

God's Strange Act

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The How, When And Why Of The Seven Last Plagues

An Exposition of Revelation 15:5-8 and 16:1-11, 16:17-21.

The introduction to the seven last plagues commences with Revelation 15:5.

“After that I looked and behold.”

This expression denotes a new section or chapter. The prophet once again employs the principle of “repetition and enlargement”. This chapter deals in detail with the seven last plagues.

PLAGUES INTRODUCED BY A TEMPLE SCENE

“The temple of God was opened in heaven.” Revelation 15:5.

The book of Revelation is mostly a series of temple scenes. Revelation 14:14-20 revealed Jesus Christ outside the temple on the white cloud. However, directions continue to come from within the temple.

Why is the temple involved? The plague-angels emerge from the temple. This means that retribution upon the unsaved emanates from the temple. God the Father presides in the temple. Christ has moved out on the white cloud. He is about to come to earth to take possession of his kingdom. Why the unusual description of the temple?

“The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.” Verse 15.

The term “tabernacle of the testimony” is used in only one other place in the New Testament.

“The tabernacle of witness in the wilderness.” Acts 7:44 (or “The tent of the testimony.” N.E.B.)

The term is derived from the Old Testament where it refers to the Ten Commandments which comprise the great moral law of God. (See Exodus 31:18; 32:15, 16; 25:16; Numbers 17:7, 8, 10.)

Why are the Ten Commandments called “the testimony” or “witness”? The Ten Commandments are a testimony or witness to the person and character of God. A law is a revelation of the lawgiver. God's law is a revelation of the character and nature of God. As one author declared:

“The law is a transcript of God's character.” (1)

The expression “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony”, means it is the temple of God's law. Heaven is declaring its high estimation of the law. This is significant. Approximately seventy years after Calvary, the Revelator declared that the eternal temple, where the Most High reigns, that building containing the eternal throne, the central structure of the universe, is the temple of the testimony, the temple of the Law. It emphasizes that God's eternal law is the foundation of His throne and government.

“Justice [Hebrew: righteousness] and judgment are the habitation [margin: establishment] of thy throne.” Psalm 89:14.

“Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.” Psalm 97:2.

What is this righteousness which is the basis of God’s government? The Psalmist answers “All thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:172.

What is the significance of this introduction to the plagues which are the outpouring of divine wrath? It is rebellion against God’s law that brings this retribution.

“The law works wrath.” Romans 4:15.

“The law brings wrath.” RSV.

“The law inflicts punishment.” Weymouth.

God’s justice and punishment are not the result of caprice, emotion or anger but are based on righteous principle, His divine law. In His amazing mercy God provided an atonement for the broken law that all men might escape the law’s fearful penalty. However, at the close of the Day of Salvation, this is no longer available. The law now must take its course. All who have spurned the mercy of God must take the consequences.

“The seven angels came out of the temple having the seven plagues.” Verse 6.

The retribution for defiance of God’s law by worshipping the beast and his image etc., comes from the temple. Why the temple? The psalmist gives us the clue.

“I was envious when I saw the prosperity of the wicked until I went into the sanctuary [temple], then understood I their end.” Psalm 73:3, 17.

It is in the heavenly temple that the judgments of God are determined. The plagues are not the result of natural forces. They are dictated by God. They are superintended by Christ and the angels.

“The same shall drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, and he shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” Revelation 14:10.

“Clothed in pure and white linen.”

This reminds one of the attire of the priests in the earthly temple. The garments of the plague-angels represent purity of motive. Their work is just and righteous.

“One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels, seven golden vials full of the wrath of God.”

The cherubim are associated with the throne. They appear to be involved in the administration of the throne. (2) This would include the administration of justice. The Father is not autocratic - heavenly beings share in responsibility. They are in full agreement.

“The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.” Verse 8

In Revelation two kinds of smoke are featured in the heavenly temple. There is the smoke of the incense which mingles with the prayers of the saints, (8:3, 4), and the smoke of God’s glory and power. Isaiah the prophet was shown the same when he saw in vision the Lord upon his throne.

“The house was filled with smoke.” Isaiah 6:1-4.

God’s presence at Mt. Sinai was accompanied by smoke.

“And Mt. Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole mount quaked greatly.” Exodus 19:18.

Scripture speaks of “the fire of God’s jealousy”. This is godly jealousy (2 Corinthians 11:2). The Most High is bathed in “everlasting fire”. “Our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:29.

“And no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues were fulfilled.” Verse 8.

Here we are given a glimpse of the awfulness of God’s wrath. The original reads “no one was able to enter”. So fearful is the wrath of God that not even an angel can abide in his presence.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Hebrews 10:31.
“Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.” 2 Corinthians 5:11.

The recipients of this wrath are the rejectors of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12. What a warning! This speaks of the tremendous importance of these three messages.

“There was no men in the temple.”

Currently there is a man in the temple - “the man Christ Jesus.” The “one mediator between God and men.” (2 Timothy 2:5.) When the plagues commence, no one stands between guilty man and an offended God. Christ’s intercession has ceased. Likewise, the Holy Spirit, our spiritual intercessor on earth, is withdrawn from the earth. At present “He makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.” Romans 8:26. While Jesus interceded before God, the Holy Spirit was freely available. “I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever.” (John 14:16.) However, God warns, “My spirit shall not always strive with man” (Genesis 6:3.) Thus at the Close of Probation, the divine restraint will be withdrawn from men and the race will be under Satan’s complete control. Then will be completely fulfilled, the prediction, “in the last days perilous times shall come.” (2 Timothy 3:1.) As one author declares:

“The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.” (3)

SHOULD WE MAKE PREPARATION FOR THE PLAGUES

Scripture reveals that there is a certain type of preparation that will be essential. This is alluded to in the destruction of old Jerusalem.

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place.” Matthew 24:15.

The “holy place referred to the area of ground which extended several furlongs outside the city wall.”(4) This prediction referred to the armies of Imperial Rome, which besieged Jerusalem and destroyed it. (Luke 21:20-24.) What literal Rome did to literal Jerusalem is typical of what spiritual Rome (the Papacy) will endeavor to do to spiritual Jerusalem, the church. The instruction Jesus gave has now an application to the church.

PARALLELS BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND ‘THE REMNANT’

JERUSLAEM IN 70 AD

1. Literal Rome invaded literal Jerusalem.
2. Matthew 24:16 “Let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.”
3. Matthew 24:17 “him which is on the house top not to come down to take anything out of his house”, [i.e. take outside stairway from rooftop to ground.] Matthew 24:18 “neither let him that is in the field return to take his clothes.” [i.e. immediate flight.]
4. Matthew 24:19. “Woe to them that are with child and to those who give suck.”
5. Matthew 24:20. “Pray that your flight be not in the winter nor on the Sabbath day.” (See Appendix.)

LAT DAY REMNANT

1. Spiritual Rome will invade Spiritual Jerusalem -the Remnant.
2. The saints are also to leave the large cities and to later flee to the mountains. Isaiah 33:14-17.
3. When the sign is given, the saints must take flight immediately otherwise they will be caught and imprisoned.
4. A warning to the saints to cease multiplying when the end is near, for those who are pregnant or have infants it will be too great an ordeal.
5. The saints likewise in the end time will need to pray that the weather will not be severe at the time of their flight and also that the Sabbath will not be transgressed by flight.

The flight of the saints from the cities will be a blessing in disguise. While they will be compelled to forsake everything and exist amid the mountains and the wilderness regions, they will be separated from the rest of the population - from the unsaved - who are the worshippers of the beast and his image. Thus, when the deadly plagues fall, the saints being apart will escape most of the terrible effects of the judgments of God.

“The time is coming when large cities will be swept away and all should be warned of these coming judgments.” (5)

GOD’S ANSWER TO THE ATTACK UPON THE SAINTS

The plagues commence with...

“A great voice out of the temple.” Revelation 16:1. They end in the same manner.

“There came a great voice out of the temple.” Verse 17.

Why out of the temple? God is enthroned there. The plagues are under his direction. He is in control. They will not get out of hand. This is an assurance to the saints. Does God punish and kill, or is this a work that Satan is permitted to do? The plagues involve suffering and pain and the taking of life.

Undoubtedly millions will perish. Is not this a transgression of the principles of God’s holy law? Is not God bound by His own law? How can God kill? The answer is that God never transgresses His law. That is impossible. It is an expression of His very own nature. However, God in taking life, does not transgress his law because all life is His. Created beings are forbidden to unlawfully take life because life is not theirs to take. The sixth commandment means murder. Jesus said of the sixth commandment – “Thou shalt do no murder.” (Matthew 19:18.) On the other hand, God can lawfully take life because it is rightfully His to take. He is the giver of life and He is also the taker of life. The Creator must administer justice, otherwise He would be an unjust God. Therefore God is responsible for the plagues.

AREAS WHERE PLAGUES ARE Poured OUT

The plagues are poured upon six areas - earth, sea, waters, sun, atmosphere, peoples.

Are the plagues literal or symbolic? In the past the general view has been that six of the plagues are literal and one, the sixth, is symbolic. The sixth is the drying up of the Euphrates and this generally has been interpreted in a symbolic sense. Why should not the whole seven plagues be entirely literal or entirely symbolic?

It is curious to notice that in the prediction of the seven seals of Revelation 6 and 8:1, six of the seals are symbolic while one, the sixth, is literal. Likewise, in the prediction of the seven trumpets, six are symbolic

while one, the seventh, is literal. But in the prediction of the seven last plagues six are literal, while one - the sixth - is symbolic. Why this apparent inconsistency? This commentary, to date, has not an answer, unless it be for the same reason that Jesus spoke in parables. (Matthew 13:10-17.) God deliberately hides the truth from the insincere. Only the dedicated searcher will find the truth. (Matthew 7:6-8.) However, there is a principle as to why the sixth plague must be applied symbolically and the other six applied literally.

Six of the plagues are based upon the Old Testament description of the plagues of Egypt when God punished that nation and delivered his people Israel. In the book of Revelation the things pertaining to Egypt are applied in a literal sense. The sixth plague is based on the Old Testament description of ancient Babylon when she was punished and literal Israel was delivered from Babylonian captivity. In Revelation the things pertaining to Babylon have a symbolic or spiritual application.

THE FIRST PLAGUE

“There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshipped his image.” Verse 2.

Other translations render it:

- “A loathsome and painful sore.” T.C.N.T.
- “A foul and painful sore.” Amp. N.T.
- “A severe and malignant sore.” Lam.
- “A loathsome and malignant sore.” Phillips.
- “A foul and malignant sore.” N.E.B.
- “A terrible and painful sore.” G.N.B.

The Greek word is “helkos” which means “ulcer, a suppurating wound”. The Septuagint version uses the same word for the boils of one of the Egyptian plagues. (Exodus 9:9, 10)

So severe is the continuous pain of the sores that during the fifth plague it declares that “they gnawed their tongues for pain”. Nothing brings relief. Painkilling drugs will be either useless or non-existent. This plague is specifically “upon the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshipped his image.” Verse 2.

This harks back to the third angel’s message and its terrible warning. Now it is being fulfilled, reminding us that God never wastes words, he always means what he says. How important this reveals the third angel’s message to be. Is this plague worldwide? Yes! Because the mark of the beast will be world-wide.

“All the world wondered after the beast.”

“All that dwell on the earth shall worship him.” Revelation 13:3, 8.
How then does one reconcile the statements that the plagues will not be universal?

“This plague will not be universal” (6)

“The plagues are not universal or the inhabitants would be wholly cut off, yet they will be the most awful scourges that have ever been known to mortals.” (7)

What does the term “universal” mean?

“The whole world or the whole of created things.” “Applicable to every member of a genus.” (8)

Will the plagues fall on every member of the race? No! They fall on the rejectors of Christ but they do not fall upon those who “keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.” Seeing that the three

angels' messages go to "every nation, kindred, tongue and people", that is, the whole world, the plagues then must also be worldwide but not universal. There is a distinct difference between the terms "universal" and "worldwide". As the author quoted above has written:

"The people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her [America's] example [in enforcing the mark of the beast]." (9)

THE SECOND PLAGUE

"The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea." Verse 3.

In this plague the world's oceans are affected. They become as blood. In what way? Some believe that they will coagulate like blood but the inference seems to be that the sea will become deadly poisonous and putrid. The waters turning to blood in the plague upon Egypt did not coagulate, but became poisonous and all the fish died. (Exodus 7:17-20.) Likewise, with this plague, the oceans become poisonous and "every living soul died in the sea". It is a recognized medical fact that in the conducting of autopsies, extreme care is required because the blood of a dead person contains very toxic qualities and is extremely putrid. When we visualize the mammoth amount of life in the oceans, what a horrendous calamity this will be. Probably the dead sea-life by the multiplied millions of tons will be washed ashore layer upon layer, maybe for miles in extent. Not only will the harbors, river mouths and beaches be choked with rotting flesh but the overpowering stench will pollute the air for miles and make life a misery.

There have been two examples of such an experience on a small local scale off the coast of Florida as reported by the United States Admiralty and published by the "Associated Press".

"The 'Red Tide' Reappears."

"The reappearance of a 'red tide' which experts say is caused by tiny sea organisms known as 'gymnodinium' has been reported by commercial fishermen in waters off the Gulf coast. Dead deep-sea fish are stated to be strewn along the beaches. One fisherman is reported to have been rendered unconscious by fumes given off by organisms. Bulldozers were required to clear beaches of dead fish when the reddish waters were last reported in January."

The Associated Press report says that the "red tide" has "reappeared". Its first appearance is detailed in United States Admiralty records kept at Washington, DC. At that time the extent of the strange occurrence was a strip of water off the Florida coast three hundred miles long by forty miles wide. All fish in this strip of ocean died and the water had the appearance of blood and also a poisonous effect on sea-life. (10)

Will the second plague be universal? No, but undoubtedly it will be world-wide because, "All nations have drunk of the wine of wrath of her fornication." Revelation 18:3.

Therefore all nations, all the unsaved, must be involved in this punishment meted out by heaven.

THE THIRD PLAGUE

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood." Verse 4.

In a few short words the third catastrophe is described. All the drinking water of the world becomes blood. But not "as the blood of a dead man" which is extremely toxic. The waters will probably be like blood in appearance and odor. In other words, all the domestic waters will become extremely nauseating. Of the Egyptian plagues, upon which six of these plagues are based, one is described as follows:

"Stretch your hand upon the waters of Egypt, their streams, rivers, their ponds, their pools both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone, that they may become blood." Exodus 7:19.

When you wash your car, it will be red like blood. When you wash your clothes they will be red like blood, when you attempt to swim, bathe or shower, it will be as in blood, but with an overpowering stench. When you wash your dishes and cook your food it will be red with a nauseating smell. But worst of all when you attempt to drink, all liquids will be red and repulsive. The natural reaction will be, that the population will refuse to drink. The fourth plague compels them to drink.

THE FOURTH PLAGUE

“The fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun and power was given to him to scorch men with fire and men were scorched with great heat.” Verses 8, 9.

What must one do in a heat wave? One must drink and the only liquid available whether it be soft, hard, bottled, brewed, boiled or filtered, will be the blood red, foul-smelling repulsive fluid. But because of the unrelenting, inescapable heat, they will be compelled to drink, drink, drink. Probably all sources of power will be out of action and air-conditioning, etc., will be non-existent.

If they resort to the beaches for relief, they will be confronted by vast masses of rotting flesh with an odor that will drive them away. If they resort to the forests or reserves in the hope that some relief might be found in their shades, they will be driven out by the far flung forest fires which will add to the heat.

“Me day of the Lord is at hand and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Fire hath devoured the pastures. Rivers of water are dried up.” Joel 1:15-20.

Undoubtedly, this plague will result in the destruction of the food supplies of the world. Fruit and vegetables, etc., will wither and famine will afflict the world as never before.

“The wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence. There shall be many dead bodies in every place, they shall cast them forth with silence.” (11)

What agony! What torture! Each plague adds to the agony. Does not this reveal our God as a God of cruelty? Is he not vindictive? The unsaved have lost eternal life, why torment them? Is not this playing into the hands of Satan? This is what scripture describes as “God’s strange work.”

“The Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” Isaiah 28:21.

Never before has God exhibited his wrath as he will in the seven last plagues. At isolated times a few drops of wrath have fallen upon sinners as revealed in scripture, but in the plagues his wrath is filled up. The last generation of man will be the generation that will be given more opportunities, more privileges and more enlightenment than any other generation in history. Their rejection of truth and their persecution of the saints, will make them more guilty - the most guilty generation of all time.

Notice the verdict of the sinless beings who will witness the terrible scenes.

“And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and was and shall be, because thou hast judged [punished] thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and thou has given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another [angel] out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” Revelation 16:5-7.

Will the blood of saints be shed in the coming time of trouble? Yes, but only prior to the close of probation. After probation closes, none of the saints will suffer martyrdom. Why? Because martyrdoms are permitted for the purpose of witness, to convince men of the truth of God and to lead them to Christ. After the Close of Probation no one needs to be convinced. All have made their decision, the Day of Salvation is ended.

Therefore, martyrdoms would be superfluous. At this time Michael (Christ) delivers his people (Daniel 12:1). They are not permitted to be martyred.

However, the death decree is issued and a worldwide attempt is made to rid the earth of dissent.

“He had power to give life to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause [compel] that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed.” Revelation 13:15.

While the unsaved will not be permitted to take the lives of the saints after the close of probation, God will nevertheless take the intention for the deed.

“By condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood as if it had been shed by their hands.” (12)

In these plagues we have a demonstration of the justice of God. Woe betide the man or power that afflicts his faithful people.

“Vengeance belongs to me. I will repay said the Lord.” (Hebrews 10:30.)

Are these two plagues worldwide? Yes, undoubtedly, but they will not be universal. The death decree against the saints will involve all nations.

“Many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bandage.”(13)

“There will be in different lands a simultaneous movement for their destruction.” (14)

“Every country on the globe will follow the example of the United States.” (15)

On the basis of the statements above, the third and fourth plagues must also be worldwide.

THE FLIGHT OF THE SAINTS

How will the saints fare amid the devastations of the plagues? The following statement reveals that they will feel some of the effects of the plagues.

“The people of God will not be free from suffering, but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah, will not pass by one of his self-sacrificing children. He will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied.” (16)

Various scriptures reveal how God will succor his people during the plagues:

“The sinners in Zion [the church] are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire [the fourth plague]. He that walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he that despises the gain of oppressions [margin: deceits] that shakes his hand from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high [heights or high places] his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. Your eyes shall see the king in his beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off.” Isaiah 33:14-17.

The above scripture reveals that the saints will find refuge in the “high places”, that is in the mountain regions, in the wilderness.

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water and dry land springs of water.” Isaiah 41:17, 18.

The ninety-first Psalm has been recognized as having a final application to the time of trouble in the seven last plagues.

“He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence [first plague]. He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shall thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night [fifth plague] nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday [seventh plague]. A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” Psalm 91:1-11.

When all drinking water is as blood, probably God will bring water from the rocks just as he did with Israel in the Sinai wilderness. When there is no food and the saints face starvation, God may provide manna, just as he did in the long ago with Israel.

THE FIFTH PLAGUE

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat [throne] of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain.” Verse 10.

The word “seat” in the Greek actually means “throne”. This means that the fifth plague is poured upon the throne -the centre of control of the Beast, or of the Papacy. This must be the Vatican. The result or effect of this plague is darkness, but not the Vatican only; “his kingdom was filled with darkness”. The kingdom of the Papacy by this time will be worldwide for “All the world wondered after the beast.”

“All that dwell on the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life.” Revelation 13:3, 8.

This means, then, that the entire globe will be enshrouded in the blackest of night. The world has rejected the spiritual light of the lamb for the spiritual darkness of the beast, and now God gives them literal darkness. It will be so intense that nothing will be able to penetrate it. As the prophet declared:

“That day is a day of wrath [of God] a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess a day of clouds and thick darkness. “ Zephaniah 1:15.

It will be a darkness that will be felt as well as seen. The darkness of the Egyptian plague involved,

“Darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which maybe felt...and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.” Exodus 10:21, 22.

With the sun’s rays blacked out, which will result in intense cold, the unsaved must experience terrible misery. Whereas in the previous plague there was extreme heat and hunger and thirst, now there is extreme cold, with hunger and thirst amid the impenetrable, terrifying darkness and from which there is no relief. Understandably, all heating systems and power supplies will have broken down and in the concentrated cold, the deep ulcerated sores that cover their bodies will be so painful that “they will gnaw their tongues” because of the awful agony.

The wording of the original Greek indicates that the darkness involves a period of time. The darkness is not short and swift. This leads to the question as to the length of time that the plagues continue. When the purpose of the plagues is understood, we believe it is apparent that time is required for that purpose to be

realized. On this ground, we believe that the period of the plagues would have to be much longer than a few days or weeks. The Revelator, in alluding to the period of the plagues, specifically uses the term “one day” and according to the usual interpretation of time in a symbolic prophecy, this represents a period of one year. (17) However, some have concluded that because the term “one hour” is used thrice in Revelation 18 in regard to Babylon’s punishment, that the plagues must be of very short duration.

When the three expressions of “one hour” are analyzed however, it is quite clear that they apply to the final dissolution of Babylon.

“In one hour is thy judgment [punishment] come.” Revelation 18:10.

Verse 9 reveals that this refers to the symbolic burning of Babylon.
“For in one hour so great riches is come to naught.” Revelation 18:17.

Verse 15 reveals that the one hour refers to Babylon’s torment.
“For in one hour is she made desolate.” Revelation 18:19.

Verse 18 reveals that the one hour refers to the symbolic burning of Babylon. We believe that the “one hour” of punishment will be meted out in the last three of the seven plagues. They are especially for Babylon. The fifth plague is upon the throne of the beast, the central power of Babylon. The sixth plague is upon the Euphrates, the numerous peoples supporting Babylon and the seventh plague completes the punishment of Babylon.

“And the great city was divided into three parts, and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” Verse 19.

Why is Babylon divided into three parts? In order to deal out appropriate punishment. Some sections of Babylon are more guilty than others. According to verses 13, 14 the three parts of Babylon are the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet. In the following chapter it is shown that these three symbols represents. (18)

Dragon: Kings, rulers and governors under the brand of antichrist. (19)
Beast: The Papacy.
False Prophet: Apostate Protestantism.

Of the three, the Beast and the False Prophet will be more guilty. They comprise the spiritual leadership of Babylon. They will deceive and lead the rest of mankind to perdition. Their punishment will be ten times greater than that of other sections of Babylon.

“Their suffering as tenfold greater than that of their people.” (20)

We suggest that the first four plagues fall upon the apostate Babylonian world. Four often denotes universality or the whole world. The final three concentrate upon the leadership of Babylon.

If the “one day” of Revelation 18:8 refers to one year, is there any reason why heaven would require a year for the plagues to be fulfilled? We believe there is. Not only are the plagues an administration of divine punishment, but they are also a revelation of heaven’s righteousness and justice. The plagues-will reveal the true character and spirit of the unsaved and the justice of their punishment. From an external view it could appear that the majority of the world’s inhabitants have been deceived by the leaders of Babylon and may not necessarily be in rebellion against God. Therefore afflicting them with the plagues could be seen to be harsh and unjust. In this light, a period of time would be essential in order to demonstrate the true spirit of the unsaved. A few days or weeks would be insufficient, we suggest, to reveal this.

In the first three plagues it is significant to notice that there is no apparent reaction by the unsaved against God. However, in the fourth, fifth and seventh plagues, the unsaved finally give vent to their true feelings.
“And men blasphemed the name of God and they repented not, to give him glory.” Verse 9.

“And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores and repented not of their deeds.” Verse 11.

“And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.” Verse 21.

We suggest that the normal reaction of humans to such extreme pain would be to cry to God for mercy and relief. However, in the first three plagues there is no apparent reaction, but when the fourth plague falls upon them, they finally burst forth in rebellion, blaspheming God and REPENTED NOT. This will reveal to the universe the true state of the unsaved. Though they had been misled, deluded, hoodwinked by the religious leaders, nevertheless, they themselves at heart, are in rebellion against God.

Another evidence that the plagues will require more than a short period of time is that in the sixth plague, the supporters of the religious leaders withdraw their support and turn against the religious leaders. It will require time for this to develop, because at the commencement of the plagues the supporters of the religious leaders are seen to be in complete agreement with their leaders, whereas in the sixth plague their eyes have been opened and they realize that their religious leaders have deluded and used them for their own ambitious ends. This, we suggest, will also require time.

Further evidence regarding the time span of the plagues, we suggest, could be in the typical experience of the Jews in the days of Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus of Persia, as recorded in the book of Esther. A decree was enacted against God’s ancient people, that on a certain date, eleven months after the issuance of the decree, the Jews were to be put to death. (21) This experience is a picture of how the death decree against the saints is to be enacted in the end-time.

“The decree which is to go forth against the people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jew in the time of Esther.” (22)

The book of Esther records how Haman, the Jews’ enemy, initiated the decree and set the exact date on which the decree was issued and the exact date thereafter on which it was to be put into effect. According to Ezra 3:6-15, an eleven month period elapsed between the issuance of the decree and its execution. Seeing the decree against the saints in the end-time “will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus” we suggest that the period between the issuance of the death decree of Revelation 13:15 and its execution could likewise be a period of eleven months.

If this application is valid, it means that if the death decree is issued around the close of probation, then its execution would be eleven months later. This is what will lead to the events of the sixth plague. It also means that the duration of the plagues would need to be about twelve months or one prophetic day.”

The sixth plague is dealt with under the three titles:

1. “The Three Powers that Will Lead the World to Armageddon”,
2. “The Drying up of the Great River Euphrates” and,
3. “The Kings from the Sun rising.”

THE SEVENTH PLAGUE

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying,

“It is done.” Verse 17.

God’s wrath has been manifested against rebellion. Now it done, it is over, it is completed. Justice is satisfied. God has no pleasure in the administration of punishment, but it must be done and undoubtedly heaven is well-pleased to see it concluded.

“And there were voices and thundering and lightning.” Verse 18.

This describes the awe-inspiring events that end the plagues and usher in the Second Advent of Christ. As one author describes it,

“Fierce lightning leap from the heavens, enveloping the earth in a sheet of flame. Above the terrific roar of thunder, voices, mysterious and awful, declare the doom of the wicked.” (23)

“And there was a great earthquake, such as was not, since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great-and the cities of the nations fell, and every island fled away and the mountains were not found.” Verses 18-20.

This will be the greatest earthquake of all time and corresponds to the second earthquake of the sixth seal of Revelation 6.

“And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” Revelation 6:14.

In this final plague the earth is made a desolate wilderness. All the proud works of men are brought to the dust. The lofty skyscrapers that presently pierce the sky will come tumbling down. The cities of earth with their teeming millions are soon to disappear.

“The time is coming when large cities will be swept away.” (24)

“the proudest cities of the earth are laid low. The lordly palaces, upon which the world’s great men have lavished their wealth in order to glorify themselves crumble to ruin before their eyes.”(25)

No wonder God instructs his people beforehand to leave the cities and to retire to quiet country places. (26)

But how will God’s people fare when amid the mountains, the mightiest of earthquakes levels the mountains and fills the valleys? The author of *The Great Controversy* declares:

“The mountains shake like a reed in the wind and ragged rocks are cast on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Its surface is breaking up, mountain chains are sinking. Inhabited islands disappear. The sea ports are swallowed up by the angry waters.” (27)

The saints of God will share in one of the most awe inspiring experiences ever to transpire upon the earth. As the psalmist wrote,

“God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Psalm 46:1-3.

“He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Psalm 91:10-12.

At this time the ministry of angels will be a special feature in the protection and deliverance of the saints.

“And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent.” Verse 21.

A talent amounts to approximately 56lbs. Imagine the devastation as these mammoth hailstones hurtle from space and smash onto the earth. This will complete the demolition of human civilization and turn the earth into a worldwide abyss.

Some scientists are convinced that huge quantities of ice exist in outer space. It is believed that some of the giant satellites of our planetary system could be composed of ice. Additionally, the delicate wispy cirrus clouds are claimed to be ice crystals floating four to seven miles above the earth.

In Siberia there exists a giant crater two miles in diameter and 50 miles in circumference. On examination it was found that instead of containing metal, it was filled with mud. The flattening of forests for miles around indicated that a cosmic iceberg had hit the earth. It was so immense that the friction of the earth's atmosphere failed to melt it. Scripture intimates that God has in reserve huge quantities of ice for such a time as the above.

"Hast thou entered into the treasure of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasure of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war." Job 38:22, 23.

As the psalmist sang under inspiration,

"Fire and hail, snow and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word." Psalm 148:8

This is the conclusion of the wrath of God in the seven last plagues. The plagues climax in the return of Christ who rewards every man according as his work shall be. To the remnant of the unsaved who still remain, it means destruction; to the remnant of the saints who have passed through them unscathed but have experienced the marvelous protection of God, it means life everlasting.

APPENDIX

Some mistakenly claim that the reason Jesus gave instruction regarding the Sabbath was because on the Sabbath, in Jerusalem, the gates were shut, and his disciples would not be able to escape. But in the siege of Jerusalem the gates were shut continuously. It is therefore obvious that the reason for Jesus' instruction, was that 40 years after the resurrection, the Lord desired his people to observe the fourth commandment.

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