

IS GOD'S WRATH INEVITABLE?

E. Methods Used in this Study

E6. Procedure: Expound and Maintain Concepts

God, in times past, had His prophetsⁱ write down the events of the future. By knowing His character, we know that all that God has written through the prophets will be accomplished. For, His will cannot be thwartedⁱⁱ. Since the events of the future are foretold by the prophets, this would include the Lord's wrathⁱⁱⁱ. We learn from Jeremiah 30:24,

“The fierce anger of the Lord will not return until He has done it, And *until He has performed the intents of His heart*. In the latter days you will consider it.”

Now, as we enter the latter days, we should consider the significance of the Lord's anger, as well as His will for us^{iv}. As Jesus will spew from his mouth those who are neither cold nor hot^v, so it is written in Zephaniah 1:12,

“it shall come to pass at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And *punish the men Who are settled in complacency*, Who say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, Nor will He do evil.'”

Let us not be settled in complacency! Let us instead be impassioned for the Lord! Let us consider all that God has said regarding the future. Let us also understand the inevitability of God's wrath to come. In our study, we will apply God's Revelation, which He gave to Jesus Christ, as a looking glass to examine the whole of Scripture, in which the issue of God's wrath is prevalent. Likewise, we will peer

ⁱ HEB 1:1, God, who at various times and in various ways *spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets*.

ⁱⁱ PRO 19:21, There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless *the Lord's counsel-that will stand*.

ⁱⁱⁱ JER 23:20, The anger of the Lord will not turn back *Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart*. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.

^{iv} LAM 3:31-33, *the Lord will not cast off forever*. ³²Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. ³³For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men.

^v REV 3:15-16, I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶“So then, because *you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth*.”

into the future plans of God for the righteous and the wicked, the clean and the unclean^{vi}.

Knowing the end from the beginning, God has declared the future, establishing Himself as uniquely qualified^{vii}: the First and Last^{viii} on a list of one! We should respond with awe, coming to Him solemnly^{ix}, and taking His word especially serious. For, it is written in Proverbs 3:5-8,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And *lean not on your own understanding*; ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. ⁸It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.”

Since He knows the future and we trust in His understanding, let us submit to His guidance by allowing His Spirit to teach us His word. For this reason, the foundation that is Jesus, the Word of God, is where we begin and where we will end this study of Revelation.

During our study, we will find that much is said in Scripture regarding the things revealed in Revelation. Our time together should resemble the disciples’ experience on the way to Emmaus, in Luke 24:25-27,

“He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, *He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*”

As we look back toward the cross of Christ, we can find the Scriptures that define the reason his suffering. For, we read in Isaiah 53:5-6,

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are

^{vi} REV 22:11, He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; *he who is filthy, let him be filthy still*; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; *he who is holy, let him be holy still.*

^{vii} ISA 46:9-10, Remember the former things of old, For *I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me*, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'

^{viii} ISA 41:4, Who has performed and done it, Calling the generations from the beginning?'I, the Lord, *am the first; And with the last I am He.*”

^{ix} ISA 41:5, The coastlands saw it and feared, *The ends of the earth were afraid*; They drew near and came.

healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And *the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*"

With the realization that the Messiah's first coming was foretold, we can reason that his second coming is also found in the Scriptures. And, so it is! In fact, it is so prominent in the Old Testament that even Jesus' disciples looked to his second coming^x, overlooking the Scriptures detailing his suffering and execution^{xi}. We can learn a lesson from their oversight however, so that we do not also fall victim of our own misguided blindness. For, if we focus solely on his first coming, we may fail to look toward his second.

Just as Christ's return is assured, all the 'scary bits' of prophecy, where God's wrath is spelled out, will also come to pass! In Revelation, these subjects are signified^{xii} by particular idioms, which are more common to the Old Testament. For example, the four horsemen in Revelation chapter 6 signify the idioms of the sword, judgment, pestilence, and famine^{xiii}. Therefore, to best define these idioms in Revelation, we search the Scriptures for other instances of their similar usage. We should also carefully consider the context in which these references are found. Then, after finding several of these references, we can configure a working definition for each idiom. Finally, as we return to the text in Revelation, we apply the gained insight from the Bible to increase our comprehension. As each idiom is clarified in this way, the overall significance of each scene in Revelation is more clearly put into focus for us.

Through our study together, we will find that a large majority of the material discussed in Revelation is detailed elsewhere in Scripture. Our endeavor throughout this study is to maintain the context between the scene in Revelation

^x ACTS 1:6, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

^{xi} DAN 9:26, after the sixty-two weeks *Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself*; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

^{xii} REV 1:1, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants-things which must shortly take place. And He sent and *signified it* by His angel to His servant John.

^{xiii} 2CHR 20:9, *'If disaster comes upon us-sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine-we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.'*

and the reference entries being presented. For example, several times the scene in Revelation is 'beheld'. Several chapters contain events that are viewed, and so begin with the phase, "I saw", such as Revelation 15:1,

“Then *I saw another sign in heaven*, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.”

Here, the context of the scene involves signs in heaven being witnessed. So, too, the reference entries should encompass the same subject, while adding to our understanding of these signs in heaven: e.g. describing their source, as we find in Daniel 6:27,

“He delivers and rescues, And *He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth*, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”

Another reference entry to help us think about these signs in heaven includes the words of Jesus, in Matthew 16:1-3,

“the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; ³"and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! *You know how to discern the face of the sky*, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.”

In contrast to the scene in Revelation, where a sign in heaven is clearly in view, here Jesus tells us that we know how to discern the sky. He even implies that we should know how to discern the signs of the times, whether on earth or in heaven. Therefore, with the information we learned in Daniel and Matthew, we can return to the context in Revelation 15:1. For, we now know that God is the one who “*works signs in heaven*”, and that we should be able to recognize these signs, knowing how they relate to “*the signs of the times*”. Thus, the sign of “*the seven angels having the seven last plagues*” indicates that, “*in them the wrath of God is complete*”. Stated another way: the time when the wrath of God will be complete is yet future; as, it will coincide with, and will be indicated by this sign in heaven: the seven angels with the seven last plagues.

Our study of Revelation looks to uncover much of that which the Bible has to say regarding the future. We will also consider our response to the insights we gain. For, the perfect plan of God will be fulfilled, whether in this generation or another to come. Though, we have before us now an opportunity to act upon the truth we have been shown. Just as Esther was given an opportunity to act, in Esther 4:14,

“if you remain completely silent at this time, *relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place*, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

So, too, we must not keep silent, or keep hidden our talent given by God^{xiv}. Instead, we are to invest ourselves completely into the work that the Lord has called^{xv} us to do. Knowing that if we fail to respond to God's prompting, His work will not be hindered. For, just as it is written, His word will be done^{xvi}.

^{xiv} MATH 25:15, to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, *to each according to his own ability*; and immediately he went on a journey.

^{xv} GAL 5:13-14, you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but *through love serve one another*. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

^{xvi} EZE 12:27-28, "Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.'²⁸"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "None of My words will be postponed any more, but *the word which I speak will be done*," says the Lord God.'