be properly honored and Christ will be exalted and the earth will be filled with righteousness and wisdom and truth.

For all the ages and certainly during this time of the Tribulation we've been studying since chapter 6, God's messengers and God's people have been faithfully preaching the truth, warning of judgment, condemning sin, extolling forgiveness in God's grace and the world has always ignored them and hated them. All along through the history of the world while it was listening out of one ear to the message from God's messengers, it was ready to find to speak to its other ear a Balaam, a prophet for hire, somebody ready to compromise for gold, somebody who would say to them what they wanted to hear and not what they didn't want to hear. They would pay any price for someone to speak God's blessing on their lust and God's blessing on their passion. They'll honor that kind of prophet. But the Elijahs and the Elishas and the Isaiahs and the Jeremiahs and the Stephens and the Peters and the Pauls, their fate has always been mocked and it's always been scorned and they have been stoned and scourged and sawn asunder and slain with a sword and nailed to a cross and thrown to wild animals and compelled to seek refuge. And they have been destitute and tormented and afflicted because they dared to face the godless sinners and condemn them in the offer of salvation.

And God says that's all, that's enough, no more. And at last the promised vindication of God's righteous servants comes. Even Jesus promised it. Back in Matthew 10 and verse 16 He said to His disciples, "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, therefore be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves but beware of men for they will deliver you up to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. When they deliver you up do not become anxious about how or what you will speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak for it is not you who speak but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And brother will deliver up brother to death and a father his child and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name. But it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next for truly I say to you,

you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. And remember, a disciple is not above his teacher nor a slave above his master, it is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher and a slave as his master."

What does that mean? If they killed the teacher, they'll try to kill the student. If they killed the master, they'll try to kill his servant. That's how it's going to be. But when the Master comes, He is going to vindicate His servants. And now it's time in chapter 19 for the Master to come. The shouts of joy are to be expected. History is finally going to reach its culmination. History will fall into line with what the prophets and the saints and apostles and evangelists and pastors have always believed and always proclaimed and what heaven has always longed for. And heaven is rightly jubilant. They should be thrilled. They should be praising. They should be singing hallelujahs.

Back in chapter 4 we just read how they anticipated this event and were singing praise. In chapter 5 they were singing praise. And to continue that, chapter 7 verse 10, when they know that the Lamb is coming to set up His throne, when they understand that a full and final salvation is coming, the great saved multitude out of the Tribulation says, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." And all the angels standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, they fell on their face before the throne and they worshiped God saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever."

And in chapter 11 when it was announced as well that the judgment was going to fall and the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever, when that announcement was made there, the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces, worshiped God saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the almighty who art and who wast because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign."

In chapter 15 when the announcement came as well they sang the song of Moses, the bondservant of God and the song of the Lamb saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God the Almighty, righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name for Thou alone art holy? For all the nations will come and worship before Thee for Thy righteous acts have been revealed."

And in chapter 16 the angels of the waters anticipating the judgment and the final coming of Christ says, "Righteous art Thou who art and who wast, O holy One, because Thou didst judge these things."

You see, heavenly beings have been rejoicing all along at every prospect of Christ's return, every anticipation of an established Kingdom, every announcement that the King is coming, that the Kingdom will arrive. And so here we come to chapter 19. John the beloved Apostle, the seer of

revelation, for the seventh time is given a vision of heaven. And as he looks and listens, here it comes again, more praise. Sounds fall on his ears and sights on his eyes which stir him deeply. And primarily what we see is hallelujah...hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. He hears the heavenly hallelujahs in the immediate anticipation of Christ coming for the final action of destroying the remaining ungodly and setting up His Kingdom.,

Now as we go through these ten verses I want to show you five reasons for heaven's joy...five reasons, five causes for the heavenly hallelujahs. I want to get through four of them tonight and leave one for next time because it's so complete in itself.

But before we look at those five reasons, would you look at just the first three words in chapter 19? "After these things." Now that's a little key, a time key. After the vision of the destruction of Babylon which comes at the end of the time of the Great Tribulation. Remember, the city is destroyed first and people stand back from the city and see its destruction so we know the rest of the world follows the destruction of the city. We don't know how much time is in there. The rest of the world has to gather all of its forces at Armageddon. That may be going on while Babylon is being destroyed. Then there is the devastating judgment described, as I showed you, in the seventh bowl. Then Jesus comes back, slaughters the remaining forces, as we'll see in later verses in this chapter, and sets up His Kingdom. But it is after these things, after the destruction of Babylon at the end of the Great Tribulation. And just before the Kingdom is established, just before the Lord returns in verse 11, in that little time between the Tribulation and the establishment of the Kingdom is the time we are taken to heaven to see this great rejoicing.

Some time around the destruction of Babylon, demons are leading the armies of the remaining lamenting world to the final battle of Armageddon. It is to that battle that Christ returns with devastating power and reconfigures the whole world. That battle is about to start and then Christ comes and then the Kingdom. It is in that interval between the destruction of Babylon and the final coming of Jesus Christ that we're taken to heaven...after these things. And here is the holy of holiest reactions to the coming of Christ.

Now as we look at the hallelujahs, let me give you reason number one. Reason number one that heaven rejoices is because full salvation is come. Reason number one, because full salvation is come. "After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, `Hallelujah.'" Why were they saying hallelujah? "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God." They were saying Hallelujah because it was salvation time. Salvation hour had arrived. Here is the anthem that celebrates the full and final deliverance from sin.

John says, "I heard, as it were, a loud voice." Now it's not really a loud voice, it's like a loud voice. It is the composite voices of a great multitude. Who is it? It doesn't specifically tell us but I think the

best understanding of it is that it's an angelic host. The reason I say that is because the saints are enjoined to join this praise and do so down in verses 5, 6, 7 and 8. And so it seems as if the saints are sort of called in to this later on, this is most likely angelic. And you remember, don't you, that angels have already participated in those great series of praise that we have seen throughout the book.

So this great multitude in heaven is millions and millions of holy angels. This is a great...this is a mega group, massive multitude. And people will always ask the question, "How many holy angels are there?" Well we don't know because the Lord doesn't tell us specifically. But there are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. They must number in the millions because there are 200 million demons in chapter 9 verse 16 who were bound at the River Euphrates. Those 200 million demons are released to join the rest of the demons. It's most likely that the 200 million bound demons aren't as many in number as the loose demons that have been running all over the world throughout all of human history. So just a portion of those demons that is bound numbers 200 million. So the total number of demons...who knows? Hundreds of millions. And chapter 12 and verse 4 of Revelation says the demons all together are only one third of the angels. So whatever the number of demons, hundreds of millions, you multiply by two to get the number of holy angels. So that at least catapults you into some mathematical concept. Millions and millions and millions of them.

Now you notice, as I told you on other occasions, they're not singing, they're saying. It may actually be heavenly rap because we don't find anything in the Bible, we don't find anything in the Bible about angels singing. We do find them saying.

And what are they saying? "Hallelujah." Hallelujah only appears in this chapter in the New Testament...here and no where else...four times and only here. But it is first used in the Old Testament not until Psalm 104. Psalm 104 verse 35 is the first Old Testament use of the word "hallelujah." It's a transliterated Hebrew term. And Psalm 104:35 says this, and I'll help you to understand what the word is used for, "Let sinners be consumed from the earth." Hmm, "And let the wicked be no more, hallelujah." Wow! What are they saying "hallelujah" about? Judgment...judgment. And that Psalm also says in 104:35, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, hallelujah." It's a hallelujah...the first time it's ever used in the Old Testament it's a hallelujah for judgment. And the first time it's ever used in the New Testament it's a hallelujah for judgment. It's almost like the word got reserved for that.

The word actually means, if you translate it, "Praise the Lord." That's what it means. But it is a transliteration of the Hebrew word used from Psalm 104:35 on through the Psalms about 24 times. It begins, the word "hallelujah," it begins and ends fifteen Psalms, particularly the two sections of the Psalms that we call the "Hallel." We call them the Hallel because of Hallelujah. Psalm 104 to 109 and Psalm 113 to 118...Psalm 113 to 118 and Psalm 104 to 109 are hallelujahs, listen carefully,

primarily celebrating Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.

So "hallelujah" is a word reserved for praising the Lord notably because of His devastating and complete judgment on wicked oppressors of His people. Interesting, isn't it? Hallelujah is a special word reserved for the joy of those who are delivered from their enemies by God's saving might.

It is reserved then in the Old Testament to be used primarily to celebrate God's salvation and destruction of the enemies of Israel. It is reserved in the New Testament and until it is...until it is used to express God's saving deliverance of His people and the destruction of the ungodly across the face of the world. It is a word connected to judgment on the ungodly and the salvation of God's people. And so, when you say "hallelujah," it has some rich and very specific meaning.

Hallelujah. What's the next word? Salvation, deliverance...complete, final deliverance is here.

And believers have always anticipated it. Paul said, "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." What did he mean by that? He didn't mean your present soul salvation, he meant your ultimate deliverance from sin and a fallen world and oppressing wicked people. Here it is, salvation has come and with it glory and power. God's glory is put on display. God's power is manifest. God's majestic glory is now seen revealed in judgment. The world will see God on display in unveiled judgment. Remember when Christ comes they cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from His face. The blazing glory of Jesus Christ comes out of a sky that is pitch dark because the universe has gone black. The whole world sees the display of glory and God's mighty power conquering energy comes to destroy the wicked and rescue the godly and establish the Kingdom.

You will see in this verse salvation and glory and power belong to our God. There's really no verb there. Salvation and glory and power to our God. It could be "belong to our God," or it could be "have come," obviously "from God."

God displays His might and His glory in a saving deliverance and destruction of the ungodly. And that's the specific expression of the word "hallelujah." It reminds me of 1 Chronicles 29:11, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. Indeed, everything that is in the heavens and the earth, Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from Thee and Thou dost rule over all. And in Thy hand is power and might. It lies in Thy hand to make great and to strengthen. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name." And here the glory and the strength of God is put on display as He comes to save.

So the first cause of rejoicing and praise is because God has fully and gloriously and powerfully delivered His people from Satan, demons, Antichrist, sinners and the cursed world. The silence then of the ruined realm of Babylon is replaced with loud rejoicing in heaven. In place of the laments come the hallelujahs because God has saved His people.

Then a second reason for praise, because justice is meted out...because justice is meted out. Verse 2, again, "Hallelujah because His judgments are true and righteous for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality and He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her." Justice is meted out because His judgments are true and righteous. Here is the joy of justice. Here is the joy of righteousness. All who pray for, all who work for, all who fight for righteousness and justice in the world can appreciate this. We live in a society where we're constantly disturbed and distressed about its injustice, inequity, unrighteousness. Saints throughout all of history have been so distressed and so disturbed and pleaded with God for a righteous world, a righteous society. It finally comes. No wonder heaven is exuberant over the reality of justice reigning in the earth, righteousness. Many righteous have died in battles with unrighteousness. Now all the unrighteous will die in the triumph of the righteous One.

Saints have always hoped for this day that is announced here in this chapter. I think about Isaiah long ago who in anticipating the Messiah said, "His name will be Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace and there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over His Kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forever more the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this." The prophet Isaiah anticipating a righteous Kingdom, the Kingdom of Messiah.

Jeremiah, among others, had the same anticipation. Jeremiah chapter 23 right early in the chapter in verse 5, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and He will reign as King and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land."

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a leader, a president, a king who did only what was righteous? We will have such a King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Back in Revelation chapter 6 we're very familiar with this, the martyrs under the altar who have been killed during the Tribulation are praying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth? Lord, how long? How long? How long do we have to wait before there is justice, before there is equity, before there is righteousness?" And then in chapter 16 verse 7, again from the altar comes, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgment."

I don't know about you but I'm sick of an unrighteous world. We battle it all the time. And godly people love righteousness that metes out justice as justice should be meted out. We who are God's people hate sin because it mocks God. And we love justice because it exalts God. We hate unrighteousness and we love righteousness. Godly long for a world of justice and a world of

righteousness. And that world, beloved, is coming.

Go down to verse 15 in this chapter. "When Christ comes He will rule with a rod of iron...He will rule with a rod of iron." What does that mean? Well, it's already been stated back in chapter 2 verse 27, back in chapter 12 verse 5, it means immediate and painful and unrelenting justice. Immediate and painful and unrelenting justice will fall.

So, the godless foolishness and pride of men who struggle to survive the seven years of holocaust are left to sort of work themselves to the full, but when the harvest is ripe, the sweep of the sharp sickle of justice comes and chops them all down. And the initiator, the initiating event that really is the final trigger to the last full judgment of God and the coming of justice is the desolation of Babylon. And he describes it again as if we haven't heard it enough. "For He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality."

He comes first to judge Babylon, who is identified as a harlot because she seduced the world into the false system of Satan. The one corrupting the earth with her immorality. The satanic Antichrist system will be permitted to lure, delude, deceive and debauch the world with its abominations which people will prefer, of course, to the gospel, as they do today. But the judgment will come, be all the more conspicuous and the destruction will be absolutely complete.

Then when justice comes there's not only a negative side, there's a positive side. It says, "And He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her." He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her. God promised He would do that. God promised there would be vengeance. Go back to chapter 18 verse 24, in Babylon, in that whole system of Babylon was found the blood of prophets and saints and all who have been slain on the earth. And God is going to bring vengeance on the system that killed His people.

This also takes us back to Deuteronomy chapter 32. And there are a number of other Old Testament passages that speak of God's vengeance in the end. Listen to Deuteronomy 32:42 and 43, "I will make My arrows drunk with blood and My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives from the long-haired leaders of the enemy. Rejoice, O nations, with His people for He will avenge the blood of His servants and will render vengeance on His adversaries and will atone for His land and His people." That one line, "For He will avenge the blood of His servants." That almost seems to be the line that is used here in heaven, "He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her."

It is only just, isn't it? That the ones who caused the moral ruin of the world should themselves be destroyed, that the ones who killed the saints should themselves be killed. It's no wonder heaven rejoices. Heaven rejoices because of full salvation for the redeemed and full justice and righteousness for the Christ rejecters. Thus does heaven lift its hallelujahs.

Thirdly, there are heavenly hallelujahs because rebellion is ended...because rebellion is ended. And just drawing this out of verse 3 we read, "And a second time they said," this same heavenly multitude, "Hallelujah." Why? "Her smoke rises up forever and ever." This is most interesting. The first hallelujah was in response to the judgment on Babylon. And the second one is in response to it as well. Again they said hallelujah but this time it's not simply because of the judgment itself which brought salvation, but secondly, because the judgment is permanent as indicated by the fact that the smoke rises forever and ever.

Remember now, Babylon is going to go up in flames. We saw that in chapter 18, did we not? Burned up with fire, it says in verse 8. Verse 9, "See the smoke of her burning." Verse 18, "They saw the smoke of her burning and said, 'What city is like this great city?'" There was even a burning of the harlot in chapter 17 when the Antichrist system burned her up with fire, according to verse 16. Back in chapter 14 verse 8, "Fall and fallen is Babylon," there we see the fury of the wrath of God and down in verse 11 "the smoke of her torment goes up forever and ever." So this idea of permanent smoke is repeated. Why? To show us that the destruction is permanent...permanent.

It's like some ancient places. Genesis 19 verse 28, the permanent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah 34:10, the permanent destruction of Edom. You say, "Well what do you mean the smoke goes up forever and ever? You mean that there will be eternal smoke just billowing out of there?" That's not the idea. The fire will burn out. The embers will cool. And the ashes will blow away. And when the earth is completely cleaned and swept and reshaped and flattened out and the islands all flee away, obviously the renewed earth isn't going to have a smoldering place. But the point is this, the result is permanent. The result is forever. Rebellion is ended. And there will come one small and brief effort at rebellion at the end of the thousand years, and we'll see that a little later, that is immediately squashed, and that's the final act. But it's over. Man will never again rule the world. He will never again control.

There's even another implication here. In a secondary sense all those people who perished in the destruction of Babylon, all those people who were burned in the conflagration of that city, all those people will burn in hell forever and ever and ever and ever where the smoke will go on eternally. "The word dieth not," says Matthew 9, "and the fire is never quenched."

So, it's all over. It's all over. Persecution is over. False religion is over. They'll never again be false religion in the world. Materialism is over. It will never exist again. Evolutionary science is over. Philosophy, psychology, it's over. It's all gone. Injustice, unrighteousness in leadership gone, over, finished, never again. A global disaster ends it all. Man has rebelled since Eden. He's concocted his wild and outlandish sinful schemes, his false religions. He's persecuted the saints since Cain killed Abel and now it is over. It's over. All rebellion burned up. And the one last little attempt at a coup at the end of the Kingdom, squashed instantly. All rebellion over.

This is that for which the saints have waited and waited and waited. How many times have we read the Psalms and heard the cry of the psalmist to destroy the wicked and not let them get away with their wickedness? Joel chapter 2, the prophet also quoted, of course, in Peter's sermon in Pentecost in Acts 2 says, "I will grant wonders in the sky above, signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire vapor of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come." God's just going to send a devastating horrifying judgment and that's going to be the end of rebellion. It's no wonder heaven is singing hallelujah, or saying hallelujah. Full salvation, complete justice and righteousness and rebellion is over.

And one last point for tonight. Fourth reason for hallelujah, because God is in control...because God is in control at last. Verse 4, "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, 'Amen, hallelujah.' And a voice came from the throne saying, 'Give praise to our God, all you His bondservants, you who fear Him, the small and great. 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.'" Why? "For the Lord our God the Almighty...what's the word?...reigns." God's in charge. God's in charge at last. Praises always belong to God even when most people denied it to Him.

Now in agreement with the angelic crowd, hallelujahs come from other heavenly residents. You notice in verse 4 the twenty-four elders who were best understood to represent the church. Some would take it that they represent angels. I certainly wouldn't want to say that that's a serious error, it's a difficult interpretation. They could well be angels, I lean toward to the fact, as I've taught you, that they could represent the church. But nonetheless, they are added to the angelic chorus. Then the four living creatures who are additional special angelic beings and both the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures described to us in detail back in chapter 4, they in joining the rest of the multitude fall down, it says, and worship God who sits on the throne. They are the same group we met back in chapter 7 and verse 11. We're not going to go back through all of that. This group of elders, this group of living beings, four living beings, four angelic beings are associated with praise all through the book...chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 11. And they add their praise by saying, "Amen, hallelujah." And that combination comes from Psalm 106:48, another Psalm in the Hallel. In fact, it's at the close of the doxology at the end of book 4 in the psalter, there are five books in the Psalms, this is the close of the doxology at the end of book four.

"Amen, hallelujah," what does it mean? "Amen" means to agree, so be it, let it happen, I mean it, Lord...affirmation, agreement. And so the volume of praise swells, "I mean it, Lord, let it be, hallelujah." They join in the praise.

In verse 5, "A voice came from the throne saying," you can read pages and pages on speculating who that voice is, we don't know. Some angel, most likely. "And he says, 'Give praise to our God, all

you His bondservants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

"Give praise to God" is a present imperative, keep on praising, keep on praising, all you His bondservants. It refers to believers. All the believers who are in heaven which would mean the church and those saved during the time of the Tribulation. All of you who reverence and worship, all of you worshiping saints, small and great, from all intellectual abilities, all social strata, all levels of spiritual progress, all distinctions and ranks of all kinds are completely transcended right here, everybody, all of you, no matter who you are, praise the Lord. That same phrase "small and great" is used in chapter 11:13, here and also, I believe, in chapter 20. Now he says it's time for all you, no matter who you are to join in praise.

So now you have the angels, and added to the angels the twenty-four elders, then those unique four living creatures and now he calls upon the great multitude of saints that are in the presence of the Lord, give praise to our God, all you His bondservants...you who fear Him, the small and great. And they do because John says in verse 6, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude." Here comes the multitude of redeemed saints who are in the presence of God adding their praise to the angels with a power borne of the experience the angels never had, the experience of being saved from sin. And now the already deafening praise becomes even more deafening and John describes it as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder. It's like a million Niagaras...the sound deafens him.

Meant to illustrate here, by the way, the loudness of praise, as millions of holy angels and redeemed souls praise God. And why? "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns." What does it mean? He's become King, He's taken over, He's in charge, He's risen to the fullness of sovereign control. And by the way, that phrase "Hallelujah for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns," is another clear reference to the Hallel. It takes us right back to Psalm 113 to 118 again. And also, do you know the book of Psalms ends with five great Hallel Psalms? So you have 104 to 109, 113 to 118, and 146 to 150. And if you look at Psalms 146 to 150, they all begin the same way..."Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord...Praise the Lord," which is a translation of the term "Hallelujah."

And what are those last five Psalms about? They're about God's sovereignty, they're about God's control, about God as the eternal sovereign ruler and His eternal fellowship with all the redeemed. The Kingdom is here. The Kingdom has come. And heaven rejoices because of salvation, because of righteousness, because rebellion is ended and because God is in control.

Cause for hallelujahs...and there's one more, but I'm going to save that till next time. But I'll give you a hint. Verse 7, "Let's rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him because the marriage of the Lamb has come." And we're going to talk about that tremendous event and concept.

Let me conclude by having you look over at 2 Thessalonians and remind yourself of a passage there that is so important. I'm just going to read it to you...2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 3, "We always ought to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting because your faith is greatly enlarged and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater. Therefore we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure."

In other words, Paul says I'm so thankful to God for your endurance, your perseverance. And I speak proudly of you, what you've gone through and how faithful you've been. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God for which indeed you are suffering. For after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you. And He will, we've seen it. And to give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well.

There's coming a day when He's going to afflict the afflicters and comfort the afflicted. There's coming a day when God is going to repay the ungodly and give relief to His people. When is it? It's when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. It's in that day when He deals out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, in that day when those will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power, in that day when He comes to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What he's saying is hang in there, be faithful. If you suffer, know this, there's a day coming when the people who make you suffer will pay and those who have hated God, hated Christ and hated His people will receive His vengeance and it's the day when He will be glorified in His saints and set up His Kingdom. Be faithful. Be worthy. Lift up the name of Christ and bring Him glory until He comes.

And that's the injunction to us. That's the admonition, that's the application. Most believers won't be around when Jesus returns. Most believers who live through human history won't be on the earth at the Rapture. They've died. We may be here when the Lord comes to take His church. We may be dead and gone. But we all have to live in the light of His coming. We have to live with hope no matter how difficult it gets, no matter how unrighteous the society is, no matter how ungodly, no matter how it persecutes, no matter how misunderstood and misrepresented we are, as we heard the testimony of that young man tonight. It doesn't matter. The day of vengeance comes, the day comes when we will be delivered from sin and all its power, the day comes when justice and righteousness will prevail on the earth, the day comes when all the rebels will be destroyed and rebellion will end, the day for heavenly, glorious hallelujahs, the day when God takes control and sets up His Kingdom.

And so, until that day we remain faithful. And pray that God will use us to lead others to His Son.

Father, we thank You tonight for the way in which You have opened the future to us, just laid it out so that we know the end from the beginning. We live in a world where people don't understand how it started. They think it all happened in a pool of slime somewhere in a non-existent universe. They don't know how it started and they have no idea how it will end. You've told us the beginning and the end and everything in the middle from Genesis to Revelation. How rich we are and how responsible to live Your truth and proclaim it, to be faithful till Jesus comes for His own. May it be true that we bring honor and glory to His name who shall someday come in full glory and reign over the universe and with His people. Till that day keep us faithful, we pray for our Savior's sake. Amen.

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