



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"The Grace of Wrath"

Seven seals were opened. When the seventh seal was opened, seven trumpets were blown. When the seventh trumpet was blown, seven bowls are poured out.

- being changed to bring change -

Images from Israel's Exodus are prominent in the bowl judgments. In the days of Moses, God sent plagues upon Egypt that included plagues of boils (Exodus 9:8-12), waters turning to blood (Exodus 7:14-25), and darkness (Exodus 10:21-29).

These events at the end of the Great Tribulation are God's ultimate deliverance of His chosen nation.

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

"Wrath" carries the idea of punishment. People seem upset whenever God is portrayed as a punisher. Yet we all have an innate sense of justice and feel that at least some folks need punishing.

God must judge sin. If you won't accept Jesus Christ, who was punished with death for your sin, you must accept your own punishment.

Note the phrase, "on the earth." The normal, plain meaning of it, and of what follows, is that God is pouring out judgment upon the whole earth. I mention that because it has become fashionable in certain Christian circles to suggest that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is not about the future but has been fulfilled in some past historic judgment.

You may have heard the term preterist or preterism. It's from the Latin word meaning *past*. Preterists teach that all or most of the End Times prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, especially around the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70AD.

Here it is in their own words, from the International Preterist Association website.

"Preterist" means past in fulfillment, and "Futurist" means future in fulfillment. Preterist basically means the opposite of Futurist. Futurists believe most end-time prophecies... are yet to be fulfilled. Preterists believe that most or all of Bible Prophecy... has already been fulfilled in Christ and the on-going expansion of His Kingdom. Most Futurists do not really believe Christ has been successful yet in fully establishing His kingdom.

Jesus' predictions were fulfilled. He did not fail, nor do we need to engage in theological gymnastics to try to explain-away the seeming delay or postponement of His return. It happened right on schedule. Many knew the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was important in God's scheme of redemption, but never understood its full significance. It has to do with the consummation of the plan of redemption. The final events of the redemptive drama came to pass in the first century within the apostles' generation (before A.D. 70). Christ's kingdom is here now. Paradise has been restored in Christ (spiritually-speaking). Christ has conquered all His enemies and has given us the Kingdom.¹

In order for the preterist to be right the Revelation of Jesus Christ would have to have been written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD. Most scholarship puts the date at 96AD.

¹ <http://www.preterist.org/whatispreterism.asp>

Internal evidence favors a later date, one later than 70AD:

- The letters to the seven churches in the opening chapters of the Revelation clearly support a later date. If the Revelation was written before 70AD, then John would have been writing about the same time as Paul. But when Paul wrote to or about the church at Ephesus, they had not yet “left their first love” as John reported.
- Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, said that no church existed there during the ministry of Paul. Paul died around 67AD. So how could John write to the nonexistent church at Smyrna prior to 70AD?

How do preterists answer certain questions? Let’s say you asked if there will be a literal Millennium - a literal one-thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth. They would say,

Many postmillennialists and all the amillennialists hold the idea that the millennium was/is/will be a period of indeterminable length and not necessarily a literal thousand years. It could symbolize a period of completeness, fullness, finishing... The [position that] millennium was the period from 30 to AD 70 is the correct one. The term “thousand years” would then simply refer to the period of time while the kingdom was being built, before God came to judge His enemies. It was a time of completion.²

Do you buy that? I don’t.

The events in and around Jerusalem in 70AD were terrible. But you cannot say it was “the wrath of God [poured] on the earth.”

We reject preterism. Personally, I cannot believe its popularity when you can look around and see, in our generation especially, so many prophecies being literally fulfilled or the stage being set.

What follows in chapter sixteen is a listing of the literal judgment from God coming upon “the earth” at the very end of the future Great Tribulation.

² <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question7>

To gain an application from these future events I will try to point out how each judgment seems to reveal an aspect of sin. We can thus be mindful of the exceeding sinfulness of sin today as well as in the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 16:2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Painful and permanent sores, like boils, cover men's bodies. The real nature of their decision to take the mark and follow the Beast is revealed. They thought his mark would save them, but his mark was a sign of their own spiritual rottenness.

A boil is the visible evidence of internal corruption. Sin ultimately corrupts from within. If you've ever been an addict or are still struggling with some life-dominating habit you know what I mean. Something, some appetite, that is perfectly normal in its rightful place suddenly begins to dominate. It takes over. Everything else becomes subordinate to it.

Revelation 16:3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

Back in chapter eight there was a partial contamination of the seas. Now it is complete.

I don't think we can begin to fathom the effects of this judgment. "Blood as of a dead man" is a phrase describing the stench from all the dead creatures.

Does the water turn to blood? Or is this a devastating condition that kills all life, like red tides? I say, *Will it really matter?* Everything in the oceans will die as their source of oxygen is removed one way or the other. If God chooses to use red tides it will still be understood as a judgment from Heaven since it will affect all the oceans.

You wouldn't want to eat a fish that died from red tide. It looks edible, floating there on the surface. It's an easy catch! But,

For humans eating contaminated fish or shellfish, the toxin can cause numbness, dizziness, nausea, fever and muscle paralysis. The most serious cases can result in respiratory arrest and death.³

Sin affects others even before it's full effects are revealed. Think of all the believers who are stumbled when a Christian leader or artist has their sin exposed.

Revelation 16:4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

Revelation 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.

Revelation 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."

Revelation 16:7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

These who rejected Jesus also shed the blood of His saints; now they are given blood to drink.

There is a sick resurgence in our long fascination with vampires. The recent film, *Twilight*, was a box-office sensation. It was adapted from a novel telling the love story of a teen-aged girl with a vampire.

In modern fiction, the vampire tends to be depicted as a suave, charismatic villain. Occasional sightings of vampires are reported. Vampire hunting societies still exist. Allegations of vampire attacks swept through the African country of Malawi during late 2002 and early 2003, with mobs stoning one individual to death and attacking at least four others, including Governor Eric Chiwaya, based on the belief that the government was colluding with vampires.⁴

We romanticize it, attach love stories to it, and thus deaden our sensitivities to the shedding of innocent blood. At the end of the

³ <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2000/09/25/national/main236179.shtml>

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vampire>

Great Tribulation mankind will see just how much they have defiled the gift of life through practices like euthanasia and abortion.

Revelation 16:8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

Revelation 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Secular scholars say sun worship is the first recorded form of idolatry. William Tyler Olcott wrote,

The earliest authentic date that has been handed down to us was inscribed on the foundation stone of the temple of the Sun-God at Sippara in Babylon by Naram-Sin, son of Sargon.

As the Great Tribulation continues the sun men have worshipped scorches them.

Men like to elevate the creature or the creation above the Creator. You can never know value or purpose or meaning in life unless and until you know your Creator.

Revelation 16:10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

There have been several times when unexplained darkness has covered a portion of the earth. On May 19, 1780, all the New England states were covered with such a darkness. President Kennedy referred to it in one of his speeches. It is called "the Dark Day," when all of New England was for several hours plunged into a deep darkness. It lasted several hours and prompted fears that Judgment Day had come.

No one has yet explained how it happened. Scientists generally agree that the Dark Day was probably caused by smoke from a large forest fire in a neighboring state or Canada, possibly combined with a thick fog. But that is mere speculation.

Even while the sun is intensified, darkness covers the “throne of the beast” and his “kingdom.” It’s God’s way of calling the worlds attention to the center of opposition to Him.

The verse speaks of an incredible “pain” associated with this bowl. Have you ever been in so much pain that you bit down on something? I remember biting down on my wallet as I was transported via van to the hospital after I had broken my leg.

Have you ever bitten you own tongue? Man, does that ever hurt!

OK, now put that together. The pain men will experience in the Great Tribulation will be so intense that they will “gnaw” on their own tongues in some sort of failed effort to alleviate their suffering.

Sin is dark! Men like to hide their evil deeds under cover of darkness. But in the darkness we hurt others and we hurt ourselves.

Revelation 16:11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt Pharaoh refused to let them go even after the series of devastating plagues. Pharaoh goes down as hardcore hard-hearted.

Hard core hard-heartedness is astonishing. We tend to think that if God would miraculously reveal Himself men would repent and receive the salvation He offers them. It’s not true. It wasn’t true when Jesus was on the earth miraculously revealing God. It won’t be true in the throes of the Great Tribulation.

“They did not repent.” The root meaning of repent is *to think differently*. It is a change of mind about whether we are sinners and need Jesus as our Savior. It involves, too, a willingness to have our lives changed by Jesus so as to bear fruit for Him.

Faith and repentance are two facets of one saving act. They are inseparable. When we say that a person is saved by faith alone, we

mean the kind of faith that includes repentance. True, saving faith involves a change of mind about sin and the Savior so that Jesus becomes my Savior and starts to redirect my life.

The thing to remember is that these judgments are a rescue attempt. The world of the Great Tribulation is one ruined by mankind. But the Lord is coming to rescue it in its darkest hour.

- At the Battle of Armageddon the Lord returns as mankind is about to annihilate itself.
- He sets up a Millennial Kingdom that restores the earth for one-thousand years.
- At the end of the thousand years the Lord puts-down one final rebellion against Himself.
- The Great White Throne judgment follows at which the Lord deals with all those from all time who have refused His salvation.
- Then eternity begins.

God's wrath is part of His rescue attempt. He's always reaching out to, always searching for, always seeking, hearts.