

Heavenly Hallelujahs Rev. 19:1-10

I. Introduction

a. Read

b. The Bible lists many reasons for giving thanks to God.

i. He is to be praised first of all for all the perfections of His glorious being.

1. “Through Him then,” urged the writer of Hebrews, “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

2. One of the perfections God is to be praised for is His holiness.

3. In Psalm 30:4 David declared, “Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name”.

4. God is also to be praised for His mercy.

a. Concluding a psalm in which God’s lovingkindness is praised in every verse, Psalm 136:26 commands, “Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.

5. Scripture also extols God’s goodness:

“Praise the Lord!” cried the psalmist, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” (Ps. 106:1; cf. 1 Chron. 16:34; Ezra 3:11; Pss. 54:6; 107:1).

- c. God is to be praised not only for His attributes, but also for His mighty works.
 - i. Isaiah wrote, “O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; for You have worked wonders” (Isa. 25:1).
 - ii. Chief among those works are creation and salvation.
- d. But of all the things God is to be praised for, perhaps the least expected is for His destruction of the wicked.
 - i. Yet that, too, is an important theme in Scripture.
 - ii. Deuteronomy 32:43 reads, “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries.”
 - iii. Psalm 48:11 adds, “Let Mount Zion be glad, let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of Your judgments,” while Psalm 58:10–11 notes that “The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth!’ ”
- e. As that long-awaited time approaches, the scene in Revelation shifts from earth, where it has been since chapter 6, to heaven.
 - i. The intervening chapters have detailed God’s cataclysmic explosion of judgmental fury on the sinful world.

- ii. That fury began to be poured out when the Lord Jesus Christ, the rightful heir to the universe, received the title deed to the earth from His Father (5:1–14).
 - iii. As He unrolled that scroll and broke its seven seals, terrifying judgments struck the earth.
 - iv. The seal judgments were followed by the equally devastating trumpet and bowl judgments.
- f. The particular target of God's wrath was Antichrist's worldwide religious, political, and economic empire, symbolized by its capital city of Babylon.
 - i. Babylon's destruction was described in detail in chapters 17 and 18.
 - ii. That destruction, which caused dismay and mourning on earth (18:9–11, 15–19), now brings joy to heaven.
- g. With the devastation of its capital city, Antichrist's empire was dealt a fatal blow.
 - i. The final destruction of the world's forces will take place shortly at Armageddon (19:11–21).
- h. Some might think heaven's rejoicing over Babylon's destruction to be insensitive and uncaring.
 - i. But that shortsighted view ignores the reality that those sinners will have had the greatest opportunity to repent of any people who have ever lived.
 - ii. They will have experienced the unprecedented disasters of the Tribulation, which they will acknowledge to be God's judgments (6:17).

- iii. They will also have heard the most powerful preaching of the gospel in history, from the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses, the host of the redeemed saved during the Tribulation, and even a powerful angel (14:6–7).
 - iv. Yet despite all that, they will remain unrepentant to the very end (9:20–21; 16:9, 11), hardened into irreversible unbelief and defiant hatred of God.
 - i. The praise seen in heaven throughout Revelation (4:8–11; 5:9–14; 7:10–12; 11:15–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–6) reaches a climax in this text.
 - i. The heavenly rejoicing is not over the damnation of those who reject God (cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11), but because Jesus Christ will soon remove those stubborn sinners from the world.
 - ii. God will then be properly honored, the Lord Jesus Christ enthroned, and the earth restored to its lost glory.
 - iii. Heaven rejoices because history is finally going to reach its culmination as the true King establishes His kingdom on earth.
 - j. As the text unfolds, five reasons for heaven's joy become evident. Heaven rejoices because full salvation has come, because justice is meted out, because rebellion is ended, because God is in control, and because the marriage of the Lamb is completed.
- II. Because Full Salvation Has Come.
 - a. (19:1)

- b. As it does throughout Revelation the phrase **after these things** marks the beginning of a new vision.
- c. This new vision takes place after the destruction of Babylon (chaps. 17–18) and before the triumphant return of Jesus Christ (19:11–21) to establish the Millennial Kingdom (20:1–10).
- d. As the loud laments over Babylon’s destruction fade into silence, loud hallelujahs ring out in heaven.
- e. In his vision John **heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven.**
 - i. The text does not identify those whose composite voices make up the **loud voice** John heard, but they are likely angels.
 - ii. This **great multitude** does not appear to include the redeemed saints, since they are encouraged to join in the praise later (vv. 5–8).
 - iii. The uncounted millions of holy angels make up a majestic, awe-inspiring choir.
- f. The angelic chorus opens with the important word **Hallelujah**, an exclamation of praise to God.
 - i. The Greek word *Allēlouia* is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase comprised of the verb *halal* (“to praise”) and the noun *Yah* (“God”).
 - ii. It appears only in this chapter in the New Testament (cf. vv. 3–4, 6).
 - iii. The Hebrew phrase first appears in Psalm 104:35, “Let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!”

- iv. In its first Old Testament appearance, as in its first New Testament appearance, **Hallelujah** expresses praise for God's judgment on the wicked oppressors of His people.
 - g. Heaven rejoices specifically because **salvation** has come for God's people, and with it the **glory and power** that **belong to God** (cf. 1 Chron. 29:11) have been put on display.
 - h. The word **salvation** does not focus on justification or sanctification, but celebrates the final aspect of salvation history, the glorification of the saints in the kingdom of Christ.
 - i. The imminent coming of Jesus Christ prompts this praise as the angels anticipate the glory of His kingdom.
- III. Because Justice Is Meted Out.
- a. (19:2)
 - b. Heaven also rejoices **because** God's **judgments are true and righteous**, as evidenced by the destruction of wicked, deserving Babylon.
 - c. That joy over the imminent triumph of God's justice is something that all who pray and work for righteousness can relate to.
 - d. Throughout history God's people have been disturbed by the inequity, injustice, and unrighteousness in the world, and have longed for God's justice to come.
 - e. Earlier in Revelation the martyred Tribulation believers "cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from

judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ” (Rev. 6:10).

- i. God’s people hate sin because it mocks God and love righteousness because it exalts Him.
 - ii. They long for a world characterized by holiness and justice.
 - iii. But that will only happen when Christ establishes His righteous kingdom and rules with a rod of iron .
- f. The stage was set for establishing that kingdom when God **judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality.**
- g. Babylon is identified as **the great harlot** (cf. 17:1, 15–16), Satan and Antichrist’s system that seduced the unbelieving world to believe the lies of Satan.
 - i. Because that system rules the whole world, it is thus guilty of **corrupting the earth with its immorality** .
 - ii. The evil of the commercial and religious Babylon will be pervasive and dominant, leading to equitable retribution from God.
- h. A further reason for Babylon’s judgment was her maltreatment of God’s people.
 - i. As a result, **He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.**
 - ii. That God will exact vengeance for His people is clearly taught in Scripture. Deuteronomy 32:42–43 reads:“ ‘I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword shall devour flesh,

With the blood of the slain and the captives,
 From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.’
 Rejoice, O nations, with His people;
 For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
 And will render vengeance on His adversaries,
 And will atone for His land and His people.”

- i. “It is only just,” wrote Paul to the Thessalonians, “for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:6–8).
 - j. Revelation 18:20 commands, “Rejoice over [Babylon], O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her” (cf. 16:5–6; 2 Sam. 22:48; Pss. 58:10–11; 79:10; 94:1–2; Jer. 15:15; 20:12; 51:36; Joel 3:20–21).
 - k. It is both fitting and just that those who caused the moral ruin of the world and persecuted God’s people should face His vengeance.
- IV. Because Rebellion Is Ended.
- a. (19:3)
 - b. Babylon’s judgment provoked the first outburst of heavenly rejoicing; the aftermath of her destruction prompts the heavenly chorus for **a second time** to say, **“Hallelujah!”**

- c. At the climax of her judgment, Babylon was “burned up with fire”, and sinners mourned as they watched the pall of smoke rise into the sky (18:9, 18).
 - d. That the **smoke rises up forever and ever** indicates that this judgment is final, permanent, and irreversible.
 - i. The language is similar to that used of God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:28), and Edom (Isa. 34:10).
 - ii. The flames and smoke will eventually die out, but the judgment is eternal on the souls of the sinners destroyed.
 - iii. And hell is a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48), where the damned “will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever” (14:10–11).
 - e. The destruction of the last and most powerful empire in human history marks the end of man’s day.
 - f. The rebellion that began long ago in the Garden of Eden is finally ended (apart from a futile, short-lived revolt at the end of the Millennium; 20:7–10).
 - g. There will be no more false religion, worldly philosophy, injustice, unrighteousness; all the sorry results of human depravity will be vanquished.
- V. Because God Is in Control.
- a. (19:4–6)

- b. In agreement with the angelic chorus, hallelujahs ring out from other heavenly residents.
- c. The **twenty-four elders** are best seen as representatives of the church.
- d. The **four living creatures** are cherubim, a high-ranking order of angels.
 - i. These two groups have **worshipped** God throughout Revelation (cf. 4:8–11; 5:8–12, 14; 7:11; 11:16–18).
 - ii. Prostrate before God’s **throne** the two new additions to the heavenly chorus cried out, **“Amen. Hallelujah!”**
 - iii. That phrase comes from Psalm 106:48 and indicates their solemn agreement (cf. the use of **Amen**, “so let it be,” in 5:14; 7:12) with the heavenly rejoicing over Babylon’s downfall.
- e. The text does not identify the owner of the **voice** that **came from the throne**, but it is likely an angel, since he refers to God as **our God**.
 - i. The voice authoritatively calls another group to join in the anthem of praise, **saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”**
 - ii. The redeemed believers in heaven are described as God’s **bond-servants** and those **who fear Him**.
 - iii. The all-inclusive phrase **the small and the great** (cf. 11:18) transcends all human categories and distinctions to embrace everyone.

- iv. All the redeemed are called to praise God.
- f. When the redeemed obeyed the command from the heavenly voice and added their voices to the heavenly chorus, the dramatic sound John heard was **something like the voice of a great multitude**.
- g. The loud chorus of praise rose to a deafening climax, which the apostle likened to **the sound of many waters** (cf. 1:15; 14:2) and ... **the sound of mighty peals of thunder** (cf. 6:1; 14:2).
 - i. The fitting finale to the heavenly oratorio of praise is a fourth **“Hallelujah!”** followed by the motive for it—**“For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.”**
 - ii. The evil world system has been completely destroyed, and God’s kingdom has come in its fullness.
 - iii. This usage of **Hallelujah** is reminiscent of Psalms 146–50, which repeatedly offer praise for God’s sovereign rule and eternal fellowship with the redeemed.
 - iv. The title **Almighty** is used nine times in Revelation (v. 15; 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 21:22).
- VI. Because the Marriage of the Lamb Is Completed.
 - a. 19:7–10
 - b. The heavenly praise continues with a call for gladness, rejoicing, and giving God **glory** for yet a fifth reason—**the marriage of the Lamb**.

- c. The imagery of marriage is used frequently in Scripture.
 - i. A marriage was the single greatest celebration and social event of the biblical world.
 - ii. Scripture uses the familiar imagery of a wedding to picture the Lord's relationship with His church.
 - iii. Second Corinthians 11:2 mentions the betrothal of the church to Christ. Paul wrote, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."
 - iv. The church's betrothal contract was signed in eternity past when the Father promised the Son a redeemed people and wrote their names in the Book of Life.
- d. The apostle Paul described the church's presentation in Ephesians 5:25–27: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
 - i. That presentation will take place at the Rapture.
 - ii. Speaking of both the present time of preparation, as He makes a home for His bride, and the moment of presentation, when He comes for her, Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many

dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2–3).

- iii. In the imagery of an ancient wedding, the Rapture marks the time when the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 2:19–20; Matt. 9:15; Luke 5:34–35; John 3:28–29), takes His bride to His Father’s house.
- iv. During the Tribulation, the raptured church will be presented in heaven.
- v. But at the end of those seven years of joyous fellowship and wonderful celebration, the time will come for the wedding ceremony, the marriage of the Lamb.
- vi. That final union of the Bridegroom and the bride is marked by a great supper.
- e. The entire heavenly chorus, including angels (v. 1), the twenty-four elders (v. 4), the four living creatures (v. 4), and all the host of the redeemed (v. 5), is exhorted to **rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him** because all the preparation is complete and **the marriage of the Lamb has come.**
 - i. Betrothed in eternity past, presented in the Father’s house since the Rapture, the church is now ready for the wedding ceremony to begin.
 - ii. That ceremony will coincide with the establishment of the millennial kingdom, and

stretch throughout that thousand-year period to be finally consummated in the new heavens and the new earth (cf. 21:1–2).

- iii. The idea of a thousand-year-long ceremony may seem far-fetched; yet it is no more difficult than several thousand years of betrothal.
- iv. And it must be remembered that “a thousand years in [God’s] sight are like yesterday when it passes by” (Ps. 90:4), and that “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” (2 Pet. 3:8).
- v. In the new heavens and the new earth, the bride concept will be expanded to include not only the church, but also all the redeemed of all ages as the New Jerusalem becomes the bridal city (21:1–2).
- vi. In the Old Testament, God is the Bridegroom of Israel (Isa. 54:5–6; 62:5; Jer. 31:32; Ezek. 16:7–14; Hos. 2:16, 19).
- f. In preparation for her marriage to the Lamb, **His bride has made herself ready.**
 - i. That was not, of course, by her own works, but rather by God’s gracious working.
 - ii. The bride has made herself ready in the power of God, by the grace of God, through the work of the Spirit of God.
 - iii. Purged from all sin and impurity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12–15), she is a flawless, blameless, unblemished virgin.

- g. Having been presented glorified, purified, and spotless before God's throne, **it was given to the church to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean.**
- i. **Fine linen** was expensive and beautiful cloth (cf. 18:12, 16), like that worn by Joseph (Gen. 41:42), David (1 Chron. 15:27), and Mordecai (Est. 8:15); *lampros* (**bright**) means glistening, shining, or radiant (cf. its use in Acts 10:30); *katharos* (**clean**) is translated "pure" in 21:18, 21.
 - ii. Such dazzling garments were worn earlier in Revelation by angels (15:6), and will be the clothing of the armies of heaven (made up of both angels and the redeemed saints) that accompany Christ when He returns to earth (v. 14).
- h. The **fine linen** with which the bride is clothed in the vision represents **the righteous acts of the saints.**
- i. At salvation, believers were clothed with Christ's righteousness, imputed to them (Rom. 3:21–24; 4:5; 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8–9).
 - ii. But now the church is clothed with a righteousness of its own; the glorified believers are intrinsically righteous, like the holy angels.
 - iii. No longer will the church have only an imputed righteousness, but also then an imparted holy perfection.
- i. The promise of 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will

be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (cf. Rom. 8:19–21) is then fulfilled.

- j. **Then** the angel who had been speaking with John (cf. 17:1, 15) **said to** the apostle, **“Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ”**
 - i. This is the fourth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6; 22:7, 14), all introduced by the word **blessed**, which means “happy,” “joyous,” “satisfied,” and “fulfilled.”
 - ii. The recipients of this blessing are **those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb**.
 - iii. That they are **invited** guests marks them as a distinct group from the church, since a bride would hardly be invited to her own wedding.
 - iv. These guests represent Old Testament believers.
 - v. Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28 both refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being in the kingdom, and Luke 13:28 also mentions the prophets.
 - vi. All the heroes of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 will be among the invited guests.
 - vii. So will John the Baptist, the greatest of all Old Testament believers (Matt. 11:11), who described himself as the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29) and hence one of the invited guests.
 - viii. All the Tribulation saints, glorified and still alive on earth and entering the millennial kingdom, will be guests.

- k. Some may question why the church age believers should be granted the honor of being the bride, while believers from other ages are merely guests.
 - i. But one may equally ask why God singled out Israel to be the covenant people.
 - ii. The only answer to both questions is that God sovereignly purposed that it be so (cf. Deut. 7:7–8).
 - iii. It must be remembered that the wedding imagery is just that; imagery that is not reality, but pictures God’s intimate union with His people.
 - iv. There will be no “second- class citizens” in God’s kingdom, just as all the participants in a wedding enjoy the celebration.
 - v. And in the new heavens and the new earth, as noted above, the imagery of the bride will be expanded to encompass all the redeemed from all ages.
- l. Whatever distinctions are made in Scripture, all believers of all ages will enjoy the full glories of eternity. Henry Morris writes: Whatever distinctions may exist between the saints of the pre-Abrahamic period, the saints in Israel before Christ, the saints among the Gentiles from Abraham to Christ, the saints of the tribulation, and the saints in the churches from Christ to the rapture ... such distinctions are secondary to the great primary truth that all will be there by virtue of the saving work of Christ and their personal trust in the true Creator God and His provision of

salvation. (*The Revelation Record* [Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1983], 389)

- m. The blessed truth that God will be in personal fellowship forever with all the redeemed saints of all the ages is so significant that the angel solemnly affirmed to John, **“These are true words of God.”**
 - i. To the beleaguered and aged apostle, in exile on the harsh, barren island of Patmos, it must have seemed amazing, almost impossible that God’s kingdom would eventually triumph. In John’s day, the church was being persecuted from without and attacked by heresies from within, and it was crumbling (see the discussion of the seven churches in *Revelation 1–11*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1999], chaps. 4–10).
 - ii. The revelation that God’s redemptive plan cannot and will not be thwarted brought great relief, comfort, and joy to the apostle.
- n. So great was John’s astonishment at the angel’s message that he involuntarily and thoughtlessly **fell at his feet to worship him** (cf. 22:8)—a practice strictly prohibited in Scripture (Col. 2:18; cf. Matt. 4:10).
 - i. Calling him back to his senses with a sharp rebuke, the angel said, **“Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God.”**

- ii. Like John, the angel was a **servant** of God, sent to minister to John and his **brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus**.
- iii. Angels serve all believers (cf. Heb. 1:14), particularly those who, like John, are involved in preaching the gospel (cf. 22:9).
- iv. The angel reminds John that he is to **worship God** only. Worship is the theme of redemptive history, and the purpose for which believers were redeemed (John 4:23). It will also be their occupation throughout eternity.
- o. The angel's final word to John is a reminder that "**the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**."
- p. The central theme of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament preaching is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i. Until the coming of His kingdom, all who proclaim the gospel must be faithful to **the testimony of Jesus**, the saving gospel message, which was His message.
 - ii. Those who are not will forfeit heavenly affirmation of their ministry.
 - iii. The glorious reality that God will judge the wicked and usher believers into His kingdom should cause all believers to rejoice. "For after all," wrote Paul, "it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:6–8).

- iv. Because believers are defined as those who “have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8), they are to eagerly wait for His return from heaven (Phil. 3:20).

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 12–22*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 193–208.