

Divine Plagues - Part I

Noah's Flood

By Rich Jacobs, MD

Divine plagues dominate the narrative in prophecy and eschatology. They show God's righteous indignation and wrath, demonstrate His awesome power, and bring justice by inflicting disaster on the wicked. They restore righteousness, warn, and instruct God's creation. But do divine plagues have a deeper meaning and purpose? Is there another message in God's plagues to others besides ourselves? This lesson will explore these questions. It will compare and analyze God's judgments in Noah's flood of **Genesis**, Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, in **Genesis**, the plagues of Egypt, in **Exodus**, and the Trumpet and Bowl Plagues of **Revelation**. Although Christ unleashes the Seals of **Revelation**, they are best characterized as tribulation caused by man rather than by God's supernatural wrath. For this reason, the Seals are not the subject of this lesson. *Figure 1*, below, lists the plagues discussed in this lesson. Although God has brought many other divine plagues over the years (e.g. the plague on Israel because of David's census, **1 Chronicles 21**, Elijah's 3-year drought, 1 Kings 17, locusts of **Joel**, etc.), this lesson focuses on these listed divine plagues.

Noah's Flood	Sodom's Judgment	Egypt's Plagues	Trumpet Plagues	Bowl Plagues
Genesis 7	Genesis 19	Exodus 7 - 12	Revelation 8 - 11	Revelation 15 - 16
40 days of rain; global flood	Hail & brimstone from Heaven	1 - Water into blood	1 - Hail, fire, mixed with blood; all grass & 1/3rd of earth & trees burned up	1 - Loathsome, malignant sores
		2 - Frogs	2 - Burning mountain thrown into sea; 1/3rd sea becomes blood	2 - Sea becomes blood; all sealife dies
		3 - Lice	3 - Star named Wormwood; 1/3rd rivers, streams bitter and lethal	3 - Rivers & springs become blood
		4 - Flies (Goshen spared)	4 - 1/3rd of sun, moon, and stars darkened; 1/3rd of day & night darkened	4 - Sun brings intense heat that scorches men
		5 - Diseased livestock (Goshen spared)	5 - "Star" from heaven opens the Abyss; locust-horse-scorpions sting men, torment for 5 months. Their king is Abaddon	5 - Antichrist's Kingdom receives painful darkness
		6 - Dust causing painful boils (Goshen spared)	6 - Release of 4 "angel"-demons, bound at Euphrates to kill 1/3rd of mankind by 200 million demon army; fire, brimstone, smoke	6 - Euphrates is dried up to prepare way for Eastern Kings. Deceiving demons gather nations for Armageddon
		7 - Terrible hail, with thunder and lightning (Goshen spared)	7 - Announces Christ's Kingdom on earth as in Heaven	7 - Great earthquake splits Jerusalem into 3 parts; nations' cities fall; 100 lb hailstones; massive geodestruction
		8 - Locusts (Goshen spared)		
		9 - Three days of painful darkness (Goshen spared)		
		10 - Death angel kills unatoned firstborn (All who obey are spared)		

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Even a superficial review of these Divine Plagues render several conclusions common to all of them.

1. God initiates the plagues, though He often uses righteous angelic or human agents to do so.
2. God announces and explains to us the reasons(s) for the coming plague before it commences..
3. God invokes a plague to correct overwhelming wickedness, though He has never eradicated all the wicked in the midst of the plague. The plague reduces the power and influence of evil and serves as a warning for the penalty for sin.
4. As a rule, God spares or delivers the righteous from the plague while destroying the wicked.
5. God appears to use natural forces as a plague, but they are manifested in supernatural proportions or in ways that cannot be explained exclusively by natural processes.
6. Men are helpless to stop, divert, or redirect the divine plague. God ends it when He chooses, presumably when His divine purpose is accomplished.
7. God preserves a record of each plague in His Word for the benefit of His people.
8. Devine plagues often communicate a deeper symbolic meaning or message that requires spiritual discernment to understand.
9. Divine plagues bring judgment on the physical world and on the spiritual realm associated with it; this can have end-times significance. Like most prophecy, divine plagues foreshadow future events and/or echo past events to illustrate, proven, and emphasize God's purpose.
10. it may be useful to notice that God emphasizes His sovereign presence and power in judgment though **the strong use of irony**. Consider the following examples.
 - a. **Proverbs 26:27** *"He who digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him"*
 - b. **Esther 8:7** *"So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'Behold, al have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews.'" — Haman was hung on his own gallows!*
 - c. **Matthew 26:52** *"Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.'"*

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Noah appears to have been born in the 10th generation following Adam (**Genesis 5:18-29**). As the population of the world grew, wickedness grew with it (**Genesis 6:1-5**). During this time, unrighteous angels entered into inappropriate relationships with humans (**Genesis 6:1, 4; Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4**), resulting in a power wicked progeny, sometimes called "Nephilim" (Hebrew: נַפְלִיִּים), or "fallen ones" (**Genesis 6:4**). Whether this mysterious event contributed to the rapid spread of wickedness is unknown, though it is the subject of considerable fruitless speculation. Because of the rapid and

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generalized proliferation of evil on earth, God decides to destroy most life that “moves on earth” through a great flood. The Flood illustrates many points made earlier.

- God appears to announce His decision to bring this plague first in the heavenly realm. (**Genesis 6:7**), then to Noah (**Genesis 6:13, 17; 7:4**).
- Although the Biblical record only records wickedness in men and angels during this time, God chose to destroy most other living things on the surface of the earth also. (**Genesis 6:7; 8:21**). Sea creatures do not appear to be included in this destruction.
- Among all the people of the world, God judged only Noah to be righteous and pleasing (**Genesis 6:8; 7:1; Ezekiel 14:14-20; Hebrews 11:7**). As a result of this judgment, God delayed the flood until Noah completed the ark (**1 Peter 3:20**).
- Although God only judged Noah to be righteous, He used Noah to save Noah's family, along with representatives with all the living creatures of the land of the earth. (**Genesis 6:17-23**) God's judgment of Noah's righteousness is vindicated by Noah's obedience to God's word (**Genesis 6:22; 7:5, 7-10**).
- God used Noah during the many days preceding the flood to preach righteousness to that wicked generation (**2 Peter 2:5**).
- Following the flood, God makes a promise of grace to the inhabitants of the earth, sealed by the sign of the rainbow (**Genesis 8:21; 9:9-16**).
- After the flood, foolishness and wickedness arose again when Noah became drunk and Ham dishonored his father (**Genesis 9:21, 22**). The actions of Noah's sons invoked Noah's blessing of Shem and curses of Ham, parsing mankind into the wicked and the righteous again. (**Genesis 9:24-27**).
- The days of Noah foreshadow the days of the end times (**Matthew 24:37, 38**).

Digging deeper.

Regarding Noah's flood, notice the following.

1. God spoke directly to Noah to announce His coming plague, the flood. God Himself initiated the flood when Noah completed the ark. God is actively engaged in the affair of men to both judge us and redeem us.
2. God explained the reason for the flood; wickedness and violence had overcome the whole world. Arguably, this marked acceleration in earthly evil took place when rebellious angels (? demons) left their spiritual realm to become inextricably entangled with humans. Although mankind is part of the cosmic conflict between Satan and God, the Lord has set limits on Satan's methods and exercise of power.
3. Only Noah was judged to be righteous, but Noah's family was saved too even though God did not explicitly judge them to be righteous. (Presumably Noah's bloodline was not “infected” with the demonic presence?). Also, representative creatures from the earth were saved in the ark. In this way, God demonstrates the exercise of both personal and corporate judgment. God judges individuals for the acts, but He also judges groups for their collective acts, such as is seen in the Judgment of the Nations (**Matthew 25**). This becomes the legal basis for salvation by grace through faith in Christ (**John 10:27-30**).

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4. The wicked world was swept away by natural forces — a flood — of supernatural proportions and circumstances. There was nothing man or demon could do to stop this plague. Thus, God shows His awesome power and sovereignty.
5. The details of the flood is preserved in **Genesis** for the benefit of God's people throughout the generations. The Flood instructs and warns us not to emulate Noah's generation.
6. God also judges the spiritual realm of angels though His divine plagues. To attempt to understand God's spiritual message in the flood, we must consider the facts of the flood itself and other hints revealed to us in God's Word.

Possible Spiritual Significance of Noah's Flood

1. Recall that God emphasizes His sovereign presence and power in judgment though **the strong use of irony**.
2. God chose a flood to exterminate wicked mankind, but the flood also destroyed all creatures that moved upon the earth. This may fulfill a corporate judgment of sinful man's authority, but assuming God acts with purpose and does not behave randomly or without meaning, it may be instructive to ask, "Why a flood and not some other means of destruction? What is unique about a flood and how does this relate to circumstances of Noah's day?"
 - a. It should be noted that while the flood only destroyed all life from the dry land (see **Genesis 7:21-23**); **it did not destroy life that normally lived or remained in the water**. Why did God do this?
 - b. The flood was a singular plague — God even promised that He would never destroy all living things that move upon the earth by a flood again (**Genesis 9:9-16**).
 - c. There is no evidence in the Bible that rebellious angels left their proper place to interbreed with mankind again **following the flood**. If this is so, then could this singular form of wickedness be related to the unique nature of God's flood plague?
3. In **Job 41**, God describes "*Leviathan*", a **sea creature** whose power and might is second only to God's; this **sea monster** symbolizes Satan. (*Note: In Hebrew, "leviathan" means "wreathed or twisted animal". The Septuagint translates this word as "dragon"*). Also, **Satan is symbolically and spiritually associated with the sea**. Other scriptural evidence supports this conclusion, briefly summarized below.
 - a. **Isaiah 27** calls Leviathan the "*serpent*" - the same creature that represented Satan in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:1**). These verses also say Leviathan is the "*dragon*" that **lives in the sea**".
 - b. The description of the dragon of **Revelation 12:3, 4, 9**, who represents "*the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan*", is consistent with the description of Leviathan found in **Psalms 74:14**, also found in the sea.
 - c. The "*Beast*" of **Revelation 13**, matches the description of Leviathan because it derives its nature and power from Satan and is seen to be "*coming up out of the sea*" (**Revelation 13:1**).

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- d. Satan's worldly capital city, Jerusalem, is symbolized by a prostitute, called the "Babylon the Great" (**Revelation 17:5**). She is said to "sit on many waters" (**Revelation 17:1**), like the world's seas, which symbolizes the world's demonically controlled "*peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.*" (**Revelation 17:15**)
 4. Believing that **God acts with purpose**, that Satan's realm is symbolized by the sea (or by the "waters"), and that God's sovereign power in judgment is emphasized by His use of irony, is it possible that God chose a flood to destroy by water the works of demons who left the "water" (i.e. "their proper abode" - **Jude 6**, Satan's realm)? Was God also declaring limits to Satan's kingdom in the contest with God? As a result of God's flood, not only did He destroy the powerful wickedness that resulted among men because of demonic interbreeding, but He also showed Satan that this form of entanglement with humans was "out of bounds".
 5. The "days of Noah" foreshadows the final days of judgment (**Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26**). Wickedness, ungodliness, and violence will again overcome mankind, as will increased demonic involvement in the world. This will be because Satan and His minions will be cast to the earth in a time of overt Heavenly warfare (**Revelation 12**). God's Divine Plagues will come again suddenly as God engages the spiritual forces on earth. The unbelieving world will be caught off guard while God's people will be waiting anxiously for their promised deliverance. The "days of Noah" also refers to a time of God's divine deliverance. Besides delivering the Church from God's wrath, these final days will also witness the salvation and redemption of Israel (see **Isaiah 54:8, 9**).
- ◆ **The irony of the "Flood Judgment" is that God destroyed by water all those who did not remain in the "water" (i.e. symbolically, the "sea" or "their proper abode"). God restrained the wayward angels (? demons) for the day of judgment and their progeny was destroyed by flood. In this way, God preserved a righteous remnant and set the ground rules for His contest with Satan and his minions in the "sea".**
 - ◆ **The "Flood Plague" dealt with overwhelming wickedness in the physical world because of overwhelming demonic influence in it. It foreshadows God's future intervention in the world under similar circumstances. Revelation 12, and other scripture, suggest that Antichrist will arise with power because Satan and his "angels" will be cast to earth from Heaven. In terms of demonic involvement, the end-times world will be like the "days of Noah", thus precipitating other Divine Plagues.**