

## Series Revelation

### This Message #18 Revelation 11:15-19

The verses we will focus on today describe the point in time in which “the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of God.” This is the point in time that the followers of God have longed for, prayed for, and anticipated. It is the time when God will engage in three important activities: judging the dead, rewarding the servants of God, and destroying evildoers. Today we will be thinking about a most significant occasion!

Before we get into these new verses, let’s review some of the important information we have previously thought about. We need to remember that the book of Revelation is focused on Jesus Christ, and that the book is a description of the rule and authority of God over creation. The central theme is “The Victory of Jesus Christ and His Church Over Satan and the World.” (*See Revelation 17:14.*) The book of Revelation is not only the climax of the Bible, but it describes the climax of human history.

The information in this book was originally given to the Apostle John in a series of visions. John was commanded to write what he saw and to make the writing available to the Church, not just the churches of his era, but to the Church of every age since the First Century.

Some people think of the book of Revelation as a theatrical production which is divided into several different scenes. Most of these scenes give a “big-picture” view of God’s sovereign and supernatural activity toward the earth and the people who dwell on it. Other scenes seem to have a tighter focus. They describe activities immediately before the climax of the drama.

Each section of the book looks at the interval between Pentecost and the Second coming of Jesus from a different perspective. Sometimes events are described from the perspective of people on earth, while at other times John saw the same events from the perspective of heaven. Each scene reveals the Lord Jesus Christ in some significant way as the program of God the Father is brought to its conclusion.

John saw the visions consecutively, one after the other, and this is the way he wrote about them, but we must not assume that the realities symbolized by the visions are consecutive. There are elements in each scene which occur simultaneously and run parallel to each other. What is obvious in the structure of the book is that all the big-picture scenes come to their conclusion at the same climatic moment.

Study the handout carefully. Scene 1 of the drama describes the risen Lord Jesus among seven of the church fellowships which existed in the time of John. Jesus encouraged the believers to be faithful to Him, and to persevere through the many hardships they would face for His sake. He wanted them to be “overcomers” of evil influences. Jesus also reprimanded believers for their improper attitudes and behaviors. These individual fellowships represented the characteristics of church fellowships throughout the Church age, from Pentecost until the end of the age.

In scene 2, John saw a panorama of heaven with the Father seated on His throne. John saw a scroll in the hand of the Father, which symbolized the history of humanity. Finally, John saw the Lamb who had been slain, who alone was worthy to take the scroll from the hand of the Father. John then watched as the Lamb opened the scroll section by section, revealing an earthly history of violence and suffering. The Lamb is portrayed as the sovereign “controller” of history, the One who limits both the impact of evil and preserves the redeemed people of God. The seven seals describe what God allows to happen in the world.

The next scene describes the trumpet judgments. In the Old Testament, trumpets were used to warn people of approaching danger. In the same way, the trumpet judgments are God’s method to alert people that their opportunity for repentance was about to end. The structure of the writing does not imply that the blowing of the trumpets follows the opening of the seals in some sort of time sequence. There is some overlap and duplication.

Trumpets 1 through 4 demonstrate God’s power over the earth, the physical world that is inhabited by wicked people. Trumpets 5 and 6 are a demonstration of the power of evil over those people. God, in a last-minute, merciful effort to get wicked people to turn to Him, allows them to experience the power of evil in order that they might repent and call out to Him. Trumpets 5 and 6 represent God’s final warning before judgment.

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, there will be no more opportunity for repentance. In chapter 10, verse 7, John heard a mighty angel say, “In the days when the seventh angel is about the sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished.” At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, time will be no more. The visible rule of Jesus will begin.

Our reading concerns this seventh and last trumpet call and the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

### **Read Revelation 11:14-19**

Jesus and the apostle Paul both mentioned a trumpet in connection with the end of the age. When Jesus taught His disciples, He described what would happen to His followers after a period of great distress. He said, “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (*Matthew 24:29-31*).

In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote, “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead (believers) will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (*I Corinthians 15:51-52*).

In his letter to the Thessalonian Church, Paul wrote, “The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise” (*I Thessalonians 4:16*).

According to the words of John, with the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, “The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.” From the standpoint of heaven, this will be the moment when the rebellious and hostile powers of evil are brought to an end, and the all-encompassing authority of the Lord and His Christ will take over completely. Of course, God has always been in sovereign control of earthly events, but He has had to work around and through the influences of evil since the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Verse 15 indicates that the influence of evil will be completely eradicated, and that there will no longer be any opposition to the authority of God. Verse 15 represents the event to which all Scripture is pointed.

The last phrase in verse 15 states that the reign of God will be eternal. There will never again be an evil being who will usurp God’s authority and rule, nor wicked followers to challenge Him. God’s kingdom will be forever and ever.

*[FYI, The Hallelujah Chorus of the oratorio The Messiah is based on verse 15.]*

In verse 16 we read again about the 24 Elders. These are heavenly beings who continually praise and worship God. Back in chapter 4, they celebrated and praised God for His work in creating and sustaining the physical universe. In chapter 5 they honored the Lamb for His act of redemption, the spiritual re-creation of the human race. Here in chapter 11, in verses 17 and 18, we learn more reasons for their praises.

The overarching reason for their praise is that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.” What is significant in the following statements of the Elders is the sequence of the verbs. The verbs are all in the tense (aorist, perfect) which indicate actions which are irrevocable. “The kingdom of the world **has become** the kingdom of our Lord,” “You **have taken** your great power,” “You **have begun** to reign,” “your wrath **has come**,” “the time **has come** for judging and rewarding and destroying.” In verse 19 “God’s temple **was opened**.” All of these statements indicate finality and irreversibility. With God in complete control, there is no possibility of going back to a previous state. From this point on, God’s reign will be eternal.

Did you notice the three things that God was going to do? First, the elders said it was time for the Lord God Almighty to “judge the dead.” The “dead” refers to all people throughout all human history. The coming of the Kingdom will concern not only those who will be living on the last day, it will concern the entire human race. Everyone will be raised and be subject to judgment to determine who will enter God’s eternal kingdom and who will be excluded.

The elders also announced that it was time for the servants of God to be rewarded and for those who were guilty of destroying the earth to be destroyed.

The servants include both prophets and saints and those who reverence God’s name. In many places in Scripture the word “saints” is translated “holy ones.” This is the common New Testament designation for believers as the redeemed people of God. The word means that they are set apart from the world through their faith in Jesus.

The phrase, “Those who reverence your name” is literally “those who fear your name.” This phrase was a common Old Testament designation for the Israelites. They were the “set-apart,” chosen people of God. The description of “small and great” indicates that all of God’s people will stand before Him in order to be evaluated and rewarded for their activities during their earthly lives.

The phrase “for destroying those who destroy the earth” is a play on words. In the Greek language, the word for “destroy” can mean “to destroy completely” as well as “to corrupt morally.” The phrase states that God will condemn to eternal judgment those who were guilty of moral corruption and depravity. He will destroy the destroyers of holiness.

I want to call your attention to one more point of interest: The description of the “Lord God Almighty” in this passage is “the One who is and who was.” Previous occurrences of this description refer to the One “who is, who was, and who is to come” (*see 1:4; 1:8; and 4:8*). The description has to be stated differently in this passage (verse 17) because there is no more time “to come.” There is no more future because “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and his eternal reign has begun.”

The last verse in the passage describes the opening of God's temple in heaven. Back in chapters 4 and 5 John saw the Father sitting on His throne surrounded by the multitudes of heavenly creatures. In chapters 8 and 9 John heard prayers and voices coming from the golden altar which was before the throne. In this passage in chapter 11, we are looking into the deepest recesses of the temple, into the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was located.

From the human standpoint, it is impossible to adequately appreciate the significance of this exposure of the ark. In the Old Testament the ark symbolized God's presence among His people (*Exodus 25:22*) and His covenant promises to them. God wanted to be as close to His people as possible, but He had to hide Himself from them because of their sins. The High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and approach the ark just one time each year on the Day of Atonement. He was required to sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal on the ark to atone for the sins of the people.

The covering of the ark was called the "mercyseat" (*Exodus 25:21-22*). This covering represented the "throne" of God. For the Israelites, it was a throne of mercy and grace inasmuch as God was willing to dwell among them in spite of their sinful activities and rebellious attitudes.

Throughout the Old Testament era, up until the death of Jesus on the cross, the ark was hidden from the sight of people, including the priests. A thick curtain separated the two rooms of the tabernacle. At the moment of Jesus' death on the cross, this curtain was supernaturally torn from top to bottom, signifying that all men had access to God (*Matthew 27:51*). However, this access is available to believers only through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

The point of verse 19 is that finally, at the end of the age, every human will be able to see God's true temple in heaven, see past the veil into the Holy of Holies, and to see the ark of God's covenant. For believers, this will be the culmination of their faith in God's gracious and merciful promises. For unbelievers, it will represent judgment because they had not accepted and acted on God's promises.

Important themes of the Bible come together in the verses we have been thinking about. When the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds, it will be the time “for judging the dead, giving rewards to those who reverence the name of God, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” From the perspective of humanity, this is the beginning of the eternal reign of God. However, we need to keep in mind that this last part of chapter 11 is from the perspective of heaven, and that there are yet many details of the “judging,” “rewarding,” and “destroying” to be described in the remaining chapters.