



Part 25 – He Shall Reign Forever and Ever

Revelation 11:15-19

There are remarkable similarities between the seven seals and the seven trumpets as they depict the same epoch of human history. But there is one remarkable difference. The trumpets end not with a hush but with a mighty song. “Revelation is a noisy book; twenty times we read of a loud voice as if the ‘war of words’ on earth corresponds to a war of praise in heaven, with

the loud praises of God and the declarations of his salvation drowning out all other, rival voices.”¹

“The themes of the entire Bible coalesce on the event that is described here. Human language fails in an attempt to state its true significance. The statement of the heavenly voice relates the end of this world’s kingdom, dominated by sin and groaning in its desire for release from its ‘bondage to decay’ (Rom. 8:19-21). More wonderfully still, they announce the arrival of the kingdom of the one God, ‘the Lord and His Messiah.’”²

The Seventh Trumpet

Vs. 15 – “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet...” As Beale notes, “The seventh trumpet, like the seventh seal and the seventh bowl, narrates the very end of history. The consummated fulfillment of the long-awaited messianic kingdom prophesied in the OT has finally come to pass.”³

“...The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ...” – The blowing of the seventh trumpet (the end of the age) has not yet come but John writes proleptically, that is, anticipating a future event as though it has happened. So sure is the final victory of God and the consummation of the age that John writes about it as though it has already come. This can also be said to be from God’s vantage point since He is eternal and is not bound by the passage of moments.

Notice that the world’s many kingdoms are summed up with the singular “the kingdom of the world.” Ultimately, there are two kingdoms in view. There is the kingdom of the world, which is in rebellion against God and so is passing away, and there is God’s everlasting kingdom. “Christ” means anointed one and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “messiah.” It is a reference to the eternal Son of God. His coming into the world will be given further attention in Revelation 12.

“...and He shall reign forever and ever.” – The “He” is singular though it likely applies to both “the Lord” and “His Christ.” The Lord reigns as the one, undivided, Triune God. This is a similar vision to that of Daniel who saw the Ancient of Days defeat the evil kingdoms of the world and hand them over to the Son of Man whose kingdom is everlasting (Daniel 7).

“Here once more we are at the *eschaton* [the end of the age], further proof of the cyclical nature of the seals, trumpets, and bowls.”⁴ Recall 10:7 where we are told that the end will come at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The end of this present sinful age and the inauguration of the new creation are celebrated in this passage as the hosts of heaven sing praise to God for the final judgement of the wicked.

The Twenty-Four Elders Sing

Vs. 16 – “And the twenty-four elders...” – The mighty song of heaven announcing the final defeat of Satan is joined by the 24 elders who fall down before the throne. As we noted earlier (chapter 4), the 24 elders are likely meant as direct representatives of the church, possibly consisting of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles, thus encompassing the church in her infancy (Israel) and fulfillment.

Vs. 17 – “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was....” – Three times in Revelation God is referred to as the One who *is* and who *was* and who is *to come* (1:4, 8; 4:8). But here there is an important variation. Notice how God is addressed as “who is and who was.” The significance of this is that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, God is no longer “to come.” The kingdom has come in all its fullness and God now dwells among his people. From our finite vantage point this has not yet happened, but the Day is surely coming.

¹ Ian Paul, *Revelation*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018) p. 207

² Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) p. 449

³ G.K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) p. 236

⁴ Osborne, 438

“...for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.” – The Almighty, with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, has now taken up his power and begun to reign. “Though this final consummation of the kingdom had not yet occurred when John received the vision, it had happened from the perspective of those offering heavenly praise.”⁵

Vs. 18 – “The nations raged...” – Again, this is written in past-tense because it depicts what will happen after the final judgment. The raging of the nations will, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, come to an end. Here we are reminded of Psalm 2 in which the psalmist asks, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?” When Jesus returns it will be clear that the wrath of the nations has come to nothing.

“...but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged...” – In his great power God will act with perfect justice. God’s wrath is not capricious or cruel. His wrath is the perfect expression of his holy justice.

“...and for rewarding your servants...” – The Scriptures are clear in the Old and New Testaments that God rewards his people on the basis of their faithfulness. Certainly, we must avoid sinful or worldly demands as payment for obedience. In this world we will have trouble (John 16:33). But in the inaugurated kingdom, there will be great reward for the faithful servants of the Lord.

“...and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” – Though we are certainly to be good stewards of the earth, I do not think that this is an allusion to modern environmental concerns. This is a contrasting statement to the previous clause which promises reward to the Lord’s servants. This clause embodies the so-called *Lex Talionis*, or the principle that the punishment ought to fit the crime. Those who have destroyed the world with sin and wickedness will receive their fitting punishment.

The Heralding of the End

Vs. 19 – “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple...” – John’s description of the temple “opened” in heaven is a sign that the end of the age has arrived. The ark of the covenant is seen, which means that it is the Holy of Holies which is being referred to as having been opened. We are reminded of the atoning power of Christ’s death at which point the curtain closing off the Holy of Holies was torn in two (Mark 15:38). The temple and the ark were both means by which God dwelt among his people. They pointed to that time when God would be fully present with his people in ways that did not require the mediation of temple or ark. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Revelation 21:3).

1. Rebellion and Judgment

A repeated theme of Revelation (and indeed, throughout the Scriptures) is that of God’s coming judgment upon the wicked. The frightening descriptions of God’s judgment in the Book of Revelation often shock us. Part of our shock is due to the regular emphasis in Scripture on God’s mercy. Indeed, God is so merciful and patient that when he does exercise justice it seems to many as though he is being rash or even cruel. Think of Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:5-7), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2), or Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). When we honestly consider these examples, it becomes clear that what ought to surprise us is not God’s judgment but his merciful patience.

2. Faithfulness and Reward

Sinners are justified before God by faith, not faithfulness. But the justified will be rewarded by God, in part, on account of their faithfulness. “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense [*reward*] with me, to repay each one for what he has done” (Revelation 22:12). The people of God will not face his judgement as the unbelieving world will because Jesus took our judgment upon himself on the cross. But our works will be judged (Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

3. Now and Not Yet

The kingdom of the Lord has come (now) and yet we still groan for its full inauguration (not yet). “At the first advent the kingdom age began, but it was partial, not to be consummated until his second advent, when the final kingdom would complete God’s plan of salvation for eternity and when God would finally begin to ‘reign forever and ever.’”⁶

⁵ Beale, p. 237

⁶ Osborne, p. 450