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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD”
Revelation 11:15-19

■ **“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:**

**‘The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Christ,
and he will reign forever and ever.’”** (Rev 11:15)

If these words do not take your breath away and make your spine tingle, you had better check your pulse.

Sovereign God is moving history toward its grand finale: the triumph of his kingdom. His goal is the absolute deliverance of the Cosmos from sin, evil, and death. We already see this happening in bits and pieces, but it will be entirely achieved when **“the kingdom of the world [becomes] the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.”**

When God’s total reign is achieved {Is 35:1-2a, 6b-7}

**The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The burning sand will become a pool,
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay,
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow,**

for {Romans 8:21} **“the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay.”**

When God’s total reign is achieved {Is 11:6-9 }

**“The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling
together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow and the bear will graze,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like an ox.**

**The nursing child will play over the hole of
the cobra,
and the weaned child will put
its hand into the viper’s nest.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge
of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea,**

for {Alfred Lord Tennyson} **“Nature”** will no longer be **“red in tooth and claw.”** Predation will come to an end.

When God’s total reign is achieved {Isaiah 9:5;
Micah 4:3b-4 }

**Every warrior’s boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.
They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.**

**Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.
They all will sit under their own vines
and under their own fig trees,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the LORD Almighty has spoken,**

and human violence and bloodshed will cease.

When the total reign of God is achieved the King of kings {Mal 3:2-3} **“will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ... he will purify [us] and refine [us] like gold and silver,”** and he {Zeph 3:9}

**“will purify the lips of the peoples,
that all of them may call on the name
of the LORD
and serve him shoulder to shoulder,”**

for all human sin will disappear.

When the total reign of God is achieved **“death and Hades [will be] thrown into the lake of fire.”** God {Rev 20:14; 21:4} **“will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [will pass] away,”** and when it goes every source of grief and sorrow will vanish.

When the total reign of God is achieved Heaven and earth will be integrated as {Revelation 21:2-3, NIV / NRSV} **“the new Jerusalem, [comes] down out of heaven from God... a loud voice from the throne”** will announce, **“Now the dwelling of God is with mortals, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”** The gulf

which we by our sin have put between us and Holy God will be erased.

There will continue to be an *appropriate* distance between sinless humans and God, just as there was in the garden. The LORD YHWH will still be the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Creator, while we will still be finite (albeit glorified) creatures.

Yet this in no way diminishes the magnificent promise that {1 Jn 3:2} **“we shall see him as he is.”** He shall slake our most persistent thirsts, satisfy our profoundest hungers, heal our brokenness, fill our emptiness, and flood us with overwhelming beauty of his presence. We will be full to overflowing with love and holiness and joy. Although you and I will never *be* God, {1 Jn 3:2} **“we shall be *like* him.”**

■ Verse 17: No wonder **“the twenty-four elders, who [are] seated on their thrones before God, [fall] on their faces and [worship] God, saying:**

**‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.’”**

For those who have a place in God’s kingdom, his total reign is the best possible news. For those who do not, it is their worst nightmare.

■ Verse 18:

**“The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,**

**and for rewarding your servants
the prophets
and your saints and those who
revere your name –
both small and great –
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”**

Many of us rightly reject the fire-and-brimstone caricature of God as an ogre who flies off the handle at the smallest offense and delights to inflict punishment on sinners. Truly, our God is {Ps 86:15} **“compassionate and gracious...slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”** The Sovereign LORD himself declares, {Ezek 18:32} **“I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”**

But in recoiling from one extreme, some have gone to the other. They argue that the Living God never gets angry about anything, there is no place in his temperament for wrath, and he judges no one.

To make this claim is to ignore, misinterpret, or discard hundreds of biblical texts. Holy God responds to human sin with grief, displeasure, irritation, anger, and outright wrath. To be sure, God's wrath is never sinful at its source and it never causes him to sin – still, it is wrath.

Scripture is equally unambiguous about judgment: LORD YHWH judged people in the past, he judges in the present, and he will judge us at the end of the world. Unlike any human judge, his rulings are never mistaken or unjust. But thank God that he does not deal in absolute justice: he never gives anyone worse than they deserve, yet {Ps 103:10} he often gives us better than we deserve.

Back to the text: if **“the kingdom of the world”** is to **“become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,”** then sin must be decisively judged and punished. There is no place in God's New Heaven and the New Earth for immorality, injustice, or idolatry of any kind.

Everyone who loves **“the kingdom of the world,”** {Rev 20:15} **“whose name [is] not...written in the book of life,”** {Rev 21:8} who clings to their sin, will go into {Rev 21:8} **“the fiery lake of burning sulfur... the second death.”** {Rev 20} As will the Antichrist and Satan and death and Hell.

But all whose names *are* written in the book of life, who by God's grace overcome **“the kingdom of the world,”** and who cling to Jesus' righteousness – they will enter **“the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,”** and they will live with him forever.

This promise for the future demands a response in the present. It is framed as two choices.

Our first choice is to receive or decline salvation in Jesus. Freedom from guilt, sin, and death is found in no one else. By his atoning death on the cross and liberating victory over the grave, the Messiah has {Rev 5:9-10}

**“purchased [mortals] ...
from every tribe and language and
people and nation.**

**[He has] made them to be a kingdom
and priests to serve...God,
and they will reign on the earth.”**

Has he purchased you? Are you a subject in God's kingdom? Are you a priest in his service? I urge you: {Ro 10:13} **“call on the name of the Lord”** and **“be saved.”**

After this, we have a second choice: to hand over our kingdoms to God, or to keep them for ourselves. We are all petty kings and queens. The extent of our domains varies by our ages, material resources, ambitions, and so forth; but only the tiniest children have no control of anything at all.

The question is: will we use our bodies, minds, and souls, our time, energy, knowledge, talents, skills, money, and opportunities to manifest God's kingdom?

This is not the same thing as becoming a Christian. It requires additional, ongoing decisions, some of which are difficult.

But they are well worth the cost! Second Peter 3:12 reveals that not only can we **“look forward to the Day of the Lord,”** we can actually **“speed its coming”!** We do so by surrendering control to God, obeying his commands, heeding his call to {Mic 6:8} do justice and love mercy, and making disciples of all nations.

If we receive salvation and hand over our kingdoms to Almighty God, then our lives will herald the great and glorious news of Revelation 11:15:

**“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Christ,
and he will reign forever and ever.”**