

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Review (4.1-11.14) and Consummation (11.14-19)



I. Revelation 4-5: The Theological and Liturgical Centre

1. Revelation 4-5: the theological and liturgical introduction and centre of the book (Revelation 4: creation; Revelation 5: redemption; OT background: Daniel 2, 7; Ezekiel 1-2, 10; Isaiah 6)
2. The scroll contains the account of how God's name is hallowed, how his kingdom comes, and how his will is done on earth as it is heaven. It contains God's judicial and redemptive plan for history. (cf. Dan 2; 7; 12.4-9; Ezek 2.9-10; Ex 32.15-16)
3. The authority of the Lion and the conquest of the Lamb; beastly rule vs. the rule of the Lamb (cf. Genesis 49.8-12; Isaiah 11.1-4; Mark 10.32-45; John 12.31-33; Col 2.13-15)

Revelation 5.9-10: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev 5.9-10; cf. 6.9-11; 8.1-5)

4. The character of God's rule revealed in the life-giving conquest of the Lamb (Ex 17.1-7; Deut 32.15-18; John 3.3-5; Ezek 47.1-12; 1 Cor 10.1-4; John 7.37-39; 16.32-17.1-5, 13-18; 19.30-36; 21.17-19)

II. The Seven Seals: God's Justice and the Tabernacling Presence in the Midst of Persecution (Revelation 6.1-8.5 – cf. view of 40 000 feet)

1. Tribulation and Testing: The Four Horsemen/Winds (Rev 6.1-8)

Revelation 6.9-16: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. ¹² When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

2. How long? (cf. Acts 1.6-8)

3. Biblical imagery for judgment (cosmic cataclysm: Is 13.9-13; 24.1-6, 19-23; 34.4; Ezek 32.6-8; Joel 2.10, 30-32a; Joel 3.15-16; Hab 3.6-11; 2 Sam 22.8-16)

4. Interlude: Who can stand? (Rev 7.1-17)

Revelation 7.1-3, 9-17: After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel ... After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

- a. "I heard ... I saw" (Rev 7.4-5, 9; cf. Rev 5.5-6): 144 000 = the great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages

- b. OT titles, images, and promises given to Israel are often applied to the church in the NT, because there is one covenant people (cf. Ex 19.4-6; 1 Pet 2.9-10; Rev 1.5-6; 5.9-10; Rom 2.28-29; Phil 3.3; Gal 3.27-29; Gal 6.15; James 1.1; 5.14)
- c. “the great tribulation”: *thlipsis* = “pressure” to compromise faith in the present age, both internally (e.g., false teaching) and externally (e.g., persecution) (cf. Rev 1.9; John 16.33; Acts 14.21-22; Rom 5.1-5; 8.35-36; 12.12)
- d. “... washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7.14): atonement and perseverance (cf. Heb 9.13-14; 1 John 1.7; Rev 3.4; Dan 11.32-35)
- e. God’s Tabernacling Presence (cf. Ex 33.12-17; 40.33-38; 1 Kgs 8.9-12; Ezek 37.26-28; John 1.14; Rev 7.15; 21.3)
- f. God’s Overshadows his Covenant People (cf. Ex 40.35; Ps 91.4; Luke 1.35; 9.34; Acts 5.14-15)
- g. The Church is God’s Tabernacle/Temple/Sanctuary (John 4.10-14; John 7.37-39; Acts 2.1-4; 1 Cor 3.16-17; 6.19-20; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.19-21)

Revelation 8.1-5: When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar 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.

III. The Seven Trumpets: God’s Justice in History and the Church’s Prophetic Ministry (Rev 8.6-9.21; 11.15-19)

- 1. The seven trumpets
 - a. A symbolic apocalyptic account of judgment, not a literal description of successive historical events (note: Rev 1.1 and the use of “like” in 8.8, 10; 9.2, 3, 5, 7-10, 17, 19; also, it is difficult to imagine a literal/universal fulfillment of these prophecies)
 - b. Trumpets signify God’s presence, sovereignty, and judgment (cf. Ex 19; Jer 4, 6; Matt 24.30-31; 1 Cor 15.52; 1 Thess 4.16)
 - c. The trumpets *announce* God’s judgment on unbelief and idolatry and are a response to the cry of the saints for justice (cf. Rev 6.10; 8.13; 9.20-21); *signify* preliminary judgments (they do not simply threaten or warn), which precede and point to the Last Judgment (of which Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, and Jericho are typical)
 - d. God’s initiative and action: “seven trumpets were given to them ...” (8.2)

- e. Allusion to the plagues in Exodus (cf. Rev 8.7 and Ex 9.22-25; Rev 8.8-11 and Ex 7.20-22; Rev 8.12 and Ex 10.21-23)
 - i. Purpose of the plagues – for revelation and glory of God (Ex 7.1-5; 10.1-2)
 - ii. 1/3 = limitation and reservation, hence judgments happening throughout the church age as a preliminary to the Last Judgment (also, measured, allowing for repentance)
 - iii. earthly elements in first four trumpets point to idolatry (worship of creation); mountain and star point to rebellious kingdoms/nations

- 2. The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets (9.1-19; cf. Gen 19; Ex 10; Joel 2; Jer 8): God’s sovereign use of demonic forces for implementing his justice, in response to the prayers of the saints
 - a. Response to God’s Judgments (9.20-21): God’s Law, idolatry, and impenitence (cf. Ex 10.16-20)

Revelation 9.20-21: The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
 - b. Idolatry and Judgment
 - i. The Demonic Deception of Idolatry (Deut 32.15-18; Jer 7.5-11; Ps 115.1-8; John 8.31, 43-47)
 - ii. God’s judgment (“God gave them up” – Rom 1.18-32)

- 3. **Revelation 10-11:** Interlude on the location and mission of the church in the midst of the trumpeted judgments
 - a. Another Mighty Angel (Rev 10.1-3a) – “angelic theophany” (cf. Ex 3.2-6; 13.20-21; 14.19-31; 24.15-18; Ezek 1.26-28; Rev 1.12-16; 4.3)
 - b. The Little Scroll (Rev 10.4-11; cf. Rev 5.1-2; Dan 12.4-9; Ezek 2.9-10)
 - i. The scroll in Revelation 5 contains the account of how God’s name is hallowed, how his kingdom comes, and how his will is done on earth as it is heaven. It contains God’s judicial and redemptive plan for history, especially in the last days, which have been inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - ii. The scroll in Revelation 10 reveals the location and mission of God’s people in the God’s sovereign plan for history

- iii. Take and Eat (Rev 10.8-11 – the call to prophetic ministry; cf. Jer 15.16-17; Ezek 2.1-3.15; Matt 28.18-20; John 16.7-13; 20.21-23; Rom 16.25-26)
- c. Measuring the Temple (11.1-2)
- i. signifies the security of God’s sanctifying presence (cf. Ezekiel 8-10; 40-48; Zech 2.1-5; 4.1-14 – the eschatological prophesies of Zechariah and Ezekiel are already being fulfilled in the church)
 - ii. Jesus as the temple (cf. John 1.14; 2.18-22; 7.37-39); the church as the temple (cf. 1 Cor 3.16-17; 6.14-18; Eph 2.17-22); Jesus and the church as the temple in Revelation (Rev 1.12-16; 3.12; 21.1-22.5)
- d. Temporal Designations:
- i. 42: encampments (Num 33.5-49); generations from Abraham to Jesus (Matt 1); period of Elijah’s draught (James 5.12; Luke 4.25)
 - ii. 42 months = 1260 days = time, times, and half a time = three and half years (cf. Dan 7.25-27; Rev 11.2, 3; 12.5, 14; 13.5-8) → *the church age between the two advents of Christ*
- e. trampling the outer court = physical, economic, social, etc. tribulation
- i. “The place of worship is protected, but the place of witness is not. The court of the gentiles, where witness takes place, is not measured. There the holy things and the people who speak of them are treated with contempt.” (Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 112)
- f. The Two Witnesses (11.3-6) – The Church’s prophetic ministry
- i. Two witnesses” – legal testimony (cf. Num 35.50; Deut 17.6; 19.15; 2 Cor 13.1; 1 Tim 5.19; Heb 10.28)
 - ii. “clothed in sackcloth” – prophecy, petition, and penitence (Is 20.1-2; Dan 9.3; Jonah 3.4-10)
 - iii. “two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth” (priests and kings called to prophetic witness, with the assurance of God’s abiding presence by his Spirit – the prophetic fire will never be extinguished; cf. Zech 4.1-13)
 - iv. The prophesying in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1.4-8; Joel 2.28-32)
 - v. In the order of Moses and Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 18.1ff; Ex 7.17-25; cf. Jer 5.14 re: fire)
 - vi. The Prophetic calling of the Church to announce Kingdom of God (Luke 10.1-16; John 12.36-50; 16.7-13; cf. Mark 9.2-29 – the Transfiguration)

- vii. “A torment to those who dwell on the earth” (11.10b; cf. John 3.16-21; Acts 24.24-25)
- g. The Death of the Two Witnesses (11.7-10)
 - i. war with the beast (cf. Dan 7.21-22; Rev 12-13)
 - ii. “the great city that [spiritually] is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified” – *spiritual geography* – “great city” = kingdom of anti-Christ/God; Babylon (cf. 14.8; 16.19; 17.18; 18.10, 16, 18, 19, 21)
 - iii. “Sodom and Egypt”: signify places of wickedness, slavery, and injustice (Gen 19.1-25; Deut 29.22-23; Is 1.9-15; 3.9; Jer 23.14-15; Ex 5.1-21; Joel 3.19; see Mark 11.12-20 re: Jerusalem)
 - iv. the death of the witnesses (cf. John 15.16-27)
- h. The Resurrection and Ascension of the Two Witnesses (Rev 11.12-13)
 - i. Christ’s life and mission is the paradigm for the church’s life and mission: proclamation/witness, death, resurrection, and ascension (cf. Ezek 37.1-14)
 - ii. “a great fear fell on those who saw them” – rejoicing turns to great fear
- i. **The Last Judgment:** And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (11.11-13)
 - i. “great earthquake” – signifies the Last Judgment (cf. Rev 6.12; 16.18; 11.19; cf. Ezek 38.19 [judgment following resurrection])
 - ii. “a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake” – reversal of former judgments or first-fruits of final judgment?

Reversal of judgment:

- in the OT one-tenth and 7000 represent the faithful remnant; but here these figures are reversed to represent the condemned (implication: the remaining nine-tenths repent and are saved) (cf. Is 6.13; Amos 5.3; 1 Kgs 19.18; Rev 15.3-4; 16.9; 19.7)

First fruits of final judgment:

- resurrection and ascension of two witnesses = eschatological vindication of the saints; onlookers who remain are identified as “enemies,” not saints (11.12)
- giving glory does not necessarily imply repentance and conversion (cf. Dan 4.34; Jonah 1.5, 9-10, 14; Phil 2.9-11; Rev 9.20-21; 15.3-4; 19.7)

IV. Consummation (the third woe and the seventh trumpet): The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (11.14-15)

- a. Narrative of seven trumpets is resumed (Rev 11.14 marks the end of the parenthesis from 10.1 to 11.13, which concludes with final judgment)
- b. The consummation of the Kingdom of God (re: transfer of kingdom to the saints and final judgment; cf. Daniel 7.13-27)

Daniel 7.13-27: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed ...¹⁷ 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'
...²¹ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom ...²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.²⁷ And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

V. Judgment and Thanksgiving: And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God,¹⁷ saying,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
 who is and who was,
 for you have taken your great power
 and begun to reign.
¹⁸The nations raged,
 but your wrath came,
 and the time for the dead to be judged,
 and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
 and those who fear your name,
 both small and great,
 and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (Rev 11.16-18)

- a. "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign"
 - i. "Lord God Almighty, who is and who was": the One who is to come, has come (cf. 1.4, 8; 4.8)
 - ii. "begun to reign": note distinction between God's eternal rule (Ps 93.1; 96.10; 97.1; 99.1; Rev 4), the inauguration of the kingdom of God (Rev 1.5-6,9; 2.26-28; 3.21; 5.5-10), and the consummation of the kingdom of God (Rev 9.12; 11.15-19; 15.2-4; 19.1-8; 21.1-22.5)

Psalm 99.1: The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

Revelation 1.4-6: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 11.15: Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

- b. Consummation of the Kingdom of God is initiated by the Last Judgment: “The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (11.18)

- i. “the time for the dead to be judged, and for the rewarding of your servants”

Daniel 12.2: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

1 Peter 4.3: For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (cf. Acts 10.42; 2 Tim 4.1)

- ii. “your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both great and small”

- iii. Judgment/reward/judgment: the destruction of the wicked is the vindication of the saints (i.e., part of their reward; cf. Rev 6.9-11)

Jeremiah 51.24-28: “I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD.²⁵ “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the LORD, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.

Revelation 18.24-19.5: And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”^{19.1} After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,² for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”³ Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

- iv. *Lex talionis*: “the nations raged (*orgizō*), but your wrath (*orgē*) came”; “destroying the destroyers of the earth”

Psalm 7.14-16: Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.¹⁵ He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made.¹⁶ His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends. (cf. Jer 7.6; Rom 1.18-32: “God gave them up ...”)