

What Is the Context for Rev 11:19?

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The context for Rev 11:19 is Rev 11:15-18. This is the seventh seal. The last part of the seventh seal has as its context the first part of the seventh seal. We have made it a point of orthodoxy that every major section of Revelation has a victorious introduction with some connection to the sanctuary. There is no harm in this, so long as the results are reasonable and remain consistent with what the text actually says. But as things stand now, we cannot take the last verse of the seventh seal within the context of the rest of the seventh seal because doing that would challenge a favorite theory. This goes too far.

In the present note we track four Greek terms used in Rev 11:17-18, as follows: *ebasileusas* (<*basileuō*, "rule" [vb]), *krithēnai* (<*krinō*, "I judge" [vb]), *ton misthon* (<*ho misthos*, "reward" [n]), *hē orgē* (<*hē orgē*, "wrath" [n]).

Table 1
Timeframe for the Terms in Context

Event	Term			
	Ruling	Judging	Reward	Wrath
Seventh Trumpet	1			
End of the Judgment		1		
Plagues		3		1
Second Coming	1	1	1	3
After the Millennium		2		1
Other	1	1		

It seems that the terms in this sample have a wide variety of timeframes, but actually this is more apparent than real. The seventh trumpet and the end of the judgment are closely associated, as are the plagues and the second coming. Moreover, the end of the judgment and the beginning of the plagues are directly related (see Rev 15:5-6). So the first four categories in table 1 all come in a very close group historically. Consider some representative examples:

^{NIV} **Revelation 11:15** 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 Christ, and he will *reign* for ever and ever."

^{NIV} **Revelation 18:8** Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who *judges* her.

^{NIV} **Revelation 22:12** "Behold, I am coming soon! My *reward* is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

^{NIV} **Revelation 16:19** The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his *wrath*.

The period after the millennium is separate of course – separated from the rest by a thousand years – and there are a couple of verses that don't directly speak to the issue of when events take place. I call these "Other" in table 1. Anyone attempting to replicate my tally will notice that I did not include Rev 11:17 or 18 in any of the columns, because they are the verses whose usage we are studying. It would be circular to use them to help show how they should be used.

Notice that the one category representing each term is the second coming. That gives us a broad timeframe that is easily distinguishable from the first century, the beginning of the judgment in 1844, and the time following the millennium. It is important to realize these things when we ask why the temple of God should be thrown open in vs. 19. Why are we allowed to see the ark of the covenant, which is clearly in the second apartment, at this point in the book? Is the second apartment opened so that holy beings can enter and start deliberating cases in the judgment? No, at this point there is no more deliberating. It is time for action – for taking one's power and starting to rule, for giving tangible rewards to the righteous and pouring out wrath on the wicked, for applying the results of any earlier deliberations. When the seventh trumpet sounds, the second apartment is thrown open so that those who have been present at the judgment can leave. It's all over. We should not try to go in when everyone else is trying to go out.

As in earlier parts of the book, so also here, a solution to the problem of depriving a verse of its obvious context so as to maintain a desired thematic relationship might be resolved by breaking the connection between historical relationships and thematic relationships. When the events of Rev 11:15-19 are mapped onto time, all five verses belong together – not in one moment of time, but in a connected sequence.

If one of these verses introduces the following section, with events respectively 6000 years earlier (Satan cast out of heaven) and 2000 years earlier (Christ born a human child), that is a thematic fact that falls outside my focus in the present note. My concern is to map the events correctly onto time and to maintain a reasonable sense of historical fulfillment.

Another goal might well be to maintain a sense of proportion. Dividing the book of Revelation into two halves by saying

Rev 1-11 (minus one verse)
Rev 12-22 (plus one verse)

does not appeal to my sense of symmetry. It is inelegant and therefore objectionable. It is more symmetrical to divide the parts as follows:

Rev 1-11
Rev 12-22.

When we do this, Rev 11:19 is seen to occur within a section that includes all of Rev 11:15-19. In this context, to know when the sanctuary is opened, we should ask when God's ruling, judging, rewarding, and pouring out of wrath take place. Not all of these events happen at the same time, so we can take the last event to establish a timeframe for vs. 19. If the plagues are an evidence of God's wrath, then the end of the judgment in heaven would be an appropriate time for the temple to be thrown open once more. (It was thrown open at the beginning of the judgment in Rev 4-5.) The judgment is

over and so the seven angels with the seven bowels pour them on an unrepentant earth while Jesus is en route, accompanied by all the angel armies of heaven. As regards determining when God opens the sanctuary in vs. 19, allowing John to see the ark of the covenant, Satan's expulsion from heaven 6000 years previously is completely and totally irrelevant.

At issue is whether the temple is opened in Rev 11:19 at the beginning of the judgment in 1844, or at the end of the judgment – whenever that occurs. It is opened here at the end of the judgment. The reference to God's wrath in vs. 18 makes abundantly clear that when the temple is opened it is not for the purpose of starting the present evidence; but for the purpose of carrying out the decisions already announced by the heavenly court.