

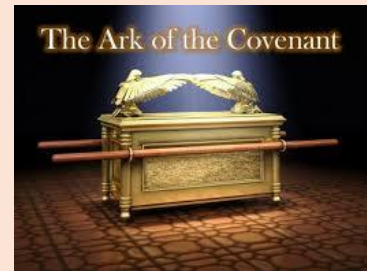
Study Guide #18: The Seven Last Plagues

Introduction

In Explorer III, Study Guide #16, we discovered that the final end-time time of trouble was directed by God against the wicked allied with the king of the north (Antichrist) and that it was the period of the Seven Last Plagues that constituted that time of trouble. In this current Study Guide, we take a closer look at these plagues and the significance of them.

Question #1: Is there any significance to the fact that the Seven Last Plagues will be poured out by angels coming out of the temple in heaven?

Answer: You are referring to Revelation 15:5-8, which is the introductory vision scene to the actual Seven Last Plagues. In verse 5 attention is called to **“the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony...”** (NKJV). The word **“testimony”** points to the Ten Commandments contained inside the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 31:18; 32:15). This is particularly important because the Sabbath Commandment will be the point of special controversy in the end-time. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #10 for the evidence of this latter truth.]



Question #2: What does the fact that the angels with the Seven Last Plagues come out of the temple in heaven teach about the wrath of God?

Answer: It is also significant that these angels come out of the temple in heaven with bowls containing the Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 15:6-7) because it underscores the fact that this is indeed God’s direct and active wrath against sin. This is important evidence that helps refute the allegation on the part of *some* Christians that God is too loving to have any active wrath, and that His “wrath” is simply a passive turning away sorrowfully and allowing the wicked to reap the effects of their choice. It’s true that God is sorrowful and that He allows the wicked to reap what they have sown. But His wrath is far greater than that, for a just and righteous God must react decisively against sin and those who insist on clinging to it. Revelation 15:1 says that the Seven Last Plagues represent the **“complete”** wrath of God. See also Revelation 14:10. This is another example where some sincere believers are right in what they *affirm* but wrong in what they *deny*.

Question #3: What does Revelation 15:8 mean that “The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God...and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues...were completed”?

Answer: When probation closes for the world, no one can figuratively enter into God’s presence, which has the effect of ending Jesus’ mediation as our High Priest. But this does not mean that to be saved one must have reached a state of perfect righteousness by then. Rather, it simply means that everyone has fixed his character in the spiritual direction of the Lord or in Satan’s direction so that neither side can do anything to change anyone’s spiritual direction. Jesus no longer needs to plead His righteousness on behalf of His people because they have made an irrevocable decision, not because they have reached some super-holy state. The issue in salvation, given that Jesus is our *ultimate* righteousness, is *not* the level of our *righteousness*, but our *loyalty* to Him.

Question #4: Is there any relationship between the Seven Last Plagues and the Seven Trumpets of Revelation?

Answer: Yes. If you read both sections carefully—Revelation 8:2-11:18 (7 Trumpets) and Revelation 15:5-18:24 (7 Last Plagues)—you will discover that several key words or phrases are



in both sections. Given the chiasmic structure of the entire book of Revelation—in which the first and last sections, the second and the next to last sections, and so on, are parallel to each other, you find that these two sections are parallel to each other. The key difference is that there is still an opportunity to repent because the Trumpet judgments are only *partial* judgments (8:7-12; 9:5, 15, 18), but it is too late to repent during the Seven Last Plagues. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #15 for a discussion of the literary structure of Revelation, as well as an outline of the book.]

Question #5: Are the Seven Last Plagues literal or figurative?

Answer: They are literal except for the Sixth Plague, although they do seem to point to certain symbolic meanings. They are reminiscent of the 10 Plagues that fell on Egypt in the time of Moses (Exodus chapters 7-12). The first three affected everyone in Egypt, but the last seven only affected the Egyptians. Thus, the Seven Last Plagues, like the last seven of the ten plagues that fell on Egypt, do not fall on God’s faithful people. Since the plagues in Egypt were literal, there is no reason, except for the highly symbolic language of the Sixth Plague, not to view the Seven Last Plagues as literal.

Question #6: Will the Seven Last Plagues fall everywhere on earth at the same time?

Answer: No, they are sequential in nature, which can be seen in the fact that the word **“Then”** is used to introduce each plague after the first one. Therefore, each of the Seven Last Plagues will end before its subsequent one begins. Note that each plague will *not* kill everyone, or else there would be no one left after the first plague. Note also that Revelation 16:11 refers to some of the recipients of the First Plague who are still living during the Fifth Plague.

Question #7: How long will the Seven Last Plagues last?

Answer: The Bible does not tell us how long the plagues will last. But it would have to be of a relatively short duration, or else every wicked person would be dead before the plagues ended. Some have interpreted the **“one day”** for the plagues in Revelation 18:8 as representing one literal year on the year-day principle. However, Revelation 18:10, 17, and 19 also refer to the period as **“one hour,”** which means that these time elements are simply used to describe the period as a short but indefinite period of time.

Question #8: What is the First Plague?

Answer: The First Plague is **“a foul and loathsome sore”** (Revelation 16:2, NKJV). The Greek word for **“sore”** is used by the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) of the boils in the sixth plague in Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11), of Job’s boils (Job 2:7), and of the sores that were associated with leprosy (Leviticus 13:18-27). A significant outbreak of such a plague will quickly arrest the attention of the whole world even if it’s not directly affecting everyone in the world.

Question #9: What is the significance of blood in the waters of the world?

Answer: The Second Plague and the Third Plague both involve the waters of the earth turning into blood. The Second Plague is that **“the sea...became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died”** (Revelation 16:3, NKJV). In the Third Plague, **“the rivers and springs of water...became blood”** (Revelation 16:4-7, NKJV). The reason given is that the wicked supported the executions of **“saints and prophets,”** meaning that the last generation of the wicked will be just as guilty of murdering *all* the saints and the prophets who had ever been martyred even though they did not literally execute them.



Question #10: What is the significance of the Fourth and Fifth Plagues affecting light and darkness?



Answer: In the Fourth Plague, the sun scorches the wicked. Apparently, the Lord thought if the wicked honored the day of the sun (Sunday), then they should reap the vengeance of the literal sun itself.

In the Fifth Plague, **“the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness”** (Revelation 16:10-11, NKJV). This refers specifically to the capital city of the beast (of Revelation 13), which is within Rome. Since literal darkness would be necessary for the wicked to experience it as a plague, God seems to be saying that since the wicked chose *spiritual* darkness, they will then experience great *literal* darkness. Since some who had received the First Plague of sores also experienced this darkness, it is highly likely that the darkness that might start in Rome will spread to the rest of the planet. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #10 for the role of the Sabbath-Sunday issue in the final mark of the beast crisis.]

Question #11: What is the Sixth Plague?

Answer: The Sixth Plague is outlined in Revelation 16:12-16. The actual plague here is the drying up of the Euphrates River (v. 12). Since that literal river ran through the literal city of Babylon in antiquity, we know that end-time *symbolic* Babylon is the target of this plague. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #5 for the identification of end-time Babylon as a symbolic power.] This symbolic context makes this Sixth Plague symbolic rather than literal. Since the river provided support for ancient Babylon, and its waters represent **“peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues”** (Revelation 17:15, NKJV), then the Euphrates in this plague is a symbol of the popular support for the false religious confederacy led by the Papacy at the end-time. Therefore, its drying up represents the sudden loss of popular support for the end-time confederacy. The plague does not identify the action that will cause this sudden lack of support. Perhaps the final straw will be the Fifth Plague of darkness, although we do not know this for certain. See Revelation 17:16-17 for the fact that the political entities will turn against the Papacy at the last hour.

Question #12: To what does the sudden loss of popular support for spiritual Babylon lead?

Answer: The purpose for and the result of the sudden end of popular support for end-time Babylon is **“so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared”** (Revelation 16:13, NKJV). Just as the literal Euphrates River was dried up (diverted from its natural flow through the city of Babylon) in order for the Medes and Persians (**“kings from the east”** then) to take the city, so the sudden drying up of popular support for *spiritual* Babylon, although too late for the wicked to be saved, will prepare the way for the Holy Trinity (the modern **“kings from the east,”** one of the

compass directions associated with heaven—Revelation 7:2; Matthew 24:27) to come and rescue God’s people. How poetic God’s Word is! [NOTE: In Explorer III, Study Guide #5, we learned that the actual Battle of Armageddon occurs in conjunction with the Seventh Plague, not the Sixth Plague.]

Question #13: What is the Seventh Plague?

Answer: The Seventh Plague consists of the most disastrous earthquake ever recorded and great hail the size of about 75 pounds (Revelation 16:17-21). The result is that spiritual Babylon is finally destroyed. Note the announcement from heaven just before this plague: **“It is done!”** (Revelation 16:17, NKJV). God will have finally tolerated the false system of worship long enough, and the Seventh Plague finishes it for good. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #5 for an explanation of the truth that the 2nd Coming of Jesus is associated with the end of the Seventh Plague.]



Question #14: Is there a special resurrection at the time of the Seventh Plague?

Answer: Yes. In Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62, Jesus promised the high priest Caiaphas that he would see Him coming in glory at His Second Coming. Yet Caiaphas died so long ago. Revelation 1:7 also promised that those **“who pierced”** Jesus would see Him come the second time. Finally, Daniel 12:2, in the context of the end-time time of trouble brought by God against spiritual Babylon and her allies (the Seven Last Plagues), says that there will be at that time a special resurrection (singular) of *some* saved and *some* lost. Altogether these texts speak of a special resurrection just before the Second Coming of Jesus.

When Jesus died on the cross after crying **“It is finished”** (John 19:30, NKJV), some graves in the Jerusalem area opened, and their dead were resurrected when Jesus was. This too was a special resurrection. Based on this evidence, we *tentatively* state that the beginning of the Seventh Plague, when Jesus again cries, **“It is done [finished]”**, a special resurrection of *some* saved and *some* lost will take place—just in time for these people to see the actual Second Coming of Jesus. It’s poetic justice that those who had the most responsibility for crucifying Jesus should see Him return in glory. As to the saved who will be raised in this special resurrection, the probability based on Daniel 12:2-3 is that they will be those who had been part of the last-day warning messages to the world, but who had died before the very end. [NOTE: See Explorer II, Study Guides #25 and #26 for an explanation of the first general resurrection (of the righteous) at the actual 2nd Coming of Jesus and the second general resurrection (of the wicked) at the end of the millennium.]