

Introduction

It's overwhelming to look out at a world that is marked by violence, hatred, bigotry, and *rage*. *Rage* really does seem to be the most apt word to describe what goes on in our world each day. Even if we try to insulate ourselves from "bad news" it doesn't stop the bad news from happening. Each moment around our world is marked by brokenness.

Onto this plane of existence steps the Christian, you and me. We know that the world is not as it should be, that something is deeply *wrong* with the world, but we are not alone in that understanding. Everyone can look around and see that something is wrong, but as servants of the living God we are supposed to have some kind of answer, some kind of hope and encouragement for a world that is raging. But how can we give that encouragement and hope if we do not have it ourselves?

Revelation 11:15-19

15 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 will reign forever and ever. 16 The twenty-four elders, who were seated before God on their thrones, fell facedown and worshiped God, 17 saying, We give you thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. 18 The nations were angry, but your wrath has come. The time has come for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to your servants the prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear your name, both small and great, and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth. 19 Then the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of his

covenant appeared in his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and severe hail.

Context

We need to talk about some context in order to understand what is happening here. This passage comes just on the heels of a violent picture of the oppression and persecution of God's people. Ultimately there is resurrection and vindication and then after this passage, it seems like it's all over! God has won, his plan has been fulfilled, and everything is as it should be.

But what is the problem with that? There's 11 more chapters in the book! We're only halfway done. How can it be over if it's not over? To understand this, we need to revisit how the book of Revelation is designed and organized.

Much of the book of Revelation centers around the number "seven" which is used in Scripture to mean "completeness." Seven seals, seven trumpets, and later we will see seven bowls. We can call these "cycles of seven." You can basically outline the book of Revelation as three cycles of seven with some interludes in between each cycle.

Very important: Each of these three "cycles of seven" are not describing three different events, but the same event, with each emphasizing different parts of the end times and giving some more information as John's vision moves forward. Each of them share similarities with the others and each of them end with a variation on some kind of storm (cf. 4:5, 8:5, 16:18).

Not primarily an order of history but an order of visions.

Scott Duvall - “We need to remember that Revelation does not unfold in sequential fashion but often revisits the same great realities in different ways as it spirals forward.”

In other words, you cannot read Revelation in a way that is chronological and sequential. “This happened and then this happened and then this happened...” If you try to read Revelation that way, it will make zero sense and you will be very confused. The way Revelation is meant to be read is in a way that sees John’s visions as progressively getting wider in their scope and thus contributing to the whole picture of the final days.

So, the events described in vs. 15-19 will be revisited and more fully explained in chapters 19-22, the actual end of the book. This is simply a vision given to John to remind us about the primary point of the book of Revelation.

It is easy for the primary message of Revelation to get lost in all the details and the varying interpretations of those details.

1. Revelation is all about me getting rewarded.
2. Revelation is all about my enemies (and maybe God’s enemies) being destroyed.
3. Revelation is all about giving me every specific detail about the end of time.

The primary point of the book of Revelation is fulfillment - that God’s plan will be fulfilled. It is not primarily about your reward, vengeance on the enemies of God, or details of the end times (although some of those things are included).

This passage serves a reminder of that primary point as it recanters us on the reality that one day everything will be fulfilled and made right.

I. Fulfillment: The Kingdom Has Come (15)

A. Seventh angel

1. Remember: seven is meant to indicate fulfillment, completion, indicates that this passage is referring to the fulfillment of God's plan.

B. The kingdom of heaven has come down

1. John 18:36 - Jesus says that his kingdom "is not of this world."
 - a) Now his kingdom is the only kingdom - every other kingdom is gone
 - b) All kingdoms bow down - none last (Daniel 2:31-45, Dan 7:13-14, Zech 14:9, Ps. 10:16)
 - c) To say that any earthly kingdom comes close to being the kingdom of heaven, or might be spared as some kind of "special kingdom," is antithetical to the message of the kingdom of God

C. The inauguration of the kingdom - what has been promised has happened

1. God has come to earth

II. Fulfillment: The Lord Reigns (16-18)

A. 24 elders praising God

1. Lots of interpretations - let's call them heavenly worship leaders.
2. They pop up to worship God and lead others in that worship.
3. Significance of the "the one who is and who was"
 - a) No "who is to come" - this is a present reality that John is seeing

B. The rage of the nations

1. The rage of the nations are nothing compared to God's wrath

2. God's power has always been present - but now it is being exercised, not power that didn't exist before.

C. The world itself is not bad - wickedness destroys the earth

1. "The destruction of those who destroy the earth is a key idea which expresses God's commitment to the created order..." - Ian Paul

III. Fulfillment: God is Present with His People (19)

A. The temple of God symbolizes God's presence

1. The door opening is significant

B. Significance of the ark of the covenant from the OT (Exodus 25:22)

C. The storm - present after the seals, the trumpets and the bowls (cf. 4:5, 8:5, 16:18)

Summary: This passage shows the fulfillment of God's plan by emphasizing the coming of the kingdom, the reign of the king, and the presence of God with his people.

Application

The primary point of the book of Revelation is fulfillment. But fulfillment of what?

Many Christians view Revelation as this book tacked onto the end of the Bible, with little to no connection to the rest of the Bible and certainly no practical application to their own daily life. It is simply a whirlwind of chaos and wild imagery that is confusing and not important for the Christian's daily life.

But let us bring this into focus. Revelation is not only connected to the rest of the Bible, it is the recognized FULFILLMENT of the rest of the Bible! Everything has

been building to this point, the coming of the kingdom, the reigning of the king, and the presence of God with his people. Earth has groaned for centuries waiting for this day. Generations of God's people have died waiting for this fulfillment of God's plan.

This is the crescendo of God's plan of redemption.

Why is this important for you to know and understand?

We live in a place of tension. We know that God is in control and that he is the ultimate authority, but as William Hendriksen says "at times it seems as if Satan is the supreme ruler." We look around and see the brokenness wrought by sin and can be shaken in our belief that the kingdom of God is coming.

Wrestling with doubt and fears is a normal part of the Christian walk. I will not stand up here and try to give you every answer for every doubt that you may have, but I will try to illustrate one important, encouraging principle that we see in Revelation 11:15-19.

The Greek words used in this passage indicate that John is writing something that is yet to happen, but is certain to happen. In other words, John is seeing a vision that he knows is yet to come, but is at the same time so imminent that it is as if it has already been completed. Does that break your brain?

Here's the real point: this is going to happen. It's not that it *could* happen, or it *might* happen, it is *going* to happen. If you have put your faith in Jesus as your savior then you should have faith that one day he is coming again! John says that

he saw this with the certainty that one day it would be a reality. He saw it in a way that was not just true, it defined what was true.

But in the meantime, it does hurt, doesn't it? Seeing the world so broken that each day it just seems like something else is going to go wrong. Even personally, I know you go through so much personally that is so sad, so devastating.

Where is our hope?

If you are in Christ you belong to a king who is coming again. A king who is going to make everything right, destroy those that destroy the world, and his kingdom will have no end. There will be no more tears, no more pain, no more brokenness and hurt. That day is coming.

I know it to be true, but I can't wait to see it with my own eyes.

Conclusion

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth take their stand,
and the rulers conspire together
against the Lord and his Anointed One:

3 "Let's tear off their chains
and throw their ropes off of us."

4 The one enthroned in heaven laughs;

the Lord ridicules them.

5 Then he speaks to them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath:

6 “I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.”

7 I will declare the Lord’s decree.
He said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.

8 Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance
and the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You will break them with an iron scepter;
you will shatter them like pottery.”

10 So now, kings, be wise;
receive instruction, you judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with reverential awe
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Pay homage to the Son or he will be angry
and you will perish in your rebellion,
for his anger may ignite at any moment.

All who take refuge in him are happy.

What does that sound like to you? What we just read! This psalm, written hundreds of years before John’s vision, was looking toward this same day that we read about in Revelation 11. Furthermore, it puts the Son of God, who we know to be Jesus, at the center of this redemptive work that God is doing.

So, as should always be the case, the whole point comes back to Jesus.

Jesus is the one who purchased us through his blood, made a way for salvation, and is the only one worthy to set in motion everything we read about in the book of Revelation. He is the one spoken of from the first chapter of the Bible to the last. Everything comes back to Jesus.

If you know Jesus, you may need to be reminded of that hope. Have you let the world and its brokenness burden you and weigh you down? Have you forgotten the end of the story?

If you don't know Jesus, you don't have that hope. But you can!

Take comfort in the fact that the nations will not rage forever, and that is a good thing. This is all going to come to an end, and that is good. Every earthly kingdom is going to be defeated, and that is good. The kingdom of God is coming, and that is very good.

I know it to be true, but I can't wait to see it with my own eyes.