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Revelation 19: 1-6 (ESV)

¹After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." ³Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." ⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." ⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

I. Introduction to Chapter 19

We have just gone through 2 chapters that focused our attention on the specific fall from glory of the false religious system and the commercial system of Antichrist & the False Prophet. Politicians and business people, who had certainly been affected by the other judgments, were forced to recognize that this ① destruction of Babylon was more final and affected commerce around the world as the heart of the world system had been turned into a smoking ruin.

Rev. 18:21-24 closed out that section of judgments by pronouncing an edict that indicated this city would never recover – it would remain desolate forever, and gave 4 reasons why God had judged her so severely.

Chapter 19 is a chapter of immense importance and hope, and does follow chapter 18 chronologically, based on the opening phrase, “after these things...” It shows us the reaction in heaven to what has just been seen by John on earth in chapters 17 & 18 (vv. 1-6); refers to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (vv. 7-9); rebukes John (v. 10) for bowing down to an angel; and then describes Christ’s exit from heaven – a picture of Him we long to see as he victoriously comes back to His world along with His armies (vv. 11-16). Finally, we see the carnage and physical judgment of those wicked men and women who had somehow survived until that point only to be slaughtered at Armageddon (vv. 17-19); and the Antichrist & False Prophet are captured, immediately judged and thrown alive into the Lake of Fire (vv. 19-21).

Chapter 19 is the crescendo and climax of history. If history were considered to be a classical orchestral overture, like the 1812 Overture of Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, with its' destructive and frantic ending, then the movements of history, played out in sounds of joy and rapture here, low tones and minor chords of sadness there,

brassy, staccato notes during this time and flowing, tearful violin & oboes there, playful banjo choruses liven things up while guitar riffs in one corner and soaring piano solos paint a picture of incredible beauty, as every note unhurriedly proceeds towards the climax that we know is coming. In music, as in life, we know resolution is on its' way.

II. Exultation in Heaven vv. 1-3

“After this” (ESV) or “After these things” (NKJV), John now hears what seems to be a loud collective voice of a multitude coming from heaven and they cry out “Hallelujah!”. Hallelujah is the equivalent of “Praise the Lord!”.

I have said it enough times over the years of Sunday School classes that there are likely only a few people here who have not heard this fact, but this is the only place in the NT where this word is used. Most people assume that it is used by the angels at Christ's birth, but it is never found in either Matthew's or Luke's Christmas stories. Instead, it is found in Christmas cards, hymns or carols. It is also not present in the crucifixion accounts or the resurrection records. It is not that the sentiment conveyed by the word is not felt by participants and observers of these critical historical and redemptive scenes, but that it is not part of the record of what was said in those instances...but it is here!

Notice the occasion for it here. Where we least expect to find this phrase being proclaimed is when people on earth are being destroyed. However, we have to realize that righteous judgment by God is no minor theme in Scripture. Besides the prophetic depictions of coming vengeance in the prophets and the Gospels, there are clusters of verses throughout the OT that point to the glory of God taking vengeance on the wicked. Look, for example at **Deut. 32:43; Ps. 48:11; 58:10-11; 96:11-13**, etc.

②

The fury of God's wrath has been demonstrated since chapter 5 when Christ took the scroll and began to open it and reveal the series of judgments planned for earth and the consummation of all the ages. With each judgment, it seemed that destruction and fear worsened until finally, the last Bowl was poured out and judgment was on the verge of being finalized.

Is it insensitive for those in heaven to rejoice over the destruction which has finally focused like a laser on the very throne and capital of Antichrist? No. In fact, Rev. 18:20 is a command of sorts for the people of heaven to rejoice over this destruction! The people on earth by this time have had more gospel preached to them, more personal encounters with true believers (some going to their deaths as martyrs), more room and reason to repent than any generation in history. Yet, they remain unrepentant and in fact become more defiant and hate-filled against God. The only thing that seems to have touched their emotions is the loss of their livelihoods.

The judgment seen in chapters 17 & 18 is not the only reason for this rejoicing in heaven. It is also because Jesus is preparing that moment to return to earth in great victory – to finally be revealed to everyone on earth as either long ignored & hated judge or long awaited saviour! This will be the absolutely most significant and magnificent scene in all of human history.

“Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!” This particular aspect of salvation here refers not to justification or sanctification, but to glorification and to the arrival (finally) of Christ’s Millennial Kingdom as He returns to earth to reign from David’s throne in Jerusalem. His glory and power are displayed as the sky opens up and He appears, and it is to this that the prophecy of Rev. 1:7 refers – “Every eye will see Him!”, and “all the tribes of the earth will mourn (NKJV) or wail (ESV) because of Him”. Only the holy angels and believers, both dead and alive believers will rejoice when He returns. Those who have vehemently refused Him, hated Him and openly rebelled against Him will wail because in that split second when that sky opens up, and those gleams of glory radiate from Him, they will realise that they have been utter fools and an eternal cost has to be paid. Note Acts **17:30-31; Heb. 10:26-31; 12:25-29.**

As cruel and violent (v. 2) as judgment seems to be, and this verse focuses on what we have read about in chapters 17 & 18, it is true and righteous. Have we not observed even our own times and been very concerned that so many people appear to receive injustice from those who hold all the power? Have we not prayed for, looked for and longed for God to avenge the injustice we see? What is the first cry that comes out of the mouths of people when a huge disaster hits? “Where was God?” Justice seems so far away at those times. Look at **Isa. 9:6-7** – a passage usually associated with Christmas, but do you see the last parts of these verses? It says in v. 7, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it **with justice and with righteousness** from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this.” See also **Jer. 23:5** & **Gen. 18:16-32.**

God is finally bringing judgment on the evil world system and the people who operate it because of their rampant idolatry and He is avenging the blood of His people; and it is likely that the 7 year Tribulation, about to end and His return will have been the most blood saturated period of history for God’s people too.

The Hallelujah is repeated (v. 3) as the smoke of her burning rises forever and ever. The sinners mourned over this sight because that smoke signaled the end of life as they had come to know it, while that same signal caused the saints and angels to rejoice greatly – truly a sight worthy of praise. This eternal smoke is saying, “this judgment is final, irreversible. The physical smoke may one day die out, but the eternal punishment of the people will go on forever – cf. **Rev. 14:10-11; MK 9:48.**

The long war against God which began in Eden in Genesis 3, is finally at an end and human depravity is about to be eradicated with the exception of a brief

uprising at the end of the Millennium, and everything that is evil, murderous, false and unjust will be vanquished.

III. A Time of Great Praise vv. 4-6

Our attention is again drawn to the 24 Elders and the 4 Living Creatures who fall down and worship God – “Amen! Hallelujah!” – not only praising God but the Amen signifies complete agreement with what God is doing and is about to do on earth. They are before God who is on His throne in this scene and then a voice from the throne (probably one of the Living Creatures) cries out, “And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

This voice is calling out to everyone who hears it to join in with this praise – everyone, small, great, all are to join in and shout praises because there is no better time or reason to do so than right now! As the call goes out, the thunderous response begins. John now hears the voice of “a great multitude” as “the roar of many waters” and “the sound of mighty peals of thunder”. This is probably describing the loudest sound ever made by human voices in history – absolutely thunderous praise. I would imagine that those on earth will hear it too – both those awaiting His arrival and those dreading it. They are saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns". See **Ps. 148:1-14 & 150:1-6**.

Note **Romans 8:18-23; 9:22-23,28**. This is the time we eagerly await – the return of Jesus Christ. It is longed for by those who love Him since He left earth in Acts 1. What glory is going to be revealed at this future time! The sights, sounds, smells – the joyous hope will have finally come to fruition. ④

Judgment of the wicked is not Christ’s only purpose for returning. Note **Heb. 9:28**. The church eagerly awaits Him, and I guarantee you that those saints alive to the end of the Tribulation will be counting the hours until He returns, and they will know the timing as a result of John’s record of Revelation. We anticipate the Rapture, but those future believers will wait on the glorious appearing when every eye shall see Him, because they will know that their redemption draws near!

Anthony Hoekema says, *“The expectation of Christ’s Second Advent is a most important aspect of New Testament eschatology – so much so, in fact, that the faith of the New Testament Church is dominated by this expectation. Every book of the New Testament points us to the return of Christ and urges us to live in such a way as to be always ready for that return... This same lively expectation of Christ’s return should mark the church of Jesus Christ today.”*^①

Robert Peterson comments, ^②“The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is vital. Hope in it fills pages of the New Testament, and it should impact the lives of believers. This is true because the second coming saves. When Christ returns, He brings the final application of His saving work. That work was accomplished in

His death and resurrection, but following these events, the second coming triggers the final outworking of the saving purposes of God.”

Some NT passages that speak about Christ’s return:

Mark 13:26-27; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 3:19-21; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4; I Thess. 1:9-10; 4:14-18; II Thess. 1:6-10; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 9:26-28; I Pet. 1:13; I JN 3: 2-3; etc.

Next lesson – Lesson # 61 Rev. 19: 7-10 The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

^① Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, Eerdmans, 1994, p. 109, as quoted in Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son*, Crossway Books, 2012, p. 251

^② Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son*, Crossway, 2012, p. 251