

# The Cup of God's Wrath

## A Septuagint and Divine Council Study

By Shane Gunn

Throughout Scripture, the cup (ποτήριον, *potērion*) serves as a juridical motif — a vessel of assigned portion, administered by God through his divine council and carried out on earth through prophetic agency. Far from arbitrary rage, the cup represents measured, intentional, covenantal justice. This study traces the cup from the Psalms through the Prophets, into Gethsemane, onto the Cross, and finally into Revelation, revealing a single coherent thread of divine administration. Every text is examined in the Septuagint (LXX) Greek alongside the ESV English, with parsing notes for key vocabulary. The goal is to understand what Jesus meant when he prayed, “Let this cup pass from me” — and what it cost him to drink it.

## I. DIVINE COUNCIL FRAMEWORK

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Before we can understand the cup of wrath, we must understand who administers it. The Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint present a cosmic governance structure — the Divine Council — in which Yahweh presides as the supreme God over a heavenly assembly. This council is the juridical body from which the cup proceeds. Michael Heiser’s work on the Divine Council worldview demonstrates that ancient Israelite theology was not mere monotheism in the modern sense, but a recognition that Yahweh stands above all other θεοί (gods/divine beings) as the incomparable sovereign.

*Δευτ. 32:8-9 (LXX): ὅτε διεμέριζεν ὁ ὕψιστος ἔθνη κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ, καὶ ἐγενήθη μερὶς Κυρίου λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ἰακωβ.*

**ESV (Deut 32:8–9):** “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.”

**Parsing Notes:**

- **διεμέριζεν** (*diemerízen*) — imperfect active indicative, 3rd singular, from διαμερίζω: “he was dividing/distributing.” The imperfect suggests a deliberate, extended act of apportionment.
- **ἔθνη** (*ethnē*) — accusative neuter plural: “nations, peoples.” The object being divided among the heavenly beings.
- **ἀγγέλων θεοῦ** (*angelōn theou*) — genitive plural: “of angels of God.” The LXX renders אַלְהֵי יְהוָה as “angels of God,” reflecting the council structure.

This passage establishes the cosmic governance framework: the Most High (ὁ ὕψιστος) assigns nations to divine beings, but reserves Israel as his own μερίς (portion). Heiser argues this is the backdrop against which all divine judgment operates — the council deliberates, Yahweh decrees, and judgment is executed. The cup of wrath is the instrument of that execution.

## II. LEXICAL STUDY — THE VOCABULARY OF WRATH

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Three Greek terms form the core vocabulary of God’s wrath throughout the Septuagint and New Testament. Understanding their distinctions is essential for tracing the cup motif accurately.

**ποτήριον** (*potērion*) — **cup, assigned portion**

Neuter noun, 2nd declension. Used 33 times in the NT. In the LXX, the cup functions as a symbol of one’s divinely assigned lot. It carries dual valence: *blessing* in Psalm 22:5 LXX (τὸ ποτήριόν σου μεθύσκον, “your cup overflows”) or

*judgment* in Psalm 74:9 LXX (ποτήριον ἐν χειρὶ Κυρίου, “a cup in the hand of the LORD”). The cup does not merely contain wrath — it *is* the assigned portion of judgment.

### **θυμός** (*thumos*) — **boiling wrath, active execution**

Masculine noun, 2nd declension. From θύω (“to rush, to rage”). This term denotes the burning, active expression of divine anger — the outpouring itself. It appears frequently in Revelation (14:10, 14:19, 15:1, 15:7, 16:1, 16:19, 19:15) to describe the final execution of judgment. Θυμός is the fire in the cup, the active agent of destruction.

### **ὀργή** (*orgē*) — **judicial anger, settled decree**

Feminine noun, 1st declension. Unlike θυμός, ὀργή denotes a settled, judicial posture of condemnation. It is the verdict before the sentence is carried out. Paul uses it in Romans 1:18 (ὀργή θεοῦ, “the wrath of God”) and Romans 2:5 (ἡμέρα ὀργῆς, “the day of wrath”). This is the decree from which the cup proceeds.

**Key Relationship:** The cup (ποτήριον) often contains θυμός (boiling wrath) flowing from ὀργή (judicial decree). The decree is settled in council; the execution is poured out through the cup. This is not chaotic rage but structured, measured, covenantal justice.

## **III. PSALM 75:8 — DIVINE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CUP**

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Psalm 75 (Psalm 74 in LXX numbering) provides the foundational image: God himself holds the cup and pours it out for the wicked. This is not delegation — the cup is in his hand.

Ψαλμ. 74:9 (LXX): ποτήριον ἐν χειρὶ Κυρίου πλήρες κεράσματος καὶ ἔκλινεν ἐκ τούτου εἰς τοῦτο· πλὴν ὁ τρυγίας αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐξεκενώθη· πίνονται πάντες οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ τῆς γῆς.

**ESV (Psalm 75:8):** “In the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”

#### Parsing Notes:

- **ποτήριον** — nominative neuter singular: the cup is the grammatical subject, the central actor in the scene.
- **χειρὶ** (*cheiri*) — dative feminine singular of χεῖρ: “in the hand.” The dative of location emphasizes God’s personal grip on the instrument of judgment.
- **πλήρες κεράσματος** (*plēres kerasmatos*) — “full of mixed wine.” Κέρασμα (genitive singular) refers to wine mixed with spices, indicating intentional preparation — this is not accidental overflow but measured judgment.
- **πίνονται** (*piontai*) — future middle indicative, 3rd plural: “they will drink (for themselves).” The middle voice implies the wicked participate in their own judgment — they drink what they have earned.

**Key Insight:** The phrase πλήρες κεράσματος (“full of mixed wine”) reveals that divine judgment is carefully prepared — mixed, measured, intentional. Like a vintner blending wine for a specific effect, God’s wrath is not impulsive but precisely calibrated to the offense. The dregs (τρυγίας) represent the concentrated sediment at the bottom — the very last drop must be consumed.

## IV. JEREMIAH 25 — PROPHETIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE CUP

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In Jeremiah 25, the cup motif shifts from a general image to a specific prophetic commission. God commands Jeremiah to take the cup and distribute it to the nations. This is the administration pattern in action.

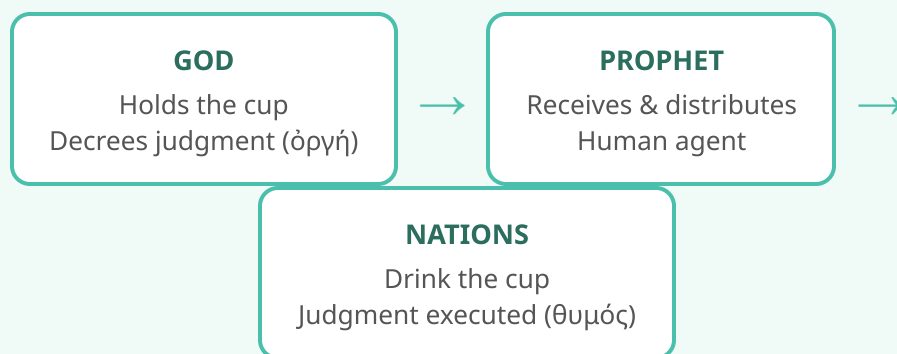
*Ιερ. 25:15 (LXX = Ier. 32:1): Λάβε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τούτου ἐκ χειρὸς μου καὶ ποτιεῖς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.*

**ESV (Jer 25:15):** “Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: ‘Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.’”

### Parsing Notes:

- **λάβε** (*labe*) — aorist active imperative, 2nd singular, from λαμβάνω: “Take!” A direct divine command. The aorist imperative demands immediate, decisive action.
- **τοῦ θυμοῦ** (*thymou*) — genitive singular: “of wrath.” This is the θυμός-content of the cup, the active burning agent of divine judgment.
- **ποτιεῖς** (*potieis*) — future active indicative, 2nd singular: “you will cause to drink.” Causative sense: the prophet does not merely offer the cup, he administers it.

### The Administration Pattern of Jeremiah 25



**Pattern:** Divine Council → Human Agent → Earthly Execution. This is the same pattern we see in John Walton’s functional ontology framework: God does not merely decree from a distance; he works *through* agents and *within* creation to

accomplish his purposes. The cup is not hurled from heaven — it is placed in a prophet’s hand and carried to the nations. This pattern will reach its climax in Gethsemane, where the ultimate agent takes up the ultimate cup.

## V. ISAIAH 51 — THE CUP REMOVED

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Isaiah 51 introduces a dramatic reversal. Jerusalem has drunk the cup of God’s wrath — and now God promises to remove it. This creates a theological crisis that demands resolution.

*Ησ. 51:17 (LXX): ἐξεγείρου, ἐξεγείρου, ἀνάστηθι, Ιερουσαλημ, ἡ πιούσα ἐκ χειρὸς Κυρίου τὸ ποτήριον τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ.*

**ESV (Isa 51:17):** “Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.”

*Ησ. 51:22 (LXX): ἰδοὺ εἴληφα ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς σου τὸ ποτήριον τῆς πτώσεως.*

**ESV (Isa 51:22):** “Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more.”

### Theological Crisis

If God removes the cup from Jerusalem’s hand, the wrath does not simply disappear. Divine justice requires that the cup be drunk. The ὀργή has been decreed; the θυμός must be poured out. If Israel no longer drinks... *who bears the judgment?* This question hangs unanswered through the

remaining prophets, through the intertestamental period, and into the Garden of Gethsemane.

## VI. GETHSEMANE — CHRIST AND THE CUP

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In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus encounters the cup that has been building since Psalm 75. Every Old Testament reference converges here. Jesus does not face a generic notion of suffering — he faces the specific, accumulated, juridical wrath of God as represented in the cup motif.

*Ματθ. 26:39: πάτερ μου, εἰ δυνατόν ἐστίν, παρελθάτω ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο· πλὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς σύ.*

**ESV (Matt 26:39):** “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

### Parsing Notes:

- **παρελθάτω** (*parelthatō*) — aorist active imperative, 3rd singular, from παρέρχομαι: “let it pass (away).” The imperative directed at the cup itself — Jesus addresses the object of judgment directly.
- **τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο** — “this cup” — the demonstrative τοῦτο points to a specific, known entity. Jesus is not speaking in abstract terms. This is *the* cup — the one from Psalm 75, Jeremiah 25, and Isaiah 51.

*Ιω. 18:11: τὸ ποτήριον ὃ δέδωκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὐ μὴ πῖω αὐτό;*

**ESV (John 18:11):** “Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

The verb δέδωκεν (perfect active indicative, “has given”) is crucial. The perfect tense indicates a completed action with ongoing results: the Father has already

assigned the cup, and the assignment stands. This is not an accident of circumstance but a juridical decree from the Divine Council. Jesus recognizes the cup as the accumulated wrath of Psalm 75, the prophetic commission of Jeremiah 25, and the cup removed from Israel in Isaiah 51 — now placed in his hands.

## VII. ATONEMENT — SUBSTITUTIONARY STRUCTURE

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The cup that was removed from Israel in Isaiah 51 is now consumed by Christ on behalf of his people. The theological gap is closed. The juridical wrath finds its resolution — not in annulment, but in substitution.

*2 Κορ. 5:21: τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.*

**ESV (2 Cor 5:21):** “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

*Ρωμ. 3:25: ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι.*

**ESV (Rom 3:25):** “whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

### **ἱλαστήριον** (*hilastērion*) — **propitiation, mercy seat**

Neuter noun/adjective. In the LXX, this term translates the Hebrew כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporet*), the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant where sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Paul’s use in Romans 3:25 declares that Christ himself is the new mercy seat — the place where divine wrath meets sacrificial blood and is satisfied. The cup of θυμός is absorbed by the ἱλαστήριον.

Christ drinks the cup that was removed from Israel's hand. The ὀργή (judicial decree) finds its satisfaction; the θυμός (active wrath) is poured out on the cross. The substitutionary structure is complete: the cup is not annulled, but transferred — from the many to the One.

## VIII. ECCLESIOLOGY — THE FAMILY RESTORED

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The cup of wrath, once consumed by Christ, gives rise to a new reality: the cup of blessing. The same ποτήριον vocabulary is inverted from judgment to communion. As Carmen Imes has shown, the phrase ἐν ὑμῖν (“among you,” plural) throughout the New Testament indicates that God's indwelling is fundamentally communal. Salvation creates not merely individual converts but a *people* — a restored divine family.

*1 Κορ. 10:16: τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ;*

**ESV (1 Cor 10:16):** “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?”

The reversal is breathtaking. The ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας (“cup of blessing”) directly mirrors the ποτήριον τοῦ θυμοῦ (“cup of wrath”). Because Christ drank the cup of wrath to its dregs, the church now shares the cup of blessing. The κοινωνία (fellowship, participation) in his blood is the communal reality that flows from the individual sacrifice. The divine family, scattered at Babel and partially restored in Israel, is now fully reconstituted through the blood of the new covenant.

## IX. REVELATION — FINAL JUDGMENT AND THE CUP RETURNED

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In the final book of Scripture, the cup vocabulary from Psalm 75 and Jeremiah 25 reappears in full force. For those who reject Christ's substitutionary work, the original cup of wrath remains — undiminished and now undiluted.

*Ἀποκ. 14:10: καὶ αὐτὸς πίνεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκρασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ.*

**ESV (Rev 14:10):** “he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger.”

*Ἀποκ. 16:19: καὶ Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἐμνήσθη ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ.*

**ESV (Rev 16:19):** “and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.”

Notice the identical vocabulary: ποτήριον, θυμός, ὀργή, οἶνος. Revelation does not invent a new vocabulary of judgment — it draws directly from Psalm 75 and Jeremiah 25. The cup that God prepared, that the prophet distributed, that was removed from Israel, and that Christ consumed on behalf of his people — that same cup now returns for those who stand outside Christ's substitutionary work.

**ἄκρατον** (*akraton*) — **unmixed, undiluted**

Adjective (genitive neuter singular in Rev 14:10: ἀκράτου). From α- (privative) + κεράννυμι (“to mix”). Ancient wine was normally diluted with water; “unmixed” wine was considered dangerously potent. The paradox in Rev 14:10 is striking: the wine is “mixed unmixed” (κεκρασμένου ἀκράτου) — prepared at full strength, undiluted judgment. Where Psalm 75 spoke of κέρασμα (mixed wine), Revelation intensifies to ἄκρατον: the final cup has no mercy mixed in.

## THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS — THE ARC OF THE CUP

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Passage	Stage	Significance
<b>Psalm 75:8</b>	Cup Prepared	God holds the cup of mixed wine; all the wicked will drink
<b>Jeremiah 25:15</b>	Cup Distributed	Prophet receives and administers the cup to nations
<b>Isaiah 51:17, 22</b>	Cup Removed	God takes the cup from Jerusalem's hand — who will drink?
<b>Matthew 26:39</b>	Cup Accepted	Christ submits to the Father's assignment in Gethsemane
<b>The Cross</b>	Cup Consumed	Christ drinks the cup to its dregs as <i>ἰλαστήριον</i>
<b>Revelation 14, 16</b>	Cup Returns	Unmixed wrath for those outside Christ's atonement

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. How does seeing the cup as a juridical decree — issued by the Divine Council and administered through agents — change your understanding of God's wrath? Is this different from how you previously thought about divine anger?

2. What does the Jeremiah 25 pattern (Council → Prophet → Nations) tell us about how God administers justice? Why does he use human agents rather than acting directly?

3. Isaiah 51 creates a theological “gap” — the cup is removed from Israel, but the wrath has been decreed. Who will drink? How does Gethsemane answer this question, and what does that tell us about the unity of the Old and New Testaments?

4. Why does Jesus ask for the cup to pass? If he knew his mission, why the anguish? What does this reveal about the contents of the cup — that it was not merely physical suffering, but the accumulated θυμός of divine justice?

5. How does the “cup of blessing” (1 Cor 10:16) relate to the “cup of wrath”? What does this reversal mean for how we understand the Lord’s Supper? Is communion a celebration of wrath averted?

6. What does it mean that the same cup vocabulary (ποτήριον, θυμός, ὀργή, οἶνος) appears in Revelation? How should the continuity of this motif shape our reading of the final judgment?

## WORD STUDY CARDS

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### ποτήριον

*potērion*

Cup, assigned portion. The vessel of divine allotment — blessing or judgment.

### θυμός

*thumos*

Boiling wrath, active execution. The burning content of the cup.

### ὀργή

*orgē*

### ἱλαστήριον

*hilastērion*

Judicial anger, settled decree. The verdict from which the cup proceeds.

Propitiation, mercy seat. Where divine wrath meets sacrificial blood.

## κεράσματος

*kerasmatos*

Mixed wine, measured judgment.  
Carefully prepared, intentional wrath.

## οἶος

*kos (Hebrew)*

Cup — Hebrew equivalent of ποτήριον.  
The underlying Semitic term throughout the OT.

## CLOSING PRAYER

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Father, we stand in awe before the weight of your justice and the depth of your mercy. You are the righteous Judge who prepared the cup, who held it in your sovereign hand, and who decreed that it must be drunk to the dregs. We confess that we deserved to drink it ourselves — that our rebellion, our idolatry, and our turning away from your covenant merited every drop of your θυμός.

Yet in your unfathomable love, you removed the cup from our hand and placed it in the hands of your Son. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He who shared your throne in the council drank the cup of your wrath so that we might share the cup of blessing. The ἱλαστήριον absorbed the fury that was ours to bear.

Now, Lord, as we gather around the table and lift the ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας, help us never to forget what it cost. Unite us as your family — your restored ἐκκλησία — bound together not by our worthiness but by his blood. May we live as people for whom the cup has been emptied, walking in gratitude, obedience, and hope until the day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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