

Praise for God's Eternal Reign

My life is coming to an end sooner rather than later," said 61-year-old Isaac to the X-ray technician helping him at the hospital.

Isaac was getting imaging done on his liver to see if the cancer had spread there. He had been battling colon cancer for three years. Isaac and his wife, Cassandra, were leaning hard on the Lord and trusting Him every step of this difficult way.

Isaac had always been the one who helped and sacrificed for others. Now, the two of them were having to depend on others. But Isaac's demeanor, attitude, and remarks were still positive and grabbed the attention of the young technician.

"You always seem to be in a good mood, Mr. Williams," said the young technician with an implied "why?" attached to it.

Isaac went on to briefly sum up for her the hope he had in Christ Jesus.

"Try as we might, we cannot live forever," he said with a laugh. "I've done things for others to help them, and people are doing that for me now. But someone sacrificed everything for me and that is Jesus Christ.

"What He did is going to last forever," Isaac continued, "and I'm thankful for that. I'm ready to see Him whenever He says, 'Come on in.' "

1. *What sacrificial act(s) have you observed someone do on behalf of another person?*

2. *In what ways might we show gratitude for a sacrificial act of kindness on our behalf?*

3. *How can we express our gratitude to Jesus for His sacrificial death to grant us eternal life?*

The Final Trumpet

Revelation 11:15-16, KJV

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.

Revelation 11:15-16, NIV

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God.

At this point in Revelation, angels have now blown seven trumpets after a seventh seal had been opened, thus releasing God's judgments on the earth.

The first four angels brought hail, fire, a burning mountain, and a falling star (chap. 8). A fifth trumpet announced stinging locusts, and the sixth trumpet announced warriors on horses (chap. 9). John was given a little scroll to eat (chap. 10), then was told to measure the temple of God (11:1-2) before two witnesses, who seem like Moses and Elijah, arrived to proclaim God's judgment (vss. 3-6). The "beast that comes up from the Abyss" killed them in Jerusalem, but they were resurrected to heaven as a great earthquake shook the city (vss. 7-14).

Then the seventh angel blows his trumpet, and countless worshipers announce that the world has become the kingdom of the Father, and of His Son, the "Messiah" (vs. 15). This is in keeping with the Old Testament, which says the Messiah of Israel will one day rule the world (see Isa. 9:6-7).

At this point, there are "loud voices in heaven" (vs. 15). It is likely that these voices were great not just in volume but

also in number. They undoubtedly included not only all the host of angels, but all heavenly beings as well as those saints already in heaven—certainly the 24 elders again (vs. 16) but also, at the very least, the great multitude of 7:9-17.

Together, these voices proclaimed that “the kingdom of the world,” or Satan, had finally come to an end, and that now, that “kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever” (vs. 15).

As John’s vision in Revelation was only at its halfway point—the war in heaven has not yet broken out (Rev. 12), much less the final battle on earth (Rev. 19)—there is considerable debate as to when this scene takes place. What is clear is that Christ had now been declared ruler of the world, not Satan, and with this declaration He was now ready to start his final conquest of all things on heaven and earth. Because of this, all of heaven rejoiced. Although Jesus’ victory had not yet been consummated, it was certain (as it always has been)—and now, it was imminent. And this reign would be eternal: “he will reign for ever and ever” (vs. 15).

John’s focus then shifted to the 24 elders, also previously discussed in Revelation 7:9-17. Again, these elders are apparently human in nature, and clearly possess authority over the inhabitants of the earth; the most popular interpretation is that they represented the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles (or some combination of Israel and the Church). Although seated on their own thrones, they too now “fell on their faces” to worship God (vs. 16). They recognized God’s ultimate authority over all things, as well as the fact that everything He has promised throughout His Word is now coming to fulfillment. Such truths are a comfort to believers as we experience harsh treatment from enemies of the faith.

4. *What happened when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet?*

5. *What did the voices in heaven declare?*

6. *What did the 24 elders do in response to this?*

The Elders Worship, and Final Judgment Begins

Revelation 11:17-19, KJV

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

As the 24 elders “fell on their faces and worshiped God” (vs. 16), they proclaim that the time of judgment has come for nations and individuals alike. They begin with thanksgiving, acknowledging the eternity of God. He no longer, in the words of Revelation 1:8, “is to come”—He has come! Therefore, the elders worship Jesus, who has

Revelation 11:17-19, NIV

⁷Saying: “We give thanks to you,

Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

¹⁸The nations were angry, and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead,

and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name,

both great and small— and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

now “taken [His] great power and begun to reign” fully over both heaven and earth (vs. 17).

“The nations were angry” (vs. 18): God had come to take back what was His, even as those nations that had rebelled against Him from the beginning of history continued in their rebellion. But it was of no consequence—the corrupters of the earth were about to be destroyed themselves. All false religion, persecution, exploitation, and immorality were about to be removed from the earth.

However, God had not come just to punish the rebellious but to reward His people, “both great and small” (vs. 18). Whatever other rewards would be involved, all those who revered His “name” were already being rewarded with eternity in God’s presence.

Then, “God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant” (vs. 19). With the advent of Jesus’ complete reign of heaven and earth, the temple of heaven could now be opened. However the ark of the covenant got to heaven, there is no dispute that it represents the throne of God Himself. With the opening of the temple came another display of God’s power, including lightning, thunder, an earthquake,

and hail—a scene not unlike God’s appearance to Moses in Exodus 19, shortly before God commissioned the earthly ark of the covenant. With this revealing of God’s glory and power, the final judgment of the earth could begin.



The seventh angel blows his trumpet in this leaf from a medieval manuscript of Revelation.

MET, The Cloisters Collection

7. What did the 24 elders say as they, too, worshiped?

8. Who was to be affected by God’s judgment?

9. How was God’s power and glory revealed in verse 19?

Victory in Jesus

As the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, John hears a multitude proclaim that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord God and His Messiah, Jesus Christ. These loud voices probably include all the angels, heavenly beings, and the 24 elders as well as saints already in heaven. Imagine the joy of those saints as they proclaim God's victory and Satan's rule over the earth comes to its final end!

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah will one day rule the world, and as Christians, this is our great hope. In the scene in Revelation, Christ is declared the Ruler of the world, and He begins His final conquest, which will lead to His eternal reign.

The 24 elders fall to their faces and worship God, praising Him for who He is and for His eternal reign over all. This passage gives us a glimpse of the fulfillment of our hope in God's future judgment. The time will come when He will judge nations and individuals, all those who have rebelled against Him and corrupted the earth. At the same time, those who revere God's name will be rewarded.

We live in hope and anticipation of this time to come, when God's presence and power will be fully revealed for all to see. Meanwhile, we participate in this glorious scene whenever we give thanks to Jesus for His eternal reign and victory over sin through His death on the Cross, because we know that the Lord is "enthroned as the Holy One" (Ps. 22:3).

10. *What is the significance of this scene before the throne of God?*

11. *Which aspect of worship described in these verses stands out most to you? Why?*

12. *How can we participate today in this scene, even though we are not yet in heaven?*

God Reveals Himself

Revelation provides a glimpse forward in time when God's eternal reign with His people will be proclaimed. John was allowed a glimpse into God's temple in heaven. The elders' words reveal God's power and the eternal nature of God's covenant.

► *Consider what God has revealed in Revelation about His presence, power, and eternal reign to answer these reflection questions: What does each description reveal about God's presence? How have you seen God put His power into action in your life or the lives of others? How have you allowed God to reign in your life? Praise God now for His eternal reign.*

KEY VERSE

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. —Revelation 11:15, KJV

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." —Revelation 11:15, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 15 through November 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 6:1-8—A Vision of Praise.
- Tues.** 1 Chronicles 16:23-34—Let the Heavens Be Glad.
- Wed.** Hebrews 1:5-14—Let All God's Angels Worship Him.
- Thurs.** Revelation 19:9-16—King of Kings, Lord of Lord's.
- Fri.** Revelation 19:17-21—God Judges the Wicked.
- Sat.** Zephaniah 3:14-20—The Lord Rejoices over You.
- Sun.** Revelation 19:1-8—The Lord Almighty Reigns.