

# **The Seven Last Plagues**

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## **Introduction**

Before exploring the topic of the Seven Last Plagues, we will consider a prophecy in Daniel 11-12 that sets the context for those plagues. This prophecy concerns a conflict between the King of the North and the King of the South, a conflict in which God's Christian people will eventually become engaged. This prophecy concerns what Daniel calls the time of the end.

## **When the Time of the End Begins**

According to Daniel 11:40-12:13, *the time of the end* is a period of time which culminates in the world's greatest time of trouble (12:1) and in resurrection (12:2). In his vision Daniel sees three heavenly beings, two standing on the two sides of a river and one who was above the river (12:5-6). One of those standing on the riverbank (v. 6) asked the one above the river when *these wonders be*. He was told that they would occur after a period of persecution lasting for *a time, times, and half a time* (v. 7). This is the same time period allotted to Daniel 7's little horn power in Daniel 7:25, which we discovered in "The Antichrist Prophecies" was calculated as a symbolic period of 1,260 literal years based on the year-day principle that a symbolic day represents a literal year. Then we also dated those same years as running from 538 to 1798. Therefore, Daniel's *time of the end* can be dated as beginning in 1798 and ending at the Second Coming of Jesus.

## **The Battle Between the King of the North and the King of the South**

The actions of the King of the North and the King of the South are related in Daniel 11:40-45 with a special focus on the King of the North. The *time of the end* begins with the King of the South attacking the latter (v. 40), and then the King of the North responds with an offensive of his own (v. 40). At some point this King of the North enters the *Glorious Land* (v. 41) and eventually defeats what appears to include the King of the South (vv. 43-44). Without the united opposition against him, the King of the North will be *troubled* by news from *the east and the north* and proceed *with great fury to destroy and annihilate many* (v. 44). In preparing to do so, he *shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain* (v. 45), where he finally meets his end (v. 45). His end is facilitated by the world's greatest time of trouble initiated by heaven (12:1), which then results in a resurrection (12:2).

The major players in this prophecy are the King of the North and the King of the South. They are identified in the next two paragraphs.

### King of the North

However the King of the North is interpreted it is clear that God's people are his *ultimate* target (v. 45) because the *glorious holy mountain* in verse 45 is identified in Scripture as Mount Zion (Psalms 48:1-2; 87:1-2). Zion, the holy mountain, and Jerusalem are equated with each other in Joel 3:17 and Zechariah 8:3. Moreover, the New Testament equates Mount Zion with *heavenly Jerusalem*, which is specifically the Christian Church (Hebrews 12:22-23). This designation in the Old Testament of an enemy of God's people as the King of the North historically points to Babylon since the Babylonians had to come from the north, following the Fertile Crescent instead of heading straight across the dangerous Arabian Desert to attack ancient Israel. It is true that Assyria came from the north as well, but Babylon was by far the greatest repeated threat that came from the north. Since this entire conflict is placed in *the time of the end* (after 1798), the King of the North must be symbolic Babylon rather than literal. We noticed in "The Antichrist Prophecies" that end-time Babylon represents the Papacy and the Protestant churches that follow her.

### King of the South

Daniel 11:5-9 (especially vv. 8-9) specifically identify the King of the South as Egypt. In Daniel 11:40-43 the focus on Egypt is on its being the *original* primary target of the King of the North. Geographically, Egypt had to come up from the south to attack ancient Israel. If the King of the North is symbolic in Daniel 11:40-45, then it follows that the King of the South (as Egypt) must also be symbolic, in addition to the other geographical references in those verses. A symbol is only used if its literal meaning or history make it an appropriate representation of what it symbolizes. Ancient Egypt is particularly associated with Israel in the story of the exodus, where Pharaoh's spiritual attitude was defiance against the God of Israel (Exodus 5:2). In other words, symbolic Egypt represents the modern forces of secularism, humanism, and atheism.

### Actions Involving the King of the North

The *time of the end* begins with the King of the South attacking the King of the North. Does history confirm that the forces of secularism, humanism, and atheism began an attack on Christianity? Yes. The year 1798 fell at the end of the French Revolution, which indeed was a secular force that even temporarily outlawed the Bible and Christianity and erected a monument to the goddess of Reason. Historians recognize that the French Revolution inspired the modern development of secularism, communism, and terrorism that continues to this day, although communism has been diminished in its influence since the early 1990s' end of the Cold War.

The prophecy states that the King of the North will eventually counterattack with success (v. 40) and enter *the Glorious Land* (v. 41). According to the Old Testament, the *Glorious Land* refers to Palestine in general or Judah and Jerusalem more specifically (Psalms 48:2; 50:2; 106:21-26; Jeremiah 3:19; Lamentations 2:15; Ezekiel 20:6, 15; Zechariah 7:14). If the King of the North actually enters the *Glorious Land* in verse 41 but only sets up his forces for an invasion of Mount Zion in verse 45, then the *Glorious Land* and the *glorious holy mountain* must represent two different entities. Because the *glorious holy mountain* in this prophecy represents the more precise location of God's end-time people, the *Glorious Land* must represent the general area in which God's people are. Knowing that these places are not literal geographical places, we conclude that the *Glorious Land* represents the religious arena in which God's people operate.

This in turn suggests that the victories of the King of the North in verse 40 were of a more political nature which were a necessary prelude before embarking on a more explicit religious campaign (in v. 41). This religious campaign will at least culminate in the mark of the beast crisis over the Sabbath issue (see also our paper, "The Case for the Sabbath"). Communist nations clearly are the most powerful organized forces of secularism and atheism, and their defeat would probably be necessary, or at least desirable, as a prelude to launching an explicit religious effort on a global scale. In the period from 1989 to 1991, communism dramatically and quickly fell in all of Europe. Historically, it is now clear that the Papacy played a major behind-the-scenes role in that fall. These events, then, seem to at least partially fulfill the victories alluded to in verse 40. Whether or not that means that communism will fall elsewhere (China, Vietnam, and Cuba) remains to be seen.

Verse 41 also mentions Edom, Moab, and Ammon as escaping the King of the North. Isaiah 11, which refers mostly to the end-time because of its references to the destruction of the wicked (v. 4; cf. Revelation 19:15; II Thessalonians 2:8) and the taming of wild beasts (Isaiah 11:6-9), says that Edom, Moab, and Ammon *shall obey them [God's people]* (11:14). This means that these nations represent those who will be converted to the truth during the final crisis.

Daniel 11:44 says *that news from the east and the north shall trouble him* (the King of the North). Because the prophecy does not concern literal geography or nations, these compass directions must have spiritual significance. According to Ezekiel 43:1-4, God's glory comes from the east. This is also the direction from which Jesus appears to come at His Second Coming (Matthew 24:27) and from which an angel descends from heaven to seal God's people (Revelation 7:2). The north was originally associated with Mount Zion (Psalm 48:2) and heaven and its throne (Isaiah 14:13-14; Ezekiel 1:4), which makes the *true* King of the North the Lord Himself and the King of the North in this prophecy the great usurper of the Lord's authority.

The *news* coming from the east and the north that enrages the King of the North must therefore be heavenly news, which is something that would be directly proclaimed by God's people rather than

by God Himself. In this context, the *news* must be the truth warning against end-time Babylon's false teachings and her efforts to enforce them, especially the honoring of Sunday in opposition to the Biblical seventh-day Sabbath. As a result of the proclamation of the truth in opposition to Babylon, the latter will seek to *destroy and annihilate* God's faithful people (v. 44). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for *annihilate* here is a word that means *to consecrate or devote something [usually a sacrifice or burnt offering] to complete destruction*. This reinforces the view that the annihilation that the King of the North has in mind for God's people is for religious reasons.

When the King of the North turns his attention to God's people in order to annihilate them, he first establishes the *tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain* (Daniel 11:45). A palace is a symbol of political power, and the expression *the tents of his palace* seems to refer to a political power's army encampment. This is confirmed by the parallel of the Roman army that surrounded Jerusalem as a prelude to its actual invasion in A.D. 70 (Luke 21:20). In geographical terms, *the seas* must be a singular sea because nothing can be located *between* more than one sea and something else (here the *glorious holy mountain*). Geographically, the word *seas* here refers to the Mediterranean Sea in the poetic plural characteristic of Biblical Hebrew.

The point is that Babylon will set up the global machinery to finally execute God's people who oppose her. The good news is that Babylon *shall come to his end, and no one will help him* (Daniel 11:45). In the context of this prophecy, this ultimate defeat of Babylon will be facilitated by the world's greatest time of trouble when Michael stands up (Daniel 12:1). According to Revelation 16-18, this time of trouble will be the Seven Last Plagues because the seventh plague causes Babylon to fall (Revelation 16:19) and the plagues are aimed at Babylon (Revelation 18:4, 8, where the plagues are called "*her plagues*").

### **The 1,290 and 1,335 Days**

Before ending our exposition of this prophecy, let us examine the other two time elements at the end of the book of Daniel. In addition to the 3 ½ times previously mentioned as referred to in Daniel 12:7, this prophecy refers to the 1,290 days (12:11) and the 1,335 days (12:12). Note the relationship between the 3 ½ times (or 1,260 days) and the 1,290 days in the following diagram:

- A the time of the end--12:4
- B 1,260 days (or 3 ½ times)—12:7
- A<sup>1</sup> the time of the end—12:9
- B<sup>1</sup> the 1,290 days—12:11

Just as A and A<sup>1</sup> are parallel, so then are B and B<sup>1</sup>. This relationship is confirmed by the fact that each set of verses—verses 4-7 and verses 9-11—begins with a statement that Daniel's book should

be sealed until *the time of the end* and follows by a reference to the persecution of God's people and then to a time period. Certainly, their parallelism does not exist in the sense that the days are of the same length, for one is 30 days longer than the other. Therefore, since the emphasis is on the *end* of the same period of persecution, the 1,260 days and the 1,290 days are parallel in that they both end at the same time. Therefore, since the 1,260 days ended in 1798, so did the 1,290 days.

Remember that the 1,260 days began in 538 (see chapter 9, volume II of our book). If you subtract 30 from 538, you reach the year 508. Something of significance must have happened in that year related to the setting up *the abomination of desolation* (12:11). Daniel 11:31-35 refers to a time of persecution as an *abomination of desolation*, which is somehow connected to the taking away of the *daily* (without the word for *sacrifice* in the original Hebrew text). Daniel 12:11 indicates that taking away of the *daily* will precede the setting up of the *abomination of desolation*. Thus, we should look for an event in 508 that helped the Papacy to begin its work of taking away the *daily*, explained in chapter 10, volume II of our book as the Papacy's obscuring of Christ's continual ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

In 508 Clovis, the king of the Franks and a Catholic ally of the Papacy, made peace with the leader of a league of Arian tribes, Arian being a reference to those Christians who believed, in opposition to the Papacy, that Christ was a created being and not equal with the Father. This peace agreement ended all *united* opposition to the full development of the Papacy's power even though it was 30 years later (in 538) that the last *individual* Arian tribe was defeated.

In verse 12 a blessing is pronounced on those who wait until the 1,335 days. Since the 1,335 days is an extension of 45 days after the 1,290 days, which are literal 1,290 years, then 1798 plus 45 equals 1843. We noted in chapter 10, volume II of our book that the 2,300-day prophecy ended in 1844. And from chapter 12, volume II of our book we learned that the Millerite movement went through the Great Disappointment that same year as a result of an incorrect interpretation of that prophecy. But 1843 saw the peak in enthusiasm before the year of the Great Disappointment. It was truly a blessed time for those believers.

### **The Seven Last Plagues**

We have just seen that the time of trouble in Daniel 12:1, which interrupts and defeats the religious and political forces persecuting God's people, must be the Seven Last Plagues. Now let us examine those plagues, described principally in Revelation 16.

In Revelation 15:5, the apostle John looks in vision and *sees the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened*. The expression *the tabernacle of the testimony* can refer either to the tabernacle as a whole (Exodus 38:21; Numbers 9:15; 18:2; Acts 7:44) or to the Most Holy

Place (Numbers 17:7-10) in particular. The point is that it is God's temple in heaven. 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), which is an appropriate sanctuary scene with which to introduce the Seven Last Plagues because the Fourth Commandment (the Sabbath) is the point of special controversy in the end-time.

As John looked at the scene, *out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands* (v. 6). The fact that these seven angels with the seven plagues come out of the sanctuary in heaven where God dwells means that it cannot be correctly claimed that the Seven Last Plagues represents the passive wrath of God in which He merely moves away and allows Satan to attack the end-time wicked. This is undoubtedly the active wrath of God. Coming from the very presence of God also means that these angels have His authority to pour these plagues upon the wicked, as does the fact that their attire reminds us of part of Jesus' attire in Revelation 1:13.

In verse 7 those seven angels are given *seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God*. The *golden bowls* remind us of the *golden censer* that was used that brought incense to the *golden altar* of incense in Revelation 8:3. It had once been filled with incense as representative of the prayers of the saints (8:4). Now *golden bowls* are used to pour out the wrath of God. This connection to the altar of incense suggests that the plagues come as a result of the prayers of the saints.

In verse 6 John sees seven angels with the seven plagues come out of the temple. After this he saw that the *temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed* (v. 8). This is surely an echo of what happened at the dedication of Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple, when the glory of the Lord filled each sanctuary so that none of the priests could minister in it (Exodus 40:34-35; I Kings 8:10-11; cf. Isaiah 6:4; Ezekiel 10:4; 44:4).

When probation closes for the world, no one can figuratively enter into God's presence, which has the effect of Jesus ending His mediation as our High Priest. Everyone has fixed his character in the direction of the Lord or in Satan's direction, and both are thus ripe for the harvest (mentioned in Revelation 14:14-20).

### The Actual Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 16:1-21)

Before addressing each of the seven plagues, there are five observations that should be made. First, these Seven Last Plagues are parallel to the Seven Last Trumpets in Revelation 8:6-11:14. Both feature the judgments of God. However, those judgments are only partial in the Seven Trumpets while they are complete and total in the Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 15:1; 14:10).

Second, the Seven Last Plagues are literal, not figurative, with the exception of the sixth plague, although they point to certain symbolic meanings. They are reminiscent of the ten plagues that fell on Egypt in the time of Moses. Then the first three affected everyone who lived in Egypt, while the last seven only affected the Egyptians. Thus, the Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 15:1), like the seven last of the ten 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.

Third, they are sequential in nature. This can be seen in the fact that each plague after the first one falls when the word *Then* is used. Therefore, like the Seven Seals and the Seven Trumpets, each of the Seven Last Plagues will end before its subsequent one begins. The only exception in the Seven Trumpets was the movement from the fifth to the sixth trumpet, which represented the idea of intensification.

Fourth, each plague will not kill everyone, or else there would be no one left after the first plague. Note also that verse 11 refers to some of the recipients of the first plague who are still living during the fifth plague.

Finally, the Seven Last Plagues are of a short but unknown duration. If they were not of relatively short duration, every wicked person would be dead before the plague ended. Some have interpreted the *one day* for the plagues in Revelation 18:8 as symbolically representing a period of one year on the basis of the year-day principle. But Revelation 18:10, 17, 19 also refers to the period of *one hour*, which means that these time elements are simply used to describe the period of the Seven Last Plagues as a short time.

#### *The First Plague (v. 2)*

The first plague was *a foul and loathsome sore*. The Greek word for *foul* is a word that is actually the opposite of the word for *good*, which would make the word *bad* a better translation. When this word is used in conjunction with the Greek word for *loathsome*, the first word indicates bad in character or nature and the second word bad in its effect (malignant). The Greek word for *sore* is used by the Septuagint (LXX) of the boils in the sixth plague in Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11), of Job's boils (Job 2:7), and of sores that were leprosy (Leviticus 13:18-27). Putting all of this information together paints a very bleak picture of this first plague, one from which many will surely die, although some will survive.

### *The Second Plague (v. 3)*

The second plague was poured out on the sea, and *it became blood*. Note that the text does not say that the sea became *like* blood but that it became blood. And proof of that is that every living thing in the sea died.

### *The Third Plague (vv. 4-7)*

In the third plague the rivers and springs of water *became blood* (v. 4). Again, the text does not say the rivers and springs of water became *like* blood but that they became blood. Even though the text does not explicitly state it, this means that every living thing in the rivers and springs will also die from this third plague. It will obviously be devastating for people, animals, and plants that depend upon water for survival.

John hears the angel here declare, *You are righteous, O Lord...Because You have judged these things* (v. 5). This seems to echo part of the Song of Moses and the Lamb sung by those on the sea of glass in 15:3-4.

*The One who is and who was and who is to be*. This is probably an echo of Revelation 1:4, 8, which is a reference to God the Father. Here, however, the Greek text does not contain the words *and who is to be*, probably because the future has arrived in the sense of the final tribulation against the wicked.

In the Greek text, the clause in verse 6, *they have shed the blood of saints and prophets* the verb *shed* means *poured out*, which reminds us of 6:9-11, where the metaphor of the blood of the martyrs as having been poured out at the base of the Altar of Burnt Offering, indicating that they were sacrificed for God. The inclusion of *prophets* here probably points to the inclusion of God's martyrs in all ages. Even though the wicked forces at the end-time did not personally execute those martyred in the past, the spirit of persecution will be the same at the end-time and promoted by the same Devil as was that in the second seal. Furthermore, the end-time saints will be sealed before the Seven Last Plagues begin in order to be protected from them (see Revelation 7 in the context of 6:17). Therefore, none of those *saints* will actually be killed after that. Nevertheless, the intention on the part of the wicked forces to execute those who refused the mark of the beast makes the former just as guilty as if they had, in fact, executed them. See Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28 for Jesus' teaching that those who desire to do evil things are as guilty as if they had carried them out physically and literally.

The angel also exclaims that this plague **is** *their just due* (v. 6). The fact that the wicked are given *blood to drink* (v. 6) is an illustration of the principle that the punishment must fit the crime. Those who in spirit were just as guilty as executing the faithful followers of Jesus in the days of the

Roman Empire; those who killed the end-time faithful in advance of the general death decree; and those who will have killed the end-time faithful in their hearts will all be deserving of drinking blood themselves. Therefore, the third plague is poetic justice.

#### *The Fourth Plague (vv. 8-9)*

The fourth plague brought scorching heat from the sun upon the wicked. The statement here in verse 8 that *power was given to him to scorch men with fire [by the sun]* is actually rendered with the word for *it* in place of the word for *him*. This conveys the idea that the sun was given divine permission to scorch men with fire, another example of a divine passive. Given that the final worship showdown is over which authority to honor through the choice of honoring either God's Sabbath or Sunday, the day of the sun, this plague makes more sense to us to take it as literal. God seems to say that if you want to honor the day of the sun so much, I will give you the sun to scorch you.

But despite the scorching of the sun, *they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues* (v. 9). This blasphemy against God is additional way of saying that *they did not repent and give Him glory*. This is the first of three statements among the Seven Last Plagues in which it is told that the wicked did not repent. Indeed, by this time, they could not repent because they had fixed their characters in Satan's direction so that God could do nothing to cause them to change their loyalty. To give God glory is reminiscent of the first angel's message, when the final call will go forth during probationary time for people to give God glory (Revelation 14:7).

#### *The Fifth Plague (vv. 10-11)*

The fifth plague brought a great darkness. It is specifically stated that the angel poured his bowl upon *the throne of the beast* (v. 10). This refers to the throne of the sea beast given to it by the dragon (13:2) and represents its capital city, in effect. Papal Rome's capital city is Rome, or more specifically in the current political scenario, Vatican City. Then it is said that *his kingdom became full of darkness*. There is good reason to understand this darkness as literal because the spiritual significance of real darkness is apparent. Since the wicked have chosen to side with spiritual darkness, then let them have literal darkness for a while.

But will the darkness be confined to Vatican City, or will it affect the whole world since the latter will be part of his spiritual kingdom? Verse 11 provides the key to answering this question. It states that at least some who survived the first plague of *sores* also live through the fifth plague. This strongly suggests that the darkness began in Rome and quickly spread all around the globe. The plague of darkness in Egypt (Exodus 9:21-29) affected all of the Egyptians, yet God miraculously provided light for all the Israelites (9:23). Since God protects His people through the Seven Last Plagues, we should expect that He will provide them some form of light during this fifth plague.

For the second time in these plagues, it is said that the wicked *blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds* (v. 11).

### *The Sixth Plague (v. 12)*

When the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates, *its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared*. In ancient Babylon, the Euphrates River flowed through the city and became its water supply that provided support for the city. Although Babylon is not explicitly mentioned in this plague, reference to the Euphrates recalls the city itself. In Revelation 17, Babylon is said to sit on many *waters* (17:1; cf. Jeremiah 51:12-13), which is defined as *peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues* (17:15). Therefore, the Euphrates River is symbolic in this context of the political and religious support provided by the wicked of the earth to end-time Babylon.

The fact that the river's *water was dried up* recalls the historical truth of the fall of the city of Babylon to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. Cyrus the Great, the Persian king, had ordered several irrigation ditches dug along the side of the Euphrates River north of the city, so that the water of the river stopped flowing through Babylon. In this way, the river was dried up so that soldiers of the Medes and Persians could walk along the riverbed right into the city, thus capturing the city in one night. This story confirms that the Euphrates River is indeed connected with Babylon, and since Babylon is symbolic in Revelation, so must this reference to the Euphrates also be symbolic.

Symbolically, the drying up of the Euphrates must represent the sudden drying up of popular global support for end-time Babylon. This sudden lack of support is described in Revelation 17, when the ten horns on the beast that Babylon rides turn against her and attack her (17:16-17). The cause of this drying up of support is not explicitly given in either chapter except that God is in charge of this turning against Babylon (17:17). The sixth plague does not specify the event that produces this drying up of support for Babylon either. However, the fifth plague of darkness that will apparently strike Rome first may highlight the fact that Papal Rome is not immune to the plagues and is thus fighting against God. We must exercise caution when Scripture is not explicit, but this is a reasonable hypothesis for what will cause the sudden lack of popular support for end-time Babylon.

The purpose for drying up the Euphrates is so *that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared*. In the popular futurist interpretation, these kings represent unspecified powers from the East whose armies will be assisted by the miraculous literal drying up of the Euphrates River on their way toward Armageddon in the Plain of Esdraelon. They are headed generally toward Israel, either as part of turning against Antichrist or to destroy Israel, whose God they believe sent the plagues.

However, this whole scenario ignores at least three vital facts. One is that Babylon, and thus the Euphrates River, are of a symbolic nature in Revelation. A second ignored fact is that those Eastern armies will have to cross the Tigris River before they cross the Euphrates River, yet nothing is said in the prophecy about a miracle to dry it up. Finally, they overlook the fact that *the kings from the east* are distinctly named in contrast to *the kings of the whole world* (more literal translation of part of 16:14). If *the kings from the east* were human political powers, they would be included in the phrase, *the kings of the whole world*. This evidence suggests that *the kings from the east* are not earthly powers at all.

Returning briefly to the fall of ancient Babylon in 539 B.C., the kings from the east then were the kings of the Medes and Persians. Three Persian kings—Cyrus the Great, Darius I, and Artaxerxes I—played a key role in permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and Judea and to ultimately rebuild the temple, the city, and the country under the umbrella of the Medo-Persian Empire. Interestingly, those were three kings in number. The compass direction of the **east**, literally *from the rising of the sun*, is associated with heaven and its glory in Scripture (Ezekiel 43:2; Matthew 24:27; Revelation 7:2). And the Messiah, Jesus Himself, is linked to the sun (Isaiah 60:20; Malachi 4:2; John 8:12; II Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16). Therefore, we conclude that in the sixth plague, God dries up popular support for end-time Babylon (perhaps the cumulative impact of the fifth plague) so that the way is prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus. The plural *kings* probably then refer to the Holy Trinity, especially in the context of the immediate context of the unholy trinity in Revelation 16:13 (the dragon, beast, and false prophet).

Verses 13-16 represent a parenthesis of events that must precede the falling of the Seven Last Plagues. It begins by John seeing *three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet* (v. 13). Note that three times the word *mouth* is mentioned as the source of demons speaking like frogs. These demonic but symbolic *frogs* will attempt to persuade human leaders all over the world to unite for the destruction of God's faithful people. To human beings, literal frogs speak an unintelligible language. According to Isaiah 8:19, people speaking under the influence of demons *whisper and mutter* with the Hebrew word for *whisper* from a root meaning *to chirp*. In Revelation 13:13, the lamblike beast, also known as *the false prophet* (19:20), performs miracles symbolized by fire coming down from heaven. With this contextual information, we are reminded again of a counterfeit of the genuine gift of tongues (Acts 2). Of course, this nonsensical speech emanates from all three demonic spirits, meaning that we should look for a counterfeit charismatic movement that helps unite all religions. Thus, spiritualism—the ultimate religion of the demonic world—will bring a spirit of unity that most Christians will attribute to the Holy Spirit, but which instead will come from demonic spirits.

Ultimately, of course, the dragon in Revelation is Satan (12:9). But when he is included as part of the unholy trinity, we would reasonably expect him to be a specific human system. The beast is

the sea beast, the Antichrist called Papal Rome, and the false prophet represents a religious element that is different from the Papacy; that would then have to be Protestantism, or more accurately, Apostate Protestantism. Since the dragon completes this unholy trinity of false religions, then it must refer to all other false religions. Some may object that the dragon is a symbol of China or the Far East in general, thus interpreting it as representing only the false Eastern religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, and perhaps Hinduism). But we should give more weight to the context of Revelation than to uninspired human symbols. We therefore conclude that the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet represents the entirety of false religions united in opposition to God and His faithful people at the end-time.

### *The Battle at Armageddon*

This end-time battle is called *the battle of that great day of God Almighty* (v. 14). Rather than the upcoming battle being between various nations, it will be a battle of God against all the nations. The location for this great battle *is called in Hebrew, Armageddon* (v. 16). The Greek text reads, *Harmageddon*, a compound Hebrew name consisting of the words *Har* (*mountain*) and *Megiddo* (a place in Palestine). The problem is that there is no geographical place called Mount Megiddo. Megiddo was a city in northern Palestine, not a mountain or even a range of hills. In fact, the city is located in the Plain of Esdraelon, sometimes called the Plain of Megiddo (Zechariah 12:11). Furthermore, the rather strange way of referring to this as *the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon* suggests that it should be viewed as a symbolic place.

The closest most famous mountain to the city of Megiddo is Mount Carmel. And the most important event in Biblical history associated with that mountain was the worship showdown between the worshipers of Baal and the prophet Elijah, who worshiped the true God (I Kings 18). That showdown resulted in a resounding victory for God and His people (represented by Elijah) and a slaughter of all the prophets of Baal. All of this is too coincidental not to have been intended by the cryptic language of this passage.

Of further interest is the fact that both sides in the Mount Carmel showdown were part of the professed people of God; they were all Israelites. The leadership of spiritual Babylon likewise claims to be part of God's Christian people, but it represents an apostate perversion of the true Christian faith. So many Christians have been set up to be deceived in the end-time because they are looking for the Antichrist and his allies to be openly hostile against God. But the prophecies over and over again tell us that the Antichrist is against Christ in the sense that it falsely claims it has the authority to officially speak for Him on earth. Then it has used this "authority" to place Church Tradition over and against the Bible, including its substitution of the first day of the week (Sunday) for the Bible's seventh-day Sabbath.

Note, however, that the gathering of Babylon's forces against God and His people must take place *before* the time of the sixth plague since the actual plague itself is the drying up of popular support for Babylon. This gathering is spoken of in Daniel 11:44-45, which occurs shortly before the Seven Last Plagues begin to fall. When the gathering takes place, it will not be limited to one geographical region or area but will be global since God has His faithful people all over the world. And wherever they are, there Babylon's forces will gather to eventually make one final push against them. But the good news is that Revelation has told us the outcome of the battle; Babylon will lose its support and be destroyed.

Since Babylon is destroyed in the actual seventh plague (Revelation 16:19), then the actual Battle at Armageddon will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus. This is the battle portrayed in Revelation 19:11-21.

God's people are warned to be ready and watch, for *I am coming as a thief* (v. 15). This must be Jesus Himself who speaks this warning because in the gospels He warned against being surprised by His coming since no one knows precisely when He will return (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:32-27; Luke 21:34-36). He certainly will not come as a thief in the sense of a secret coming because the apostle Paul refers to His return *as a thief in the night*, when *sudden destruction comes* on those who are not ready (I Thessalonians 5:2-3). Peter also warns that *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up* (II Peter 3:10).

Those who watch are called blessed in verse 15: *Blessed is he who watches....* This is the third of the seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). *Watch* and *be ready* are the key words in those passages where Jesus speaks of His coming as a thief (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:36). Paul similarly exhorts believers with, *let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober* (I Thessalonians 5:6).

In addition to watching, the faithful believer *keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame* (v. 15). Here is how one specifically watches while waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus. He *keeps his garments*. Revelation often refers to the garments of God's people, which represent their righteous deeds and character of utmost loyalty to Jesus (3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8). The reference to nakedness thus speaks of spiritual or character nakedness, the nakedness of shame (16:15; 3:17-18). When the people of the world turn on Babylon the harlot, they make her naked (17:16), which connects spiritual nakedness in Revelation with the nakedness of the harlot. In the Old Testament, literal nakedness was a mark of shame, whether done to people literally or figuratively (Isaiah 20:4; Ezekiel 16:37-39; Nahum 3:5).

The spiritual point is that God's professed people need to watch and be ready for Jesus to come, not to become discouraged especially in the end-time, when everything seems to be going against

them. Keep faithful and loyal to Jesus, so that when He comes, He will not find you ashamed of the nakedness of your disloyal relationship with the harlot Babylon.

### *The Seventh Plague (vv. 17-21)*

In verse 17 John hears *a loud voice came out of the temple in heaven, from the throne*. Since the voice is said to come *from the throne*, then surely this is the voice of God. He announces, *It is done!* This is reminiscent of the words Jesus spoke just before He died on the cross, recorded in John 19:30. Matthew records that at Jesus' death, certain graves were opened, and some saints came out of their graves after Jesus' resurrection (27:50-53), also associated with an earthquake at the time of Jesus' death (cf. Revelation 16:18). While caution should be maintained when making predictions on which the Bible does not specifically tell us all details, it is nevertheless a reasonable hypothesis that the Special Resurrection of those who died in the Lord in the hope of the Three Angels' Messages and certain special wicked people will occur early in the seventh plague.

Revelation 1:7 says that *even they who pierced Him [Jesus]* will be alive to see Jesus return in glory. Also, the resurrection referred to in Daniel 12:2 in connection with the final time of trouble (the Seven Last Plagues) involves *many* (not all), *Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt*. This is neither the first general resurrection of the righteous at the Second Coming of Jesus (I Thessalonians 4:16-17) nor the second resurrection of the wicked after the millennium (Revelation 20:5). Therefore, this is a special resurrection in which certain saved ones and selected wicked ones will be resurrected just in time to see the Second Coming of Jesus (just as He promised the high priest Caiaphas (Matthew 26:64; cf. v. 57; Mark 14:60-62).

The actual seventh plague involves *a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were upon the earth* (v. 18). The result of this earthquake will be that *the great city was divided into three parts...and great Babylon was remembered before God* (v. 19). Elsewhere in Revelation, with the exception of 11:8, the *great city* is always Babylon (17:18; 18:10, 16, 18-19, 21). The fact that the word for *great* is used to describe a city and again to describe Babylon in the same immediate context suggests that Babylon is intended by the reference to *the great city*. Further confirmation of this conclusion comes from the fact that *the great city was divided into three parts* (v. 19), which in the context of the Seven Last Plagues, surely refers to the unholy trinity of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (cf. 16:13). Obviously, this is a figurative division.

Because *the cities of the nations fell* as a result of this great earthquake (v. 19) means that we should interpret this *earthquake* as a literal, massive earthquake. Only one earthquake is mentioned in this plague. However, since end-time Babylon splits into three *symbolic* parts, it has been suggested that this literal earthquake was accompanied by a figurative earthquake affecting

Babylon. It is easier to understand it as one literal earthquake having symbolic effects on Babylon and literal effects on *the cities of the nations*.

Another result of this *great earthquake* is that *every island fled away, and the mountains were not found* (v. 20). This language is very similar to that under the sixth seal (Revelation 6:14). It might be objected that this is not a literal event because if *the mountains were not found*, then how could the wicked ask the mountains to fall on them and hide them from wrath of God and the Lamb (6:16). Yet in Revelation 20:11, at the beginning of the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the millennium, it is said that *the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them*. No one believes that meant the earth will literally disappear. Instead, it must be a poetic description of the planet's destruction at the return of Jesus. But the planet was still literally there. Likewise, 16:20 describes a literal earthquake that moved the islands and mountains from their original places; yet mountains will still exist for people to attempt to hide from God and the Lamb. The fact that islands and mountains will be moved out of their places (v. 20) reminds us of the event at the very Second Coming of Jesus in Revelation 6:15-17. Therefore, the Second Coming of Jesus will occur at the very end of the seventh plague.

Another part of the seventh plague, in addition to a great earthquake is that *great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent* (v. 21). Hail is often used as a judgment of God, including as the seventh plague that hit Egypt (Exodus 9:13-26). The Old Testament also features hailstones as weapons against several recipients of God's justice (Joshua 10:11; Isaiah 28:2, 17-18; 30:30; Ezekiel 13:11-13; 38:22; cf. Revelation 11:19). Sources giving the weight of a talent vary widely, ranging from 45 to more than 90 pounds because various nations weighed their talents differently. But the word for *talent* in Revelation 16:21 is a Greek word, so it would make sense to focus on the weight of a Greek talent. One source stated it was equal to about 75 pounds. Regardless of its precise weight, it is clear that the hail of the seventh plague will inflict great damage upon what it falls and quick death upon the wicked.