

PALADIN TANKING IN CATAclysm PATCH 4.1: A COMPREHENSIVE RAIDING GUIDE

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In Cataclysm 4.1, there are many intricacies involved in effective tanking. To be a successful dungeon tank, there are several things to note, but to be an amazing raid tank, you will need to use every ability in your spellbook efficiently and appropriately. In addition, you will need to maximize all of your best statistics and select the most effective gear from your raids.

I. INTRODUCTION

Up until the most recent patch 4.1, Paladins had less threat generation than the other tanking classes in the game. However, with the most recent patch, Word of Glory was given a 20 second cooldown, making it less tempting to use all 3 holy power to self-heal. In addition, Paladins are awarded an extra holy power if they use an Avenger's Shield within 3 seconds of a proc. This gives Paladins a much quicker means of threat generation early on in a fight when it matters the most. I will now go into detail about what all of these abilities mean, the rotations and priority, the most effective talent specs, and strategies.

ABBREVIATIONS

AD: Ardent Defender

AP: Attack Power

BiS: Best in Slot

BoK: Blessing of Kings

BoM: Blessing of Might

CD: Cooldown

Con: Consecration

Crit: When an ability is a critical strike

CS: Crusader Strike

DP: Divine Protection

DPS: Damage per second

DS: Divine Shield

GAK: Guardian of Ancient Kings

GC: Grand Crusader

GCD: Global Cooldown

HotR: Hammer of the Righteous

HP: Holy Power

HoW: Hammer of Wrath

HW: Holy Wrath

JotW: Judgements of the Wise

LoH: Lay on Hands

MP5: Mana per 5 Seconds

Proc: When a certain spell is randomly activated by another ability or an auto-attack

SoI: Seal of Insight

SoT: Seal of Truth

SotR: Shield of the Righteous

SP: Spell Power

Spec: Specialization

TbtL: Touched by the Light

WoG: Word of Glory

II. TALENTS

Suggested Talent Spec for Single-Target Threat:



Figure 1

Here's why:

PROTECTION

Divinity: You will want 3/3 pts in Divinity to increase all healing effects on you by 6%, as well as increasing your WoG when you are using it off CD.

Seals of the Pure: This increases the damage done by your SoT and other seals (not worthy of noting) by 12%. This is an important threat generation because, unless you are soloing a boss and need to use SoI to increase healing on you as well as your mana to heal yourself, SoT is going to be the only seal you tank with.

Eternal Glory: As of the most recent patch, Specing into Eternal Glory is useless since WoG now has a 20 sec CD and cannot be spammed.

Judgements of the Just: This talent enables your Judgement to reduce the melee and ranged attack speed of your target by 20% for 20 seconds.

Toughness: Toughness is an important talent. By maxing this out to 3/3, you are increasing your armor value from items by 10%.

Improved Hammer of Justice: This is an unnecessary talent to spec into because, in raids, you cannot use this ability on a boss. In dungeons, you can use HW to stun elementals, dragonkin, demons, and undead creatures with the Glyph of Holy Wrath. If you are a blood elf, you have an AoE silencing effect in addition to Avenger's shield and Rebuke to interrupt spell-casts, rendering this talent useless for PvE.

Hallowed Ground: Putting 2/2 points into this talent is beneficial to both AoE and single-target threat generation because it increases the damage of your Consecration by 40% and decreases its mana cost by a whopping 80%. This is helpful if you are on add-duty as well as the first 10 seconds of a boss fight when the fight for threat is at its worst.

Sanctuary: Sanctuary does two major things. First of all, it reduces the chance for you to get critically hit by a melee attack by 6% and reduces all damage taken by 10%. Secondly, when you block or dodge a melee attack, you gain back 3% of your maximum mana. If you have high mitigation, this is a great stat in dungeons because mana is a struggle on larger mobs since there is no glyph to reduce the mana cost of HotR, unlike the Glyph of the Ascetic Crusader, which reduces the mana cost of CS.

Hammer of the Righteous: This is your main AoE ability that generates Holy power and large amounts of threat.

Wrath of the Lightbringer: This talent is extremely important because it increases the damage done by your CS and judgement abilities by 100% as well as increasing the critical chance of your HoW and HW abilities by 30%. This is a major threat increase.

Reckoning: If you are going to use SoI on certain fights or at certain points in boss fights, (see section VI.), this is a very important means of generating self healing, since SoI gives you a chance to self-heal through your melee swings. This talent grants a 20% chance for your next 4

weapon swings within 8 seconds to generate an extra attack when you have a successful block. If you have a lot of block (55% block and above), this is a great talent for raiding heroic content.

Shield of the Righteous: This is your main HP ability as a Protection Paladin.

Grand Crusader: This is also a very important threat generating ability. As of patch 4.1, when Grand Crusader procs, if you use your Avenger's Shield within 6 seconds, you will gain an extra charge of HP. Grand Crusader has a 20% chance to proc when your CS and HotR abilities do damage to your primary target, so having an good chance to generate an extra charge of holy power brings you closer to your next full SotR, thus improving initial threat.

Vindication: Your CS and HotR abilities reduce the physical damage done by your primary target by 10% for 30 seconds. This is very useful on a boss fight.

Holy Shield: Using SotR or Inquisition increases the amount of your shield blocks by an additional 10% for 20 seconds. So if vindication and Holy Shield happen at the same time, you are gaining 20% more damage mitigation for 20 seconds.

Guarded by the Light: The main reason to spec into this talent before patch 4.1 was to increase the healing of WoG by 10%. However, now that WoG has a 20 second CD, these points are better spent in Reckoning. This talent can be very useful in raids, but due to the new 20 second CD, you are better off having points in Reckoning and Seal Swapping to generate self-healing than to rely on WoG.

Divine Guardian: This is an important raid bubble that every good tank should have. This ability is paramount in fights that require raid damage reductions such as during the Feud Phase in the Heroic Chimaeron fight of Blackwing Descent.

Sacred Duty: This ability enables your Judgement and AS to have a 50% chance to make your next SotR a critical strike. This lasts for 10 seconds and is very beneficial for single-target threat, since SotR is your main threat-generating ability as a tank.

Shield of the Templar: This is one of your most important and non-debatable talents because it reduces the CD of your Avenging Wrath by 60 seconds, reduces the CD of your GAK (your most important damage mitigation bubble) by 120 seconds, and enables your Divine Plea to generate three HP when activated. This will be taken into further detail below.

Ardent Defender: This is your second most effective self CD to Guardian of the Ancient Kings. Every protection paladin should spec into this to have a third damage reducing CD.

RETRIBUTION:

Crusade: The most important component of this talent for a protection paladin is that it increases the damage of your CS and HotR by 30%.

Improved Judgement: Having an extra 20 yards on your range for Judgement is extremely helpful when kiting adds on Maloriak or maintaining threat if you have to run far away from a boss, such as during Fel Firestorm on the weekly boss in Baradin Hold. However, this is preferential and can be used for specific bosses and not others if you are running two separate protection talent specializations instead of one.

Rule of Law: Rule of Law increases the critical effect chance of your CS, HotR, and WoG by 10%. Instead of putting 3 points into this talent, it is best to put two points into Pursuit of Justice below:

Pursuit of Justice: As explained earlier, this is a beneficial talent to have because it gives a 50% chance to generate an extra charge of HP when you are hit by a stun or another immobilizing effect, as well as increasing your movement and mounted speed by 15%, which is a nice bonus. Having a small percentage to crit versus a 50% chance to gain a charge of HP when hit by an immobilizing effect is less reliable and less predictable. Therefore, put your last point in Pursuit of Justice rather than Eye for an Eye.

SUMMARY

With this threat spec, you will be using Seal of Truth (SoT) and the Glyph of Seal of Truth in order to increase the expertise generated by SoT by 10 when activated. Even if you use SoI rather than SoT on certain fights or at specific moments, the extra 10 expertise is needed for threat generation at the beginning of a boss fight when threat matters the most. You wouldn't use Glyph of Seal if Insight because the extra 5% to healing spells would only apply to WoG in most fights.

III. GLYPHS

Overall, the best single-target threat prime glyphs are Glyph of Crusader Strike, Glyph of Shield of the Righteous, and Glyph of Seal of Truth. The best major glyphs would be Glyph of Consecration, Glyph of the Ascetic Crusader, and Glyph of Focused shield, and the minor glyphs are up to player preference. Here's why these glyphs are beneficial:

PRIME:

Glyph of Crusader Strike: Since CS is the main single target ability to use, it is good to increase its chance to crit by 5%.

Glyph of Shield of the Righteous: Since SotR is your main, single target "finishing move", this glyph increases threat by increasing the damage done by your SotR by 10%.

Glyph of Seal of Truth: When using my proposed talent spec, you will want to use Seal of Truth. By using this glyph, you are increasing your expertise by 10 points, which is very beneficial to threat, since it increases the chance that your attacks will actually hit your target and not be blocked.

MAJOR:

Glyph of the Ascetic Crusader: CS and HotR cost a lot of mana, especially for abilities you need to spam in order to generate holy power as quickly as possible. There is no mana reduction glyph for HotR, but the Glyph of the Ascetic Crusader reduces the mana cost of your CS by 30%, which is huge.

Glyph of Focused Shield: Depending on your raid composition for particular boss fights, this is a glyph you should always have if you are the boss tank rather than the add tank because your Avenger's Shield will hit 2 fewer targets, but for 30% more damage. This is a very important glyph when pulling a boss (given that your Avenger's Shield doesn't miss). However, in a fight such as Cho'gall, this glyph can be switched out in order to hit both mind-controlled targets from a range rather than just one during Cho'gall's ability called Worshipping.

Glyph of Consecration: With the talent spec Hallowed Ground, which increases Consecration's damage by 40% and its mana cost by 80%, this is an important ability to use even for single target threat since it doesn't cost nearly as much mana as it would without the talent. In addition, this glyph increases the duration and CD of Consecration by 20%, making it an even more viable ability to add to your single-target threat generation.

MINOR:

Your choice of minor glyphs is negligible, but I would recommend getting Glyph of Blessing of Might and Glyph of Blessing of Kings to reduce the mana cost of these blessings if you have to reapply the buff during battle after a battle resurrection occurs. In addition, buy the minor glyphs for SoT and SoI to reduce the mana cost for seal swapping. But again, this is almost negligible (See section VI).

***If you are the designated AoE tank for a raid boss fight or tanking a Cataclysm dungeon, there are a couple modifications to note:**

- 1) Use **Glyph of Dazing Shield** rather than Glyph of Focused Shield in order to hit three targets and slow them down.
- 2) Use **Glyph of Hammer of the Righteous** to increase the damage of both the physical and holy components of this ability by 10%.
- 3) Use **Glyph of Holy Wrath** if you need to be able to stun Elementals and Dragonkin with your Holy Wrath in addition to Undead and Demons. Glyph of Holy Wrath is not useful in any current raid content for add kiting since the adds to kite in specific encounters are Undead and Humanoid, but it is useful in Cataclysm dungeons such as Grim Batol, Vortex Pinnacle, Throne of the Tides, and more.

IV. ROTATION AND PRIORITY

A. SINGLE-TARGET

Single-Target Threat Priority:

- 1) Avenger's Shield
- 2) A three HP Shield of the Righteous
- 3) Crusader Strike
- 4) Judgement
- 5) Consecration
- 6) Holy Wrath

IN GENERAL:

Avenger's Shield > All UNLESS:

You might save your AS to silence a distanced caster in order to bring it closer to you. Also, if you are the boss tank on the Maloriak fight in Blackwing Descent, you want to carefully time your AS so that it doesn't accidentally interrupt something that shouldn't be interrupted, since AS will not be your primary interrupt on that fight anyway, (Rebuke will, since it has a 100% chance to hit as of the most recent patch).

Crusader Strike > Judgement unless you need mana while using SoT. In that case, you will want to use Judgement to restore 30% of your base mana over 10 seconds (due to Judgements of the Wise). If you are using SoI, when you use Judgement, you get 15% of your mana back immediately, and then the 30% over 10 seconds, which is why CS and AS will be higher in priority when using SoI.

Consecration and Holy Wrath are fillers as you build up your HP with Crusader strike. You would use Consecration first because it does 4660 holy damage over 10 seconds to all enemies in its AoE with the talent Hallowed Ground (which increases its damage by 40% and reduces its mana cost by 80%.) Therefore, you would definitely want to have Consecration higher on your priority list than Holy Wrath since Holy Wrath does only 3728 raw damage split evenly among all the targets in your AoE.

Once you build up 3 Holy Power, Use Shield of the Righteous

THE PULL:

When Pulling a boss, you have 2 options. You can either hit Divine Plea (DP), Inquisition, AW in rapid succession and then pull with AS, or you can hit DP, AW, pull with AS, and then open up with a 3 HP SotR.

Inquisition Pull:

This is tricky because AS doesn't always hit. But if it does, opening with DP + AW + Inquisition in combination with the Glyph of Focused Shield means you are hitting the boss with a 60% holy damage increased Avenger's Shield, which will put you way ahead on the threat meters.

You can also use this idea later in the boss fight when you have maintained threat. If you have a Holy Power ready and your Avenger's Shield procs with Grand Crusader, you can quickly use your 1 HP to hit Inquisition and then immediately use AS to get another increased AS. Because you are using the proc within 6 seconds, you will also get a free charge of HP which you can use towards your next SotR.

SotR Pull:

With the Shield of the Righteous pull, you use DP + AW, pull with AS, and immediately open with a 3 HP SotR and you can immediately start gaining HP for your next 3 HP SotR. After 2 full SotR's, you will be far ahead on the threat charts, especially with a hunter's Misdirect and a rogue's Tricks of the Trade.

The Inquisition Pull will put you further ahead on the threat charts, but if you miss, you were better off with the SotR, which is more reliable if you are not hit-capped. If you follow this guide, you will not be hit-capped, so it is up to the player if he or she is willing to risk a miss on their AS on the initial pull. However, I would not recommend it due to its inconsistency.

B. AOE TANKING

AoE Threat Priority:

- 1) Avenger's Shield
- 2) Hammer of the Righteous
- 3) A two-point Inquisition
- 4) Consecration or Holy Wrath

Use HotR to gain threat and HP. With your HP, it's best to use a two-point Inquisition since Inquisition will increase your holy damage done by 30%, and HotR, Consecration, and HW (all your AoE spells) all do holy damage.

Consecration and Holy Wrath are interchangeable depending on the scenario. If you are running into a pull of all Undead targets, it's a good idea to sometimes use HW first so that you can hit them with an HotR and Consecration while they are stunned.

V. STATS: REFORGING, GEMMING, AND PROFESSIONS

There is still a block cap for tanks, called the 102.4% rule. According Figure 2 by Rebenton on *Elitist Jerks*, the block cap works as follows:

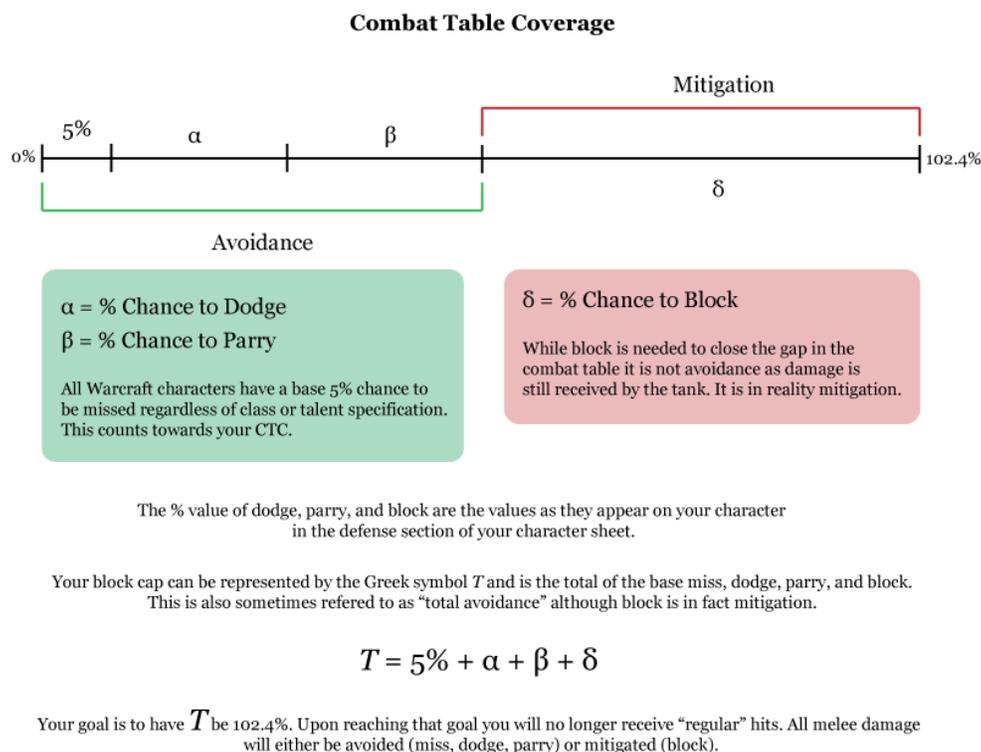


Figure 2

With diminishing returns on parry and dodge, the only way to achieve block cap as a Protection Paladin in Cataclysm is to stack mastery, with your next priorities then being dodge, parry, and hit/expertise last. This is because there are no diminishing returns on block, but there are on dodge and parry. This is why you want to stack mastery and try to even out dodge and parry by reforging all parry to dodge unless you can reforge to mastery. Everything else (any excess hit or expertise) should also get reforged to mastery if possible to provide the maximum mitigation.

Unlike tanking in Wrath of the Lich King and the Burning Crusade, tanks no longer need to reach hit or expertise cap. With Seal of Truth, Righteous Fury, a proper rotation and priority comprehension, and the talents listed above (in section II), you will not need the extra threat generated from hit and expertise cap, since the threat battle only lasts for about the first 10 seconds of every boss fight. This is made a lot easier with Misdirect, Tricks of the Trade, and class-specific threat dumps such as Ice Block or Cloak of Shadows, so it is much more beneficial to stack your avoidance and mitigation stats--especially since block cap cannot be reached in this tier's current gear content.

The reason to stack block (mastery), parry, and dodge is to make the damage you take more predictable to healers. This way, healers can use their mana more wisely and conservatively if they can predict your incoming damage more easily than watching you get hit for random spike

damage. This is why you don't stack stamina. At 359+ ilevel, you should have more than enough stamina from your gear to handle all the heroic raid bosses.

Although it is better to stack and reforge into avoidance, there are some instances where gemming for stamina would be more effective. Against magical attacks, you can't block, parry, or dodge, so that is why you will see some tanks stacking stamina. As Digren explains on Maintankadin:

Stamina is still the best way to survive bleeds and magic damage, which are not blockable or mitigated by armor. However, for most encounters the majority of incoming damage is physical and blockable, making encounters that differ often called "gimmick" encounters tanked by "gimmick" tanks (like mages) or in "gimmick" gear (like a resist set). Thus the comparison between mastery and stamina is not easy, and is very encounter dependent."

If you are making two sets of gear, I would recommend having a set specifically for bosses with more magical damage and less melee attacks.

Professions:

The best two professions that I'd suggest for a tank are **Jewelcrafting** and **Blacksmithing**. With Blacksmithing, you gain two additional sockets: one in your bracers and one in your gloves. Jewelcrafting grants the use of special gems. I would recommend having 525 Blacksmithing and Jewelcrafting and using the +67 mastery gems called Fractured Chimera's Eye. There is an option to gem with +101 stamina (Solid Chimera's Eye), but since most of the bosses in the current raid content have mainly melee attacks rather than magical, it is best to gem avoidance (mastery/parry/dodge) than stamina if you are only making one tank set. Other professions have their uses, but as a tank, your stats and stat flexibility are best maximized by Blacksmithing/Jewelcrafting. However, if you already have two other professions, the only professions I'd suggest dropping to go to Jewelcrafting and blacksmithing are Skinning, Herbalism, and Tailoring since they have no tanking benefits.

Gemming:

In all yellow and any-color slots, you will want to use yellow 40+ mastery gems (Fractured Amberjewel), in all blue slots you will want to put green 20 mastery/30 stamina gems (Puissant Dream Emerald), and in red slots you will want to use the orange 20 mastery/20 parry gems (Fine Ember Topaz) to maximize total mitigation and obey the socket bonuses. However, at high gear levels (359+), I would recommend you consider breaking stamina socket bonuses to use 40+ mastery gems if you are using Vial of Stolen Memories and Symbiotic Worm as your trinkets. Since these trinkets give the most stamina, you may need to get the mastery from somewhere else.

Reforging:

Stat Priority:

- 1) Mastery
- 2) Dodge

- 3) Parry
- 4) Hit/Expertise

Because mastery is the most important stat, look for gear with mastery and reforge what you can to it. Since most of the current tier's gear has parry and you receive a certain amount of parry when you hit certain levels in the game, it is necessary to look for gear with dodge and reforge all extra stats (that cannot be reforged to mastery) to dodge.

VI. TANKING WITH SEAL OF INSIGHT VS. SEAL OF TRUTH: SEAL SWAPPING

I use something called "seal swapping."

As explained briefly in section IV, Seal of Truth is most often used for tanking since it has the most threat and damage output of all the seals. However, Seal of Insight is also beneficial to use or swap to in certain scenarios: when AoE tanking for adds in raids or dungeons, and specific boss encounters. According to Sapphidia on *Tankspot*: "In tank gear unbuffed at 85 my SoI proc heal for about 1500. Nothing special, but with 2/2 reckoning, high block and such, it seems a proc every 2-3 seconds isn't unusual at all when spamming tank moves. With raid buffs and a full stack of vengeance, this goes up to nearer 4,000"

Here are a couple examples of times to use SoI or swap to it at a particular time in the fight:

- 1) **Heroic modes of Nezir (in the Conclave of Wind)**. If you are the tank alone on Nezir's platform with a healer in Heroic Conclave, it would be a good idea to use SoI in order to maximize healing from melee attacks, especially because you will not be struggling with the DPS for threat since they are all on Anshal and Rohash's platform. However, when you switch over to tank Anshal right before the Ultimate, swap back to Seal of Truth to maximize threat since you will be competing with DPS.
- 2) **Maloriak during dark phase**. In the dark phases of Maloriak, it would be a good idea to use SoI and cast your Judgement in between his shadow breaths since the healer has very few seconds to heal you up to full health. As soon as dark phase is over, the tank must switch back to SoT to hold threat off of the DPS and healers.
- 3) In **Heroic Chimaeron**, if you are the tank taking double attacks, it is a good idea to use SoI during Phase 1 and then switch to SoT in Phase 2 when it's a DPS race. If you are the tank during Feud Phase, you won't be tanking at all until the System's Failure, so you can use SoI almost the entire fight, but swap back to it for Feud Phase if you are struggling for threat and for Phase 2 when it becomes a DPS race and no healing can be done.
- 4) **When tanking the Nefarian fight during phase 2**. In phase 1, when the DPS switch to DPS whichever boss you are not tanking, you can swap to SoI since you won't be fighting for threat. This will help your healer's mana a lot. Also, on the adds in phase 2, after you interrupt

their spellcast, you can help the healer out on your platform by throwing a flash of light or two on someone. These are 4 prime examples of effective seal swapping for single-target tanking.

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