

**The Dramatic Establishment of
God's Reign over the World**
Revelation 11:15-19

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I don't know what its like to be a mother. I have not carried a child inside of me. I don't know what it's like to give birth. I don't have motherly instincts or the protective care that most mothers naturally have over their children. Then every Mother's Day comes along and I am supposed to preach to mothers. It's one of the many impossible challenges we face in the ministry.

I suspect there are times when Moms ask the question "Is it worth it? "Is my mothering worth it when the kids don't listen? It is it worth all the effort when they ignore what I say or when they outright defy my wishes? Was it worth it to pour all those years of love and effort into that child who grows up to deny the faith or turn to a path that brings God grief? Is it worth it to keep the house clean when no one even notices that the baseboards got dusted or the vacuuming was done? Was it worth it to work that extra job to bring in that money to help them go to school?

Then there are the "is it worth it" questions that arise from a culture that sometimes devalues women who stay home. In some settings, people give value based on profession. But if you're a stay at home Mom, you don't get paid. You didn't go to school for that. You don't have a degree – a Bachelor's in Mothering. "Therefore, are you worth much," some might say, "if you JUST stay at home?" Yet, at home, a child's character is formed; faith is taught; life is processed and the basic needs hopefully are met. From all this, children gain a foundation from which they can go into life.

The short text we're looking at from Revelation today speaks to mothers who do all this behind the scenes work that few notice. It also talks to those who keep on in the Christian life though they get no praise and recognition. It talks to those who persevere in their work to the glory of God and for the betterment of the company, society and family. It talks to those who work hard at their job when no one looks because they work to honor God. It talks to students who carry out their studies with integrity in a culture swimming in cheating. It talks to seniors who keep on growing in their faith and desire to take up the fight against bitterness or cynicism.

This short passage describes the arrival of the end of history. It tells what will happen and how it will affect everyone. It contains some great encouragement for mothers and others who carry out their calling to God's glory. This text in Revelation 11:15-19 – as we discover what will happen in the future. I pray you will find encouragement for the present. So let's see what it says.

Revelation 11:15-19 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying,

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

¹⁸ The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

¹⁹ Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”

This passage is surprising especially when we read the verse before it. Verse 14 has just said “The second woe has passed; behold, the third is soon to come.” So we expect the third woe to arrive and a dreadful announcement. But instead we get a song of triumph related to the 7th trumpet. What happens when this trumpet is blown? It triggers the dramatic establishment of God’s eternal reign over the world. Earlier in Revelation when the 7th seal was broken, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

But when the 7th trumpet is blown, silence is replaced by loud voices. **These voices in heaven declare a seismic change in the world’s rule (15).** They say, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” Now what does this mean? How has the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ? Isn’t God already reigning over everything? Yes. But the world does not recognize His reign nor live in submission to it. In one sense, the devil reigns over the kingdom of the world. Remember when the devil tempted Jesus in the desert? He takes Jesus up to a high mountain and showed Him the kingdoms of the world. Then the devil declared that Jesus could have all these kingdoms if only he would bow down and worship the devil. So in some way the devil reigns over the world that lives in rebellion against the Lord. This kingdom of the world is currently in conflict with the kingdom of God and His purposes.

It's kind of like the situation in Spain or any number of a countries that has a rebel region. Though the Spanish government rules over all of Spain, in the region of Catalonia, many citizens do not recognize the authority and rule of the government in Madrid. So they rebel and just about separated earlier this year. It's like that in the universe today. God rules over it all. But there is a rebel planet called earth where the majority of its inhabitants and their kingdoms rebel against the Lord.

But when the 7th trumpet sounds, the evil rebellion will finally be put down. The kingdom of the world which had been under Satan's reign will transfer to the eternal rule of God. This does not mean that God wasn't already reigning. But it does mean that every corner of the world will now respect and live according to God's reign. He will reign forever and ever.

Notice how the voices from heaven describe God here – “the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ.” That seems strange to us because the Lord is Christ. But Lord here refers to God the Father. His Christ is Jesus. You might recognize this verse because it is quoted in one of the most famous pieces of music surviving today. You know the “Hallelujah chorus” in Handel's Messiah? That pieces starts with the triumphant chorus of Hallelujah and the declaration “for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Then in the center of that chorus, it quiets down a little with the words “The kingdom of this world has become.” Then it ramps up again because the kingdom of this world has become “the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ and of His Christ.” Then you have “and he shall reign forever and ever.” Handel got that all from Revelation 11:15 and appropriately wrapped it into the Hallelujah chorus in triumphant celebration. So the sounding of the 7th trumpet will be cause for great celebration among God's people. God's reign will be firmly established all over the world.

But it's not only a cause for celebration among God's people. There will be in heaven continue to celebrate. According to verse 16, the 24 Elders who sit before God on their 24 thrones fall on their faces and worship the Lord and His Christ. They sing a hymn of praise that unpacks how this new era of God's reign will be established.

So they start the hymn by addressing the Lord God Almighty. They give thanks to the Lord. But did you notice that something seems to be missing from God's title. Verse 17 – “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty who is and who was.” What's missing? Back in Revelation 1:8 God declares, “I am the Alpha and Omega, who is and who was and is to come.” Then in the heavenly throne room scene the four living creatures never stop saying “Holy, holy, holy is the

Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” So what’s missing in the way the 24 Elders address God in Revelation 11:17. ? The Lord no longer “is to come.” “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty who was and is” because He has come. He arrives with the 7th trumpet. When this day comes, we won’t have to wait any longer. The Lord will be with us.

So the 24 Elders thank the Lord God Almighty who was and is. Then they acknowledge this change in the ruling structure of the world with the phrase “you have begun to reign.” Then in verse 18, they itemize God’s actions on the last day.

God responds to the nation’s rage with His wrath (18). “The nations raged but your wrath came.” The nations rage because they don’t want anyone to rule over them. They have been raging for centuries. We joined in that raging for a while when our rebellious will resisted God’s reign. But when the 7th trumpet sounds, their rage will be met by God’s appropriate wrath. We must get rid of the image that God’s wrath consists of coming upon a group of unsuspecting peaceful people and then wiping them out because they didn’t believe in Him. He responds with wrath to raging nations. They want to keep reigning and keep hold of the power over their heart. They want to keep on oppressing and using the people they reign over. We joined them when we wanted to go our own selfish and prideful ways. But God will overthrow them with His wrath.

Then the Elders say “the time came for the dead to be judged.” **The Lord God Almighty will judge the dead (18).** When the 7th trumpet sounds, Judgment Day arrives. Revelation 20:12 describes it – “And I saw the dead great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done.”

Then comes the part that I want mothers to hear and all those who strive by God’s strength to glorify God in their lives. **He will reward the prophets, servants, those who fear the Lord God Almighty’s name both small and great (18).** When the 7th trumpet sounds, the time arrives to reward those faithful to God. He will reward His servants the prophets – those who faithfully proclaimed His word in whatever situation they were placed. The prophets are kind of the prominent or more famous people of faith throughout history. But look at who else will get rewarded. Saints – the set apart ones – anyone who fears the name of the Lord. And I especially love the next clause – “both small and great.”

Mom’s and other caregivers - your children may disobey you, defy you. They may choose a path that goes against God’s best for them. The culture may devalue you. Someone might think less of you. No one might notice the behind

the scenes work you do to keep a house going and children fed and formed. But God sees it all. When the 7th trumpet sounds, the time will come where you will receive reward for your faithful ministry on behalf of the children God entrusts to you. This applies to workers who go the extra mile at their job for the glory of God. This applies to students who refuse to cheat but honestly earn their grades. This applies to the ordinary behind the scene Christian who faithfully ministers in ways and places no one else sees. I know many of you don't want any recognition but God sees and God's recognition and reward will be perfect on that day.

The 24 Elders also recognize that on that day, the destroyers will be destroyed by God – another example of the appropriate just response to wrongdoing. Those who destroyed will be destroyed.

The passage concludes with another great gift. **God will reveal the new open access to His presence (19).** In verse 19, God's temple in heaven opens to reveal the heavenly Ark of the Covenant. In the Old Testament, the ark symbolized God's presence. It was put into the temple behind the curtain to the Holy of Holies. The only person who could see it was the High Priest who went in once a year. But now the temple is opened for all to see the ark symbolizing this coming time of close access to God's very presence. All in all, that day will be a day like no other in all of history.

Did you notice the past tense verbs describing this day? The 24 Elders talk as if this day has already happened. "You have taken your great power and begun to reign – not you will take power and begin to reign. Your wrath has come not will come. The time came for the dead to be judged not will come. The time came for rewarding your people. How can the 24 Elders talk about the future in the past tense? They are so certain that these events will occur that they talk about them as if they have already happened. It is absolutely certain that the 7th trumpet will be blown and history will end. There's no doubt.

But until that day, how can we live? **Rest in the comfort that God will right all wrongs and shatter the oppressors.** The grief and hardship you have suffered at the hands of others will not be overlooked. This world ultimately belongs to God and He will right all the wrongs of history in the Day of Judgment. .

Worship God because of His coming intervention to rule over heaven and earth. There's no other person in all of history who has ruled the entire world in a way that the subjects want to live under that rule. God will reign and overcome all who oppress and destroy. Our calling is to at least place our lives under God's good reign even if others do not. **Keep going by God's strength because God will reward both small and great (11:18).** This is our great motivation

and purpose of life – to live for the glory of God. To do whatever you do to the glory of God; Change a diaper; bath a child; rock them to sleep; get up to feed them; drive them to their activity; listen to their worries; show them the faith; teach them the ways of the Lord. We receive grace and strength to live like this, because Jesus endured a suffering He didn't deserve so we could live a forgiven life that we didn't deserve. Though our lives are hard, we look forward to this glorious day because of Him. So live to His glory with all that you have and are until He returns or calls you home.