

“THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 11:15-19

Introduction.

For six days the people of Israel marched around the city of Jericho in silence. But on the seventh day, seven priest carrying seven trumpets before the ark of the covenant let out a great blast from the ram’s horns and the people gave a great shout and the walls of Jericho fell down and the people of God entered the Promise Land, the land of God’s covenant promise.

When John saw in his vision the seventh angel blowing the seventh trumpet there were loud shouts of many voices in heaven, and the promised kingdom of Christ was ushered in and the temple of heaven was opened up with its ark of the covenant.

The entering of the Promised Land so long ago was a foreshadowing of God’s people entering the kingdom of Christ. The mystery the prophets had predicted was now fulfilled.

Revelation 10:7 in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

The trumpet announcing the kingdom of Christ, vs. 15.

John heard loud voices, either the voices of angelic hosts or the hosts of saints around the throne or the 24 elders fall before the throne, or all of the above.

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

Can you hear those words from the *Hallelujah Chorus* in Handel’s Messiah? Remember how it builds to a great climax, “and He shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords, hallelujah, hallelujah.” That must be as close as anything on earth to what it will really be like in heaven. The majesty of the music matches the majesty of the reality. And I am sure it is only an appetizer at best, a foretaste.

But what does this mean? Isn’t Christ God, isn’t He always the Lord over the whole earth?

We know that in a sense Satan rules the earth. Remember at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Satan:

Matthew 4:8-9 The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

In the NT Satan is called “the god of this world” (II Corinthians 4:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) and “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31).

I John 5:19 the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

“The kingdom of the world” is this world under Satan’s influence in rebellion and sin.

But now the end of his rule and reign has come and Christ lays claim to all that is His. Now comes the over throw of Satan and all of God’s enemies and the victory and universal rule of Christ.

Yes, God has always been sovereign over all the earth, but up to now it has been a rebellious earth. Now the rebellion is overthrown. Now “Thy will is done on earth as it is in heaven.”

“When the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ there will be no more lawlessness, no more rebellion, no more brokenness, no more injustice, and no more unrighteousness” (Kevin DeYoung).

An analogy of this in our own country is when we elect a president on the first Tuesday of November but his presidency doesn’t officially begin until January 20. He has won, he is elected, he is already but not yet. So with Christ, He was won the victory and He is king. For a time the opposition is still in place exerting its final throes of influence, but its days are numbered.

John’s vision is of that final day when “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

The response to the enthronement of Christ, vss. 16-18.

We first met the 24 elders in Revelation 4:4. Remember they represent the redeemed people of God from all ages, from the OT and the NT, from the time of the prophets and the time of the apostles, they are the symbol of the true church.

There are two parts to the elder’s response, the first part is expected, the second part is surprising.

We expect there to be *praise for God's glory* and majesty and power, that He rules and reigns on high.

Notice the change of the verbs. In Revelation 1 we heard: "Grace to you from Him who is and who was and who is to come." Now it's: "who is and who was."

The future has arrived and is now present. John is seeing the future described in the present tense. This is cause for worship.

But *praise for God's wrath*? Really? Is God's wrath something to worship, to praise, to give thanks for in church? Yes.

Their song echoes David's song in Psalm 2:

Psalm 2:1-6 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,

3 "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,

6 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

God will have the last laugh. The wrath of the nations is met with the wrath of God. *The punishment fits the crime*. They get what they deserve.

These are the ones who made war with the witnesses, who conquered and killed them and then celebrated over their dead bodies. Their celebration is short lived.

This is the last judgment, when the unrighteous and the righteous receive their just rewards. In verses 17-19 we have a little miniature summary of what will come in more detail in Revelation 19-22.

But this is a glimpse of how the best is yet to come. Can you imagine such a day when the wicked are no more, when sin and evil are destroyed, when temptation is defeated, when we will sing and fall down before the throne in praise and gratitude for God's grace and God's wrath?

How should we pray for wicked souls on earth?

My prayer is "God, change them or remove them. God, do a great and real work of grace by the power of your Spirit, or if in your judgment their wickedness is irredeemable then make their punishment swift. Glorify your mercy or glorify your justice, but in all things be glorified."

We know that by God's grace those who seem to us most evil can actually be trophies of His grace. So the Apostle Paul who was chief among sinners.

I Timothy 1:13-15 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

And we know that some who seem to us to be heaven bound are actually servants of hell.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

We recoil at these strong words, they are unpleasant to our ears. Should we ever desire such things? Are we overly sensitive in thinking such things have no part in our prayers or our religion or our thoughts of God? Are we morally superior to God with these kinds of thoughts?

Is not our aversion to such language a blindness to the wickedness of sin, the lack of true hatred for Satan and evil, a lack of understanding of and concern for the glory of God?

Should we not sometimes be like David to Goliath, “How dare you defy the living God?”

Every Jericho that stands between God’s people and God’s promises must fall. Every obstacle and hindrance to heaven will fall at the trumpet of God. Evil will be allowed to run its course and in the end self-destruct. Those who sought to destroy the earth are destroyed. Again the punishment fits the crime.

The saints reward.

Try to picture the very best day of your life, the happiest, most joyful, most perfect day of your life. Now multiply that by a thousand and you might be close to what this day of reward will be like. Christmas, Easter, your birthday and anniversary and best vacation all rolled into one.

God knows His own, from the least to the greatest. And He is the rewarder of all who fear Him and seek Him.

The revealing of the ark of the covenant, vs. 19.

This is God’s response to the response of the elders. He opens up the temple of heaven to reveal the ark of His covenant.

Remember last week I mentioned the two other interpretations of Revelation. The Preterist or past perspective that says most of Revelation took place already around the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The futurist or dispensational position says that most of Revelation is yet in the distant future. They take this text to mean that there is going to be a rebuilding of a millennial temple on the old site in Jerusalem.

But the temple on earth was only temporary until a better temple could come, a true temple, Christ's body, the church. Christ's blood rendered the temple obsolete, unnecessary. The new covenant is in Christ's blood and it is a better and more lasting covenant.

The entire book of Hebrews stands against this position.

This opening is the original temple in heaven after which the temple on earth was modeled. The Holy of Holies was the most holy part of the temple and the ark was the most holy thing in the Holy of Holies.

How is it that we are allowed to see into the holy of holies, that place that only the great High Priest entered? Because now Christ is our great High Priest and He has torn the veil in His blood.

The ark is the symbol of God's favor and presence with His people. His people are now in heaven.

This is a vision, not a statement about what we will really see in heaven. This is a symbolic picture of the real, intimate, perfect fellowship there is between God and His covenant children.

This fellowship is based on and possible only because of the mercy seat or seat of atonement, because of the blood of Jesus. This is the covenant of grace that we are under. This is the assurance that our sins are atoned for and forgiven, that God's covenant is permanent. The work of Christ is finished.

When the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Christ, then the favor and presence of God will be with all His people, on earth and in heaven. What we had in the garden before the fall will be restored and never to be taken away again.

How many times has "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven" been prayed? Millions of times, even billions of times. This vision is the answer to those prayers and an encouragement to continue to boldly pray that prayer. God hears and He will answer.

This is a picture of the good news of the Gospel consummated, this is a picture of the best that is yet to come. This is our future and our hope.

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Blessed be the Lord God Almighty who is, who reigns forever more.