

**Further Stating and Defending the Final Trumpet Rapture of the Church of God in Jesus Christ:
“Has Come” OR “Came” translations of ἤλθεν (ēlthen) in the Book of Revelation, especially Revelation 11:18**

Revelation	5:7	6:17	7:13	8:3	11:18	14:7	14:15	17:1	17:10	18:10	19:7	21:9
(Observation: EVENT [either wrath/judgment, reaping or wedding] passages in bold ; ACTIONS-OF-INDIVIDUALS/ANGELIC-BEINGS passages not in bold)												
NKJV	came	has come	come	came	has come	has come	has come	came	come	has come	has come	came
NRSV	went	has come	come	came	has come	has come	has come	came	come	has come	has come	came
NAS	came	has come	come	came	came	has come	has come	came	come	has come	has come	came
ESV	went	has come	come	came	came	has come	has come	came	come	has come	has come	came
NLT	stepped forward	has come	come	came	has come	has come	has come	came	come	came	has come	came
NIV	came	has come	come	came	has come	has come	has come	came	come	has come	has come	came
CEV	went	has come	come	came	has come	has come	is here	came	come	has come	is here	came

Summary comments:

English translations favor the rendering, “has come” when events are being addressed (as opposed to actions of individuals). While, yes, there is exegetical possibility for the word “came” as a translation for the Greek word *ēlthen* in the Revelation 11:18 passage, it is surely not the dominant one that most translations have used. But in addition to this fair and important observation, are there other considerations that further disqualify the translation “came” and the past-tense understanding of the events included in this verse?

We believe there are. Please carefully observe the following information. Some who use the translation “came” do not necessarily conclude the passage is referring to the events of the wrath/ judgment, reaping and wedding taking place before the setting of Revelation 11:18. For the others who do employ the past tense understanding, please consider the following.

If “came” and a past tense understanding is accepted as the way in which *ēlthen* is translated, huge textual (i.e., chronological) and synthetic (i.e., harmony) problems emerge.

The passage especially under consideration is Revelation 11:18. We will use the two versions that translate *ēlthen* as “came” while keeping in mind the majority of the English translations use “has come.”

The updated NASB of this verse reads:

“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 ESV of this verse reads:

“The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

A couple textual observations before making our point:

The verb *ōrgisthēsan* (aorist passive) allows for the action to be cast in the past—“the nations were enraged” (NASB-U) or “the nations were angry” (NKJV) are good translations—but there are other options concerning how this verb can be translated: e.g., “The nations raged . . .” (ESV)

The verb *ēlthen* is tied to the rest of the events of the verse. The time “came” OR “has come” when (given the aorist passive infinitives: to be judged, to be given rewards and to be destroyed) these three events of judgment, rewarding and destruction had occurred OR now occur. If “came” is the correct translation, then the four events of the verse can be understood as already having taken place; if “has come” is the correct translation, then the four events are now to occur—following the taking place of the Revelation 11:18 declaration by the elders. There is a huge difference between these two perspectives if “came” is understood as already having taken place.

Whichever idea— “came” (past tense) or “has come” (the idea that the time has now come for God’s wrath and other events mentioned in this verse)—is used, fair questions emerge:

If “came” is accepted as the correct way in which to translate *ēlthen*, then where, according to this position, are these four things to be found in the book of Revelation?

1. When, earlier, had His wrath come? If it already “came,” then we should be able to show where the event of His wrath is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “came” translation, where is His prior wrath recorded in the book?
2. When, earlier, had the time of the dead to be judged occurred? If it already “came,” then we should be able to show where the event of the judgment of the dead is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “came” translation, where is the (prior-to-verse-18) event of the judgment of the dead recorded in the book?
3. When, earlier, had the time of rewarding occurred? If it already “came,” then we should be able to show where the event of the rewarding of the bond-servants, the prophets and the saints and those who fear God’s name (small and great) is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “came” translation, where is the prior event of the rewarding of God’s faithful people found recorded in the book?
4. When, earlier, had the time of the destruction of those who destroy the earth occurred? If it already “came,” then we should be able to show where the event of the destruction of the earth destroyers is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “came” translation (especially since there is no other verb which follows *ēlthen* in the rest of the sentence), where is the earlier event of the destruction of the destroyers of the earth found recorded in the book?

The same fair, critical question should also be asked of the more favored translation, “has come.”

If on the other hand “has come” is accepted as the correct way in which to translate *ēlthen*, then where, according to this position, are these four things to be found in the book of Revelation?

1. When does His wrath actually come? If it has now arrived (at the setting of Revelation 11:18), then we should be able to show where the event of His wrath is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “has come” translation, where is His wrath recorded in the book of Revelation?
Answer: Revelation 14:17ff—the Bowls of Wrath
2. When does the time of the dead to be judged occur? If it, as of Revelation 11:18, has now arrived, then we should be able to show where the event of the judgment of the dead is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “has come” translation, where is the event of the judgment of the dead recorded in the book?
Answer: Revelation 14:17ff—initially in the Bowls of Wrath and followed by the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15
3. When does the time of rewarding occur? If it has, as of Revelation 11:18, now arrived, then we should be able to show where the event of the rewarding of the bond-servants, the prophets and the saints and those who fear God’s name (small and great) is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “has come” translation, where does the rewarding of God’s faithful people take place in the book?
Answer: Revelation 14:14-16ff—initially at the Final Trumpet Rapture given the historical parenthetical of Revelation 12:1 – 14:13 and followed by the day of accounting where we will all be recompensed for our life actions (Daniel 7:13, 14; 7:9, 10; Matthew 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20).
4. When does the time of the destruction of those who destroy the earth occur? If it has, as of Revelation 11:18, now come, then we should be able to show where the event of the destruction of the earth destroyers is textually referenced. So, for those who embrace the “has come” translation, where is the event of the destruction of the destroyers of the earth found recorded in the book?
Answer: Revelation 14:17ff—initially in the Bowls of Wrath and followed by the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15

Our point: There is clear justification for the rendering, “has come,” whereas the “came” rendering (with the understanding the events following the verb had taken place prior to the Revelation 11:18 statement by the elders) is filled with difficulties.

Do you see the dilemma of those who embrace the “came” (past tense) idea? There are not earlier recorded passages (before this verse—Rev. 11:18) that address these four events of judgment, rewarding and destruction. We do on the other hand find specific accounts of these three events AFTER the Revelation 11:18 passage. In other words, the context of the book of Revelation fits the favored (for good reason) “has come” translation. It does not fit the “came” translation if one holds the past tense understanding.

In conclusion, we have two reasons favoring the “has come” translation: 1) English versions predominately use the “has come” rendering and, 2) Context: the unfolding of the events of the book of Revelation when the “has come” translation is used fits, where it is not textually justifiable using the “came” translation.

This is our partial presentation in favor of the use of the “has come” rendering of ἔλθεν. Perhaps it’s time to ask those who favor the “came” rendering to give warrant for their position.

“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.” (Revelation 11:18; NKJV; emphasis ours)

Following this verse we find:

“Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.” Revelation 14:16 (the beginning of the rewarding of His people, although the official rewarding event takes place after this initial gathering of God’s people in Jesus Christ).

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.’” Revelation 16:1

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.” Revelation 20:12

The destruction of those who destroy the earth will take place during the bowls of wrath and the final day of judgment where their eternal state is decreed.

A major hermeneutical principle is retained by the “has come” rendering of ἔλθεν: If the simple meaning is the best interpretive explanation for a biblical reading, then we should go ahead with the basic understanding and apply that understanding to the ongoing pursuit of Bible synthesis/integrated biblical theology.