

**Revelation 16: 1 and 2; “The 1st Bowl of Wrath Continued”, Sermon # 114 in the series –
“The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on May 4th, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Last Sunday I began to explain to you what I believe is meant by these 7 bowls of wrath which are mentioned here in verse 1. Taken all together, they are the wrath of God being poured out upon the Antichristian system of false religion, which I have told you before is Roman Catholicism and all of her daughters in Liberal Protestantism; that is, those churches which preach and believe in a sacramental salvation instead of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Antichristian Rome has substituted a false gospel for the true one, and so in the pouring out of these bowls of wrath is found God’s public condemnation of this system through the preaching and teaching of Spirit anointed Reformers. Beginning with the preaching of the English Reformer, John Wickliffe, the declaration of God’s wrath against the false system of Antichrist was set forth in a very public way. This declaration of wrath has continued down through many generations for almost 700 years of the 1260 years of the reign of Antichrist. And this preaching of the witnesses will continue until the that declaration is silenced, for a time of 3 and a half years, at the end of the 1260 days (years) prophecy. But after that, her witness will be raised from the dead by Christ Himself, and it will go forth with greater power than ever before, and the Great Commission shall be completely fulfilled during the time of the Millennium.

All of these bowls of wrath indicate God’s great displeasure and anger against all those who contradict His Word and try to substitute a false gospel or false authority for the true one in the Church of Jesus Christ. Those who are a part of promoting and supporting this false system will suffer under the eternal wrath of God unless they repent and “come out of her” as it says in Revelation 18: 4. This afternoon I want to continue our study of the Reformer John Wycliffe by bringing to your attention the 3 major false doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church which Wycliffe was pouring the wrath of God upon by his preaching. 1st – The practice of Monasticism. 2nd – The doctrine of Transubstantiation. And 3rd - The doctrine of Papal authority. I will be taking the liberty of reading to you from histories which I have read which I think will convince you that this is why God thought that it was absolutely necessary to have his servant to pour out a bowl of wrath upon that false system.

1st – The practice of Monasticism.

Let me read you verse 2 once again: “So the first went and poured his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.” I have explained to you the spiritual meaning of this in my last sermon, but I could not help but notice that there was also an actual pestilential disease that came upon Europe from 1347-50 that took away a quarter to a third of the inhabitants of Europe; the Black Plague. From what I have read, over 25,000,000 people died of the Black Plague in the 5 years from 1347-1352. In studying the plague, one site (britainexpress.com) said this: “Monasteries were most numerous in Britain during the early 14th century, when there were as many as 500 different houses.” “The Black Death of 1348 dealt the monasteries a major blow, decimating the number of monks and nuns, and most never fully recovered.” The black plague symptoms were really quite similar to what is described in verse 2, “a foul and loathsome sore”. The most identifiable symptom of the Black Plague, and the one most associated with the disease, were the development of what was called, “Buboes”. “Buboes are enlargements of the lymph nodes located in the neck area, groin and underneath the armpits.” “These nodes can range in size from 1 to 10 centimeters and are usually discolored.” “Buboes are found in 70% of Black Plague patients.” From what I have read of it online, these enlargements would sometimes break open into foul and loathsome sores as the disease progressed. But let me now read to you how this plague spiritually affected the man whom we are studying today. I will read to you from Andrew Miller’s Church History:

“About the year 1349, when Wycliffe had reached his twenty-fourth year, and was rising to some renown in the college, England was visited by a terrible pestilence, called the “black plague.” “It is supposed to have made its appearance first in Tartary, and after ravaging various countries in Asia, proceeded by the shores of the Nile to the islands of Greece, carrying devastation to almost every nation of Europe.” “So prodigious was the waste of human life that some say a fourth part of the inhabitants were cut off; others, that half of the human race, besides cattle, were carried off in certain parts.” “This alarming visitation filled the pious mind of Wycliffe with the most gloomy apprehensions, and fearful forebodings as to the future.” “It was like the sound of the last trumpet in his heart.” “He concluded that the day of judgment was at hand.” “Solemnized with the thoughts of eternity, he spent days and nights in his cell, and no doubt in earnest prayer for divine guidance.” “He came forth a champion for the truth; he found his armor in the word of God.” “By his zeal and faithfulness in preaching the gospel, especially to the common people on Sundays, he acquired and deserved the title of the “evangelic doctor.” “But that which brought him such fame and popularity at Oxford, was his defense of the university against the encroachments of the mendicant friars.” “He fearlessly and unsparingly attacked these orders, which he declared to be the great evil of Christendom.” “They were now four in number — Dominicans, Minorites or Franciscans, Augustinians, and the Carmelites — and they swarmed in all the best parts of Europe.” “They strove hard in Oxford, as heretofore in Paris, to obtain the ascendancy.” “They took every opportunity of enticing the students into their convents, who, without the consent of their parents, were enlisted into the mendicant orders.”

“To such an extent was this system of trepanning (trapping or ensnaring) carried on, that parents ceased to send their children to the universities.” “Thirty thousand youths had at one time studied at Oxford, but from this cause the number was reduced to six thousand.” “Bishops, priests, and theologians, in almost every country and university in Europe were contending against those arch-deceivers, but it was all to little effect, for the pontiffs vigorously defended them as their best friends, and conferred on them great privileges.” “Wycliffe struck boldly, and we believe fatally, at the root of this great and universal evil.” “Next to the decline of the papal power, which we have already noticed, we may begin to mark that of the mendicant orders. “He published some spiritual papers entitled, “Against able Beggary,” “Against idle Beggary,” and on “The poverty of Christ.” “He denounced mendicancy in itself, and all the others as able-bodied beggars, who ought not to be permitted to infest the land.” “He charged them with fifty errors of doctrine and practice. He denounced them for intercepting the alms which ought to belong to the poor; for their unscrupulous system of proselytizing; for their invasion of parochial rights; their habit of deluding the common people by fables and legends; their hypocritical pretensions to sanctity; their flattery of the great and wealthy, whom it would rather have been their duty to reprove for their sins; their grasping at money by all sorts of means; the needless splendor of their buildings, whereas parish churches were left to decay.”

“Wycliffe was now the acknowledged champion of a great party in the university and in the church; and dignities and honors were conferred upon him. But if he had gained many friends, he also had many enemies whose wrath it was dangerous to provoke.” “His troubles and changes now began.” “The friars supplied the pope with information as to all that was going on.” “In 1361 he was advanced to the mastership of Balliol college and rectory of Fillingham.” “Four years after he was chosen warden of Canterbury hall.” “His knowledge of Scripture, the purity of his life, his unbending courage, his eloquence as a preacher, his mastery of the language of the common people, rendered him the object of general admiration.” “He maintained that salvation was by faith, through grace, without human merit in any way.” “This was striking, not at the outward evils merely, but at the very foundations of the whole system of popery.” “Led by divine wisdom, he commenced his great work at the right place and in the right way.” “He preached the gospel and explained the word of God to the people in vernacular English.” “In this way, he planted deep in the popular mind those great truths and principles which eventually led to the emancipation of England from the yoke and tyranny of Rome.”

What was John Wycliffe's answer positively, to replace the traveling mendicants? Merle D'Aubigne in his History of the Reformation tells us: "A great change was now taking place in the reformer. Busying himself less about the kingdom of England, he occupied himself more about the kingdom of Christ." "In him the political stage was followed by the religious." "To carry the glad tidings of the gospel into the remotest hamlets, was now the great idea which possessed Wickliffe." "If begging friars (said he) stroll over the country, preaching the legends of saints and the history of the Trojan war, we must do for God's glory what they do to fill their wallets, and form a vast itinerant evangelization to convert souls to Jesus Christ." "Turning to the most pious of his disciples, he said to them: "Go and preach, it is the sublimest work; but imitate not the priests whom we see after the sermon sitting in the almshouses, or at the gaming-table, or wasting their time in hunting." "After your sermon is ended, do you visit the sick, the aged, the poor, the blind, and the lame, and succor them according to your ability." Such was the new practical theology which Wickliffe inaugurated — it was that of Christ himself." "The "poor priests," as they were called, set off barefoot, a staff in their hands, clothed in a coarse robe, living on alms, and satisfied with the plainest food." "They stopped in the fields near some village, in the churchyards, in the market-places of the towns, and sometimes in the churches even." "The people, among whom they were favorites, thronged around them, as the men of Northumbria had done at Aidan's preaching." "They spoke with a popular eloquence that entirely won over those who listened to them." "Of these missionaries none was more beloved than John Ashton." "He might be seen wandering over the country in every direction, or seated at some cottage hearth, or alone in some retired crossway, preaching to an attentive crowd." "Missions of this kind have constantly revived in England at the great epochs of the church." (Vol. 5, P. 105, 106)

The 2nd major doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church that Wycliffe poured out God's wrath upon was the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Listen to D'Aubigne again: "Having given his fellow-countrymen the Bible, Wickliffe began to reflect on its contents." "This was a new step in his onward path." "There comes a moment when the Christian, saved by a lively faith, feels the need of giving an account to himself of this faith, and this originates the science of theology." "This is a natural movement: if the child, who at first possesses sensations and affections only, feels the want, as he grows up, of reflection and knowledge, why should it not be the same with the Christians?" "Politics — home missions — Holy Scripture — had engaged Wickliffe in succession; theology had its turn, and this was the fourth phase of his life." "Yet he did not penetrate to the same degree as the men of the sixteenth century into the depths of the Christian doctrine; and he attached himself in a more especial manner to those ecclesiastical dogmas which were more closely connected with the presumptuous hierarchy and the simoniacal gains of Rome, — such as transubstantiation." "The Anglo-Saxon church had not professed this doctrine." "The host is the body of Christ, not bodily but spiritually," said Elfric in the tenth century, in a letter addressed to the Archbishop of York; but Lanfranc, the opponent of Berengarius, had taught England that at the word of a priest God quitted heaven and descended on the altar." "Wickliffe undertook to overthrow the pedestal on which the pride of the priesthood was founded." "The Eucharist is naturally bread and wine." "He taught at Oxford in 1381; "but by virtue of the sacramental words it contains in every part the real body and blood of Christ." He did not stop here. "The consecrated wafer which we see on the altar," said he, "is not Christ, nor any part of him, but His efficient sign." "He oscillated between those two shades of doctrine; but to the first he more habitually attached himself." "He denied the sacrifice of the mass offered by the priest, because it was substituted for the sacrifice of the cross offered up by Jesus Christ; and rejected transubstantiation, because it nullified the spiritual and living presence of the Lord."

Wycliffe got himself into a lot of trouble for taking this stand. Even though he had given England their first translation of the Bible from Latin into English in 1380, yet he was hated by the priests for his public writings and preachings against Transubstantiation, and for translating the Scriptures. "Courtenay, bishop of London, having been appointed to the see of Canterbury, lost no time in convoking a synod to pronounce on this matter of Wickliffe's." "They met in the middle of May, about

two o'clock in the afternoon, and were proceeding to pronounce sentence when an earthquake, which shook the city of London and all Britain, so alarmed the members of the council that they unanimously demanded the adjournment of a decision which appeared so manifestly rebuked by God." "But the archbishop skillfully turned this strange phenomenon to his own purposes: "Know you not," said he, "that the noxious vapors which catch fire in the bosom of the earth, and give rise to these phenomena which alarm you, lose all their force when they burst forth?" "Well, in like manner, by rejecting the wicked (he meant Wycliffe) from our community, we shall put an end to the convulsions of the church." "The bishops regained their courage; and one of the primate's officers read ten propositions, said to be Wickliffe's, but they ascribed to him certain errors of which he was quite innocent."

"The following most excited the anger of the priests: "God must obey the devil". (But Wycliffe had never said this) Another saying which they falsely attributed to him was: "After Urban VI we must receive no one as pope, but live according to the manner of the Greeks." "These ten propositions (supposedly Wycliffe's) were condemned as heretical, and the archbishop enjoined all persons to shun, as they would a venomous serpent, all who should preach the aforesaid errors. "If we permit this heretic to appeal continually to the passions of the people," said the primate to the king, "our destruction is inevitable." "We must silence these Lollards — these psalm-singers." "The king gave authority "to confine in the prisons of the state any who should maintain the condemned propositions." "Day by day the circle contracted around Wickliffe." "The prudent Repingdon, the learned Hereford, and even the eloquent Ashton, the firmest of the three (who had sided with Wycliffe, and had defended him in the past), departed from him." "The veteran champion of the truth which had once gathered a whole nation round it, had reached the days when "strong men shall bow themselves," and now, when harassed by persecution, he found himself alone." "But boldly he uplifted his hoary head and exclaimed: "The doctrine of the gospel shall never perish; and if the earth once quaked, it was because they condemned Jesus Christ." (Vol. 5, P. 113 of D'Aubigne's History)

The 3rd Major Doctrine that Wycliffe poured out this bowl of wrath upon was the false authority of the Papacy.

Miller says in his history: John Wycliffe "had not yet reached the harbor." "He was living peacefully among his books and his parishioners, and the priests seemed inclined to leave him alone, when another blow was aimed at him. A papal brief summoned him to Rome, to appear before that tribunal which had so often shed the blood of its adversaries. His bodily infirmities convinced him that he could not obey this summons. But if Wickliffe refused to hear Urban, Urban could not choose but hear Wickliffe. The church was at that time divided between two chiefs: France, Scotland, Savoy, Lorraine, Castile, and Aragon acknowledged Clement VII; while Italy, England, Sweden, Poland, and Hungary acknowledged Urban VI. Wickliffe shall tell us who is the true head of the church universal." "And while the two popes were excommunicating and abusing each other, and selling heaven and earth for their own gain, the reformer was confessing that incorruptible Word, which establishes real unity in the church."

He further says: "Wycliffe's escape from the snare of his adversaries and this reiteration of his most obnoxious opinions, would hardly fail to provoke every species of attack which might be expected to diminish his influence." "An anonymous writer, who is described by the reformer, as "a motley theologian," immediately assailed the point of his doctrine, which impeached the infallibility of the Pontiff." "From Wycliffe's reply, it appears, that his antagonist had affirmed the pope to be incapable of mortal sin, and that he had declared, as a consequence, that whatever he ordains, must be just." "On this statement, it is remarked, that if it were correct, his holiness might exclude any book from the canon of holy writ, and might introduce any novelty in its place; that he might thus alter the whole bible, and make the very scripture heresy, establishing as catholic what is opposed to the truth." In another place, Miller says: "The experience of Avignon and Bruges added to the results of his previous thought and inquiry, and satisfied his mind that the pretensions of the papacy were without foundation in truth. He published indefatigably the deep convictions of his soul, in learned lectures

and disputations at Oxford, in pastoral addresses in his parish, and in spirited tracts written in clear English prose, which reached the humbler and less educated classes. He denounced with a burning and long-treasured indignation the whole papal system. "The gospel of Jesus Christ," he said, "is the only source of true religion. The pope is Antichrist, the proud worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and purse-carvers."

Robert Vaughn an historian of two hundred years ago says this – "From the fourth century, to the present period, it had been the various, but continued effort of the popes, or of their flatterers, to place the accredited representatives of St. Peter above all human control. Their equals, by whom alone they might be judged, were not supposed to exist; and thus the correction of a pontiff, came to be extensively regarded, as a work which the Deity alone was competent to perform. Against this impious tenet, and in defiance of the power of its advocates, Wycliffe delivers his solemn protest. By Walsingham, he is introduced as stating that on some accounts an ecclesiastic, and even the bishop of Rome may be corrected by their subjects, and may be impleaded both by the clergy and laity, if with a view to the good of the church. In support of the doctrine thus attributed to him, Wycliffe assumes the pope to be a peccable brother; sharing in common with other men, in a tendency to what is sinful; and thence infers his equal subjection to the laws of brotherly reproof. He accordingly writes, "If it be evident, therefore, that the college of cardinals are remiss in performing this service, for the necessary welfare of the church, it is obvious that others, and it may chance principally the laity, may reprove and implead him and reduce him to a better life." These were the bold words of the first great Reformer 150 years before Luther appeared on the scene. It was no wonder that there were so many calling for his punishment. But Wycliffe was to die of natural causes while in the very act of administering the Lord's Supper, and never to go to prison or be put to death by his enemies.

D'Aubigne says this in conclusion, upon Wycliffe's place in the history of the Church. "Wickliffe is the greatest English reformer: he was in truth the first reformer of Christendom, and to him, under God, Britain is indebted for the honor of being the foremost in the attack upon the theocratic system of Gregory VII." "The work of the Waldenses, excellent as it was, cannot be compared to his." "If Luther and Calvin are the fathers of the Reformation, Wickliffe is its grandfather." "In many respects Wickliffe is the Luther of England; but the times of revival had not yet come, and the English reformer could not gain such striking victories over Rome as the German reformer. While Luther was surrounded by an ever-increasing number of scholars and princes, who confessed the same faith as himself, Wickliffe shone almost alone in the firmament of the church." "The boldness with which he substituted a living spirituality for a superstitious formalism, caused those to shrink back in affright; those who had gone with him against friars, priests, and popes."

"Erelong the Roman pontiff ordered him to be thrown into prison, and the monks threatened his life; but God protected him, and he remained calm amidst the machinations of his adversaries." "Antichrist," said he, "can only kill the body." Having one foot in the grave already, he foretold that, from the very bosom of monkery, would someday proceed the regeneration of the church. "If the friars, whom God condescends to teach, shall be converted to the primitive religion of Christ," said he, "we shall see them abandoning their unbelief, returning freely, with or without the permission of Antichrist, to the primitive religion of the Lord, and building up the church, as did St Paul." Thus did Wickliffe's piercing glance discover, at the distance of nearly a century and a half, the young monk Luther in the Augustinian convent at Erfurth, converted by the epistle to the fulfillment of this prophecy." "The rising sun of the Reformation," for so has Wickliffe been called, had appeared above the horizon, and its beams were no more to be extinguished." "In vain will thick clouds veil it at times; the distant hill-tops of Eastern Europe will soon reflect its rays (that is - John Hus in Bohemia); and its piercing light, increasing in brightness, will pour over all the world, at the hour of the church's renovation, floods of knowledge and of life."

My own footnote to these histories: Roman Catholicism has substituted a false authority for the true one, in the establishment of the office of the Papacy; these Popes in the last 1200 years have

taken their seat in the temple of God, attempting to show themselves to be Christ's vicar, His earthly representative and head over the Church of Jesus Christ. They call him, "Your holiness". Now let us ask ourselves this question: Should any man be allowed to be given such a title that makes him out to be God in the flesh? No mere man ought to be called "His Holiness". Only Jesus Christ is holiness personified. The edicts, or Papal bulls, over the past 1200 years have so added to, and taken away from, the Word of God the Bible, that a whole system of false worship has been developed by them, and it still exists to this day, deceiving many people in the world about the whole subject of what the Church should believe, in terms of the Bible, and how she should worship the true and living God. It is Satan who is standing behind the false Church of Rome. He would have all people believe the lie, and perish in their sins. You and I, as a part of the true Universal Church of Jesus Christ, must do what we can to expose what is false and preach and share what is true. This is true in all generations of Church history, but it was especially needed in the time period of Church history which we are studying today. The labors and ministry of John Wycliffe was certainly a great part of the 1st bowl of wrath which was poured out upon Rome.