

**Revelation 16: 2-4; “The 2nd & 3rd Angels together”, Sermon # 121 in the series –
“The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on October 15th, 2017, in the Afternoon Worship Service,
and revised and re-preached it in May of 2020.**

On the 31st of October, 2017, we celebrated the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s nailing the 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Chapel. I along with many others believe that this event marks the official beginning of the Reformation; that glorious time when the errors and heresies of the Roman Catholic Church began to be decisively addressed, and when the truth of the gospel and the word of God which had been warped, twisted, and suppressed for many hundreds of years, began to emerge once again. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, not adding any of the works of man, either ecclesiastical or moral, was sounded forth by Luther, who took aim specifically at the practice of the selling of indulgences. He publicly opposed the practice of the Pope through his representatives, who were declaring pardons for sin for a price to all who would buy them for themselves, or for their dead relatives. They were told that they could buy them out of purgatory, that place which has been made up by Rome, that place which supposedly exists where people are held between heaven and hell, until they can hopefully find some way out after a time.

This great event of Luther’s confronting the ecclesiastical rulers and theologians of the church of Rome of that day, was a form of practical preaching. It had good arousing effects upon the minds of many Christian people who lived in the 10 kingdoms of the beast, all of Europe including England. I believe that in relation to what we are studying, that this great work of confrontation took place toward the end of God’s pouring out of the second bowl of wrath, and the beginning of His pouring out of the 3rd bowl of wrath. This 2nd century of the Reformation of the Church has had many exciting aspects to it. The 3rd will have just as many. The life of Martin Luther overlaps from the 2nd bowl of wrath to the 3rd as his life and ministry set the stage and held up a standard of truth for all of the rest of the “angels” who would pour out their bowls of wrath in coming centuries.

For those who love the truth of the Scriptures, and want to see Christ’s kingdom come in a greater sense in our own day, you will find that, during this time, in the words and actions of the Reformers, especially seen in Luther and Melancthon, is portrayed the very heart of the Reformation. And so, this afternoon I like 1st of all to show you how Moses’ confrontation with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is like the Reformers’ confrontation with the Papacy at the Reformation. 2nd – I would like to show you just how the waters of the rivers and the springs of water represent the teaching and preaching of antichristian priests and people. And 3rd – I would like to show you an example of the fulfillment of pouring out of this bowl, in history.

1st of all – I would like to show you how Moses’ confrontation with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is like the Reformers’ confrontation with the Papacy at the Reformation.

It says in verses 3 and 4 of our text it say – “Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.” “Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood”. The imagery which is employed in these verses should lead our minds back to the 7th chapter of Exodus and God’s word to Moses in verse 1. “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.” “You shall speak all that I command you.” “And Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he must send the children of Israel out of his land.” “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.” “But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.” The first of these signs and wonders that was performed by Moses and Aaron was the turning of the waters of the river Nile into blood.

But I want to remind you also of what took place just before the first judgment was poured out on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. It is found in Exodus 7, verse 8. “When Pharaoh speaks to you,

saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves, then you shall say to Aaron, "Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent." "So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded." "And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent." "But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." "For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents." "But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said." Now, you can see here what kind of pride Pharaoh had when it came to his wise men and sorcerers; the magicians of Egypt. They could do what Moses and Aaron could do. They could throw their rods down on the ground too and they too would become serpents. The real difference between the two in this contest was that Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

This should speak to us of the preaching of the gospel at the time of the Reformation. At that time there was a Pope who heard from the lips of Luther and Melancthon and many other Reformers that there was a difference between the Roman Catholic gospel and the true gospel of Jesus Christ. He heard that there was a difference between the Biblical worship commanded in the Bible and the Mass which was said by the priests. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the rod of His strength it says in Psalm 110, verse 2 – "The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion." "Rule in the midst of Your enemies!" This is exactly what was taking place at the time when Martin Luther and others with him confronted the established hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. Christ was still ruling in the midst of His enemies, but there were those who had twisted His gospel. And the long line of Popes had tried to take His place as the Head of the Church. The Catholic church claimed to be the only true church having the only true gospel, but really she was a false church being led by the one who is spoken of in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4, as the one who "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

In other words, the Papal office was, and still is to this day, the Antichrist. They (that is all the Popes down through history) are the ones who have caused this great apostasy from the true Church of Jesus Christ. This truth is affirmed for us in our own 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith in chapter 26, Paragraph 4 says – "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

2nd – I would like to show you how the waters of the rivers and the springs of water represent the teaching and preaching of antichristian priests and people.

Verse 4 – "Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood." I think that we need to link this in our minds, to Exodus chapter 7, verses 14-24. "So the LORD said to Moses: 'Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.' "Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand." "And you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear!" "Thus says the LORD: 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD." "Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood." "And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river."

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood.'" "And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone." "And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD

commanded.” “So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants.” “And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.” “The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.” “So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” “Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.” “And Pharaoh turned and went into his house.” “Neither was his heart moved by this.” “So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river.”

Now I hope that you can begin to see how this passage can be so very aptly applied to Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon in the time of the Reformation. They, like Moses and Aaron, took the rod of God, the truth of the word of God, and applied it to the river, the streams and springs of water, that they might become blood; that is, that those in the kingdom of beast, like the Egyptians of old, could no longer see that what they were drinking, that which was the source of their spiritual life, and strength, and refreshment, in terms of the doctrines which Papal Rome preached, were something that they could continue to drink from any longer.

The evident judgment from God through the preaching of the word, was upon this false teaching, and upon all the writers who supported it. I believe that this, the pouring out of the 2nd and 3rd bowls of wrath is a picture of what the Reformers in this two hundred year period of time from 1447 to 1647 did with the rod of the gospel to the antichristian rivers and springs of false doctrine. They did it so very effectively that many people began to see that they needed to leave the church of Rome. Luther’s ministry ended with his death in 1546, at the end of the 2nd bowl of wrath’s being poured out, but Melancthon’s continued on into the time period of the 3rd bowl being poured out.

Here we have the second and third angels together, even as we find it in Zwingli and Oecolampadius, and Guillaume Farel and John Calvin, the Swiss Reformers. They poured out God’s 2nd and 3rd bowls of wrath upon their waters of the Antichristian system of Rome, so that men would have to search elsewhere to find fresh waters. They would preach the pure Word and bring the truth of Christ and His great salvation to light so that people could truly be saved. Many people began to realize that they must leave the Roman Catholic Church in order to find the pure waters; that is, the teaching and preaching, that were pure and wholesome to drink from.

Listen to Jonathan Edwards on this verse – “That we may understand what those rivers are upon which the third vial was poured out [Revelation 16:4–7], we must consider what are those rivers by which the city of Babylon is watered, what are the fountains of waters at which they drink. Without doubt, they are those societies that are fountains of Popery, fountains of popish doctrines and doctors, fountains of teachers of Antichristianism; that continually send forth streams into every part to water the antichristian world, that water the stately cedars of their Lebanon, their trees that bring forth the grapes of Sodom and apples of Gomorrah; those fountains at which the Papists do continually drink. The water is the doctrine; the streams, or waterers, are the teachers.”

“The teachers of true Christianity were said to water Christians (Paul planted and Apollos watered); so the teachers of Popery are the streams that water the popish world. And what are the rivers and fountains from whence these proceed but the societies from whence they issue forth, the universities, societies of Jesuits, and others? These are the rivers and fountains that continually keep the trees from withering and drying up, and the men from dying with thirst. Wherefore, I take the rivers here to be meant all such societies as are fountains of Popery, whether of one kind or another. (end of quote) (Miscellanies, Vol. 13, Page 195)

Now, I hope that you can see that there is a strong parallel between the children of Israel coming to the place where they would leave their Egyptian bondage, and God’s people in antichristian times being able to come out from under the authority of the Pope and the Papal system of false doctrine. Those who spoke to the Pope such as Luther and Melancthon in Germany, and Zwingli and Oecolampadius in Switzerland, in the early days of the reformation, were like Moses and Aaron to the Pharaoh. They were some of the main witnesses to the truth of the word of God which God raised up

in those times. They would speak the truth of the gospel and the word of God; broadcast the truth out, and the Pope had to listen to it whether he liked it or not, for it was his duty to defend and promote the false Roman Catholic doctrine as the supposed Head of the Church.

But just as God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh so that He could multiply His wonders in the land of Egypt, even so, God would harden the heart of the Popes when He poured out His plagues upon the false system through Luther, Melancthon, and many others in that generation and many generations since that time. He would do this so that Christ's true Church would, over the time of many centuries of faithful preaching, be able to come out from under the bondage of false doctrine and false worship.

3rd - I would like to show you an example of the fulfillment of the pouring out of this bowl, in history.

I have said to you in past sermons that I believe that these 7 bowls of wrath are the wrath of God which has been poured out by faithful preachers and their preaching, upon the Antichristian system. They pour it out successively and progressively, over the last 700 years of the 1260 days (which are really prophetic years) time period. These 7 bowls of wrath are poured out by 7 angels, and the angels represent, as they did in chapters 1-3 of this book, ministers of the word. I hope that you can see that the most important way that the Church advances to victory is through proclamation of the truth of the word of God. In order to fulfilling the Great Commission, and to bear a faithful witness on behalf of Christ in our generation, we must do our part in testifying to the truth. And the way that we will do that is by the faithful proclamation of the word of God in all of its depth and fullness. In this God-appointed way, we will see progress, even in troublesome times, and this progress will indeed lead someday to the Millennium, the spiritual reign of Christ's kingdom upon the earth. I want to give you an example of this pouring out of the 2nd bowl of wrath from Luther's labors as a Reformer.

In Merle D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation we find this in Volume 3, Page 204 – "While the nations and their rulers were thus hastening forward to the light, the reformers were endeavoring to regenerate everything, to interpenetrate everything with the principles of Christianity. The state of public worship first engaged their attention. The time fixed by the reformer, on his return from the Wartburg, had arrived. "Now," said he, "that men's hearts have been strengthened by Divine grace, we must put an end to the scandals that pollute the kingdom of the Lord, and dare something in the name of Jesus." He required that men should communicate (observe the Lord's Supper) in both kinds (the bread and wine); that everything should be retrenched from the ceremony of the Eucharist that tended to make it a sacrifice; that Christians should never assemble together without having the Gospel preached; that believers, or at least the priests and scholars, should meet every morning at five or six o'clock to read the Old Testament; and at a corresponding hour in the evening to read the New Testament; that every Sunday, the whole Church should assemble in the morning and afternoon, and that the great object of their worship should be to sound abroad the Word of God."

The church of All Saints at Wittenberg especially excited Luther's indignation. Seckendorf informs us that 9901 masses were there celebrated yearly, and 35,570 pounds of wax annually burnt. Luther called it "a sacrilegious Tophet." "There are only three or four lazy-bellies," said he, "who still worship this shameful mammon, and if I had not restrained the people, this house of All Saints, or rather of all devils, would have made such a noise in the world as has never before been heard. The struggle began around this church. It resembled those ancient sanctuaries of paganism in Egypt, Gaul, and Germany, which were destined to fall that Christianity might be established. Luther, desiring that the mass should be abolished in this cathedral, addressed a petition to the chapter to this effect on the 1st of March, 1523, and a second on the 11th of July. The canons having pleaded the elector's orders, Luther replied, "What is the prince's order to us in this case?" He is a secular prince; the sword, and not the preaching of the Gospel, belongs to him."

"Here Luther clearly marks the distinction between the State and the Church. "There is but one sacrifice that taketh away sins," said he again, "Christ, who offered himself up once for all; and in this we are partakers, not by works or by sacrifices, but solely by faith in the Word of God." The elector,

who felt his end drawing near, was opposed to new reforms. But fresh entreaties were added to those of Luther. "It is time to act," said Jonas, provost of the cathedral, to the elector. "A manifestation of the Gospel, so striking as that which we now have, does not ordinarily last longer than a sunbeam. Let us make haste then." As the letter of Jonas did not change the elector's views, Luther lost all patience; he thought the moment had come for striking a decisive blow, and addressed a threatening letter to the chapter: "I entreat you amicably, and urge you seriously, to put an end to all this sectarian worship. If you refuse, you will receive (with God's help) the reward that you have deserved. I mention this for your guidance, and require a positive and immediate answer, — yes or no, — before Sunday next, that I may know what I have to do. May God give you grace to follow his light. Thursday, 8th December 1524. Martin Luther, Preacher at Wittenberg."

"At the same time the rector, two burgomasters, and ten councilors, waited on the dean, and entreated him in the name of the university, the council, and the township of Wittenberg, "to abolish the great and horrible impiety committed in the mass against the majesty of God." The chapter was forced to give way; they declared that, being enlightened by the holy Word of God, they acknowledged the abuses that had been pointed out, and published a new order of church-service, which began to be observed on Christmas day, 1524. Thus fell the mass in this renowned sanctuary, where it had so long resisted the reiterated attacks of the reformers. The Elector Frederick, suffering from the gout, and rapidly drawing near his end, could not, in spite of all his exertions, prevent this great victory of the Reformation. He saw in it a manifestation of the Divine will, and gave way.

The fall of the Romish observances in the church of All Saints hastened their abolition in a great number of churches throughout Christendom; everywhere the same resistance was offered, — everywhere there was the same triumph. In vain did the priests, and even the princes in many places, try to interpose obstacles; they could not succeed. It was not the public worship alone that the Reformation was ordained to change. The school was early placed beside the Church; and these two great institutions, so powerful to regenerate the nations, were equally reanimated by it. It was by a close alliance with learning that the Reformation entered into the world; in the hour of its triumph, it did not forget its ally. Christianity is not a simple development of Judaism."

"Unlike the papacy, it does not aim at confining man again in the close swaddling bands of outward ordinances and human doctrines. Christianity is a new creation; it lays hold of the inner man, and transforms him in the inmost principles of his human nature, so that man no longer requires other men to impose rules upon him; but, aided by God, he can of himself and by himself distinguish what is true, and do what is right." I will close with this: What speaks more to the springs and rivers of the antichristian system being turned to blood than the idea that those who left the Roman Catholic church, having realized that its waters and springs were polluted, could now join with a true church of the Lord's people and partake of the Lord's Supper with both of the Elements, not just the bread, but the wine? The wine which represents the blood of our Savior was no longer withheld from the laity who left the church of Rome to seek and find a Reformed church. The doctrine and practice of the antichristian church was now known to be under the judgment of God by those who would look into the truth of the Scriptures.