

Lesson # 37 The Seventh Trumpet Revelation 11: 15-19

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Revelation 11:15-19 (ESV)

¹⁵Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
 who is and who was,
 for you have taken your great power
 and begun to reign.
¹⁸The nations raged,
 but your wrath came,
 and the time for the dead to be judged,
 and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
 and those who fear your name,
 both small and great,
 and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

¹⁹Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. ①

I. The Kingdom is Won

v. 15

As the 7th trumpet is blown, what follows almost seems to be describing the end of the conflict and of the physical judgments. However, this cannot be because there are still 7 Bowl judgments to follow and only then the return of Jesus Christ occurs when He sets up His Kingdom. So why is this statement made here?

Alva McClain comments, "This is the *dejure*ⁱ announcement of what in a short time will be made *defacto*ⁱⁱ. It is only a sovereign God who can speak like this: for He 'calls those things which be not as though they were' (Rom. 4:17). And it is an impressive exhibition of divine grace and sovereignty that the announcement is made at the precise moment when the Beast reaches the height of his power on earth, with all opposition crushed (Rev. 12⁷; 13:4-8)."ⁱⁱⁱ

The point being stressed here is that God has taken back to Himself the great power which is His by right. In Rev. 10:6, the angel declared that there would be "no more delay", and now this is made reality. This judicial act signified by the 7th Trumpet sounding will have continuous results leading up to a certified and

incontrovertible end. God will exercise supernatural power & judgments and will not be appreciably opposed until the determined end of all things.

Some literary proof of a change having taken place here is found when we compare Rev. 1:4,8; 4:8 and 11:17. Note what is missing in 11:17? The words, “and is to come” are not there. But also note how it has morphed – “for You have taken Your great power & begun to reign.” The clause “and is to come” is also missing in Rev. 16:5. Why is that significant?

Remember, the 7th Seal was broken and the 7th Trumpet has blown. The remainder of the events leading up to the eternal state is now exposed on the opened scroll and in anticipation of when the actions of the 7th Trumpet have run their course, a settled reality, the battle is all but over. This is almost a parallel to the cry from the cross, “It is finished!” Satan was defeated there, but has still enjoyed the ability to wage war until this future time arrives.

A similar literary device – called “prolepticism^{iv}” – is used by Paul in Rom. 8:29-30, when he speaks of the elect as having already been glorified. The glorification of the predestined, called & justified is such a certainty that it can be spoken of as having already occurred. That is similar in concept to what we have here in Rev. 11:15 in relation to God’s sovereign control and coming Kingdom – it cannot fail to arrive, so it is spoken of as if it has already arrived.

Obviously, at this point in John’s narrative, the Mediatorial Kingdom (the Millennium) has not yet arrived physically on earth because that would contradict the rest of the book of Revelation, but the judgments are in full swing leading up to this decreed end, and it is impossible that what is decreed will not come to pass. (Isa. 43:13; 46:10, etc.)

II. The Worship in Heaven

vv. 16-18

As a result of the announcement made by the loud voices in heaven, our attention is now returned to a group not heard from since Rev. 7:13-14 – the 24 Elders. Their reaction is to fall on their faces before God and to worship Him.

Their words of praise are words of thanksgiving to “Lord God Almighty”, a title used here and 6 other times in Revelation, and this speaks of His unchallenged sovereignty which is being demonstrated in the judgments so far which have taken place under His direct rulership. As was already mentioned, He is the One “who is and who was”, not the One “who is to come”, because that moment called for has arrived - it is at the door. The original phrase has been replaced by “for You have taken Your great power and begun to reign.” Back in v. 15, “He shall reign forever and ever”, so it is not as if something has been removed from God.

He has allowed the anti-Christian people, sentiments, evil & rebellion to seemingly control world history right up until near this point in the Tribulation,

but now asserts His great power and tightens His grip on what He will allow as opposition to His purpose - & the soon to begin bowl judgments will bear this out. This reign is not the church age following AD 70 as one post-millennial writer comments^v from his Dominion Theology position.

The elders (v. 18) now ‘sing’ or ‘say’ praises regarding God’s actions and the response of the nations. The nations are enraged, wickedly so, while God operates in His wrath. The holy outpouring of His wrath easily overcomes the anger of the world and there is no danger of God being overwhelmed or caught by surprise by any schemes that man can come up with, even if they are Satanically inspired. Notice Psalm 2.

The heavenly praise mentions “the time for the dead to be judged”, but this is not just referring to the Great White Throne, which is likely what is in sight at v. 18. It also talks about “rewarding your servants (lit. slaves), the prophets & saints and those who fear Your Name, both small and great.” It is the judgment of the righteous in sight here – possibly the Sheep & Goats judgment at the end of the Tribulation, for rewards as a result of faithful service. Although this appears to be 3 groups – slaves, prophets and saints – best scholarship says it is two. “Your slaves the prophets” and “the saints”. Prophets are distinguished from the saints in that they had a very specific role for which they had been gifted and prepared. These could be either OT or NT prophets.

Both the small & the great refers to the lowest humble persons to the greatest, such as kings – all will receive the same consideration from Christ, their faithfulness, not their station in life being the determining factor in their rewards in heaven. Note Rev. 22:12; I Cor. 3:8; Matt. 5:12; Col. 3:24; II JN 8, and the promise of Crowns – II Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; I Pet. 5:4. The saints are “those who fear your name.” ③

The end of the verse depicts the judgment and destruction of all who have and who are destroying the earth by their sin. This is not related to ecology either. Evil, long dominant since the fall will reach its’ apex in the Tribulation, virtually crushing the good and righteous along the way – but it will all catch up to them – God will judge and it will be final, with no appeals. Note Isaiah’s take on this in **Isa. 24:17-23; 26:20-21; 30:27-33**.

III. God’s Heavenly Temple Opened

v. 19

Once the praise of the 24 Elders has come to a close, the next thing that occurs, seemingly in response to this praise an the reasons for the praise is that God’s Temple in heaven is opened and the Ark of the Covenant is seen in His temple.

This ark is not likely the one from the earthly tabernacle & Solomon’s Temple. That ark was made according to the pattern of this ark in heaven as was the entire Tabernacle & Temple – cf. Ex. 25:8-9,40. The Ark of the Covenant was the

first article made for the Tabernacle & its manufacture is described in Ex. 37:1-9 & 25:10-22.

The ark was an extremely important piece of furniture in the tabernacle & Temple, mainly because, above it rested the Shekinah Glory of God's presence once it was housed within the Holy of Holies. It was an integral part of the Day of Atonement ceremonies once a year as the High Priest alone entered the Holy of Holies on that day to sprinkle the blood of a goat and of a bull on the Mercy Seat (the propitiation) which formed the lid of the ark. Captured once by the Philistines (I Sam. 4) it caused great grief and plagues in their midst.

Transported incorrectly at David's order, it became the cause of the death of Uzzah (II Sam. 6) who touched it to keep it from falling off a cart, but in doing so, he offended God's holiness and was struck dead on the spot.

Inside the ark were the following items:

- the 2 tables of the Ten Commandments (2nd set)
- a golden pot containing some of the manna
- Aaron's rod that budded

There is also a great typical importance in the ark because in many ways it foreshadowed Christ – which we won't take the time to go into now – but I highly recommend A.W. Pink's book entitled, "Gleanings in Exodus" if you are interested in this aspect of the ark. No one explains types better than A.W. Pink.

The ark was moved about in the wilderness by a special sect of priests called the Kohathites until the Temple was built. It was always covered and never seen by anyone but the High Priest and then only 1 day a year within the Holy of Holies, and it was mostly hidden by the smoke of incense on that day – cf. Lev. 16. ④

Once God's glory had left the Temple and the ark in Ezek. 10, it never returns as far as we know from the Biblical record to the Temple again. The ark is not heard about again after Ezek. 10:4 (and here only by inference) until the heavenly one is mentioned here in Revelation 11. It may have been captured along with the other Temple treasures in II Chron. 36:17-18 and carried off to Babylon when the Temple was razed by Nebuchadnezzar. Others believe it was hidden in a cave somewhere or under the Temple somehow by Jeremiah when it became obvious that the Temple was going to be ransacked. Others think that Shishak, King of Egypt captured it in I Kings 14:26.

Interestingly, the ark apparently never sat in Zerubabbel's Temple or the restored version of it by Herod, which was the Temple extant when Jesus was on earth. Even the description of the Millennial Temple in Ezek. 40-48 talks about God's glory filling the Temple but no ark is mentioned. Of course, since the ark is a type of Jesus Christ, and He'll be there in person during the Millennium, there would be no need for an ark to represent Him.

Whether there will be an ark in the 3rd Temple (the one to be built so it stands for Antichrist to defile it) is a matter of conjecture. There is no biblical evidence of it, although the groups preparing to furnish and rebuild the Temple plan to

find it (or perhaps have secretly found it) or build a replacement based on Exodus' details. One cryptic clue about the ark could be available to us – **II Thess. 2:4** – in the Temple pattern there is no seat, except the Mercy Seat and no priest would dare sit there, yet the Antichrist “sits” in the Temple as he claims to be God. It could be that the seat he usurps is the Mercy Seat of a new or re-discovered Ark of the Covenant.

The appearance of this ark in heaven would have been encouraging to the seven churches and especially Jewish converts who understood the significance of the ark – this would be seen as a sign that all things were ready to be put back in order.

This vision is followed by a description of lightning, rumblings, thunder, and earthquake and heavy hail – judgment is in full swing. A decisive crisis has arrived indeed and there will be no escape except for the elect.

Next lesson – Lesson # 38 The Woman, the Dragon & the Child – Rev. 12: 1-6

ⁱ “dejure” def – by right, according to law

ⁱⁱ “defacto” def. – actually existing

ⁱⁱⁱ Alva J. McClain; *The Greatness of the Kingdom*; BMH Books; 1980; pp. 473-474

^{iv} “prolepticism”, or prolepsis, or proleptic – def. the assigning of a person, event, etc. to a period earlier than the actual one; a representation of something in the future as if it had already existed or occurred.

^v David Chilton; *Days of Vengeance*; Dominion Press, 1987, pp. 280-293