

Revelation 11:15-19

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 0 0] where are we heading what's the end game and I mean the end game of everything the end game of history I know a few of you are beginning studies perhaps the Aberdeen University or Robert Gordon's University and you will be learning a whole bunch of stuff stuff that I know nothing about you will become I trust experts in your fields of study that will involve a little studying but as long as you put the hours in you will learn a whole bunch of stuff and I wish you well in those studies and everything that you learn and discover but I can tell you this your lecturers your professors clever though they are they won't give you an insight into where we are heading and what the end game is the end game of history that is beyond their remit but this morning we want to discover what God has to say about the end game about where we are heading as a human race where the earth is heading where history is heading the sounding of the seventh trumpet that we read about in Revelation announces the last day of the last days just to remind ourselves that through our our journey through Revelation we've been working on the understanding that the last days comprises that period of history that begins with the first coming of Jesus and ends with his second coming and these last days end with the last days singular the day when Jesus returns the day that ushers in the final consummation of the purposes of God and the dawn of the new heavens and the new earth and the seventh trumpet the sounding of the seventh trumpet will announce the dawn of that last day now this has been hinted that already in a previous chapter just in chapter 10 and in verse 7 we thought about this two or three weeks ago we we read there but in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet the mystery of God will be accomplished so even there we're already being hinted at that reality that all of God's purposes will will come to their fruition and will be accomplished and will be fulfilled as the seventh trumpet is sounded so what will happen on that day what are we told will follow the the sounding of the seventh trumpet let me suggest that there are three things that we find in these verses in chapter 11 perhaps there are more than three but three that I want to focus on or draw your attention to first of all we discover that a kingdom is established when the seventh trumpet is sounded a kingdom is established but then secondly we'll notice that in the passage we see that a king is identified and then thirdly the king begins his reign so a kingdom is established a king is identified and the king that king begins his reign first of all then a kingdom is established we read there in verse 15 of chapter 11 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 the angel sounds his trumpet and there are loud voices in heaven I don't know if you remember what we're told about the opening of the seventh seal which is two or three chapters back in revelation the seven seals are really just an alternative presentation of the same events as the seven

trumpets but you may recall that at the opening of the seventh seal we were told that there was silence in heaven and now we have quite a contrast of the seventh angel sounds his trumpet there are loud voices in heaven so what is it is it silence or loud voices well I think the silence anticipates and sets the stage for an eruption of loud voices of heavenly praise you could maybe think of it a bit like a minute silence in a football stadium that is followed by a deafening roar when that minute of silence ends it's a poor illustration but maybe in some way gives an idea of what is going on these things are not contradictory but both go together we're not explicitly told but it seems reasonable to identify the voices spoken of as belonging to the angelic host the angels in heaven but our principal interest is in what they say their praise speaks of a kingdom being established the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah now up to this point in in revelation we have been operating with with two kingdoms indeed the whole of the bible really operates on the basis of these two kingdoms the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of god the kingdom of god the kingdom of god as it is spoken of the kingdom of god as it is spoken of here in our passage refers to the enemies of god in their many manifestations throughout history wittingly or unwittingly serving the enemy serving satan the kingdom or this kingdom opposed to god has exercised and indeed in our time exercises real power and uses that power to oppose and persecute and sometimes even decimate god's people and we read much of that in revelation now what we have also seen as we have made our way through revelation is that the power of the kingdom of this world has ever been subject to the ultimate power of god and yet for all that this dark kingdom has in a real sense ruled and held sway in the world but when the seventh trumpet sounds no longer the sounding of the seventh trumpet marks the final and definitive defeat of the kingdom of this world god now takes for himself the rule which he formerly permitted satan to exercise the kingdom of the kingdom of god the kingdom of god the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah assumes total and unopposed dominion and every dissenting voice is silenced now in human conflict we can maybe take syria as an example you you hear of rebel strongholds that stubbornly persist even when one side in the case of syria the asad regime holds ever increasing sway the syrian conflict has been going on for so long maybe you've almost lost interest in it but if you have been following it even to a certain degree you'll know that the asad regime is little by little exercising and gaining dominion over the whole of the country but there are these rebel strongholds that we hear of not so when the seventh trumpet sounds no rebel strongholds every square inch of the cosmos will be under the unopposed sway of our lord and of his messiah this is the day anticipated in in daniel's vision that we read part of a few moments ago

a kingdom is established the kingdom is established one kingdom over all now of course we're looking forward to that day and in revelation we're told about it indeed in revelation it's described in the past tense because it's being written from the perspective of it having happened or or happening but we look forward to that day but that outcome that we've described was was the outcome ever in doubt you know in in life we can be in circumstances where the outcome is in doubt be that in matters of of great significance or matters of less significance just last weekend i was watching a football match that my son was playing in in baltimore in maryland and it was on the youtube channel of the college that they were playing against and from the very start of the game it was clear that the two teams were very well matched it was difficult to anticipate what the final result would be it could go either way and the first half was was eagerly fought nil nil right until two or three minutes before half time when sadly the other team scored a goal but you were thinking well this they could still turn this around they're so well matched there there are opportunities you still didn't know what the final outcome would be and then the second half started and it went two now you began to lose a little bit of hope they went three now you thought well yeah it does seem like the outcome is decided but then it was three one and then it was three two and suddenly you thought well no we don't know what the outcome is going to be this could still turn around we don't know what the outcome will be then there was a killer blow they went or two up but then immediately joseph's team scored it was four three and you're thinking oh they could still equalize they could still turn this around you didn't know the final outcome sadly it ended four three but the point is so often we don't know what the final outcome will be but when it comes to the end game of history we know the end outcome it is not in doubt god will defeat his enemies just as we are told in revelation it is not in doubt the outcome is definitive we don't know when it will be we're not told but we know that the kingdom of god will prevail the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah in this battle being played out on the canvas of history in which we are actors the the outcome is not in doubt and so believer i would say to you take heart and hold on so a kingdom is established but also in the passage we see that a king is identified and in some ways it's very obvious who the king is but let me just very briefly comment on this the king is identified who is the king of this kingdom what we're told there in the praise of the angelic hosts of the loud voices the kingdom of the world the world has become the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah we read that and we appear to have two kings or a shared kingship our lord and his messiah now in revelation unlike the rest of the new testament the name or or title lord almost invariably refers to god or god the father we have that in the same passage in verse 17 we give thanks to you lord god almighty and his or god's messiah or anointed one is of course jesus messiah jesus so this kingdom belongs to god the father and god the son but then notice what is said by the angels in their chorus of praise and it's a very significant detail that we find in the words that they pronounce in praise of god

the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah and then notice what is said and he will reign forever and ever he singular will reign the kingdom belongs to the lord and his god the king of the lord and his messiah but he will reign forever and ever god will reign the triune god will reign will reign he will reign not they will reign he will reign and he will reign forever and ever the eternal god reigns over his eternal kingdom so the king is identified our god our triune god it governs over this kingdom that is established and now we go on to really in what is in many ways the heart of the matter and that is the nature of this reign we're speaking about the king begins his reign now the loud voices have already flagged up this reality in their chorus of praise and he will reign forever and ever and the future points points points to the ongoing and eternal character of his reign but this is a reign that on that day will have begun but it is the praise of the 24 elders that sheds light on the nature of that rain or or rather what we could call the first act or expression of sovereign rule let's just examine what is said by the 24 elders there from verse 16 and following and the 24 elders who were seated on their thrones before god fell on their faces and worshipped god now we first met the 24 elders in chapter 4 and at that time suggested that they are angels who represent the the patriarchs and the apostles or the whole of the people of god and we'll stick with that identification though it's not critical to agree or disagree with whether that is the best identification of the 24 elders the fact is that they witness the fact is that they witness this epochal moment and they fall prostrate from their thrones and erupt in awestruck worship and what do they say we give thanks to you lord god almighty the one who is and who was well let's just stop there for a moment we give thanks to you lord god almighty the one who is and the one who was is there not something missing when you just read that you don't think well there's something missing here well let's just compare what they say in the manner they address god with what we read in the very first chapter of revelation in chapter 1 in verse 8 what do we read there in revelation chapter 1 in verse 8 let's read uh yeah revelation 1 verse 8 i am the alpha and the omega says the lord god who is and who was and who is to come the almighty you see what's missing the who is to come is missing why is it missing because he's already come he's already come and so there's no need to speak about him as the one who is to come because he has come the one who was the one who is but no longer the one who is to come but back to the content of the praise of the 24 elders because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign god has taken power at the time of his choosing and he has begun to reign what does god do as he begins to reign what is his first act of sovereign power and rule well we read there in the passage in verse 18 the time has come just in the second line of verse 18 the time has come the kairos of god the time has come for judging that is what he does the time has come for judging the dead god judges having taken control the inaugural event of god's kingdom is the final judgment so central to the day

that is sometimes called the day of judgment who are judged well in the passage we're told the time has come for judging the dead the dead which simply is to say that all who have lived without exception will be judged i think we can describe it as a given though it's not explicitly stated here that those living when that day dawns will also be judged the living and the dead as it is sometimes described all will be judged you will be judged what are the possible outcomes of this judgment well in the passage we find that two outcomes are identified reward or destruction the time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants and then we jump on to the end and for destroying those who destroy the earth so two outcomes are identified reward reward and destruction let's think of each in turn first of all for rewarding who are rewarded on that day all are there all who have ever lived all who have ever died will all be there and all those who are there all those who are subject to this judgment who are those who will be rewarded well we're told for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name both great and small sometimes it's wondered if if distinctions are being drawn between different subsets i suppose of those who are being rewarded so your servants the prophets your people those who revere your name but i think rather what we have here is a description that encompasses all of god's people with different language being used but that applies to all of god's people so even when it speaks of your servants the prophets i think they're in the light of what we saw last week at the beginning of chapter 11 where the two witnesses who are prophets represent all of god's people then as we come on to the second half of the same chapter here where it speaks of your servants the prophets i think we can reasonably conclude that that is speaking about all of god's people who speak god's truth in this world they will be rewarded all of your people the the word there is saints all of your saints all those who have been set aside by god as his own people they will be rewarded all those who revere your name indeed the the reverencing of his name is evidence of who we are it's evidence of our status as god's saints as god's people that is what we do we revere the name of the one we serve of the one who has saved us of the one who has chosen us of the one who has drawn him us to himself they are those who are rewarded it's not a reward that they have earned but a reward that they will be granted on the basis of their status as children of god as saints of the most high and we need to pause there for a moment and ask about a direct question what about you what about you will you be rewarded on that day what will determine if you are are you with god or are you against god have you become by faith in jesus part of god's family are you trusting in god's messiah the one provided for sinners such as you are have you put your trust in him have you enjoyed the forgiveness of sins that only he can grant if that is true of you then on that day you will be among those who are rewarded do you revere his name is your life live with

[20 : 21] all its failings and all its limitations and the many times that you fall short nonetheless is your life lived with a view to honoring and revering his name and lifting up his name all such will be rewarded it's the first outcome of that great event on that last day but there's another outcome that the vision identifies and identifies and it uses the language of destroying and for destroying those who destroy the earth now if this passage was the only passage that we had that spoke of that great and dreadful day and if this was the only verb that was employed to speak of what would happen on that day then we might conclude that this points to the destruction or annihilation of those who are enemies of god but when we bring to bear that the totality of the biblical data on the matter we know that it points in another direction namely that of defeat and of punishment for god's enemies the verb to destroy is perhaps used because of the symmetry with the the charge leveled against those destroyed and for destroying those who destroy the earth we'll come back to that symmetry in a moment but who are destroyed who are the objects of this very solemn outcome well we can pick up some of the clues in the vision in verse 18 we read the nations were angry and your wrath or your anger it's actually the same word or the same root word that is used for describing the nations and for describing god's wrath or anger the nations were angry and your anger has come who are destroyed all those who lived their lives angry with god the enemies of god it is the enemies of god who are destroyed or punished these enemies are charged we've noticed with destroying the earth which is an intriguing charge now it's certainly true that god has given us responsibility to care for the earth and we're doing a pretty poor job of it he has given us responsibility to care for the earth and to destroy the earth is a serious matter but given all that has gone before in the vision i think it's best to understand their destructive activity as referring to a way of life that is destructive and rapacious and selfish and self-centered and one that often victimizes god's people again this is something we've discovered time and time again throughout revelation such will be destroyed we should notice that this judgment though profoundly solemn it's not a happy subject very solemn subject but we should notice that this judgment is altogether equitable is altogether equitable it's altogether just we see the equity of god's judgment in the very symmetry of the language employed that we've already just highlighted in passing the nations were angry and your anger has come this is not a picture of god being or becoming angry being enraged or getting angry but rather the description of god settled and unyielding opposition to evil finding its just expression we see that symmetry again in the last expression of verse 18 the time has come for destroying those who destroy the earth the punishment fits the crime it is sullen judgment but it is just it is equitable it is altogether fair what about you you'll be there on that day we'll all be there we will be rewarded or we will be destroyed we will be vindicated or we will be condemned a kingdom is established a king is identified and the king begins his reign

but there is one further insight given in our passage of what will happen on that day now let's just close by noticing that further insight in the final verse in verse 19 we read then god's temple in heaven was opened and within his temple was seen the ark of the covenant the temple god's dwelling place is opened for his people that they might dwell with him this is the their reward this is the heart of their reward to dwell with him but it is also open to let us see what is inside and in the vision an artifact a piece of furniture if you wish is identified as being visible inside this temple in heaven we're told it's the ark of the covenant now we know that in the in the tabernacle as the people of israel made their way through the desert or in the temple once it had been built we know that the ark of the covenant was housed in the in the holy of holies and represented god's presence with his people but represented also his covenant with his people hence the name the ark of the covenant and of course his covenant spoke of and reminded his people of his unbreakable promise or commitment to be with his people and to be fought his people and so it's significant that on that day when the temple of heaven is open what is seen there is the ark of the covenant everything that happens on the last day or the first day of this new kingdom that is established is to be explained by god keeping his promises and demonstrating his covenant faithfulness to his own god is making all things right for the apple of his eye his own blood-bought people and so i say to you believer take heart and take hold let us pray heavenly father we do thank you for your work we thank you that you are the one who does give us an insight into the end game the destination that history is driving towards we don't claim to know we don't need to know all the details there will be elements that are uh beyond our knowledge not your intention for us to know but what we need to know we know what we need to know you tell us and you tell us for our good to encourage us but also to warn us help us to heed your warning warnings that are delivered out of a care for us that we might be prepared we do thank you we do rejoice in the reality that you are the god who is sovereign and though you have chosen to allow the kingdoms of this world to exercise their evil power in our own day and we see the evidence of that the pain that it brings we do thank you that there is a day coming when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our lord and of his messiah and we look forward to that day and we indeed cry out come lord jesus heavenly father we do thank you then for this reality and for this hope and we pray that we would be among those who revere your name help us to live our lives honoring your name revering your name praising your name lifting your name up that others might see and be drawn to your name and to yourself and we pray these things in jesus name amen