

No Longer Top Secret

The Trumpets of Seven Archangels – Part VI

Revelation 11:15-19

Introduction

A recent issue of *World Magazine* carried a brief article on the tight security measures used recently in the transference of information from one location to another. After spending decades locked away in a secret cabinet with multiple locks inside a triple locked vault, company officials carefully removed a yellowing piece of paper and transferred it to an undisclosed location. The entire process was carefully guarded and security was at top alert. This yellowing piece of paper dates back to 1940, and the handwriting on it is by the corporate founder. His name was Harland Sanders, and the company he founded is Kentucky Fried Chicken.

That's right! This yellowing piece of paper bearing his signature is, in his own handwriting, the only copy of a secret recipe of eleven herbs and spices which supposedly holds the key to KFC's worldwide success. Corporate executives needed to consult the original recipe once more as they prepared to release a new line of chicken strips. This consultation prompted the need for heightened security. So, following this top level, top secret meeting, the paper was locked in a small safe, handcuffed to a guard, who got into an armored car that took him and the recipe to an undisclosed location where the secret lies safely hidden away, once again.¹

This is proof that corporate theft is a real problem. It is also proof that we take our chicken seriously! KFC can argue, of course, that they made more than 840 million dollars in 2008, so their recipe is worth keeping secret.

This is the way it is, is it not? We keep whatever it takes to advance our own wealth and worth top secret. We keep our valuables under lock and key. We lock our car doors. We keep our trade secrets surrounded with filters and cameras.

I am not opposed to this. I lock the doors to my house and have a security system, and only a few people know the code. My Ford F150 has an alarm system built into it. Whenever anyone in the church parking lot opens their door and dings my truck, it takes their picture and emails it to me. We are developing a whole new category for church discipline!

Can you imagine KFC – or Apple Computer, or General Motors, or Wall Street – announcing, “We’re going to show you the recipe – photocopies for everyone. We’re going to tell you what we’re working on for the future. We’re going to open up to you our trade secrets.”?

Not on your life!

Well, for those who care enough to look, God is going to do something wonderful – if not breathtaking. He is about to open the vault of heaven and show us the future in a unique way.

For those who might be feeling a little overwhelmed by now with all the strangeness of Revelation – the weird animals and flying creatures; trumpets, seals, horsemen, blood, gore and pestilence; mysterious numbers and markings – our Lord stops for a brief moment at exactly the halfway point of this revelation and gives us a crystal clear look at the future of the world. Corporate executives might lock away a chicken recipe or hide away trade

secrets, but God will now open the vault and reveal future secrets for all the world to see.

As you turn in your Bible to Revelation chapter 11, understand that often in this book, we are given the big picture in a few verses, followed by close-up snapshots that focus on the details.ⁱⁱ

The Seventh Trumpet – Future Secrets Are God-Revealed

In Revelation 11:15, we are given the big picture as God reveals some secrets concerning future days.ⁱⁱⁱ

It all begins with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Notice verse 15.

Then the seventh angel sounded; 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.”

Let me make note once again that although the seventh trumpet is the last in the sequence of the seven trumpet judgments, it is not to be equated with the “last trumpet” to which Paul refers in I Corinthians 15:52, when he writes,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

The seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15 covers an extended period of time; it is not the instantaneous “in the twinkling of an eye” event of the last trumpet in I Corinthians. In fact, this seventh trumpet in Revelation calls for prolonged waves of judgment on the ungodly.^{iv}

Verse 15 tells us that . . .

. . . there were loud voices in heaven, saying...

We have already encountered the word “legontes” (λεγοντες), which is translated as “saying” in chapter 5. This word can amplify “adousin” (αδουσιν) as a clear reference to singing. This word which is translated as “saying” is a reference to the lyrics that we are able to read in verses 15 and 16.

So just imagine, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we have the glorious, swelling anthem of praise and adoration as first the angels sing.^v

We have also already learned that myriads times myriads of angels stand ready to sing these great praises – perhaps in this verse as well. “Myriad” means 10,000. It was the largest unit used in Greek mathematics in the ancient world. If we do our math

and multiply a myriad times a myriad, we come up with a hundred million angels – singing, as John writes in verse 15, at the top of their lungs.

One author writes that if we want to hear a little of what this sounded like and understand what these words mean, then listen to Handel’s *Messiah* and its “Hallelujah” chorus.^{vi}

In fact, George Frideric Handel took the words of verse 15 as his text. Notice this verse again.

. . . “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

This is what the prophet Daniel predicted

. . . One like a Son of Man was coming...

And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom . . .

Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms . . . will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom . . .

(Daniel 7:13, 14, 27)

As God in Revelation chapter 11, opens the vault of the future and shows us the end of history, we might say that it is all over but the shouting – or at least, the singing.

Elements revealed

Notice several elements in these angelic lyrics.

1. First, notice the singularity of the coming kingdom.

The angels sing,

. . . “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord . . .”

This is not “kingdoms,” but one “kingdom”.

Even though our world is separated into a thousand kingdoms with all their rulers and potentates, an astonishing truth is revealed in this. All of the world’s diverse national, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups are in reality, one kingdom, and they have been under the dominion of one king.^{vii}

Three times in John’s gospel, our Lord Jesus called Satan, “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

On one occasion, in fact, Jesus was accused of being empowered by Satan when casting out demons.

Our Lord responded by exposing this ridiculous logic, when He said,

“If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:26)

When Christ was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, the devil showed our Lord all the individual kingdoms in a moment of time, and then said to the Lord,

... “I will give You ... this domain [singular] ... if You worship ... me ...” (Luke 4:6-7)

Here is a secret exposed – the world is actually ruled by Satan. The world systems are under his thumb. They might think they have power and they might think they know where they are going, but they are, in reality, under the sway and dominion of this deceiving angel of light.

The nations do not coincidentally happen to follow other gods, despise the believer, and often persecute Christians. The nations are actually influenced like puppets on strings; manipulated by, as Paul wrote,

... the god of this world [who] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (II Corinthians 4:4)

Although Satan is a usurper and not the rightful king, he is the present ruler of Earth’s kingdom. He rules through those who disbelieve the gospel and who themselves hate the name and authority of Jesus Christ.

What a frightening thing this is to reveal to unbelievers – their world system is in the grip of the enemy of the true and living God. And he will not loosen his grip without a fight. However, he has already lost his kingdom, according to the revelation of the secrets of God.

This leads me to the second point. First we noted the singularity of the kingdom.

2. Secondly, notice the certainty of the kingdom.

The angels sing,

... “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord ...”

The verb that is translated “has become” is a proleptic aorist. You do not need to know this for the quiz!

Simply understand that this verb tense is rather amazing; it views an event in the future as an already accomplished fact.^{viii}

In other words, the angels are singing that the kingdom will belong in the future to our Lord as an already accomplished, historical reality. It is that certain.

At this point in time on the planet, it is during the middle of the Tribulation and Satan has consolidated global influence, setting himself up as God – through his puppet antichrist. People might be led to think that God has lost it all.

However, listen – do you hear the music in heaven? One hundred million angels are singing, “The kingdom belongs to God.”

- God knows the future, and before it happens the angels go ahead and sing about it;
- God knows the future, and unveils its secrets to the hosts of heaven and, through the apostle John, to the entire human race;
- God knows the future, and guess what – God wins.

This is already in the books; in fact, it is in *the Book*.

3. Thirdly, notice the Sovereign of the kingdom.

Look again at verse 15.

... “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ...”

What does this mean?

The title, “kuriou” (κυριου) or “Lord” is often used as a title for Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament. However, in the book of Revelation, it is often used as a title for God the Father.^{ix}

This phrase could be understood as, “the kingdom of God the Father”.

However, what does the last part mean, “and of His Christ”?

“Christou” (Χρήστου), or Christ, simply means “Messiah”. This can be translated, “anointed One”.

The angels are singing lyrics that reveal the fulfillment of prophecy from centuries past – the Messiah will reign.

How could David have known this, had not the Holy Spirit breathed through him the truth of secrets yet explained to him? So David sang, using these same titles in Psalm chapter 2, about the futility of the nations that wage war,

. . . against the Lord and His Anointed [His Christ] . . . (Psalm 2:2b)

This is using the exact same words in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

David goes on to say in this Psalm,

Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling.

Do homage to the Son . . .

(Psalm 2:11-12a)

Way back in David's day, he was singing about God the Father and God the Son – the anointed One – the Messiah.

This is the unity of their sovereign rule – when the Father rules, so does the Son, and when the Son rules, so does the Father.

John wrote about their union earlier, when he said,

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ [literally, the Messiah – the anointed One]? . . .

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

(I John 2:22-23)

John's Revelation of the Messiah's sovereign rule on Earth one day would have been incredibly encouraging to the believers living in John's day.

When John was writing this book, the Roman Emperor Domitian became the first emperor to have himself officially titled in Rome, "God the Lord" and "Lord of the Earth". He persecuted Christians, killing many, and exiling well-known believers such as the apostle John because they dared to call someone else, "Lord".

Domitian was sovereign alone. He had no idea, until it was too late, that he was actually doing the bidding of the great deceiver; the usurper; the one who hates the worship of God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

So, in Revelation chapter 11, the angels sing. Understand that we, the church, will actually be in heaven to hear this trumpet blow and a hundred million angels sing.

We read, in verse 16, what you and I will do as a result of the angels' song.

And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

The twenty-four elders represent the church – the bride of Christ – already raptured and safely in heaven, apart from and away from this day of wrath on Earth.

One minute the elders are sitting on their thrones and the next minute they are down on their faces worshipping the God of glory. Their response is ecstatic; spontaneous – it is pure praise!^x

This is what true worship is all about – whether we are singing, praying, studying, testifying, or serving – it is all worship as we recognize the greatness of God and play the part of willing servant to His Majesty's will in our lives.

George Handel communicated this sense well in his great work that we call, Handel's *Messiah*.

He had only recently suffered a stroke which had paralyzed the left side of his face, causing intense pain. Most days Handel could barely afford rent and food. His health had been broken and he was discouraged and anxious about the future.

Then one night, he was given a folder filled with verses of scripture from a friend who was attempting to encourage Handel. His friend was merely trying to encourage him to take the verses of scripture and use them to compose some new work. The verses were simply referring to prophecies about Jesus Christ, the Messiah. George looked them over and then, tossed them aside as he crawled into bed. But he could not sleep.

He got up and went to his piano and began to write. Handel was left handed and because of his recent stroke, his notes and script were poorly written – but he carried on.

For three weeks, in fact, he hardly stopped to eat or sleep or entertain visitors. Finally, after twenty-two days of solitude, a friend made it inside Handel's apartment and found the composer at his piano with sheets of music strewn everywhere. George looked at him and with tears streaming down his face, he said to his friend, "I do believe I have seen all of heaven before me, and the greatness of God Himself."

In 1741, when the *Messiah* was first performed in London, as they arrived at the "Hallelujah" chorus, England's King George removed his crown and stood up – for in their culture, one never sat in the presence of a superior – and thus the tradition of standing at the "Hallelujah" chorus began.^{xi}

In the text Handel chose, there is the singing of angels who rehearse the greatness of the Sovereign, the singularity of His kingdom, and the certainty of

His reign. And the church, represented by the elders, cannot sit either – in fact, they fall down before the throne of God and worship Him.

Thanksgiving for elements revealed

Now, these voices begin to praise God with an incredible hymn of thanksgiving. They will thank God for several aspects of these secrets unveiled.

1. First, they praise God for His attributes.

They sing in Revelation 11:17.

. . . *“We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were . . .”*

This goes back to the phrase in chapter 1, verse 4, which says,

. . . *from Him who is and who was and who is to come . . .*

Also, in chapter 4, verse 8, we again read,

. . . *“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”*

This is repeated in chapter 11, verse 17 – almost. Notice that the final phrase is left off, as it simply says,

. . . *who are and who were . . .*

We could render this, “Who is and who was.” There is no reference to “and who is to come.” Why not? Because He has come.

He has come. He is not *going* to reign – He *is* reigning. So, they praise God for His attributes.

2. Secondly, they praise God for His triumphs.

Notice further in verse 17.

“. . . because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”

“Begun to reign” is the perfect tense, which pictures the permanence of His sovereign control. One author put it this way, “The almighty One until this time allows anti-Christian power to control the world, but after this future climax, His direct control will be in place [and remain forever].”^{xii}

This is not just a coronation ceremony, an expensive robe, crown, and a golden throne. This is permanent, active sovereignty.

Let me illustrate the difference by reading what one of my favorite commentators, John Phillips, who also happens to be a British subject, wrote, as he commented on this particular text.

On June 2, 1952, Elizabeth II was crowned Queen of England in Westminster Abbey. At one point during her coronation, the Archbishop of Canterbury turned and asked the people, “Do you take Elizabeth to be your true and lawful sovereign?” From the multitude rolled back a single word, “Aye.” She then took the coronation oath, received a Bible, took communion, was seated on the coronation chair, anointed, clothed in a robe made of gold, given the ring, the scepter, and crowned with the glorious crown of St. Edward. The guns of London fired a salute, and the new monarch left the Abbey in grand procession for a banquet of state. But from that day to this, Queen Elizabeth II has never made a single decision affecting the government of her kingdom. The Prime Minister of England and the members of the English Parliament do that. All she does is sign their decisions into law. Why? Because this is a constitutional monarchy – a monarchy where the King or Queen is sovereign in name alone, while all the power belongs in the hands of her people.^{xiii}

As I read this, I could not help but think that the average person in America who says they believe in God, actually believe in a constitutional monarchy. He is sovereign in name only. We will dress Him with cathedrals and steeples; we will furnish Him with money and offerings for things accomplished in His name; we will even pay for His representatives to go to distant lands to represent His kingdom, but in our personal lives, outside of church and the ceremony of religion, He is a king in name only.

The real power is in the hands of the people. And most people prefer God to stay up there on His golden throne. Let the people inform Him of their will and expect Him to sign it into law.

Notice verse 17 again.

“. . . You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”

The power is not in the people – the power is in God alone. So, the believers praise Christ, not only because of His attributes, but because of His triumphs.

3. Thirdly, they praise God because of His judgments.

Verse 18 shows the response of the people on Earth.

And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.

The last phrase in this verse, by the way, “those who destroy the earth” is not a reference to people who pollute the environment. It is unbelievable how many pastors are now using this text to preach environmental messages. This is a reference to people who pollute the Earth with unrepentant sin, which brings about the destruction of Earth by God’s wrath.

God is not judging these people because they would not recycle. He is judging them because they will not repent.

Remember, John’s vision is not a close-up view of the details. There are actually several judgments – the judgments of the nations as they enter the Kingdom; the judgment of all unbelievers before the Great White Throne just prior to being condemned and cast into eternal hell.

In the same way, the rewards are not distinguished between the New Testament Christian’s reward at the Bema seat and the rewards of the faithful servants in the Kingdom.

This is a picture that condenses everything into one quick overview. These verses actually condense the activities of the entire Tribulation period, the Millennial Kingdom, and even hint at the eternal state.

Did you notice the attitude of the unbeliever in verse 18 toward the reign of Christ? They are literally enraged at the thought of it.

It brings their hatred to a fever pitch.^{xiv}

There is crowning in heaven, but cursing on Earth; there is rejoicing in heaven, but rage on Earth.^{xv}

This past week, someone emailed a link to me to *Fox News* showing their discussion on a new ad campaign by the American Humanist Association – an association of atheists, agnostics, humanists. These are the kind of people who are blinded by the god of this world – but to whom we take the gospel, right?

The ad simply says, “Why believe in a god, just be good for goodness sake.”

How is that for Christmas cheer? “Why believe in a god” – and we know which God they are talking

about because this is targeted for Christmas time – “just be good for goodness sake.”

In other words, we do not have to be good because God will hold us accountable or because He has actually informed mankind what good is – just be good for goodness sake.

The Humanist Association has poured thousands of dollars into this campaign that puts signs on the sides of city busses. They have targeted the Washington D.C. transit system, which has agreed to carry the ads – that was a real shock to me.

Remember, the believing church is singing the praise of God who delivers both rewards and wrath. If the world has a problem with the suggestion that God has dictated what good and evil are, and rewards accordingly, imagine the unbeliever’s rage over the claim of Christ to rule the Earth?

We will see later that the world will mount an army to literally take on God Himself.

However, in this paragraph of scripture, the secret is out. Christ will literally reign on Earth; the unbelieving world will rage against Him; He will reward His own and usher in His kingdom.

More secrets revealed

Now, more secrets are revealed in verse 19.

And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

For the Jew who believes the ark of the covenant is lost forever, the heavenly original – the image that was copied in the temple of the Jews – has not been lost.

This image of the ark in the temple of God is specifically dedicated to the nation Israel that God will keep His covenant promise to them.^{xvi}

The Messiah will not only rule, but believing Israel will be re-gathered.

In the same way that the promises of Christ’s first coming were fulfilled, the promises of His second coming will be fulfilled as well.

Since I mentioned the Christmas season earlier, let me point out something that most Christians miss in the typical Christmas reading. Turn to the gospel by Luke, chapter 1.

Notice Gabriel's announcement to Mary in verses 31 through 33, and get your pencil ready to circle something that is often missed.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; . . .

Most people assume there is a period at this point in verse 32. This is not a period; it is a semi-colon. I am speaking to an educated crowd, so this is not over your head. Continue to read in verse 32 and through verse 33.

. . . and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.

In this text, we have the promise of His first coming – as a baby who grew up to become a crucified Savior, resurrected and ascended Lord – and the promise of His second coming – to do what? He will sit on David's throne – and rule over Israel and everything else.

It is amazing to me how many people believe the first part, but spiritualize away the second part.

Both parts are literally true. At His second coming, He will come to reign as sovereign Lord and His kingdom will have no end.

So, go back and circle this semi-colon, and then draw a line out to the margin of your Bible and write "2,000 years". That is how long this semi-colon has lasted so far. I could easily preach a message on this semi-colon of Luke 1:32.

Conclusion

God has revealed to us what the rest of the story looks like – it is no longer top secret. This is a panoramic view as the vault of heaven's plan is opened.

- Sinners are enraged and judged – oh, how tragic;
- The nation is re-gathered – oh, what a surprise;
- Saints are rewarded – oh, what grace;
- The kingdom has come – oh, what glory.

The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 11/16/2008 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ "Tight Security," World Magazine (Oct., 2008).

ⁱⁱ Edward Hindson, Revelation: Unlocking the Future (AMG, 2002), p. 128.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ray Stedman, God's Final Word (Discovery House, 1991), p. 224.

^{iv} John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 1 (Moody Press, 1999), p. 308.

^v William Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors (Baker, 1940), p. 132.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} MacArthur, p. 310.

^{viii} Robert L. Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 106.

^{ix} Ibid., p. 107.

^x Sam Gordon, Revelation: Worthy Is the Lamb (Ambassador, 2000), p. 253.

^{xi} Internet "George Handel/History of the Messiah".

^{xii} Thomas, p. 109.

^{xiii} John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 153.

^{xiv} MacArthur, p. 316.

^{xv} Phillips, p. 151.

^{xvi} William Barclay, The Revelation of John: Volume 2 (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 73.