

"The Seventh Trumpet Judgment"

Revelation 11:15-19

"The sounding of the seventh trumpet marks a significant milestone in the book of Revelation. It sets in motion the final events leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly millennial kingdom."³⁴⁷ It includes the final outpouring of God's wrath as seen in the seven bowl judgments. The inclusion of the seven bowls within the seventh trumpet is due to the reference of both being the completion of God's mystery or wrath. This is seen in Revelation 10:7 regarding the 7th trumpet and in Revelation 15:1 regarding the 7 bowl judgments. It is also important to note that this is just the last trumpet in the series of seven trumpet judgments, but is not to be identified with the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52. Although the 7th trumpet is sounded here in chapter 11 the resulting judgments as seen in the pouring out of the seven bowls is not described until chapters 15 and 16. The intervening chapters (Rev. 12-14) serve as an interlude for the purpose of explanation of other related material.

The Heavenly Exclamation: {v. 15}

After the sounding of the 7th trumpet there is a heavenly exclamation. John hears the sound of loud voices. These loud voices are not specifically identified, but could possibly refer to all of the host of heaven. The content of their exclamation is that, "*The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.*" First of all the form of the verb *egeneto* (has become) is called a proleptic aorist. A proleptic aorist speaks of a future event that will most certainly take place as if it has already happened. The event that is being exclaimed is not taking place chronologically at this point, but the heavenly host recognizes that the period of God's final wrath is about to be poured out and are overjoyed to the point that they speak of it as if it has already taken place.

The *kingdom of the world* is a reference to all of the world's kingdoms seen as being under one king. This king is none other than Satan, who is often identified in the Scriptures in this role (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and will be the driving force behind the ruler of the one world government. "The image here suggests the transference of the world as one empire from the dominion of the enemy into the hands of the rightful owner."³⁴⁸ This wicked worldly kingdom will be replaced by the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This kingdom ruled by Christ is not only a reference to His future 1,000 year reign on the earth, but also refers to His reign over the new heaven and earth for all eternity. The Scriptures consistently speak of the future rule of Christ over the earth. (cf. Exodus 15:18; Psalm 2:6-9; Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14; Micah 4:1-3; Zech. 14:9; Luke 1:31-33)

The Hymn of Thanksgiving: {vs. 16-18}

It is at this point that the 24 elders, earlier identified as representatives of the glorified, raptured church (see ch. 4) ring in with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. The phrase *who sit on their thrones before God* simply identifies them as the same 24 elders previously mentioned in chapter 4. Their first action is that of falling on their faces before God. This is not uncommon as they fall on their faces in an act of worship throughout the book of Revelation (cf. 4:10; 5:8, 14; 19:4). The act of falling on one's face is an act of humility and emphasizes the extreme reverence they have for God. Not only do they show reverence to God by falling on their faces, but they worship God.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

The term *proskyneo* (worship) has a basic meaning "to kiss." It has come to be a more technical term for adoration, meaning "to fall down, prostrate oneself, or adore on one's knees." It carries the corresponding inward attitude of reverence and humility. In the book of Revelation this term is specifically used of adoration directed toward God or Christ and is specifically focused on worshiping God for His being or for His works. In fact here in verses 17 and 18 we see just that. The 24 elders worship God by giving Him thanks. They thank God for who He is and for what He does (or will do).

Thanksgiving to God for who He is: Two aspects of who God is are highlighted here by the 24 elders in this hymn of thanksgiving. The first is described by the term *pantokrator* (almighty). "This word carries the thought that none can resist His all-embracing sovereign power."³⁴⁹ "It describes God's sovereign, omnipotent, irresistible power. Nine of its ten uses are in Revelation (cf. 1:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). It has the sense of God exercising His all-embracing, all encompassing will by means of His irresistible power."³⁵⁰ The second aspect is highlighted by the phrase *who are and who were*. This phrase emphasizes the eternity of God. "God had no beginning and will have no end. He was in that He has existed from eternity past; He is in that He exists now and for all eternity future."³⁵¹ The phrase *who is to come* is not included at this point (although some manuscripts do) because as this hymn looks forward, His coming would have already taken place. Remember that the context of this passage is proleptic, speaking of a future event as if it had already happened. God is the Almighty God and He is the eternal God.

Thanksgiving to God for what He does: Several aspects of what God does are highlighted here by the 24 elders in their hymn of thanksgiving. It is important to note that this section is anticipating future events as if they had already happened. As we continue through the book of Revelation we see that the 7th trumpet is the beginning of these actions. Three works of God are specifically highlighted:

His Sovereign Rule: This is described by the phrase, "*You have taken Your great power and reigned.*" "The perfect tense of the verb signifies the permanence of God's sovereign rule."³⁵² The *power* is the supreme and final authority of God over all things and points to the final great conflict through which God overcomes His enemies and sets up His reign on earth. The reign is speaking of the installment of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth (Rev. 20:4-6). Although His physical reign only lasts 1,000 years on our present earth, He will have supreme rule and authority over the new heavens and new earth for all eternity. Remember that this passage is **looking forward** to the time when the rebellion on the earth is defeated and Christ is visibly established as King.

His Coming Wrath: At the point of the end of the Great Tribulation the people of the world will no longer be terrified, but they will be filled with rage. "The term for enraged suggests a deep-seated, ongoing hostility, not a momentary emotional fit of temper, but a settled burning resentment against God."³⁵³ This is the wrath of men as opposed to the wrath of God. "The wrath of men is impotent, while the wrath of God is omnipotent. The wrath of men is wicked, while the wrath of God is holy."³⁵⁴ This rage of the nations is manifested in their gathering together to fight against God (cf. Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:19-21). In the phrase *and Thy wrath came*, the verb *elthen* (came) is another proleptic aorist. It is pointing to the future display of God's wrath against the nations at His coming (cf. Revelation 19:11-21). Here it is describing the event as if it is an already accomplished fact.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

His Certain Judgment: This is highlighted by the phrase, *and the time [came] for the dead to be judged*. "Time translates *kairos*, which refers to a season, era, occasion, or event. The establishing of Christ's Kingdom will be a fitting time for the dead to be judged. The Great White Throne judgment (20:11-15) is not in view in this passage, as some argue, since that judgment explicitly involves only unbelievers. It is best to see the reference to judgment here as a general reference to all future judgments...The elders are simply singing of future judgments as though they were one event, in the same way that other passages do not distinguish future judgments from each other (cf. John 5:25, 28-29; Acts 17:31; 24:21)." ³⁵⁵ As the elders offer up this hymn of thanksgiving they emphasize two aspects of future judgment:

A Time of Reward: This time of reward has two groups of people in view. The first group are *Your bond-servants the prophets*. "This phrase encompasses all who have proclaimed God's truth throughout redemptive history, from the time of Moses to the two witnesses. Scripture frequently designates prophets as the Lord's servants (cf., 2 Kings 9:7; Ezra 9:11; Jer. 7:25; Ezek. 38:17; Dan. 9:6; Amos 3:7; Zech. 1:6)." ³⁵⁶ The second group of people in view are the *saints*. The term saints is a reference to the redeemed of both the Old and New Testaments. This is a reference to Old Testament saints, the raptured church, and Tribulation saints. The saints are described by the phrase *those who fear Thy name*. "They are distinguished from the prophets in that their service to God consists of reverencing His name rather than prophesying." ³⁵⁷ All of God's saints are in view from the small to the great. This is just a general reference to a future reward for God's people. Believers are often promised crowns in the New Testament as a reward:

1 Corinthians 9:25: An incorruptible crown for those who keep the old nature in subjection. **1 Thessalonians 2:19:** A crown of rejoicing for those who bring others to Christ. **2 Timothy 4:8:** A crown of righteousness for those who love Christ's appearing. **James 1:12 & Revelation 2:10:** A crown of life for those who maintain their love for the Lord in the midst of trials. **1 Peter 5:4:** A crown of glory for those who are good shepherds of God's flock.

A Time of Condemnation: This is described by the last phrase of verse 18, *to destroy those who destroy the earth*. Those who destroy the earth are contrasted with the receivers of reward in the preceding phrases. This could be a general reference to all unbelievers, but it might be best explained in the context of chapter 12-14 and specifically identified as Antichrist, his followers and Satan who is the ultimate destroyer. These will ultimately be condemned and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

The Heavenly Temple: {v. 19}

Verse 19 brings this section to a conclusion. It is here where John is given another view of the heavenly scene. Earlier in chapters 4 and 5 is recorded his view of the throne of God and the altar. Now he is given a further vision of the temple of God in heaven opening up to reveal the ark of His covenant. This verse is a response to the hymn of the 24 elders. "The ark of the covenant corresponds to the rewarding of the faithful, and the cosmic disturbances to the outpouring of God's wrath." ³⁵⁸ Most commentators note that the ark of the covenant symbolizes God's communion with the redeemed. ³⁵⁹ "Some also see that it is a heavenly sign of God's compact with His people being fulfilled. They see it as a symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people and inflicting vengeance on His people's enemies." ³⁶⁰

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

This ark pictured here in the heavenly temple is not the earthly ark. Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah hid the earthly ark in a cave on Mount Sinai until the restoration of Israel.

Along with this vision of the heavenly ark, John sees flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder as well as an earthquake and a great hailstorm. Lightning and thunder are similarly associated with the vision of God's throne in Revelation 4:5. These are additionally accompanied by an earthquake in connection with God's judgment in Revelation 8:5 and 16:17-18. The earthquake cannot be part of the heavenly scene, so it must be part of the 7th trumpet judgment upon the earth. A likely result of this 7th trumpet is a great storm upon the earth in which there will be lightning, thunder, an earthquake (world-wide) and a great hailstorm. The final outpouring of God's wrath upon an evil and wicked world is coming in the pouring out of the 7 bowl judgments.