

**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 fear him,  
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.**

**7 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.”**

**(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.” (NIV 84)**

Theme: Join in Singing the heavenly Hallelujahs

1. For Christ has punished the Church’s enemies.
2. He has invited his Church to his banquet.

Did you catch the last song in the preserve music? If you noticed what song was playing I am sure that you recognized it. For those of you who didn’t catch it, the song was the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah*. This is a song that we often hear during Christmas and it is certainly an appropriate song for such a wonderful day. But this song was written not with Christmas in mind, but with judgment day in mind. Think about it. The reason that they are singing all these Hallelujahs is because Christ reigns forever. “For, the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth...He shall reign forever and ever...King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

This song is Handel’s attempt to mimic the song of the believers in heaven recorded in this morning’s text. But as magnificent as this song is, it will pale in comparison to the Hallelujahs we will sing on the last day.

Do we share Handel’s joy and anticipation for the last day?

Sometimes it seems as if we are indifferent to the end of the world.

We may be so focused on this worldly life that we act as if it’s all that matters. We may become indifferent about judgment day, and like the virgins in today’s gospel, we are then unprepared for when Christ comes or we fail to prepare others.

But today we join in signing the heavenly, Hallelujahs. For Christ will punish our enemies and he will invite us to his heavenly banquet. The book of Revelation is one that intrigues a lot of people. Some are scared of it. Most are confused by it. People interpret this book in many different ways. This is all because of the many different pictures it paints. This book is filled with symbols, numbers, beasts, angels, demons, and so on. It’s a book of symbolism. And sometimes it is difficult to determine what symbolizes what.

The details of this book may be confusing at times, but the purpose is clear. God wins. The devil and his followers will rebel. But Christ always wins. Those who follow the devil will suffer with him forever. Those who believe in Christ will live with him forever. That is the main point of this book, that we must not forget. In our text for today we are reminded of this purpose. We are reminded that Christ wins and thus, so do we.

In our text John hears the shouts of Hallelujah. This Greek word comes from two Hebrew words. It means, “praise the Lord.” We see this phrase all the time in the Old Testament. Especially in the book of Psalms. But strangely, this word does not show up at all in the New Testament. Except in Revelation. Four times this word is used in all of the New Testament. The four times in our text when the believers in heaven shout “Hallelujah!”

The praised the Lord for what he has done for us. **Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.** These words hardly need an explanation. God has given us eternal life where we will sing Hallelujah to our Savior. Through his life and death he saved us from our sins. We won’t have to suffer through the pain and torment of hell. We praise God because of his glory. Christ has the glory of God. He has glory because he gave us eternal life. He has power because he gives us eternal life. Because he rules over the world. And he punishes those who don’t believe in him.

And that is the second reason why they shouted Hallelujah. God punished the unbelievers. Specifically they praised God because he condemned the Great Harlot. This Great Harlot was previously mentioned in the book of Revelation. She was also referred to as Babylon. But she doesn’t refer to a certain city, or a certain promiscuous lady. It is clear that this term refers to the apostate church. That is, those who claimed to be Christians, but they rejected the truth and persecuted the true church. This apostate church had sold out their faith for their own wants and pleasures. And they corrupted the earth with their disgusting acts. And on top of it all, they shed the blood of the believers. So God paid them back for all the horrible things they had done.

And the saints shouted Hallelujah. For they witnessed the destruction of those who persecuted them. **The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.** They shouted praise the Lord because they saw their enemies in hell. They saw the smoke from the unbelievers burning forever. They were delighted that God rescued them from the hands of the unbelievers. They praised the Lord for he treated the unbelievers as their sins deserved.

Sounds pretty harsh doesn’t it? They were rejoicing that someone was suffering in hell. Whatever happened about loving your enemies?

Why would they rejoice in seeing someone suffer? We may be shocked that believers in heaven rejoice that others are in hell. That is because we are often indifferent to false teachings. “It’s not a big deal what other people believe. So what, if they don’t believe everything the Bible says. It doesn’t matter if they follow a different god.” We often act indifferent to God and his will. We act as if we don’t care if someone goes against God’s word. And get a little upset when others stick up for what is right. We don’t think others have the right to tell unbelievers they don’t believe the truth.

But God isn’t indifferent about his word. He hates unbelief. He hates those who teach things contrary to his Word. He tells us many different ways to teach all of his Word. He warns that those who add or subtract to his teachings will be condemned. He tells us to stay away from those who don’t teach the truth. He tells us to refute those who do not teach sound doctrine. God is not indifferent toward unbelief. He hates those who don’t believe what he says in his word. So he punishes them. But he saves believers. Not only does he save us from our sins, but he saves us from our enemies. He takes the Church to heaven and send punishes the unbelievers.

For this reason we rejoice. We sing Hallelujahs because he saved us as he punished our enemies. But that is not the only reason we praise the Lord. We also praise him because he has invited us to his heavenly banquet.

Sometimes our indifference to the truth of God’s word leads us to be indifferent about the end of the world. We know the world is going to end, but we often don’t seem to care. We act as if this life is all there is. We often care more about our earthly pleasure than our spiritual lives. You have good friends, family members who love you, a job, nice home, and so on. You don’t want your life to end; you want to live on this earth forever. Your focus is on how to extend your life. Or how to make your life better. On what makes you happy. We become so focused on this life that we forget about the life to come. Sure, you are always aware of the last day in the back of your mind. But you just don’t feel like thinking about it. You try to avoid the subject, because it makes you sad, or because it makes you realize that you haven’t been preparing yourself. But then you may end up like one of the virgins in today’s gospel. They knew Christ was

coming. And they wanted to enter the marriage with him. But they got caught up in this world. They were found unprepared. And they weren't able to sing Hallelujah's with all the saints.

So how do you prepare yourself for Christ's coming? By preparing your heart and mind. And how do you do that? By making use of the means of grace. By worshiping regularly. By attending Bible class. Studying God's Word at home. By being strengthened through the body and blood of Christ together with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Just the fact that you are here today indicates that you are preparing yourself at least a little bit for Christ's coming. But how are you doing in your encouragement of others? Do you encourage others to be prepared? We must admit that we often don't. This all goes back to our indifference toward the word of God. We often act as if we don't care what others believe. We let them think anything we want—after all who are we to tell them what is right or wrong. So many times, when we know that someone is unprepared for Christ's coming, we don't say anything to them at all. And as a result they will not be ready for the last day. They will be left out of Christ's wedding banquet. They won't be joining you in singing the heavenly Hallelujahs.

We want everyone to join us in the banquet of the lamb. We want all people to join in singing heavenly Hallelujahs. We don't want anyone to be an enemy of the Church. We want all people to worship Jesus in heaven with the elders and four living Creatures, who sang the third Hallelujah. And then all the saints loudly sang the fourth Hallelujah. It was **Like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder.** The sound of praise to God will be the loudest thing you will ever hear. Multitudes of believers will join in shouting praise to the God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Listen to their song: **Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 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. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.**

They are shouting for joy because they have been invited to the wedding banquet of the lamb. In fact, we are not just those who are invited. Rather we, the Church—believers, are the bride. Christ chose us to be his own. God has made the Church ready for this wedding

banquet through the means of grace. He has brought her to faith. We have been clothed, not the soiled garments of our sin, but with clothes that have been washed through the blood of Christ. Now we wear garments, bright and clean. Pure white, because we are pure. No longer sinners, but pure innocent saints through the love of Christ.

So we, dressed in pure white, join the groom at his banquet. In the banquet halls of heaven we will eat the wedding feast of the lamb. And we will join in the glorious Hallelujahs. And so, we will be blessed. Blessed because Christ saved us from the punishment of sin. Blessed because he has rescued us from the pain and torment of hell. Blessed because we will live with him. We will join him forever in heaven. Which will be far greater than anything we could ever experience here on earth. All this, not because you have earned or deserved it. But because of God's love. And since we know this is true and will happen we can join in praising God here on earth. Today, we too shout "Hallelujah—Praise the Lord."

We sing today and we will sing Hallelujahs in eternity. We long for this day to come. We can't wait to join in the glorious songs of the saints. But first we must prepare ourselves. And we prepare others. For even though we do delight when the enemies of the church are repaid of what they have done, we would rather have them join us in heaven. And there together with all the saints we can join in shouting "Hallelujah—Praise the Lord!" Amen.