

Revelation

Escape the Coming Wrath

Lesson 18

Revelation 11:15-19

The Seventh Trumpet is Sounded!

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. Revelation 10:7 expresses the finality of the seventh trumpet: “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.” That mystery is the full revelation of the consummation of God’s plan. It was prophesied by the Old Testament preachers, but its fullness was never revealed until the book of Revelation. That the seven bowl judgments, which represent the final outpouring of God’s wrath, are included within the seventh trumpet is evident from 15:1: “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.” Those “seven plagues” that finish God’s wrath are the seven bowl judgments: “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God’” (16:1). Since both the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls are said to finish God’s wrath, the bowls must be part of the seventh trumpet judgment.

The last three of the seven trumpet judgments are so horrific that they are referred to as woes. In 8:13 John “heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’” After the sounding of the fifth trumpet John wrote, “The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things” (9:12). Before the sounding of the seventh trumpet he added, “The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly” (11:14).

The seventh trumpet sets in motion the final consummation of God’s redemptive plan for the present universe. During its tenure will come the final fury of the Day of the Lord judgments (16:1-21), the final harvest of judgment on earth (11:18, 16:19), and the Lamb’s defeat of the kings of the earth (17:12-18), culminating in the final, climactic triumph of Christ at Armageddon (19:11-21). The sounding of the seventh trumpet signals God’s answer to the prayer, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). That answer sweeps through chapters 12-22 as God finishes His mighty work of reclaiming creation from the usurper, Satan.⁸⁸

⁸⁸

Ibid. 307-308.

1. The second woe (Four angels loosed at the Euphrates— 1/3 of earth's population killed) has passed; the third woe is coming soon. Read Revelation 11:15-19. What does John see occurring in verses 15-16?

2. What is about to happen to the kingdom of the world?
 - a. Who has reigned (limited reign) over the world until now (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2)?

The use of the singular term kingdom of the world instead of the plural “kingdoms” introduces an important truth. All of the world’s diverse national, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups are in reality one kingdom under one king. That king is known in Scripture by many names and titles, including the accuser (Rev. 12:10), the adversary (I Peter 5:8), Beelzebul (Matt. 12:24), Belial (II Cor. 6:15), the dragon (Rev. 12:3, 7, 9), the “evil one” (John 17:15), the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), the roaring lion (I Pet. 5:8), the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the serpent of old (Rev. 12:9; 20:2), the tempter (I Thess. 3:5), and, most commonly, the devil (Matt. 4:1) and Satan (I Tim. 5:15). Though God scattered this kingdom at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), Satan still rules over the pieces of the once united kingdom. While God ordains human governments for the well-being of man (Rom. 13:1), those same governments refuse to submit to Him or acknowledge His sovereignty (cf. Acts 4:26). They are essentially part of Satan’s kingdom...

Satan will not relinquish his kingdom without a struggle. In a desperate and doomed effort to maintain control of the world, God will allow him to overrun it with hordes of demons during the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments (9:1-19). But his efforts will not keep the true King from returning and establishing His earthly kingdom (cf. 19:11-21; 20:1-3, 10). Jesus Christ will return to sit on the throne of His father David (II Sam. 7:12-16) and take over the whole world from the satanically controlled people who now possess it. This is really the theme of Revelation—the triumph of God over Satan as evil is purged from the world and Christ becomes its holy ruler...

Summing up a lengthy discussion of the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ’s earthly kingdom Zechariah wrote, “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” (Zech. 14:9).⁸⁹

- b. Read Philippians 2:9-11. How will everyone express their submission to Christ one day?

⁸⁹ Ibid. 310-314.

3. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, what do the twenty-four elders (the raptured church) do?
 - a. Why is there unrestrained joy over the sounding of this trumpet?
 - b. Who is about to reign on planet earth?
 - c. How long will He reign (Psalm 145:13; Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27; Zechariah 14:9; Luke 1:31-33)?

The elders left their own thrones and prostrated themselves in worship before God's throne. They gave thanks for three special blessings: that Christ reigns supremely (Rev. 11:17), that He judges righteously (Rev. 11:18), and that He rewards graciously (Rev. 11:18).⁹⁰

4. Read Psalm 2 and Micah 4:1-8. What do these two passages of Scripture prophecy concerning "the last days?"

5. As the world witnesses firsthand the wrath of God, as the seven bowls of judgment are executed, what will be the response of the nations according to verse 18?
 - a. Are you surprised at this response?
 - b. Read Exodus 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34 and I Samuel 6:6.
 1. What was Pharaoh's response as he experienced the wrath of God as it was poured out upon the Egyptians?
 2. What did God eventually do to the heart of Pharaoh (Exodus 10:1; 11:10)?

"The nations were angry." What do the nations have to be angry about? Certainly the Lord has been good and gracious to them. He has provided their needs (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31), assigned their territories, and graciously postponed His judgment to give men opportunity to be saved. Even more, He sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Today, God offers forgiveness to the nations! What more could He do for them?

Then, why are the nations angry? Because they want to have their own way. "Why do the heathen [the nations] rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

⁹⁰ Wiersbe, 600.

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed [Christ], saying, 'Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:1-3). They want to worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Like adolescent children, the nations want to cast off all restraint; and God will permit them to do so. The result will be another "Babylon" (Rev. 17-18), man's last attempt to build his Utopia, a "heaven on earth."⁹¹

6. Read Acts 3:19. What should be your response when you come to the realization that you have sinned against God? What has your response been?

7. According to verse 18, the time has come for what?

Not only will the seventh trumpet signal the outpouring of God's wrath on earth, it will also indicate that the time has come 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 in their song make no attempt to separate the different phases of judgment as they are separated in the closing chapters of Revelation. They simply sing of future judgments as though they were one event, in the same way that other Scriptures do not distinguish future judgments from each other (cf. John 5:25, 28-29; Acts 17:31; 24:21).⁹²

8. Read Hebrews 9:27. What is every man's destiny?

9. What does John see in verse 19? Who resides in the temple? Of what is the ark symbolic?

This chapter opened with a temple on earth, but now we see the temple in heaven. The focus of attention is on the ark of God, the symbol of God's presence with His people.

In the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, the ark stood behind the veil, in the holy of holies. God's glory rested on the ark, and God's Law was within the ark, beautifully illustrating that the two must never be separated. He is the holy god and must deal righteously with sin. But He is also the faithful God who keeps His promises to His people. It was the ark of God that led Israel through the

⁹¹ Ibid. 600.

⁹² MacArthur, 319.

Jordan and into their inheritance (Josh. 3:11-17). This vision of the ark would greatly encourage God's suffering people to whom John sent this book. "God will fulfill His promises!" John was saying to them. "He will reveal His glory! Trust Him!"

Once again, John saw and heard the portents of a storm (See Rev. 4:5; 8:5). Greater judgment is about to fall on the rebellious people of earth! But God's people need not fear the storms for He is in control. The ark reminds them of His presence and the faithfulness of His promises. And on that ark was the mercy seat on which the blood was sprinkled each Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:15-17). Even in wrath, God remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

The stage is now set for the dramatic appearance of "the beast," Satan's masterpiece, the false Christ who will control the world.⁹³

10. How does Revelation 11 end (verse 19b)? What does this coming storm symbolize? What is yet to unfold?

The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth away from the usurper, Satan, and from earth's petty human rulers. History is moving inexorably toward its culmination in Christ's earthly reign. When He returns, He will bring covenant blessings to the redeemed, but eternal judgment to those who reject Him.

In the light of that sobering truth, Peter exclaims, "What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (II Peter 3:11)!⁹⁴

⁹³ Wiersbe, 601.

⁹⁴ MacArthur, 321.