

Alleluia! • Revelation 19:1-6

INTRO • Read Rev. 19:1-6 • Set the Scene

1. We've spent **7 months** in our study in Revelation!
2. As we've been immersed in John's visions of judgment over the last several weeks, I'll bet most of us have forgotten **where** he was & **why** when he saw these things.
3. John was a prisoner on the island penal colony of **Patmos** off the coast of Asia Minor.
 - a. The Roman Emperor **Domitian** had called for an Empire-wide persecution of Christians.
 - c. He enforced a strict policy of **Caesar worship**; demanding everyone under the banner of Rome honor him as "Lord & God."
 - d. As one of the last of the Apostles & a leader of the Church, John was targeted by the authorities for arrest & torture.
 - e. The story goes they tried to execute him by putting him in a vat of boiling oil.
 - f. But God preserved him & when the officials realized the hand of divine favor was upon him
 - g. They got spooked & instead of killing him, they banished him to the prison Island of Patmos where at least his influence in the Church would be lost.
 - h. But it was there on Patmos, as John worked the rock of the prison quarry, God showed him the astounding visions of the end times that became the Book of Revelation.
 - i. So much for putting the kibosh on John's influence.
4. As we come to ch19 & the final section of Rev., John is shown something God's People have prayed for, for thousands of years.
6. John's **personally** waited for it ever since he **last saw** Jesus; when he stood on the Mt of Olives next to Jerusalem & watched Him ascend into heaven.
7. For it's here in ch19 John sees the **Second Coming**.
 - a. All heaven rejoices because evil has finally come to an end!
 - b. The devil's reign of terror is broken.
 - c. And the righteousness of God that fills heaven now fills Earth.

Two Thrones

1. As I often ask you to, try to put yourself in John's place as we read these words.
 2. Imagine what it would like to see & hear these things for the very 1st time!
- ⁴ And the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" ⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" ⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"
3. John's on a barren rock in the middle of the sea because some Roman punk wearing purple thinks **he's** omnipotent.
 - a. Domitian thinks **HE** reigns.
 - b. The throne in Rome thinks **it's** the center of the universe.
 4. John sees the **Real** Throne & **True** King.
 - a. The Real Throne is in Heaven.
 - b. The True King is Jesus.
 5. What was true then, is no less true today.
 - a. Washington isn't the seat of power; **Heaven is**.
 - b. The President & Congress don't rule.
 - c. The Supreme Court, **ISN'T** the **Supremest** Court.
 - d. God OVER-rules in the affairs of Earth.
 - e. **Jesus** is Lord; not some earthly-pretender, no matter how much he puffs out his chest.
 6. John needed to be reminded of that **& so do we**.
 - a. He needed to be reminded of it because of where he was & how he got there.
 - b. He needed to see & hear it because he'd just had several visions of the abominable reign of the satanically-empowered antichrist in the End Times.
 - c. Those visions could easily tempt him to despair.
 - d. But the visions didn't end w/evil-triumphant.

- e. They go on to Christ triumphing OVER satan & all his plans.
 - f. You & I live in the midst of a fallen world moving rapidly toward the day when the things John saw become daily news headlines.
 - g. While no one's being banished to an island for being a Christian **yet**,
 - h. Recent court cases **are** trending toward a growing hostility to the Gospel.
 - i. The rule of man can appear so powerful that we'd also be tempted to despair as we watch evil called good and good, evil.
7. So what John sees & hears in these vs is what **we** need to see & hear w/the eyes & ears of faith. "Alleluia!"
- 1. 4 times in these 6 vs the hosts of heaven singing "**Alleluia!**"
 - 2. Alleluia is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Hallelujah."
 - a. Which means "**Praise to Yah**"; the shortened form of God's name Yahweh = "I Am."
 - b. "The One Who was, is & will be."
 - c. The Eternally Present One.
 - d. Yahweh is the name God uses to comfort His people with the knowledge that
 - 1) Where they *are*, He *is*;
 - 2) & what they *need*, He *becomes*.
 - 3. "Alleluia" means "Praise to the Ever Present & Sufficient One!"
 - 4. Is God here, now? // Is He the source & supply of all we truly need?
 - 5. Our outward circumstances ought not determine whether or not we worship & praise God?
 - 6. Because no matter what our circumstances, **God is here & is the solution to our circumstances.**
 - 7. Look at v5

Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

- a. The praise of the heavenly host crying out "Alleluia!" **becomes a command.**
 - b. "**Praise** our God!" a voice from the throne calls.
 - 1) Don't just sit idly by to watch & listen as heaven rejoices.
 - 2) Join in! Because this is what you were created for!
8. I can just see John, dressed in his tattered & dirty prisoner's frock.
- a. His sandals little more than a ragged strip of leather.
 - b. His bald dome; what hair he has is gray & dirty.
 - c. The dust cakes the creases of his furrowed, sun-burned face
 - d. But on that face is a smile of joy lifted to the skies.
 - e. His calloused hands are raised.
 - f. His mouth is open as his chapped lips sing praises.
 - g. He gives Jesus what Domitian demanded but would never get from him: Worship!

Praise Is an Act of Faith

- 1. Friends: Praise is an act of faith.
- 2. It isn't reserved just for the good times of blessings.
- 3. We praise God even when circumstances are rough.
- 4. Think of the song *Blessed Be Your Name*.

Blessed Be Your Name - In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow - Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your name - When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness - Blessed Be Your name

Every blessing You pour out - I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord - Still I will say -
Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your name - When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's 'all as it should be' - Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name - On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering - Blessed be Your name

You give and take away - My heart will choose to say - Lord, blessed be Your name

4. That was written by **Matt Redman**.

a. In His book, *The Unquenchable Worshipper* he penned this ...

This world is full of fragile loves – love that abandons, love that fades, love that divorces, love that is self-seeking. But the **unquenchable worshipper** is different. From a heart so amazed by God and His wonders burns a love that will not be extinguished. It survives any situation and lives through any circumstance. It will not allow itself to be quenched, for that would heap insult on the love it lives in response to.

The Bible is full of unquenchable worshippers; people who refused to be dampened, discouraged, or distracted in their quest to glorify God. I love the heart attitude of the prophet Habakkuk, who decided he would choose to respond to God's worth, no matter how bleak a season he found himself in. He wrote -

Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail, & the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, & there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. [Hab 3:17-18]

5. Think of Paul & Silas in the Philippian jail.

a. Sitting in stocks, their backs bloody from the lash.

c. & all for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ

d. Instead of whining; demanding God explain Himself –

e. They sang His praises; confident it would somehow work for good.

6. Most of us don't have barren fig trees & haven't been beaten & put in jail for preaching Christ.

7. But the principle is the same for us as for Habakkuk & Paul.

8. We can always find a **reason** to praise.

9. Maybe not in our circumstances, but in God Himself Who never changes.

10. When **Fanny Crosby** was an infant, bad medical treatment left her blinded for life.

a. Despite this, she determined to trust in God.

b. When she was only 8, she wrote this song –

O what a happy soul I am! Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world - Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy, - That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, - I cannot & I won't.

11. Someone once asked her if she wished she wasn't blind.

12. Her reply was typical for her; "Well, the good thing about being blind is that the very first face I'll see will be the face of Jesus."

13. When circumstances deal a bad hand, many get bitter & complain.

a. Fanny chose contentment & praise.

b. She wrote 8,000 hymns to her loving God.

14. Two paths lie before us; Complaining bitterness or Contented praise.

15. Now, let's be clear. This doesn't mean we're all to paste on a fake smile and say everything's peachy.

a. No one ought to be a harder realist than the Christian.

b. A commitment to worship & praise God doesn't mean we ignore evil and suffering.

c. It means we don't allow it to **eclipse** the Glory of God.

d. It means we hold to the truth evil doesn't have the last word. God Does.

16. Hey: **70%** of the Psalms are **laments**!

a. They're songs of sorrow; a distressed cry to God.

b. But they never question God's worth or plan.

c. They're expression of hope in the midst of a fallen world.

17. If anyone had a reason to be discouraged & depressed it was John on Patmos.

a. If anyone had a reason to question God's plan, it was he.

- b. This vision reminded John above & beyond his circumstances is the overruling throne of God.
- c. The God who sits there is the same Who because of love, went to the Cross for us.

The Sacrifice of Praise

1. Heb 13:15 says

By Christ let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

2. A sacrifice *costs* us. It's something we regard as valuable.

- a. Praise in response to blessing is natural & easy.
- c. But praise in the midst of adversity ***is a sacrifice***.

3. Joni Eareckson Tada wrote -

A sacrifice of praise will always cost you something. It'll be a difficult thing to do. It requires trading in our pride, our anger, and most valued of all, our human logic. We will be compelled to voice our words of praise firmly and precisely, even as our logic screams that God has no idea what He's doing. Most of the vs written about praise in God's Word were penned by people who faced crushing heartaches, injustice, treachery, slander, and scores of other intolerable situations.

4. Joni knows what it means for praise to be a ***sacrifice*** to God.

- a. She became a quadriplegic as a bright, vibrant, & attractive teenager.
- b. She went thru years of anger at God, questioning His purpose & power.
- c. Today she understands God's ways are not our ways;
- d. & though her paralysis is difficult to bear, she praises God in the midst of it because of the thousands of doors it's opened for her to speak of God's love.
- e. Her wheelchair has carried her far more places her legs ever could.

5. There's an interesting thing I've discovered about a sacrifice.

- a. It's only difficult ***before*** you make it.
- b. It's the ***calculation*** you go thru that's hard because you think about ***what you'll lose***.
- c. But ***once you make it, it's all joy*** & an amazing sense of rightness & peace.
- d. I can honestly say, I've never regretted a single sacrifice I've given to the Lord.
- e. But coming ***to*** the place of sacrifice has often been a struggle.

6. And so it is with the sacrifice of praise.

- a. There are times I don't ***want*** to praise
- b. Things aren't going as I want & I'm upset.
- c. Then I'm remember: God isn't ***advanced*** by my praise.
 - 1) He's no Tinkerbell whose glory shines brighter when I clap faster.
 - 2) God doesn't need my praise.
- d. Praise benefits ***me!***
 - 1) Don't get me wrong: We don't praise God for selfish reasons.
 - 2) We praise Him because He's worthy & that's what we're created for.
 - 3) When we do what we're created for, life works!

Hitting the Mark

1. Most people live their entire lives trying to maximize their happiness & minimizing grief.

2. What they don't realize is if they ***aim*** at happiness, they'll never attain it.

3. Happiness simply isn't our goal. ***God is***.

4. Happiness is the fruit of pursuing Him.

5. In worship & praise we lift our eyes & hearts off the things this world tries to distract us with & we set them ***back*** on God.

6. And when we see Him, everything else falls into place once again.