

The Seventh Trumpet

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Revelation 11:15-19

We now come to the pinnacle of our worship service where we have an opportunity to look into the Word of God. And I would encourage you to take your Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter 11. We have now made our way to verse 15 and this morning we will examine verses 15 through 19. Let me read this text to you concerning the seventh trumpet, Revelation 11 verse 15.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.¹

The Lord has taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is on heaven."² And, beloved, now at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which will contain the seven bowl judgments of the wrath of God, we see the final pre-kingdom judgments set into motion. The end is now in sight.

This is the final development of Daniel's 70th week, and here we witness the tearful sigh of relief not only from the martyred saints who have been crying out to the Lord, "How long?", but also the collective sigh of every saint down through redemptive history who has lived in anticipation of frankly two things: one, the consummation of all things when God comes to judge the world, to judge unbelievers and all who have mocked him and, secondly, in anticipation of the coronation of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, as Christ our King who has the title deed comes to the earth to destroy the usurper Satan and take back all of creation which is rightfully his.

At the zenith of the satanic beast's world power—referring to the antichrist—with the world indulging in the most vile wickedness imaginable, we see the final seven plagues of God's wrath being poured out. In fact, in Revelation 15 verse one we read, "Seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished."³

¹ Revelation 11:15-19.

² Matthew 6:10.

³ Revelation 15:1.

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Now, understand. While the interlude that follows the sixth trumpet ends now at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the actual events of the bowl judgments are disclosed to us later on in chapters 15 and 16. And the Lord provides for us, therefore some fascinating background information in chapters 12 through 14 that we will begin to look at next week, which is a digression, a digression that takes us all the way back through the tribulation, a digression that reveals to us some extensive information about Satan, about the career of the antichrist, about the false prophet and God's special dealings with Israel and the wickedness that will ultimately fill the earth and finally ignite the wrath of God.

So before us this morning, dear friends, we have another captivating passage of Scripture that I hope will ignite our hearts with celebration as we are reminded afresh of that day that is coming when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

I have divided this passage of Scripture into four sections that I hope will help us understand them. We will see, first, the triumphant proclamation; secondly, the terminal punishment; thirdly, the treasured prize and, finally, the transcended promise. As we examine these together I trust you will do so with an attitude of humility and worship that will translate into service for our coming King.

First, let's look at *the triumphant proclamation* that we see in verse 15. Again, there we read, "Then the seventh angel sounded; 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 will reign forever and ever.'"⁴

Now you will recall in chapter eight and verse one at the opening of the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. But here we see something very different. There is a stark contrast here in the opening of the seventh trumpet as the host of heaven explodes in celebration as they rejoice in the beginning of the end. You see, now the long wait is over. I remember once hearing a dear black preacher preach a sermon at Moody's Founder's Week and I will never forget the title of his sermon. It was, "There is Pay Day Some Day." And, beloved, here at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we see the signal for that pay day.

I find it fascinating also to note that as we witness this heavenly scene we get some sense that the saints in heaven today are aware of certain events on earth as they relate to the consummation of redemptive history when Christ will be glorified on earth. And I must confess to you that on the basis of Scripture and certainly on the basis of the passion that wells up within my soul that I am a triumphalist. I am one that believes that there is going to be a public triumph.

You see, God is glorified in the outworkings of his wrath. And that would be inconceivably anticlimactic were his judgments to be performed in secret and his triumph undisclosed. Beloved, I yearn to see the public triumph of my Savior and King when he

⁴ Revelation 11:15.

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publicly defeats the enemy of my soul. I long to see him defeat the usurper Satan and utterly humiliate all those who have mocked him down through redemptive history. After all, what story would be complete where the villain is vanquished and the victor is exalted in secret, and you don't know what happens? Where there is no final chapter, where it is left unwritten. And, beloved, you must remember that that is the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the revealing of the Lord in all of his glory. It is the *apocalypse*, it is the unveiling, it is the disclosing of the Lord in his glory, in his triumphant glory.

Now, make no mistake about it. When he returns it will be public. We read, "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be,"⁵ in Matthew 24 verse 27. And we know that the universe will go completely black. And he tells us in verse 30, "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky."⁶ The sign being the glorious, ineffable, brilliant light of his shekinah. It will appear in the sky and then "all of the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." Nobody will miss what the vast majority of the world missed when he came the first time. Somehow his glory will envelop the entire globe. So the seventh trumpet now sets all of this into motion.

Notice the phrase, "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."⁷ Notice the word "kingdom" is singular, it is not plural, and there is an important theological concept that flows from this. You will recall that Satan tried to establish an earthly kingdom on at Babel and the triune godhead defeated his attempt at a one world state by confounding the languages, thus dispersing the Satanic kingdom to every corner of the globe. Notwithstanding the language barrier that has served to prevent a full fledged international state, all of the diverse languages and all of the diverse nations have always remained under the rule of one kingdom and that is the kingdom of darkness.

I would also add that although the United States was founded upon Judeo Christian values, it has never been a Christian nation under God ruled by God nor will it ever be. The Word of God tells us that Satan "is the god of this world," 2 Corinthians 4:4. Jesus called him in John 12:31, "The ruler of this world."⁸ In 1 John 5:19 we read, "that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."⁹ Moreover Satan is called in Ephesians 2:2 "the prince of the power of the air" meaning that Satan rules the demonic powers who occupy the air, the heavenly sphere that encompasses the earth, who influence men to act and think consistent with Satan's diabolical and rebellious purposes. And for this reason Paul says that before we were saved, in Ephesians two beginning at verse two, that we "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the Spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." And then he went on to

⁵ Matthew 24:27.

⁶ Matthew 24:30.

⁷ Revelation 11:15.

⁸ John 12:31.

⁹ 1 John 5:19.

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describe this in more detail saying, “we formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath.”

So while Satan’s kingdom of darkness has existed down through redemptive history, there has never been a one single kingdom of the world in terms of a global empire per se. But this will happen during the time of the tribulation when Satan will rule through the antichrist for a time limited to 1260 days as we see in Scripture. However, understand that this kingdom of the world would not be able to exist had God not authorized it. Indeed we read in chapter 13 verse seven of Revelation, “It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.”¹⁰

But now here in verse 15 we see that it has become the kingdom of our Lord, “the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.” Here “Lord” is referring to God the Father, underscoring the equality that exists between the Father and the Son in terms of their nature as well as in terms of their rule. Now grammatically the verb translated “has become” is very rare in the original language, but it is also very informative. This is where the author will use the past tense, a past tense verb to describe a future event as if it were already accomplished.

Let me give you an example. In Romans chapter eight and verse 30 we read, “And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, [and here it is:] He also glorified.”¹¹ Are you glorified yet? No. But it is as good as if you were glorified. That is the point. So the glorification of those who have already been declared righteous in that passage is as certain as if it has already been accomplished.

So the emphasis here is on inevitability. It is on certainty. So although the transference of power from Satan to God is still future, the certainty of it is as though it were already done. It has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. So this is an accomplished fact that is yet to occur. What a testimony of the omnipotent power of our God, of his sovereignty, the one who works all things after the counsel of his will.

So with the sounding of the seventh trumpet the final judgments leading up to the glorious transfer of kingdoms is set into motion which anticipates this divine rule over all creation and the coming earthly millennial kingdom which will be the consummating bridge to the eternal kingdom. And although you will recall that there are two phases to the future kingdom, there is no differentiation that is made between the millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom of that new creation here in this text. And that is typical in Scripture. We don’t see that differentiation very often.

But, beloved, this triumphant proclamation points to the ultimate fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies that go all the way back even to the song of Moses in Exodus 15. Do you remember when the Israelites looked forward to the day when then Lord

¹⁰ Revelation 13:7.

¹¹ Romans 8:30.

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would be the king over all of the earth? In fact, in Revelation 15 beginning in verse two John quotes that very song in this context where the inspired prophet Moses saying with the children of Israel, here is what they sang:

Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear,
O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE
NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR
RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.¹²

Zechariah also prophesied in this same vein in Zechariah 14:9 when he stated, “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”¹³

You see, friends, this will be the fulfillment of what the angel Gabriel told Mary. Remember at before the birth of Jesus in Luke 1:31 he said:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.¹⁴

You see, this will fulfill all of the unconditional covenants that God gave to Israel as well as the promises the Lord made to the 12 apostles; that they would sit on 12 thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel, remember, in Matthew chapter 19. And it will also fulfill the promises that he has made to us, to believers that we will one day reign with him, 2 Timothy 2:12.

So with these glorious realities now in sight, notice verse 16, “And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God.”¹⁵

Oh, child of God, understand this is us. This is referring to us. You will recall that the 24 elders are the representatives of the glorified raptured Church as we learned in our study of chapter four. So with the sounding of the seventh trumpet we read that we will fall on our faces and then we sing a hymn.

I was meditating upon this. Can you imagine a more dramatic demonstration of humility and veneration than to fall on your face and sing a hymn?

Beloved while on our faces before the Lord of glory we will erupt into spontaneous jubilation and sing this paean of praise here in verse 17. “We give Thee thanks, O Lord

¹² Revelation 15:3-4.

¹³ Zechariah 14:9.

¹⁴ Luke 1:31-33.

¹⁵ Revelation 11:16.

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God, the Almighty, who art and who wast,”¹⁶ Or, in other words, who were, “because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.”¹⁷ This is so incredibly exciting to me. Think about it. “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty,”¹⁸ *pantokrator* (pan-tok-rat'-ore) in the original language. It denotes the unassailable sovereignty of our God, his omnipotent power, his creative power. And now this irresistible power is about to exert itself upon the whole world.

He says, “You have taken your great power and have begun to reign.” Here the use of the perfect tense “you have taken” denotes the permanence of his takeover. His judicial act will now have continuing results as he now exercises his regal power and authority in judgment which will continue through his mediatorial kingdom, the earthly millennial kingdom, because it must be fully established on earth as Christ when He will one day be seated upon his throne.

Now, as a foot note, obviously when you look at this text, up until this time the kingdom has not been fully established on earth. I don't see that, do you? I hope you don't. And this is an important truth that frankly refutes those who would have us believe that Christ's glorious reign began in AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed or those who believe that the kingdom is synonymous with the Church. Both positions, dear friends, are foreign to Scripture and are certainly a contradiction to the text that we have before us. This is so straightforward. There can be no justification for some allegorical interpretation here. Here we see very clearly the judicial acts of Almighty God are the ones that precede the events of chapter 20 (the millennial reign, referring to the millennial reign), as God here begins to vanquish his foes on earth and visibly establishes his universal reign, the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ when, according to Isaiah 2:3, “The law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”¹⁹

Now, I would remind you that Daniel saw all of this in his night visions in Daniel seven. Beginning in verse 13 we read:

Behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the
peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His
dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His
kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.²⁰

And later in verse 18 he went on to say, “But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.”²¹ Then in verse 22, “The Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest

¹⁶ Revelation 11:17.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Isaiah 2:3.

²⁰ Daniel 7:13-14.

²¹ Daniel 7:18.

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One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.”²² And then in verse 27, “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.”²³

Now, notice how the nations on earth react to this divinely righteous, albeit hostile takeover. Verse 18. “And the nations were enraged.”²⁴ The term “enraged” describes a defiant rage, one that rises out of a long standing deep seated seething resentment. Certainly we, as Christians, are all too familiar with this kind of hostility.

Now we could ask the question, “Why such malice?” Well, it is because of man’s sin nature. Man is by nature at enmity with God. In Titus 1:15 we read that “both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”²⁵ We read in Ephesians two that man is spiritually dead. He is a spiritual cadaver. Unbelievers, according to Ephesians 4:18 are “darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.” And, beloved, were it not for his grace and mercy we would still be in that state.

Then, adding to their innate rebellion against God, by now... think about it, these people are absolutely apoplectic with rage because of the plagues that they have endured. By now it is as though their blood vessels are rupturing. They are utterly incensed. Remember, by now over half the population of the earth is dead and the worst is yet to come in the seventh trumpet.

So as a result of their rage the trumpet sounds and we see, secondly, *the terminal punishment* in verse 18. “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came.”²⁶ Interesting. This is the same unique verb form as used in verse 15 describing a future event as though it had already happened. Once again underscoring the absolute certainty of the impending judgment. “And Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged.”²⁷

“Time” in the original language here could be translated “the season” or “the era,” the era of history. When Christ returns to establish his kingdom this will be the fitting season for the dead to be judged, a reference to the consummation of history when all of the wicked will be judged as well as the faithful to be rewarded as we will examine in a moment.

But first notice at the end of the verse, “the time came to destroy those who destroy the earth.” Now, this is not a reference to those who pollute the earth. This is a reference to those who destroy through the metastasizing corruption of their sin. We must understand,

²² Daniel 7:22.

²³ Daniel 7:27.

²⁴ Revelation 11:18.

²⁵ Titus 1:15.

²⁶ Revelation 11:18.

²⁷ Ibid.

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beloved, that sin is a toxin so lethal, so devastating that a supernatural purging is required to ultimately eradicate it. We have such a shallow definition of sin. If we could even remotely see it as God sees it so many things would become so much more clear, especially when we sing *Amazing Grace*.

You see, because of sin, there must be an uncreation and a recreation. There must be a total dissolution of the heavens and the earth as we read in 2 Peter 3:10. So the destruction of verse 15 here speaks primarily of the destruction of unbelievers as well as—and we are going to see this as we get into this in weeks to come—as well as the political and the economic and religious systems of Babylon that we will read in chapters 17 through 19, as well as the unholy trinity of Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet, all of which precede the ultimate dissolution of the heavens and the earth.

So the nations were enraged. Wouldn't you expect after all of that that word would say "humbled?" The nations were humbled. The nations were repentant. The nations were finally broken and contrite. But we don't see that. We see that they are enraged. Beloved, this is the reason for the horrific judgment, because of the persistent and stubborn unbelief of their hearts God has judicially sealed them in their unbelief even as he did Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. And we know that the rage will be so blind that, according to Revelation 16 and verse 14, "the spirits of demons performing signs will go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them together to the war of the great day of God, the almighty." And in verse 16 we read, "And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon."²⁸ Of course, Christ returns, and the beast and his armies are utterly defeated as we read in Revelation 19.

So think about it. How unbelievably tragic. Millions and millions of people who repeatedly ignore every attempt to respond to the gospel of grace, every invitation, until finally it is too late. They will be the ones who will receive their terminal punishment.

Now all through Scripture we are reminded of this final day of reckoning when Christ returns in blazing vengeance and glory as a consuming fire even as the world shakes its defiant little fist in his face.

We read, for example, the words of the psalmist in chapter two verse one:

The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed,
saying, "Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!"

He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will
speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying, "But as
for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."²⁹

²⁸ Revelation 16:16.

²⁹ Psalm 2:2-6.

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The prophet Isaiah describes this day as well in chapter 24 beginning in verse 17 where he says:

Terror and pit and snare confront you, O inhabitant of the earth. Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; for the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, and it totters like a shack, For its transgression is heavy upon it, And it will fall, never to rise again. So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven, on high, and the kings of the earth, on earth. And they will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.³⁰

So, once again, the seventh trumpet signals the final judgments that will culminate in the great battle that the prophets foresaw, even as far back as Moses some 3400 years ago. But notice what else is tucked away in this text of terminal punishment.

Number three, we see *the treasured prize* in verse 18 in the middle, “And the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great.”³¹ This is a reference to the eternal reward promised to believers who will inherit the coming kingdom in both of its phases, the millennial and the eternal. But this also includes the rewards we earn through faithful service. If I can digress for a moment, Jesus teaches us that we are going to receive rewards for faithful service. In fact, he testifies to the church in Revelation 22:12 says, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done,”³² a very motivating concept.

You see, the Lord sees all that we do. He knows our heart and he will reward those things that we do for his glory. You know, that even includes things like how we serve our employers, even employers that do not deserve our respect as we read in 1 Peter 2:18 and Ephesians six.

Paul speaks to us through his words to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 3:8. He says, “Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”³³

But notice the two specific groups that are mentioned here in this text: “Your bond-servants,” which could be translated slaves, “the prophets...” and we know that prophets

³⁰ Isaiah 24:17-23.

³¹ Revelation 11:18.

³² Revelation 22:12.

³³ 1 Corinthians 3:8.

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are frequently described in the Old Testament as the Lord's slaves, referring here to those men who down through history have faithfully proclaimed the Word of God. But there is a second group here, "And the saints, and..." it could be even translated, "... *even* those who fear your name, the small and the great."³⁴ A reference here to all who fear God who have, therefore been saved by his grace from the very lowliest slave to the most exalted nobleman, all will receive reward.

And I would remind you that faithful Christians, true believers who are faithful will be fruitful. We see this principle in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. There we learn that to whatever degree a true believer maximizes the sacred trust that God has given him through his gifts and his experiences and his opportunities, God will give him even more opportunities to be fruitful. And, sadly, many times we squander that which God has given us, and, as a result, we read in 1 Corinthians 3:15 that "our work will be burned up and he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved yet so as through fire."

But reward belongs to those who take full advantage of all of the opportunities that the Lord gives him. We see this in this parable of the talents in Matthew 25 verse 23. The Lord says, "You who are faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things." In other words, God will increase our charge on earth and in heaven based upon our faithfulness.

We see this concept developed even more explicitly in Luke 19 in a similar parable. Remember the parable of the nobleman. There Jesus teaches that faithful service on earth is the basis for kingdom rewards both in the millennial kingdom as well as in the eternal state. You see, faithful saints will be rewarded commensurate to their level of devotion on earth. Again, "you were faithful with a few things so I will put you in charge of many things."

I cannot improve upon what John MacArthur said on this subject. I would like to quote this to you. He said, "Heaven will be a time of ever expanding and increasingly joyous service and the saints who then will serve the most and rejoice the most will be those who have served the Lord most steadfastly while on earth. Every soul in heaven will equally possess eternal life and will be equally righteous, equally Christ like and equally glorious. Everyone will be equally perfect because perfection has no degrees. The difference will be in opportunities and levels of service. Just as the angels serve God in ranks, so will redeemed men and women. And the degree of their heavenly service will have been determined by their devotedness of their earthly service. Heaven will not involve different qualities of service because everything heavenly is perfect. Everything done for the Lord will be perfectly right and perfectly satisfying. There will be no distinctions of superiority or inferiority and there will be no envy jealousy or any other remnant of sinful human nature. Whatever one's rank or responsibility or opportunity, those will be God's perfect will for that individual and, therefore, will be perfectly enjoyed in a way that is beyond our present comprehension. Believers will be both equal and unequal in the millennium and in the eternal state," end quote.

³⁴ Revelation 11:18.

So we have seen *the triumphant proclamation, the terminal punishment and the treasured prize*. Finally, we see *the transcended promise*.

Notice in verse 19, “And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple.”³⁵ Now, particularly in the book of Revelation we see that the heavenly temple is the abode of God where he is seated upon his throne with the Lamb of God the Lord Jesus Christ with him there in the holy of holies. We see in Revelation that the temple is where the saints are assembled to worship and to serve, which will be the constant occupation of the redeemed throughout eternity. And we see that even the New Jerusalem that will descend from heaven is part of a heavenly temple shaped in the very dimensions of the holy of holies.

Moreover the heavenly temple is seen as the source of divine revelation and that place from which the saints cry out for justice. It is from the heavenly temple of God that the angels carry out the judgments upon the world that the Almighty assigns to them and where they guard his holiness.

So here we see the temple is opened. And it is fascinating. It says, “the ark of his covenant appeared in his temple.” Let me give you some background that will hopefully help you to see the gravity of what is being revealed to us here.

In the Old Testament we see that the ark of the covenant was always the token of God’s presence. You will recall that after Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden they were expelled from the very presence of God and the holy ground and forced into the outside to the cursed ground. And then you will recall that God stationed cherubim to prevent reentry as they brandished their flaming swords of fiery judgment. Then later on at Sinai God’s presence returned and the Garden of Eden was replaced by the tabernacle, a place now where God could return to man, though man could not yet return to God. And there at Sinai God created a priestly nation, and through the Levitical priesthood, and the sacrificial system, and the tabernacle, and later on the temple, there could exist a mediated access into the presence of God where man could return to him spiritually, though not yet physically.

And inside the holy of holies in the tabernacle—and we read this earlier in Exodus 25—there stood the ark of the covenant. And just as the cherubim guarded the east entrance to the Garden of Eden to prevent sinful man from returning to the holy ground inside and, instead, remain on the cursed ground outside, the cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle. But there was one big difference. These celestial guardians in the garden were very different in that they were stationed to face *outward* to prevent man’s reentry. But those that were stationed atop the mercy seat of the ark faced *inward* toward the presence of God, the hovering shekinah of the glory of God, therefore making it possible for a holy God to be present among men.

I might also add that cherubim were embroidered on the veil of the temple. They were carved into the doors and the walls and the panels of the first temple. In fact, Solomon

³⁵ Revelation 11:19.

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created two cherubim that were 15 feet high made out of olive wood, and they were overlaid with solid gold as they overshadowed the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies in the first temple. So the cherubim symbolically guarded the presence of God that hovered above the mercy seat. And inside the ark of the covenant—according to Hebrews 9:4 and other passages—we know that it contained “a golden jar holding the manna and Aaron’s rod which budded and the tables of the covenant.”

Now also in the earthly tabernacle above the ark was the mercy seat. The Septuagint translates that the *hilastarion* (hil-as-tay’-ree-on), the place of atonement, it is the place of satisfaction and appeasement where propitiation is made satisfying the justice of God. The mercy seat then separated the violated law that was within the ark from the Shekinah glory of the divine presence that hovered above the mercy seat between the cherubim. And the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat on the day of atonement would symbolize the final sacrifice of the Lamb that would one day come who was, according to 1 John 2:2, “the propitiation for our sins,” propitiation translated *hilasmos* (hil-as-mos’), again, as the mercy seat is the *hilastarion* (hil-as-tay’-ree-on), Jesus was the one who satisfied the wrath of God.

You see, friends, upon the mercy seat, above the ark of the covenant, that is here revealed in Revelation, we find that place where mercy and justice come together. And that is precisely what we see happening here in this scene. Please remember that divine mercy is condescending love that reaches down to meet a need without considering the merit of the recipient. And here in verse 19 we see the covenant making and the covenant keeping God of Israel now displaying the ark of the covenant, the glorious symbol of his intimate love and saving grace that could only be obtained by the outpouring of his wrath upon the innocent Lamb whose blood was shed on our behalf.

Now, understand this from the mindset of the people during the time of the tribulation, especially the Jews. This scene has profound significance, because today the ark is nowhere to be found. They... they are looking for it. They would love to have it. Somewhere during the ancient history of Israel it disappeared. Some believe that perhaps when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple he destroyed the ark. Others think it was removed by Shishak the king of Egypt as we read in 1 Kings 15. Or maybe Manasseh did something with it as we read in 2 Chronicles 33. One tradition even insists that Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave in Mount Sinai and there it awaits that time of ultimate consummation when the Messiah returns.

But here, beloved, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, to the Jew the unbelievable happens. Now *we* know that the veil of the holy of holies was thrown open when Christ died, but here *they see it!* And now the temple of God, that intimate place where the divine presence exists that is unapproachable, not only is it open to them, but look what happens, the ark of the covenant appears at center stage. What does this tell them? This tells them that not only is God now about to take up their interest as he prepares to subdue the Gentile nations that have oppressed them all of this time, but also that believers can be invited into his presence because, again, the veil was wrent at Calvary.

The Seventh Trumpet

13

Revelation 11:15-19

This is emblematic, dear friends, of the covenant of grace. Beloved, here is the transcendent promise that the sovereign and holy God of Israel is merciful and full of grace to all who believe in the atoning work of Christ who was the propitiation for our sins, the one who saves both Jew and Gentile.

And, moreover, he is faithful now to fulfill his covenant promises to Israel. He is about to establish his glorious kingdom on earth and he will be their God and they will be his people. And then as the ark appears at the end of verse 19, “There were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”³⁶

Here we see yet another manifestation of the glory of God that emerges from the throne room of heaven. We saw this earlier in Revelation four and verse five. What a fitting response to the sounding of the trumpet. And, again, this will lead to the final climactic battle of Armageddon when Christ will emerge and he will come forth from the holy temple to wage war against the nations as the lion of Judah the messiah and king.

Oh, child of God, fear not. May you be encouraged, renew your hope. Our sovereign, omnipotent, merciful God is working his plan and he is coming soon.

Dear sinner, you who refuse to respond in humility to the message of saving grace, especially those of you who claim to be a Christian, but your life bears no fruit of genuine repentance, please hear me. Won't you humble yourself today before it is too late? Agree with God about the rebellion in your own heart. And ask him to forgive you so that when he comes you will see him as your Savior and not as your judge.

Let's pray together.

Father, these truths remind us afresh of your holiness and your sovereignty and certainly of your love for us, and we praise you for that. May the Word of truth do its work in every heart that you might be glorified, we ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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³⁶ Revelation 11:19.