

# GOD OF POWER

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Revelation 11:11-19

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Revelation 11

**TODAY'S SCRIPTURE:** Revelation 11:15-19

## I. Declaration of Truth

### Revelation 11:15

**15 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 Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”**

15a. Various forms of the number seven occur hundreds of times in the Bible. Its occurrences often signal completeness. Trumpets are blown at accessions of kings to their thrones.

15b. With the sound of the trumpet are unidentified heavenly *voices* making the grand pronouncement we see here. Loudness in this book characterizes worship. Should not God's victory be declared as loudly as possible?

What John saw speaks to the hope that the people of God have so longed to see: God has become the king over the whole earth. Old Testament prophets looked forward to a day when “the God of heaven” would “set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed . . . and it will itself endure forever” (Daniel 2:44).

In John's vision, the day when “the Lord will be king over the whole earth”

(Zechariah 14:9) was foreseen as certain. The sin that separated the human realm from the heavenly realm will no longer be an obstacle. John later pictured this kingdom as the unified city of New Jerusalem; those who continue to sin are not allowed to enter the city (Revelation 22:14-15).

The finality of this collective kingdom becomes clear as the voices' proclaim that God *will reign for ever and ever*. Whereas *the kingdom of the world* is temporary and filled with sin, the reign of God will be eternal.

God's eternal reign is shared with the Lord's *Messiah*, his Christ; these are Hebrew and Greek words that mean the same thing: “anointed one.” As the heavenly chorus praises the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb (Revelation 7:10), so do the heavenly voices here.

## II. Worship of God

### Revelation 11:16-18

**16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,<sup>17</sup> 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.**

**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 people who revere your  
name,  
both great and small—  
and for destroying those who de-  
stroy the earth.”**

16. A previous scene of worship reappears as *the twenty-four elders fall on their faces*.

17a. In their dramatic posture of worship and submission, the elders begin their *thanks* by addressing God in a certain way, using the respectful and reverential title *Lord God Almighty*.

The word translated *Lord* in and of itself can imply only a measure of respect, as with “sir.” When combined with *God Almighty*, however, things change. The full, three-word use of this designation is found in the New Testament only in Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; and 21:22. It serves to relay the expansive power of God in the world.

God alone is almighty! John’s use of this title reflected his confidence that God’s redemptive plan would come to fruition, even in the midst of tribulation and suffering.

17b. The elders describe God’s eternal nature. This same description is used by the author himself, the apostle John, in Revelation 1:4; by the Lord God in 1:8; and by the four living creatures in 4:8. This description reflects and expands on God’s self-designation “I AM” of Exodus 3:14 (John 8:58). As the description speaks of God’s eternal, unchangeable nature it implies his sovereignty.

17c. The elders’ reasoning for giving thanks in Revelation 11:17a above is now

stated. God’s *power* is shown in its totality and fullness as his overthrow of evil results in an uncontested reign. God, by his actions, has answered the age-old question, “How long, Sovereign Lord?” (Revelation 6:10; see Isaiah 6:11; Habakkuk 1:2). This part of John’s prophetic vision will be the final move of God as he establishes “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21; Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13).

18a. The elders continue their pronouncement as they describe reactions to God’s exercise of his power. The word translated nations occurs some two dozen times in this book—sometimes in a positive sense (Revelation 5:9) and sometimes in a negative sense, as here. Nations frequently jostle against one another (Psalm 2:1), and now their anger is a result of having to face God’s wrath (Revelation 6:15-17). His wrath poured out on them does not result in repentance—quite the opposite! The “great day of the Lord” (Zephaniah 1:14), long prophesied, is at hand.

18b. *The time of judging the dead* is when all who have lived and died throughout history will be resurrected to face judgment (Daniel 12:2; see Revelation 20:12-13).

18c. The reward to be given to the righteous also finds expression in Matthew 5:12; 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 John 8; Revelation 22:12; and elsewhere.

One of two categories to be rewarded is God’s *servants the prophets* (Revelation 10:7). This can include those servants of God who spoke about the future as well as those servants who preached the message of God (Psalm 40:9; Acts 8:5; 1 Corinthians 9:16-18; etc.). Prophets can be both *foretellers* and *forthtellers*. In both cases, the one proclaiming God’s truth calls people to a faithful relationship with the Lord. The heart of this relationship is forsaking all other “gods” in remaining loyal to him alone (Galatians 4:8). Some

in this group and the next experience martyrdom (Revelation 16:6; 18:24).

18d. The second group to be rewarded are the *people of God who revere God's name*. They were faithful—some even to the point of martyrdom in the service of the Lord. Some older translations call these individuals “saints,” drawing attention to the holiness of the body of Christ.

As if to stress the inclusive nature, *both great and small* are in view. Although 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 speaks of differing levels of reward, we should not separate these groups too much. Both are faithful to God, and they will be rewarded as such (Revelation 19:5).

18e. The elders end their utterances by returning to the imagery of the angry mob, defeated and punished. Through a poetic use of parallelism, the elders describe God's visiting on *those who destroy the earth* the same thing in return.

We should be careful not to read twenty-first century concerns back into this statement. In this text, destroying the earth does not refer to environmental devastation, no matter how sinful such actions might be. The idea is in a broad context of biblical times. Jeremiah 51:25 uses the same wording in speaking of Babylon. Sometimes Babylon is used figuratively (1 Peter 5:13; Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5), so it may refer to evil entities in general.

The type of destruction that awaits those who destroy the earth is not specified here. The bottom line is that the fulfillment of God's kingdom brings eternal retribution to those who oppose the people and purpose of God (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

### III. Opening of Temple

#### Revelation 11:19

**19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings,**

### **peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.**

19a. The vision expands to reveal the *temple*, which is the large sanctuary of *God in heaven* and the center of worship there (Revelation 3:12; 7:15; 15:5-8; 21:22). When it *opened*, John glanced into the innermost part of the heavenly temple and caught a glimpse of the greatest treasure of the temple: God's *ark of his covenant*.

For Israel, the ark was more than an ornate box containing various historical items (Exodus 25:10-22). It symbolized God's presence with his people and his covenant mercy.

The ark was topped with a statuary representation of “two cherubim” with outstretched wings, forming the “atonement cover” (Hebrews 9:5), where God's presence could rule in mercy and covenant faithfulness. It was reserved for the Lord God alone and symbolized his presence with his people.

Instead of being seen only by the high priest once a year (Hebrews 9:7), the ark in heaven fulfills its ultimate purpose. In this heavenly temple, God will rule his people, and his presence will be with them permanently (Revelation 21:3).

19b. The opening of the temple is accompanied by severe phenomena. As with the breaking of the seventh seal, there is *lightning*, . . . *thunder*, and *an earthquake* (Revelation 8:5; 4:5).

Such imagery is characteristic of apocalyptic literature. It is intended to catch the reader's attention, perhaps to show the seriousness of God's judgment. *A severe hailstorm* is often associated with judgment.

Additionally, such imagery would draw the audience to compare John's revelation to God's dramatic revelation to Moses (Exodus 19:16-19). The God who revealed himself to Moses will, someday, reveal himself to all people.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## GOD OF POWER

### Into the Lesson

With the help of a smartphone or other internet-accessible device, find headlines that could lead some to believe the world is out of control. Write the headlines below:

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As we work through the lesson, be thinking about how it can help you cope with our difficult world and how it could help you encourage someone else as well.

### Into the Word

What does Revelation 11:15-19 indicate about the following:

God's power?

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God's justice?

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God's followers?

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God's sovereignty?

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### Into Life

How would you respond to these statements, applying the truths of today's text.

“Christianity is an interesting religion, like many other religions. Sincere followers of every religion will experience the same thing after death.”

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“This world is such a mess—so much suffering, so much injustice, so much evil. I have trouble believing that a good God is in control.”

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“I understand how the God of love works in the New Testament. But I don't see how that matches the descriptions of the God of wrath in the Old Testament.”

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Circle the word that best describes your typical outlook and why? Consider specific ways your life or views on life should change in light of the future described in the book of Revelation.

*Hopeful / Anxious / Happy / Joyful / [other]*

### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

There is a future when God's reign in Heaven will join his reign of earth.