

Revelation Eleven (vv.15-19)

- Revelation 11.15 recommences the cycle of the seven trumpets after a short interlude (10.1-11.14).
- The seventh trumpet is of a broader scope than those preceding it. It is not a momentary happening, but seems to incorporate a period of time, *“But in the **days** of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets,”* (10.7).
- The trumpet announces the coming of the Kingdom and includes all the matters that will take place in connection with the establishment of that Kingdom, including a further period of divine wrath, i.e. the vials (cf. 11.15, 18).

The Sounds in Heaven [11.15-18]

v.15. The seventh trumpet declares the consummation of God’s purpose – Christ will reign for ever. The sounding of trumpets in Scripture is associated with the announcement of judgment (Joel 2.1-2) and the coronation of a king (2 Samuel 15.10; 1 Kings 1.39). As the **seventh angel sounded**, there were **great voices in heaven**. This seems to be the response of the whole host of heaven celebrating the imminent reign of Christ (contrast the *silence* in heaven that followed the opening of the seventh seal, 8.1). The rejoicing is because, *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever”* [NET]. **Has become** is a proleptic aorist – though the Kingdom is yet future, the tense of the verb assumes the perspective of the events of the seventh trumpet having *already* run their course. The Kingdom is therefore viewed as an already accomplished fact (RL Thomas). The **kingdom** (singular) **of the world** suggests every country in the world is actually one spiritual kingdom under Satan – he is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4.4). Control of this kingdom will be wrested from the usurper to become **the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ [Messiah]**. Earth will still be one kingdom, but under the dominion of the Lord Jesus, **He shall reign** – the administration of this kingdom will be invested in God’s Christ. This world-empire, once dominated by a usurping power, has now passed into the hands of its true owner. Christ will reign **for ever and ever**, literally, ‘unto the ages of the age’, or time without end. The thousand years of millennial reign on the earth is the first phase of a rule that is eternal. The mediatorial kingdom of Christ will merge with the eternal kingdom (1 Corinthians 15.28).

v.16. The great *proclamation* of v.15 results in the *praise* and *thanksgiving* of vv.16-18. The proclamation of v.15 is so significant the **four and twenty elders** (representatives of the church in priestly ministry) vacate their **seats** (thrones) and prostrate themselves before God in worship. **v.17.** First, the elders acknowledge the person and character of God. This is true worship – the adoration of a divine Person. **Lord God Almighty** [*pantokratōr*] is a characteristic title for God in Revelation, denoting His all-powerful sovereignty over the affairs of His created universe. None can resist the power of God, which power is now asserted in direct rule over the world. The Kingdom will not be established by social changes on earth but as an act of divine power (Allen). This omnipotent God transcends time, “the one who is and who was,” [NET]. This describes God’s uninterrupted existence in the present and past. The clause **art to come** appears in manuscripts of later date and is likely a scribal addition here, taken from the three previous mentions of the same expression (1.4, 8; 4.8). MacArthur says, *“Significantly, those three earlier occurrences add the phrase ‘who is to come’. Since the present passage views Christ as already having come and established His kingdom, that phrase is not repeated here.”* The elders then offer thanksgiving for what God has done, having **taken great power** [*dynamis*] and **reigned**. God, in the Person of Christ, has exercised His great power by overcoming all opposition and establishing His eternal reign.

v.18. Finally, the elders explain *how* the Kingdom was established and *what* it would bring to pass for the dead (judgment) and the saints (reward). The impenitent **nations** became **angry** [*orgizō*], furious or enraged (not a momentary flare of temper but a settled burning resentment) at the prospect of a reigning Christ. The nations will ultimately demonstrate their wrath by assembling their armies at Armageddon to oppose God and His Christ (cf. Psalm 2; Acts 4.25-28; Revelation 16.14, 16). But man’s wrath will be answered by divine wrath, particularly the great blaze of anger at the coming of Christ. Revelation 19.15, *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness [thumos] of the wrath [orgē] of Almighty God”*. The outpouring of God’s wrath spells the end of worldly rebellion against God.

The remainder of v.18 presents a *chiasm* which contrasts the destinies of unbelievers and believers. The *time of the judging of the dead* is parallel with *destroying those who destroy the earth*. Likewise, the *time of rewarding the prophets* is parallel with *rewarding of the saints*. The Kingdom will usher in a **time** [*kairos* – referring to a ripe season or era] fitting for the **dead** to be **judged**. Given the summary terms of this whole outburst of worship, this is likely a general reference to all future judgments of the dead. The Kingdom age, as the consummation of the ages, is the appropriate era for such. The judgment of the wicked dead will in fact take place at the *end* of the Kingdom, at the Great White Throne (cf. 20.12-13). There is a possibility this could refer to the judgment of the resurrected saints of OT days and the martyred saints of

the tribulation days, but the use of the word “judge” [*krinō*, the result of a judicial process, ‘to condemn’, pronounce guilty] and the parallel with the final statement in this verse makes this unlikely. To **destroy** (utterly bring to corruption) **them which destroy the earth** probably refers to those who have morally and spiritually corrupted the world with their sin – including Babylon (Jeremiah 51.25; Revelation 19.2), the beast, the false prophet and Satan. By contrast, the people of God will be **rewarded** – they will receive their due. There are likely *two* groups in view:

- **1. Servants, the prophets.** All those who have publicly represented the Lord by preaching – whether tribulation prophets (Revelation 11.3, 6) or OT prophets. “It must include all who have stood in this line of ministry excluding the church age. Lonely men who had stood for God in dark days would now find their work revealed and rewarded.”
- **2. Saints, even them that fear thy name.** Likely refers to OT and tribulation saints. As saints they were characterised by *separation* in days of idolatry and immorality. As those that feared His name, they displayed *reverence for* God by obeying His word (cf. Malachi 3.16). *Every* saint will be rewarded whether **small** or **great**, a phrase which denotes every social and economic class, from kings to slaves. All stand equally before God.

The Sanctuary in Heaven [11.19]

v.19. In heaven, John sees a *symbol* (the Ark) and a *storm*. Amid the rumblings of divine judgment stands a symbol of God’s faithfulness to His people and covenant. God is still in control of every detail. The **temple of God** is **opened in heaven**, not now a door (cf. 4.1), but the very inner sanctuary of heaven – the intimate dwelling place of God. So far in the book of Revelation, the *throne* of God has been the focus – symbolising divine authority and righteous judgments. Now the *temple* becomes the focus – speaking of divine presence and holiness. This is the anticipation of human beings enjoying unmediated fellowship with God (21.3). The opening of the heavenly sanctuary makes visible the **ark**. What John saw was not the *earthly* ark but its heavenly counterpart – and probably not a literal ark, but the ark as a symbol of God’s presence, and His communion with men (on the basis of sacrifice). The ark of **His covenant** declares God to be true to His word – He will fulfil His promises to Israel. There is a possible hint here that God will again take up His residence amongst men. For that to be accomplished, there must needs be great judgments. Hence John saw **lightnings, voices** (roaring sounds), **thunderings**, an **earthquake** and **great hail** – the *third* such fearful storm of Revelation (4.5; 8.5). On each occasion the storm increases in intensity, great hail being added here. God will rid the earth of all opposition to Himself.