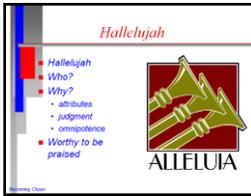




Four-fold Hallelujah

Rev. 19: 1-6 (NIV) After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. (2) 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." (3) And again they shouted, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." (4) The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne. And they cried, "Amen, Hallelujah!" (5) Then a voice came from the throne saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who have been, both small and great!" (6) Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns."

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Hallelujah, in the NIV, occurs only here in the entire Bible. Other translations have it in the Old Testament, but all agree that this is its only location in the New Testament. This passage is the source of Handel’s famous “Hallelujah Chorus.” The word itself is a composite one, “Hallel + Jah (short for Jahweh)” or “Praise the Lord.”

Who, then, so praises the Lord?

- a multitude, at the beginning and end. Some commentators see angels in the first and the saints in the second.
- then the elders and four living creatures, getting closer to the throne.
- then a voice from the throne itself, echoed by the multitude again.

What’s interesting is this: the elders, the voice, the four living creatures echo the hallelujah; only the multitude says *why*.

Why: There are three categories of why God should be praised, and it is good for us to examine them:

- There are his *attributes*. Aquinas assures us that God is his attributes, and these attributes are great: Salvation (for which we should be grateful); glory (in which we should be awestruck) and power (which is unlimited)
- There are his *judgments*. Only God can judge righteously, for only He
 - can see the heart and know the intent
 - is pure and therefore unprejudiced
 - has the wisdom to know the right judgment, and the power to enforce it.
- Finally, because he is omnipotent, and he reigns. It may not have been clear to all before this -- but it is now.

Worthy to be praised: Have you ever noticed that a goodly part of the Psalms which praise God do so by commanding others -- even rocks and trees -- to praise Him? Perhaps this seems odd to us because we have lost the concept that anything is worthy -- intrinsically -- of praise. We have become like Oscar Wilde’s cynic: we know the price of everything -- and the value of nothing.

Wedding of the Lamb

(Rev 19:7-10 NIV) 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. (8) Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (9) Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (9)
Then the angel said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (10) At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

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There is one concept that must come first, at least chronologically. Babylon is destroyed *before* the wedding of the Lamb. The false church must be destroyed before the true church can wed her Lord.

The Bride, of course, is the church (though some dispute this -- how, I don't know). This doctrine is clearly taught in Ephesians 5:22-27. The interesting point (for those believing in *sola fide*) is that the wedding garment is the righteous acts of the saints. This clearly makes the passage a symbolic one (not necessarily without literal fulfillment), but it also makes a point about transfiguration. Transfiguration proceeds from within; the righteousness which Christ has planted within has worked out (in fear and trembling!) into righteous acts.

The wedding guests are the subject of much debate. The clearest indication is in Matthew 22:2-14 (a parable). From that parable one might conclude that the guests are also the church. Futurists debate this; but the passage is definitely worth reading, as it amplifies the main point here -- which is that the blessed are invited (which leaves out everyone else). There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

John's reaction is interesting. He begins by trying to worship the angel -- which the angel sternly prohibits. There are two points in this:

- Compare the angel's statement with the practice of the Catholic church, with its panoply of saints and angels (like, for example, Michael).
- This is another example of the principle that the higher in the kingdom one is, the more certain it is that God is to be worshiped -- alone.

The remark about the **Spirit of Prophecy** is a simple one. All prophecy, in the Old Testament or New Testament, is aimed at one person: Jesus Christ.

The futurists hold also to these points:

- The supper is on earth; the wedding is in heaven. McGee holds that the "supper" is in fact the Millennium.
- The return of Christ is indicated here, and in the next session, and hence His return is "Pre-Millennial."
- The guests may or may not include the church (opinion varies) but certainly include "the mortals" -- generally those saved during the Tribulation and those of the Old Testament period. This is concluded from various Old Testament "millennial" prophecies which indicate that people in that era will have long life -- but not immortality. Not yet. (See Isaiah 65, especially verse 20)

Rider on a white horse

(Rev 19:11-16 NIV) I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. (13) He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. (14) The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. (15) Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to pierce down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has his name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

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There are many symbols here:

The Rider, clearly Jesus Christ, is described as faithful and true. The word "true" in the Greek carries two meanings: the one who brings truth, and also "the real thing." The crowns (Greek diadems) are those of a king. The horse is symbolic of conquest (as opposed to the donkey); the white horse implies purity.

Smith sees a literal horse here. This is the opening of the great debate: is this passage to be taken as literal return or symbolic scene in heaven only?

The name which no one knows has caused much speculation. Here are some of the thoughts:

- Kurios, or Lord
- Maybe we'll finally get the right vowels for YHWH.
- a name which cannot be revealed until then
- by being unknown, it implies no one has power over Christ.
- it may imply that no mortal can ever *fully* know him

Much speculation exists also about the name on the thigh. It may be engraved on the scabbard, or other article of clothing; it may be on the armor "skirt" (often done to make it easy for a foot soldier to read), or it may be the then-common fashion with statues of writing the name of the person on the thigh.

The **Robe** dipped in blood is clearly a reference to Isaiah 63:1-4, which makes this blood the blood of his enemies.

The Armies of Heaven also are disputed. Some see this (with much justification from the Old Testament) as the heavenly host -- the angels. Others see the (raptured) saints; or the saints of the Old Testament period. Talbot suggests all of the above.

The sharp sword in some sense must suggest Jesus as "The Word"; it is the most common symbolic use of the sword. Lindsey sees a literal sword (of some sort), again as part of the Pre/Post Millennial debate. (See verse 21 for a justification of this view).

Post Millennial thought runs like this:

- This entire passage is highly symbolic; therefore, there is no specific requirement to interpret it literally (e.g., Smith's horse).
- In particular, the symbol of the sword implies the world wide victory of the Gospel.
- The passage itself never actually states that Christ has returned; other passages place his return *directly before* the judgment.

One last on this: the futurists are absolutely certain of their view. The historicists unanimously proclaim their views with a great deal of humility. This may be a very Christian attitude but it does not convince the multitude of 20th century Christianity in America.

Armageddon aftermath

Rev 19:17-21 (NIV) And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair: "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, (18) so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." (19) Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. (20) But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. (21) The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

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Comparison is about all that is left for us, as the Revelation cresecendos. The angel (Greek, "one angel") is in the sun (symbolic of light, symbolic of God). It is a parallel passage to Ezekiel 39:17-19, which places this as the aftermath of Armageddon. The frightful comparison is this: compare this to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

The beast is either the Papacy or the political power under it, or, for the futurist, the revived Roman Empire. In any event, it is destroyed.

The false prophet is, to the futurist, a shadowy individual who works for the beast (perhaps). To the historicist, this is Islam. In either case, he (or it) is destroyed.

The interesting point: Satan is not destroyed. He is about to be bound, but he is not destroyed. This is a strong argument for the idea that beast and prophet are earthly and physical. Satan started in heaven -- and ends in hell.

What I really know about this

(Deu 29:29 NIV) The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

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