

Hallelujah . . . Amen!

Thy Kingdom Come – Part II

Revelation 19:1-6

Introduction

On Saturday, August 8, 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton set sail from Plymouth, England, with twenty-nine men. Their quest was to become the first to cross the Antarctic on foot.

In a recent publication, I read that Shackleton recruited fellow pioneers with an advertisement that read:

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages; bitter cold; long months of complete darkness; constant danger; a safe return doubtful; honor in success.

He was an honest man – these men would experience everything he promised.

As Shackleton and his men sailed their way to the continent, disaster struck the expedition when their ship became trapped in pack ice and was slowly crushed before they could land. The men became literally stranded on a huge ice floe – a flat, free-floating mass of ice.

Shackleton was also an able leader and worked as hard as the rest of the men. They nicknamed him simply, “the Boss”. He would eventually become their hero.

He kept the men busy by day as they endured the coming winter. They played ice soccer and had nightly songfests and sled-dog races.

Shackleton proved himself a self-sacrificing leader as well, willingly exchanging his warmer sleeping bag with one of his crew’s. He personally served hot milk to his men every morning and attempted to buoy their spirit.

In the spring, when they realized their thinning ice floe was going to break apart, they made it to a nearby remote island. Knowing that their rescue from such a desolate island was even more unlikely, Shackleton and five other men decided to risk their lives and cross eight hundred miles of open Antarctic sea in their lifeboat. And they made it safely across.

Two times Shackleton attempted to return to his men to rescue them, but had to turn back. On his third attempt, after a one-hundred-five-day journey,

he kept his word and returned to rescue his stranded crew.

Now there is another side to this story that often goes untold. It is the story of life for these men on this desolate island.

Shackleton had left Frank Wild – his second-in-command – in charge of the camp. Wild would maintain the routine that had already been established by Shackleton.

He assigned daily duties, served meals, held sing-along times and athletic competitions. Wild worked hard to keep up the morale of the men in what seemed to be a hopeless situation.

Because the camp was in constant danger of being buried in the snow and becoming completely invisible from the sea, Frank kept his men busy shoveling away drifts of fallen snow. These men never lost hope, but they wondered if they would ever see home.

Barely four days worth of rations remained in the camp when Shackleton finally arrived on an ice-breaking ship. He personally made several trips through the icy waters to ferry members of his crew to safety aboard the ship. The news media would make this story an international legend of perseverance, hope, and a promise kept.

Shackleton later learned from the men that each morning, Frank Wild would say to them, “Be ready, boys, the Boss may come today.”¹

The world has been given the promise – Messiah will return to planet Earth.

With His bride, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will return in the splendor of His majesty to rescue those who, during the Tribulation, have believed His gospel, and judge those who disbelieved. The King – the Hero of the saved; the Judge of the unsaved – is coming in person.

Before the Crucifixion, the disciples asked Jesus about His return. This was not a question about the rapture, but about the prophecies of His second coming to earth.

The first time Christ came, the prophecies were fulfilled that He would be born of a virgin, suffer rejection and crucifixion, and be resurrected.

Now the disciples ask Him what would be the signs of His second coming. Christ answered by describing the cosmic disturbances and natural disasters that we have already studied in the book of Revelation. Then the Lord said,

. . . after the tribulation of those days . . . the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . (Matthew 24:29-30a)

Later, Christ prophesied,

. . . when the Son of Man comes in His glory . . . then He will sit on His glorious throne. (Matthew 25:31)

The King is coming to keep His promise and set the record straight.ⁱⁱ

Revelation chapter 19 is the textual bridge between the Tribulation and the return of Christ with the church and hosts of heaven. In fact, in our next discussion we will study a message I have already entitled, “Here Comes the Bride,” for the church, the bride of Christ, will be described in this chapter in all her wedding day beauty.

Revelation chapter 19 opens with the stunning epoch in human history when Jesus Christ is about to come back with His bride to set up His glorious kingdom and throne on earth – a kingdom, as Keith and Kristyn Getty sing, “with emerald courts and sapphire skies.”

Is it any wonder that as Christ returns, everyone related to Him is about to burst into song? The atmosphere is absolutely electrifying. This is the capstone of redemptive history.

We are given the lyrics as chapter 19 opens,

After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;”

In this amazing scene, all the redeemed along with the hosts of heaven will be shouting, chanting, and singing, “Hallelujah!”

However, let me tell you something surprising – this is the first time in the entire New Testament that we read this word, “Hallelujah”. It neither appears in any other New Testament book nor anywhere else in Revelation.

Why? Probably because of its more common use in the Old Testament, in which we find this word about twenty-two times. It is most often referring to

the rescuing of God’s people Israel and the judgment of the wicked.

So in Revelation chapter 19 there is the restoration of Israel to their land and kingdom, as well as the presence of God’s glorious Son on the throne of David.

The word “Hallelujah” is a Hebrew word that is transliterated into the Greek language and the English language, and every other language for that matter. In every place in the world that I have traveled to minister to the body of Christ, everyone knows and uses the word “Hallelujah”. I have met people whose language I did not know a word of, or they mine, and I have had a one word conversation, “Hallelujah!” And they would brighten and return with, “Hallelujah!”

No matter where we travel, every Christian knows the opening lyric of praise to the coming King!

“Hallelujah” is a compound word – a verb and noun squeezed together. The verb, “Hallelu,” is an imperative form of the verb “praise”. The “yah” ending, to make the word, “Hallelu-yah,” is the shortened form of Yahweh, the covenant name of God.

“Hallelujah” then, means, “praise the Lord”.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the Old Testament, the word is often used in the Psalms. In fact, Psalms 113-118 are called the Hallel Psalms (the Hallelujah Psalms) because of the appearance of this word, “Hallelujah,” in the context of the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of the wicked.

We can certainly use this word now, as a New Testament church. We do not need to wait for the kingdom because we have been rescued already from the clutches of the enemy and our bodies are living temples of God’s Spirit. In fact, “Hallelujah” is a word we should get used to using as we speak and sing our praise to God.

Now in Revelation chapter 19 there are four stanzas to this great hymn of praise. Each stanza includes the same word – “Hallelujah”. Look at the four times this word appears in the first six verses:

- Verse 1 – **“Hallelujah!”**;
- Verse 3 – **“And a second time they said, ‘Hallelujah!’”**;
- Verse 4 – **“Amen. Hallelujah!”**;
- Verse 6 – **“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.”**

It is no wonder that numerous authors I have read consider chapter 19 to be “Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus”.

Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus

Let us go through these four stanzas in Revelation chapter 19 and notice why the hosts of heaven and all the redeemed are singing the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

1. The first “Hallelujah!” is sung for what God offers.

Notice verse 1 again.

... *“Hallelujah! . . .”*

Why? Because . . .

“ . . . Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;”

These qualities of God’s character are His alone. Only He is able to give these as a gift to those who believe.

But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them He gave the power to become children of God . . . (John 1:12)

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, (I Thessalonians 5:9)

Peter promised that the believer would one day rejoice in the glory that awaited the faithful servant of Christ (I Peter 1:8).

Power, glory, and salvation belong to our God – they are God’s possessions to be offered to His own.

The singer Bono steps out on the stage during his concerts and puts up on a jumbo screen the word “coexist”. The letter “c” represents the Islamic crescent, the letter “x” represents the Star of David, and the letter “t” is shown as a cross. Then he flashes the leading mantra of the emergent church, “Everything you know is wrong.” What is he referring to? He is referring to religion – biblical, propositional truth, once delivered. Bono then leads the crowd in a chant, “Jesus, Jew, Mohammed – all true. Jesus, Jew, Mohammed – all true!”^{iv}

What is Bono saying? He is saying that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are equally true.

Christianity believes that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who came, was crucified and buried, rose again, ascended, and is coming back. Islam neither believes Jesus is God incarnate nor that He died on the cross. Judaism believes the Messiah has not even

come yet. How can all of these beliefs be equally true?

This is the same as believing highway I-95 south will take us to Florida and at the same time to New York and the North Pole.

Thousands of people; in fact, millions of people in our generation are saying, “Whichever way you want to believe will take you to God. Isn’t that great?!”

We can listen to the statesman-like spin of this same message – only this time from Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain. He has now been promoted by the Willow Creek Association in their simulcast leadership conference for evangelical leaders.

It is a mystery to me why hundreds of churches in America primarily would desire unbelievers to instruct them on how the church should act and how Christian leaders should lead.

Tony Blair happens to be one of the key players in this global push for unified religion. On his board is a Zen Buddhist, a Hindu, an Anglican, a Protestant pastor, and a Jewish rabbi. This is his attempt at coexisting.

We can go online and read about Blair’s Faith Foundation. He said – and listen to this carefully and wade through the Christianized words to get his primary message, “God’s Spirit moves through us and the world at a pace that can never be constricted by any one [religion]. Be very wary of people who think theirs is the only way.”^v

Be wary of whom? Tony Blair is referring to Christians who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

We, as believers, are the problem. He is saying to watch out for us.

Peter wrote to the believing church,

If you are reviled [scorned; mistrusted; maligned] for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (I Peter 4:14)

However, this is the message, we have learned, of Babylon. And the volume of Babylon is growing ever louder. It says, “One world. One political power. One global village. One global economy. Unity among diversity.”

We, in our study, have watched this message grow and take shape until it came to power during the Tribulation under the reign of the antichrist. It ultimately waged open war on God and was defeated.

Now, in Revelation 19, as Christ is set to return, the multitude of heaven is chanting a different tune. Notice it was not, "Salvation is from whatever god you like." No. The lyrics are, "Hallelujah!" – "Praise Yahweh!" – "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God."

This is the first "Hallelujah". "Hallelujah" for what God offers.

2. The second "Hallelujah!" is for what God settles.

Notice verse 3.

And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever."

Who is she that is referred to in this verse?

Look back to verse 2.

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.

She is Babylon – the world system and the world's empire city.

The world is corrupted by Babylon's arrogant defiance – her man-glorifying, nature-exalting, animal-worshipping, Christian-murdering, promiscuous-philandering, false-teaching, ego-promoting, money-loving, sexually-deviant, pseudo-spiritual, Christ-denying, demonically-bound, spiritually-blind world system; and this is just the beginning of the profile for Babylon, the pride of earth.

Now we can imagine the hosts of heaven, the world of Christians, and the resurrected saints glorifying God for His salvation and glory and power, but we do not think of glorying in God's eternal, unrelenting, just, terrifying judgment. Yet this is exactly what is happening according to these verses. We, the redeemed, are as thrilled over the justice of God as we are the salvation of God.

When God measures out divine justice and eternal punishment to the followers of the beast; to the followers of the great prostitute (the false religion that seduced the hearts of unbelieving mankind); to the unredeemed, unrepentant humanity along with all the fallen angels, the believer will be singing, "Hallelujah!"^{vi}

We do not usually attach the word, "Hallelujah" to the destruction of the unbelieving wicked, do we?

This is a fulfillment of Moses' words in Deuteronomy 32:43, when he writes,

Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants and will render vengeance on His adversaries . . .

David wrote in Psalm 96,

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all it contains; let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the Lord . . .

(Why is all of nature singing praise, as it were to God?)

. . . for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness . . .

(Psalm 96:11-13)

Some might think that the believer and the angelic host of heaven are somewhat insensitive and uncaring to rejoice in the downfall and judgment of Babylon. This ignores the reality that this city and its inhabitants and the world of followers of the antichrist will have had more opportunities to repent than any people who have ever lived.

- In chapter 6 and again in chapter 9 we are told the human race at large refuses to repent even though they acknowledge that the great plagues and natural disasters have come from the hand of God;
- Also recorded in chapter 6, these unbelievers will have heard the most powerful preaching of the gospel in human history through the ministry of 144,000 Jewish evangelists;
- The world will also hear and watch the amazing, supernatural, death-defying testimony of the two witnesses in chapter 11;
- Add to this the fact that these people will see and hear the angel, in chapter 14, who circles the globe testifying to the gospel of Christ;
- They hear and watch, as well, faithful believers choose martyrdom over the antichrist, refuse to take his mark, and walk with joy to the guillotine choosing to die for Christ rather than abandon Christ.

Yet, despite all this, the world at large will remain unrepentant to the very end; hardened in their defiant hatred of God.^{vii}

The hosts of heaven and all the believers shout with joy because at the root of all of this is the fact

that God will set the record straight. And the believer, who longs to see the world bathed in the unhindered glory of Christ, will rejoice when Christ sits as righteous judge over all the earth.

We long for the day when the name of Jesus is no longer run through the mud. We yearn for the day of His glory on earth.

Perhaps you heard about the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Scotland, where an open Bible was put on display. Next to the Bible were several pens with a note saying, "If you feel you have been excluded from the Bible, write your way back into it."

Within days, so many people had defaced the Bible, writing lewd messages and profanity against God that the Gallery pulled the display.

Messages included: "this is all sexist sewage..."; "I am bisexual and proud"; "I want no god [who disagrees] with this."

When the scales of holiness and justice are taken up by the hand of Christ, His righteousness prevails, the word of God is vindicated, and His character is exalted, we will be singing, "Hallelujah!"

"Hallelujah!" for what God offers!

"Hallelujah!" for what God settles!

3. The third "Hallelujah!" is for what God fulfills.

Notice verse 4.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures [cherubim] fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

This is it. Only this time, the word "Amen" is added to "Hallelujah".

This is conclusive proof that a few Baptists made it to heaven! We are not told how many – it might be too discouraging.

"Amen" is a word of affirmation. We could render it, "so it is; so be it; it is true."

These are the elders, once again, representing the raptured church throughout the Tribulation passages. They are in the white robes promised to the church, wearing the crowns promised to the church, and seated on thrones also promised to the church as co-regents with Christ.

Notice the angels are thrilled to join in. Why? Because now, more than ever, they are so glad they resisted Satan's earlier attempt to seize the throne of God. Satan planned a coup attempt against Triune

God, and these angels had refused to side with Lucifer, the deceiver.^{viii}

One-third of the angelic hosts joined Satan. This was not a small coup attempt.

There is no doubt that Satan went to fellow high-ranking angels like Gabriel and said, "Listen, join with me and we will together depose God. You will be my chief ambassador in my kingdom."

Gabriel said, "No," to the invitation. He believed the word of the Lord that His reign is everlasting and His word is faithful and true.

It would be Gabriel who would later announce to Daniel that the kingdom of God would overthrow the puppet kings of Satan (Daniel 9).

What is happening in these verses? God's word is coming true.

I think Gabriel is saying, "I'm glad I stayed with Him!"

"His word came true. Amen. Hallelujah!"

"Hallelujah!" for what God offers.

"Hallelujah!" for what God settles.

"Hallelujah!" for what God fulfills.

4. The final "Hallelujah!" is for what God occupies.

Look at verses 5 and 6. By the way, the language indicates this is coming from the direction of the throne. It could be from the cherubim or the church – we do not know.

And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

God is on His throne. He is victorious. He now occupies a throne without obstruction, competition, or rebellion. He is seen for what He is – the sovereign King of the universe.

Long ago, Gabriel came to a virgin teenager named Mary and announced that she would conceive by God's Spirit and deliver a baby boy who was none other than the fulfillment of all that the prophets had foretold. He would be the Messiah, and Gabriel told Mary,

"He will . . . [have] the throne of . . . David;

“and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

(Luke 1:32-33)

This is the beginning of this fulfillment.

The Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.
“Hallelujah!”

Can you imagine the sound of this praise that John records is like the sound of many waters?

Have you ever been to Niagara Falls? How majestic, mighty, and awesome is the sound of the water rushing, falling, cascading down. Six million cubic feet of water rumbling over the falls ever single minute. My family and I went a few years ago and it was an amazing sight. It is so much better than an amusement park – they do not turn it off at night. Oh, imagine the sound of praise that is like the sound of Niagara Falls!

However, how wonderful even if it is just one voice – your voice – offering praise and faith and trust that His word is true.

“Amen” and “Hallelujah” are great testimonies of faith on this side of the Kingdom. It is a great testimony for you today to say by faith, “His word is true”; for you to sing through your tears, “He is worthy of praise.”

I stood in the hospital room, a few months ago, of a dear friend and co-worker who had taken a turn for the worse. He had previously been in the hospital with a chronic condition that now seemed irreversible and fatal. He had been on life support for several days; his body was running down.

In the hospital I learned that the doctors had given Dennis twelve hours, and then they were going to unplug all the paraphernalia. They had done everything they could. I stood in his room and told him, “Goodbye.” With tears in our eyes, his dear wife, one of our secretaries, asked me to preach his funeral. We talked over some of the details. I left with a heavy heart, drove home and told my wife, Marsha, the updated news.

However, during the night, something happened – no one knows for sure what – but Dennis began to improve. His vital signs improved and within hours, he was off life support and asking for something to eat and drink. To make a long story short, within days, he was back at work.

I am not planning his funeral, by the way – he will probably outlive me.

His wife told me later that as he was coming back to life, literally – he was able to breathe on his own and they took out his breathing tube – the nurses heard him singing. While he was unconscious, they heard him singing the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

Now Dennis is not in the choir – and there is probably a good reason for that. But imagine that! He is just one of God’s trusting believers, and even while in and out of consciousness, he had this tune in his mind. He was singing one word over and over again – this word “Hallelujah” that is uniquely reserved for the people of God.

It is the word of the redeemed; it is a word for those who have been rescued. “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!”

ⁱ David Jeremiah, What in the World Is Going On? (Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 235.

ⁱⁱ Edward Hindson, Revelation: Unlocking the Future (AMG Publishers, 2002), p. 187.

ⁱⁱⁱ David J. MacLeod, “Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus,” Bibliotheca Sacra (Jan.-Mar. 1999), pp. 72-84.

^{iv} <http://www.olivetreeviews.org>.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Kendell H. Easley, Holman New Testament Commentary: Revelation (Holman, 1998), p. 347.

^{vii} John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 195.

^{viii} Donald Grey Barnhouse, Revelation: God’s Last Word (Zondervan, 1971), p. 351.