

Promise of Ultimate Victory

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Date: 13 March 2022

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[0 : 00] If you will, go with me to Revelation chapter 19. Revelation 19. Pastor Jason has been preaching on some of the promises we read throughout the Bible, and I'd like to continue that theme.

This promise, however, is not written as an explicit promise because it's a prophecy. It tells us about our future as God's people.

So it serves as a promise, even though it's not written as we would expect a promise to be written. I'll read the first six verses of Revelation 19.

After this, I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, Hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just. For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Once more they cried out, Hallelujah, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever.

[1 : 08] And the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah. And from the throne came a voice saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

And I'll stop right there. If I were to imagine not just this chapter, but also the previous chapter, chapter 18, together as a movie, chapter 18 would be like coming to the dramatic climax when the tension is at its greatest.

The earth is made bright with the glory of an angel. Just before the city of Babylon, with all of her wickedness, is plagued with death and mourning and famine and burned up with fire, according to the previous chapter.

Those who gained wealth from her are standing far off in fear of torment, weeping and mourning aloud. They're standing helpless as they watch the smoke rise from their once great city.

[2 : 36] They cry out, In a single hour she has been laid waste. So as we watch this scene unfold, there's a tremendous amount of noise, people are screaming, city walls are collapsing.

But then a mighty angel takes up the city and we're told in verse 21 of the last chapter, throws it into the sea, the entire city. And you can just imagine this on the big screen as it sinks.

All goes quiet. There's not a sound to be heard. All we see on the screen is maybe some faint ripples on the water. A moment later, however, we begin to hear this faint muffled roar in the distance.

We're not sure what it is just yet, but the camera slowly pans upward. And it moves straight up right through the clouds until we reach heaven itself.

And suddenly we see a great multitude of people singing and shouting, Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. For his judgments are true and just.

[3 : 46] For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Hallelujah! They cry. Hallelujah! Over and over again.

Hallelujah! That's the scene unfolding in this part of Revelation. And I believe we need to watch it. Just play out before us, before we attempt to examine the various pieces of it.

It's been said that Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book. We need to absorb the drama of it. We need to see the story.

We need to watch the imagery. Now, of course, we can study the details and we can better understand the various parts of it. But the story itself comes first.

That's the nature of this kind of biblical literature. It's more like a movie than a textbook, if you will. So with that in mind, let's work our way through the passage here in Revelation 19.

[4 : 52] And it may seem strange that I'm focusing on this part of chapter 19 when you see the marriage of the Lamb come right after. You think that's where we'd want to go. That's the heart of it. And it is. But I don't want to skip over this part either.

After this, after the fall of Babylon, which we actually read about in the last chapter, John heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven.

According to Revelation, this is a great multitude that no one can number from every nation, from every tribe, from every people, every language. People from all walks of life are represented here. And even though that once perplexed the Lord's first disciples, what we discover is that God's redemptive power reached far beyond the borders of Israel. The gospel found a home in every nation, in every tribe, every people group, and among every language.

So there's a great multitude in heaven. And when John sees them following the collapse of Babylon, they are shouting hallelujah. And I love that word. It's one of the most universal words in the world and throughout history.

[6 : 11] It's a word so remarkable that our English Bibles don't even bother to translate it. They just transliterate it. They bring it right over from the original Hebrew. And what does it mean? Well, halel means praise.

Yah is short for Yahweh, the proper name of God. So what the word means is praise Yahweh, praise the Lord. Now, interestingly, as universal and remarkable as this word is, Revelation 19 is the only place in the New Testament where you will find it.

And it is here used four times. It's used only 24 times in the Old Testament, if I've counted correctly. And every appearance is in the Psalms.

In fact, the last Psalm ends with hallelujah. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. That is hallelujah. So what we have here in Revelation 19 is essentially another hallel Psalm.

It's a song of praise for the Lord. It's Psalm 151, if you will. But there's something that may strike us as unusual about this particular song of praise.

[7 : 24] It praises God, of course. But it praises God specifically for his judgment of the great prostitute Babylon.

Hallelujah. For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. Hallelujah. The smoke goes up from her forever and ever. Now, on Sunday mornings, we don't sing a lot of songs about God's judgments.

That's not a common theme we hear throughout hymns or even contemporary songs. But it is a perfectly legitimate reason to praise God.

To be clear, we don't praise him because we relish the prospect of the destruction of sinners. That's not it. Even God has said, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

No pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would rather the wicked turn from his ways and live. Live. But if the sinner refuses, of course, justice will be accomplished.

[8 : 32] And the punishment will always be appropriate. Sinners will be judged along with Babylon one day, to whom they gave their allegiance in this world.

And while we are more likely to praise God for his mercy and his grace come Sunday morning when we sing those songs, as we should, it's no less appropriate to praise him for his justice. Listen again to this song. I mean, read it once more. Notice all of the reasons the saints in heaven give for praising God here.

I've already mentioned the first, which is that justice will prevail. And I think that's a bulk of their song. But second, there is salvation. Verse 1.

The multitude in heaven praises God for salvation, immediately following the destruction of Babylon. You see, salvation really can't be fully accomplished apart from the destruction of wickedness.

[9 : 39] You know, think of the flood in Noah's day. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 3, eight persons were brought safely through water. And I think some translations of the Bible are even clearer on this point.

They say that Noah and his family were saved through or by the floodwaters. Through or by the floodwaters. In other words, they were not saved from the water by the ark.

They were saved by the water. And from what were they saved? The book of Genesis tells us, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

That is a summary of where mankind was at in the days of Noah leading up to this flood. The flood saved Noah and his family from the rampant evil that prevailed in the world during that time. That's what they were saved from. God saved them by essentially eliminating the evil. He physically and forcibly removed the evil from the earth.

[10:55] Now, that, of course, does not include the evil that resided in their hearts. But you understand the point I'm making. He wiped the earth of the evil.

And that is a sample, often a type or a shadow in scripture of what he will do again at the end of time. Only then it will be complete. It will be thorough. It will be perfect.

He will take every last bit of wickedness and destroy it once and for all. And we say, hallelujah.

Praise the Lord. You know, the older I get, the more I find myself meditating on a passage found in Romans chapter 8.

I think about this passage a lot. The apostle Paul writes, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

[12:13] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

I can't speak for you, of course, but I can certainly relate to the kind of groaning Paul describes in that passage.

You know, even on the best days of my life, I still get tired. I stub my toe. I get a headache. I catch a cold. The baby's crying.

I lose my keys. I'm late to work. When my family and I finally have an opportunity to get away from it all, maybe take a little vacation, I get sunburned while lying on the beach.

And on and on it seems to go, right? I'm not describing anything unusual, am I? This is life in a fallen world, anyhow. And then making matters worse, I quietly observe the world around us.

[13:25] Sometimes I watch the news. I read the reports of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who are suffering tremendously, oftentimes because of their faith and for no other reason.

I read the headlines coming out of our own nation. Rioters, looting, burning down cities in the name of so-called justice.

Meanwhile, the people we've entrusted to lead our country and our communities often turn a blind eye. In some cases, they applaud and they encourage the lawlessness.

And it breaks my heart to see it. Men pretending to be women. And women pretending to be men.

And where are the psychiatric professionals whose vocation it is to help people who struggle with mental or emotional disorders? Many of them are wagging their fingers at those of us who dare affirm biological reality.

[14:29] I can't buy a gallon of milk or a new shirt without walking into a store that is at least partially decorated with rainbows in blatant defiance of God and his promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Why do they display the rainbow? Well, without the faintest hint of irony, they are celebrating the kind of gross, unnatural sin which, according to Scripture, deserves a worldwide flood.

The media screams, follow the science, follow the science. That's something we've heard a lot recently, and I'd love to. Will you please tell me what the science says about the beginning of life?

When does life begin? According to many, the science isn't clear on that point. Then why? Why are we allowing, endorsing even, the slaughter of millions of children every year?

And I could go on, but I know you understand my point. We see it. And it tears us apart to see it. I long to be free from this world in its present condition.

[15:53] Don't you? I long to be free from tyranny, from corruption, from profanity, from violence, from persecution, from injustice, from materialism, from godlessness, and unthankfulness, and

suffering, and sorrow, and death.

I want to be free from all of it. And so I groan inwardly, anxiously, anticipating the day when God will bring a complete end to all of it. He will save us from it.

Not for a season, but for all eternity. Babylon will fall because God will judge the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality.

And the saints will shout, hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God. We will be free as we watch the smoke rise up from the harlot. As it goes up forever and ever.

In other words, we'll never forget from what God has saved us. A third reason the great multitude in heaven here praises God is for his glory and for his power.

[17:06] In the Hebrew mind, glory conveyed the idea that there is a weightiness to God. There's a weightiness to God. The matter of God and his person are no small things.

Sadly, however, those who have been seduced by Babylon. God is a small thing. He's not worth thinking about.

He's a light matter. We can neglect him. We can disregard him without any consequences. His power is irrelevant. If he has any power at all, that's the way Babylon thinks. The truth is, of course, there is coming a day when every knee will bow to God.

And every tongue will confess to him. The entire world will one day see his glory. And they will recognize his undeniable weightiness. And they will behold his power.

No one will miss it. And when that day comes, the saints will shout with joy, hallelujah. Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.

[18:15] Now, if you're still troubled at the thought of celebrating, if you will, praising God for the destruction of wickedness and consequently the wicked, turn your eyes to the God of our salvation.

See his glory. See his power. Aren't his judgments true and just? That's what we read here. Doesn't the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality deserve the fate she will receive? Hasn't God finally avenged on her the blood of his servants? You know, she was an unrelenting temptress with a mission to draw away the saints from God and when she could not entice them with sin, what did she do?

She simply killed them. She is killing them. But praise be to God. At this point in the timeline, God has rescued us from her.

She is no more. Just look, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever. Now, skipping down to verse six, the multitude in heaven cries out again. Hallelujah for the Lord, our God, the almighty reigns.

[19:31] And to be clear, there has never been a time when our God was not reigning as the almighty Lord. But this is a moment in particular when the entire world sees it.

Again, no one misses it. According to Psalm 2 today, the nations rage and the rulers may take counsel together against the Lord.

But when we reach this moment described in Revelation 19, even those nations and rulers who once worked against God and his people will be stopped.

They will be stopped. According to Psalm 2, he who sits in the heavens laughs at their vain attempts to plot against him. Again, the church shouts hallelujah for the Lord, our God, the almighty reigns.

Make no mistake. No one is higher. No one is more powerful than our God. The saints have waited so long for this moment.

[20:34] They have longed for this day. And they have finally reached the consummation of everything God has been doing from the beginning. For their good. Obviously for his glory, but for their good.

God began promising this day shortly after our fall into sin. He continued to prophesy it generation after generation. And then eventually, some 2,000 years ago, we saw the long-anticipated Messiah. He came to this earth. We watched his ministry. We heard his teachings. Then we witnessed his death and his resurrection.

Some of those first disciples stood there with their mouths hanging open as they watched him ascend into heaven once again. And then the wait continued. Even as early as the first century, some believers grew a bit nervous.

Where is Christ? Is he coming back? Have we missed his return? Peter addresses that in 2 Peter 3. Do not overlook this one fact, he writes.

[21 : 45] He goes on to write.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar. And the heavenly bodies will be burned and dissolved. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God?

I pray we have not lost sight of this day, the day of God, the return of Christ. Now I'll confess to you and I'll be the first to confess there are times when I feel very overwhelmed by the world around me. I'm burdened by the sin and the godlessness of popular culture. I'm worried about my children's future in a nation that may very well be experiencing the judgment of God as we speak.

[22 : 52] I don't know. I wonder sometimes how bad he'll allow things to get. And these thoughts can leave me feeling anxious and afraid and even sometimes angry.

And sometimes I have that impulse. I want to march through the streets and, you know, as they say, take the country back. I want to see some semblance of righteousness again.

And this is all on top of battling my own sin from day to day. But then I look to Christ. But then I look to Christ and he reminds me that, for starters, I won't be here that long.

My children won't be here that long. He even reminds me that I have good reason to feel a certain level of dissatisfaction in a fallen world that has rejected him.

I shouldn't be thrilled about that. He reminds me, perhaps most importantly, that he did not die in my place so that I could be satisfied in a fallen world.

[23 : 59] Christ has redeemed us for so much more. You and I, as believers, we don't hope for humanity to finally get its act together and engineer a utopia on earth where everything is right again.

That's not our hope. No, we hope for the coming of Christ who says, behold, I am making all things new. Emphasis on I as Christ speaks.

I am making all things new. Only Christ can accomplish that perfect world I'm sure most of us long for in the pit of our stomachs. Only Christ can bring an end to Babylon the harlot and all of her wicked influence in this world.

And the promise, of course, is that he will. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, as your children, we often feel the sense that we don't belong here.

We feel the tension between us and the world around us. We often feel a strong desire to escape. We can relate to your apostle who said, my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

[25 : 24] And while we want to remain here and faithfully serve you as long as your will and purpose ordains, Lord, we confess that we groan inwardly to see the last remnants of sin removed once and for all.

Lord, we seek your glory in seeing justice prevail over the whole earth. And until then, we are thankful for the promises we have in Scripture, that you will one day destroy Babylon.

We will be free from her tyranny. And you will be glorified as every knee bows to you. Lord, we thank you. And we say hallelujah in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. In closing, let's sing number 600 from the Trinity Hymnal. When this passing world is done, believers who are hidden in the Savior's side will find paradise waiting.

All glory be to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[26 : 35] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.