

My children are young and constantly asking questions. One day they kept asking me how things worked and over and over I would say I don't know. Until Calvin got a little frustrated and exclaimed "Do you know anything?" Maybe that is how you have felt as I have preached through Revelation. Maybe you were excited in the beginning but have been disappointed because I have less answers than you may have imagined. Or I keep mentioning so many different interpretations, it makes it seem like we can't know anything about this book.

But this week we come to the seventh trumpet. And this appears to not just be the last of the seven trumpets, but the end of the book. Because this describes what will happen when Christ returns.

And I have described before that this whole book is about the Kingdom of God. And we know what the kingdom of God will be like. We know what the end says. And so this morning we will talk about three things we know for sure about the kingdom of God based on Revelation 11:15-19.

I. The kingdom of God will come into the world (v. 15)

God's kingdom is coming.

No matter what your interpretation is of Revelation, that is the main idea of this book.

The kingdom of God is coming into the world.

That is true whether you think this book is about the future, the past, or the right now.

The whole story of the Bible is the story of God's kingdom coming into the world and Revelation is the climax and the finale of that story.

Verse 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."

It begins with the angel blowing the trumpet.

Then voices declare the kingdom has come in the world.

The way it's phrased is significant.

It does not just say the kingdom of God has come.

It says the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Jesus.

It has been transformed.

What was the kingdom of man.

What was the kingdom of demons is now the kingdom of Jesus.

The kingdom of sin is now the kingdom of God.

Now Jesus will reign forever.

The kingdom of heaven is right now just spiritual.

It is hard to see at times these days.

We mostly get glimpses of it or have to see it by faith.

But on this day it will be obvious and clear.

Jesus will sit on a throne in a physical place all can see.

This is part of why I think that this trumpet comes at the end.

Because Jesus will only reign at the end of the book.

I think it's helpful for us to see as well, that this proclamation is a fulfillment of the Lord's prayer

The Lord's prayer is what Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

And he told them when you pray, pray like this "your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

That is not just a prayer for your life.

We pray a prayer that the will of God, the plan of God, would be accomplished, not just in the people of God but in the whole world.

It is a prayer that Earth would be turned into heaven.

A prayer that the Earth be transformed and remade.

It is a prayer that the Earth will be invaded by the kingdom of God.

The birth of Jesus and Bethlehem was when the kingdom of God truly began to invade the world

The church now, continues to preach spread the message of the kingdom of God.

But one day, the whole world will be covered with the kingdom.

This is our hope in Revelation, and this is what keeps us going.

Honestly, passages like this keep me motivated. I continue to study revelation and try to preach through it.

Cause it can be hard to try to unpack and figure out some of these weird images go together.

But it's encouraging to remember to recognize the story of Revelation is the story of God's kingdom coming to earth.

And this is something that we need to remember in our own life.

We need to remember it when we are discouraged because we see sin reign.

When we see the wicked prosper.

We see bad people get away with it.

We need to remember that the kingdom of God is coming.

II. The kingdom of God will pass out judgment (v. 16-18).

Verse 16, **"And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,**

The 24 elders once again lead humanity and worship of God.

Because when the kingdom of God comes the right response immediately is one of worship and admiration.

And what we have in the following verses is the content of their worship.

They praise God for what He is doing

Some of this is a good reminder of what worship should be should be.

The kinds of things we should say and sing.

They're describing what it is that we praise God for and why.

Verse 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.'"**

The worship begins by giving thanks.

But notice what is here and what is not.

They praise the God who is.

They praise the God who was.

But they don't praise Him for something else.

They do not praise the God who will come.

Which is what they normally have said throughout the book.

Because He is here right now.

He has come.

One day we will no longer talk about the coming of Jesus.

Because He will just be here.

And they praise Him for taking His power.

For taking His power and beginning to reign.

They praise Him for finally being in charge.

God is in control of the world.

He is reigning in heaven.

But one day He will come home to Earth to reign here.

Verse 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."**

This is the meat of our section.

The nations are raging.

This image is the nations' rebelling against God.

Their raging is like the tantrum of a toddler throwing everything in the room.

Or the rage of an addict who is being denied drugs.

All of their sin and rebellion is ultimately anger at God.

But one day, the time will come.

When the anger of the nations will be compared to the wrath of God.

And the wrath of God is almost always withheld from the world.

Until the book of Revelation.

This is one of the reasons I believe most of Revelation is fulfilled actually in the future.

Because I do believe God is withholding His wrath.

He is not currently pouring it out on the Earth.

But one day it will come.

The wrath of God is not something to be embarrassed by as Christians.

It is not God losing His temper or control over His emotions.

His wrath will come at the appropriate time.

And His wrath would be better understood as the righteous punishment of evil.

It is His justice.

And it will come at the end.

When all the living and the dead will be judged.

One day, every single thing will be brought into the light.

People have ideas of this judgment.

One of the popular misconceptions is that people's deeds will be weighed.

And if the good deeds outweigh the bad then we get rewarded with eternal life.

That is not how we will be judged.

We will be judged by God's standard.

This is a pass fail test.

Our good deeds are not weighed against our bad.

Instead, our lives are compared to the standard of God's righteousness and holiness.

Everything said or done or thought.

Or failed to do when we should've done something.

All of those are compared to the God who is perfect and holy and love and patient and kind.

And failure at any point means we are unworthy and unable to be in the presence of God.

That's what the judgment is.

And it is a judgment that nobody can pass.

No one is good enough, no matter how religious of kind you are or well together you have it or how generous you have been

No one is righteous enough on their own.

So what is our hope?

This is the gospel.

This is why Jesus came.

Jesus came down to earth to die in the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sin.

But also that His righteousness, His holiness, His perfect perfection could be credited to us.

That we could be imbued with His righteousness.

So that when it comes to the day of the judgment, God doesn't look at our lives and compare them to Jesus.

He looks at what Jesus has done for us and the answers that Jesus has put on the test and we pass.

Not because of what we have done,
but because of what Jesus Christ has done.

This is the gospel.

This is what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us.

The only way to pass the judgment of God is through Jesus.

And it is Grace.

It is not something that we earn.

It is not something that we deserve.

It is only something that can be given to us and has to be freely taken.

That's what we need to remember even as we try to follow Jesus that we can't earn heaven.

We cannot become righteous or become good people on our own account.

That can't happen through our own effort.

One day, every single person on earth will be judged.

Only those who have trusted in Christ will be rewarded.

Nothing else is good enough.

There are no other gods that can help you.

There's no one else who can take away your sin and there's no one else who can make you born again and make you righteous in the sight of God.

It is only a gift of Grace and it is only something that we can receive from Jesus.

This is a recognition that we must accept Christ as Savior or be punished.

This judgment and punishment seems to be eternal.

It is an eternity spent away from God

Which is what those who want nothing to do with Jesus have wanted.

They wanted nothing to do with God and now they will have nothing to do with God forever.

But it does seem that in the life to come, there are levels and degree of punishment just as there are levels and degrees of reward.

Everyone will be judged, but not everyone is punished equally.

My kids have been saying, "that's not fair."

Over and over again.

And they don't really know what it means they're just learning.

They say it anytime they don't like things.

Or they have to be disciplined.

Or just someone gets something and they don't.

They cry out that it's not fair.

My dad's response when I said it growing up was "the only thing that's fair is you in hell right now."

Which always seemed ridiculous, but as a parent I'm starting to understand it.

But the reality is that hell and the punishment of God is fair and it is just.

The person who lived a pretty good life.

Was very generous and never killed anybody never hurt anybody never forced themselves on anybody but just rejected Jesus cause they didn't find it credible and then died.

They still will face the judgment of God, and they will face eternal death, because even their life as good as it was nothing compared to the righteousness of God and the standard that God has asked us all the humanity to live.

OK with that person's punishment in the life to come is going to be less than another person who is especially wicked

There is eternal punishment for those who reject God it does not mean it is all the same

We see this with Jesus, who said those who reject the gospel will face a greater punishment than Sodom and Gomorrah.

Because those towns did do unbelievably wicked things, but they did not get the same blessings in the same opportunity in the same grace that these villages who heard Jesus and the kingdom proclaimed did.

Because they happened to see people who knew Jesus and proclaimed the kingdom and they rejected it and so their punishment will be worse.

His punishment will be just.

No one will experience one second more of pain than is right.

It also should be comforting to those of us to see wicked people get away with things.

Who see murders that go unsolved.

Who see rapist and pedophiles and abusers get away with everything and seemingly escape justice.

We see the rich and we see politicians.

We see the way they mistreat millions of people with devastating consequences. We wonder why God lets it happen.
Well, one day they will answer to God and they will get exactly what is coming to them.

There is judgment coming
Every single one of us will have to face the judgment of Jesus.

And we can go to that judgment, trying to do our own efforts.
Or we can go to the judgment, trusting and nothing more than the grace of Jesus.

That is the negative side of the judgment that is coming.
But there are always rewards.
There seem to be levels of rewards as well.

Just as all who have refused to trust in Jesus will be eternally punished
All who put their trust in Jesus will be eternally rewarded.
And the greatest reward is just getting to be in the new heavens and the new Earth with Jesus.

Our discipleship class has been going over this and talking about how it's gonna be very similar to the earth here, but even better.
We will know each other, we will retain our memories and our identities, and yet all of the pain and the suffering and the sickness of this life will be no more.

We will get to work and to play and to worship Jesus to do all the things in life that are good and beautiful, those will continue.

All of that is standard, but there is another reward

There does appear also to be levels of reward.

In a similar way that we don't know what the levels of punishment will be we don't know exactly what the level of reward will be.

There isn't a sticker chart that says bring five souls to Christ and then get a penthouse and a pet tiger.

But the encouragement that I want us to see is that these rewards mean that every part of our lives have meaning.

Not just when we put our faith in Jesus and we get baptized but all the time that we spent following Jesus.

All of that has a purpose.

Part of that purpose is recognizing every moment of obedience every step of faith is seen by God and acknowledged by God and matters and echoes into eternity.

This is why it mentions servants, prophets, and saints.

From the greatest to the smallest.

The rewards are not just for the evangelist who leads a great revival and leads thousands of people to Jesus.

Rewards are also for the man who was homeless who finds Jesus as he lays dying on the street and as one of his last acts on earth decides to share with someone else.

Every moment is seen by God it will be rewarded in the life to come.

Sometimes I hear Christians they want to hurry on to the next life.

One of the reasons to stay here is because we love Jesus and whatever we do here and we will be rewarded.

It is not meaningless.

One of my deepest-held convictions and something that has been life-changing for me is to recognize that God blesses and sees the ordinary. God will bless the people who follow Jesus when who serve him here in our community just as He rewards missionaries who go to unreached peoples.

The prayers from grandmother's for their grandchildren.

Those countless hours spent loving on babies in the nursery.

I don't know what gets rewarded the most or what they are.

But I do know, and it has been life-giving for me is to recognize that every moment that I spend obeying Jesus matters and it will matter forever.

When your time comes and you go to be with Jesus, you'll be glad for every minute that you spent in prayer and you may wish that you would spent more.

Maybe a better way to say it cause it's not that we will regret.

We wish we could do things differently.

But I think if we really understood the reality of the reward in the life to come, it would change how we live.

We would spend more time in prayer than we do.

We would spend more time meditating in God's words than we do.

We would probably give away more of money than we do.

We would probably be more generous and loving towards others.

Will share the gospel more and take great risks to tell people about Jesus.

We would encourage one another and build each other up more instead of just tearing each other down just for jokes.

So as we follow Jesus today, let us do so with our eyes on the prize at the end of the race

Would we run those who are running to win a prize.

Who are running as if every step matters.

Whether we are in last place or first.

We run to please the king knowing that every step taken following in the footsteps of Jesus will be rewarded.

III. The kingdom of God will bring God's presence (v. 19).

Verse 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."**

We have been discussing heaven a lot in our discipleship class.

About how we do know a lot more about it than most people think.

And our ultimate destination as followers of Jesus is not heaven but the new heavens and the new earth.

Which will be very similar to life on Earth now, just better in every way.

But there is one big thing about the new heavens and new earth that is mysterious.

It is hard to describe and hard to pinpoint.

It is the presence of God.

It will be the opening of the temple of God.

A place we have only seen in pale recreations.

Maybe we have seen pictures in books or models in a museum.

But it is nothing compared to this.

Even if you could go back in time and visit Solomon's temple.

Or the temple after Herod restored it.

It would be nothing compared to what this will be.

When the doors of the temple open and God comes forth.

When the ark of the covenant is seen again.

The ark of the covenant was lost long ago.

It has never been found, except in Indiana Jones movies.

But it was symbolic of the presence of God.

It was the place God dwelt.

It was the place grace and atonement for sins came from.

But it disappeared.

But on this day it will come again.

And with it comes the presence of God.

Which makes the stones cry out, the sky scream, and the ground itself shake.

This is the presence of God.

It will come and fill the earth fully and completely.

God once walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day.

On this day He will do it again.

His presence will always be with us.

The arrival of God's presence will fill you with joy like a child again.
It will fill you with wonder like the first time you looked at the stars and recognized the vastness of space.
It will fill you with love greater than your wedding day as you saw your spouse across the aisle.
It will fill you with gladness like the birth of your first child.
It will taste sweeter than the best piece of cake you have ever eaten.
It will be more beautiful than the view from the top of a mountain.
It will be the very presence of God.
He will return.
With all of the wonder that attends his coming.
The very ground will shake and the skies will burst.
Because they cannot help it.
The stones cry out that God has come home.

That is what we will see one day.
The new heavens will be a place greater than your wildest dreams because the presence of God is there.

Think about the best time you felt God's presence.
The worship song, or a powerful sermon.
Maybe it was a revival service.
Maybe it was while you were on a mission trip in a foreign country.
Maybe it was the day you got baptized.
Or perhaps the day you were saved.
Think about what it felt like when God's presence just overwhelmed you and you never wanted to leave.
That is what it will feel like all of the time.

The good news is that this is what all believers can see one day.
It is also something we can experience now.
The curtain has been torn.
God has come to be with His people.
Every time the church gathers together, God is here.

He is here now in our midst.

He also sends the Holy Spirit to live in you.
Just as the Earth is the temple of God.
You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.
This is a gift of the gospel and of faith.
It is not something that you earn it is something we recognize.

God does not just walk with us.
Christ is not just unified in us.
The Holy Spirit lives inside of you.
He is always with you.
He will never leave nor forsake you.

We should recognize His presence.
The gift of seeing who God is and where He is should change how we live.
Not because we are trying to earn something.
But because we recognize that we have company.
You act differently when people are in your house.
You put on pants and do your best to host.
Well, the kingdom of God and the presence of God is in you right now!
It is in you when you wake and in you when you fall asleep.
Do you recognize it?
And do you recognize that part of our mission right now as the witnesses
and ambassadors of God, is to bring His presence?
Everywhere you go, the Holy Spirit goes.
Everywhere you are, the kingdom of God goes forth.

We know plenty about Revelation.
The kingdom of God will come into the world bringing judgment and the
very presence of God.
May God's kingdom come.
May God's will be done.
On earth as it is in heaven.