

Rev. 11:14-19, The Third Woe
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Overview

1. Revelation 4-16 is built around three series of sevens (seals, trumpets, bowls).
2. Each of these begins with a vision in heaven (ch. 4-5; 8:1-6; ch. 15).
3. The seventh seal unfolds into the seven trumpets (8:1-6)
 - a) Leads us to expect that the seventh trumpet unfolds into the seven bowls---but what about ch. 12-14?
 - b) Note similarities between seventh trumpet (11:14-19) and ch. 15.
 - 1) Heavenly setting
 - 2) Hymn by the redeemed
 - 3) Hymn looks forward to God's judgment
 - 4) Heavenly temple is open for judgment.
 - c) Suggests that we are faced with an external inclusio. And in fact ch. 12-14 will be found to provide background history and theology to help us understand the bowls.
4. Three parts to this heavenly vision
 - a) General announcement by "great voices"
 - b) Praise from the 24 elders whom we met in ch. 4
 - c) Vision of the temple of God (first time seen in Rev.)

A. 15, The Great Voices

1. Where is the action? In heaven. With the two witnesses, we have left behind the earthly scene of judgment and reentered the heavenly throne room. This is an important alternation, reminding us of the importance of assessing earthly events in the light of heavenly decrees. Col. 3, "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
2. Who speaks? "Great voices"
 - a) "Great voice" is frequent in Rev, and can apply to things spoken by different classes of beings.
 - 1) 1:10, an angel (recall discussion)
 - 2) 16:17, comes from temple of God; appears to be God (and so the phrase is applied in Deut. 5:22);
 - 3) 19:1, said to be "much people."
 - 4) Other references (either God or angel):
 - a> 11:12, summons witnesses to heaven
 - b> 16:1, dispatches the bowls
 - c> 21:3, declares God's residence with men
 - b) This is the only plural occurrence. God seems to be excluded by "our Lord," but might be angels (who at least can say "our

God," 7:3) and men. The plural marks it as a matter of particular emphasis.

3. What do they say?

- a) MT differs from AV here. Not plural "kingdoms" (e.g., England, Germany, France, the US), but singular "kingdom," in the abstract sense of "sovereignty, rule."
- b) Inchoative sense: "has become." God is always sovereign over all of his creation, but it has pleased him to delegate the immediate rule over this earth to Satan, "the god of this world," and so God's people have been praying for two thousand years, "may thy kingdom come, may thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." The text celebrates the answer to this prayer and the end of Satan's world system: "Authority over this physical world has come into the possession of our Lord and of his Christ."
- c) This new state of affairs will never end. "He shall reign for ever and ever."
- d) *Application*: We must never forget two things: Satan has leave to rule now, for a limited time; and our God will one day take the throne and rule forever. The first fact (ignored by amillennialism) reminds us that no human government is perfect and statism is wrong; we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The second shows us why it is folly to serve Satan; he will ultimately lose.

B. 16-18, The Praise of the Elders

Focuses on two events: earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God, and judgment of the dead.

1. 17, They give thanks for what the great voices have revealed.

- a) In MT, God is called "who is and who was," but not (in contrast with 1:8; 4:8) "who is to come." The voices have revealed that he has come; what was future is now present.
- b) He has taken his power and reigned. Useful distinction between God's potential (power) and his actual intervention (reign).

2. 18, the coming judgment.

- a) God's wrathful response to the wrath of sinners against him. Never let the concept of love of God cause you to forget his wrath. He is "angry with the wicked every day," Psa. 7:11, and that wrath will one day be unleashed in his judgment.
- b) The focus here is on his judgment of the dead. Amplified in two directions:
 - 1) Reward of his people. Who are they?
Cf. 19:5, with two members: "servants and those who fear ...". There, the second seems epexegetical. Could be here

as well, but that would require "prophets" to be in a universal sense: difficult, though perhaps Num. 11:29 and Matt. 10:41 could justify it. Alternatively, need to distinguish not only the first two members, but also the second two, since there is no difference in the construction to indicate a shift from the copulative use of _kai_ to the epexegetical.

- a> "Thy servants the prophets." Standard OT expression (17x; in NT only here and 10:7) for the prophets. Perhaps these are in focus because of the two witnesses who prophesy in the first part of the chapter.
- b> "Saints." A broader term that includes and goes beyond prophets. Joined with prophets in 16:6 and 18:24 as those who are martyred. Specifically refers to those whom the Spirit of God has separated from the world. Applies to all believers, even those who are not prophets. And yet, John draws an even larger circle.
- c> "Those who fear thy name, small and great." Cf. Cornelius (Acts 10:22) and the proselytes in the Synagogue (Acts 13:16, 26). Perhaps a reference to those inclining toward the Lord, but who have not yet received baptism and been admitted to the Lord's Table. He knows their hearts, and takes care of the loose ends.
- d> *Need a study of multiple _kai_'s to see if we can shift between copulative and epexegetical in a single series.*

2) Destruction of those who destroy (corrupt, *diaphtheirw*) the earth. The original "green" movement. We are so worried about CO2 and global warming; in God's eyes, sin pollutes the land.

a> Num 35:33, murder

b> Jer 3:9, adultery

c> More generally, Gen. 3:17, "cursed is the ground for thy sake."

Interesting that God focuses on this aspect of their sin rather than, say, their rebellion against him) as the grounds for judgment. Man has spoiled God's beautiful creation; God will judge him for it, and then restore it to its edenic condition. Fits very naturally with the notion of a physical kingdom of God on earth.

C. 19, The Heavenly Temple

1. The temple: explicitly located "in heaven." Not the earthly one that John was commanded to measure at the start of the chapter.
2. Ark of his covenant:
 - a) 2 Chron. 5:1-10, installed by Solomon in the temple in Jerusalem.
 - b) 2 Chron. 35:3, still associated with the temple at the time of

Josiah. This is the last time in Israel's history that it is seen. Disappears at the time of the Babylonian captivity--was it taken into captivity? Or hidden by Jeremiah, as Jewish legend says?

c) Jewish tradition holds that it will reappear at the time of Messiah's coming. Its appearance here probably signifies that the end is at hand.

3. The loud noises, cf. 4:5; 8:5; 16:18. The sign that we are at the start of a new cycle.