

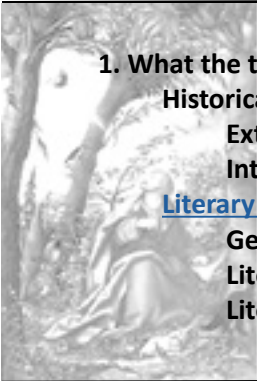


# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 29

Text: Rev. 11:15-19

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**QUICK LINKS**

**1. What the text meant.**

**Historical Aspects:**

- External History
- Internal History

**Literary Aspects:**

- Genre
- Literary Setting
- Literary Structure

**Exegesis of the Text:**

- A. [Angel blows His trumpet](#), v. 15a
- B. [Loud voices chant](#), v. 15b
- C. [Twenty-four elders chant](#), vv. 16-18
- D. [Heavenly temple opened](#), v. 19

**2. What the text means.**

# The Seventh Trumpet

### Greek NT

15 Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἄγγελος ἔσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγοντες· ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

16 Καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι [οἱ] ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους αὐτῶν ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ 17 λέγοντες· εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας. 18 καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν.

19 Καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ὤφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη.

### Gute Nachricht Bibel

15 Dann blies der siebte Engel seine Posaune. Da erhoben sich im Himmel laute Stimmen, die sagten: »Jetzt gehört die Herrschaft über die Erde unserem Gott und seinem Gesalbten\* König, und Gott wird in alle Ewigkeit regieren!«

16 Die vierundzwanzig Ältesten, die vor Gott auf ihren Thronen sitzen, warfen sich zu Boden und beteten Gott an. 17 Sie sagten: »Wir danken dir, Herr, unser Gott, du Herrscher der ganzen Welt, der du bist und der du warst! Du hast deine große Macht gebraucht und die Herrschaft angetreten! 18 Die Völker lehnten sich gegen dich auf; darum bist du zornig geworden. Jetzt ist die Zeit gekommen, Gericht zu halten über die Toten. Nun ist die Zeit der Belohnung da für deine Diener, die Propheten, und für dein ganzes heiliges Volk, alle, die deinen Namen ehren, Hohe und Niedrige. Nun ist die Zeit der Bestrafung gekommen für alle, die die Erde zugrunde richten: Jetzt werden sie selbst zugrunde gerichtet.«

19 Die Türen am Tempel Gottes im Himmel wurden geöffnet, sodass die Lade mit den Zeichen des Bundes zu sehen war. Zugleich blitzte es und donnerte und dröhnte; die Erde bebte und schwerer Hagel fiel nieder.

### NRSV

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 Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever."

16 Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 singing, "We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

### NLT

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: "The whole world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped him. 17 And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. 18 The nations were angry with you, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants. You will reward your prophets and your holy people, all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. And you will destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth."

19 Then, in heaven, the Temple of God was opened and the Ark of his covenant could be seen inside the Temple. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed and roared; there was a great hailstorm, and the world was shaken by a mighty earthquake.

## INTRODUCTION

After the pause of the Interlude in 10:1-11:14, John now brings us to the blowing of the seventh and final trumpet. This will trigger the beginning of the seven bowls of divine wrath in 15:1-16:21. But first celebration in heaven breaks out over the arrival of the very end. The pouring out of these bowls of wrath are celebrated as the assertion of God's sovereign reign over the earth and of this setting up the final event of the great day of final judgment especially of the wicked nations and of the rewarding of the saints of God.

Coming out of this heavenly celebration will be a series of extraordinary events in chapters twelve through fourteen beginning with the persecuting of the pregnant woman by the old dragon Satan. God's protection saves both the woman and her newly born Son by hiding them in the wilderness. War breaks out between the dragon and the angel Michael in the sky with Michael and his angelic army defeating the dragon and his demonic army. The old dragon seeks to find the woman on earth but she is safely hidden in the wilderness. She is saved from him when the earth opens its mouth and swallows the river of flood waters spewed out of the dragon's mouth. So the dragon decides to go after the other children of the woman, who are those holding the testimony of Jesus and keeping the commandments of God.

The dragon gets ready for war on the sand of a seashore and a beast emerges out of the sea in order to help the dragon. The amazed earth begins to worship both the dragon and the beast by proclaiming them invincible. If that's not enough a second beast emerges out of the earth to join the dragon and the first beast. Possessing all of the authority of the first beast it also dazzles people on earth and deceives them into worshipping it along with the dragon and first beast.

But standing on Mt. Zion in the earthly Jerusalem is the Lamb and with Him the 144,000 saints (cf. chapter 7). These celebrate the Lamb in devotion to Him. In the midst of this celebration, three angelic messengers fly over head with three distinct messages affirming the Lamb, calling upon the saints to endure suffering, and proclaiming the coming judgment of God upon those worshipping the beast. In climax God speaks out of heaven pronouncing a beatitude blessing upon those who have died in the Lord.

Next John sees the Son of Man with a golden crown and a sharp sickle in His hand seated on a cloud in the sky. The Lamb on Mt. Zion is now the Son of Man seated on a cloud in the sky. In apocalyptic vision those shifts are easy to make.

This is followed by three angels coming down out of the heavenly temple to where the Son of Man was in the sky. The first one urges the Son of Man to use

his sickle to harvest out the true people of God from corrupt humanity. The second angel also has a sickle in his hand and is urged by the third angel to use his sickle to begin the harvesting of the evil people from the earth. This harvest was thrown into a wine press outside Jerusalem and created a stream of blood as high as a horse's bridle for about 200 miles out from Jerusalem.

Now the seventh trumpet is ready to be blown in chapter fifteen when the wrath of God is unleashed in full force upon the earth. Seven angels emerge out of the heavenly temple and scatter the wrath of God like destructive fire across the earth in this final temporal judgment of God before the very end of human history.

If the Roman censor on Patmos bothered to read this far into the document of Revelation, can you image what was going through his mind by this point? Probably a lot of what goes through the minds of the few modern pagans who bother to read this book of the New Testament. "This is weird, strange stuff! It doesn't make a lick of sense to me! Anyone writing and reading this stuff can't be educated and thus a danger to the empire."

Now we focus on 11:15-19 which signals the beginning of all this!

### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

#### Historical Aspects:

As is typically the case the historical aspects play a role in establishing a backdrop against which to interpret the sacred text.

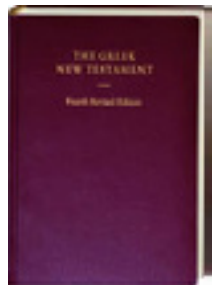
**External History.** In the history of the hand copying of this passage only one text variation surfaces that the editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed) felt was important enough to list. In verse seventeen copyists were divided over whether ὅτι should precede εἰληφας or whether it should be καὶ instead.<sup>1</sup>

The difference is between "for you have taken your great power" and "and you have taken your great power." The better reading contains ὅτι based on superior external evidence and also internal evidence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>{B} ὅτι κ<sup>2</sup>A 205 209 1611 1854 2053 2329 2351 Byz [P 046] it<sup>gig</sup> h vg<sup>ww</sup> st syr<sup>ph</sup> h cop<sup>sa</sup> eth Andrew; Cyprian Primasius // καὶ ὅτι P<sup>47</sup> κ\* C 2344 vg<sup>mss</sup> (arm) // et qui it<sup>ar</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup> (mss) καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὅτι 051 1006 1841 vg<sup>cl</sup> (cop<sup>bo</sup>) Tyconius (Beatus)

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>2</sup>cThe reading ὅτι has superior external evidence and it best explains the origin of the other readings. The addition of ὁ



Of course, many other variations of lesser significance surface in the comparison of the now existing manuscripts containing this passage. In the text apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed), some twenty-one places emerge where variations in the reading of the text can be found.<sup>3</sup> A combination of accidental



ἐρχόμενος (the one coming) before ὅτι is a typical Byzantine addition, in imitation of the three-part expression in 1:4, 8; see also 4:8. The reading καὶ ὅτι has good manuscript support, but the syntax is so difficult that it must be a mistake by a copyist.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 536.]

### <sup>3</sup>Offenbarung 11,15

\* λεγουσαι P<sup>47,115</sup> κ C 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2329. 2344 M<sup>A</sup> (the participle λέγοντες is replaced by the verb form)

| txt A 2053. 2351 M<sup>K</sup>

\* –νοντο αι –λαιαι 1 al (the singular ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία is replaced by the plural spellings)

\* αμην κ 2344 pc vg<sup>cl</sup> bo (after αἰώνων at the end of the sentence ἀμήν is inserted)

### Offenbarung 11,16

\* κ\* A 2053txt pc (the article οἱ before εἴκοσι is omitted)

\*<sup>1</sup> P<sup>47</sup> A 046. 1006. 1841 M<sup>A</sup> ([οἱ] before ἐνώπιον is omitted)

| txt κ C 051. 1611. 1854. 2053. 2329. 2344. 2351 M<sup>K</sup>

\* καθηνται P<sup>47</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> C 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2344 pc (alternative spelling for the participle καθημένοι)

| οἱ καθηνται κ\* M<sup>K</sup>

| txt A 051. 1854. 2329. (2351) M<sup>A</sup>

\* P<sup>47</sup> (ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους αὐτῶν is omitted)

\* και κ 1006. 1841 al (καὶ is inserted before ἔπεσαν)

### Offenbarung 11,17

\* (+ ο P<sup>47</sup>) –ιος P<sup>47</sup>(\*) κ pc (alternative spelling κύριε)

\* ο θεος P<sup>47</sup> (ὁ θεὸς is accidentally repeated before ὁ παντοκράτωρ)

\* και P<sup>47</sup> κ\* C 2344 pc ar vg<sup>ms</sup> (ὅτι is replaced)

| και ο ερχομενος 051. 1006. 1841 al vg<sup>cl</sup> (bo); Tyc (Bea)

| txt κ<sup>2</sup> A M lat sy

\* μενουσαν P<sup>47</sup> (μεγάλην is replaced)

### Offenbarung 11,18

\* –σθη P<sup>47</sup> κ\* (ὠργίσθησαν is replaced with alternative spelling)

\* κληρος C (καιρὸς is replaced)

\* 1 2 4 5 051. 1. 1854 al (the sequencing and spelling of τοῖς ἀγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις is altered)

| τους –ους κ. τους –νους (P<sup>47</sup>) A (2351) pc

| † τοις –ροις κ. τοις –λοις κ<sup>2</sup> M

| txt P<sup>47,115</sup>vid κ\* A C 2329. 2344. 2351 pc

\*<sup>1</sup> –ραντας C 051. 1611. 1854. 2329. 2344 pc sy (διαφθείροντας is replaced by alternative spelling)

### Offenbarung 11,19

\* P<sup>47</sup> κ 051 M sa<sup>ms</sup> bo<sup>pl</sup> (the ὁ before ἐν is omitted)

| txt P<sup>115</sup> A C 1006. 1841. 2329. 2351 pc it bo<sup>pl</sup>; Vic

\* εδοθη C (ᾠφθη is replaced)

\* του κυριου P<sup>47</sup> (2344) M<sup>K</sup> sy<sup>hmg</sup> sa (αὐτοῦ is replaced)

| του θεου κ pc h

\* M<sup>K</sup> (καὶ σεισμός is omitted)

mistakes and intentional efforts at stylistic improvement account for these variations. None of them significantly alter the meaning of the text. Plus, most of the variations occur in the later and less significant manuscript copies.

Consequently, we can exegete the adopted reading of the scripture text in the full confidence that it represents the most likely original reading.

**Internal History.** One of the interesting aspects here is the focus on ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *God’s temple in heaven*. This is in connection with the blowing of the seventh trumpet in heaven (v. 15). Earthly aspects play very little role in this passage. The time and space references occur in reference to actions and activities in heaven, rather than on earth. Thus they are more properly treated under the exegesis of the passage than here (cf. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14).

## Literary Aspects:

**Genre:** This passage continues the apocalyptic vision of Revelation and thus continues to exhibit the sometimes mysterious and seemingly illogical traits of this kind of ancient literature. The kaleidoscopic mindset, that perhaps can best characterize this way of thinking, comes full blown to the surface here. In what approaches a sub-genre unit, the blowing of the seventh trumpet does not immediately trigger the seven bowls of wrath, that the readers were conditioned to anticipate.

Rather, what we first encounter is something approaching a *‘throne vision’* comparable to chapters four and five, but with less detail. In fact two sets of heavenly characters (φωναὶ μεγάλα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, loud voices in heaven, v. 15 // 5:11ff.) and οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι, the 24 elders (v. 16 // 4:11) from the initial throne visions in chapters four and five reappear here. As is central to the throne vision patterns, the emphasis centers on offering up praise to God via chanting (λέγοντες, vv. 15b, 17a). The contents of both chants (vv. 15c, 17b-18) are both similar to those recorded in 4:8b, 11; 5:9-10, 12b, 13b, and yet distinctive from them as well. In chapter eleven the focus is on celebrating the very end of human history. Although John’s somewhat standardized verbs εἶδον, *I saw*, and ἤκουσα, *I heard*, that are loosely used in chapters four and five, are not found in chapter eleven, this is not unusual since even in four and five they are not used in formulaic fashion to introduce the chants of the groups in heaven.

[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 653–654.]



**Literary Setting:** The precise setting and its significance for 11:15-19 is not as easy to determine as has been the case for the majority of the text units up to this point. Clearly two subunits inside vv. 15-19 are present, vv. 15-18 and 19, but how do they fit in contextually?

Via content it is obvious that they follow the Interlude of 10:1-11:14 that stands between the sixth and seventh trumpet blowings. This much is clear. But the blowing of the seventh trumpet was supposed to usher in the seven bowls of wrath, which are described in 15:1-16:21.

Thus 12:1-14:20 stand between these two closely linked events. What is described here that delays the pouring out of God's wrath? Most of the depiction centers on the combat between warfare between Satan and the two beasts in collusion with him and the angel Michael leading a host of heavenly angels (12:1-13:18). The war begins ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (12:7) and then shifts εἰς τὴν γῆν (12:13). It centers on persecution of the γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον (12:1), who gives birth to a Son (12:5). All the people of the earth get caught up in this conflict. But Christ assembles the 144,000 saints on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (14:1) who worship Him in Jerusalem, while three angels fly through the sky above them encouraging them to faithfulness in their commitment to Christ (14:6-12). This is interrupted by a voice from heaven pronouncing a beatitude blessing on the martyrs (14:13).

The scene suddenly shifts to the sky where the Son of Man is coming down to earth with a sharp sickle for harvest day (14:14, 16). Three other angels quickly appear out of the heavenly temple with sickles and harvest the evil people who are thrown into the wine press of God's wrath (14:15-20). This creates a pool of blood "high as a horse's bridle" for about a 200 mile radius.

The beginning of chapter fifteen then introduces the out pouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath with the declaration ὅτι ἐν αὐταῖς ἐτελέσθη ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, *that with them is completed the wrath of God*. Thus the temporal judgments of God on earth are brought to an end. Everything from this point will focus on the eternal punishments of God for those sent to Hell.

Conceptually, what John does in this additional Interlude between the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and the implementing of the seven bowls of wrath (15:1-16:20) is reach back across the span of time with an apocalyptic depiction of the attempts of Satan to rid the world of Christ and of those on earth connected to Him. Of course it fails, but the struggle is real and intense. A worshipful celebration of God's power and victorious reign over earth sets the tone in 11:15-19 for the depiction of this struggle between Satan and Christ.

**Literary Structure:** The block diagram below in very literal English translation reflects visually the grammatical relationships internally of this text in the original Greek.

<sup>11.15</sup> And  
**356 the seventh angle blew;**  
 and  
**357 there were loud voices**  
 in heaven  
 saying,  
 Have become the kingdom of the world  
 | of our Lord  
 | and  
 | of His Christ,  
 | and  
 He will rule forever.

<sup>11.16</sup> And  
**358 the twenty-four elders . . . . fell**  
 who before God are sitting  
 in |their thrones  
 upon their faces

And  
**359 they worshipped God**  
<sup>11.17</sup> saying,  
 We give thanks to You,  
 | Lord God  
 | | the Almighty  
 | | Who is and Who was  
 | because You have received Your great power

11.18

| and  
 | You have ruled.  
 |  
 | and  
 the nations raged  
 | and  
 has come Your wrath  
 | and  
 the time for the dead to be raised  
 | and  
 to give the reward to Your servants  
 | the prophets  
 | and  
 | the saints  
 | and  
 | those fearing name  
 | your  
 | and  
 to destroy those destroying the earth.

11.19

And  
**360 was opened the temple of God**  
 in heaven  
 and  
**361 was seen the ark of His covenant**  
 in His temple  
 and  
**362 there were flashes of lightning**  
 and  
 rumblings  
 and  
 peals of thunders  
 and  
 an earthquake  
 and  
 large hail.

### Analysis of Rhetorical Structure:

In this pericope the internal structure is relatively clear. The seventh angel blows his trumpet (# 356) and a series of responses occur (#s 357-362).

First is the chant of the many loud voices (#357). This is followed by the worshipful chant of the twenty-four elders (#s 358-359). Finally the opening of the temple (# 360) exposes the ark of the covenant (# 361), which is followed by supernatural phenomena (# 362).

### Exegesis of the Text:

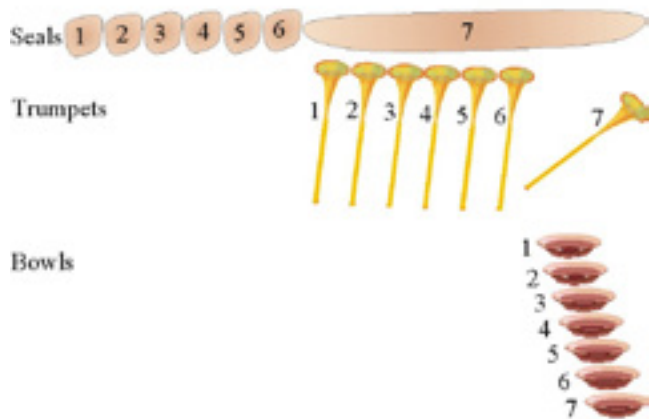
The basic twofold division above provides the most natural structure for exegeting 11:15-19. This is the pattern to be used.

#### A. The angel blows his trumpet, v. 15a

15 Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἄγγελος ἐσήλασεν·

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet,

After the pause of 10:1-11:14, the seventh angel is now given permission to blow his trumpet that signals a new set of events and activities. The setting is in heav-



en rather than on earth as has been the case during the preceding pause. And the introductory formula oriented statement used with the first six trumpets is repeated here with the appropriate specification of the number.

The function of the blowing of the trumpet here remains the same as in the previous six. It was to signal the occurrence of events and actions either in heaven or upon earth that were 'bundled' together in some

particular ‘package.’ Sometimes the inner connection of these items is clear, but often it is not obvious as to why various things are put together in a sequence of events.

Here the package centers on heavenly worship first by ‘loud voices’ (v. 15b) and then by the twenty-four elders (vv. 16-18). The ‘loud voices’ chant the central theological principle and the response is then given by the 24 elders. The nature of the chants by both groups is in the OT form of thanksgiving.<sup>4</sup> One major thrust of thanksgiving is a heavenly celebration of final judgment of the dead (v. 18, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι, and the time for judging the dead).

The third element of the ‘package’ is the opening of the inner sanctuary of the heavenly temple which was accompanied by flashes of lightning etc. (v. 19). All of this is designed to prepare John -- and ultimately his readers -- for the final, ultimate expression of divine wrath upon the earth. In literary function, this both brings to a conclusion the emphasis in vv. 15-18 and sets up the following sequence of events in 12:1-17.

But it should not be forgotten that a somewhat similar scene is described at the opening of the seventh seal on the scroll of God’s eternal will in 8:1-5,

8.1 Καὶ ὅταν ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἑβδόμην, ἐγένετο σιγὴ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ὡς ἡμιῶριον. 2 Καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους οἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστήκασιν, καὶ ἐδόθησαν αὐτοῖς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγες.

3 Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἦλθεν καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἔχων λιβανωτὸν χρυσοῦν, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ θυμιάματα πολλὰ, ἵνα δώσει ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. 4 καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ καπνὸς τῶν

<sup>4</sup>“Rev 11:15–18 consists of a two-part responsory hymn that juxtaposes the celebration of the reign of God with the final judgment in which all the dead are judged; the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. The first part is spoken by anonymous ‘loud voices in heaven’ (v 15b), while the response is given by the twenty-four elders (vv 17–18). Since the responsory hymn in vv 17–18 is introduced with the first-person plural verb εὐχαριστοῦμεν, ‘we give thanks’ (which only occurs here in Revelation; the noun εὐχαριστία, ‘thanksgiving,’ however, occurs twice in formulaic phrases in Rev 4:9; 7:12), it is reasonable to expect that the hymn will conform to the OT and early Jewish traditions of the song of thanksgiving.

“The OT contains both communal and individual songs of thanksgiving (Eissfeldt, Introduction, 120–24). OT thanksgiving songs, originally intended for use by individuals and groups in the temple, consist of three parts (Gunkel, Psalms, 17–19): (1) the description of the author’s distress, (2) the cry for help, and (3) the description of deliverance. Since both the individual song of thanksgiving and the thank offering are called תודה *tôdâ* (Jonah 2:10; Pss 50:14, 23; 107:22), the former probably originated as a verbal accompaniment to the latter and then became independent of it, particularly in the post-exilic period following the cessation of the temple cult.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 635–636.]

θυμιαμάτων ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. 5 καὶ εἴληφεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸν λιβανωτὸν καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός.

8.1 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

3 Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Both these scenes of worship grow out of the more detailed worship scenes in chapters four and five, which are foundational to all the subsequent scenes of worship.

## B. Loud voices chant praise, v. 15b

15b καὶ ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγοντες· ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

15b and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”

The uniqueness of ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι is the plural number rather than the singular form everywhere else in Revelation.<sup>5</sup> In the singular sometimes Christ

<sup>5</sup>“While the phrase φωνὴ μεγάλη, ‘great sound, loud voice,’ occurs frequently in Revelation in a number of connections, only here does the phrase occur in the plural of the sound of chanting or singing, though it is not at all clear why the plural is used. The closest parallel to 11:15a occurs in the hymnic introduction in 12:10, καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν, ‘and I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying’ (cf. 19:1). The phrase ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ‘in heaven,’ is given as the location where the seer hears the voices, and the same prepositional phrase occurs in 12:10 and 19:1, indicating the heavenly perspective of the seer and suggesting that these hymns could only be heard in the vicinity of the heavenly court (Jörns, Evangelium, 91). Elsewhere the earthly perspective of the seer is implied by the use of the phrase ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ‘from heaven’ (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:2, 13; 18:4). The climactic character of the seventh trumpet is anticipated in the angelic speech in 10:7, in which it is proclaimed that the secret plan of God, which he announced to his servants the prophets, will be revealed in the days when the seventh trumpet is sounded. The identity of the loud voices is left unspecified, and there is no reason to speculate with Swete (141) and Charles (1:293–94) that the voices are those of the

speaks in a loud voice (1:10, 15; 4:1), or an angel (5:2, 5:11, 12; 7:2; 10:3; 14:9, 15, 18; 18:2; 19:17), or one of the living creatures (6:1), or a heavenly eagle (8:13). On other occasions the voice of God comes through loudly (6:6; 19:5; 21:3). Several times the source of the loud voice is not identified directly: 12:10; 14:2, 13 16:1, 17; 18:4. Four times the φωναὶ are the rumblings of thunder either in heaven or in the sky above the earth: 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18. The source of the plural voices here in 11:15 most likely plays off the singular φωνῆς μεγάλης in 11:12 which reaches back to ἡ φωνή ἣν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν in 10:8 which uses a singular subject φωνή with two plural masculine participles λαλοῦσαν and λέγουσαν modifying the feminine relative ἣν using φωνή as antecedent, thus *the voice which speaks and says*. Such a basic violation of Greek grammar would stand out dramatically. But this comes out of the mysterious seven thunders speaking in 10:3, ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν φωνάς, *the seven thunders spoke in their own voices*. All of these very unusual references point to the voice of God and reach back to the foundational image in 4:5,

5 Καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ, καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καιόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,

5 Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

The Hebrew 'plural of majesty' concept seems clearly to lie in the background with the Hebrew and later Jewish tendency for direct references to God to mostly be in the plural form rather than in the singular.<sup>6</sup>

Significant is that the voice is located ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *in heaven*, rather than ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *out of heaven* (11:12). John now is back in heaven rather than on earth as in the previous scene.<sup>7</sup> And the celebration is focused in heaven as well.

The declaration of these loud voices is introduced

cherubim or with Lohmeyer (95) that the voices are those of the twenty-four elders (see Beckwith, 608). The introductory λέγοντες (masculine nominative plural participle) is a solecism since it modifies φωναὶ μεγάλαι, and therefore should be λέγουσαι (feminine nominative plural participle; see Note 11:15.b\*).<sup>8</sup> [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 637–638.]

<sup>6</sup>On a sidenote, never inside the NT does one find the direct reference ὁ θεὸς λέγει / εἶπε, *God says / said*.

<sup>7</sup>Note the signals of scene shift. John moves freely in his vision back and forth from earth to heaven and vice versa.

**In heaven:** ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *in heaven*: 4:2; 5:13; 8:1; 11:15, 19; 12:1, 3, 10; 15:1, 5; 19:1

**On earth:** ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *out of heaven*: 8:10; 9:1; 10:1, 4, 8; 11:12; 13:13; 14:2, 13; 16:21; 18:1, 4; 20:1; 21:2, 10

by the masculine plural participle λέγοντες again reaching in incorrect Greek back to φωναὶ, *voices*, which is feminine plural. And bothered several later copyists who changed it to the grammatically proper λέγουσαι.<sup>8</sup> Similar "corrections" surface at 4:1 and 9:13.

The declaration of these loud voices is twofold:

ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου  
τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ,  
καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

*The kingdom of the world has become  
that of our Lord and of His Christ  
and He will reign forever and ever.*

Again a few copyists were puzzled by the singular ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου, *the kingdom of the world has become*, and changed it into the much more common ἐγένοντο αἱ βασιλείαι τοῦ κόσμου, *the kingdoms of the world have become*.<sup>9</sup> This chant of victory here is comparable to similar ones in 7:10 and 12:10-12.

The use of the aorist ἐγένετο seems at first to assert this transfer of power as a past event. But contextually it more likely is projecting a future event with the such certainty as to be an already accomplished event.<sup>10</sup> Pity the poor Bible translators who must try to figure out how to express this in a modern language which has no such use of verb tenses!<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>P<sup>47.115</sup> κ C 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2329. 2344 M<sup>A</sup>

[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 653.]

<sup>9</sup>“Variants: (1) ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία] Andreas 94 025. (2) ἐγένοντο αἱ βασιλείαι] Andr a b c g h n 598 1773 2019. (3) omit ἐγένετο] Andr e.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 633.]

<sup>10</sup>“The theme of this song of victory is the kingship or rule of God, and the song consists of two lines connected by καί. The verb ἐγένετο is used to introduce a hymnic section only here and in 12:10 (where the kingship of God is also emphasized). Although ἐγένετο is an aorist and therefore refers to God’s assumption of kingship as a fact of the past, the context makes it clear that ἐγένετο is used proleptically, like the *perfectum propheticum*, ‘prophetic perfect,’ of a future event that prophetic certainty speaks of as an event of the past (GKC § 106n; Justin 1 Apol. 42.1). The initial position of ἐγένετο emphasizes the certainty of the final and complete eschatological rule of God.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 638.]

<sup>11</sup>The enormous variety of nuances of meanings possible to express with the ancient Greek aorist, perfect, and present tenses is a continuous nightmare for Bible translators working in modern western languages, all of which have nothing comparable to the vast majority of these variations of usage. Typically this becomes one of the many places where the special meaning of the Greek text of the NT has to be totally dropped in the process of translation. For example, note the literalistic NRSV “has become” for ἐγένετο here. The English reader thus would have no clue as to what is going on in the underlying original language text here, and would falsely assume that this transfer happened some undefined



What has God taken control of? The phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου, *the kingdom of the world*, While κόσμος is very common in the Johannine gospel and letters (78x + 24x of 186x in NT), it is found only three times in Revelation: 11:15; 13:8 (καταβολῆς κόσμου, *foundation of the world*); 17:8 (καταβολῆς κόσμου, *foundation of the world*). The somewhat similar πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου, *the kingdoms of the world*, in Matt. 4:8 refers to all the individual kingdoms located in the world. But more common in the NT is the Hebrew based τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου from לְיַמֵּי הַיָּמִּים *ummōt hā-ōlām*, with the meaning ‘the nations of the world.’

The singular form here, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου, alludes to this world as the base of Satan’s power and influence over the lives of people.<sup>12</sup> Satan has exerted powerful influences upon this world and the lives of countless millions of people. But that is rapidly coming to a grand end. This is the celebrative declaration of the loud voice of God in heaven. That Satanic sphere of influence upon people will soon terminate with the full assumption of power by God and Christ: τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, *of our Lord and His Christ*. The parallel of this song of victory to a similar on in 12:10a is remarkable and helpful for interpretation of both:

ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις  
καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν  
καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ,

*Now have come the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the power of His Christ.*

Upon the assumption of power over Satan comes then the eternal reign of God in the second strophe of 11:15.

καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.  
*and He will reign forever and ever.*

This declaration of the reign of God is common in the OT and elsewhere in the NT.<sup>13</sup> God’s ultimate authority

point in the past.

<sup>12</sup>“The apocalyptic perspective recognized that Satan was ‘the god of this world’ (2 Cor 4:4), ‘the prince of the power of the air’ (Eph 2:2), the κοσμοκράτωρ, ‘world ruler’ (Eph 6:12; Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 1.5.4), ‘the ruler of this world’ (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; T. Sol. 2:9; 3:5–6; 6:1; Asc. Isa. 1:3; 2:4; 10:29), and ‘the ruler of this age’ (Ignatius Eph. 17:1; 19:1; Magn. 1:2; Trall. 4:2; Rom. 7:1; Phld. 6:2); see H. Kruse, “Das Reich Satans,” Bib. 58 (1977) 29–61, and D. E. Aune, “Archon,” DDD, 156–57. According to 1 John 5:19, ‘the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 639.]

<sup>13</sup>“While the grammatical subject of βασιλεύσει, ‘will reign,’ is ἡ βασιλεία, ‘the kingdom’ (v 15b), this is clearly impossible, for the logical subject is certainly God, to be supplied from τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, ‘our Lord,’ in v 15b. There are several parallel phrases from the OT that appear in the LXX, e.g., LXX Ps 9:37(MT: 10:16), βασιλεύσει κύριος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, ‘the Lord will reign for ever and ever’ (see other LXX passages: Exod 15:18; Zach 14:9; Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27; Ps 145:10; Wis 3:8). The

over all humanity is asserted in powerful terms as having absolutely no end to it.

What the voice declares is the final triumph of God at the very end of human history. The celebration of that yet to come victory takes place in the certainty that will happen and thus can be celebrated in advance of its actual occurrence. To be sure, the final expression of divine wrath in temporal judgment is about to take place, but this celebration looks beyond that in anticipation of the very end.

The responsive chant of the 24 elders follows and fills out even more of the details of the celebration in heaven.

### C. The twenty-four elders chant praise, vv. 16-18

16 Καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι [οἱ] ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους αὐτῶν ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ 17 λέγοντες· εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας. 18 καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν.

*16 Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their*

eternal reign of God is also found in an eschatological context in Jos. As. 19:8, καὶ κύριος ὁ θεὸς βασιλεύσει αὐτῶν [i.e., τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ ζῶντος θεοῦ] εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ‘and the Lord God will reign over them [i.e., ‘the sons of the living God’] for ever.’ A parallel phrase is found in Rev 22:5, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ‘and they will reign for ever and ever,’ but the subjects are the servants of God in the New Jerusalem. The verb βασιλευεῖν, ‘reign,’ is used three times in Revelation with God as the subject, all in hymnic contexts (here; 11:17; 19:6), with a strikingly close similarity between the usage in 11:17 and that in 19:6 (see Comments on those passages). The hymnic phrase here in 11:15 emphasizes the eternal nature of God’s reign and has a number of close parallels in the OT and early Jewish literature, primarily in hymnic contexts. The oldest such text is Exod 15:18, the concluding line from the Song of Moses, arguably antedating the beginning of the Israelite monarchy (cf. Albright, *Archaeology*, 117, 132; Albright, *Yahweh*, 13; Brettler, *King*, 14): ‘The Lord will reign for ever and ever’ (LXX κύριος βασιλεύων τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ἐπ’ αἰῶνα καὶ ἔτι). This phrase is alluded to in a number of later texts, including Ps 10:16(LXX 9:37), ‘The Lord will reign for ever and ever’ (see also Pss 145:13[LXX 144:13]; 146:10[LXX 145:10]; Lam 5:19; Ezek 43:7; Dan 4:3, 34; 6:26; Mic 4:7; Wis 3:8; Jos. As. 19:5, 8). The metaphor ‘forever’ is also used of the reign of the house of David (2 Sam 7:13–16; 22:51; 1 Kgs 2:45; 1 Chr 22:10; 28:4; 2 Chr 6:16; 7:18; 13:5; Pss 45:6; 61:7; 89:3–4, 35–37; Isa 9:7; Jer 33:17; Ezek 37:25; cf. 1 Sam 13:13 [of the house of Saul]), and by extension it refers to the Messiah (Luke 1:33; Heb 1:8).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 639–640.]



thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 singing, “We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

The ‘narrative’ introduction to their verbal response to the heavenly voices has substantial similarity to the other worship scenes involving the 24 elders.

**Rev. 4:4, 9-10.** Καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς. . . .

4 Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. . . .

9 Καὶ ὅταν δώσουσιν τὰ ζῶα δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ εὐχαριστίαν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, **10 πεσοῦνται οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἐνώπιον τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων καὶ βαλοῦσιν τοὺς στεφάνους αὐτῶν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου λέγοντες·**

9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10 the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,**

Particular similar is 11:16 to 4:10. Note also **5:8-9a, 14.**

8 Καὶ ὅτε ἔλαβεν τὸ βιβλίον, τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου ἔχοντες ἕκαστος κιθάραν καὶ φιάλας χρυσᾶς γεμούσας θυμιαμάτων, αἱ εἰσὶν αἱ προσευχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων, 9 καὶ ᾄδουσιν ᾠδὴν καινὴν λέγοντες·

8 When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 They sing a new song:

14 καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα ἔλεγον· ἀμήν. καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεσαν καὶ προσεκύνησαν.

14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Finally is the worship scene in **19:4**

4 καὶ ἔπεσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ λέγοντες· ἀμήν ἀλληλουϊά.

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated

on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”

In these four heavenly worship scenes involving the 24 elders, their participation is always responsive. They respond to declarations of God or other heavenly creatures to expressions of praise to God and Christ. As such they are following the pattern of worship in the Jerusalem temple where the ‘congregation’ of worshipers always responded to the worship expressions of the priests and the Levitical choirs. Typically in the Jerusalem temple the congregation’s response was limited to ‘Selah,’ an affirmation of acceptance equivalent to ‘Amen.’ Most of the time in the heavenly worship, the 24 elders are permitted to do more than just affirm only with ‘Selah’ what others have declared.

What is significant in the narrative introduction of v. 16 are their two highly symbolic actions:

1) ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν, **they fell on their faces.** The consistent heavenly posture of worship for the 24 elders is to put their faces to the floor as reflected not just here but also in 4:10, 8:14, and 19:4. Such physical expression was a visible acknowledgment of the absolute sovereignty of God. It also underscores the importance of ‘body language’ in the worship of God. For them worship meant full acceptance of God as sovereign Lord and not just words but body posture was important in expressing this.

2) προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ, **they worshiped God.** The other term from προσκυνέω essentially asserts the same body posture in worship as does the first expression.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly the verb προσκυνέω is used to describe the worship not only of the 24 elders in heaven but also of the angels (7:11) and the living creatures

<sup>14</sup>**προσκυνέω** (κυνέω ‘to kiss’) impf. προσεκύουν; fut. προσκυνήσω; 1 aor. προσεκύνησα (Trag., Hdt.+ Freq. used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks before a divinity or someth. holy.) **to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully,** in Attic Gk., and later (e.g. Appian, Mithrid. 104 §489), used w. the acc. (so **Mt 4:10** and **Lk 4:8** [Dt 6:13 v.l.]; **J 4:22ab**, ; **Rv 9:20**.—Gen 37:9; Ex 11:8; Judg 7:15 A; pseudepigr.; Philo; Jos., C. Ap. 1, 239, Ant. 2, 13; 7, 250; Just.; Tat.; Mel., P. 92, 690; Ath.); beside it the Koine uses the dat. (Phryn. p. 463 Lob.; JWittmann, Sprachl. Untersuchungen zu Cosmas Indicopl., diss. Munich 1913, 16; KWolf, Studien z. Sprache des Malalas II, diss. Munich 1912, 34; GKilpatrick in: Studies and Documents 29, ‘67, 154–56; B-D-F §151, 2; Rob. 455; 476f), which the LXX (s. also JosAs; ApcMos 27:33) and our lit. prefer (s. also EpArist 135; Jos., Ant. 6, 55; Just., D. 30, 3; 78, 9; 88, 1.—Jos., Ant. 6, 154 πρ. τῷ θεῷ immediately after τὸν θεὸν πρ.). This reverence or worship is paid

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 882.]

(19:4). Followers of Christ are called upon to prostrate themselves before God in worship: 14:7; 19:10; 22:9. John is forbidden to prostrate himself before an angel in worship: 19:10; 22:8-9.

Of course, the location of the elders prostrating themselves is *ένώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοῦς θρόνους αὐτῶν*, in front of God. This compares to *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ*, in front of His throne (1:4); *ένώπιον τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου*, in front of the One sitting upon the throne (4:10); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ένώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου*, in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb (7:9); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου*, in front of the throne (7:11); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ*, in front of the throne of God (7:15); *ένώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, in front of God (8:2); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου*, in front of the throne (8:3); *ένώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, in front of God (9:13); *ένώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς*, in front of the Lord of the earth (11:4); *ένώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν*, in front of our God (12:10); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου*, in front of the throne (14:3); *ένώπιόν σου*, before You (15:4); *ένώπιον τοῦ θρόνου*, in front of the throne (20:12). Only those spotlessly holy can get this close to God in heaven. The depiction is of a royal court. Typically those in the presence of God were standing, but the elders are seated prior to prostrating themselves before God: [οἱ] *ένώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοῦς θρόνους αὐτῶν*, who are sitting on their thrones in front of God. This depiction varies from the one in chapter four where the thrones of the elders are in a circle around the throne of God (4:4): *κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρες*, circled around the throne are 24 thrones.<sup>15</sup> That the 24 elders are seated before prostrating themselves is a symbol of their status and importance in the heavenly court of God.

The verb / participle construct of *προσεκύνησαν / λέγοντες* highlights that while they were chanting they prostrated themselves on their faces before God.

The content of the chant is given in vv. 17b-18, and centers on *εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι*, we give You thanks.<sup>16</sup>In comparison to the other recorded chants in the

<sup>15</sup>“The fact that the elders are seated before God is emphasized here. In biblical tradition, royal officials typically stand before the king or queen when attending him or her (1 Sam 16:21–22; Jer 36:21; Dan 1:19; 2:2), and such officials can therefore be called ‘the elders who stood before Solomon’ (1 Kgs 12:6) or ‘those servants who stand before you’ (1 Kgs 10:8; Gen 41:46; see Brettler, King, 101). In depictions of the heavenly court in Israelite literature, God is always seated (1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:1; Dan 7:9) and is surrounded by members of the heavenly court who are always standing (1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:2; Dan 7:10).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 640.]

<sup>16</sup>“Vv 17–18 constitute a collective song of thanksgiving, *das kollektive Danklied* (K. Berger, *Formgeschichte*, 242), or a prayer of thanksgiving, *Dankgebet* (Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 54). The main basis for thanksgiving is that God has assumed kingly rule (v 17b), and this is followed by an ‘eschatological retrospective’ in v 18, providing the specific eschatological acts of God upon

worship of the 24 elders, we see some similarities and differences.

**4:11.** ἄξιός εἶ, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

**5:9b-10.** ἄξιός εἶ λαβεῖν τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ἀνοῖξαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσφάγης καὶ ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους καὶ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.”

Every expression of praise give by the 24 elders centers on God and/or Christ. In the foundational visions of chapters four and five, their praise begins with *ἄξιός εἶ...worthy are you....* In 11:17, it begins *εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι*, we give thanksgiving to you.... In 4:11, the praise is directed to God and in 5:9, to Christ as the Lamb. In 11:17, it is directed to God as in 4:11. The clear liturgical formula of *εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι* underscores the worship expression that follows.<sup>17</sup> Here *εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι*

which his assumption of kingship is based. This verse contains several features that are combined in a single line in 19:6b, *ὅτι ἔβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ὁ παντοκράτωρ*, ‘for the Lord our God the Almighty has begun to reign’.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 640.]

<sup>17</sup>“*εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι*, ‘we thank you,’ is the only certain liturgical formula found in the hymns of Revelation (Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 54; Jörens, *Evangelium*, 99). The term does occur in the NT in the general context of giving thanks to God in prayer (John 11:41; Acts 28:15; cf. TDNT 9:411), particularly in the context of meals (Mark 8:6; Matt 15:36; John 6:11, 23; Acts 27:35). In the specific context of eucharistic prayers, the formula occurs in Did. 9:3, ‘We give thanks to you, our Father [*εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, πάτερ ἡμῶν*], for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory for ever’ (similar eucharistic prayers of thanksgiving are found in Did. 9:3; 10:2–5; see Audet, *Didachè*, 377–98; TDNT 9:414–15). See also Apost. Const. 7.38.4, *περὶ πάντων σοι διὰ Χριστοῦ εὐχαριστοῦμεν*, ‘We give thanks to you for everything through Christ’ (see also Apost. Const. 7.26.2). Yet these do not explicitly state the reason that God is thanked, which is introduced with the *ὅτι* clause in Rev 11:18. *εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι* corresponds to the Hebrew formula לַאֲנַחְנֵנו מִדָּיִם *mōdīm .ānahñū lāk* found in rabbinic sources (m. Ber. 5:3; b. Ta.an. 6b; Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 54). Attestation of this formula raises the question of whether the author has preserved liturgical traditions derived from the celebration of the Eucharist (the view of Schille, *ZTK* 52 [1955] 174). The phrase does occur in other early Jewish writings in Greek (though the verb

followed by ὅτι sets up the basis for the thanksgiving, here as well as in 4:11; 5:9; and 12:10.<sup>18</sup> This reflects

εὐλογεῖν is much more frequent), including Jdt 8:25, παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα εὐχαριστήσωμεν κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, ‘for all these things let us give thanks to the Lord our God’; 2 Macc 1:11, μεγάλως εὐχαριστοῦμεν αὐτῷ, ‘we thank him [i.e., ‘God’] greatly’; T. Abr. (Rec. A) 15:4, εὐχαριστῶ σοι κύριέ μου, ‘I give thanks to you, my Lord’ (Sarah addressing Michael). Cf. 3 Macc 7:16:

They departed from the city crowned with all manner of fragrant flowers, with gladness and with shouting, giving thanks to the God of their fathers [εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ τῶν πατέρων], the Eternal Savior of Israel, with praises and melodious hymns.

“The phrase כִּי אֲדַבֵּר לְךָ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם .*ôdkâ .’ādōnāy kī*, ‘I thank you, Lord, because,’ is a standard introductory formula that occurs several times in the Qumran Thanksgiving Psalms or Hodayoth (1QH 2:20, 31; 3:19, 37; 4:5; 5:5; 7:6, 26, 34; 9:37; 14:8 [כִּי kī not used]; 17:7 [כִּי kī not used]; cf. 11:3 [כִּי אֲדַבֵּר לְךָ אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם .*ôdkâ .’ēlī kī*, ‘I thank you, my God, because’). In these hymns, the כִּי kī is often followed by a general description of salvation from distress (e.g., 1QH 2:20–22; 3:19–21; 5:5–6). It is also found in early Jewish literature transmitted in Greek (Jdt 8:25; 2 Macc 1:11; Ant. 1.193). The song or prayer of thanksgiving was also adapted to epistolary contexts (2 Macc 1:11). Perhaps the best-known form of adaptation is found in the introductory prayer of thanksgiving with which many Pauline letters begin. These prayers of thanksgiving are introduced with either the first-person singular form of εὐχαριστῶ, ‘I give thanks’ (Rom 1:8–17; 1 Cor 1:4–9; Phil 1:3–11; Philem 4), or the first-person plural form (as in 1 Thess 1:2; Col 1:3–8). In these prayers, God is referred to in the third person (the *er*-Stil, ‘he style’). In addition to the epistolary context for prayers of thanksgiving, the early Church also used the verb εὐχαριστεῖν, ‘give thanks,’ in a liturgical context in connection with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Some examples of this type of prayer of thanksgiving are fairly close in form to the prayer of Rev 11:17–18.

“The form εὐχαριστῶ with a ὅτι clause that introduces the reasons for gratitude is one of two main types of Pauline epistolary prayers of thanksgiving described and analyzed by P. Schubert (Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings, BZNW 20 [Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939] 10–39; cf. P. T. O’Brien, Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul, NovTSup 49 [Leiden: Brill, 1977] 6–15). There are several examples of this form in early Christian non-epistolary contexts (Luke 18:11; John 11:41; cf. Ignatius Smyrn. 10:1). A prayer of thanksgiving similar to the Pauline epistolary thanksgivings is found in 2 Macc 1:11 (part of a quoted letter).

“In Hellenistic religions, prayers of gratitude are relatively rare (this issue is discussed in Versnel, “Prayer,” 42–62). εὐχαριστεῖν, ‘to give thanks,’ is a term frequently used to express thankfulness both to people and to the gods, but the short formula εὐχαριστῶ, ‘I give thanks,’ occurs only in inscriptions of the imperial period and are then located primarily in Asia Minor (Versnel, “Prayer,” 45).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 640–642.]

<sup>18</sup>“The ὅτι clause, which introduces the reason for thanksgiving, is also used in hymns elsewhere in Revelation (4:11; 5:9; 12:10). The verb βασιλεύειν, ‘reign,’ with God as subject occurs three times in Revelation, all in hymnic contexts (here; 11:15; 19:6; see Comments on these passages). There is a particularly close similarity between 11:17 and 19:6, though in 11:17 ἐβασίλευσας, ‘you have begun to reign,’ is in the second person, while in 19:6 ἐβασίλευσεν, ‘he has begun to reign,’ is put in the third person,

a common Pauline pattern of prayer in the *Proema* of his letters.

God is addressed in a highly formal liturgical manner as:

κύριε ὁ θεός	Lord God
ὁ παντοκράτωρ,	the Almighty
ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ᾄων,	Who is and was

This formula occurs five times in Revelation (4:8; 11:17;

reflecting two hymnic styles (the *du*-Stil, ‘thou style,’ and the *er*-Stil, ‘he style’; see Excursus 4B: Hymns in Revelation). In 11:17 the subject of ἐβασίλευσας is κύριε ὁ θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ‘Lord God Almighty,’ while in 19:6 the subject of ἐβασίλευσεν is κύριος ὁ θεός ἡμῶν ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ‘the Lord, our God, the Almighty.’ Both ἐβασίλευσας (here) and ἐβασίλευσεν (in 19:6) may be construed as ingressive aorists emphasizing the beginning of a state, i.e., ‘have/has begun to reign as king’ (Delebecque, 206; Ford, 168; EDNT 1:207). Since ἐβασίλευσας is parallel to εἴληφας, ‘you have received,’ it has perfective value (Mussies, Morphology, 338; cf. Porter, Verbal Aspect, 251). The parallelism could run the other way, of course, and εἴληφας could be considered an aoristic perfect (Turner, Syntax, 69). The fact that εἴληφας and ἐβασίλευσας are in the second person does suggest a similarity with investiture formulas that confer royal authority on a new king (cf. 2 Kgs 9:6), though such formulas are never used of Yahweh in the OT, for who can confer royal authority on him? Yet construing ἐβασίλευσας as an ingressive aorist need not mean that God did not reign as king previously; rather it could mean that his kingship has only now become effective over the world. In the LXX several of the declarations of Yahweh’s kingship in OT coronation hymns, expressed in Hebrew with the perfect verb מָלַךְ *mālak* in the phrase מָלַךְ יְהוָה *YHWH mālak*, ‘Yahweh reigns,’ are translated using the aorist of βασιλεύειν in the phrase ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν (Pss 92:1[MT 93:1]; 95:10[MT 96:10]; 96:1[MT 97:1]; 98:1[MT 99:1]). Closely related to this phrase in coronation psalms are the phrases מָלַךְ אֱלֹהִים *mālak .’ēlōhīm*, ‘God reigns’ (in Ps 47:8[MT 47:9]; LXX Ps 46:9 [not found in MT], ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θεός), and מָלַךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ *mālak .’ēlōhāyik*, ‘your God reigns’ (in Isa 52:7 [LXX βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός]). While the precise meaning of מָלַךְ יְהוָה *YHWH mālak*, which Mowinckel called an enthronement formula, has generated a great deal of debate in OT scholarship, the meaning of ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν is hardly less problematic. Some have regarded מָלַךְ יְהוָה *YHWH mālak* as a nominal sentence that describes not an event but rather the quality of the subject; therefore, it could be translated ‘Yahweh is the one who exercises kingship’ (Gelston, VT 16 [1966] 507). Based on parallel declarations reportedly made on the occasion of the enthronement of Israelite kings (Absalom in 2 Sam 5:10 and Jehu in 2 Kgs 9:13), however, מָלַךְ יְהוָה *YHWH mālak* may mean ‘Yahweh has become king’ or ‘it is Yahweh who is king.’ Mowinckel argued that such declarations were made of God during the cultic ritual of the annual New Year enthronement ceremony and that the translation ‘God has become king’ is therefore appropriate and does not contradict the view that Yahweh has always been king (Offersang, 126–28). The OT emphasis on the eternity of the reign of God (see Comment on 11:15), however, does not appear to cohere well with the emphasis here on a time in the indeterminate past when God received his great power and began to reign (received from whom?), an event that seems to reflect the kind of investiture narrated of the Lamb (see 5:7, 9, 12).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 642–643.]



15:3; 16:7; 21:22) and is a literal translation of the Hebrew צבאות יהוה (אלהי) יהוה YHWH (*ḥš*) *šēbā.ōt*, *Yahweh (the God) of (the) Hosts*. It is found nine times in Amos and ten times in the rest of the OT.<sup>19</sup> The idea of ὁ παντοκράτωρ from the Hebrew צבאות (*šēbā.ōt*) references the unlimited power of God. The phrase underscores the eternal existence of God.<sup>20</sup> This expression

<sup>19</sup>“The phrase κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ‘Lord God Almighty,’ is a formula found 5 times in Revelation (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22; see Comment on 4:8) that reflects a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase צבאות יהוה (אלהי) יהוה YHWH (*ḥš*) *šēbā.ōt*, ‘Yahweh (the God) of (the) Hosts,’ found 9 times in Amos (3:13; 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16, 27; 6:8, 14; 9:5) and only 10 times in the rest of the OT (2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Hos 12:6[5]; Jer 5:14; 15:16; 35:17; 38:17; 44:7; Ps 89:9[8]). The shorter form ‘Yahweh of Hosts’ occurs 267 times in the OT. Both titles have military overtones. צבאות *šēbā.ōt* understood as an abstract plural, however, could connote ‘mightiness’ (cf. O. Eissfeldt, ‘Jahweh Zebaoth,’ in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. R. Sellheim and F. Maass [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1962–73] 3:120). For this reason, the LXX often translates צבאות *šēbā.ōt* with παντοκράτωρ. See the excursus in Wolff, Joel and Amos, 287–88. In the LXX the longer form is often translated κύριε παντοκράτωρ θεὸς/θεός (2 Kgdms 7:25 [MS B], 26 [MS A], 27; 1 Chr 17:24). In LXX Amos this is consistently rendered κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:16; 9:5, 15); the same form also occurs in Nah 3:5; Zech 10:3; Mal 2:16 (MS A).

“In the NT, apart from the OT allusion to LXX 2 Sam 7:8 in 2 Cor 6:18 (λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ, ‘says the Lord Almighty’), the form κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ occurs only in Revelation, where it occurs seven times (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22) and twice more in the form ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (16:14; 19:15). On this title, cf. Bousset-Gressmann, *Religion des Judéens*, 312 n. 2, though the discussion is somewhat garbled and contains several errors. κύριε παντοκράτωρ occurs in T. Abr. (Rec. A) 15:12; Paral. Jer. 1:5; 9:6, while the whole formula, though not in the vocative, appears in 3 Apoc. Bar. 1.3, and it occurs in the form κύριε ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὁ θεός in the Prayer of Manassis (Denis, *Fragmenta*, 115). It is particularly significant that the full title occurs in Revelation several times in close association with the title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν (καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος), ‘who was and is (and is to come)’: 1:8; 4:8; 11:17.’ [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 642.]

<sup>20</sup>“There is some variation in word order. In 1:4; 1:8, the phrase is ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, while in 4:8, ὁ ἦν and ὁ ὢν are transposed. A shorter, bipartite formula, perhaps a more traditional form that John expanded, is ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ‘who is and who was,’ which occurs twice (11:17; 16:5). This bipartite formula is expanded to a tripartite formula in 16:5 through the addition of the predicate ὁ ὁσιος, ‘the holy one.’ ὁ ὢν, ‘the one who is’ (a substantival participle from the verb εἶμι, ‘to be’), was, among Greek-speaking Jews, a popular name for God ultimately derived from the phrase ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ὢν, ‘I am the one who is,’ in the LXX translation of the Hebrew phrase אהיה יהוה רשע, *’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh*, ‘I am who I am,’ in Exod 3:14. Josephus places the phrase ὁ ὢν on the lips of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:10 (Ant. 8.350) but omits it from his version of Exod 3:14 (Ant. 2.276). Philo often uses the phrase ὁ ὢν of God, sometimes in combination with θεός, ‘God’ (e.g., ὁ ὢν θεός, ‘the God who is’; ὁ ὄντως ὢν θεός, ‘the God who truly is’). The phrase ὁ ὢν is used at least eight times as a divine name, with the asterisks marking passages that allude to Exod 3:14

(\*Mos. 1.75; \*Som. 1.231; \*Mut. 11; \*Det. 160; Quod Deus 110; Opif. 172; Leg. 3.181; \*Abr. 121); see J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysic* [Amsterdam, 1964] 83 n. 213). Presumably the popularity of ὁ ὢν as the name for God among Greek-speaking Jews influenced the later insertion of the phrase in the LXX text of Jeremiah, where the phrase ὁ ὢν occurs four times, always in the context of prayer (1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 39:17). The title was familiar to Jews in Asia Minor as attested by an inscription on an altar from Pergamon that reads θεὸς κύριος ὁ ὢν εἰς ἀεὶ, ‘God, the Lord who exists forever.’ Despite the objection of Delling (*Worship*, 78–79), this is very probably an allusion to the LXX version of Exod 3:14 (Nilsson, *Eranos* 54 [1956] 169–70; Bickerman, ‘Altars of Gentiles,’ 341–42), for even though the expression εἰς ἀεὶ, ‘forever,’ is not found in direct connection with ὁ ὢν, Exod 3:15 does describe the name of God as a ὄνομα αἰώνιον, ‘an eternal name,’ a feature emphasized by Philo (Mut. 12; cf. Mos. 1.74f–75). Numenius, a second-century A.D. Middle Platonic philosopher, refers to the supreme being as ὁ ὢν (frag. 12, in É. des Places, *Numenius: Fragments* [Paris: Société d’Édition ‘Les Belles Lettres,’ 1973] 55–56; see brief commentary on p. 108). Normally, Numenius uses the term τὸ ὄν, ‘Being, Existence’ (frags. 2.23; 3.1, 8, 9; 4a.7, 9, 12; 5.5, 6, 14, 18 [bis]; 6.7, 8, 15; 7.2, 13, 14; 8.2). The Greek magical papyri, many of which exhibit clear Jewish influence (ISBE, rev. ed., 3:219, s.v. ‘magic’), reflect the popularity of divine names borrowed from Judaism and also use ὁ ὢν as a divine name, often in connection with Ἰάω, ‘Iao,’ a divine name with close associations with the Hebrew divine name YHWH (often vocalized as Yahweh and shortened in ancient texts as Yahu). PGM LXXI.3–4, for example, has several points of contact with Rev 1:8 (the divine names ὁ ὢν, κύριος and παντοκράτωρ): and p 31 ‘The God who is, Iao, Lord Almighty [ὁ θεὸς ὢν ὁ Ἰάω, κύριος παντοκράτωρ].’ For other magical texts containing the divine predicate ὁ ὢν, see PGM XII.111; XIII.1020, 1048. The title ὁ ὢν also occurs on several amulets. A bloodstone amulet in the British Museum depicts Helios and Selene, with the inscription ‘Iaō, Sabaōth, Abrasax, the Existent One [ὁ ὢν]’ on the reverse (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 2:259; vol. 3 fig. 1116). One amulet, apparently of Jewish origin, has the inscription ‘One God in the heavens [ἐν οὐρανοῖς] who exists [ὁ ὢν] and who existed before [προῶν], the one greater than all, who dominates all beings in midheaven’ (Delatte-Derchain, *Les intailles magiques*, 266, no. 381; cf. Peterson, *Εἷς Θεός*, 260–61); the plural form οὐρανοῖς is either a Semitism or reflects an elevated hymnic style, and ὁ προῶν is a more literary grammatical choice than ὁ ἦν in Rev 1:4. On another amulet (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 108–9, no. 151), the words ἐγὼ and ὁ ὢν, ‘I am the one who is,’ are found on either side of a mummy, an allusion to LXX Exod 3:14. A Christian amulet (British Museum, 56473), of uncertain date, has the divine names Iaoth Sabath Adōnaei on the obverse with ὁ ὢν on the reverse (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 225). A Christian amulet of uncertain date has ὁ ὢν on the reverse, with one crux potens at the top and another at the bottom, while the obverse reads ‘Iaoth Sabath Adonaei,’ with one crux potens above and three below (C. Bonner, ‘Amulets Chiefly in the British Museum,’ *Hesperia* 120 [1951] 333–34, no. 46).

“John uses the phrase ὁ ὢν four times (1:4, 8; 11:17; 16:5), twice in the context of prayer (11:17; 16:5), like the LXX variants in Jeremiah. He is the first Christian author to use this divine name; it rarely occurs among later Christian authors (see LPGL, 418). Why does John use this divine name twice in the opening sections of his book (vv 4, 8)? Just as Moses was told by God to accredit his message by telling the people that ὁ ὢν had sent him, so John

is derived from the LXX translation of אהיה אהיה אהיה (*'ehyeh 'āšer 'ehyeh*) in Exodus 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, *I am the one who is*.

The basis for thanksgiving is ὅτι εἵληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας, *because You have taken your great power and begun to reign*. The elders are profoundly thankful that God has “activated” His immense power in tangible expressions that are starting to take place. As the subsequent expressions will make specifically clear this celebration is the beginning of the final events of human history. The first strophe does not imply that God has acquired additional power from some unnamed source. All power lies within Himself. Clearly in the background here stands Psalm 99:1 (LXX 98:1):

appears to be authenticating his prophetic book by claiming that its actual source is none other than ὁ ὢν. ὁ ὢν. is understood by Philo as the divine name that Moses, as a prophet, used to authenticate his message (Mos. 1.75; Mut. 11).

A similar threefold temporal description of divinity is widespread in Greco-Roman literature beginning with Homer (F. Büchsel, TDNT 2:399). In a reference to a hymn to Zeus that has perished, Menander Rhetor (1.342) mentions that “Zeus was before all things [Ζεὺς πρὸ πάντων ἐγένετο]” but that this statement contradicted other elements in the hymn. Plato Timaeus 37E preserves the traditional formula λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστιν τε καὶ ἔσται, “For we say that it [Eternal Being] was and is and will be” (see Plato Leges 4.715e). Empedocles (frag. 14, line 9 in M. R. Wright, Empedocles: The Extant Fragments [New Haven:Yale UP, 1981] 100–101 [text], 177–79 [translation and commentary]): ἐκ τῶν πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται ὀπίσσω, “From them [fire, air, water] comes all that was and is and will be hereafter.” Here, however, this time formula is used not of divinity but of aspects of the material world. Plutarch preserves an inscription from the base of a statue of Athena, whom the Egyptians identified with Isis: “I am all that has been, and is, and shall be [ἐγώ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονός καὶ ὄν καὶ ἐσόμενον], and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered” (De Iside et Osiride 354C [tr. LCL]; cf. 352a; 372f–373ah). A similar passage is found in Pausanias 10.12.10: “Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be; O mighty Zeus [Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἔστιν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται· ὃ μέγαλε Ζεῦ].” The setting of this hexameter line is important, for Pausanias attributes it to the Peliades (“Doves”), the female priestesses of Zeus who were cult officials at the oracle of Zeus at Dodona; the setting therefore connects Zeus with p 32 prophecy since the tripartite prophecy formula is also based on the three moments of past, present, and future. In Asclepius 14.17–18 (Nock-Festugière, Hermès Trismégiste 2:313): deus aeternus ... hoc est, hoc fuit, hoc erit semper, “The eternal God ... is the one who is, the one who was, and the one who will always be.” In Asclepius 29.5–7 (Nock-Festugière, Hermès Trismégiste 2:337): si enim animal mundus uiuensque semper et fuit et est et erit, nihil in mundo mortale est, “if the world itself is a living being and was and is and will be, nothing in the world is mortal.” Finally in Asclepius 134.25–26 (Nock-Festugière, Hermès Trismégiste 2:344): et sine hoc nec fuit aliquid nec est nec erit, “and without whom nothing was, nothing is, nothing will be” (see John 1:3). The last two passages from Asclepius, however, concern not divinity but the world and material reality.”

[David E. Aune, Revelation 1–5, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 30–32.]

Ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν,  
ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοί·  
ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῶν χερουβιν,  
σαλευθήτω ἡ γῆ.†

The Lord is king;  
let the peoples tremble!  
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim;  
let the earth quake!

The two primary strophes assert the absolute power of God. Whether this implies an ‘enthronement ceremony’ as chapter five of Revelation implies about Christ or not is unclear. Probably not. The two secondary strophes call upon people to tremble in fear of God’s sovereign power.

The ‘fleshing out’ of the remainder of this OT Psalm of praise stresses the justice of God to punish evil doers and to reward those following His laws. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel receive tribute as faithful servants of God. These core themes are reworked by John in the praise of the 24 elders here in chapter eleven. In these last moments of human history just prior to the final set of temporal judgments upon the earth, the 24 elders begin celebrating the divine assertion of power beyond the bowls of wrath and centered on the Day of Final Judgment of all peoples of the earth.

Verse eighteen continues the celebration with a clear re-working of Psalm 98.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>“καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὀργίσθησαν, ‘The nations are enraged.’ Taken with the preceding phrase, καὶ ἐβασίλευσας, ‘and you have begun to reign,’ in v 17c, the unusual combination of the two motifs of the Lord reigning and the anger of the nations makes it certain that this is an allusion to LXX Ps 98:1, ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν, ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοί (MT 99:1, עַמֵּי יִרְגְּזוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה *YHWH mālāk yirgēzū ammîm*), ‘The Lord has begun to reign; the people are enraged.’ An allusion to the MT is also possible, however, since the Hebrew verb רָגַז *rāgaz*, ‘to excite, tremble, be agitated,’ is translated with ὀργίζεω, ‘enrage,’ eight times in the LXX (Gen 45:24; Exod 15:14; 4 Kgdms 19:28; Job 12:6; Pss 4:4; 98:1; Prov 28:9; Zech 1:2). Charles (1:296) favors the allusion to the LXX here since ὀργιζέσθωσαν, ‘they are enraged,’ is a possible, though not a correct, translation of יִרְגְּזוּ *yirgēzû*. Another possible source for this allusion is Exod 15:14, ἤκουσαν ἔθνη καὶ ὀργίσθησαν, ‘the nations heard and were enraged’ (here ἤκουσαν *yirgāzûm* can be translated ‘tremble’). The juxtaposition of the two motifs of the rule or reign of God and the tumult of the heathen became traditional in Jewish eschatological scenarios. To be sure, the rule of God was originally conceptualized as a rule exercised through an Israelite king, a notion that was transferred to the Messiah in some strands of eschatological expectation. Thus, while the reign of God followed by the rage of the nations as found in Rev 11:17–18 makes little sense if the reign of God is involved, it fits perfectly if the reign of the Messiah is in view (see ). The motif of the tumult and assault of the nations occurs frequently in eschatological scenarios (Pss 2:1–2; 46:6; 65:7; 1 Enoch 55:5–6; 99:4; 4 Ezra 13:30–31; Jub. 23:23; Sib. Or. 3.660–68; Hartman, Prophecy Interpreted, 77–101), and the anger of the nations is concretely expressed by their gathering to wage war against God and his people in several eschatological scenarios in Revelation (16:14; 17:14; 19:19; 20:9).” [David

The call to the people ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοί, *let the peoples boil over with rage* in Psalm 99 (LXX 98) becomes καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, *and the nations have boiled over with rage*. Of course, in the elder's celebration they are projecting an event that for them was in the near future at this stage of the apocalyptic vision.

The rage of the nations, however, is of no consequence in comparison to καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου, *and Your wrath has come*.<sup>22</sup> The pouring out of divine wrath in temporal punishments in the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls of wrath are but anticipation of the final expression of wrath that has eternal consequences for evil and evil people in an eternal Hell. The concept of the Day of God's wrath is deeply embedded in the OT in reference to temporal judgments particularly on the northern kingdom with its destruction by the Assyrians in 722 BCE and the destruction of the southern kingdom ultimately in 582 BCE by the Babylonians.<sup>23</sup> The exilic and post exilic prophets projected another future day of wrath from God.

Out of that tradition comes the Day of Judgment<sup>24</sup> concept inside the NT: Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; Mark 6:11 [variant reading]; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; cf. 2 Tim

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E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 643–644.

<sup>22</sup>“In the NT, the angry reaction of Jesus against those who desecrated the Temple (John 2:13–17) bears the characteristics of divine wrath. Wrath is also an essential part of Paul's theology: he often mentions that human disobedience and transgression result in the coming of the wrath of God (Rom 1:18; 2:5; 2:8; 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10).” [Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1147.]

<sup>23</sup>“The day of God's wrath, יוֹם עִבְרַת יְהוָה *yôm ebrat YHWH* or יוֹם יְהוָה *yôm ap YHWH*, is tradition rooted in the OT (Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:18; 2:2–3; Lam 2:2).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 644.]

<sup>24</sup>“Generally this term refers to that time in the future when God or some divinely authorized agent would intervene in history, condemning the unrighteous and vindicating the faithful and obedient. In earlier biblical and intertestamental texts, it is usually nations which will be judged, while in later, particularly NT texts, more attention is devoted to the prospective judgment of individuals. Modern scholars have tended to avoid or neglect this topic. Synonymous terms, appearing mainly in popular literature, include the ‘great’ or ‘last’ judgment. Although a few OT formulations approximate it (e.g., Isa 34:8; Jer 51:52; Mal 3:5–6), the term ‘day of judgment’ does not appear in the OT as such. It does occur several times in the OT Apocrypha (e.g., 2 Esdr 7:38, 102, 104, 113; 12:34; Jdt 16:17) and Pseudepigrapha (e.g., 1 En. 22:11; T. Levi 3:2–3) and seven or eight times in the NT (Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; Mark 6:11 [variant reading]; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 10:25–27; Jude 6). In addition, the noun ‘judgment’ and various forms of the verb ‘to judge’ occur in numerous OT, intertestamental, and NT contexts with substantially similar meanings.” [Richard H. Hiers, “Day of Judgment,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 79.]

4:8; Heb 10:25–27; Jude 6. Several variations of the term surface: ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως, *on the Day of Judgment* (Mt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36); εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως, *for the Day of Judgment* (2 Pet. 2:9; εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων, *for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly* (2 Pet. 3:7); ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως, *on the Day of Judgment, on the Day of Judgment* (1 John 4:17); ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, *on that day* (2 Tim. 4:8); εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας, *for judgment of the great day* (Jude 6); τὴν ἡμέραν, *the Day* (Heb. 10:23–31). As these references in their context stress that ‘day’ will include both God's people and the rest of humanity. First John 4:17 admonishes believers to love God and others as a source of confidence (παρρησίαν) for facing God on that day. Heb. 10:19–31 is a detailed exhortation to believers to be consistent in their commitment as preparation for τὴν ἡμέραν, *the Day*. Particularly emphasized is gathering together in worship and study as preparation for facing God in final judgment. In 2 Tim 4:6–8, Paul expresses confidence that he is fully prepared to face God in final judgment.

The ἡ ὀργή of God (11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15) and of the Lamb (6:16) or both (6:17) is a repeated theme in Revelation and mostly points to this day of final judgment, following the larger pattern of the NT.<sup>25</sup>

What does ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου, *Your wrath has come*, mean for this final end-time event? A series of declarations follows, each one introduced by καὶ setting up a list of events linked to the coming of God's wrath:

1) καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι, *and the time for the dead to be judged*.

2) καὶ (ὁ καιρὸς) δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, *and to give the reward to your servants, the prophets and the saints and those fearing Your name, both small and great*.

3) καὶ (ὁ καιρὸς) διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν, *and to destroy those who have destroyed the earth*.

<sup>25</sup>“Several synoptic passages suggest that the coming Son of Man will be judge, e.g., Mark 13:26–27; Matt 25:31–46; Luke 21:36. Later NT traditions frequently name Jesus Christ as the one who will judge, e.g., Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1. The coming of Jesus as judge is sometimes described as ‘the Day of Christ’ or ‘the Day of the Lord,’ e.g., Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 5:2. See DAY OF CHRIST. Certain texts assign ‘the Twelve’ or ‘the saints’ (faithful Christians) a share in the task of judging ‘Israel’ (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30), the Church (1 Cor 5:12), the world (1 Cor 6:2), or even angels (1 Cor 6:3). Nevertheless, God himself is frequently represented as the one who will judge: Matt 18:35; John 8:50; Rom 2:2–11; 3:6; 14:10 (cf. 2 Cor 5:10); Heb 10:30–31; 1 Pet 1:17; 2:23; Rev 18:8. A few Pauline passages suggest that God and Jesus will both take part in judging: Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5. In John 12:48 Jesus warns that the word he has spoken will be his hearers’ judge ‘on the last day.’” [Richard H. Hiers, “Day of Judgment,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 80–81.]



The first strophe *καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι* sets up the structure with the use of *καιρὸς* (opportune moment) as a noun that is modified by three successive infinities: *κριθῆναι*, *δοῦναι*, and *διαφθεῖραι*. This sense is ‘the time .... to be judged, to give and to destroy’. These three divine actions are linked to this single opportune moment of time.

*First, the dead are to be judged at that time.* This idea is expressed elsewhere as Christ being *κριτῆς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν*, judge of the living and the dead: Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; Barn. 7:2; 2 Clem. 1:1; Polycarp Phil. 2:1; cf. Rom 14:9.<sup>26</sup> This idea of the dead being judged is repeated in Rev. 20:12 in greater detail, with vv. 11-15 providing the broad context and further amplification.

*καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.*

*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.*

Here the fuller picture of the day of judgment is presented that 11:18 anticipates.

Closely linked to it is the general resurrection of the dead, as 20:13-15 underscores: *τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν*, in the resurrection of the dead (Lk. 20:35); *καὶ ἐκπορεύονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως*, and will come out -- those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:29); *ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*, in the resurrection on the last day (John 11:24); *ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν*, in Jesus is the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:2); *ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν*, resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:32); *ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν*, resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6); *ἀνάστασιν μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων*, a resurrection is going to be of both the

<sup>26</sup>“The reference to the judgment of the dead has a parallel in the frequent saying referring to Jesus Christ as *κριτῆς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν*, ‘the judge of the living and the dead’ (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; Barn. 7:2; 2 Clem. 1:1; Polycarp Phil. 2:1; cf. Rom 14:9). In 1 Pet 4:5 and Acts Thom. 30, it is God, not Jesus Christ, who is regarded as the judge of the living and the dead (Michaels, 1 Peter, 235), and in 2 Clem. 1:1, the author urges that “we must think of Jesus Christ as of God, as ‘the judge of the living and the dead.’” This phrase became part of the *Symbolum Romanum*. In a comprehensive sense, God is designated the ‘judge of all’ in Heb 12:23. Apart from this widely used formula, the phrase ‘judge of the dead’ is scarcely found except for the close parallel in Rev 20:12, where it is said that *ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ*, ‘the dead were judged’.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 644.]

*righteous and the unrighteous* (Acts 24:15); *ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν*, resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:21); *ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν*, resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12, 21, 42); *τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν*, the resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:11); *ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν καὶ κρίματος αἰωνίου*, both resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (Heb. 6:2).

*Second, the faithful are rewarded.* While the first strophe applies to both *δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων* in the pattern of Acts 24:15, the second strophe centers on the *δικαίων*: *καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους*, and a time to give reward to Your servants who are the prophets and the saints and those fearing Your name, the small and the great.<sup>27</sup> Although the series of references to the recipients can be understood differently,<sup>28</sup> the best approach

<sup>27</sup>“The term *μισθός* refers to the reward or recompense that is based upon what a person has earned or deserves; it can be either positive or negative (Louw-Nida, § 38.14). Elsewhere in Revelation, *μισθός* occurs only in a saying of the exalted Jesus in 22:12, ‘Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me’ (here *μισθός* can be construed both positively and negatively). In Rev 11:18 *μισθός* is an umbrella term referring to the salvific benefits that God will bestow on the faithful in the eschaton (see M. Smith, *Tannaitic Parallels*, 49–70). The use of the metaphor of *μισθός* for spiritual recompense is evident in Gk Ap. Ezra 1:14, ‘a slave serves his masters to receive his wage [*μισθός*]; thus the righteous man receives his reward [*μισθός*] in the heavens.’ This reward is described elsewhere in Revelation using a variety of metaphors, including eating of the tree of life (2:7; 22:14), immunity from the second death (2:11), hidden manna and a white stone (2:17), authority over the nations (2:26–27), white garments (3:5; 7:14), the believer becoming a pillar in the temple of God and having written upon him or her the name of God and the New Jerusalem (3:12), sitting beside Christ on his heavenly throne (3:21), being present before God on his heavenly throne (7:15–17; 22:3–4), and having access to the New Jerusalem through its gates (22:14). While this list is scarcely exhaustive, it does convey some of the dimensions of the eschatological reward bestowed on believers by God.

“The notion of reward or recompense is clearly expressed in Rev 2:23 (see Comment there), ‘I will give to each of you according to your works.’ Variants of this same proverbial expression are found in 22:12 (‘to recompense [*ἀποδοῦναι*] each according to his work’) and 20:13 (‘each will be judged according to their works’). The tendency among NT scholars to denigrate the notion of reward for meritorious achievement is a theological overlay that distorts the NT views of reward and punishment (see Preisker’s statements in TDNT 4:714–28). In the LXX a *μισθός* can be something that God grants those who do his will in heaven or in the eschaton (Matt 5:12 = Luke 6:23; 1 Cor 3:8, 14; 2 John 8; TDNT 4:699–701).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 644–645.]

<sup>28</sup>“A syntactical problem in this verse is whether *τοῖς δούλοις σου* should be taken with *τοῖς προφήταις*, i.e., ‘your servants the prophets,’ or with *τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις*, i.e., ‘your servants, namely, the prophets and the saints’ (the latter view is argued by Beckwith, 609–10). The first interpretation is supported by the frequent use of the phrase ‘your servants the prophets,’ while the

seems to be as follows:

τοῖς δούλοις σου  
τοῖς προφήταις  
καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις  
καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου,  
τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους,

The servants of God are specified as prophets, saints, and the respectful. The final qualifier underscores both those without significance and those with. These sets of references surface in different configurations in 13:16; 16:6; 18:24; 19:5. The prophets seem to refer consistently in Revelation to the OT prophets from whom John draws so much of his imagery (cf. 16:6 and 18:24). The saints and fearful are designations of believers. The small and the great has its roots in Psalm 115:13 (LXX 113:21) in pronouncing a blessing upon those fearing God both small and great. Elsewhere in the NT, τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, [those fearing His name](#), often refers to Gentile God-fearers coming to Christ so that the two references here specifies Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this is the significant of these two terms here, but it is not clear. It could be just two ways of despising Christians.

*Third, the evil are to be destroyed:* καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν, [and \(the time\) to destroy those destroying the earth](#).<sup>30</sup> The earth signals the people latter is supported by the fact that in Revelation the prophets and the saints are considered two groups in Rev 16:6 and 18:24. See LXX Ps 113:21(MT 115:13), εὐλόγησεν τοὺς φοβουμένους τὸν κύριον, τοὺς μικροὺς μετὰ τῶν μεγάλων, ‘He blessed those who fear the Lord, both small and great.’ A doublet occurs in Rev 19:5, ‘Praise our God all you his servants and you who fear him, both small and great.’ On the phrase ‘insignificant and important’ or ‘small and great,’ see Comment on 13:16. On ‘holy ones’ = Christians, see Comment on 5:8.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 645.]

<sup>29</sup>“The reference to ‘one who reveres God’ (ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν) is found in a similar hymnic context in 19:5 and occurs several times in Acts (10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26; cf. Justin Dial. 10.4). The equivalent expression ‘one who worships (God)’ (ὁ σεβόμενος [τὸν θεόν]) occurs six times in Acts (13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7) and has often been taken as virtually a technical term for Gentiles who have been attracted to Judaism but have not actually become converts. Here and in 19:5, it is clear that this phrase is used in a nontechnical sense of a Jew or Gentile who reveres God, so that ‘those who revere your name’ should be understood to refer to Christians of gentile origin, while ‘God’s people’ represent Christians of Jewish origin (Feuillet, NTS 4 [1957–58] 197–98).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 645.]

<sup>30</sup>“καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν, ‘and to ruin utterly those who ruin the earth.’ Here ‘earth’ is metonymy for the ‘people of the earth.’ Judgment is justice based on the principle of lex talionis, the ‘law of retaliation’ in kind. The statement here in Rev 11:18, like that in Sib. Or. 3.311–12 (quoted above under v 6a), expresses a form of limited liability; i.e., one could not inflict a punishment on an offender greater than the crime that he or

of the earth. The nations (τὰ ἔθνη, v. 18a) who became enraged at the expression of God’s power now become the objects of God’s destorying judgment, in large part due to their destroying of God’s people on the earth. This is defined in 20:15 as καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός, [and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire](#). In this world they raged against God and His people, but in final judgment they receive back the due reward of that rage: eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

Thus at the blowing of the seventh trumpet we celebrate the coming of the very end with final judgment. The heavenly creatures give thanks to God for His about to be re-asserted sovereign control over all affairs. Upon the completion of the bowls of wrath the temporal judgments will be over, and the day of judgment will usher in the eternal order of things. For God’s saints it will be a day of reward, but for the rest a day of destruction. All will be raised to a resurrection body of eternal order where the blessings of God last forever upon His people, and the torments of Hell last forever on the nations who followed the old dragon, Satan him-

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she had perpetrated (cf. a similar emphasis in Rev 18:6–7). On the lex talionis, see R. Hirzel, *Die Talion*, Philologus Supplementband 11 (Leipzig: Weicher, 1910) 407–82; A. Dihle, *Die goldene Regel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962). A close parallel occurs in Apoc. Abr. 29.19 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP 1:704), where the righteous ‘will destroy those who have destroyed them, and they will rebuke those who have rebuked them through their mockery.’ Exod 21:24 expresses this in the famous principle ‘an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ The Twelve Tables, the first codified body of Roman law, which dates to ca. 450 B.C., expresses the same principle (8.2; tr. LCL): ‘If a person has maimed another’s limb, let there be retaliation in kind [talio esto].’ Similarly, Ovid *Artis amatoriae* 1.655–56 states (tr. LCL; with modifications), ‘for there is no law more just than that contrivers of death should perish by their own contrivances.’ In extralegal contexts the notion of ‘poetic justice’ holds that ‘those who live by the sword die by the sword.’ A biblical example is that of Haman who, according to Esth 7:10, died on the gallows he had erected for Mordecai. Adoni-bezek, who had cut off the thumbs and big toes of seventy kings, suffered the same fate (Judg 1:7). The words of Samson in Judg 15:11 also reflect this principle: ‘As they did to me, so have I done to them.’ Other examples include Judg 9:56–57; Longus 1.20; Xenophon of Ephesus 4.4; 3 Macc 5:1–5, 21, 38; 6:21. The phrase ‘they are deserving’ (Rev 3:4; 16:6) is used ironically, since ἄξιος, ‘worthy,’ is usually an attribute of God or the Lamb in Revelation.

“The phrase καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντες, ‘and to destroy utterly those who deprave,’ is an instance of paronomasia, in which both literal and figurative meanings of a word are used in the same context (for other examples in Revelation, see 2:2[2x], 22; 3:10; 14:8; 18:6[3x], 20, 21; 22:18, 19; cf. BDF §488.1; Turner, *Syntax*, 148). The literal meaning of διαφθεῖρειν is ‘to destroy utterly’ (Louw-Nida, § 22.40), while a figurative extension of the word means ‘“o morally ruin, to deprave’ (Louw-Nida, § 88.266).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 645–646.]

self who will be tossed into the lake of fire along with these outside the people of God.

#### D. The heavenly temple is opened, v. 19

19 Καὶ ἠνοιγῆ ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ὤφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη.

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Major events in Revelation often seem to be accompanied with extraordinary phenomena.<sup>31</sup> Note the following:

**Rev. 4:5.** Καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ, καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καιόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,

Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

**Rev. 8:5.** καὶ εἴληφεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸν λιβανωτὸν καὶ ἐγένευσεν αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός.

Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

**Rev. 16:18.** καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας, οἷος οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ' οὗ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τηλικούτος σεισμός οὕτως μέγας.

And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings,

<sup>31</sup>“There are several lists of atmospheric and seismic phenomena in Revelation with a theophanic significance (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; see Comment on 4:5). Parallel atmospheric and seismic phenomena introduce the dream of Mordecai in LXX Esth 1:1d, καὶ ἰδοὺ φωναὶ καὶ θόρυβος, βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός, τάραχος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ‘And behold there was rumbling and noise and thunder and earthquake, upheaval upon the earth.’ The Philistines were conquered when, according to 1 Sam 7:10, the Lord ‘thundered with a mighty voice’ (for thunder as a weapon in holy wars, see 1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 22:14; Klein, 1 Samuel, 68). The voice of the Lord is particularly emphasized in Ps 29, a hymn that is probably a Canaanite or Phoenician Baal hymn slightly modified (Cross, Canaanite Myth, 151–52; for an opposing view, see P. C. Craigie, Psalms 1–50 [Waco, TX: Word, 1983] 241–49). In Ps 29:3–9 the various aspects of a thunderstorm are turned into metaphors for the voice of the Lord. Earthquakes are also frequently mentioned in descriptions of theophanies in Greco-Roman sources (Callimachus Ap. 1–2; Philostratus Vita Apoll. 4.16).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 678.]

peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake.

Using 11:19 as the starting point, the list of phenomena is as follows:

11:19	4:5	8:5	16:18
ἀστραπαὶ	ἀστραπαὶ	βρονταὶ	ἀστραπαὶ
φωναὶ	φωναὶ	φωναὶ	φωναὶ
βρονταὶ	βρονταὶ	ἀστραπαὶ	βρονταὶ
σεισμός		σεισμός	σεισμός
χάλαζα <sup>32</sup>			

Rev. 11:19 lists large hail, χάλαζα μεγάλη, which is not in the other lists, although 16:21 describes 100 pound hailstones falling over the earth in connection to this listing. 16:18 does say a great earthquake, σεισμός... μέγας with the adjective qualifier for great. Rev. 8:5 reverses the listing of ἀστραπαὶ and βρονταὶ. The list is introduced by the verb ἐγένοντο in 11:19; 8:5; 16:18; but ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται, coming out of the throne in 4:5. It should not be forgotten that in the ancient world generally thunder was understood as deity speaking, and this is true in the OT as well. The accompanying flashes of lightning signaled the power and authority of God speaking. Note Psalm 29:3–9.<sup>33</sup>

In 16:18, ἐγένοντο introduces the plural forms ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ but ἐγένετο the singular σεισμός. And the earthquake is further qualified as οἷος οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ' οὗ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τηλικούτος σεισμός οὕτως μέγας, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake. This accounts for the separating out of σεισμός for special attention.

Such atmospheric and seismic occurrences signal the presence and involvement of God, which is clearly

<sup>32</sup>ἀστραπαὶ: flashes of lightning; φωναὶ: rumblings (=loud sounds); βρονταὶ: peals of thunder; σεισμός: earthquake; χάλαζα: hail.

<sup>33</sup>Psalm 29:3–9. 3 κύριε ὁ θεός μου, ἐκέκραξα πρὸς σέ, καὶ ἴασω με· † 4 κύριε, ἀνήγαγες ἐξ ἄδου τὴν ψυχὴν μου, ἔσωσάς με ἀπὸ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς λάκκον. † 5 ψάλατε τῷ κυρίῳ, οἱ ὅσοι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐξομολογεῖσθε τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἀγιοσύνης αὐτοῦ· † 6 ὅτι ὄργη ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ζῶη ἐν τῷ θελήματι αὐτοῦ· τὸ ἐσπέρας ἀδυσθήσεται κλαυθμός καὶ εἰς τὸ πρωὶ ἀγαλλίασις. † 7 ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ μου Οὐ μὴ σαλευθῶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. † 8 κύριε, ἐν τῷ θελήματι σου παρέσχου τῷ κάλλει μου δύναμιν· ἀπέστρεψας δὲ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου, καὶ ἐγενήθη τεταραγμένος. † 9 πρὸς σέ, κύριε, κεκράζομαι καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεόν μου δεηθήσομαι†

3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, “Glory!”



the case here in 11:19.<sup>34</sup> Such are labeled theophanies, i.e., unusual manifestations of God's presence.<sup>35</sup>

A variety of things can trigger such theophanies. In 4:5 just the vision of God on His throne signaled these events as ongoing phenomena. In 8:5, it was the opening of the seventh seal in anticipation of the seven trumpets. In 16:18 it is the pouring out of the seventh bowl of wrath that triggers the end of the temporal judgments as announced by the voice of God in 16:17. VV 19-21 continue to describe the aftermath of Babylon

<sup>34</sup>“In the OT the Hebrew word קול *qôl*, ‘sound, voice,’ is often used in the plural form קולות *qôlôt* to mean ‘thunder’ and is frequently translated in the LXX with the Greek term φωναί as in the following passages: Exod 9:23, 28, 29, 33, 34; 19:16; 1 Sam 12:17, 18. In the context of storm phenomena associated primarily with the Sinai theophany (Exod 19:16–19; Jeremias, Theophanie, 100–111), which served as the model for later theophanic scenes (Isa 29:6; Pss 18:6–16[LXX 17]; 77:18[LXX 76:19]), it is clear that φωναί should be translated not ‘voices’ (AV, RSV) but rather “rumblings” (NIV, NRSV), a term synonymous with βρονταί; the NEB avoids the problem by including just two atmospheric elements, ‘flashes of lightning and peals of thunder.’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 294.]

<sup>35</sup>“Several observations can be made about these lists (on the earthquake, see Comment on 8:5; on the large hail, see Comment on 11:19c): (1) The most frequently occurring pattern is ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί (4:5; 11:19; 16:18), with a slight reordering in the remaining passage (8:5, βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ). This list of storm phenomena clearly forms the core of all four lists. A very similar list occurs in Jub. 2:2, which refers to the creation of ἄγγελοι φωνῶν, βροντῶν, ἀστραπῶν, ‘angels of the sounds, thunders, and lightnings’ (Greek text of Epiphanius in Denis, *Fragments*, 71; on the corruption of the Ethiopic text, see VanderKam, *Jubilees* 2:8; Hebrew text of 4Q216=4QJuba has only הורלות *haqqôlôt*, ‘voices’ or ‘thunders’; see VanderKam and Milik, *JBL* 110 [1911] 257–60). Very similar also is Apoc. Abr. 30:8, where the last in a series of ten plagues is described as ‘thunder, voices, and destroying earthquakes’ (tr. Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:704). (2) The two lists in 11:19 and 16:18–21 are virtually identical, though the σεισμὸς in 11:19 is qualified as μέγας, and the lengthy description of the magnitude and extent of the earthquake in 16:19–20 interrupts the mention of χάλαζα μεγάλη, the effects of which are also described at some length. (3) The theophanic use of storm phenomena, such as lightning, rumblings, and thunder, grew out of the narrative of the Sinai theophany in Exod 19:16–18, where p 295 five phenomena are mentioned, thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, a loud trumpet blast, and an earthquake (essentially repeated in Tg. Onq. Exod 19:16 and Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 19:16), initially repeated in Ps.-Philo Bib. Ant. 11:4, and then enormously expanded primarily through the use of seismic disturbances in Ps.-Philo Bib. Ant. 11:5 (tr. Charlesworth, *OTP* 2:318):

And behold the mountains burned with fire, and the earth quaked, and the hills were disturbed, and the mountains were rolled about, and the abysses boiled, and every habitable place was shaken, and the heavens were folded up, and the clouds drew up water, and flames of fire burned, and thunderings and lightnings were many, and winds and storms roared, the stars gathered together.

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 294–295.]



being split into three parts by this great earthquake and the falling of hundred pound hailstones over the earth.

But in 11:19 what triggers the phenomena is Καὶ ἠνοιγήθη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ὠφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, *And opened was the temple of God in heaven, and seen was the ark of His covenant in His temple.* The sudden, unexpected opening of temple doors was considered a scary event in the ancient world.<sup>36</sup> John's readers would have immediately connected this to the Greek and Roman legends of such things that circulated widely in that world. Very likely, but not certain, is whether the Jewish legend of the sudden opening of the temple doors 40 years before its destruction in 70 AD reaches back to the end of the first century or earlier. If it did, then the Jewish readers would have linked this depiction up to that belief. This background signals the meaning of this opening of the temple curtain exposing the inside of the Holy of Holies. Something very ominous was happening, and it was to come out of heaven.

When the temple curtains opened, ὠφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, *was seen the ark*

<sup>36</sup>“Temple doors that opened by themselves were considered a prodigy in the ancient world (Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.7; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13; Cassius Dio 66[64].8.2; see Excursus 6A: Ancient Prodigies and the Plagues of Revelation). There is a parallel to Rev 11:19 in Vergil *Aeneid* 3.90–96 (tr. Copeley, Vergil):

Scarce had I spoken when suddenly all things shook, the temple, the sacred laurel; the whole hill moved around us. The shrine sprang open; the tripod clanged. As we fell prostrate, a voice came to our ears: “Oh Dardans! Hardy men! The land that first gave you and your fathers birth, with wealth and joy will take you back. Look for your ancient mother.”

“According to the tradition in b. Yoma 39b, forty years before the destruction of the temple the doors of the temple (הֵקָל *hēkāl*) would open by themselves until they were rebuked by R. Johanan ben Zakkai. This kind of prodigy has been influenced by similar phenomena in the Greco-Roman world.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 676–677.]

of His covenant in His temple.<sup>37</sup> This is the only direct reference to the existence of the ark of the covenant existing in heaven. But the entire assumption in the OT is that the Jerusalem temple was to be an earthly copy of the heavenly temple. Of course, the ark of the covenant in the Jerusalem temple had not contained the items originally mentioned for many centuries prior to its destruction in 70 AD.<sup>38</sup>



<sup>37</sup>“The presence of the ark of the covenant in the heavenly temple implies that it is the ‘true’ ark, which served as an archetype for the construction of the ark housed in the earthly tabernacle and temple (cf. Exod 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; 1 Chr 28:19; Wis 9:8; Acts 7:44; Heb 8:1–5; 9:24; b. Hag. 12b; Gen. Rab. 55.7; Midr. Cant. 4:4; Str-B, 3:702–4; Winston, *Wisdom*, 203–5). This is the only explicit reference in early Jewish and early Christian literature to a heavenly ark of the covenant, though ‘throne’ can be used in a way corresponding to the earthly ark as in Jer 17:12, ‘A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.’ That the earthly temple corresponds to the heavenly throne is made explicit in Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 15:17 (tr. Maher, in McNamara et al., Tg. Ps.-J.: Exodus), ‘You have established, O Lord, a place that corresponds to the throne of your Glory, made ready opposite the dwelling place of your holy Shekinah.’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 677.]

<sup>38</sup>The legends of its survival has provided Hollywood with the stuff for many movies that have made it enormous sums of money.

In the list of the temple furnishings and vessels broken and carried to Babylon, the ark is conspicuous by its absence (2 Kgs 25:13–17; Jer 52:17–23). Yet in 4 Ezra 10:22 the plundering of the ark of the covenant is lamented by “Ezra,” and T. Mos. 3:2 explicitly mentions that the holy vessels were carried off (alluding to 2 Kgs 25:13–17 and Jer 52:17–23). There was some eschatological speculation in early Judaism that the temple vessels, including the ark, would be restored in the eschaton. Most of these speculations are part of the Jeremiah-Baruch tradition (see Wolff, *Jeremiah*, 16–17, 20–26, 61–71), which maintains that the temple furnishings were not carried off by the Babylonians but were hidden locally until the end time by Jeremiah (2 Macc 2:4–8; Paral. Jer. 3:8–11; Vit. Proph. 2.11–19) or angels (2 Apoc. Bar. 6:5–9); see Kalimi-Purvis, CBQ 56 [1994] 679–85. The Jeremiah legend was also preserved by Alexander Polyhistor, a first-century B.C. historian (preserved in Eusebius Praep. evang. 9.39; FrGrHist 723, F 5); he probably derived his version from the Jewish historian Eupolemus frag. 4, though according to this account Jeremiah retained only the ark and tablets of the Law (Holladay, FHJA 1:132–34). Josephus Ant. 18.85–87 preserves the Samaritan belief that Moses himself had concealed the sacred vessels on Mount Gerizim (see M. F. Collins, “The Hidden Vessels in Samaritan Traditions,” JSJ 3 [1972] 97–116). In rabbinic tradition, on the basis of 2 Chr 35:3, the ark was thought to have been concealed by Josiah and would eventually be restored in the messianic age by Elijah (b. Yoma 52b; b. Hor. 12a; y. Šeqal. 6.1). For Talmudic traditions on the hiding of the tem-

The religious point here is similar to when the curtains split open at Jesus’ death, according to Matt. 27:50–51. Access to the presence of the holy God was now possible through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. In one sense this visibility of this central symbol of God’s relationship with His people is the culmination of the slaughtered Lamb beginning to disclose the eternal will of God by opening the seals of that scroll (cf. 6:1). God has established a very specific way by which He relates to sinful humanity as symbolized by the scroll containing the covenant located in the heavenly ark. Christ through His sacrificial death has opened up the details of this covenant contract. The blowing of the seventh trumpet anticipating the seven bowls signals the coming end of human history. The celebration chants of the 24 elders affirms the implementation of the terms of that covenant on the day of final judgment. Verse 19 then brings to a marvelous climax this celebration and then sets the stage for those final events leading up to the great day of judgment.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

Again as with all legitimate interpretation of scripture, the range of modern day applications must develop from the limits of application to the initially targeted readers by the human author. Going beyond this opens the door to heresy and false teaching.

For John’s initial readers, the affirmation of the heavenly voice (v. 15) that God is getting ready to ‘activate’ directly His sovereign rule over the world in order to inaugurate the final temporal judgments leading to the final judgment was marvelous news. The representatives of God’s people in heaven, the 24 elders, respond in thanksgiving and worship of God on the occasion of this announcement. They symbolize the response of God’s people on earth longing for this day to come.

And truly we can -- and should -- joyously look forward to that coming day of final judgment. To be sure, it will be awe inspiring and fearful. But as faithful servants of God through Christ we can celebrate with John’s first readers the coming of that Day.

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ple vessels, see V. Aptowitz, *Parteilpolitik der Hasmonäerzeit in rabbinischen und pseudoepigraphischen Schriften* (Vienna: Kohut, 1927) 192–93 n. 2; for Jewish speculations about the lost ark, see M. Haran, “The Disappearance of the Ark,” IEJ 13 (1963) 46–58. M. Haran argues that Jer 3:16 implies that the ark is no longer in existence (IEJ 13 [1963] 51) and notes that in the vision of the temple in Ezek 40–48 no mention is made of tables, lampstands, ark, or cherubim. Jewish coins minted during the Bar Kosiba rebellion (A.D. 132–35) depict the facade of the Jerusalem temple (at that time in ruins) with an object that looks like the ark between the pillars (Meshorer, *Jewish Coins*, 159 [no. 165], 161–62 [nos. 178–81], 165 [nos. 199–201]).

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 678.]

