

# Jerusalem's Cup of Iniquity

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## The Principle

God measures the actions of individuals and of nations. Each is seen as having a *cup* in which their transgressions are accumulated. When one's life become predominately evil, then their cup is seen as full and God will judge that person or people accordingly. Judgment comes at this time because His mercy has been spurned and His patience has come to an end. Now that person or nation will receive the full force of God's judgment as the natural consequences of their actions.

"I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming and I will act. I will not relent, and I will not pity and I will not be sorry; according to your ways and [according to your deeds](#) I will judge you," declares the Lord GOD." Ezekiel 24:14

## Examples

Throughout the Scripture we find reference to this principle.

1. **Abraham** is told that his descendants will have to wait to occupy the land of Canaan. Why? "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16). God will not arbitrarily remove the current inhabitants from the land without cause. Yet, when the Amorite's cup of iniquity is full, God will judge them, making room for the Israelites to take over the land.
2. **Sodom** and **Gomorrah**: A very revealing insight into the working of God is given to us before Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. In Genesis 18 we hear Jehovah say, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and [their sin is exceedingly grave](#)" (18:20). This is an indication that judgment was about to come because their sin is being measured as *complete*, or *full*. Still, God is going to first go down and see "if they have done entirely according to its outcry" (18:21). God will not judge without just cause.

What follows next is a back and forth exchange between Jehovah and Abraham, where Abraham is seen as *bargaining* for the city to be spared. First he asks if God will spare the city if fifty righteous persons are found within the city. The basis of his request rests upon the justice of God – he knows that God would not slay the righteous along with the wicked, "far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (18:25). As the requests continue, God agrees to spare the city on account of only ten righteous persons (18:32). Since the city is destroyed in the end, it is implied that the ten righteous could not be found. Thus, we can conclude that Sodom's cup of iniquity was quite full. God's judgment upon them was both just and righteous. Note the words of the two angels who were sent by God to Sodom: "we are about to destroy this place, because [their outcry has become so great](#) before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it" (19:13).

3. **Israel** fails in its first opportunity to possess Canaan. This is because of Israel's continual complaining against God and total rejection of Him. As a result, they were rejected by God to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Initially God was going to destroy them all, but they were spared due to the pleading of Moses. God's judgment came upon the numbered men who were twenty years and older because their cup was full:

"Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have [put Me to the test these ten times](#) and have not listened to My voice, 23 shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who [spurned Me](#) see it" (Numbers 14:22-23).

Ten, being a number of completeness, signifies that their cup of rebellion was full. God promises that they will be judged saying, "your corpses will fall in this wilderness" (Numbers 14:29) and, "So I declared on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest." (Hebrews 3:11, quoting Psalms 95:11).

4. When **Israel** is about to finally possess the land of Canaan, Moses explains to them that the time has come due to the great wickedness of its current inhabitants – i.e. their iniquity was finally complete (as foretold to Abraham; Genesis 15:16).

"Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but [it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you.](#) 5 It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but [it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you](#), in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).

5. **Nineveh**: This city's cup was nearly full, so God sent Jonah to her, warning of God's coming judgment. Nineveh avoided God's wrath by repenting of their sinful ways. "When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." (Jonah 3:10). Obviously, Nineveh avoided judgment because they did not fill their cup to the full.
6. The **Individual**: Just as with a city or a nation, we as individuals can store up our sins to a point where we will be judged. "But because of your [stubbornness](#) and [unrepentant](#) heart you are [storing up wrath](#) for yourself in the [day of wrath](#) and revelation of the righteous [judgment](#) of God" (Romans 2:5).

Thus, the responsibility of us all is to "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

God is amazingly patient ...*and gracious*. He is willing to forgive those who are truly repentant. But when one consistently refuses His warnings, and rejects His grace over and over again, they will face a certain reckoning from God when He sees that their cup of iniquity is full. Divine justice counter-balances divine mercy, and both must be present in order for perfect love to exist.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://prolifedefender.blogspot.com/2010/09/hermeneutics-101-full-cup-principle.html>

## Jerusalem

As God measures the actions of individuals and nations, He also measured Jerusalem. Jesus, in His scathing rebuke of the Pharisees, announces that the time has come for Jerusalem's judgment. Her cup of iniquity was nearing full.

“[Fill up](#), then, the [measure of the guilt](#) of your fathers. 33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

34 “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 so that [upon you may fall the guilt](#) of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I say to you, [all these things](#) will come upon [this generation](#).” (Matthew 23:32-36)

It is not as though God takes pleasure in such action. Notice the lament of Jesus over Jerusalem which immediately follows His announcement of her coming judgment:

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, [your house is being left to you desolate!](#) 39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Matthew 23:37-39)

God, in His foreknowledge, knew this would happen. In fact, judgment had come once before:

“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when [I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments](#)—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their animals! 22 Yet there will be some survivors—sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem—every disaster I have brought on it. 23 You will be consoled when you see their conduct and their actions, for you will know that [I have done nothing in it without cause](#), declares the Sovereign Lord.” (Ezekiel 14:21-23)

This is the theme of the book of Revelation. God is about to bring a final judgment against Jerusalem.

Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

“ ‘Come out of her, my people,  
so that you will not share in her sins,  
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;  
5 for her [sins](#) are [piled up to heaven](#),  
and God has [remembered](#) her crimes.’ ”  
(Revelation 18:4-5)

When Jerusalem is spoken of being judged, we are to understand that her judgment is representative of all of Israel being judged. The end of the age has come upon this nation. This judgment has already been promised by the prophets. Israel's judgment will finish the ‘mystery of God’ (Revelation 10:7).

Jerusalem added to her cup of iniquity, filling it to the full, by continuing to kill the prophets sent to her, by murdering Jesus who was sent by God to them, and by killing Christians.

## Killing Jesus

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God's judgment upon Jerusalem and Israel for killing Jesus is obvious to even the most casual reader of the New Testament.

“Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for [it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem](#).

34 “O Jerusalem, [Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets](#) and [stones those sent to her!](#) How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! 35 “Behold, your house is left to you [desolate](#); and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Luke 13:33-35)

The murder of Jesus was placed solely at the feet of the Jews. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus attest to this:

And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how [the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.](#)” (Luke 24:19-20)

Part of the reason Stephen was stoned by the Jews was due to him blaming them, just like their fathers who killed the prophets, for having now murdered the Christ:

“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. 52 Which one of the [prophets](#) did your fathers not persecute? They [killed](#) those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and [murderers you have now become](#); 53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

## Killing the Prophets

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We read in the gospel of Matthew that the Jews would add to their cup of iniquity by continuing to murder the prophets which God would send to her:

“So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 [Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt](#) of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the [sentence of hell](#)? 34 Therefore, behold, [I am sending you prophets](#) and wise men and scribes; some of them [you will kill and crucify](#), and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 [so that upon you may fall the guilt](#) of all the righteous blood shed on earth.” (Matthew 23:31-35)

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [who kills the prophets](#) and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you [desolate!](#)” (Matthew 23:37-38)

“Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it [cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem](#). 34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that [kills the prophets](#) and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just \* as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! 35 Behold, your house is left to you [desolate](#); and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Luke 13:33-35)

## Killing Christians

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Paul encourages the Christians in Thessalonica for being such good examples in that they suffered for Christ just as the Jewish Christians had done:

...you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of [your own countrymen](#), even as [they did](#) from [the Jews](#), 15 who both [killed the Lord Jesus](#) and the [prophets](#), and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that [they always fill up the measure of their sins](#). But [wrath has come upon them](#) to the utmost. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16)

The language is unmistakably clear. Paul lays the guilt for the death of Jesus and the prophets at the feet of his countrymen. Not being content, the Jews persecuted the Christians<sup>2</sup>. Paul says that wrath is coming upon Israel due to the fact that they are filling up their cup of sin.

## Teachings of Jesus

Jesus repeatedly speaks of the coming demise and judgment of Israel. As seen above, this will be due to her iniquity in breaking God's covenant. It is also necessary that Israel be judged to make room for the new covenant and the coming kingdom of God.

### ***Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen***

This parable is introduced by the Parable of Two Sons: Matthew 21:28-32

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ 29 “And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. 30 “The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the [kingdom of God](#) before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.”

Since Israel had not done the will of their Father, the kingdom of God is going to be opened up to others. This thought introduces the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (found in Matthew 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12; and Luke 20:9–19). The parable speaks of landowner who rents out his vineyard to some farmers. When the landowner tried to collect his rent the farmers *‘seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third’* (21:35). Assuming that the farmers will respect his son, he sends him to collect. Sadly, the farmers kill him as well. It is at this place in the parable that Jesus asks His question:

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” 41 They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to [a wretched end](#), and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.”

43 “Therefore I say to you, the [kingdom of God](#) will be [taken away from you](#) and [given to a people](#), producing the fruit of it. 44 “**And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.**”

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<sup>2</sup> The book of Acts is full of accounts of the Jews persecuting Christians. For example, see Acts 4 (imprisonment), Acts 5 (beating of the apostles), Acts 7 (martyr of Stephen), Acts 8 (widespread persecution), Acts 12 (James killed).

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, [they understood that He was speaking about them](#). 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

Observations:

1. The kingdom will be taken away from the Jews, and give to the Gentiles.
2. The very Jesus whom they have stumbled over, will scatter them like dust (i.e. speaking of their demise due to the judgment of God).
  - ESV: v41 *He will put those wretches to a miserable death*
  - Luke's account: *He will come and **destroy** these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others."* When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" (Luke 20:16)
  - The Pharisees understood both what Jesus meant, and to whom He was speaking about. For this reason they looked for reason to have Jesus arrested. Their cup continues to be filled.

### **Great Faith**

Jesus marveled at the faith of a centurion whom came asking for his servant to be healed:

Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone **in Israel**. 11 I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but **the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness**; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:5-13)

- Jesus points out that a gentile (who was excluded from the kingdom of Israel) showed greater faith than anyone of Israel (to whom the kingdom was promised; and of whom should have been waiting for the Christ).
- Jesus declares that people from other nations will partake of the kingdom while those who it was promised to will be cast away. Why? This will happen due to their lack of faith, and their rejection of Jesus (whom they would eventually murder).

### **The Narrow Door**

While proceeding to Jerusalem, Jesus teaches that one must strive to enter the narrow door that leads to life. He warns of a time when the door will be shut and one will not be able to enter:

"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27 and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; **DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.**' 28 In that place there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth** when you see [Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets](#) in the kingdom of God, but **yourselves being thrown out**. 29 And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the **kingdom of God**. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last." (Luke 13:24-29)

- Once again Jesus speaks of the Jews, who were first in line to the kingdom, would miss it all together, while Gentiles (those from nations of the east, west, north and south) would sit with Abraham in the kingdom.

- These Jews would be *thrown out* to a place of *weeping* and *gnashing of teeth* (this is judgment language). Jesus claims that they will not be known, and therefore will be sent away as *evil doers*.
- Those who will be seen in the kingdom specifically includes the *prophets* (those who the Pharisees are accused of murdering, Matthew 23:32-36).

### ***The Lost Sheep of Israel***

When Jesus sends the twelve out to teach He instructs them to only go to their fellow brethren of whom He identifies as the *lost sheep of Israel*:

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the [lost sheep of the house of Israel](#). 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘[The kingdom of heaven is at hand](#).’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. 9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. 11 And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. 12 As you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13 If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

14 Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, it will be [more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah](#) in the [day of judgment](#) than for [that city](#). (Matthew 10:5-15)

- We have already learned that Sodom was destroyed for both the lack of righteous persons and due to fact that their cup of iniquity was full (*their sin is exceedingly grave*, Genesis 18:20). Now, cities in Israel face the exact same fate if they were to reject the disciples being sent by Jesus.
- Jesus pronounces a ‘day of judgment’ which will come upon each of those cities. Israel’s time has come –either they will follow Jesus as the Christ, or be destroyed.
- Similar judgment language is found for those cities which rejected Jesus by refusing to repent even after they witnessed His miracles (Matthew 11:20-24). Jesus claims that “*if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day*” (11:24).

### ***This Generation***

Jesus could not have been clearly about when the destruction of Jerusalem was going to take place:

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘[I will send to them prophets and apostles](#), and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be [charged against this generation](#), 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be [charged against this generation](#).’ (Luke 11:49-51)

### ***A Message for Herod***

Jesus is warned the Herod is seeking to kill Him. Not backing down, Jesus sends a stinging message to Herod:

Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.” 32 And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach **My goal.**’

33 “Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it **cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.**

34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **the city that kills the prophets** and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! 35 Behold, **your house is left to you desolate**; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Luke 13:31-35)

- Jesus asserts that He had to go to Jerusalem to die because *it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem*. They are the city which kills the prophets, and they are the city which will bear the guilt of all the prophets who were murdered.
- Being the center of Jewish faith, the spiritual leaders found there should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. But rather than acting in faith, they rejected Him. Now God will reject them, and their house will be left *desolate* – an obvious reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

### ***The Unfaithful Servants***

In which is commonly known as the parable of the Talents, Jesus gives an obvious reference to what is going to happen to those Jews who have not been faithful with that which God has given them:

“I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 27 “But these enemies of mine, who **did not want me to reign over them**, bring them here and **slay them** in my presence.” (Luke 19:26-27)

- The Jews have obviously been given ‘much’ in terms of God’s lovingkindness. He chose them over all peoples to be His nation. Yet they refuse the kingship of His Son.
- The consequence? Jesus will see them slayed in His presence.
- That which they had (the kingdom) will be taken away and given to another (both Jews and Gentiles in God’s coming kingdom).

### ***Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem***

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you when **your enemies** will throw up a **barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in** on every side, 44 and they will **level you to the ground** and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, **because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.**” (Luke 19:41-43)

- Notice the clear coming judgment Jesus is pronouncing upon Jerusalem
  - Your enemies will throw up a barricade against you
  - Will surround you
  - Will hem you in on every side
  - Will level you to the ground (you and your children)
  - Will not leave one stone standing

- The reason? All because they did not recognize Jesus and the promised Messiah. God had finally fulfilled His promises and has visited Jerusalem through His Son. Rather than receiving Him, they rebelliously murder Him. Now their cup of iniquity is near full.

### ***The Teachings of Jesus in Revelation***

Jesus begins the Revelation speaking of things which must soon take place<sup>3</sup>. He ends by saying, “*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*”<sup>4</sup> Revelation is a book of coming judgment. It is not by coincidence that language used by Jesus in the gospels when speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction is also found in the book of Revelation.

1. Jerusalem is called "**Sodom**" and "Egypt" and "Babylon" (Revelation 11:8; 17:5, 14:8, 18:10, 21).
2. This city is where Jesus was **crucified** (Revelation 11:8).
3. This city was drunk on the **blood** of the saints and the witnesses of Christ (Revelation 17:6, 18:24, 18:20).
4. She has a **cup full of iniquities** (Revelation 18:5).
5. The Bridegroom has **divorced** Her (Revelation 18:23).
6. In Jerusalem, pictured as the great harlot called Babylon, is found the **blood** of the prophets and the saints who were slain on the earth (Revelation 18:24).
7. When Jerusalem falls, God is spoken of as having finally **avenged** the blood of those killed by her (Revelation 19:2).

## Summary

While mankind might fail to realize the seriousness of sin’s consequence, be assured that God measures our conduct while living on this earth. While God, our heavenly Father, is very longsuffering towards us, His patience has limits. When we, as individuals or as a collective society, become so filled up with wickedness that our cup is full, He will come in judgment against us. This has been the case throughout history, and especially in destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Jerusalem finished filling her cup by killing the prophets, the Son of God, and His disciples. Because of her sins, Jerusalem will be destroyed (as an act of judgment and vengeance), the nation of Israel will come to an end, and God’s kingdom will be given to another.

The book of Revelation is a message of both hope and vengeance. Hope for those who have suffered at the hands of the wicked, and vengeance in that God will destroy those very wicked who are oppressing His people. All God asks is that His people remain faithful, even if their faith brings about their own death. Revelation reveals that there is victory, even in death, for those who die for Christ will immediately find themselves with Christ who will wipe away all their tears.

Lord come quickly, again!

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:1

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 22:12