



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Ark Talk"
11:15-19

The ark of the covenant has been found!

Well, sort of. It's in Heaven, in our text.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded...

We're moving into the last half of the Great Tribulation. God's judgments are going to come in rapid succession. But first we have a lot of earthly details to explore.

Revelation 11:15 ... And there were loud voices in heaven...

I like pointing out the sense of drama that God portrays in these descriptions. Just at this moment a spontaneous yet expected chorus breaks out among angels and the redeemed in Heaven.

Spontaneity would be great this side of Heaven if we were all always in perfect harmony with how the Holy Spirit is leading us. Too often a person 'feels' led to do something but it ends up detracting from the Lord and attracting attention to self. Thus we are wise to have some sort of order to our services and to facilitate them in ways that allow for the Spirit to 'move' while keeping our attention on Jesus. Just

how structured or how casual we are depends on our spiritual affiliations and heritage as well as other factors.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

In the ancient Greek grammar, the verb tense of "have become" indicates an absolute certainty about Jesus' coming and reign, even *before* the fact is accomplished.

Here is an example we can relate to. At the headquarters at a successful political campaign on election night, there is joy, even though it will be a while until their candidate is actually installed into office. The joy anticipates a certain result.

An event so certain that it is spoken of as if it has already taken place is called proleptic.

We could all benefit by being a little more proleptic. In the middle of your personal trials and tribulations looking ahead to what is already true of you in Christ is inspiring. Knowing God will complete His good work in you and that you will be glorified and live with the Lord forever in Heaven gives you the perspective you need to press on toward the finish.

Be proleptic. Anticipate Heaven and you will experience it in your heart and in your home.

Revelation 11:16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

Back in chapter four we showed you why the "twenty four elders" represent the Church - you - raptured to heaven prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. Jesus promised the Church that He would "...keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to

test those who dwell on the earth.”¹ Listen to these promises from the pen of the apostle Paul:

1 Thessalonians 1:10 ... wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

You and I will be surrounding the throne, not suffering the Tribulation!

Revelation 11:16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

On earth we talk about having our ‘ups and downs.’ In Heaven we will have our ups and downs in terms of posture before the throne of God. This is at least the fourth time we’ve seen the church fall prostrate before the Lord in adoring worship. We’ll see it again in chapter nineteen.

Revelation 11:17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

A common criticism of God is that if He is so great and powerful, why doesn’t He do something about all the evil in the world? Why does He let so many bad things happen to good people?

Ultimately the answer is that there are no ‘good’ people. All have sinned and fallen short of the perfect righteousness required to inhabit Heaven.

Because God is “almighty, the one who is and who was and who is to come,” He is able to hold everything together while working out His plan to redeem lost mankind and the fallen creation. The declaration here is that “You have taken Your great power and reigned.” The idea is that through the events of the Great Tribulation up to this point and

¹ Revelation 3:10

those yet to follow God has proven He is God and displayed His kingly power.

Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry...

This isn't just talking about the years of the Tribulation. It's a summary of human history. Though God has always reached out to lost men, they have rejected His offer of salvation - angered that they are considered sinners.

Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come...

God's "wrath" is not at all like human "anger." It is His measured but necessary response to sin. For a believer, God's wrath has been taken by Jesus on the Cross. For the nonbeliever it is coming.

Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

This declaration of the final judgment comes with still time to repent. Again I point out that in wrath God remembers mercy and seeks to save. He keeps warning that a day is coming when all offers to be saved will be off the table. But until then He is not willing that any should perish.

Revelation 11:19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

People are fascinated with finding the lost ark of the covenant, which was a copy of this one you read about in heaven.

The ark of the Covenant disappeared off of the pages of history by the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Nothing in the Bible is said about the Ark in the Old Testament after the return from Babylon, but the Apocrypha states that the Ark could not be found when the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple at the time of Ezra and Zechariah.

The Holy of Holies in the Second Temple was thus an empty chamber, without the ark of the covenant. When the Roman General Pompey conquered Jerusalem around 63BC, he demanded the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies. When he did, he came out saying that he could not understand what all the interest was about the sanctuary, when it was only an empty room.

Based on ancient Jewish writings, some have suggested the ark is hidden on Mount Nebo on the Jordan River's east bank. This site is presently in the modern nation of Jordan. The explanation in the Apocrypha was that Jeremiah hid the Ark in a cave in Mt. Nebo before the Babylonian invasion, and that its location would not be revealed until God was ready for it to be found.

Others suggest the ark is hidden somewhere near the Dead Sea, on the Jordan's west bank. This location is usually considered in association with the ancient site of Qumran and the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here, the Ark and other artifacts are believed buried in one of the region's caves, like the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Another view suggests the Ark is located beneath Jerusalem, in a stone-carved tunnel. Some say it is beneath the suggested site of the crucifixion.

The Temple Institute in Jerusalem's Old City, an Ultra-Orthodox organization dedicated to rebuilding the Jewish Temple, says the ark is under the temple mount and will be revealed at the proper time - when the Temple is rebuilt. Rabbi Yehuda Getz believes that in 1982 he was very close, within 40 feet, to finding the cave in which the ark resides. He was conducting a search in an old tunnel that had been filled with the debris of centuries, which runs perpendicular to the Western Wall and under the Temple Mount. However, when the Moslems discovered that there were diggings being conducted under the Dome of the Rock, they threatened a general riot and the diggings were stopped. The rabbi explains that, for the sake of maintaining peace with their Moslem neighbors, the Israelis had to

reseal the entrance to the tunnel, and it remains blocked up to this day.

A view which has received little attention until the past decade has now been popularized by a recent book. *The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant*, by British journalist Graham Hancock, has almost reached best-seller status and captured the imagination of the general public. According to this view, the Ark of the Covenant was taken from ancient Jerusalem in the days of King Solomon. While there are numerous variations of the story, the common thread centers on a son fathered by King Solomon and born to the Queen of Sheba. While this union is not mentioned in the Biblical account of the meeting between these two, it has a long tradition in Ethiopia, a suggested location of ancient Sheba.

This son, named Menelik, is said to have brought the ark to his country for safe keeping, according to an account preserved in the Ethiopian royal chronicles.

Many scholars feel that it will never be found. They base their view on Jeremiah 3:16,

Jeremiah 3:16 "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore.

The Second Temple stood for over 500 years without containing an ark, and it was fully recognized as a valid house of worship for the Lord. Christ Himself declared the Temple to be His Father's House. So it would not be unthinkable to build the Tribulation Temple even if the ark is not discovered.

Just a little more speculation, if you will indulge me. The Ethiopians believe they will bring a very prominent gift to the Messiah when He sets up His kingdom. It's based on Zephaniah 3:10 which reads,

Zephaniah 3:10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering.

They speculate this “offering” is none other than the ark with its mercy seat.

It’s not too farfetched because in other Scriptures the ark and mercy seat seem to be associated with the throne of God in the Millennial Kingdom.²

Here is something else to consider. In the Book of Acts the Ethiopian eunuch came to worship in Jerusalem. Was it just a personal spiritual quest? Or was he on a mission to determine if the Messiah had come so that the ark and the mercy seat could be returned?

It’s wonderful to speculate as long as we stick to what we know to be true.

Still we get excited by all this talk of the search for the ark and the building of the Tribulation Temple. It reminds us the rapture is imminent. Let’s be rapture ready.

² Psalm 132:8, 11, 13,14; Psalm 68:1, 24, 29, 31