

The Fear of God - God's Judgments (Worship God or Else)

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If my conclusions about the first four trumpets are accurate, the book of Revelation will make a lot of sense just as it reads. God's judgments initiate the [great tribulation](#) and they serve as a catalyst to achieve the human responses that God desires. In effect, His judgments and show of force will either harden people's hearts or open their minds. Revelation's story describes how the two phases of God's wrath (redemptive and destructive) will be implemented, and fortunately, it also includes the human response. Revelation predicts the behavior of religious and political leaders who will occupy positions of power when the [great tribulation](#) begins. The Bible does not tell us who the world leaders will be, but God knows them by name. Two thousand years ago, when John received the visions of Revelation, God foreknew who the political and religious leaders would be. He also foreknew their reactions to His actions and He included their response in the book of Revelation for our benefit. God wants His children to know what they are about to face. Jesus told His disciples, ". . . The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." (Matthew 13:11)

So far, we have studied the full cup principle and the first four trumpet judgments. We have learned that when God's patience with the people of Earth reaches its limit, He sends warnings. Bible history indicates God's most effective warnings are those that include both destruction and a message. If there is just a message (as in Noah's day), few believe. If there is destruction but no message, few understand. So, the [great tribulation](#) includes both.

Global Destruction

God uses the trumpet judgments to warn the world that He is terminating this age of sin. God's spokespersons, the [144,000](#), will tell a surprised world that He is about to establish His kingdom of righteousness. They will call on everyone to worship God and to reject the claims of Babylon. Of course, all who refuse to obey the laws of Babylon will suffer the consequences. At this point, we have only scratched the surface of all that Revelation has to say. In order to further develop the prophetic story, consider the following scenario. It describes man's desperate situation shortly after the Great Tribulation begins:

The great earthquake that marked the beginning of the Great Tribulation will have ripped up thousands of miles of highways, collapsed overpasses and bridges, and stopped most transportation. The fiery meteor showers that follow will set wildfires that rage out of control for several months. Men will not be able to contain or stop the fires because transportation is completely disrupted. Because one-third of Earth's oxygen producing trees are burned up in the first judgment, respiratory ailments will become a problem for almost everyone. When the damage caused by the raging fires is compounded by two mega-asteroid impacts, any optimist would seriously doubt the possibility of survival on Earth. Scientists have rightly called these large asteroid impacts "civilization threatening impacts." With megatons of ash from the fires and debris from the asteroid impacts circulating in the atmosphere, the added darkness caused by numerous volcano eruptions will make life on Earth a short term situation at best. Furthermore, thousands, perhaps millions of people will die from drinking contaminated water.

This means that typhus and other plagues will be rampant. God carefully designed the first four judgments of the Great Tribulation to show the survivors that planet Earth is doomed. Even more, He wants the world to understand the curse of sin. God hopes that when people finally realize that their planet is fatally wounded, they will thoughtfully consider their desperate need of a Savior.

Global Famine

Even if food crops survive the wildfires, asteroid impacts, and volcano eruptions, few crops will reach maturity after the fourth judgment occurs because sunshine will not be able to penetrate the enormous clouds of ash and soot. Crops will wither and die, especially crops like corn which require 100+ days of sunlight between the last frost and time of maturity. Within a few months, food will be as scarce as gold. (At the beginning of 2002, experts calculate the world's stockpile of food can last about 45 days.) In addition to the famine in the part of the world specifically affected, there will be no rain in many other parts of the world as well! (Revelation 11:6) To make matters worse, scientists claim that rain occurring after a major asteroid impact will become so acidic that it will be lethal to plant and animal life. Obviously, a person does not have to be a rocket scientist to understand that Earth will be damaged beyond recovery. God wants it this way. God is deliberate and purposeful in everything He does and He inflicts a mortal blow to Earth because He wants to send a strong message to the survivors.

From man's point of view, desperate circumstances call for desperate efforts. To stabilize their situation, governments will respond. First, they will put emergency constitutions in place. They will declare martial law to prevent anarchy and a complete breakdown of orderly conduct. Stringent laws and curfews will be implemented and people will have no choice but to comply. Many individual freedoms and rights will be suspended. The price of sin is always great – even on the innocent.

To prevent looting and gouging, the nations of the world will implement rationing. People, full of fear, will do anything to obtain food, water and medicine. Governments will control the buying and selling of all commodities. This will be necessary because every survivor needs a basic number of items to sustain life itself. Who can argue with these drastic methods if it means survival? As days turn into weeks and weeks into months, millions of people will give in to depression and despair. Hope for recovery will dim. All parts of the world will have smoldering destruction and suffering beyond description. The nations of Earth will be in a state of shock. People who are alive will envy the dead. Jesus saw the travail of the human race during the Great Tribulation. He said, "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:21,22)

How do Humans Honor God?

This is terrible to say, but it is true. When humanity is forced to feel God's wrath, it begins to consider the presence and reality of God. When times are good, God is forgotten. God's love

and patience with sinners (God's silence) is misinterpreted. But when God initiates global suffering, suddenly many questions will arise. "Why did God do this? What does He want?" Overnight, a great awakening will occur. At the present time, Christians talk about God's love, the idea of a pretribulation rapture, and God's wonderful salvation and forgiveness, but they do not often talk about the things that make Him angry. Some Christians even deny that God has wrath! Consequently, His judgments will confound many Christians. They will be unable to reconcile these "Acts of God" with their assumed knowledge of God. Their "faith" will disappear when they actually experience God's wrath and terror will overwhelm them.

It is not difficult for God to frighten people. He only needs to tamper with those things that make us feel secure. With many millions of people dead and the scale of destruction beyond measurement, survivors will be forced to acknowledge they do not understand God or have a relationship with the Almighty. Did you notice a knee jerk phenomenon after the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001? Church attendance popped up 300% for about six weeks! Like Israel of old, nations will tremble with fear before Almighty God during the time of His visitation. (Exodus 20:18-21) The solution to pleasing or appeasing God – so that His destruction of Earth will stop – will appear simple on the surface. Religious leaders will demand, "We must submit to the authority of God." But how does a person worship and honor the God of Heaven so that His righteous wrath will cease?

Religious Revolution

If the physical destruction on Earth and the loss of life caused by the first four trumpets is overwhelming, the religious revolution that follows will seem just as overwhelming. Leaders from all religious systems will unite and with one voice they will offer a straightforward explanation of God's judgments. They will adjust their prophetic interpretations to fit an unfolding situation. They will say, "These 'Acts of God' have come because we have forgotten our Creator." In a sense, this is true! All around the world, religious leaders of all faiths will agree with one another saying, "We must repent of our great sins and appease God or we will be totally destroyed." For authority, Catholic and Protestant leaders will turn to the Bible, Moslems will appeal to the Koran, Jews will appeal to the Talmud, and Hindus and Buddhists will use their holy writings. The point is that every nation will discover its guilt before God and the accuser will be each nation's religion!

As people begin to link the devastations caused by the four trumpets to the idea that God is displeased with the entire human race, one question will form on everyone's mind: "What must we do to appease God before He kills the rest of us?" Even though different solutions will be offered in different nations, a common theme will develop around the world. In fact, Revelation predicts there will be a sudden, but powerful movement to appease God. This movement will have great authority and power. Like religious powers of ages past, it will persecute everyone who refuses to cooperate with it. This movement is called "Babylon" in Revelation because it will be full of confusion. This may read like a fairy tale, but when you think about it, all prophecy seems strange until the time for fulfillment arrives. Currently in the United States, less than 33% of the population attends church regularly. I believe this percentage will more than double when God's wrath is revealed! Religion will become "the" priority and religious leaders with

evangelical fervor will lead the nations of the world into a religious revolution.

The Right Way to Worship God

The coalition of the world's religious leaders will discover a big problem. There are several different religious systems on Earth and each religious group worships God in a different way. Is there one right way to worship God? Moslems believe that God is pleased when people obey the teachings of Mohammed and regard Friday as a holy day. Catholics, Anglicans, most Protestants, Greek and Russian Orthodox Christians believe that God is pleased when people obey their religious leaders and the laws of their churches, which includes observing Sunday as a holy day. Jews read the Torah and regard Saturday as a holy day. Hindus, Buddhists and other religious groups have different ideas about what pleases God. Does God really care about the way we worship Him? This question regarding worship will be the subject of much debate. In today's context, the question has no solid footing. At best, it remains one man's opinion against another. However, when 1.5 billion people lie dead among the smoldering ruins that burn the nostrils and eyes of the survivors, how God wants to be worshiped will become the question to answer.

New Laws to Worship God

In an earlier segment, we discussed the community effect. We know that desperate circumstances can unite a diverse group of people when they share in common suffering. During the Great Tribulation, most people will regard God as a Holy Terror. Religious leaders will easily motivate their frightened government leaders to quickly enact laws that require all citizens to honor and worship God. At first the laws will be oriented as "sin less" laws, but eventually, more laws will be implemented in every nation demanding that everyone respect God or suffer the penalty. However, there will be no consistency in the legislation of these "sin less" laws; instead, there will be great confusion. Catholics and Protestants will seek laws that agree with their theology, Jews will make laws agreeing with their doctrines, Moslems will want laws respecting their beliefs in Allah, and other groups will do the same. How can diverse religions on one planet appease one God? Is He a God of many religions?

Forcing Diverse Religions to Worship God

One organization on Earth stands head and shoulders above all others in terms of diplomatic ties with religious and political leaders all over the world. It is the papacy. The Roman Catholic Church has steadily secured diplomatic connections with almost every segment of Earth's population since John Paul II became Pope in 1978. When he dies, his legacy to the Church of Rome will be his worldwide pursuit of formal relationships with many countries, which now numbers over 170 nations!

When the [seven trumpets](#) begin, the pope in office will move quickly to convene a "World Council" of religious and political leaders. This council will form a powerful coalition that is called "Babylon" in Revelation. (Revelation 13, 17, 18) Perhaps the [United Nations](#) will be used to expedite this organization. However, the "glue" that will bond the leaders of the world together

will not be politics. Instead, it will be immediate concerns about God's anger and His overwhelming destruction. Overnight, a new reality will settle in on humanity. The old paradigms are out, and new ones will form. In an effort to appease God on a global scale, religious leaders will quickly compromise on "minor" religious differences. The leaders will struggle to find a global solution to appease God, but will be unable to find one. The central question remains: "How does God want the inhabitants of Earth to worship Him?" Moslems, Jews, Catholics, Hindus, Protestants and other religious organizations will have fundamentally different answers to this question and it will be impossible for one person to prove the superiority of his religion over another. Thus, a reign of confusion will begin. Eventually, the devil himself will appear on Earth during the fifth trumpet. Masquerading as God, he will solve the solution to Earth's diversity by declaring all of the world's religions void. In their place, the devil will offer his new "one world" religion and the world's religious leaders will zealously participate! After all, they will "think" this glorious being is none other than God Himself!

What Does God Desire?

God wants the human race to worship Him – our worship is the only thing in the whole universe that God does not own! God does not need our adulation. Instead, He has given human beings the power of choice and He wants us to choose to worship Him. God wants us to love, adore and worship Him because whatever we worship we imitate! "By beholding we become changed." God wants people in His coming kingdom who uphold and exalt the same laws that He upholds and exalts! So, God will send His servants, the [144,000](#), throughout the Earth to present His message and purposes. They will present the terms and conditions for salvation. God does not send the first seven judgments upon Earth without a clearly expressed message, for if He did, there would be no meaning or purpose for all the suffering. Remember, the [seven trumpets](#) are redemptive in nature. During the 1,260 days of the [seven trumpets](#), God will send three messages throughout the Earth. The [144,000](#) will present God's first message saying: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Revelation 14:7) Notice the first sentence. "Fear God" will be easy after experiencing some of His power. Notice the second sentence. "Worship Him" will be difficult because worshipping God will be contrary to the laws of Babylon. Also, notice how the last sentence itemizes the four elements that God has afflicted with the first four trumpets! Religious people worldwide will quickly agree why the judgments of God are falling. However, the command to worship God will be the frustrating part. The [144,000](#) will tell the world how God wants to be worshiped, but the leaders of Babylon will also be telling the world how to worship God and the two "hows" will be in direct conflict! When all the varying views from the religions on Earth are merged in a context where worship is required, it is easy to see how the world will become a very confusing place during the [great tribulation](#).

Think about this for a moment. Sincere people all over the world worship God according to the dictates of their conscience and worship in a way that they believe is true worship. The Bible indicates that God accepts such worship. According to Romans 2, Romans 14, John 4 and Acts 10:35, God accepts the worship of all sincere people on Earth if they worship Him in spirit and in truth. If people worship God with a humble and obedient spirit, according to all the truth they know, then God, who is always generous and merciful, accepts their worship as genuine.

However, during the [great tribulation](#), God is going to send illuminating truth through His [144,000](#) messengers, telling the world how He wants to be worshiped. People who honestly worship God in Spirit and truth will conform. Everyone else will rebel. As the honest in heart begin to worship God according to His law, their actions will violate Babylon's law. Worshipers will have to disobey the laws of Babylon in order to worship God as He requires. The penalty for worshipping God as the [144,000](#) direct will be great. The penalty for obeying the laws of Babylon will be even greater! This obvious dilemma is how God establishes the great test of faith that will separate the sheep from the goats. (A wonderful parallel is found in Daniel 3.) Let there be no mistake about it, the [great tribulation](#) will be a time of wrath for all people, languages and nations.

The Gospel in the End Time

Remember, God will use the destructive forces of the first four trumpets to literally arrest the attention of all survivors, hoping they will consider His gospel and learn what He wants. In other words, the world must hear the unvarnished truth about God and His authority over man. God creates this setting to tell the world how He is to be worshiped. Notice the order of events: God destroys a third of Earth so that the subject of worship becomes a consuming issue. Then, God speaks through His servants, the [144,000](#). They will explain what God wants. Everyone will hear the truth on this matter. This is why Jesus said the gospel must go to every nation and to every person – as a testimony to all nations – before the end comes. (Matthew 24:14) The testimony of the [144,000](#) will stand in direct opposition to what the religious leaders of Babylon want to do. The book of Revelation predicts that Babylon will enact laws regarding worship that are contrary to God's will, and regrettably, most of the world will submit to the laws of man rather than obey the law of God. John wrote, "All inhabitants of the Earth will worship the beast [Babylon] all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (Revelation 13:8, insertion mine)

If you would like to read the next segment, go to [The Devil Appears on Earth](#)