



Sermon Notes

A Vision of Final Judgment and Salvation In Revelation 11:15-19

The opening of the sixth and seventh seals gave us a terrifying glimpse of God's wrath, as all mankind cries out, "Hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev 6:16-17). With the sounding of the seventh trumpet we receive yet another vision of the final Day of Judgment and salvation. We know that Revelation 11:15-19 describes the final judgment for the following reasons:

1. John has been told explicitly that God's purposes would be complete with the sounding of the seventh trumpet (10:7).
2. The declaration that "the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ" (11:15) indicates the end of earthly kingdoms. This will happen at the second coming of Christ.
3. The Greek words translated "wrath," "judge" and "reward" in Rev 11:15-19 are used elsewhere in Revelation, with one exception, in references to the final judgment day (see "wrath" 6:16; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15; "judge" 6:10; 18:8,20; 19:2,11; 20:12-13; "reward" 22:12; the one exception is "judge" in 16:5)
4. God is described as the one "who is and who was" but not also as the one "who is to come" as earlier in Revelation (see 1:4,8; 4:8). Instead in 11:17 the

phrase “who is to come” is replaced by the phrase “because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.” Thus in this vision God is not called “the one who is to come” because he has finally come! This again indicates we are looking at a scene of the final judgment. (NOTE: some later manuscripts of Revelation include the phrase “is to come” and a few English translations, like the KJV, follow this tradition. However earlier and better manuscripts do not have the phrase, and should be followed.)

5. The time for judging the dead (11:18) is another signal that the final judgment day is in view. The Bible uniformly teaches that the formal judgment of the dead does not take place until the very end (see for example, Daniel 12:1-2; Revelation 20:8-15).
6. The final phrase “lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm” appears in other visions of final judgment in Revelation: the seventh seal (8:5) and the seventh bowl (16:18-21). This again supports the broader view that the cycles of seven are repetitive and complimentary rather than chronological, and that the seventh element in each cycle describes the final judgment and salvation.

Why does the Ark of the Covenant appear?

At the very end of this text, John describes the unveiling of a heavenly ark of the covenant (11:19). What does the ark’s appearance here signify?

At the very least, it suggests the unveiled presence and glory of God. The ark symbolized God’s glorious presence among Israel. It was kept veiled behind the curtain in the tabernacle, and later the temple, to show the dread holiness of God and Israel’s (and our) separation from God

because of our sin. The ark’s appearance here fits a vision of consummate judgment in which God reveals himself in wrath and salvation.

But the presence of the ark may also be part of the general imagery of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and journey to the Promised Land that is found within the trumpet visions. The trumpet judgments are broadly modeled on the plagues with which God struck Egypt and Pharaoh: hail (Rev 8:7), water turning to blood (8:8), darkness (8:12), locusts (9:3), and death (9:15). Furthermore, the Exodus plagues were an ironic judgment on Egypt’s gods. For instance, the Egyptians worshipped the sun, so God caused it to go dark showing his sovereignty over the sun. In a same way the trumpet judgments target the world’s idolatry (9:20).

But the trumpet judgments not only echo the Exodus from Egypt, but also Israel’s entry into the Promised Land, and especially the conquest of Jericho. The fact that there are seven trumpets sounding warnings is reminiscent of Israel’s march around Jericho for seven days blowing seven trumpets (see Joshua 5:13ff). On the seventh day the walls of Jericho came collapsed, which is perhaps reflected in the sixth and seventh trumpets (see Rev 11:13,19). As Israel marched around Jericho, it bore the Ark of the Covenant (see Joshua 6:4), symbolizing God’s presence to fight for Israel against Jericho. Perhaps the ark’s appearance in Revelation 11:19 also harkens back to that narrative.

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-19, God will win the victory for us forever and completely. God has rescued us from our slavery to sin in the Egypt of this world ruled by Pharaoh Satan. He is bringing us through the long pilgrimage in the desert of this world where we live as strangers and aliens, dependent upon his daily grace. And on that final day, the Jericho of this world will fall and God’s people will enter their final rest in the Promised Land, the new heaven and the new earth!