

“The Hallelujah Chorus”
Revelation 19:1-9
March 22, 1998
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An outline of Revelation:

- 1** **Introduction/Purpose**
- 2-3** **Letters to 7 churches**
- 4-5** **A scene in heaven**
- 6-18** **Just before the end**
- 19** **Jesus comes again**
- 20-22** **The new heavens and earth**

When I was in my elementary years, I attended a one-room school house in rural northern Wisconsin.

There was a total of 15 students in the entire school from grades 1-8.

Studying Revelation 19, I was reminded of an incident that happened when I was in about the 5th grade.

It was winter time, which it is much of the time in Wisconsin, and at recess we would build two snow forts about 25 feet away from each other and then at noon we would have snowball fights - each team firing from its own fort.

One day Chester Miller was on the opposing side.

Chester was big! Certainly much bigger than me.

And some of us thought Chester was “one brick shy of a full load”.

So when Chester got angry it was rather frightening because he didn’t know when to quit.

At noon that particular day we were busily making snowballs, storing them in the fort and then at the appointed time we began the war.

Fairly soon in the battle I picked up a special snowball - hardened with a little water - better for breaking down the enemy’s fort - and I launched it with all my might.

Chester stood up in his fort just as the snowball arrived and it caught him in the head.

For just a second I felt sorry for Chester.

But the hollar he let out and the way he came out of his fort toward me told me he was in pain not injury.

And my sympathy turned instantly to fear.

Chester’s words as he came toward me were something about ending my life.

It's funny now but it wasn't, then!

My only hope was to outrun Chester, so I took off around the school house corner with Chester lumbering after me in screaming pursuit.

Around and around the school house we went - Chester yelling about killing me and me crying and running for my life.

It seemed like forever but finally the school bell was rung ending recess but Chester didn't stop coming after me - and if Chester didn't stop there was no way I was going to stop.

All the other children went inside but not Chester and so not me.

You might ask why I didn't make a dash for the school-house door?

I knew that being inside only meant I would be cornered.

The teacher came out and ordered Chester to stop but she was no match for Chester and when Chester didn't stop chasing me, I didn't stop.

Then Chester's sister, Janet, appeared.

She was in 8th grade and she was bigger and tougher than Chester.

The teacher had apparently asked for her help.

When I realized Janet wasn't after me but was going to take Chester out, and then when I saw her step in front of Chester and take him down to help him get control of himself I collapsed into snow with tears of relief.

The dragon had been slain. Babylon the great had fallen.

What relief, what joy.

Have you ever had a genuinely life-threatening experience?

Can you remember the relief, the joy when it was past and you realized you weren't dead and weren't likely to die soon?

There's an emotional response that can be very strong.

Most of you know the biblical account of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea but have you ever imagined the emotions they experienced?

Historians estimate there were more than a million of them.

They had left Egypt, walking and carrying everything they owned.

It was a huge exodus of people - you've probably seen pictures of civilians streaming out of war-torn cities or countries - to give you some idea of their experience.

By the time they got to the Red Sea, an impassable barrier, they realized the Egyptians had changed their mind about letting them go and their army was in hot pursuit.

At that point they were convinced they were doomed.

They were slaves, they were carrying gold from Egypt and they had been responsible for some of the worst plagues to ever visit Egypt.

Then God opened up the waters of the Red Sea.

The water banked up on either side creating a dry road-bed right through the sea.

With haste the Israelite masses walked through that sea to the other side.

But as they made it to the other side they could instantly see the danger was not over - the Egyptians on their horses and chariots were madly dashing through the sea on the same dry road-bed.

Again, clutching their children to them, they waited for what appeared to be the inevitable end.

But God once again intervened - and certainly as he had stacked up the water to create a dry road-bed, so now he released that walled-up water and it caved in on the Egyptians.

And from the safe side of the sea, the Israelites saw, with astonishment, that their enemy had been miraculously defeated.

Now can you imagine the relief they experienced?

Can you picture them watching in fear as the Egyptians approach?

Can you see them peer in astonishment as they watch the waters cave in on those horses and their riders?

Can you see them stand in stock silence as they take in what has happened?

Can you then imagine them turning to each other and whispering at first and then slowing raising their voices to shouts - "Did you see that?!"

Can you see them hugging each other?

What relief, what joy - what a celebration!

The Bible says "Then Miriam took a tambourine in her hand and all the women followed her with tambourines and dancing they sang:

"Sing to the Lord for he is highly exalted.

The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea."

Can you see them raising their faces toward heaven and shouting and waving anything in their hands and dancing and praising God and little kids running around in circles with excitement like they do when they don't know what's going on but it's fun.

I can imagine the party went on all day.

And as the singing continued more and more words were added to the song:

“The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” Exodus 15:1-2

Now I want you “fast-forward” at least 3500 years.

We skip quickly over:

Joshua leading the Israelites into Canaan. (1500 B.C.)

Samson and Samuel as judges in the land (1200 B.C.)

David crowned as king (1000 B.C.)

The fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian armies. (600 B.C.)

There’s Ezekial and Daniel in captivity.

The Persian Empire and then Alexander the Great. (400 B.C.)

The Romans conquer the known world. (200 B.C.)

Jesus comes to earth the first time.

Peter and Paul and others spread the gospel. (A.D. 50)

Mohammed preaches and Islam begins to grow (A.D. 600)

Europe begins to divide into nation-states. (A.D. 1000)

The Crusades take place (A.D. 1200)

Columbus begins to explore the world. (A.D. 1400)

Martin Luther and John Calvin lead the great reformation. (A.D. 1500)

An English colony is founded at Jamestown, Virginia. (A.D. 1600)

The American Revolution (A.D. 1700)

The Russian Revolution (A.D. 1900)

World War II (A.D. 1940)

The Second Russian Revolution (A.D. 1989)

Today - March 22 (A.D. 1998)

The evil one-world government (A.D. ?) Rev 13

According to Revelation chapters 13 and 17, which we studied recently, the coming governmental/religious system that will control the world, that John alternately calls the beasts, the prostitute, and Babylon will be so evil and so pervasive that it will make the Egyptians that chased Israel seem like the “Welcome Wagon.”

The one-world government that is coming will have unlimited power.

It will offer untold wealth and comfort to those who pledge their allegiance to it.

But it’s greatest joy will be to persecute and kill God’s people and it will all happen, undoubtedly, in the name of law and order and what is good for the human race.

But when Jesus comes again, according to chapters 14 and 18 - that great evil empire will fall.

It will unravel from within and Jesus will bring judgment from without.

And the people of the world will mourn because they put their trust in her and she has been destroyed and they go down with her.

Video: "Babylon the Great" falls (A.D. ?) Rev 18

With that we come to the first ten verses of chapter 19 of Revelation.

Chapter 18 viewed the destruction of that last great evil empire from the vantage point of the people who were going down with her.

Just like viewing the crossing of the Red Sea from the view point of an Egyptian soldier that watches the walls of water cave in on him and his army.

Chapter 19 is viewing the destruction of that last great evil empire from the perspective of God's people.

Remember what we imagined earlier when we considered what the relief and joy the Israelites felt when they saw the Egyptian Army defeated by the sovereign intervention of Almighty God.

This is how the people of God will feel in that day when Jesus comes again - evil has been destroyed and Jesus has come.

This passage has understandably been called the Hallelujah Chorus.

Four times the word is shouted out - "hallelujah".

It is only here in all the NT that this word is used.

It is a word common to the OT and it is a transliteration of two Hebrew words which mean "praise" and "Jehovah" - and thus our English translation "Praise the Lord" or just simply "Hallelujah".

Why the excitement?

It appears there are two major events that generate this enthusiasm for God.

The first is the destruction of the enemy of God's people- verses 1-4

The second is the marriage of God's people - verses 5-9

When does this take place?

Revelation 19:1-10 describes a time after Jesus comes again.

His actual second coming will be described in Rev 19:11-21.

But here in the first part of the chapter John jumps ahead and describes what it will be like when Jesus has come back.

So John is looking ahead and he feels the excitement that will be felt when Jesus has come again - when He is here on this earth again.

First of all then he describes the excitement believers will feel when they realize that the enemy of their souls has been destroyed.

Rev 19:1b-3 "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. And again they shouted: Hallelujah! The smoke of her goes up for ever and ever...And they cried, "Amen, Hallelujah!"

At the end of the tribulation when Jesus comes back again and ushers in the eternal kingdom of God, all the people of God will stand looking back and they will see there is no longer a threat.

The enemy has been destroyed.

When Jesus forgives us for our sin upon our repentance and faith in his death for us - we experience freedom from the penalty of sin.

Immediately upon the experience of the "new birth" - when we become Christians - Jesus promises that from that day forward we can know that we will never be punished by God for our sin - the punishment, the penalty has been taken by Jesus. He died in our place.

As we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ we can also know an increasing freedom from the power of sin.

It doesn't mean we won't sin again but it does mean we will realize that by God's grace it is possible for us not to sin. - he enables us to obey to a degree we never thought possible.

Life will still be a struggle but we can experience wins and not just losses when it comes to sin.

We experience something of freedom from the power of sin.

But when Jesus comes again a whole new world will open to us - a world that is free from the presence of sin.

No sinful nature or evil spirits offering their temptations to us.

No government directly or indirectly attacking our values, our beliefs.

No religion or state out to convert us or kill us.

Imagine a world where the Balkan nations lived in peace- real peace.

Imagine a world where the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda and Burundi loved each other.

Imagine a world where poverty and sickness were non-existent.

Consider a world where there was no child abuse, no unfaithfulness, no deep emotional pain of rejection, of loneliness, of fear.

Imagine a world where the specter of death, of illness, of debilitating old age were absent - not even thought about again.

Envision a world with no greed, no prejudice.

Imagine everything that works against us in this life being destroyed.
Imagine being set free to actively serve God with no opposition even from our own natures.

No wonder these people were excited - the enemies of life that brought temptation, pain, suffering, fear, and frustration were gone.

Do you want to know the truth?

I am so conditioned to living in this corrupt world and with my corrupt nature that I struggle to imagine what it could be like.

But in Revelation 19:1-4 the people of God see it happen, they experience it and they can't contain themselves for joy they feel.

But secondly these people feel this excitement because of the marriage of God's people.

Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints)."

All through the Bible God uses the analogy of marriage to describe his relationship to his people.

In Hosea 2:19 God says, "I will betroth you to me for ever."

In Isaiah the Lord calls himself the husband of Israel.

In Mark 2:19 Jesus likens himself to a bridegroom to his people.

In II Corinthians 11:2 Paul writes, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

And in this passage the people of God are compared to a bride who has waited for a long time for the wedding and now the groom - Jesus himself, comes - and what they had waited so long to experience has now come to pass - they are together!

Have you ever known an ache in your heart when you have been separated from the one or ones you love?

Have you ever known the sheer joy at being reunited - together again?

Is there anyone you know so well and love so much that to be with them is peace, is contentment, is satisfaction?

In Revelation 19, the people of God had so long desired to be with Jesus that when he actually comes they can't contain themselves.

Oh, to see him face to face.

To experience his love not by faith but by sight.

The text says the bride has made herself ready.

She has lived in anticipation.

She has obeyed, she has shaped her life with the expectation of seeing him soon.

To be honest, there have been too many times when I have had no eagerness about the coming of Jesus.

Too many times when seeing him brought no emotion to my heart.

I suspect the major reason why some of us couldn't care less about seeing Jesus is because we don't know him.

If we knew how much he loves us we could hardly wait to see him.

In Ephesians 5 when the apostle Paul compared the relationship of a husband and wife to that of Christ and the church he said this is the way Jesus feels about us:

Ephesians 5 25-27 "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her...and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless."

Paul uses five verbs to indicate Christ's love for you and me - his church.

Loved her

Gave himself for her

Make her holy

cleanse her

and present her to himself.

His whole reason for coming to earth the first time was to rescue us from ourselves and Satan and transform us into what he created us to be.

His love was so strong that he gave himself for us, died in our place to cleanse us from our sin, and he lives today to sanctify us, to make us holy, to reshape us so that we will be able to receive him when he comes again.

I don't think it is too strong to say that Jesus can hardly wait to come back to see you and be with you - he loves you.

There are many things about marriage that make it great but outstanding among all the others is one: Unconditional love.

You can earn respect, or rewards, or even honor but you can't earn love.
With a true marriage comes an unconditional commitment to love.

I love to go home at night, I can hardly wait to get home after a trip, I want to be with my wife because there is no place else in the world where I know the sheer contentment, peace and satisfaction of being loved that I know in her presence.
When you are loved that way - where else would you want to be?

When we begin to grasp the height and depth and length and width of the love of Christ we too will long for that day when we will be with him.

No wonder the people in Revelation 19 were excited:

The enemy was destroyed and the Bridegroom had come.

Everything they had believed, everything they had trusted
Jesus to do, he had done.

A life of obedience, of faithfulness even in the face of
a hostile world - was worth it all.

Now that is why they were excited but I want you to see how John describes it.

For the way John presents this information adds to the anticipation of that day.

First of all I want you to notice that unlike earlier passages where John describes what he sees in his visions of the future this time he "hears".

19:1 "After this I heard..."

19:5 "Then a voice came..."

19:6 "Then I heard..."

John did not here have a visual experience, he had an audio one.

Have you ever had one of those "boom-box" cars pull up along side you at the stop light - and your car shakes from the sound coming from it?

You look over and see that the driver is having an experience - the sound has captured them.

John is captured by the sound and it is LOUD!

19:1 "a great multitude in heaven SHOUTING:"

19:3 "And again they SHOUTED:"

19:4 "And they CRIED:"

19:6 "Like a great a great multitude...SHOUTING:"

John hears it and its loud but how loud and what does it sound like?

19:1 "Like the roar of a great multitude..."

19:6 "what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder..."

You've heard Bronco fans at the stadium when the opposing quarterback is trying to get a critical play off before the time expires.

You've been under a large waterfall.
 You've been in a canyon in the summer when a
 thunderstorm rattles the trees.

John says that's what it was like.
 The sound was deafening.
 The excitement was contagious.
 The celebration was like nothing ever experienced before.

Earlier John said it was like this:
 Revelation 5:11ff "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels,
 numbering...ten thousand times ten thousand...Then I heard every
 creature in heaven and on earth singing...."

Imagine, standing there that day with all that sound, all that celebration and in
 the middle of it all is Jesus.

And everyone of us has our eyes on him.
 We can hardly believe it is real - but it is.
 He has come, the enemy is destroyed, we are with him!

"Hallelujah, For our Lord God Almighty reigns."

When Handel wrote the Hallelujah Chorus this was the passage that inspired it.
 Can you put yourself there - Can you "hear" that day?

Play Handel's Hallelujah Chorus

Will you believe he is coming?
 Will you stake your life on it?
 Will you live your life today with that sound ringing in your ears?

Prayer

Visitors Reception
 Prayer Chapel

Benediction:
 "Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his
 glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Savior
 through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen.