

AGONY 3

A. The “Cup” of God’s Wrath in the Holy Scripture.

*“I said to the wicked: Do not act wickedly: and to the sinners: Lift not up the horn. Lift not up your horn on high: speak not iniquity against God. For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert hills: for God is the judge. One he putteth down, and another he lifteth up: for **in the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture.** And he hath poured it out from this to that: but the dregs thereof are not emptied: all the sinners of the earth shall drink. But I will declare forever: I will sing to the God of Jacob. And I will break all the horns of sinners: but the horns of the just shall be exalted”* (Psalm 75:5-10).

*“Arise, arise, stand up, O Jerusalem, **which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His wrath;** thou hast drunk even to the bottom of the cup of dead sleep, and thou hast drunk even to the dregs”* (Is. 51:17).

*“For thus saith the Lord of hosts the God of Israel: **Take the cup of wine of this fury at my hand:** and thou shalt make all the nations to drink thereof, unto which I shall send thee. And they shall drink, and be troubled, and be mad because of the sword, which I shall send among them. And I took the cup at the hand of the Lord, and I presented it to all the nations to drink of it, to which the Lord sent me: To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Juda, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof: to make them a desolation, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a curse, as it is at this day. Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people, and all in general”* (Jer. 25:15-20a).

*“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image, and receive his character in his forehead, or in his hand; He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in **the cup of His wrath,** and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever: neither have they rest day nor night, who have adored the beast, and his image, and whoever receiveth the character of his name”* (Apoc. 14:9-11).

B. What, then, is the “cup” which our Lord dreaded?

It is the cup of God’s wrath, poured out on sinners. It is the cup which will be poured out in those who are unrighteous, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. It is the “cup” which was foretold in the Old Testament, and which is still prophesied in the Book of Apocalypse. It is the cup of the wrath of God, beginning with the Great Tribulation,

and enduring throughout all eternity. The cup which our Lord dreaded drinking was the wrath of God, manifested in eternal torment.

Much less frequently, Holy Scripture speaks of another cup, the cup of salvation or of rejoicing (cf. Psalm 15:5; 22:5; 115:13; cf. Jer. 16:7). The disciples may have had the two “cups” confused. Thus, when James and John sought permission to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in the kingdom, and Jesus asked them if they were able to drink the “cup” that He would drink (Matthew 20:20-23), they were thinking of the “cup” of salvation, of rejoicing, not of His suffering on the cross, when they quickly responded, “*We are able.*”

No wonder our Lord was “*sorrowful and sad*” (Mat. 26:37), and His soul was “*overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*” (Mat. 26:38). The agony was due to the Cross which loomed before Him. He was suffering in the anticipation of His bearing of the sins of the world that He accepted to redeem out of Love for His Father and for us.

“As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep... Therefore doth the Father love me: because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (Jn 10:15; 17-18).

“Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

Our Lord willingly bore the wrath of God (the “cup,” as it were) in the sinner’s place. Redemption comes when a person receives the Faith with Charity in Christ’s Grace, as the One who was innocent, and yet died in their place, bearing the wrath of God which their sins deserved. Those who reject Christ, His atoning sacrifice and His Mystical Body, which is the Holy Catholic Church must bear the wrath of God, which will be poured out in the future. It is this wrath to which the Book of the Apocalypse refers (see text above).

“Watch ye therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come” (Mat. 24:42). When and how the Lord’s return will come is still a mystery, but Catholics will go through the great Tribulation with the divine protection of the Grace of God that our Lord Jesus Christ is mercifully pouring on souls from His Passion and Crucifixion.

“For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be: and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened” (Mat. 24:21-22).

“But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand” (Lk 21:28).

The Great Tribulation is a horrifying repeat of the agony of our Lord Jesus Christ, which men must endure because of the rejection of the Redeemer, and it will try everybody.