

I had fun researching the story of Handel's "Messiah" this week and putting that video together. I found so many interesting tid-bits. For example... opera and classical composers were often the subject of moral outrage in the 1700s. ... Perhaps there was good reason sometimes for it. During a 1727 performance of a different Handel oratorio... the two leading sopranos broke into a fight. (They literally came to blows onstage... while performing.) ... And what did the audience do...? They cheered and rooted them on. ... Throughout much of the Victorian era... many in the church looked upon opera... and theater in general... as a prideful trade. And even though Handel's Messiah is only Scripture... it initially had unfavorable reviews from the church as being "blasphemous." ... While it would certainly be too much to call it an overnight sensation... it is clear that this work quickly became very popular and was soon to be seen as a classic.

The story of the composition of this most famous of all Christian musical works has been told differently... such as the amount of time it took Handel to compose it. ... Another variant is how the tradition started for audiences to stand whenever the musicians begin to play the Hallelujah Chorus.

An often repeated explanation about the start of this tradition *is that* King George II was so moved by the "Hallelujah" chorus during the London premiere of *Messiah*... that he rose to his feet... and then everyone in attendance followed suit as not to be sitting when the king stood.

However, according to various experts... there is no truth to this story. In fact there is no evidence King George II was even in attendance... The first reference to this story was a letter written 37 years after the fact... and it is

unlikely the newspaper writers that were in the audience... would have overlooked mentioning a royal presence.

So... it would seem that Handel's Messiah is surrounded with mystery... But the original Hallelujah Chorus does not have much mystery.

We have come today... in our study through Revelation... to the original Hallelujah Chorus... and it is more magnificent than George Fredrick Handel's rendition. I told you that I had fun studying the classical oratory composed in 1741... but I had great joy... studying the Apostle John's (in Revelation 19.)

John's Hallelujah Chorus comes as a breath of fresh air after the depressing activities of the previous chapters. ... Now there is cause for us all to celebrate! ... We have been through 12 chapters of graphic descriptions of harsh judgments... and vivid descriptions of the evil that brought it to the earth. Against this dark backdrop... we come to John's Hallelujah Chorus... and here is what (our study of it) will do for us... (Here is my prayer for each of us this morning.) ... This passage is encouragement not to quit... not to give up... to know that whatever befalls the Christian in this life... there is ultimately a victorious pay off for those who remain faithful.

We are all easily dissuaded from what is best for us... and we all need to be convinced that the One who is coming for us... is worth the wait... so that the seducers who would ruin our lives... don't cause us to turn away and stop waiting for the Lord's return... Who is about to come for His bride.

Here is the main point of our study this morning... This passage contrasts the fall of the prostitute with the beauty of the bride ... so that we will live to be the bride, not the prostitute. You will remember from last week... (as we studied the previous chapter)... that the prostitute is a symbol of the world's idolatry and immorality. But today we have the bride... which is the symbol of the church.

The point of depicting Babylon as a prostitute is to get at the way she corrupts and defiles God's good creation. ... She takes what God has made good and blessed and makes it immoral. ... She packages and sells things that should not be sold... things that are made to be enjoyed within the confines of God's instructions. ... Babylon sells cheap perversions of God's free gifts.

John wants to move us (as his readers)... to live for the church and not the world... for righteousness and not smut... for Christ and not Satan... ... So we move this morning from the judgment of the prostitute to the glory of the bride.

The lovers of Babylon lose everything they lived for when she falls... but the people of God rejoice over this same event. ... This is where we pick up... with today's passage.

Revelation 19:1

“After this...” In the Greek... this phrase is “meta tauta” or “after these things...” We first came across this very phrase in chapter four of Revelation. John wrote “meta tauta”... after these things... after the descriptions he gave for what the 7 distinct church periods would be like

while it is on earth. “meta tauta” – then comes the Tribulation... and we have been “meta tautaing” ever since chapter four in the book of Revelation – until now. Here we get another “meta tauta.” Now we move on... “after these things... Now we will see what will take place after the Great Tribulation... and it is a great place to sing the Hallelujah Chorus.

You may be surprised to learn that this verse marks the first appearance of the word Hallelujah... not only in the book of Revelation... but in the entire New Testament! ... There are 24 Hallelujahs in the Psalms... and throughout the Old Testament... but this exhilarating shout of praise does not appear in the New Testament until the last few chapters. ... But at this point in Revelation... the shouts of Hallelujah become thunderous... resounding... even deafening.

Hallelujah! is a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning 'Praise Yahweh'. The word is derived from a combination of two Hebrew words, halal and Jah, meaning “Praise Yahweh” or “Praise God.”

The final and utter destruction of Mystery Babylon precipitates a Hallelujah Chorus in heaven that brings the entire heavenly host to its feet in a standing ovation of praise. ... Gone is the adulterous institution that wrapped up God's truth in a tissue of demonic lies... that set deadly snares for unwary believers... that introduced error and abomination into the world in the name of God.

Keep in mind what they have just witnessed! ... The most corrupt and evil system that ever invaded this planet... seeking always to control mankind

through politics and religion has been destroyed. ... Satan's kingdom has come to an end making room for the kingdom of Christ.

Babylon worshiped gods that could not save and killed those who would not go along with her idolatry... but "salvation" belongs to God. ...Babylon proudly took glory to herself... but "glory" belongs to God alone. ... Babylon has exercised stolen power in God's world... but "power" belongs to Him alone. ... Babylon's lies will be exposed... and the truth will ring loudly through eternal celebrations of God's "salvation and glory and power."

He will not let His people down on that last day. ... We experienced 'salvation' when we became Christians... and continue to experience it through this life... for we know that through faith we are among those whom Christ has redeemed. ... But... wonderful as this assurance is right now on earth... nothing can compare with the glory of that final day when the whole world will see that God is a *saving* God. ... No wonder they shout praise to God for his salvation.

Revelation 19:2

God cannot be 'bought off' by anyone. ... Unlike humans... He cannot be 'tempted' to sin... or to veer from His foreordained purposes. ... His judgments are right. ... They accord with what is and with what ought to be. There is no lack of evidence. ... There is no deviation from the standard. There is no prejudice. ... There is no falsehood. ... There is no injustice. God's judgments are "true and just." ... God's judgments are unlike the judgments of the flimsy (flip-flopping) courts of the earth. ... They always

reflect truth and righteousness. ... They are always fair and just. ... This inspires worship.

Have you seen injustice in the world? ... Have you seen the righteous punished and the wicked rewarded? ... Have you seen Christians arrested for trying to help people... while those who set out to destroy life are commended? ... Let me encourage you to trust that God will do justice. God will set all things right. ... He will avenge his servants and punish the wicked. ... We can trust him. He is worthy of our praise.

Revelation 19:3

The first cry of "Hallelujah!" in 19:1, celebrated God's truth and justice in salvation. This second one in verse 3 here celebrates the extremity of the harlot's punishment: "The smoke from her goes up forever and ever"

Are you tempted by evil? ... Lured by immorality? ... Enticed by idolatry? Look again at the last phrase of 19:3: "*The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.*" Evil, injustice, immorality, and idolatry will only result in regret. If you never repented and trusted in Christ... your regret will last forever. ... We want these images of God's justice to be sealed to our hearts so that when sin tempts us we see smoke rising from the ruins of Babylon.

Her punishment will never end. Why? ... Because punishment of sin is ultimately about God's word being upheld. ... Hell lasts forever because God is infinitely Holy and Just.

Revelation 19:4-5

God's servants in verse 5 are those who "fear him." The fear of God kept them from fearing Babylon and her threats. Now they are called to praise God for his triumph over Babylon.

The first part of this morning's passage... Revelation 19:1-5... focuses on the praise of God for the salvation He achieved by judging the great prostitute Babylon. ... Now we move to the second section... Revelation 19:6-8... and it will focus on the praise of God for His reign and for the marriage of the Lamb.

But before Christ returns to the earth... there is going to be a wedding... and you and I... as believers... will be part of it.

We can have a much better appreciation for the Marriage of the Lamb... by understanding the background of the Jewish marriage system... which involved four distinct steps.

First the father of the groom would make arrangements for the marriage... and pay the bride price. The timing varied. ... Sometimes this would occur when the children were very small. At other times... it was much closer to the time of the marriage. ... But often the bride and the groom would not meet until the wedding day.

The second step was the fetching of the bride. ... The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home. But two things had to happen before this. ... The father of the groom determined the timing. So he had to give the groom the command to go and fetch her. Second... prior to the groom's leaving to fetch his bride... he had to have a place ready and prepared for his bride.

The third step was the wedding ceremony. Only a few were invited to this. But prior to the ceremony... the bride underwent a ritual immersion... and ritual cleansing.

The fourth step was the marriage feast. Unlike the marriage ceremony... the feast had many invited guests and would often last for as many as seven days.

Now notice the parallels of this to what our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are doing with us. ... In the marriage of the Lamb... all four of these steps are evident. ... First the Father made arrangements for His Son... and paid the price – which was the life of His Son.

Like the Jewish wedding... much time has elapsed since step one... when arrangements were made and the price was paid. It has been a little more than 2,000 years. ... But step two will come!

Step two will be the rapture – when Christ comes to fetch His bride. He will come and take the church away to the home He has been preparing for us. Only God the Father knows the timing of this... and He will give the command.

Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

This will happen once the place of our future residence has been prepared...

John 14:1-3 (ESV)

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I

have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Following the Rapture... in Heaven... the third step will take place.

Revelation 19:6-8

You and I... as the bride... will be dressed in white linen... which as our text says... is the righteous acts of the saints. This means all the wood... hay... and straw... have all been burned away... and all the gold... silver... and precious stones have been purified. ... the judgment seat of Christ that believers go through corresponds with the Jewish practice of cleansing the Bride... and getting her ready for the marriage ceremony.

Between the time of the rapture of the church to Heaven and the time of its formal union with the Lord... the dreadful events described in the Tribulation have been taking place on earth. ... During this same period the saints of God will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10-12 (ESV)

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 (ESV)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

2 Corinthians 3:12-15 (ESV)

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.

Believers will receive rewards for faithful service and also face the consequences of the way they have lived. ... The question of sin and salvation is not at issue at the judgment seat, but the believers "work" will be brought into review.

Position in the kingdom and capacity for eternity... being decided now in this life... will be confirmed at the judgment seat. That occasion... one of great heart-searching... is presented to us in the most solemn terms in Scripture. ... Paul used such words as fire and terror to describe it. ... At the same time the judgment seat of Christ will be a private... family affair and... once it is over the people of God will be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." ... The fine linen is the "righteousness of saints" (that we saw in verse 8 of our passage in Revelation 19.) ... The church will be ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

When we... as the bride... will arrive in Heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ... we will not at all be beautiful... (in fact, we will be covered with spots... wrinkles... and blemishes... according to Paul in Eph. 5:27)... but by the time we go through our cleansing... at the same time the Tribulation is happening on earth... we will be radiant in glory. ... We will have "made ourselves ready" for the public ceremony.

This statement "it was granted her" is a divine passive. God "granted her to clothe herself." ... Back in Revelation 7:14... those clothed in white robes had "*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" That is the connotation here... the stains of misdeeds been washed away by the blood of the Lamb, "righteous deeds" make the "fine linen" shine.

So what do you want? ... Do you want to buy unsatisfying and perverted imitations of God's gifts from the prostitute... only to be punished with her forever in anguish and regret... or do you want to be the bride?

Isn't it astonishing that such a bridegroom would give himself to us? We don't deserve to have him help us cross the street. And he gave everything. He left Heaven, walked dusty roads, endured the cross, rose from the dead, poured out the Spirit, accomplished redemption for us. It is almost too good to be true. But it *is* true. Wonder of wonders: trust in Jesus and he will come for you on that day.

The multitude joyfully celebrates and honors the Lamb because the day of his wedding has come and his bride is ready.

We can hardly imagine the glory of that wedding day. ... Never has there been a more worthy bridegroom. ... Never has a man sacrificed more for his beloved. ... Never has a man gone to greater lengths... humbled Himself more... endured more... or accomplished more in the great task of winning His bride.

Never has a Father more wealthy planned a bigger feast. ... Never has a more noble Son honored His Father in everything. ... Never has a man treated His bride-to-be more appropriately. ... Never has a more powerful

pledge... like an engagement ring... been given than the pledge of the Holy Spirit given to this bride. ... Never has a more glorious residence been prepared as a dwelling place... once the bridegroom finally takes His bride.

Great will be the rejoicing. ... Great will be the exultation. ... There will be no limit to the glory given to the Father through the Son on that great day.

Never has a bridegroom done more to qualify His beloved to be his bride. Never has a bride needed her bridegroom more.

Never has there been a wedding more significant than this one. ... Never has a Prince with more authority taken a bride with less standing. ... Never has a bride had her Prince die for her... rise from the dead for her... and give to her His own standing before the Father.

Never has a bridegroom loved his bride more. ... Never has a bride waited as long for her bridegroom. ... Never has a bride sung more songs to her beloved. ... Never has there been a wedding with more guests than this one will have. ... Never has a wedding taken place on a more momentous occasion... the end of the overlapping ages and the ushering in of the kingdom. ... Never has there been a marriage like this one.

Revelation 19:9

"Who are the guests?" ... In John 3:29... John the Baptist... (who was the last Old Testament prophet)... indicated that he was a friend of the Bridegroom. ... Thus... a part of this guest list will be the Old Testament saints who will be in heaven and have received their rewards. ... Remember... they do not make up the bride. (The church is the bride of

Christ.) ... I believe that the Old Testament saints... and those who become believers through the Tribulation will be the guests at this wedding. list will include those who are saved during the tribulation.

Who can blame the Apostle John for getting overly excited at all of this...? John finds God's truth... and the blessing of being invited to the marriage feast so moving... that he wants to worship.

Revelation 19:10

John is clearly overwhelmed by the beauty and joy of this occasion and correctly responds with worship. ... But it is strange that he should be tempted to worship one who is not God. ...The angel has to remind John to look in the right direction. Only God is to be worshipped.

What is even more strange... is that In Revelation 22:8-9... we again see John worshipping an angel... and he has to rebuke John again... for the very same thing!

There is no doubt that it is always easy to be tempted into worshipping the messenger rather than God Himself. ... Overwhelming spiritual experiences can draw us into this temptation. ... Here is a clear warning to us all. ... If even the apostle John (twice) fell into such a sin... how much more may we be tempted! Let's be careful with any kind of hero worship... Make sure we are not worshipping the creature rather than the creator... even within Christian circles.

... ..

What would life be like if we knew... really **knew**... that such a bridegroom was coming for us? ... Is He coming for you? ... Are you trusting Him? ... If not... what are you hoping for from the future? ... What is more to be desired than what He offers?

The whole book of Revelation was probably read aloud in early Christian worship when John sent it to the seven churches.

They needed to know... and we need to know... that Jesus is enough. He is enough in the face of inconvenience. ... He is enough in the face of cancer. ... He is enough in the face of persecution. ... He is enough in the face of imprisonment... and even death. ... God... through our passage today... intends to show His people see that Jesus **is** enough.

Hallelujah !