

# **Satan's Last Fling - The Seven Last Plagues**

Based on a presentation by Dr. Richard Nies

Sending the seven last plagues seems so unlike God. What could be gained, after probation has closed, to inundate the world with such horrible judgments? And how are we to understand this? What does it tell us about the kingdom of God? In what way does it increase our capacity to appreciate our Lord and witness for Him? These are the questions to be addressed by this study.

This study is organized under the following seven headings:

1. The **SYMBOLISM** of the Seven Last Plagues;

Why are they couched in such difficult terms to understand?

Why can't God be more specific?

2. The **NATURE** of the Plagues;

What are they really like?

How literal are they?

3. The **CAUSE** of the Plagues;

4. The **SIGNIFICANCE** of the Plagues;

In terms of our thinking and understanding, what do they mean? What is involved in them?

How do we understand this as a part of the great Drama of God?

5. The specific **CONTENT** of each of the Plagues;

To gather more specific meaning and look in more detail at the sweep of the anticipated history of these Plagues.

6. The **DURATION** of the Plagues;

How long do they last?

7. The **LESSONS** to be derived.

## **\*\*\*\* SYMBOLISM \*\*\*\***

Why doesn't God come right out and say that there are going to be some tremendous battles in some particular place, and what that means? Why are the descriptions couched in such difficult terms? Why can't God give us specific events?

The answer resides in this fact: God does not want us to simply pinpoint events. He wants us to **understand issues**. Furthermore, there is a certain sense in which God has left history in a flux; of not putting things down too closely, almost as if, were he too specific, it might lead to a **conception of determinism**. That there is not much that anyone can do, this is going to be the flow of events, we will just sit back and watch it take place.

## **\*\*\*\* NATURE \*\*\*\***

What are they like? Are they really going to be physical events that are going to touch people, that are going to hurt, that are going to be felt? We have information in the *Great Controversy* p.627,628 saying that they are going to be similar in character to the Plagues in Egypt. And those were quite tangible!

*Great Controversy* (627.3, 628)

The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people.

**They are also in a similar category, only worse, as at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.**

*Great Controversy* (36.2)

The Savior's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfilment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow.

*Great Controversy* (614.1)

The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.

**\*\*\*\* C A U S E \*\*\*\***

While God did cause the plagues in Egypt, he does not cause the seven last plagues.

No one will be changed or saved by the seven last plagues. Probation will have been closed.

*Great Controversy* (614.2)

A single angel destroyed all the first born of the **Egyptians** and filled the land with mourning. . . . **The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits.** There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.

*Great Controversy* (28.1)

The long-suffering of God toward **Jerusalem** only confirmed the Jews in their stubborn impenitence. In their hatred and cruelty toward the disciples of Jesus they rejected the **LAST** offer of mercy. Then God withdrew His protection from them and removed His restraining power from Satan and his angels, and the nation was left to the control of the leader she had chosen.

*Great Controversy* (35.3)

.... **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work.... The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.**

*Great Controversy* (36.1), *4SP*

.... **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the Law of God, is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace

and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty.

*Great Controversy* (614.1)

When He leaves the Sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and **Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. . . . 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.

**\*\*\* SIGNIFICANCE \*\*\***

Why does God allow the seven last plagues? What is to be gained from this?

You must consider the "thrust of history" to appreciate what is happening during this time. As we consider the significance of these plagues, you will recall the importance to Satan's kingdom that he never allow God's people to form. **Satan claimed in the beginning that he could run a better world IF he were given the opportunity. And if God were to ever give a demonstration that he could have a people that could fully reflect his character, Satan would have "had it."**

**Satan has always contended, "Where are your people, God?"**

**Until God's people can form and become visible so that the whole world can see what they are like, Satan can prolong the controversy.**

**God is going to "form" his people; they will "form" and God is going to say, "Here they are, the 144,000."**

Now, if that people "forms," they become a very direct threat to the kingdom of Satan, and he must exterminate them. His very well-being demands it! **If that people stay alive, if that people remain visible, so they may be inspected by the universe, then Satan's time has run out.**

**\*\*\* CONTENT \*\*\***

First of all, we must remember that Satan must exterminate this people, the 144,000!

*Great Controversy* (618.2)

As Satan influenced Esau to march against Jacob, so he will stir up the wicked to destroy God's people in the time of trouble. And as he accused Jacob, **he will urge his accusations against the people of God.**

Satan will say, "This isn't really a worthy people, they really belong to me, and I'll show you that they do." **And he goes wild trying to harass them and distract them. He must destroy them or destroy their faith in God. He must not let them "form." He must destroy their significance as a holy people by any means possible. And as he accused Jacob, he will accuse the people of God.**

*Great Controversy* (618.1)

.... He numbers the world as his subjects; but the little company who are keeping the commandments of God are resisting his supremacy. **If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete.**

**The plagues are not a completely different kind of experience than has been going on just before the close of probation. That is, the only difference with what is happening after the close of probation, from what went on before, is in degree, not in kind.**

*Great Controversy* (589.3,590)

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away," "the haughty people . . . do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant." (Isaiah 24:4,5)

5T 212.4

Already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon the earth.

**GOD'S WRATH** (Reminder: the biblical definition of "God's Wrath.")

**SIN IS NOT OF A QUALITY THAT GOD HAS TO ADD SOMETHING TO IT TO MAKE IT WORSE OR MORE DEADLY. SIN ITSELF AND THE RESULTING SEPARATION FROM GOD IS DEADLY.**

9T 11.1

The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth.

**\*\*\* P L A G U E S 1 - 4 \*\*\***

**The first four plagues represent Satan's efforts to destroy God's people through the elements (or indirectly through man). It would appear from the information we have that the nature of the first four plagues is very similar to nuclear warfare.**

7SDABC 967:

Deadly instruments of warfare will be invented. Vessels, with their living cargo, will be entombed in the great deep. All who have not the spirit of truth will unite under the leadership of satanic agencies. But they are to be kept under control till the time shall come for the great battle of Armageddon. (Letter 79, 1900); 7BC 967.8

7SDABC 968.12:

Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle.

Revelation 16:1-9

The bowls or vials mentioned in Revelation 16 are a symbolic expression from the Sanctuary service. Judgments were always accompanied by some kind of libation—the pouring out of some

liquid—to indicate some special kind of judgment.

**Why should these plagues only fall on those with the mark of the beast—those who worship his image—when Satan is trying to destroy God's people?**

**For one obvious reason, Satan is trying to destroy God's people but God is protecting them; so in the process Satan ends up wiping out a good portion of his own people.** But he is perfectly willing to make that sacrifice if he can also get at God's people. But in his final fling, the world and the universe is going to see that, in fact, God is going to watch over his own people. He will not allow Satan to destroy them. There would be no point in the destruction of God's people after the close of probation.

*Patriarchs Prophets (98.2)*

.... The seal of Heaven was on that door; . . . . So when Christ shall cease His intercession for guilty men, before His coming in the clouds of heaven, the door of mercy will be shut. Then divine grace will no longer restrain the wicked, and **Satan will have full control of those who have rejected mercy. They will endeavor to destroy God's people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be shielded by divine power.**

In Revelation 16:7 (RSV), we read: And I heard the altar cry, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments!"

**This is part of the final revelation of God. And the final revelation of SATAN!**

**With these first four plagues, Satan is trying through the elements to exterminate the people of God. But what does he accomplish? He almost wipes out his own people and his own kingdom! We are told that these plagues are not universal or else he would.**

**\*\*\* PLAGUES 5-6 \*\*\***

Revelation 16:10,11 (RSV): <sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup>and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

**We see Satan's people turn to religion because they are desperate, seeking truth and what are they told?**

*Great Controversy (590.1)*

And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils. . . .

**The people are looking for answers from religious institutions and they get no answers; they get darkness.** On the one hand, they curse God for these calamities; and on the other, they are seeking some solution from him. **They are not told that they have offended God; instead, they are given a blasphemous lie.**

Rev. 16:12 (RSV): The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

**The religious forces have lost their luster, they have lost their punch. So these demonic religious forces take over and they are seen for what they are—puppets for the satanic agencies. Spiritism will be manifest and through these forces of the satanic agencies,**

**Satan will come as an angel of light, claiming to be Christ.**

\*\*\*\* A R M A G E D D O N \*\*\*\*

Revelation 16:16 (NASB)

And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. "They" meaning these spiritistic mediums being spoken about in the previous verses. Now this is where we come to one of the major thrusts of these plagues.

*Har* is a Hebrew word meaning "mountain".

*Magedon* could be referring to the valley or plain of Megiddo.

**Or, it can refer to the word "MO'ED" (or MOGAD), which means assembly or gathering.**

Go through the Old Testament and read every text where Megiddo is used, and ALWAYS it refers to a valley (plain) or the city; it is never applied in scripture to a mountain.

Now the other word, MOGAD, is from a Hebrew word YA'GAD, which means "to gather in assembly," to get together in some kind of congregation for some kind of festival or some kind of meeting. When looking up Old Testament verses where this expression is used, the word is used for a special festival where all the people got together around the Tabernacle or Sanctuary, and it referred either to the festival or to the point of gathering.

At first look, it may not make a lot of sense. **What does it mean, "Mount of the Congregation," "Mount of Gathering"?** But that is the way it is. In fact, it came to be used as an expression where it referred to the Sanctuary itself—when and where God was supposed to manifest his presence.

Isaiah 14:12-14 (RSV)

How you are fallen from Heaven,  
O Day Star, Son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
you who laid the nations low!  
You said in your heart,  
'I will ascend to heaven;  
above the stars of God  
I will set my throne on high;  
I will sit on **the mount of assembly**  
in the far north;  
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,  
I will make myself like the Most High.'

NOW in this text is the expression "Mount of Assembly"! if we were to translate that into the Greek sound-alike expression we would say, "I will sit upon Har-Magedon"—Mount of the Congregation, Mountain of the people of God in the far north.

Ah, this is Armageddon. Mount of the Congregation where God rules his people. And we are told that in Satan's original claim: "I want to be King of the Mountain," a claim he will make again under the sixth plague.

II Thessalonians 2:3,4 (RSV)

Let no man deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion

comes first, and the man of [sin] lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

*Great Controversy* (624.1,2)

Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.

**As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. (Revelation 1:13-15). The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: "Christ has come! Christ has come!" The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Savior uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.**

What are the people going to say when "Christ himself" claims to have changed the Sabbath?

*Great Controversy* (635.1)

When the protection of human laws shall be withdrawn from those who honor the law of God, there will be, in different lands, a simultaneous movement for their destruction. As the time appointed in the decree draws near, the people will conspire to root out the hated sect. It will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow, which shall utterly silence the voice of dissent and reproof.

Another statement speaking about the end of the 2300 day prophecy:

*Early Writings* (55,56)

Then Jesus rose from the throne, and most of those who were bowed down arose with Him. I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the CARELESS

multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. . . . Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the Holiest, and pray, "My Father, give us thy Spirit." Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, TRYING TO CARRY ON THE WORK OF GOD. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, "Father, give us Thy Spirit." Satan would breathe upon them an UNHOLY influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children.

**Armageddon (Har-MAGEDON) is a condition in which Satan personates/impersonates Christ and makes this one final claim to be God, attempting to master and rule the entire world. The deception has been prepared under the fifth judgment. He is through with these religious organizations, the waters are dried up, he no longer relies on his agents, he appears and takes control himself. Just as the Holy Spirit is the dominating person and the controlling person in the lives of the people of God, so are the spiritistic forces the dominating influences of the enemy. Satan marches them against the people of God so the people of God cannot "form," so they cannot be a people, so they cannot be presented by God to the world and the universe. And now Satan prepares to lead his people to march at midnight. But what do we find?**

**\*\*\* PLAGUE 7 \*\*\***

Now, God, for the first time since he went into hiding, comes out. This is foretold in several passages:

Isaiah 42:13 (RSV): The LORD goes forth like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.

Amos 1:2 (RSV): And he said:

"The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers."

Zechariah 14:1-4 (RSV): <sup>1</sup> Behold, a day of the LORD is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. <sup>2</sup> For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup> On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward.

Joel 3:9-17 (RSV): <sup>9</sup> Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare war, stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. <sup>10</sup> Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior." <sup>11</sup> Hasten and come, all you nations round about, gather yourselves there. Bring down thy warriors, O LORD. <sup>12</sup> Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the nations round about. <sup>13</sup> Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. <sup>14</sup> Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. <sup>15</sup> The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from

Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. <sup>17</sup>“So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy and strangers shall never again pass through it.

This word “Jehoshaphat” comes from two words, the first “Yahweh” meaning Jehovah, God; and the second “Shophat,” which means “to judge.” “Come up to the judgment of God!”

So, God says, “Stop!”

Revelation 16:17-21: <sup>17</sup>The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” <sup>18</sup>And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake. <sup>19</sup>The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup>And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; <sup>21</sup>and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague. (NRSV)

That's God's reply, “Stop!” Now you say, “Why does God do such a horrendous thing?”

1) The wicked have become so entrenched in their wickedness that they no longer can sense reality. And God is going to jar their thinking one last time. And in so doing he so disrupts their thinking processes, the settled state of their biases, so that for just a brief time they recognize the truth. And they confess—out of the temporary freedom that has been granted them—saying, “God, we really hoped to destroy your people.” They testify before the universe, “**You truly are the people of God. We have been wrong.**”

2) But it also serves another purpose. All down through the generations, God's people have asked God, “When are you going to speak? Why are you so long meek and mild? Are you forever going to let Satan control the universe and dominate the forces of the elements?” In one last demonstration, God is going to convince the righteous the world around—not only the righteous on this earth but the righteous in the entire universe—that God has never lost control. God still has control of the elements. Just because he has shown mercy for so many generations, does not mean that he has lost control of things. And **God gives one last demonstration to show the majesty that he has, majesty which Satan has claimed is his.**

**\*\*\* Duration \*\*\***

How long do these plagues last? What is their duration? In Revelation 18:8,10,17,19, the plagues are said to last in prophetic time one day or one hour. Now this may seem confusing to some. Which is it? One day in prophetic time would be 360 days or a year, a Jewish year. One hour would be 15 days—1/24th of a year—using prophetic time. Now it appears that Satan would like to have a year. But then we have this interesting statement:

When Jesus leaves the most holy His restraining Spirit is withdrawn from rulers and people. They are left to the control of evil angels. Then such laws will be made by the counsel and direction of Satan that, **unless time should be very short, no flesh could be saved.**--1T 204 (1859).

Satan wants a year, but God says you can only have 15 days.

*Great Controversy* 631.0: “Yet for the elect's sake the time of trouble will be shortened.”

Shortened from what? And shortened to what?

Satan wants a year but God gives him two weeks.

*Great Controversy* 490.2: "When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a **short time** before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven." A short time.

Now, the most definitive statement on this was written April 6, 1846 in a little tract, "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad."

Then Jesus laid off his priestly garment and put on his Kingly robe, and took his place on the cloud which carried him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth--a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the East, which took a number of days, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint's feet. Ellen G. Harmon.

Note that expression, "The synagogue of Satan worshipped [*sic*] at the saint's feet."

We are told in prophetic time that it will be shortened from one year--360 days--to one hour in prophetic time, or 15 days. We are told from various references from the pen of E.G. White that it will be shortened for the elect's sake. And then we have this expression that it "took a number of days." It is reasonable to assume that this will take 15 days.

**\* \* \* \* Lessons \* \* \* \***

What lessons can we learn from all of this?

First of all, I think we see the last great and perhaps **the only full demonstration of what sin is really like when it "goes to seed."** The universe has never really seen the full impact of sin. We have only seen touches of it. But as long as God restrains, the wicked are held in check. But it must be necessary to the revelation of God that the universe would finally get a "belly full." When everyone has made their own decision for God or against God, there really isn't too much point in God holding Satan in check. No one else is going to change their mind.

And so God gives to the universe one brief, 15-day demonstration of the awfulness of what it would be like if Satan ruled the "Mount of the Assembly." The universe will never forget that lesson.

A second lesson that we can learn which we are going to take up in more detail next time is that **God can have a people who can live in the most trying hour of earth's history.** With the worst impact of years of degenerative heredity, with the worst violence that the universe has ever seen, and yet, they will not sin--even so much as by a thought. That will be a demonstration that the universe has never seen before. They have seen isolated individuals but they have never seen what God's people would be like, purified in a crucible, which will be another part of the last Revelation. A very valuable lesson to be learned from the study of this phase of eschatology.

But I think the last and most important lesson is that **we learn something about the character of God. God who has allowed himself to be misunderstood by people on this ball of mud because he has been so merciful that he would not allow the universe to see what it was like to experience the full ire of the devil. I thought many times, "God, why didn't you really let everyone get a belly full, long ago?" Because God is too merciful--he loves us and he is too loving--he does not want to overwhelm people. And so he has never allowed sin to "go to seed." And thus, he has been misunderstood. Too many people today think that self-centeredness is a great way to live. They need to see what that would really be like.**