

Revelation 19: Four-fold Hallelujah and the Rider on the White Horse

Chapter 19 has three parts: a four-fold hallelujah, the arrival of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the victory over the armies of the beast and false prophet. This chapter is the climatic chapter of the Revelation. Victory upon victory follow for the King and Lord of all where God destroys the minions of evil and glorifies the Lamb and his bride, the church.

Four-fold Hallelujah (Revelation 19: 1-18)

At the condemnation of the prostitute, the great city, John hears the great multitude in heaven shouting a fourfold hallelujah. The word, *hallelujah*, means, “Praise you the Lord.” The *h* is pronounced in English but not in the Greek of the day. It is sometimes a short song of praise or thanksgiving as it is so used here: *Hallelujah* broken into separate words. The Hebrew equivalent—praise the Lord—is found in many Psalms, such as; Psalms 135:3; Psalms 111; Psalms 104; Psalms 106:1; Psalms 146. Therefore, in Hebrew, the expression is not compounded. Hallelujah appears only these four times in the New Testament. The non-compounded, *praise the Lord*, appears once in Romans 15:11: “11 And again, Praise the Lord (kurion), all ye Gentiles; And let all the peoples praise him.” In the Greek version the word used here is *allelouia*. *Allelujah* was used in Latin songs and hymns of the Middle Ages, transliterated to English which had no H from Latin which had the *H*. *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* does not recognize *allelujah* as an English word. *Jah* in the *Old Testament* is a short form for *Yahwey* –a word along with *Jehovah* not now used by the Jews. Modern English versions translate *Yahwey* with the word *Lord*, as do the Jews.

The first hallelujah

Revelation 19:1-2

19 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: 2 for true and righteous are his judgments; for he has judged the great harlot, her that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

A great multitude celebrates the victory over the great prostitute, Babylon. The overcoming and destruction of the great prostitute show that salvation, glory and power belong to God. The prostitute got exactly what she deserved; God’s judgments are true and just. Through her adulteries, she had corrupted the earth and led man into spiritual death. Now God has avenged the blood of his servants. Paul described the matter in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10:

5 (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: 6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.

The second hallelujah

Revelation 19:3

3 And a second time they say, "Hallelujah. And her smoke goes up for ever and ever."

When they again shouted, "Hallelujah," her smoke went up forever and ever. The duration of the prostitute's judgment is so pronounced. Literally, forever and ever is into the ages of the ages and indicates no end to her punishment. The destruction rendered by God has no relief from a certain end. The devil, the beast, and the false prophet also receive this torment without end in Revelation 20:10:

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The third hallelujah

Revelation 19:4-5

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sits on the throne, saying, "Amen; Hallelujah." 5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, the small and the great.

The elders and the four living creatures join in the worship. At this point, there is a response from the throne (perhaps the Lord, himself). All God's servants, great and small, are to fear him. The first hallelujah dealt with the duration of God's punishment; this hallelujah deals with the all-inclusive nature of those who worship him.

The fourth hallelujah

Revelation 19:6-8

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

John hears the sound like the roar of rushing waters and loud peals of thunder. Here, John heard, "As it were of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunders." This is the fifth time John has heard this overwhelming sound. In each case the sound is from the throne (4:5; 16:18), the temple (11:19), and in response to the censer from the altar being poured out (8:5). The shouting that John heard has the force, power, and majesty of heaven and the throne of God.

This hallelujah announces that the wedding of the lamb to his wife has come. The contrast is clearly to the destruction of the great prostitute of the first hallelujah. Preparations are over; the wife has made herself ready. She, the church, the heavenly city, receives fine linen to wear. Since fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints, the saints adorn the bride. The saints give their lives to this adornment.

This is the first time that the word, *wife*, appears, used in this manner, to designate the marriage between Christ and the church, with the exception of the analogy of Christ to the church in Ephesians 5:23. Now with the wedding announced, the bride and Christ becomes a central theme of the closing chapters beginning in Revelation 21:1-2:

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

John sees the bride in Revelation 21:9-10:

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, "Come hither, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

By the time that the Revelation closes in the last verse, the bride joins equally with the Spirit to call people to the Lamb in Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And he that hears, let him say, "Come." And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

The bride adorned with the righteous acts of the saints describes the necessity of the sufferings, trials, and perseverance of the saints. Their righteous lives make the wedding to the Lamb of God possible. Through hardship and travail, the righteous stand firm. From their baptism to the grave, the saints of God put on Christ, through baptism initially, and through their righteous works as they live as Christians. Paul described the first act in Galatians 3:26-28:

Or you are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for you all are one (man) in Christ Jesus.

The Lamb's message to the churches was that they were to so dress:

Revelation 3:4: But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

Revelation 3:17-18: Because you say, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing;" and know you not that you are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: 18 I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe thyself, and (that) the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Revelation 16:15:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, unless he walk naked, and they see his shame.)

John Directed by the Angel (Revelation 19:9-10)

Revelation 19:9-10

9 And he said unto me, "Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said unto me, "These are true words of God."

10 And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, "See you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The angel of verse 9 appears to be the angel of 17:1, who was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of God's wrath and invited John to see the punishment of the great prostitute. The only other angel in context is the angel of 18:1, who apparently was an angel of a special class—having

great authority, illuminating the earth by his splendor, and having a mighty voice. The angel, in this context, instructs John. God blesses those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb:

Makarios, used in the beatitudes in Matthew 5 and Luke 6, is especially frequent in the Gospel of Luke, and is found seven times in Revelation, 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14. It is said of God twice, 1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15. In the beatitudes, the Lord indicates not only the characters that are "blessed," but the nature of that which is the highest good. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The notes on Revelation 1 spoke about how the word, *blessed*, marks the single overarching theme of the Book of Revelation. The development of that theme reaches its climax with the wedding of the bride and the Lamb of God. The passages bear repeating in this present context:

Revelation 1:3: Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13: And I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yes," says the Spirit, "That they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

Revelation 16:15-16: 15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, unless he walk naked, and they see his shame.) 16 And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

Revelation 19:9: And he said unto me, "Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said unto me, "These are true words of God."

Revelation 20:6: Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7: And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14: Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

Even in the parables, Jesus had taught the importance of the coming of the bridegroom and the need to be prepared (See Matthew 9:15 and 25:6-10). The beauty, celebration, and glory of the wedding supper of the Lamb and the bride are in direct contrast to the fate of the great prostitute, Babylon in Revelation 18:23:

23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery were all the nations deceived.

These are the true words of God connects the joining of the bride and bridegroom to the revelation of God. In John 14:10-11, Jesus taught:

10 Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

He later included in his prayer the relationship of the word of God and the truth in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth.

At this point in the revelation, John is getting to **the heart of the matter**.

So taken was he by the events, John fell down to worship the angel. However, the angel describes himself as a fellow servant of God with John and all those who hold to the testimony of Jesus. The angel's simple command, "Worship God!" is so plain, so emphatic, that one cannot miss the point of to whom we owe allegiance, homage, awe, and reverence. Not the angels in heaven, not religious clerics, not temples made with hands, not relics or statues, or any such persons or things. **Worship God!**

The angel states what appears to be an eternal principle: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The New Testament is replete with this connection between our testimony and God's prophecy through the apostles and prophets. Three examples will suffice. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:11, "11 if any man speaks, (speaking) as it were oracles of God." Jude wrote of contending for the faith entrusted to the saints in Jude 3-4: "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." This spirit of prophecy and our testimony of Jesus perfects the church. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11-13:

11 And he gave some (to be) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: 13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

A Majestic Christ Appears (Revelation 19:11-16)

This part of chapter 19 picks up where events paused in Revelation 16:12-16 where John learned that the beast and the false prophet gathered the kings of the whole world together for battle on the great day of God Almighty:

12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the (river) Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that (come) from the sun rising. 13 And I saw (coming) out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: 14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

The pause in the events of the great battle allowed the angel to show John the fate of the great prostitute, the great city Babylon. With the fate of the prostitute concluded and with the four-fold hallelujahs, the narrative returns to the great battle and the final disposition of the beast and the false prophet.

Revelation 19:11-16

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he does judge and make war. 12 And his eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon his head (are) many diadems; and he has a name written which no one knows but he himself. 13 And he (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure. 15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

*16 And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written,
KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

John sees heaven standing open. These very first words of this episode establish the place of the battle as in heaven, making it wholly and totally a spiritual battle. Not only is the place of impending

battle in heaven, but the armies of the Lord are also the armies of heaven (19:14). Plain and true, the battle of Armageddon (16:16) is a spiritual battle setting the beast, the false prophet, and kings of the whole world (16:12-14 and 19:19-21) against the church the bride of Christ. There is no evidence that Armageddon is a physical battle on this earth. The evidence is to the contrary, the rider on the white horse is already KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The rider of the horse is called *Faithful and True*. In the letter of the church of Laodicea, Jesus called himself faithful and true. John recorded in Revelation 3:14,

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”

Once again, the text is certain. The Lord is now the ruler of God’s creation. There will be no future kingdoms on this earth. He is *now* KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And we are *now* a kingdom and priests with him, according to Revelation 1:5-6:

5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us (to be) a kingdom, (to be) priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The NKJV and the KJV and the Greek Version all read “made us kings and priests. The translators of the later versions—ASV, NASV, NIV—inserted the *to be*. The older version and the Greek Version present us as kings and priests a *fait accompli*, dispensing with the millennial theories forevermore.

The purpose of the Lord is to judge and make war. His description here is similar to the one in the first chapter: eyes like blazing fire, many crowns upon his head, and dressed in a robe dipped in blood. On the one hand, he has a name written on him that no one knows but himself; on the other hand, his name is the word of God. This name, the word of God, is reminiscent of John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

The armies of heaven were following him; they too are riding white horses. The phrase, *they are dressed in fine linen, white and clean*, shows that the army of heaven is clothed with the righteous acts of the saints as in Revelation 19:8: “(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)” The dress is figurative of the righteousness of the saints, during this spiritual war. This spiritual army, so amassed, is the army spoken by Paul in Ephesians 6:10-13:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places). 13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

Every day, Christians fight the spiritual war against the beast and the false prophet. Indeed, even the armor of this warfare is spiritual armor as described in Ephesians 6:14-17:

14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil (one). 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

In this passage by Paul, the weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. In John's vision the Lamb is so equipped also in verse 15:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

Christ gave the same the description of himself in Revelation 1:16,

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

In the letter to the church at Pergamum in Revelation 2:12, the sword is sharp, double-edged. In the same passage the Lord tells how he will use the sword, “

16 Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The writer of the Hebrew letter describes the full nature of the sword as the word of God in Hebrews 4:12-13:

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

In summary, the war is in heaven, the armies of the Lord are spiritual armies of heaven, and the sword is a spiritual sword, the word of God. The Lord himself is the Word of God. There is no room in this passage for the sectarian materialism, which calls for a physical, material war in this present, material earth. The battle of Armageddon is a spiritual battle fought between the armies of heaven and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The phrase, *he will rule them with an iron scepter*, is from a prophecy in the second Psalm, verse 9. In the letter to the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:26-27), the Lord quoted the prophecy and applied it to himself and to his followers:

26 And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

In Revelation 12:5, the phrase specifically describes the Christ child:

5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne.

Thus, the Lord of this context is a reigning Lord. He has written on his robe, dripped in blood, and on his thigh, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORD'S. He is the one who treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. The reference here to the winepress connects us once again to the harvest of the earth of Revelation 14:17-20:

17 Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, he that has power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, “Send forth your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.” 19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress), of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The end of the harvest is the end of flesh and all things worldly in verses 17-18.

The End of Flesh (Revelation 19: 17-18)

Revelation 19:17-18

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, "Come (and) be gathered together unto the great supper of God; 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great."

With the all-inclusive harvest of the last day, flesh and blood will be no more. God's wrath is upon all flesh, small and great, mighty and weak, free and slave. The events that follow will bring a just end to flesh and fleshly matters. The beast and false prophet, the dragon, and all those whose name is not written in the Book of Life receive their righteous judgment.

The Fate of the Beast and the False Prophet (Revelation 19: 19-21)

Revelation 19:19-21

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Suddenly the war is over for the kings, the beast, the false prophet, and the rest of them. Only Satan, the dragon, remains, however, his fate, too, is sealed. From Eden to the flood, from Babel to the cross, from the cross to this great day of God Almighty, the battle waged across time is over. The sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse has slain the enemy. Those who stood for the testimony of Jesus—clothed in the white linen of their righteous acts—and the Word of God are victorious. In just three verses, the Lord defeats the beast and the false prophet. They are thrown alive in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Flesh is no more, but the punishment is forever.

The fate of the beast and the false prophet is the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. In the next chapter, Satan himself, the dragon, will receive the same fate.