

There is one word, which is pretty much pronounced the same, no matter what language you speak, or what nation you come from. It's actually a Hebrew word, and it's a compound word (which means "it's 2 words joined together"). And rather than translate the word, we transliterate it – that means we spell it out in our alphabet, the way it sounds in the Hebrew...

Is anyone game enough to have a guess at what word I'm talking about???

What about if I put the Bible reading up? Now can you guess what the word is now???

Hallelujah!...

It actually means YHWH be praised. Hallelujah!!!!

Righto, would anyone like to have a guess at how many times the word Hallelujah appears in the New Testament (we know it well)? I'll give you multiple choice – 4; 24; 124; or 324... So, let's have a show of hands...

- 4
- 24
- 124
- 324

It's 4 times. The word Hallelujah, which we know so very well, appears in our New Testament, a total of 4 times. And all 4 of them, are in the first 6 verses of Revelation 19. In the Old Testament, it's used about 20 times in the Psalms, but only if you read the Septuagint (Greek translation) Otherwise, most English translations translate it as "Praise the Lord"...

Alright, so if you want to sound really religious, or if you don't mind being branded as "One of those 'Jesus Freaks'", don't be afraid to shout occasionally "Hallelujah", which means "Praise God".

So, we're going to now read, Revelation ch19. And all the people said::: Hallelujah!!!

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,
² 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."

³ Once more they cried out,
"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying,
"Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,

small and great."

⁶ 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.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the
saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. **He** will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had

received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Well, we're really at the business end of the Book of Revelation now. This week (in ch19) and next week (in ch20), we're going to be getting 2 different views of the final battle – a battle in which the nations – the high and mighty kings of the earth, will directly oppose Christ in war...

Now, when the kings of **Earth** oppose the King of **Kings** and Lord of **Lords** – when human and demonic armies oppose the armies of God, who do you suppose is going to come off second-best??? Well, it's a foregone conclusion, isn't it? – God's going to win....

And so today in ch19, we have a picture of Jesus Christ victorious, and those who are with Christ, are invited to the wedding feast. This, is looking forwards to the final things, where Jesus Christ returns, the wicked are judged, and Jesus is united with His disciples in eternal glory.

Chapter 19 begins, with a great Hallelujah chorus. God is praised, "Hallelujah!!", but why is God being praised? God is being praised, because Babylon is fallen. (That's what we learned about, last week and the week before (ch17&18).) Godless civilisation – that civilisation, against God, and

against God's children, is fallen – it is not more... That society that grew so wealthy, and lived in such luxury, and yet was so unjust, is fallen. That society, that persecuted God's children, is fallen. And so, the disciples of Jesus are going to rightly rejoice: "Hallelujah!"

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
God is going to save His children and He will bring glory to Himself, because in His power, He will destroy, that Godless civilisation, that has been persecuting His children for so long. Antichrist is the one who is actually going to do it, but it is God who wills it, and God who brings it about. "Hallelujah!"

But the Hallelujah chorus continues to flow, even **after** it stops talking about the fall of Babylon. By the time we get to v6 & 7, we're shouting "Hallelujah!" for a different reason. There's a wedding on – what a time of joy!!!! We love weddings, and **this** is the wedding of the year – it's the wedding of the century – it's the wedding of eternity...
the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

I do hope that the blokey blokes amongst us can graciously and joyously accept this metaphor – that we are going to be a bride... Is that OK??? –that's not too 'girly' for us?

The image is of the church, is the bride of Christ.

...

In just under a month, it will be 25 years, since I stood at the front of a church, and looked down the aisle, wishing that the Bridesmaids would forget their rehearsed slow, gliding steps,

and hurry up and skip down the aisle, so that I could lay eyes on my bride... But, they did exactly what they were supposed to do, and took their time (swishing their way slowly down the aisle)... But then finally she did appear. (At that point, was she my bride, or my fiancé?) I think she was my bride, because this was her / our wedding day. And so my bride appeared, in all of her radiant beauty.

Now, what those women did to themselves, to prepare for the wedding, is totally beyond me.

As far as I was concerned, all I had to do (all anyone had to do), was have a shower and a shave, and then get dressed and drive to the church... But what were the women doing all day? I have no idea. To us men, it's a total mystery. I have trouble getting Robyn to get out of bed to have breakfast in the morning, and yet apparently, early in the morning, she sprang out of bed, and she's off to participate in all sorts of mysterious rituals, that would ensure that, on this day of her wedding, she would look more beautiful than any other day of her life...

The bride, makes herself ready for the groom. The preparations begin **months** in advance. And this is the image of the church, being made ready, to be presented to Christ... The image, is of the bride, being clothed in **fine linen, bright and pure"**

Alright, it's an image of purity – it's an image of holiness and righteousness..

And the Angel said to John: **Write this:** (That means this is really important, OK) Write it down: **"Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."**

This is important:

Have you received an invitation to Jesus' wedding? Are you going to be presented (along with the rest of the Church) to Jesus, to spend eternity in loving relationship with Christ???

Have you received an invitation?

Many are called, but few are chosen.

Jesus told a parable once about a King who gave a wedding feast for his son, and he sent out all of these invitations, but nobody would come – what an insult... How rude, to decline an invitation to a wedding – a royal wedding at that. What's that saying about the person who's invited you? It tells them that you don't want to have anything to do with them. A wedding, is a once-in-a-lifetime celebration, that you would juggle your calendar, and make every effort, to ensure that you would be there... But these people said "Nup. We're not coming."

And again and again, the king sent out his servants, to **beg** people to come in to the wedding.... Some ignored them; Some went about their business; Some abused the servants who were delivering the invitation, and some killed them...

And so the King destroyed those who had murdered his servants, and the invitation was sent out further afield...

Matthew 22:11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

What's the point of this parable? Let me start at the beginning:

None of us **deserve** to be saved. None of us **deserve** to be presented to Christ as His bride... None of us **deserve** to be a part of what makes up His church... That's what grace is about... The free gift of God, is that even though I **don't** deserve it, and even though **you** don't deserve it, Jesus died, so that **all** those who believe in Him, will have their sins washed away, and they will be pure and holy... We get a new chance at life – we get a new chance of **eternal** life...

Those who reject God's invitation in this life, of course, well they're doomed – they don't get forgiveness; They don't get eternal life; All they get, is judgment...

Now, at this point, I want to make something **very** clear: Many atheists, with venom in their words, hate God, and hate the gospel, because they misunderstand the gospel, and they misunderstand Judgment... And they say, "Are you going to

tell me, “God is going to judge me, just because I don’t believe in Him?””

And the answer to that is “No.” The answer is: “You **won’t** be judged for just ‘not believing in God’ – you will be judged for your sin.” God is a righteous God, and because He is righteous, He cannot let sin and wrongdoing, go unpunished...

But God is also a loving God. God is also a merciful God. God is also a forgiving God, and a saving God... And so God gave of Himself. Jesus Christ – His one and only Son – the **only** righteous man – the **only** sinless man, to ever live, took the judgment that we deserved... The only one who didn’t deserve judgment, took the judgment of many.

And then He invites us to believe in Him. He invites us to trust in Him. He invites us to follow Him. And those who repent of their unbelief; Those who repent of their sin and their wrongdoing, are forgiven – **they** won’t be judged.

Alright, are you seeing the importance of this? We **all** deserve to be judged. And we are **all** offered this gift of God. And when we let go of our pride; when we let go of our unbelief; When we give our hearts to God, to love God, and to trust Him,,,, then the judgment which we **already** justly deserve, is stripped away, nailed to the cross...

If we have a desire to be united with Christ, in all that this entails, united to Christ we will be...

That’s the beginning...

But there’s something that we’ve been learning about the Christian life, as we’ve been reading this book of

Revelation... And that is the place of ongoing repentance, obedience, and faithfulness... A good example, can be found in the letter to the church in Sardis (ch3), where there was only a **few** who had **not** soiled their garments... And those who had **not** soiled their garments, would walk with Jesus Christ in white, because they were worthy...

But, what of the others? (remember, Jesus is talking to a church here, and only a **few** of them had not soiled their garments). What of the others???? They hadn't been faithful; They hadn't been obedient; They hadn't been holy... What of them?

Well, all was not lost. Jesus gave them an opportunity to get right with Him again: **Repent**. Get right with Jesus again, and follow Jesus again (only this time, do it with your whole heart). Live in faithfulness and obedience – that's the way to be pure and holy, and ready for the coming of the Day of the Lord...

When Jesus returns, there are going to be **two** suppers on that day... The supper of the marriage of The Lamb, where those who are faithful to Jesus, will be invited as the dinner guests...

And then there is another supper, and to hear about this supper, I have to talk about something a lot of people **never** want to hear about: While the faithful disciples of Jesus, are invited to the wedding supper, as the dinner guests... , the invitation to the other supper, is an invitation to the birds. At the **wedding** supper, you are the guest. At the **other** supper, you are the meal...

A couple of weeks ago, Roy and I drove to Dirranbandi for the Bush Disciples evening service, and man-o-man, there were some roos. It was still daylight, and there were roos everywhere. The grass was over a metre high on the side of the road (only grass around), and so we had trouble seeing them.

*And of course, there were carcasses on the road, and the birds were feeding away (the crows and the wedge-tailed eagles). And of course we couldn't see the carcasses on the **side** of the road, because the grass was too tall, but every now and then, a whole murder of crows would fly up out of the grass – they'd been feeding on a carcass that we couldn't see...*

And I couldn't help but remembering this, when I read today's reading... On the day that Jesus returns, the birds will be invited to dine on those who are not at the marriage supper of the lamb.

How we respond to Jesus' invitation that we receive in this life, has **enormous** ramifications for how it ends for us. Our relationship with Jesus in this life, has enormous ramifications for the day that He returns, and for our whole eternity.

Today:

- Jesus invites us, to come to Him.
- He invites us to repent of our sin,
- He invites us to leave our sin at the foot of the cross
- He invites us to receive forgiveness that we don't deserve
- And He invites us to follow Him as Lord.

How we respond to this invitation, will determine whether we will be invited to the **wedding** supper, or whether we will **be** the supper (for the birds).

It's not very fashionable (or acceptable) today, to believe what the Bible has to say about judgment. Or if you **do** believe it, it's certainly not very nice to preach it, or to insist that this is a Gospel truth. It's seen as some kind of ancient Victorian way of scaring people into the faith (and we would never want to do that)... But as a preacher of God's word, to be faithful to His calling – to be faithful to His word, today, this is what I must preach.

When Jesus returns, **in righteousness he judges and makes war**. When Jesus came the first time, the Jews were expecting their Messiah to come and make war on the enemies of God... And really, all the Jews had wrong, was the timing (and their concept of “Who the enemies of God were”. At His first coming, the Messiah came to save, and to give Himself as a ransom for many,,. But the second coming of Jesus, is when the Messiah will complete the salvation for those who are waiting for Him, and He'll do this by making war on His enemies.

So far, in the book of Revelation, we've been hearing a lot about how Jesus' disciples will be tempted:

- They will be persecuted;
- They will be tormented;
- They will be imprisoned, and starved;
- They will be slandered;
- And beaten;
- And beheaded...

But through all of this, we are **not** to retaliate, because when the time has come, **Jesus** will step in, and complete His salvation, by making war on His enemies, and dealing with Satan and evil, once and for all.

V¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. **He** (Jesus) will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

I don't need to explain this, do I? You get the picture...

And there will be no station in life, that is too lofty, or too lowly, to escape the judgment of God. From the greatness of kings and captains and the mighty, to the lowliness of a slave – Anyone who has rejected Jesus, will become a carcass for the birds to gorge themselves on. This, is the Gospel Truth.

This is an image of the final stand against God, and the Lord's victory. Antichrist and the false prophet will be **thrown alive** into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse (Jesus), and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Isn't the contrast incredible? The joy of the invitation to the supper of the wedding of the Lamb, held against the carnage of the supper of the birds... But I want you to understand, "I

just called it the supper of the birds”. God in **His** word calls it “¹⁷... **the great supper of God**”...

You know, so often, modern preachers attempt to distance God, from the concept and event of judgment... But God doesn't distance Himself from it. God is every bit as much involved and glorified in the judgment of the **faithless**, as what He is in the reward of the **faithful**... You know, a lot of people cannot accept this, but that doesn't stop it from being true.

For thousands of years, the servants of God have been inviting the peoples of the world, to come to faith in Jesus Christ... And the majority of them, have rejected that invitation. They've been invited (over and over again). And yet:

- they reject Christ;
- they reject His grace;
- they reject His mercy;
- they reject His costly sacrifice;
- and they choose to go it alone.

They have every confidence that they'll be OK, but they won't be OK.

So today, I'm asking you to search yourself: At this point, which supper are you heading towards? Are you heading towards a supper where you will be presented, pure and holy, as a bride to Christ, to dine as a guest at His wedding supper? - to be with Christ, in His glorious eternity...

Or are you heading toward the supper where you're going to be the meal?

Which is it? What are you heading towards, at this moment?

This isn't a decision to be put off. This event, will happen just like that (snap), when Jesus returns. When Jesus returns, there isn't going to be any time, for us to revise our decision – there won't be any time to launder our clothes; There won't be any time to act on those regrets; or to revise our response to the invitation to faith...

That decision has to be made now.

When Jesus returns, He's coming for a pure bride.