

Bowls 1-3 - the End of Israel

Revelation 16:2-7

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Text

16:1 And I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the bowls of God's fury on the earth." 2 So off went the first one and poured out his bowl on the earth, and a foul and malignant ulcer appeared in the people who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. 3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood, like a dead person's; so every living soul in the sea died. 4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they turned into blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "How just You are! The One who is and who was, the holy One, because You have judged these things. 6 Because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it!" 7 And I heard one from the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty! Your judgments are true and just!"¹

Introduction

On Monday I typed in the question, "If there is a God, why" and Google returned 223,000 websites addressing this question, many of which were agnostics questioning God's existence. "If there is a God, why is there so much suffering?" That question assumes that we deserve the opposite of suffering, and to receive suffering in this life supposedly proves that God is either unjust or does not exist. "If there is a God, why are there young children who are sick and dying?" "If there is a God, why is there so much evil in the world?" Actually, one website had a very clever response from a Christian who tried to paint a world in which God stopped every evil thing from happening - not just murder, rape, theft, and other biggies, but stopped all sinners from even thinking sins - because how can you logically stop with outward sins? And I thought he did a good job of showing that when we reject the grace of God all answers are meaningless and you would end up with a world of robots or a world absent of humans.

But it is interesting that this passage which describes the same kind of pain, disease, suffering, physical calamities, and death that agnostics and atheists use to rail against God and against His justice are used by this passage as a proof that God is a God of perfect justice. This passage comes to the exact opposite conclusion that atheists come to. Revelation shows no

1 Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering - [The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken](#).

embarrassment whatsoever over linking these atrocities with God. Those in heaven who think clearly because they have no sin blinding them say in verses 5-6,

“How just You are! The One who is and who was, the holy One, because You have judged these things. 6 Because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it!” 7 And I heard one from the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty! Your judgments are true and just!”

The very things that make rebels shake their fists at God make saints worship and adore the same God. The only difference is that a holy nature views sin in a totally different way than an evil nature views sin.

Well, these three bowls are grouped together not only as three connected Festivals, but as three connected judgments in history. They represent the last plagues poured out upon Israel in AD 136, and they showcase the total justice of God.

I. Bowls 1-3 relate to the ending of Israel as a nation

A. Bowl One (v. 2)

Poured out on the land of Israel (v. 2a - γῆν)

Verse 2 begins, "So off went the first one and poured out his bowl on the earth..." The Greek word for earth is γῆν, which generally refers to the land of Israel in the book of Revelation. So this bowl is being poured out as a judgment on a nation that had been intensely persecuting Christians. There were two major enemies of the early church: Israel and Rome. And Israel's persecution of Christians only intensified in the years after AD 70. Pearson summarizes the historical evidence we have of this period, saying this: Christians are being cursed in the synagogues and excommunicated ... [they are] being persecuted, and denounced as 'children of hell.' These developments are not limited only to Palestine, but are apparently also felt in the Diaspora.²

The early church father, Justyn, complained to the Jewish apologist, Trypho: ...so far as you... have it in your power, each Christian has been driven out not only from his property, but even from the whole world; for you permit no Christian to live... we are taken away out of the earth. (Dialogues, p. 36.)

In another place he says, the Jews "slay and punish us wherever they are able" so that Bar Kochba decrees that "Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they would deny Jesus Christ, and utter blasphemy" (Apol. 1:31) The persecution of both Polycarp and Justyn Martyr is attributed to the Jews stirring up the Romans against them

² Birger A. Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation," HTR 64 (1971): 93.

(Martyrdom of Polycarp 12:2; Apol. 1:31). And of course, Jesus prophesied several times that this would be the case, saying that the Jews would hound them out of towns, arrest them, beat them in the synagogues, imprison, and kill them (Matt. 10:23; 23:34-35; Mark 13:12).

I am not saying that the Romans were guilt free. We will see that most of these plagues also affected the Romans. But it is important to realize that rabbinic Judaism or Talmudic Judaism is not an ally to Christianity. In the first two centuries they were the bitter enemies of Christianity. Kenneth Gentry documents how the Jews pushed and connived to get the Roman government to join them in persecuting the Christians - especially the Jewish Christians. So this section shows judgments that would fall upon both seats of government. But here, the locality where the judgments fall is in the land of Israel.

A plague of boils or sores erupted in their bodies (v. 2c), no doubt due to the blood and bodies found everywhere.

And notice that this judgment consists of some kind of disease that manifests itself in some kind of eruptions on the skin. There are a number of diseases, including bubonic plague that have symptoms of abscesses or boils or ulcers. This doesn't name the disease; only the symptom: "and a foul and malignant ulcer appeared in the people..." Disease ran rampant in AD 136. In fact, according to Dio Cassius, the Roman historian, more died of disease during the next few days than died of the sword,³ and we documented millions who died of the sword. The sad part of it all was that Hadrian refused to allow anyone to bury the bodies after the slaughter of Bethar. They were putrefying everywhere. In fact, he made macabre walls by stacking up the bodies around fields and vineyards. One source mentions the wolves and hyenas roaming the area eating the dead. And there was so much blood in the soil of Israel, that several second century sources say that the Gentiles who took over the vineyards fertilized the vineyards for seven years with the blood of the slain. With this gross lack of hygiene, it was no wonder that disease spread everywhere. And it did. This bowl happens immediately after the judgment of chapter 14.

3 " Very few Jews in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out." Cassius Dio, Roman history 69.13.3 - 14:1.

It was during a time when Jews worshiped the beast and had his mark (v. 2b)

And who died as a result of this disease? It says, "a foul and malignant ulcer appeared in the people who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image." Back when I discussed the mark of the beast we saw that prior to AD 70, only Roman soldiers were tattooed or branded with the name or number of Caesar, but after AD 70, all Israel wore the mark as well and offered a pinch of incense to Caesar. The Talmud records the rationalizations that they made as to why this was not a compromise. And up until approximately AD 132, the Jews continued to side with Rome and to use Rome as a tool for exterminating Christians. Emperor Hadrian was initially very supportive of the Jews, even saying that they could rebuild their temple. So all the way into the early second century, Jews continued to bow to Caesar, and so it is no surprise to find in the histories that millions of Jews died of this horrible disease after the defeat of Bethar in AD 136. They compromised with the mark of the beast in their skin and God afflicted them in their skin. And though Tabernacles is not specifically mentioned, I believe the disease of this bowl began to appear during the week of Tabernacles in AD 136. In any case, it was shortly after the massacre at Bethar.

But the Jews weren't the only ones in the land of Israel that were afflicted. Disease knows no racial boundaries, and Roman soldiers were getting this disease and dropping like flies as well. And of course, virtually all Roman soldiers were tattooed or self-branded with the mark of the beast.

So both the Jews and the Romans suffered massive losses. Hadrian was so ashamed of the loss of soldiers in Israel that he had no triumphal entry into Rome to celebrate the victory. Toward the end of the war he had had to conscript boys to fight. Legion 22 ceased to exist altogether, historians assuming that it was because every soldier to a man had died. So though the bowl was poured out on the land of Israel, it affected both Romans and Jews who were there.

B. Bowl Two (v. 3)

The Sea of Galilee became congealed blood (v. 3a)

The next bowl happened less than a week earlier on the second-to-last festival day, the Day of Atonement, or Ab 9. Remember, we proved last week that these events go backwards along with the chiasm. And the Day of Atonement was the day that Bethar was destroyed - the day that I documented rather heavily in the last part of chapter 14. When the blood of

Christ's atonement was rejected, their blood was spilled - interestingly, on the same day as the Day of Atonement. Verse 3 says, "Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood, like a dead person's; so every living soul in the sea died."

Is it really possible that the entire sea of Galilee became congealed blood? Obviously you know what I think - our God is a God of miracles, and if He says it became congealed blood, it became congealed blood. But if you remember the last sermon on chapter 14 that dealt with the phrase, "blood up to the horses' bridles," you will recall that I gave a number of quotes from Jewish recollections of that period, all of which claim such copious amounts of blood that it would have filled up the Sea of Galilee and more. Obviously modern historians don't believe these ancient sources and say that they are exaggerated - and they may be. But even modern historians tend to agree that this war was the bloodiest war in recorded human history.⁴

In any case the Tanaaitic rabbis of that period claimed that 80,000,000 Jews were killed.⁵ The Jerusalem Talmud claims that there was a flash flood of blood that lifted huge boulders and carried them downstream and that the blood flowed for miles to the Mediterranean.⁶ Obviously that would have to be a miracle, because human blood would congeal before it would do that, and even 80,000,000 pints would not be enough blood to do that. So there is obviously something else going on. In another place the Talmud says that the Mediterranean ocean was stained with the blood as far northwest as the island of Cyprus.⁷ So there was more blood to go around than just for the

4 Earl Abraham Ola calls it "the greatest holocaust in Jewish history." Earl Abraham Ola, Bar Kochba, (Xulon Press, 2004), p. 158. One person on a history forum suggested: The (Simon) Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman Empire was one of the bloodiest conflicts in recorded history, so much so that there was no triumph to celebrate the victory. According to Dio half a million Jews were slain, according to Jewish sources the number is in the millions and the Romans "went on killing until their horses were submerged in blood to their nostrils" if that's any indication of the level of carnage.

The Roman losses have to be inferred but even a conservative estimate would have to be in the 10's of 1000's at the very least, for example the record of the Legio XXII Deiotariana ends abruptly after the war which most likely means the legion was annihilated to a man.

Come to think of it, it's also the worst and bloodiest genocide of antiquity as well.

5 "Said R. Yohanan, "Upon orders ['voice'] of Caesar Hadrian in Betar they killed 80,000 myriads."" Jacob Neusner, The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). A myriad is a thousand; 80,000 x 1000 = 80,000,000

6 The Babylonian Talmud says, "This refers to the eighty thousand battle trumpets that assembled in the city of Betar when they took it, and men, women, and children did they kill in it, until their blood flowed and fell into the Great Sea." Jacob Neusner, The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary, vol. 11b (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 473. "...the blood flowed four mils into the sea. [OO] Now if you might want to suppose that Betar was near the sea, in fact it was forty mils from the sea." Jacob Neusner, ed., The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 69a.

7 "His legions surrounded them and killed them. He said to the women, "Obey my legions, and I shall not kill you." They said to him, "What you did to the ones who have fallen do also to us who are yet

Sea of Galilee. Some rabbis of the period described streams flowing into Galilee as being one part blood to two parts water.⁸ How Galilee became full of blood, I am not certain. Some have suggested that it wasn't real blood, but is what scientists have been studying in recent years as the phenomon known as blood rain. But God could have just done a miracle and turned the water into blood like He did with Egypt's waters at the time of Moses.

Everything living in that sea died (v. 3b)

But whatever the source of the blood or the blood-like substance, the Sea of Galilee as a whole was polluted and 100% of the sea creatures died. That massive fish kill would have added to the stench of human bodies that were already accumulating from the previous week.

So this highlights God's sovereignty over pollution. When nations rebel against God, God does not allow them to enjoy the bounties of nature. So it should not be a surprise in our own time that the most polluted countries in the world have been the communist countries; in other words, the most God-hating countries in the world. I see pollution as one of God's judgments on nations. He allows their evil trajectory to catch up with them.

C. Bowl Three (vv. 4-7)

Rivers and springs in Israel become bloodied (v. 4)

But it wasn't just the sea of Galilee that got polluted. All the springs and rivers that fed into Galilee were defiled by blood as well over the course of the previous week. Verse 4 says, "Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they turned into blood." The whole land of Israel was polluted. The water was undrinkable. And yet, to survive, the Jews and Romans had to drink the waters. They didn't have a choice.

standing." He mingled their blood with the blood of their men, until the blood flowed into the ocean as far as Cyprus. At that moment the horn of Israel was cut off, and it is not destined to return to its place until the son of David will come." Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions*, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 55b.

8 The Talmud of the Land of Israel says, "It has been taught: R. Eleazar the Great said: There are two streams in the valley of Yadaim, one running in one direction and one in another, and the Sages estimated that [at that time] they ran with two parts water to one of blood." Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions*, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 55b. The Babylonia Talmud uses the image of "wine," saying, "It has been taught on Tannaite authority: R. Eliezer the Great says, 'There are two streams in the Valley of Hands, one of them flows in this direction, the other in that direction, and sages made the estimate that they ran with two parts of water to one of wine.'" Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation*

This God given pollution is said to be a just judgment of God

It is just because God is the definition of holiness and justice (v. 5)

And all of this is said to flow from the hand of a God of holiness and justice.

Verse 5 says,

And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "How just You are! The One who is and who was, the holy One, because You have judged these things.

Notice that there is not the slightest embarrassment in declaring these judgments to be holy and just. Why? Well, the text says it is because God has judged these things, and He is just. He is the measure of what is just. We cannot complain against His judgments because there is no basis for declaring justice apart from God. When people say, "If there is a God, why is there evil in the world?" your response should be, "If there is no God, there is no such thing as evil." It's just one animal attacking another animal - something that Darwin said was good.

The complaints of modern men against God's wrath and judgment flow from making man the measure of truth. But man is himself corrupt. He is incapable of adequately discerning truth from error. Our judgment must always line up with God's word, and as Paul worded it, we must be willing to let God be true and every man a liar (Romans 3:4).

It is just because they deserve it (v. 6)

Verse 6 continues this theme:

Because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it!"

Did Bar Kochba's armies deserve it? Absolutely yes. They were brutal in their torture and killing of Christian men, women, and children. And as they did to others, God did to them. But there is more to this than simply retribution for the killings that happened under Bar Kochba. They were still being punished for the sins of their ancestors. Christ pronounced judgment not just on the generation of Israel that had crucified Him, but also on their children. There is a covenantal relationship with evil in our previous generations that must be broken for the curse to be broken. And that there was a curse on Israel is clear from many passages. 1 Thessalonians 2 says, For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. (vv. 14-16)

And of course, Israel had pronounced this self-curse upon themselves. When

Pilate washed his hands and said that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). That's a curse. They had pronounced a curse upon themselves and their descendants. And apart from Jesus bearing that curse for them, they continue to be under that curse to the uttermost. They are still under the curse, a curse which can only be broken by faith in Christ Jesus.

And by the way, this is true of all of us. Even though I was a Christian, I struggled for years with the sins of my ancestors until I put those generational sins under the blood of Christ and cut off the legal ground that demons had claimed to mess around in my life. No one can escape the fact that we live in a covenantal world. Even Satan and his demons must function within the legal framework of God's covenantal universe. Like it or not, God's covenant continues to affect men and demons generationally.

But people object, surely the women and children should not be blamed for the horrible crimes of a previous generation or even for the horrible crimes of their king, Bar Kochba. They point to all of the children that were killed at the city of Bethar alone. The rabbis claim that Bethar had 500 synagogue schools each of which had at least 500 children in them, and all but one of the 250,000 children were killed.⁹ Surely those children were innocent. Surely you cannot say that they shed the blood of saints and prophets.

But you see, they are covenantally related to their fathers. It's just the way life is. This is why it is so critical that when people come to Christ they self-consciously renounce the sins of their ancestors and break off the curse of their ancestors in their own lives. Four times the law of God emphasizes that God is always "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Deut. 5:9; cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:7; 14:8). And if you don't know how to break off the curses of past generations, talk to me. It is so important. Demons take advantage of those covenantal curses and continue to afflict Christians who have not removed the legal ground to do so.

But beyond their connection with their fathers, it is important to note that children are not innocent. Psalm 14 is quoted by the apostle Paul as proving that every man, woman, and child is corrupt from conception and increasing in corruption as that child develops. According to Romans 3, every one of

9 Rabban [Shimon] Gamliel said: "There were 500 schoolhouses in Betar. The smallest of them had no fewer than 500 children." Jacob Neusner, *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). Midrash Rabbah on Lamentations 2.2.4 says that it was 500 schools with the least of the schools not having less than 300 students. See <http://www.livius.org/sources/content/rabbinical-literature/midrash-rabbah-lamentations-2.2.4/>

them is filled with the poison of asps. The Psalm that David wrote during his repentance, Psalm 51, speaks of sin being present in our souls from the moment of conception. In other words, there is no innocent baby. Isaiah explains why babies need God's salvation just as much as adults do – they are “children given to corruption!” (Is. 1:4). He tells adults, “you were called a rebel from birth” (Is. 48:8). They are not innocent; they are rebels. Psalm 58:3 says, “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” In an absolute sense, there is no such thing as an innocent who suffers - except for Jesus. Psalm 14 and Romans 3 says, “They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one.” So we cannot accuse God of injustice when children die in collateral damage.

The upshot is that Paul says in Romans 5 that death passed to even babies because of two things: Romans 5:14 says that death passed to babies (and you will have to look at John Murray's exegesis of that - death passed to babies) because of the legal imputation of Adam's sin, and secondly, because babies have their own sin nature that deserves death.

And for those who object that it isn't fair for God to legally impute Adam's sin to babies, Paul's response is that you don't have salvation without imputation. If you think the imputation of sin is unfair, then the imputation of Christ's righteousness is unfair and therefore justification is unfair, and therefore no one could be saved. Romans and 1 Corinthians both say that God imputes Christ's righteousness to us in exactly the same way that He imputes Adam's sin to us. He does so immediately; not mediately, like Roman Catholics say, but immediate imputation. So Adam's fall guarantees that death comes eventually to everyone and our own sin natures also guarantee the same death.

The death of babies should not surprise us, even if it does trouble us. Now, men who kill babies are guilty of murder, but God is not. So that would be my second response: there is no such thing as a totally innocent person. They may be innocent of crimes, and thus not worthy of death from men, but they are not innocent of sin, and thus not free from judgment from God. All are in need of salvation.

But my third response is that there is strong evidence that these 250,000 children at Bethar had been groomed by the rabbis to blaspheme Jesus (and we still have recorded some of the curses against Jesus that they were being taught in these rabbinic synagogue schools), and they were being taught to hate Christians, and to kill if they got the chance to do so. When you read

the description of what those children were taught, there is evidence that they were just as demon-possessed as the adults were. The rabbis taught these young children to chant that with their pencils they would bore out the eyes of their enemies.¹⁰ Murder was already in their hearts as well.

In any case, whether we think of their own sin, the imputed sin of Adam, or the covenantal connection these children had with Bar Kochba, God was just in inflicting every death. He was just in making survivors have to drink from the blood-defiled springs and rivers.

Just and holy creatures will always agree with God's justice and truth (v. 7)

And verse 7 says that all just and holy creatures should be able to say "Amen!" to God and to agree with His justice and truth.

And I heard one from the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty! Your judgments are true and just!"

Can you say that God was true and just in judging Israel and Rome? Or does that make us cringe? Can you say that God is true and just in sending people to hell? Or does that doctrine make you ashamed? Can you say that God was true and just in wiping out the Canaanites under Joshua? Or do those passages make you ashamed? When we find shame over anything in Scripture, it is an indication of a heart drifting from God. Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). We cannot make a false god in our own image. We can't make God nicer than He really is. God is who He is and by faith we worship Him and cling to Him even when we do not understand Him. The disciples weren't sure they knew why Jesus was making offensive statements, but they knew not to criticize Him. All the crowds forsook Him, and Jesus gave the disciples the opportunity to leave too, asking them, "Do you also want to go away?"

But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:67-69)

When people claim that God can't exist because this world is filled with evil, answer them by saying that you cannot even define evil as evil apart from God. If we are simply animals, there is no such thing as evil. Nature

10 The following is the translation of Peter Schafer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1995), p158. It is taught: Rabban Shimon b. Gamaliel says: There were five hundred schools in Bethar, and in the smallest of them were not less than five hundred children. They used to say: If the enemy comes upon us, we shall go out to meet them with these pencils and bore out their eyes. When however sin caused this to happen, [the Romans] wound every one of them in his own scroll and burnt him... pTa'an 69a.

becomes red in tooth and claw, and on an evolutionary scale, that is good. We must learn that though we may not totally understand why God does things the way that He does, we should trust Him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me clarify four things that I absolutely do not want you to misunderstand. First, though God is allowed to kill and to make alive, men cannot play God by doing so. These Romans and Jews who were killing each other were guilty of murder and should have been opposed in their murderous war. The fact that God raises up a Babylon to smash Israel in judgment in the Old Testament did not lead prophets to conclude that Babylon was good and justified in what they did. No. They were just as evil as Israel was. God is simply letting his mutual enemies wipe each other out. It is a lex talionis justice principle. They both got what was coming to them. In fact, the expression, "A plague on both their houses" fits the context of these plagues.

Secondly, just because God uses pollution as one of His judgments does not justify us in polluting waters. God owns the waters; we do not. Indeed, God judges individuals and nations who deliberately pollute the waters. God is simply allowing a nation's sin and rebellion to exhibit its logical conclusions. Proverbs 8:36 says, "But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death." All anti-God systems love death. And we are seeing the logic of our nation's unbelief bearing fruit in how the GLBT movement involves itself in more and more self-destructive behaviors and is burning itself out; how humanists are exterminating themselves through abortion and homosexual desire; how the FDA protects contaminated products; how the Federal Reserve has sent us on a debt spiral. Eventually every Christ-hating system will end up in a self-destructive mode. But that does not mean we should justify it. We should oppose these things just as people of that time should have been offended with the pollution of the waters.

Third, God never allows pollution or war to permanently ruin His world or to ruin His plans for a redeemed planet earth. Though the Sea of Galilee was absolutely trashed, the stench of this blood eventually washed out, and fish from upstream eventually repopulated the waters. God has built incredible self-regenerative processes into planet earth, and it is amazing how the earth recovers from pollution, volcanoes, ice ages, and other disasters as quickly as it does. We need not fear that the world will be destroyed forever. As nations repent and begin to follow God's law, God will reverse the curses

and will begin to bless every aspect of nature on their behalf and has promised to do so in His covenant document, Deuteronomy. But blessings flow in nature to godly nations, and we are living on the last remnants of blessing that were given to a previous generation.

And finally, while we can agree with the justice of God in His judgments, it is perfectly appropriate to minister to people who have undergone these judgments. That is not fighting against God. Always keep in mind that these are temple bowl judgments, or redemptive judgments. And the church did indeed step in to pick up the pieces and to establish a vibrant church in the land of Israel - a church that lasted for centuries. Indeed, Christians should be at the forefront of seeing opportunities to minister the kindness of God to those who have experienced the traumas that result from the bitter fruits of our sins. Jail ministry is a wonderful ministry. We might hate the crime, but still show the mercy of God to the criminal. We should be the first to hate ungodly wars and yet minister to veterans with PTSD. We should be the first to hate and oppose the horrible sex-trade trafficking that is fueled by our pornographic society, and yet be willing to help pick up the pieces and minister God's healing grace. Sin is always hateful, whether God uses sin as a judgment or not. Sin is always sin and must be opposed. So don't ever take our agreement with God's judgments as a reason to not care. It was a caring compassionate loving church that picked up the pieces of this disaster and won multitudes to Christ. May we be part of a church that continues to do so. Amen.

This of course assumes that the Jewish Tannaitic rabbinic witnesses were closer to the truth than Dio Cassius. But even Cassius admits that the number of Jews who died "was past finding out" (see previous footnote). The actual figure is probably much less than 80,000,000 claimed by one rabbi and probably much more than the 2,000,000 claimed by some based on conservative population analysis.