

REVELATION – SERMON 72

HEAVEN'S HALLELUJAHS

Revelation 19:1-7

INTRODUCTION

- The ornithologist identifies birds by their songs – each has its unique song
- Man can also be identified by the songs he sings
- Drunkards, fornicators, rebels, idolaters have their types of music and songs that characterise them
- God's people have their own distinct songs that mark them
- As we have seen already, Revelation is a book of songs – the psalter of the New Testament (4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-14; 7:10, 12, 15-17; 11:15, 17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7)
- Chapter 18, containing the mournful lament of the earth-dwellers, with the sixfold “Alas!”, now makes way for the fourfold “Alleluia!” of the heaven-dwellers in chapter 19
- This chorus is the climax of all the praise songs of Revelation
- This chapter is one of the most important, not only in Revelation, but the whole bible, for it records the event that almost every other book points to, and which is the most anticipated in all of biblical prophecy—the Second Coming of Jesus Christ
- This chapter is also a transitional chapter, forming a bridge between the Great Tribulation, and the Millennium
- It shows how these great changes in the world will be effected:

- ✓ Unrighteous governments will be replaced by righteous
 - ✓ The persecution of the saints will cease
 - ✓ War will turn to peace
 - ✓ Satan will be bound
 - ✓ Lifespans will be increased
 - ✓ The ground will be more fruitful
 - ✓ Animals will cease to be deadly
 - ✓ There will be one language
- The cause of all these changes, and many more, will be the return of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - There are three scenes in this chapter, marked by what John “heard” and “saw” (vv.1,11,21)
 - ✓ The first scene begins in the celestial (1-10) with the rejoicing in heaven and the marriage of the Lamb and his wife
 - ✓ The second scene moves terrestrial (11-18) as Christ comes with his saints to smite the nations and establish his kingdom
 - ✓ The third scene then shifts to the infernal (19-21) as the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire
 - This song we are studying today is the response to the events of the previous chapter
 - In 18:20, the persecuted saints, and indeed all of heaven, were called to rejoice over the fall of Babylon as the retributive judgment of God
 - Here we are given, through John, another unveiling of the heavens to witness the worship that takes place there
 - There are similarities to the shout of praise from heaven that was heard when Satan was cast down to the earth in 12:10

- The key word used in this chorus is *Alleluia*, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Hallelujah*
- Hallelujah (Praise ye the LORD) is found 24 times in the Old Testament, and 28 times in the whole bible
- The number 24 is associated with priesthood and the worship of God
 - ✓ King David organised the temple worship into 24 courses (1 Chronicles 23-24)
 - ✓ The 72nd Psalm lists 24 things that the Lord Jesus Christ will do when he sits on his throne as King and Priest during the Millennium
 - ✓ The 24 elders, representing the glorified redeemed in heaven following the rapture, have a priestly function, as they carry golden vials, full of odours (5:8)
- As a multiple of seven, the number 28 has divine connotations
 - ✓ The curtains of the tabernacle were 28 cubits long (Exodus 26:2; 36:9)
 - ✓ Christ is called “the Lamb” 28 times in Revelation

Consider these four Alleluias with their four reasons for praising the Lord

I. ALLELUIA! ACCLAIM HIS WORKS OF SALVATION (1)

A. A great voice of much people

1. The word for “people” (*ochlos*) can be translated as “multitude”

2. This unspecified group may contain a vast unified chorus of all the created beings in heaven, including
 - a. Glorified believers from the church age
 - b. Tribulation saints
 - c. The various ranks of angels
3. It appears to be the same great multitude who round off the song in v.6

B. They render highest praise to God

1. Salvation
 - a. Salvation is of the LORD (Jonah 2:9; Titus 3:5)
 - b. This word should be understood to not only include the individual salvation of the soul, but the whole work of redemption that will be completed with the new heavens and earth
2. Glory
3. Honour
4. Power

II. ALLELUIA! ACKNOWLEDGE HIS WRATHFUL SEVERITY (2-3)

- A. True and righteous are God's judgments (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 19:9; 119:137)
 1. The martyrs prayed for God's vengeance on the basis of his *holy* and *true* character (Revelation 6:10-11)
- B. He is to be praised in his judgment of the wicked

1. He is a God of both goodness and severity (Romans 11:22)
2. The tribulation period is the just judgment and wrath of God upon a wicked and rebellious world
3. Those impenitent haters of God will have been exposed to the greatest gospel witness this world has ever seen—the 144,000 (7:3-8); the two witnesses (11:3-13); the angel with the everlasting gospel (14:6)
4. Yet they blaspheme God and slaughter the saints
5. By the time of the last seven vials/plagues, the opportunity to repent is passed and the beast worshippers are given over to destruction
6. The person who goes to hell, goes there only after trampling over every obstacle God has put in his path, including the body and blood of Jesus Christ
7. It is appropriate for us to sing in praise of God's punishment of the wicked
 - a. The first song in the bible praises God for his judgment on the Egyptians
 - b. Many of the psalms extol God's wrath on his enemies, and pray for their destruction (Psalm 68:1)
 - c. The first Hallelujah in the bible imprecates: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more" (Psalm 104:35)
8. We are to pray and labour for evil men to repent, but if they will not repent, we pray for their *removal*

C. Babylon's smoke ascends forever

1. This indicates the final complete desolation of the city
2. It describes the eternal damnation of the beast, false prophet, and all those who choose Babylon over Zion (Revelation 14:10-11)

III. ALLELUIA! ABASED IN WORSHIPFUL SUBMISSION (4-5)

A. The twenty-four elders and the four beasts

1. The elders were identified as being representative of church age believers in heaven after the rapture
2. The four beasts (living creatures) are of an angelic order, closely resembling the cherubim
3. This is their last appearance in Revelation

B. They fall down in worship

1. The elders throughout Revelation are found to be continually falling down in worship before the throne of God (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16)
2. Falling down on one's face is an outward expression of worship (1 Corinthians 14:25)
3. "Amen" indicates assent and agreement – "so be it"
 - a. They are in agreement with the multitude's song and combine their own praise with them
 - b. In heaven, there is no division, strife or schism, but complete harmony and unity

- c. Heaven is the domain the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the Amen” (3:14)

IV. ALLELUIA! ADORE HIS WORTHY SOVEREIGNTY (6-7)

A. A command to praise God

1. This is most likely the voice of a mighty angel
2. The call echoes many of the Psalms calls to praise the Lord (Psalm 113:1; 135:1, 20)
3. The call is to all God’s servants, and those that fear him, both small and great

B. The multitude praise God’s all-powerful, universal rule

1. God presently rules over his creation from heaven (Psalm 93:2)
2. This declaration anticipates the imminent return of Christ (19:11-21), when he makes his throne in Jerusalem, when his “kingdom come” and his “will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)
3. The word translated “omnipotent (*pantokrator*), is used nine times in Revelation and is rendered “Almighty” in every case except here

C. Praise is a glad and joyful activity

1. True praise emanates from a heart full of thanksgiving and love to God (Psalm 100:1-2)
2. This Alleluia melds into the joyous wedding celebration of the Lamb and his wife

CONCLUSION

1. The tradition for centuries has been to stand to one's feet during the singing of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*
2. Yet it may be more appropriate to fall on our faces at the sound of *Hallelujah*
3. This passage, and others like it, should guide our worship here on earth in preparation for our worship in heaven
4. It should thrill our hearts with the prospect of singing in that great throng—redeemed, glorified, and evermore dwelling in the presence of Jesus Christ
5. Question: "Will I be in that number?"
6. Praise and prayers for judgment upon the wicked are appropriate for the saints
7. But our motives must be spiritual, not carnal (see Psalm 139:19-22)
8. When we consider the destruction of the wicked, our response should not be to proudly think, "Well, they deserve it, but I don't."
9. We should say, "That is the judgment I deserve, but have escaped by God's mere grace."
10. We should say, "There but for the grace of God, go I"