

The Full Cup Principle

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For thousands of years, nations have come and gone. Historians may explain certain events that caused a nation to rise or fall, but many people do not realize that a sovereign God sets up nations and takes them down. God does not do this arbitrarily; instead, He does this as circumstances warrant. (Daniel 2:21; 4:17,35; 5:22-30) Consider a recurring problem that God has faced throughout history: Suppose the first generation of a new nation knows everything about God's ways and will, and they are able to pass along 80% of what they know to their children (I am being generous). Then, each succeeding generation also passes along 80% of what they know to their children. In just five generations, the nation will only know one-third as much about God as their original ancestors! This rapid decline in spiritual knowledge and accountability to God explains, in part, why religious interest and church attendance drops with each passing generation. The irony in this illustration is that the fifth generation is unaware of its spiritual darkness. Each generation thinks that it knows God well enough and this is how every nation, from God's point of view, descends into apostasy. This declining process is universal and inevitable, always resulting in greater violence, decadence, and degeneracy. Because God knows man's degeneration is inevitable, He has a wise and changeless solution, a policy that deals with nations so mired in the curse of sin that there is no way out.

The Full Cup Principle

God loves this world and He watches over it at all times. (Proverbs 15:3) Because this planet is cursed by the power of sin, people and nations have natural enmity toward each other. Somewhere on Earth, nations are always at war. God does what He has to do to keep the nations from killing one another. When God acts, He does what He has to do to benefit all mankind. So, when the fullness of time is right, God destroys a wicked nation for the sake of oncoming generations. (Ezekiel 14:12-21) God loves future generations the same as He loves the present generation. In fact, He already knows the name of each person who will be in a future generation. (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:16) Subsequently, His love for forthcoming generations creates a management problem. When a current generation becomes so evil that corporate repentance and reformation is impossible, God has to annihilate the offending generation so that the next generation will have a fresh start. (Nehemiah 9:16-33; 1 Thessalonians 2:16)

I call God's policy for dealing with wicked nations the "Full Cup Principle." I created this phrase to associate God's patience with the idea of a measuring cup. Suppose each new nation is given a measuring cup (a probationary period of grace). Over time, as generations pass and people begin to forget about God and accountability to Him dims, the cup fills with guilt as people slide deeper and deeper into apostasy. When God sees the nation's cup is full, He releases His righteous wrath and destroys it because they will not repent of their apostasy. Once that nation disappears, God gives the land to a new people and the process starts over. Here are a few examples:

The Full Cup Principle in the Days of Noah

The whole world filled its cup in Noah's day: **"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the Earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the Earth, and His heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them.'"** (Genesis 6:5-7) Some people foolishly argue that a God of love does not kill people, because God Himself says **"Thou shalt not kill."** (Exodus 20:13, KJV) Murder is an act born out of hatred or predatory behavior. (1 John 3:15; Psalm 11:5-7; Numbers 35) God does not consider carrying out the death penalty murder or an act of hatred. In fact, God says that putting murderers to death is necessary to achieve justice. (Genesis 9:5,6; Numbers 35:31)

The Lord said to Noah, **"I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth."** Therefore, the argument that God does not kill people is a false claim because it makes God appear to lie. God told Noah to warn the world of the coming flood and Noah did, both in word and action. (Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5) When 120 years of grace expired (Genesis 6:3), God fulfilled His promise. He destroyed the men, women, and children who refused to get into the ark. Then, God put His rainbow in the clouds after the flood as a sign that He would never again destroy the world with a flood! (Genesis 9:11-13) When God sees that extended mercy will not produce corporate repentance and reformation, He must annihilate the current offending generation because of His love for oncoming generations.

The Amorites and the Full Cup Principle

When the Lord made the following promise to Abraham, the Amorites had not yet filled up their cup: **"Then the Lord said to him (Abraham), 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.'"** (Genesis 15:13-16)

Notice the last sentence in this passage. God promised to give Canaan to Abraham's offspring *after* the sins of the Amorites had reached their full measure! Earlier, God had given the land of Canaan to the Amorites, but each nation comes with a measuring cup. Keep in mind that Israel was to possess Canaan on the same terms and conditions that applied to the Amorites. (Leviticus 18:24-25; 25:23) Contrary to what a lot of people think today, God gave ancient Israel the land of Canaan on a conditional basis. Moses warned Israel of this: **"But be assured today that the Lord your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; He will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, . . . After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, 'The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.' No, it is on account of the wickedness of these**

nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations.” (Deuteronomy 9:3-5) God destroyed the Canaanites when they filled their measuring cup of wickedness! (Leviticus 18:24-25) Likewise, God destroyed Israel twice, the first in 605 B.C. (Daniel 9:12-14) and then in A.D. 70.

Why Was Israel Given a Second Chance?

Just before God sent Israel to Babylon (605 B.C.), He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah explaining why He was punishing Israel: **“But you did not listen to me . . . and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves. . . . Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, . . . and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. . . . This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt, . . . and will make it desolate forever.”** (Jeremiah 25:7-12)

God caused Israel to be destroyed in 605 B.C. for provoking Him to anger. It is also interesting to note that God also declared through Jeremiah that He would destroy Babylon for the same reasons that He destroyed Israel! This indicates that God deals consistently and fairly with all nations. (Ezekiel 14:12-21) Jesus gave the underlying basis of the full cup principle when He said, **“But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”** (Luke 12:48)

God gives each nation a measuring cup when it forms, and when its cup is filled, God’s wrath breaks out because of defiance. Historians may explain the sequence of events describing *how* a nation fell, but the Bible explains *why* it fell. Civilizations rise and fall by divine decree. When Babylon’s measuring cup was filled, God destroyed it and gave the land to the Medes and Persians. When the Medes and Persians filled their measuring cup, God destroyed the empire and gave the land to the Grecians. The process goes on and on because of the curse of sin.

God gave ancient Israel a second opportunity to fulfill His plans, so we can say He gave Israel two measuring cups. God did this because Abraham’s faith impressed Him and He wanted a whole nation of Abrahams as His representatives on Earth. Therefore, God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would someday be as numerous as the stars. Also, God wanted Abraham’s descendants to serve as the trustees of His gospel. God wanted to bless the whole world through a nation of priests; a people who would know, understand, and share the love of God. God wanted His gospel of salvation spread to every corner of Earth! Therefore, God entered into a covenant with Israel and He graciously promised from the beginning that He would give the nation a second chance if they happened to go astray. Notice these two passages:

The Lord said, “ **‘But if they [my people] will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers [when they are exiled in the land of their enemies, if they will confess] -- their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies -- then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. . . They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.’** ” (Leviticus 26:40-45, insertions mine)

Solomon referred to the Lord’s promise of a “second chance” in his prayer when He dedicated the temple to God in Jerusalem: “**When they [your people, Israel] sin against you -- for there is no one who does not sin -- and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; then from Heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy; for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace. ‘May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you.’** ” (1 Kings 8:46-52, insertion mine)

God kept His word and He did as He promised. He gave Israel a second chance (measuring cup) lasting 70 weeks (490 years - from 457 B.C. to A.D. 34). Unfortunately, Israel did not learn from its mistakes.

You may recall that God also gave the city of Nineveh a second measuring cup, but the succeeding generations in Nineveh did not learn from the mistakes of their forefathers either. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Nineveh about 160 years after the city repented in the days of Jonah. Like Nineveh, Israel turned away from God a second time and went into such deep apostasy that when the Son of God came to Earth and spoke the truth, they accused Him of blasphemy and crucified Him. At that point, the Father could do nothing further with ancient Israel, so He established a new Israel. God destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel in A.D. 70. God gave the land to the Arabs; and later, Muslims put a mosque on Temple Mount. God brought this about to keep the Jews from ever rebuilding a temple there.

Israel Filled Up Its Cup

Shortly before Jesus returned to Heaven, He announced the end of His covenant with the nation of Israel saying, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house [your nation, religion and temple] is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again [I will have nothing more to do with your religion or temple] until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”**’ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to its buildings. **‘Do you see all these things?’ He asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’**” (Matthew 23:37-24:2) History reveals that God would rather have a mosque on the Temple Mount than a Jewish temple.

Shortly before Jesus’ death, He used the idea of a measuring cup in His final discourse with the Pharisees. After Jesus pronounced seven curses on the Jewish leaders for their religious bigotry and hypocrisy, He said, “**Fill up, then, the measure of the [cup of] sin of your forefathers! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?**” (Matthew 23:32,33, insertion mine) When the Jews rejected Jesus, they filled their cup, and God destroyed them in A.D. 70. Remember, God’s patience has a limit. This principle is easy to understand. The law of love will not permit a hopelessly evil generation to destroy forthcoming generations. This is the only way to be fair to the next generation. When God threw Lucifer out of Heaven, he did it because His patience with rebellion has a limit. Remember, when a nation reaches the limit of divine forbearance, God’s wrath breaks out. In A.D. 70, God sent the Romans to Judea to destroy ancient Israel. Contrary to what is often said today, modern Israel is not an extension or rebirth of ancient Israel. Zionism is altogether a different subject and matter.

New Testament Examples of the Full Cup Principle

The New Testament confirms the full cup principle. Paul warned the sexually immoral Romans, “**You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.**” (Romans 2:5,6,8) The Roman Empire, beginning in 168 B.C. filled its cup and God destroyed it in A.D. 476.

About A.D. 55, Paul encouraged the suffering believers in Thessalonica to be patient until the enemies of Christ had filled their cup. “**You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches [in Judea] suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They [the Jews] displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.**” (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, insertions mine) When Paul wrote this epistle, he knew the Jewish nation had filled its cup of sin and soon, God would send the Romans to destroy Jerusalem. (Luke 21:20-22)

The Great Tribulation

If you have read this far, you should see a strong parallel developing. The Full Cup Principle and the fourteen plagues mentioned in Chapter 1 are inseparable. God's coming wrath will be global, because the world is at the same level of apostasy today as the world was in Noah's day. God has unsealed the book of Daniel so that we can use its four rules to understand His plans. The time has almost arrived. All that remains is for Jesus to declare, **"There will be no more delay!"** During World War III, while men are struggling against one another with nuclear exchanges in a contest of wills, Jesus will act decisively. He will suddenly send signs and wonders, which people will see in the sky and hear in the Earth. A Sovereign Jesus will step into the affairs of mankind with a display of divine power that will dwarf nuclear power. A global earthquake will destroy many of the world's infrastructures (e.g., communication, travel, banking, power grids, etc.) and then four horrifying judgments will follow. (Revelation 8:5-12) At the end of 1,335 days, Jesus will appear, the Great Tribulation will be over and the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20 will begin. When the 1,000 years have ended, Jesus will purify this planet with fire. Then, He will create a new Heaven and Earth. The saints will inhabit the new Earth and enjoy it eternally! Their cup will be full, but overflowing with happiness. **"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."** (Psalm 23:5,6)

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