

Session 3: Timing Factors in the Book of Revelation

I. NT Assumptions behind “This Age”

A. Restraint of Divine Judgment

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... (^{ESV} 2 Pet. 3:9–10)

B. Extension of Mercy to the Gentiles

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.³⁰ For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,³¹ so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. (^{ESV} Rom. 11:25–32)

C. The Demand of Martyrdom

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (^{ESV} Matt. 16:24–25)

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (^{ESV} Matt. 24:9–14)

II. Missions and Martyrdom during the Messianic Woes

A. Fullness of the Gentiles (cf. Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:18; 12:5; 14:6; 15:4; 19:15; 21:24; 22:2)

1. Intent of Temporal Judgments

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (^{ESV} Rev. 9:20–21)

2. Results of Temporal Judgments

Missions and Martyrdom

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And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire-- and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." (^{ESV} Rev. 15:2–4)

B. Fullness of Martyrdom (cf. Rev. 2:9; 6:9; 7:14; 11:7, 18; 12:11, 17; 13:7; 14:13; 15:2; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20; 19:2; 20:4)

1. The Completion of the Witness

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (^{ESV} Rev. 6:9–11)

2. The Escalation of Divine Judgment – As the saints persecuted (cf. Rev. 7:14; 13:7; 16:6; 17:6), judgments escalate (cf. Rev. 8:5; 14:7; 16:7; 18:2)

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne,⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (^{ESV} Rev. 8:3–5)

And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"⁷ And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!" (^{ESV} Rev. 16:5–7)

And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" (^{ESV} Rev. 18:19–20)

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,² for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." (^{ESV} Rev. 19:1–2)