

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, ²for 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. ⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸Fine 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.”

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, fellows Saints of God,

Perhaps you have been at a hotel or resort and you’ve seen people all dressed up, a limo out front with “Just Married” written on the back window—the obvious signs of a wedding reception. And maybe you’ve walked past the doors to the celebration. And if you did, you most certainly took a peek inside, just to see what it was like! Loud music, the chatter of many voices, people dressed in their finest clothes, even some so nice that they got them from someone else—like tuxedos.

If you can picture that scene, then you will easily understand the picture Jesus gave to his people as he spoke of his return to this world being like a groom coming to pick up his bride. You’ll understand the picture of the celebration in heaven being like a wedding supper, a wedding reception.

But to fully realize what God has to say to you today in the recorded audio/visual presentation shown to the Apostle John, which he wrote down for us in the book of Revelation (chapter 19), you have to know a few other things—things like this: the word “saint” means “holy one”—a saint doesn’t have to be dead; you and I, if we believe in Jesus as our Savior, are in fact, people who have been made holy. We are saints. But also realize the difference between a saint *militant*: one still fighting the fight of faith in this world—and a saint *triumphant*: one who has triumphed over the grave by faith in Christ and is now in heaven with their God. We’re talking about those saints triumphant today.

It's also helpful to know that prior to these words before us this morning, God spoke of Judgment Day and how the saints of God will celebrate Christ's ultimate victory over all who opposed him. Now in *these* words, we hear and see the victory celebration as it continues in heaven. It's like the party after a wedding—the wedding reception, or as Jesus called it in the gospel parable in Matthew 25, the “wedding supper.”

You and I—through God's Word to John—get A PEEK INSIDE THE WEDDING SUPPER OF HEAVEN! And be prepared for this:

Prepare to be assured of Christ's victory for you.

Prepare to find the comfort of knowing what your friends and loved ones are doing in heaven.

Prepare to find confidence about *your* invitation to the wedding.

And prepare to find encouragement to be ready to go when it's time to go.

So now, let's take **A PEEK INSIDE THE WEDDING SUPPER OF HEAVEN**

1. SEE WHO'S THERE

2. LISTEN TO WHY THEY ARE REJOICING

3. REJOICE THAT YOU WILL BE JOINING THEM!

We've seen big weddings and big wedding receptions before, but nothing like the number of people that John heard in this vision. The great multitude there is the collection of saints triumphant. It is all those who, when they lived in this world, put their trust in the Savior sent by the Father to redeem the world. Who can count the number of believers of all time?! It is a *great* multitude!

If you read closely, you notice that much of this is what John heard, but we are told who was there and certainly John also saw them because he describes those who were worshipping God. 24 elders were also there, bowing down before God. Those 24 elders have been mentioned already in this book of Revelation. We understand 12 of them to be representatives of believers from Old Testament times, the days prior to the Father sending his Son into the world as the Messiah. These are the patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The others are the Twelve Apostles, who saw the risen and ascended Christ in New Testament times.

Bowing down before God with them were four created beings, obviously different from the saints and not angels either. These four represent all of God's creation and we hear this about them earlier in Revelation:

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop

saying: ***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”*** Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ***“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*** (Revelation 4:6–11)

Those are the attendees at the heavenly wedding supper. And then, of course, there is the glorious, almighty God on his throne.

Can you imagine peeking into the wedding supper of heaven and seeing all of those people along with the creatures and angels of heaven AND the majestic, divine God who reigns forever and ever?! I’m imagining my jaw dropping and being at a total loss for words if I were to actually get a glimpse of that!

But it turns out that’s not what happens in heaven! There is definitely awe and wonder, but those in heaven, who see all of this, do speak. No one is silent! And it’s loud. Really loud. And if you don’t really like loudness, don’t worry, you’ll be fine—it’s heaven, where there is no sorrow or pain! And if you have trouble with your hearing now, you won’t have to worry about that in heaven because our bodies will be transformed to be like Christ’s glorious body, God tells us!

John hears **the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting**...and they keep shouting out their praise. He hears the 24 elders and those 4 magnificent creatures crying out in praise to the Lord. He hears a voice from the throne—the voice of an angel—booming out the command for all to praise God. And again the great multitude shouts out **like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder!** This is the sound of heavenly rejoicing!

And if you know what has happened, you understand why there is this kind of rejoicing in heaven! Listen to what the crowds of saints are shouting:

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 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.”... “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

To understand their shouts, remember that this is a *vision* given to John and that we are looking at just a piece of it and not the whole book this morning! I’ll try to help by explaining some of the details that can be gleaned from the rest of Revelation and from the rest of Scripture.

We know what a prostitute is. A prostitute is unfaithful and promotes, encourages and fosters unfaithfulness. While God speaks of all believers, the whole Holy Christian Church, those faithful to Jesus, as the bride of Christ, he speaks of all those who reject him and who are unfaithful to him as a prostitute. Although this shouting of the saints triumphant at first sounds strange, when we understand those pictures God is using, it's not so hard, is it?

The saints shout to God because God has, with divine justice, condemned those unfaithful to him and it is an eternal condemnation—**The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever,**” they shout. You see, in heaven, they understand just how horrible it was that people rejected God’s love extended to them. With a proper understanding of God’s divine justice, they rejoice that God did what had to be done. With heavenly joy they realize that those who opposed them and their God in the world will NEVER be able to do so again. They are safe at home with their Savior-God and cannot be threatened again. When you understand how their eyes are opened to that, you understand why they shouted, *“Hallelujah!”*

By the way, “Hallelujah” or “Alleluia” (the Greek spelling) means “praise the Lord.” You might find it interesting to know that the only place in all of the New Testament that you find that word is here in these verses before us today. It is the cry of the saints in heaven as they see that all who opposed God are defeated and that they are safe with him. *“Praise the Lord!”* is their loud and joyful shout of praise!

The 24 elders and the 4 impressive creatures then fall down before God on his throne and cry out, **“Amen, Hallelujah!”** *“It is true! Praise the Lord!”* they shout!

And then the command of the angel, **“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”** prompts all the saints triumphant to shout out with one thunderous voice: **“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.”**

Yes, you should be hearing the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel’s *Messiah* in your head right now! This is where it comes from—from the vision of the saints triumphant around the throne of God.

The saints praise the Lord God Almighty and encourage each other to glorify him. And they give the reason why—because this is the wedding of the Lamb of God, who has taken away the sins of the world! His bride is fully prepared! She has been given fine clothes, bright and clean—which stands for the “not guilty” verdict given to her because Christ paid the price for sin on the cross and his righteousness has replaced sin in his bride, the Church.

The bridegroom, Jesus, is there in heaven and the full count of believers is now there as one, as his bride. It is time to rejoice! This is the picture of eternal life in heaven with our God! This is the Wedding Supper of the Lamb! Wow!

The angel says “**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**” He says that you are blessed, or happy—the word means happy. You are happy because you are invited to this wedding, the joining of our Savior Jesus with all believers in heaven for all eternity.

These days here in this world, we may not always feel so happy. We may not always feel blessed. There is enough opposition to our faith in the world and from those around us and, frankly, our own sin makes it worse. And we know it. We get to thinking about our lives and our wants and lose our focus on God’s will for us and what he ultimately has in store for us around his throne in heaven. The danger is that we become like the 5 foolish girls who found themselves unprepared to greet the bridegroom when he showed up for the wedding and were not permitted to enter the wedding. So yes, our sin is damning.

But remember that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, has redeemed you. With his own perfect blood shed on the cross, he paid for your sins and mine. He has bought us back and we are now clean. Our rags of sin are gone and the bright, clean robes of righteousness are wrapped around us. Like a bride beautifully dressed, we are ready.

So we watch and we wait with eager anticipation for Christ to return because on that day, we will not be taking A PEEK INSIDE THE WEDDING SUPPER OF HEAVEN, we will *be inside* as Saints Triumphant, alongside the great multitude and the 24 elders and those 4 amazing creatures and the angels—and we will shout “*Hallelujah!*” to our God who will be sitting there on his eternal throne. This is going to happen, so be prepared and **REJOICE THAT YOU WILL BE JOINING THEM!** The bridegroom is coming and the wedding is going to happen. The angel says that it’s true! Hallelujah! Amen!