

His Kingdom Is Forever

Text: Revelation 11.15–19

Theme: When Christ returns He will reign forever and ever.

Introduction — Chapter 11.15–19 linchpin upon which Revelation turns

- Ch 1: Resurrected, glorified Christ revealed
- Ch 2 & 3: this Christ speaks to His church & says: Overcome!
- church wonders “How?” Jesus answers
- Ch 4 & 5: look to this omnipotent God and His Christ, the Lamb that was slain
- they rule over all things, and Jesus saves His people

Then, Ch 6 begins to show forth God’s judgment upon unbelievers in the world

- it is His righteous judgment for their stubborn, rebellious unbelief
- but it is also His mercy, giving them warning
- at the end of ch 6, the sixth seal is opened: the end is ready to come
- it all crescendos into a grand silence in ch 8
- when that seventh seal is broken, there is silence in all of heaven for about half an hour
- that is like the silence before the storm
- it’s like a grand masterpiece of music, having a rest in the score before the finale
- then, timpani roll and horn blast forth and strings thrum for all their worth

Now, here at end of cha 11, we have end of seven trumpets

- seals and trumpets run parallel to each other; not sequentially nor chronologically
- we see history, from first century to last in the seals
- then, backed up and given to see same thing in trumpets, just from different perspective
- we’ve seen pattern: four + three
- endings are similar, just intensified each time to stress: this is, indeed, the end
- and, as with each one, given to see how God keeps His church, His people safe
- interlude between sixth and seventh seal, as well as sixth and seventh trumpet
- while God pours out wrath upon death-dwellers, He seals & protects His own dear saints

One difference between sixth seal and sixth trumpet however

- end of seals: crescendos into silence, ch. 8
- end of trumpets: crescendos, not into silence, but into singing and shouting
- why this difference?
- because we’re given to see the finale: Christ come to earth
- and of course all heaven and earth break into singing
- when Christ comes again, He will reign forever and ever

These verses, then, like linchpin: all swings on this point

- been building up to this point
- what follows, flows out of this, showing on other side of this, how it got here & how it ends
- like a large “X”, comes to point and goes out again to show what God is doing
- and what we see above all is when Christ returns He will reign forever and ever

It all begins with seventh trumpet and loud voices in heaven as...

I. HIS KINGDOM COMES, v. 15

- seventh trumpet sounds and loud voices sing out
- could be angelic multitude; could be all the saints in heaven

- could just be shouting; could be singing at top of voices
- but arranged in poetic form, so most likely an old hymn
- and they sing: **The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.**

1. What a climatic peak

- some of you are familiar with Handel's Messiah
- most listen to it around Christmas, but oh so much more than Christmas
- it is so worshipful, it is biblical, it is musically theological
- takes you from prophecies of Messiah, to His birth, and all the way to His second coming
- probably most famous portion is the Hallelujah Chorus
- not the end, but near that
- end is grand finale "Worthy is the Lamb who was Slain" followed by glorious "Amen"
- but Hallelujah Chorus masterfully woven into whole
- 4-5 songs leading up to it are from Psalm 2
- nations rage, try to break bonds of God's holiness & righteousness
- Lord laughs at them in derision, then breaks them with a rod of iron
- all this conflict waged between God & earth-dwellers...just like we've seen in Revelation
- and then... "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth"
- we love that part, but it keeps getting better
- orchestra & chorale go all pianissimo and legato: the kingdom of this world...has become
- and THEN! Blaring forth: the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ
- and He shall reign for ever and ever
- oh, brothers and sisters, it is so full of gospel good news and delightful theology
- both for Handel, and for John in Revelation, this is the turning point
- the kingdom of our Lord! And He shall reign for ever and ever

2. What is the kingdom of this world?

- note it says "kingdom" not "kingdoms" — all about one kingdom, not plural nations
- this kingdom, talking this way, is just how the world works
- whatever rules and has power in this world: that's the kingdom overall
- 1 John 2.16 says: **"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"**
- that's the world, isn't it: lust of the flesh, desire of the eyes, and the pride of life
- that's what shapes, defines, reigns in this world
- it's not the world that God created, but it is the world in rebellion against God
- things are simply not as they were supposed to be
- good news is this: one day, the way things should be is the way things will be
- the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord

3. What is the kingdom of our Lord?

1) some say it is just a matter of ethics and morals

- Jesus came to announce the way in which He wants you to live
- then they cite the Sermon on the Mount and say: Go live this way
- well, it's not wrong, but it is woefully inadequate by itself
- the problem? We can't live that way, so this is just more bad news for you and me

2) others say the kingdom is about what's going on in your heart

- it's all experiential, pietistic: get in touch with your spiritual side
- well, again, it's not completely wrong, but also inadequate; it's not enough
- we need to know Jesus and what He's done

3) and then there are those who view kingdom as only eschatological: last things

- the kingdom is only when God ushers in Christ's final reign and rule
- we'll never see it in this world, but only in the next
- well, just like previous two: it falls short of what Scripture actually says

4) need all three together

- shorter way of describing kingdom of God: it's His reign and rule
- Kingdom is about God having sway over society, our hearts, and our allegiances
- currently, kingdom of this world seems to hold sway
- when kingdom becomes that of our Lord: no more impurity, lawlessness, unbelief
- no more injustice, unrighteousness — no more sin
- all things will be set right — the way God wants things to be will be the way things are

4. Present or future?

- here now? Or waiting for it to arrive?
- yes; both — kingdom is the already and the not yet
- only way we can make sense of gospels, Paul's letters and Revelation
- Matthew 4.17: **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"**
- Luke 17: Jesus tells Pharisees, when asked when kingdom will come: it is among you
- in other words: it's here; I am the one who brings it right here before you
- Matthew 6.10: **Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**
- Jesus says the kingdom is here, but also to pray that it will come: now & not yet
- a bit like our presidential elections: elected in Nov, but not inaugurate until Jan. 20
- we live between the cross and the consummation
- it's how our salvation works: you have been saved, are being saved, and will be finally saved
- you were made holy, are being made holy, and will be ultimately made holy
- this is what the kingdom of God is

5. Something to sing about

- kingdom is here: Christ came, defeated devil at the cross and the empty tomb
- He is reigning and ruling, but not in all it's glorious fullness just yet
- 1 Corinthians 15 tells us all His enemies must be subdued under His feet
- many in this world dispute His crown; some still in unchecked rebellion
- but when that seventh trumpet sounds: no more delay, as saw in ch 10
- reign complete & unquestioned
- all will bow the knee and confess Jesus Christ as Lord
- and all His people will sing and rejoice, we'll sing and shout the victory

This is what we wait for: the King and His Kingdom...

II. WHEN IT ARRIVES, vv. 16–17

- reminded of throne room of heaven in ch. 4 with twenty-four elders here
- falling down around the throne & worship God Almighty
- then we see why they worship in this manner

1. the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth

- first, this is the Lord God Almighty
- omnipotent: all powerful, no one mightier, no one can overthrow Him
- on that day, the Lord will take power
- nations will no longer rage against Him
- saints will no longer suffer for Him but be rewarded
- the destroyers of the earth will be destroyed
- and God Himself will dwell with His people
- get a much clearer picture when we get to Revelation 19
- are you ready for God's King, Jesus Christ, to come?
- good; but are you bowing the knee to Him now?
- our problem as American Christians is we don't much like kings
- 1776 was all about throwing off oppressive yoke of a king we would no longer tolerate
- you've seen flags: Don't tread on me, Liberty or death
- one said: We serve no sovereign
- I wonder how much of that flavors our allegiance to King Jesus
- Jesus is all fine as Savior, shepherd, friend
- but His Lordship is something altogether different: He is King and we must bow the knee
- the Lord God Almighty reigns

2. Who is and who was

- back in Rev 1, we heard: who was, is and is to come
- not that here: why?
- because this vision is at the end: Jesus HAS come; no more future to wait for
- when 11.15–19 take place, when seventh trumpet sounds, the end is here
- no more waiting for Him to come: He's come and is here
- the future will become the present for all eternity
- like we sang back at our church picnic:
- **Where shall I be when that last trumpet sounds**
Where shall I be when it sounds so loud
When it sounds so loud as to wake up the dead
Where shall I be when it sounds
- where will you be? In Christ? Or left out in utter darkness and misery for ever and ever?

When He comes, the declaration will be about...

III. JUDGMENTS AND REWARDS, VV. 18

- much of John's thought here is influenced by Psalm 2
- Psalm 2.1–6
Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying
"Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."
- now, this was partially fulfilled with Jesus came
- but the nations raged and killed that Deliverer...or so they thought
- God will always have the last laugh
- He gets the final say in all things, over His enemies and over the nations

- the resurrection validated all that Jesus said, taught, and did in dying on the cross
 - but it also guaranteed the victory at last when He comes
 - God's wrath will come at last: justice will be served one final time for all eternity
 - this is why passages such as this hold Christians, churches in nations that persecute them
 - when threatened with loss of freedom, family, possessions or even life: this is their anchor
 - they know that God & His Sovereign King Jesus will break those nations with rod of iron
 - so nations will be judged
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- but His saints will be rewarded
 - this will not be because we earned it; no merit here
 - no, this is like our inheritance: because we belong to Christ, this is what will be given to us
 - we don't think this way anywhere near enough, and we should
 - we should be like when I was a kid about a month prior to Christmas
 - JC Penney catalog, Sears catalog, Montgomery Wards catalog had come
 - all the pages in the toy section were dog-eared and pictures were circled
 - and then right before that big day: heart pounded with anticipation
 - was it selfish? I suppose it might have been
 - but what happens to our appetites as adult Christians? We lose that hunger for heaven
 - stuff of this world holds us too strongly
 - let go of that and hunger for heaven like child waits for Christmas
 - God will not be disappointed because you expected too much from Him at that day
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- you've heard it said: eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth
 - well, those who seek to destroy what God has done will be destroyed on that day
 - God's justice will be carried out
 - if you are one who is in Christ, however, know this
 - God poked Christ in the eye, knocked out His teeth...for you, who died in your place
 - saints rejoice at this; earth-dwellers will call upon the mountains to fall upon them

Lastly, we need to see...

IV. THE ARK = GOD'S ETERNAL PRESENCE, v. 19

- I wish I had time to make a more complete connection, but think of Jericho for a moment
- God's people had wandered in a wilderness and were about to enter God's provided rest
- Joshua 6, they come to Jericho, first of God's enemies to be dealt with
- read how seven priests for seven days would have seven trumpets, march and blow one time
- behind them, the ark of God is carried: why?
- this was the powerful picture of God's presence with them: Jehovah Shammah: Lord is there
- then, on seventh day, march around seven times (you get picture of completion, don't you?)
- march quietly until seventh time: then trumpets blew, people shouted, God delivered!
- that's what's happening here: seventh trumpet sounds & God delivers, routs His enemies
- God's creatures and people shout out praise to God
- but note what it is that John sees in heaven: temple and ark
- not literal, no need for it; Jesus took care of all that, remember?
- but "where" is God? In heaven. Jehovah Shammah: the Lord is there
- but where will He be and where will we be?
- He will be with us and we will be with Him
- Jesus Emmanuel for ever and ever
- Rev 4, we saw door in heaven open, God's there with lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder
- next to throne was Lamb slain, taking scrolls & opening up God's plan for history til the end

- now, here we are: at the end and this is what we see
- all that could be called a theophany: an appearing of God
- but when the end comes, no more theophany: God will be with us indeed
- where will you be when that last trumpet sounds?

Conclusion – Joy to the World

- we think of this as a Christmas hymn, don't we?
- but it's not; in fact, if you really pay attention to the words, Jesus' birth never mentioned
- not a Christmas song; it is a Kingdom of God come to earth song
- talks about Christ coming, reigning and that rule holds sway over everything on earth
- Joy to the World is a Revelation 11 kind of song
- so, we're going to close with that
- and may our hearts be filled with the hungry kind of joy that anticipates His coming