

The image is a complex, layered composition. At the top, a dark, stormy sky is filled with a meteor shower, with bright streaks of light and glowing trails. A large, dark, angular object, possibly a spacecraft or a piece of debris, is seen falling from the upper right. In the center, a large, dark, textured cross stands prominently. Below the cross, a city skyline is visible, featuring several tall skyscrapers, including the Empire State Building. In the foreground, three large pyramids are arranged in a row, with a smaller pyramid to the left. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden-brown and orange tones, suggesting a sunset or a fire. The text 'SEAN SUTTON' is at the top, and 'THE FIRST AND LAST PLAGUES' is at the bottom in a large, stylized font.

SEAN SUTTON

THE
FIRST AND LAST
PLAGUES

THE FIRST & LAST PLAGUES

SEAN SUTTON

An adapted excerpt from the book,
Forbidden Fruit: When Obeying God Becomes Illegal
(available for free at FatherofLove.info)



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THE FIRST PLAGUES: CONSEQUENCES OF EGYPT'S SIN

Concerning the plagues in Egypt, the Psalmist declared that God “cast upon them the fierceness of his **anger, Wrath**, and indignation, and trouble...” Psalm 78:49 (KJV). But *how* did God cast His “anger” and “wrath” upon them? Is it the same way we show our anger and wrath? Or are God’s ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than ours (Is. 55:9)?

The word for God’s “anger” is the Hebrew word “aph,” which is the same root word that describes God’s “longsuffering” (anaph) toward those who reject Him. This word means an intense and heavy breathing (grief) through the nostrils, like one who is sobbing over a lost loved one. We see this in the life of Christ when He went to heal on the Sabbath day, but the man-made rules of the Pharisees forbade people to even do acts of service and healing on the Sabbath. When Christ was encountering them, the Scripture records that “He looked around at them **angrily** and was **deeply saddened** by their hard hearts...” Mark 3:5. His anger, or His grief, is also demonstrated when He allows the wicked to walk the path which He knows is not best for them (see Ex. 4:10, 14; Num. 11:4, 10, 31–32; 1 Sam. 8:19–20 + Hos. 13:9–11), for this brings Him much grief. Concerning God’s wrath, Paul wrote in Romans 1 that “**God’s wrath**” has been **manifested** against the wicked when He “**delivered them**” to their sinful lifestyles, because their sins bring upon themselves “the appropriate penalty for their” sins. Romans 1:18, 24, 27 (ISV) (also see Deut. 31:16–17; Ps. 89:46; 106:40–42; Is. 54:7–8; Ezek. 22:31; Wis. 11:16).¹

¹ For some good, accessible information on the wrath of God, please see Jay A. Schulberg, *Acts of Our Gentle God* (Father of Love, 2019), <https://tinyurl.com/GentleGod> (particularly chapter 13), and Kevin J. Mullins, *Did God Kill Jesus Instead of Killing Us?* (Father of Love, 2023) <https://tinyurl.com/DidGodKillJesus> (particularly chapter 3). For a more detailed discussion on this topic, please see Greg Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament’s Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), vol. 2, ch. 15, “Divine Akido: The Cross as the Revelation of God’s Wrath,” <http://tinyurl.com/2u9jeaz6>.

In like manner, when Egypt explicitly rejected the presence of the Creator (Heb. 1:2) and Sustainer (Heb. 1:3) of all nature, He was forced to “give them up” to destruction.

Psalm 78:48–50 (KJV) ⁴⁸ **He gave up** their cattle also to the hail, And their flocks to hot thunderbolts. ⁴⁹ He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, Wrath, and indignation, and trouble, **By sending [releasing, H4917] evil angels among them.** ⁵⁰ He made a way to his anger; **He spared not** their soul from death, But **gave their life over to the pestilence [plague, H1698];**

Note how it says that God “spared not” the Egyptians from the consequences of their actions and allowed evil angels to come among them. When verse 48 says that God cast upon the wicked “hot thunderbolts,” the word used is “Resheph,” which was not only a common noun, but also a proper name: **“Resheph was a belligerent, aggressive god who used diseases to attack people, but who could also heal. In Egypt, Resheph was originally venerated as the deity who supported the Pharaoh in battles, but then he was summoned mainly because of illness and everyday needs.”**² Egypt had worshipped and sacrificed to this false god, “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.**” 1 Corinthians 10:20. Entrenched in demon worship, Egypt was ultimately left to the destructive powers and “protectors” they venerated when they spurned Christ’s Spirit.

Deuteronomy 32:37–38 ³⁷ Then he will ask, **‘Where are their gods,** the rocks they fled to for refuge? ³⁸ Where now are those gods, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their offerings? **Let those gods arise and help you! Let them provide you with shelter!**

Unfortunately, their trust in Resheph for shelter from the wages of their sin was misplaced.

² Maciej M. Münnich, *The God Resheph in the Ancient Near East* (Mohr Siebeck, 2013); also see Willem van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Brill, 1999), p. 333.

When Israel rejected Christ, the sins of the nation affected the earth and brought forth a great earthquake. In like manner, when the oppressive Church-State system of the Dark Ages enforced a Sunday law throughout all Christendom, the result was crop failures, famine, and pestilence—each leading one to another, from spiritual cause to effect. When Egypt likewise made laws outlawing the observance of the Sabbath, the result was the same, but more pronounced.

There are many theories as to exactly *how* the plagues in Egypt occurred. Most Christians believe that God supernaturally brought death and destruction upon Egypt, but this is inconsistent with the way God has dealt with humanity throughout history. We have seen that God, when rejected, allows the wicked to reap what they sow, slowly withdrawing His presence and restraining power over the various destructive forces of nature and their enemies, both physical and spiritual. Looking at history, the judgments of God occur when God withdraws Himself and allows a chain of events to occur, in which the wicked will be punished by reaping what they had sown. When we consider the cumulative nature of the plagues, we will see the chain of cause and effect at work:

1. Water to blood
2. Frog invasion
3. Biting insects (“lice”)
4. Flies
5. Livestock diseased
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness
10. Death of firstborn

In the first plague we find a diseased Nile, which would cause a mass exodus of frogs to swarm the land in droves. Soon after this, many of the frogs presumably dehydrated and died, leading the Egyptians to gather “them into great heaps, and a terrible stench filled the land.” Exodus 8:14. When these frogs were removed from their ecosystem, the unchecked populace of insects and flies would have speedily reproduced and be drawn to the frog carcasses. It would not be surprising to find that a number of these insects carried diseases with

them and passed them on to the livestock and humans in Egypt, causing boils.³ Another factor that could cause disease among both animals and humans is drinking water that was polluted with bacteria or toxins.

But how could a series of events like this begin? How could the waters of the Nile “naturally” turn to blood? Firstly, it is possible that the authors of the Scriptures oftentimes described things *as they appeared*. This is known as “phenomenal language.” An example of this is when Jesus declared that “the stars will fall from the sky” in the end days. Matthew 24:29. Few would understand this passage to mean that Jesus taught that the stars in the sky would dislodge and plummet to earth. Most would understand that He is describing how an event, such as a meteor shower, would appear to us. To human sight, the waters turned as red as blood, so it is declared that **the rivers “turned [haphak] to [lo] blood [damm]...”** Exodus 7:17 (KJV). The same words are used to describe a time when **the moon shall be “turned [haphak]... into [lo] blood [damm]...”** Joel 2:30-31 (KJV). No one believes that the moon will literally turn to blood, but rather that it simply appears as red as blood.

Another reason to believe that the Nile did not turn to literal blood is seen by the fact that “the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink...” Exodus 7:24 (KJV). Here it is evident that the Egyptians were digging “seep wells.”

“Essentially a seep well is a hole dug in the ground, near a water source that goes below the natural water table. The water from the water table seeps through the earth and into the hole that you dug. If the hole is dug the correct distance away from the original water source, your water is naturally purified.”⁴

This seems to clearly explain what the Egyptians were doing, but there’s one problem—the technology to filter drinkable water out of blood wouldn’t exist for thousands of years, and a seep well wouldn’t cut it. A seep well would only work if the waters were polluted—it wouldn’t work if it was literal blood.

³ Such as the fly *Stomoxys calcitrans* potentially carrying *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax) which can cause boils. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), p. 98.

⁴ “Seep Well,” *The Survival University*, <http://tinyurl.com/n92828hv>.

But what could cause such a catastrophe that would make the rivers appear as blood? There are many theories, one of which is the Santorini volcanic eruption, one of the biggest volcanic eruptions in human history which “erupted with power equal to two million Hiroshima-type atomic bombs,”⁵ which some claim occurred near the time of the Exodus.

“This theory argues that the plagues were really **the fallout of volcanic eruption** on the island of Santorini in the south of Greece around 1620-1600 BCE. Microbiologist Siro Trevisanato, author of *The Plagues of Egypt: Archaeology, History and Science Look at the Bible*, argues that ancient Egyptian medical texts support this idea.

“Winds would have carried the volcanic ash to Egypt at some point over the summer, and **the toxic acids in the volcanic ash would have included the mineral cinnabar, which could have been capable of turning a river a blood-like red color**, Trevisanato holds. The accumulated acidity in the water would have caused **frogs** to leap out and search for clean water. **Insects** would have burrowed eggs in the bodies of dead animals and human survivors, which generated larvae and then adult insects. Then, the volcanic ash in the atmosphere would have **affected the weather**, with **acid rain** landing on people’s skin, which in turn **caused boils**. The **grass would have been contaminated, poisoning the animals** that ate it. The humidity from the rain and the subsequent **hail**⁶ would have created **optimal conditions for locusts** to thrive. Volcanic eruptions could also explain the several days of **darkness** [from ash blotting out the sun]...

“What evidence is there for this? Pumice, which is stone made from cooled volcanic lava, has been found during excavations of Egyptian ruins despite there not being any volcanoes in Egypt. Analysis of the rock shows that it came from the Santorini volcano, providing **physical**

⁵ “Thera/Santorini Eruption” (1989), *Jet Propulsion Laboratory*, <https://tinyurl.com/4e8zvhsn>.

⁶ According to Dorothy Vitaliano, “... the seventh plague, hail, and lightning are often associated with volcanic eruptions. Tiny ash particles can serve as condensation nuclei for hail, and strong electrical charges are common in the ash-filled air.” Jeffrey A. Lee, “Explaining the Plagues of Egypt” in *Skeptical Inquirer*, vol. 28, no. 6 (2004), p. 54, <http://tinyurl.com/5n7mahmy>.

evidence that the ash fallout from the eruption at Santorini reached Egyptian shores.”⁷

Another plausible scenario that could explain the waters turning red involves “a bloom of toxic freshwater algae known as *Oscillatoria rubescens*, that is known to have existed 3,000 years ago and still causes similar effects today. The algae multiply in slow-moving warm waters with high levels of nutrition and when they die, they stain the water red.”⁸ When the “Red Tide” would occur, the fish would die for several reasons, but “Bullfrogs, however, have a natural defense in the form of a protein known as saxiphilin,”⁹ so the frogs would not die as quickly as the fish and could therefore escape the toxic waters (until they died of dehydration).¹⁰ Whether the volcano, algae, or something else was the physical cause of the polluted waters, the following results are essentially the same.¹¹

Regardless of how this chain of events played out, it seems clear that a chain reaction did occur. This is an important lesson for us today. How many of us are unconscious of the butterfly effect that our habits have on ourselves, our neighbors, and the environment? As I was researching the topic of how algae blooms can cause water to appear as blood, I quickly realized that this is still a problem today. A quick search for “red algae blooms” or “red tides” on Google brings an endless supply of modern-day apocalyptic images of bloody waters. These blooms typically kill off mass amounts of marine life by producing toxins, depleting oxygen, blocking sunlight, or clogging the gills of various fish. This is not only tragic for the animals, but it also has detrimental effects on the economy of various communities. For instance, a new study found that Florida’s economy

⁷ Olivia B. Waxman, “Did the 10 Plagues of Egypt Really Happen? Here Are 3 Theories” (2019), *Time*, <https://tinyurl.com/59vvpuz>.

⁸ Joe Schwarcz, “The Ten Plagues: Natural Disasters or Divine Intervention?” (2019), *McGill*, <https://tinyurl.com/33j5cz55>.

⁹ “A Bullfrog’s Powerful Defense Against Toxic Red Tides” (2019), *Berkeley Labs*, <https://tinyurl.com/53kdv3p3>.

¹⁰ Environmental stress can also cause tadpole metamorphosis to accelerate. This, in conjunction with less predators, could have caused the mass frog exodus.

¹¹ The harmful algae bloom (HAG) however, would not cause hail and darkness, so some suggest that the plagues could have been the result of the algae bloom in conjunction with the Santorini eruption or some other phenomenon. Vitaliano explores this theory in her work *Legends of the Earth; Their Geologic Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 252-259.

lost about “\$2.7 billion due to the red tide blooms that occurred in 2018...”¹² This is not something abstract, but it is a real financial strain for those affected. But what exactly causes these blooms?

Simply put, algae blooms occur at excessive rates when they are “overfed” with nitrogen and phosphorus—the two main components in animal manure.

“... It’s estimated that **every minute, nearly 2 million pounds of excrement are produced by animals raised on CAFOs** [Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations] in the U.S.

“Unlike human waste, manure from CAFOs is **not treated** and typically gets flushed into underground pits or lagoons that are several acres wide. It is stored there until it is applied as fertilizer on fields. But the quantity of waste produced on factory farms **cannot easily be absorbed, resulting in over-application and runoff** of the manure—and all of the chemicals, toxins and bacteria it contains—into local waterways. It is also common for the pits or lagoons to leak, break or overflow, contaminating groundwater. Animal agriculture is the leading polluter of U.S. rivers and streams, the second-largest source of wetlands contamination, and the third-largest source of lake pollution.

“As a result, CAFOs have severe impacts on aquatic health as **excessive nutrient concentrations from manure, such as nitrogen or phosphorus, can make water uninhabitable or cause harmful algal blooms**. Rural communities rely heavily on groundwater wells for drinking water, and the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2000 National Water Quality Inventory found that 29 states specifically identified CAFOs as contributing to drinking water quality impairment. Cleanup expenses from CAFOs have cost municipal water systems over \$1.1 billion over the past 10 years.”¹³

¹² Robyn White, “Florida Lost \$2.7 Billion in One Year Due to Red Tides” (Jan. 29, 2024), *Newsweek*, <http://tinyurl.com/5bdm2yy4>.

¹³ “The Water, Air, and Climate Impacts of Factory Farming,” *ASPCA*, <http://tinyurl.com/m88sc7zv>. Also see Ann Alexander, “One More Nasty Consequence of Factory Farming: Runaway Algae” (August 11, 2016), *Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)*, <http://tinyurl.com/23dv77fa>; Kyle Rabin, “Toxic Algae Blooms and Agriculture: 5 Things to Know About Their Connection” (2017), *Water Footprint Calculator*, <http://tinyurl.com/yc7dcjv4>.

The tragic practice of factory farming has led to massive profits for a few, but at what cost? Not only has this industry led to immense suffering of animals and the environment, but even our fellow man suffers because of it—particularly people in communities of color and poverty. The spraying of untreated animal feces in these communities has led to “everything from poisoned wells and diminished property values to shortened lifespans, as well as higher rates of physical and mental health problems for residents.”¹⁴

Right before the waters turned to blood (in a potential algae bloom), the Bible says that Pharaoh made the people stop resting and told their taskmasters to “**Load them down with more work**” (Ex. 5:9). The work they were loaded down with was brickmaking, which involved making clay from the soil around the Nile, a process which likely had unforeseen ecological impacts on the land if it was not given time to rest. Is it possible that Pharaoh’s exploitative laws which affected the Hebrews also affected the land itself? Could the unceasing brick production—like unceasing CAFOs—have caused nutrient-rich soil and fertilizer to run off into the Nile, subsequently triggering an algae bloom? If so, then Pharaoh’s greedy oppression and exploitation of his slaves and the land ricocheted back on his own head. In this paradigm, God’s request for Pharaoh to free the slaves and give them (and the land) rest was not only for their good, but his own good as well! Regardless of what triggered the algae blooms, we must always keep in mind the teaching of Christ—when the oppressed suffer, He suffers (Matt. 25:40); if we help perpetuate industries of exploitation and injustice, we are perpetuating the sufferings of Christ in these people.¹⁵ Let us not forget this lesson of cause and unseen effect that God wants us to learn from these plagues.

Some may suggest that the plagues in Egypt were *only* the result of natural disasters and that God had nothing to do with this, but this would be an

¹⁴ Jamie Berger, “How Black North Carolinians pay the price for the world’s cheap bacon” (April 1, 2022), *Vox*, <http://tinyurl.com/2njem3nh>.

¹⁵ It should also be pointed out that many farmers in the factory farming industry are just as much victims of circumstance as those outside the system; they deserve our compassion and empathy. Many of these individuals are stuck in this system and can’t get out of it for financial reasons and don’t know how to get out or what they would do even if they did get out. One great example was the chicken farmer Craig Watts, whose struggle was featured in the 2017 documentary, *Eating Animals*. Thankfully he, along with many others, has been able to get out of the factory farming industry by converting his poultry house into an indoor mushroom growing facility.

erroneous view that discounts many facets of the Biblical narrative. Firstly, let us consider the fact that the Bible records that each plague seems to be initiated when Moses or Aaron utilizes his rod. It is worth noting that this rod had been used to give signs to Pharaoh that the message of liberation was from the one true God.

Exodus 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did what the Lord had commanded them. **Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent!**

Was this simply an arbitrary demonstration to show God's power? Or was there a deeper symbol in this act? Jay Schulberg, in his succinct book, *Acts of Our Gentle God*, offers a fascinating explanation concerning the spiritual meaning behind the use of the rod:

“Moses was to go before Pharaoh as God’s representative. **God’s purpose in this demonstration was for it to be more than a mere display of power; it was an illustration to identify the real destroyer. When Moses, as God’s representative, held the rod in his hand, it symbolized the forces of nature under God’s control. No harm could come to Egypt as long as God’s protective hand held back the destructive forces of nature. When Moses cast down the rod, it became a serpent, the symbol of evil and destruction. This symbolized the forces of nature out of God’s control and under the control of Satan—the destroyer.**...

“If at any time after the plagues had begun, Pharaoh would have turned from his defiant course and let the Israelites go, God would have taken control of the forces of nature again, and the plagues would have ended. The stubborn ruler did not do this, and Egypt was left in ruin. God’s role in the plagues of Egypt becomes clear when we consider the symbolic message that God gave in the rod and the serpent.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Jay A. Schulberg, *Acts of Our Gentle God* (Father of Love, 2017), p. 28-29, <https://tinyurl.com/GentleGod>.

What happened when Aaron released the serpent? It ate the other serpent—what a striking illustration of the self-destructive nature of sin!¹⁷

God had been Egypt's true Protector, holding back the devastating forces of nature, but He intermittently removed this shield at specific times which would be declared by Moses and Aaron in advance in order to show that these events were not *merely* natural disasters, but that they were indeed judgments from God. For instance, once the waters became contaminated, it seems that God had been suppressing the destructive elements in it while upholding the life-giving properties of the water, until the appointed time when He released the destructive elements within the water to do its work. This could be why the waters which were even in vessels (Ex. 7:19)¹⁸ likewise turned to “blood”—they were already polluted with toxins, but God had held back the chemical reactions from taking place, so when He removed His life-giving and cleansing Word from the water, it would have turned red as blood and become incredibly bitter. The God who has the power to transform the molecular makeup of water in earthen vessels to wine by His command (John 2:6-9) can easily inhibit or permit chemical reactions of contaminated water at His command.

¹⁷ Boyd compares this imagery in relation to the destruction of Pharaoh at the Red Sea crossing. Pharaoh was symbolized as a Dragon (Ezek. 29:3-5; 32:2), just as, in the Ancient Near Eastern conception, the Red Sea was also symbolized as an anti-creational, cosmic opponent of God (cf. *chaoskampf*), often depicted as a Dragon/Serpent and often referred to as *Yam* (see Ps. 74:13-14; 77:16, 19-20; 106:9; 136:13-14; Is. 51:9-10; Hab. 3:14-15; etc.). Through this lens the Scriptures show that “God waged this battle not by engaging in violence but by pitting one form of evil (the Red Sea, raging waters, Rahab, *Yam*) against another form of evil (Pharaoh/Egypt, ‘the gods of Egypt’ [Exod 12:12])... once God withdrew the ‘angel of God’ and the ‘pillar of cloud’ that had been restraining him, Pharaoh blindly sent his army right into the mouth of the cosmic dragon as they pursued the Israelites. At this point, Yahweh withdrew his restraint of *Yam* and allowed ‘the sea’ to ‘return back to its place’ (Exod 14:27). In other words, the anti-creational chaos monster was permitted to do what it always yearns to do—namely, devour all it can devour (cf. Hab. 3:14-5)... the narrative that culminated with a dragon swallowing a dragon at the Red Sea began in Pharaoh’s court with a dragon swallowing other dragons.” Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, vol. 2, p. 1174, 1176, 1177 (for full discussion, see pages 1168-1185). Also see Gregory Boyd’s more accessible and condensed form of the 2 volume *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, entitled *Cross Vision: How the Crucifixion of Jesus Makes Sense of Old Testament Violence* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), ch. 14, “Dragon-Swallowing Dragon Warfare,” <https://tinyurl.com/4ayh9nf3>. Ebens adds a depth of meaning to Boyd’s interpretation in his work *Mirror Principle* (Father of Love, 2023), ch. 24-25, <https://tinyurl.com/Mirror-Principle>.

¹⁸ The word “vessels” in the text is supplied by the translators, however.

But what of the last plague, the death of the firstborn? Various theories seeking to explain this plague have been brought forward, such as the idea that the first-born male children would have had first pickings to resources, such as grain—which could have been poisoned or tainted from the previous plagues. Regardless of *how* this occurred physically, the God of heaven shows the ultimate source of this death:

Exodus 12:23 (KJV) For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer **the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.** (cf. Heb. 11:28)

Who destroyed the innocent children? The Dragon or the Lamb? The Destroyer or God? Who is explicitly identified as the Destroyer in Scripture? Christ declared that the purpose of Satan, the Thief, “is to steal and kill and destroy.” John 10:10. We also read in Revelation’s 5th Trumpet that Satan, the angel of the bottomless pit, is known “**in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer.**” Revelation 9:11. Satan is the Destroyer, Christ is the Restorer. The intertestamental Book of Jubilees also describes the death of the firstborn in Egypt as occurring “**when all the powers of Mastêmâ [Satan] had been let loose to slay all the first-born in the land of Egypt,** from the first-born of Pharaoh to the first-born of the captive maid-servant in the mill, and to the cattle.” Jubilees 49:2.

But doesn’t the verse we just looked at, Exodus 12:23, says that “the Lord will pass through to smite” the firstborn? True, but who destroyed Israel? God had said, “**I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.**” Jeremiah 13:14 (KJV). Though God is described as the who would actively kill them, all He really did was hand them over to “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and... their enemies... and **he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.**” Jeremiah 21:7 (KJV). This is one of many examples in the Bible where “God and God’s agents... are... the subject of the same destructive verbs.”¹⁹ Thus God smote the firstborn in Egypt the same way He “smote” His true Firstborn, Jesus (Mark 14:27)—by *allowing* the Destroyer to

¹⁹ Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), p. 53.

smite them. In both places God allowed the Innocent to suffer at the hands of the wicked to *reveal* the true character of the Destroyer so the world can be reconciled to God.

Christ, the Lamb of God, had wanted to protect both the Egyptians and Hebrews by covering them with His blood, but they would not let Him. This comes out more prominently in the Greek Old Testament (LXX), where it says that “the blood shall be for a sign to you on the houses in which ye are, and **I will see the blood, and will protect you**, and there shall not be on you the plague of destruction...”²⁰ The blood of the Lamb is the life of Christ (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, etc.), and Christ’s life is righteous. Therefore, being “covered” with the blood is symbolic of receiving the righteousness of Christ by faith! But we can only receive the righteousness of Christ if we (1) confess our hidden enmity against Christ and (2) see the selfless love of Christ—both of which are demonstrated in the slaying of the Lamb and the cross. This is why the feast of Passover, where the Lamb would be slayed, and Unleavened Bread where leaven, a symbol for sin, would be removed from the house (heart), is described as a special sign (like the Seal of God):

Exodus 13:9 **This annual festival [Passover] will be a visible sign to you, like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead.** Let it remind you always to recite this teaching of the Lord: ‘With a strong hand, the Lord rescued you from Egypt.’

When the 144,000 are covered with the righteous life, or blood, of Christ by faith and have received the Seal of God, God won’t allow the Destroyer to torment them, for they have taken refuge in the secret place of the Most High (Ps. 91:1).

Psalms 91:3–11 (KJV) ³ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *And* from the noisome pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, *And* under his wings shalt thou trust: His truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler. ⁵ Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *Nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; ⁶ *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *Nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. ⁷ **A thousand**

²⁰ Brenton’s *Septuagint*, Ex 12:13.

shall fall at thy side, And ten thousand at thy right hand; *But* it shall not come nigh thee. ⁸ **Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold And see the reward of the wicked.** ⁹ Because thou hast made the Lord, *which is* my refuge, *Even* the most High, thy habitation; ¹⁰ **There shall no evil befall thee, Neither shall *any* plague come nigh thy dwelling.** ¹¹ **For he shall give his angels charge over thee, To keep thee in all thy ways.**

In the end, all who choose the service of anyone besides God shall be destroyed by that power. Just as Israel was ultimately destroyed by their spiritual enemy—the Romans—which they had chosen instead of Christ, just as the Egyptians were destroyed by their spiritual enemy—Satan—which they had chosen instead of Christ, so too shall the whole world, in the end, be destroyed by their spiritual enemy which they have chosen to obey instead of Christ. As such, Christ is ultimately compelled to give up all to the leader they choose, and it will be revealed that the one whom they worshipped as a healer and protector, is nothing of the kind.

Whatever the physical “causes” of the plagues, the spiritual cause and lesson remain: when we reject God and His ways, He is forced to “give us up” to reap what we have sown. Some see the involvement of naturalistic explanations in these plagues as an attack on the supernatural work of God, but this need not be, for the God of Israel is the Creator. The idea that God could have destroyed the Egyptians by allowing them to reap the natural results of what they had sown into the earth cannot diminish the message for us today—the only place of safety and life is with Christ, the Tree of Life. The only reason we are not currently suffering from the implosion of all nature is because the life-giving and upholding Spirit of God is still on the earth. However, if the result of rejecting God’s Spirit locally in *Egypt* brought on the plagues that desolated their nation, what would happen if *the whole world* rejected God’s Spirit?

THE LAST PLAGUES: CONSEQUENCES OF MANKIND'S SIN

Revelation 14:9–10 (KJV) ⁹ And *the* third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any *man* worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ the same shall drink of **the wine of the wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

Revelation 16:1 (KJV) And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out **the vials of the wrath of God** upon the earth.

Many assume that the last plagues are the breaking point for God, a time when He finally will let loose all His pent-up anger and wrath. This, however, is not the case for several reasons. Firstly, is God the type of Person who would punish those who don't want to be in a relationship with Him? In the realm of relationships, this is called abuse, and in the realm of politics, this is called a dictatorship. According to the testimony of Jesus concerning God's justice,²¹ God is a supporter of religious liberty; He gives everyone the freedom to choose which side they prefer, and He will not externally interfere or coerce the voters with threats.

Secondly, if we look at the cycles of 7 which precede the 7 Plagues (7 Seals and 7 Trumpets), we will see Satanic agencies active in each while God is the passive agent which restrains and loosens the forces of darkness.

THE 7 SEALS & THE DEMONIC ELEMENT

In the 7 Seals, we see the four horsemen bearing the colors of White, Red, Green, and Black. The first horseman is described as having “a bow; and a crown

²¹ See chapter 3, section 4 of *Forbidden Fruit* to read about how Jesus revealed how God's justice demands restoration, nor retribution, and how justice cannot exist apart from freedom.

was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.” Revelation 6:2 (KJV). I used to think this was a reference to Jesus since white typically represents purity and Jesus is also pictured on a white horse in Revelation 19. There, however, he is pictured as having a sword, not a bow;²² many diadems (*diadēma*), not a single crown (*stēphanōs*). Likewise, in the context of the Seals, the Lamb is already described as the winner (Rev. 5:5), but this horseman is still trying to win. Is it possible that this figure on a white horse is symbolic of Satan and his masquerading messiahs who disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15)? This seems to be the case, for Christ, in His Olivet Discourse, outlined the first four horsemen of **[1] counterfeit Messiahs** (Rev. 6:2), **[2] war** (Rev. 6:4), **[3] famine** (Rev. 6:5-6), and **[4] death** (Rev. 6:8):

Matthew 24:4–9 ⁴Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, ⁵ for **[1] many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many.** ⁶ And you will hear of **[2] wars** and threats of wars... There will be **[3] famines** and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. ⁹ “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and **[4] killed.** You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers.

God is not *causing* these tragedies, but He is *permitting* them. This is explicitly pointed out in the second Seal:

Revelation 6:4 (RSV) And out came another horse, bright red; **its rider was permitted** [*didōmi*] **to take peace from the earth**, so that men should slay one another; and **he was given** [*permitted, didōmi*] **a great sword.**

Indeed, John often used the word for “permitted” to describe “the divine permission granted to evil powers to carry out their nefarious work—the denizens of the abyss (ix. 1, 3, 5), the monster (xiii. 5, 7), and the false prophet

²² “... it may be relevant to observe that throughout the Old Testament there is some tendency to put the bow and arrow in relation to the *enemies* of Israel. The most significant passage in this regard is Ezekiel 38-39, the account of Gog and his armies. Much later in the book, John will cite Gog by name...” Vernard Eller, *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense Out of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 86.

(xiii. 14, 15)... It follows that **all four riders represent evils which are not directly caused by the will of God, but only tolerated by his permission...**²³ Indeed, “God does not will the action to happen, but **God wills the other side to show its colors**. Disclosure is a matter of necessity (1:1; 4:1; 11:5; 17:10; 20:3; 22:6).”²⁴

THE 7 TRUMPETS & THE DEMONIC ELEMENT

Satanic “DNA” is found throughout the Trumpet sequence, likewise incriminating Satan, not God, as the perpetrator of these sufferings. The 5th Trumpet makes this fact painfully clear:

Revelation 8:13–9:1 (KJV) ^{8:13} And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, **woe, to the inhabitants of the earth** by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound. ^{9:1} And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw **a star fall from heaven unto the earth**: and to him was given [permitted, *didōmi*] the key of the bottomless pit.

Here is a clear reference to Satan’s fall to earth and the heavenly sympathy for those who dwell where the Serpent has landed:

Revelation 12:9, 12 (KJV) ⁹ And **the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth**, and his angels were cast *out* with him... ¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. **Woe to the inhabitants of the earth** and of the sea! for the devil is come

²³ G.B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), p. 81, <http://tinyurl.com/28kydxtc>. Another reason to believe these horsemen represent Satanic rather than divine action is the fact that the martyrs under the altar symbolized in the fifth seal cry out *because of lack of divine action*. If the first four seals represent God’s work of vengeance against the wicked, why do those in the fifth seal ask why He has yet to avenge their blood (Rev. 6:10)?

²⁴ Sigve K. Tonstad, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), p. 125.

down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath *but* a short time.

This fallen star which opens the bottomless pit and leads an army of demonic spirits is clearly the active cause of this Trumpet’s “plague” (Rev. 9:20). If we needed even more evidence of the satanic cause of the destructive Trumpets, we learn that the fallen star which leads this army is, as we have seen, the Destroyer (Rev. 9:11; John 10:10).

	IS. 14:12-20	REV. 9	REV. 12
SUBJECT	STAR	STAR	SATAN
ORIGIN	HEAVEN	HEAVEN	HEAVEN
ACTION	DESCENT	DESCENT	DESCENT
DESCENT TO	EARTH/PIT	EARTH/PIT	EARTH
CHARACTERISTIC	DESTROYER	DESTROYER	PERSECUTOR

The 6th Trumpet likewise shows the role of evil angels in the end, for we read that the angel which blew the sixth trumpet was commanded to “¹⁴**Release the four angels who are bound** at the great Euphrates River.’ ¹⁵**Then the four angels... were turned loose** to kill one-third of all the people on earth... ¹⁹ Their power was in their mouths and in their tails. For **their tails had heads like snakes**, with the power to injure people.” Revelation 9:14-15, 19. Just as Satan, the ultimate counterfeit Christ, was *permitted* to take peace from the earth (Rev. 6:4), these serpentine angels that been previously restrained will eventually be *turned loose* and allowed to manifest Satan’s Kingdom of darkness.

This “loosing” shows us how angels of God “cause” destruction at the command of God:

Revelation 7:1–3 ¹ Then I saw **four angels** standing at the four corners of the earth, **holding back the four winds** so they did not blow on the earth or the sea, or even on any tree. ² And I saw another angel coming up from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. And he shouted to those four angels, who had been given power to harm land and sea, ³ “Wait! **Don’t harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants.**”

How do these angels of God “hurt” the earth, sea, and trees? By *releasing* the winds—the forces of destruction—when God commands them to. And what happens after chapter 7, when God’s people are sealed? After this we see destruction coming upon the earth, sea, and trees (Rev. 8:7-11). However, even at this point God still restrains the power of Satan from harming any of His children who trust in Christ, for He only allows the fallen angel and his minions dominion over those who have sided with him—“only the people who did not have the Seal of God on their foreheads.” Revelation 9:4.

It is also worth pointing out that these trumpets caused by demonic activity are described as *plagues* (Rev. 9:20). This brings up the question: if Satan and his henchmen are responsible for the death, destruction, and plagues of the 7 Seals and the 7 Trumpets, who will be responsible for the subsequent plagues?

THE 7 LAST PLAGUES—GOD’S UNMIXED WRATH

The Last Plagues are rightly described as the wrath of God. The only problem is the modern, Roman interpretation of wrath. If we view God like the ruler of Rome, then His wrath is manifested by obliterating all dissenters. But according to the testimony of Jesus’ life, His wrath and judgments are manifested when He allows the wicked to reap what they sow and suffer the self-destructive consequences of their sins that ricochet back on them—all for the purpose of revelation.²⁵ This definition of wrath has many examples throughout Scripture, including Revelation.

Ezekiel 22:31 (KJV) Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; **I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads**, saith the Lord God. (cf. Rom. 1:18–19; 24–27; Deut. 31:16–17; Ps. 89:46; 106:40–42; Is. 54:7–8).

²⁵ Again, see chapter 3, section 4 to read about what Jesus’s life revealed about how God’s judgments work.

Revelation 13:10 (KJV) **He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword...**

Revelation 16:6 **Since they shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is their just reward.** (cf. Rev. 11:18; 18:6; 22:18-19)²⁶

Just as the first plagues progressed as God gradually withdrew His hand of protection, so too shall the angels of God which restrain the destructive forces of Satan, man, and nature, let loose their hold on these things and give the wicked up to the natural result of separating themselves from the Source of protection and life. This is why the plagues that are poured out are described as the “**bowl filled with the wrath of God.**” Revelation 15:7. God will, in His “wrath,” give over those who reject Him to reap the consequences of the path they have chosen, just as He allowed the Egyptians to reap destruction and be vomited from the earth which they defiled and corrupted by their sinful, destructive lifestyle.

With this understanding, not only are the last plagues manifestations of the wrath of God, but the previous Seals and Trumpets were likewise manifestations of His wrath. The only difference is that in the last plagues His wrath is *unmixed with mercy* while in the previous Seals and Trumpets His wrath was *mixed with mercy*—God was still limiting how far the powers of darkness could go (Rev. 6:6; 7:1; 9:4), but in the end He will give them free reign.

“In the initial **seal judgments**, for example, **the sea is completely protected** from the destructive agent (Rev. 7:3). In the **trumpet judgments**, less protection is given, and the agent is allowed to turn **a third of the sea into blood, killing a third of its life** (Rev. 8:8-9). In the **bowl judgments**, however, ‘the elements of restrain and

²⁶ Some may be tempted to read these passages through the Old Testament lens of the *lex tallionis*, an eye for an eye, principle (law of retaliation). However, Jesus repudiated this principle and replaced it with the principle of not responding to violence with violence (Matt. 5:39-45). These passages aren’t saying that if you hurt someone, God will hurt you; instead, they are saying that harming someone will naturally lead to you being hurt (a principle we see play out from Babylon until the end of time [see *Forbidden Fruit*, chapter 4]).

limitation... have all disappeared.’ At this point, God responds to people’s obstinate refusal to repent by letting destructive cosmic forces have their way, with the result that **‘every living thing in the sea died’** (Rev. 16:3, italics added).²⁷

PROGRESSION OF GOD’S END-TIME “WRATH”		
SEALS	TRUMPETS	BOWLS
1/4 Destroyed →	1/3 Destroyed →	ALL Destroyed
<i>Most Restraint of Satan</i>	<i>Less Restraint of Satan</i>	<i>No Restraint of Satan</i>
(Rev. 6:8)	(Rev. 8:7-8)	(Rev. 16:3)

The plagues are a punishment from God, but He is punishing by what He permits—and He permits these things for the Satanic side of the controversy to fully unmask itself before the onlooking universe.

As God is rejected by the world, He is forced to remove His upholding hand from earth. Then the last plagues shall be poured out, causing it to revert back to its original state before creation, when it was **“formless [H8414] and empty [H922], and darkness covered the deep waters...”** Genesis 1:2. The physical darkness that existed before creation testified of the spiritual darkness caused by Satan’s lies at the beginning of the cosmic controversy. In like manner, once the whole world has fully accepted Satan’s lies and implemented his form of government, the earth will likewise revert to complete desolation as the curse “consumes the earth” (Is. 24:6).

Jeremiah 4:22–23, 26 ²²“**My people are foolish and do not know me,**” says the Lord. “They are stupid children who have no understanding. **They are clever enough at doing wrong, but they have no idea how to do right!**” ²³ **I looked at the earth, and it was empty [H922] and formless [H8414]. I looked at the heavens, and there was no light...** ²⁶ I looked, and the fertile fields had become a wilderness.²⁸

²⁷ Boyd, *Crucifixion of The Warrior God*, vol. 1, p. 609-610.

²⁸ According to Isaiah, the fallen angel, Lucifer, is responsible for making “the world as a wilderness.” Isaiah 14:17 (KJV).

THE 7 PLAGUES & THE DEMONIC ELEMENT

When the sequence of the Trumpets and Plagues are compared, the similarities are striking.

	TRUMPETS	PLAGUES
1 ST	EARTH	EARTH
2 ND	SEA TURNS TO BLOOD	SEA TURNS TO BLOOD
3 RD	RIVERS & FOUNTAINS	RIVERS & FOUNTAINS
4 TH	SUN	SUN
5 TH	DARKNESS & TORTURE	DARKNESS & AGONY
6 TH	EUPHRATES & WAR	EUPHRATES & WAR
7 TH	LOUD VOICE IN HEAVEN	LOUD VOICE IN HEAVEN

If the 7 Seals and Trumpets were caused by Satan and his agents, should we expect the last plagues to be any different? Let's look at the plagues and see if we can glean any insight.

Throughout most of Revelation the passive (instead of active) voice is used, thus leaving us to wonder who is the cause of what. In the 1st Plague, for example, we see that the wicked are inflicted with “**horrible, malignant sores**” (Rev. 16:2). This verse is in the passive voice (e.g. “Jimmy was hit by a rock”), leaving us to speculate as to who caused these sores. However, this is reminiscent of Job's afflictions, where we find an example of the *active voice*: “**Satan struck Job with terrible boils**” (Job 2:7). “Struck,” the active verb, points us to the active agent: Satan. Could this first plague be the result of Satanic influences on mankind? Those who worship the beast²⁹ don't think so—they believe God is the source of their suffering, thus “**they slandered the God of Heaven**” (LSV) *as though God was afflicting them* with “their pains and sores” Revelation 16:11.

In the 2nd Trumpet we saw that 1/3rd of the sea was turned to blood when God removed His protecting hand in part, but in the 2nd Plague we see what happens when God fully removes the restraint placed upon the forces of destruction—all the sea and everything in it dies (Rev. 16:3).

²⁹ To learn the identity of this end-time beast power, read the full book (*Forbidden Fruit*)! This topic is covered in ch. 4 & 5.

Waters turning “to blood” is not all that unique, whether it be from algae blooms, the dumping of toxic chemicals and dyes, or some other agency. What is unique, however, is that essentially all the waters appeared as blood. The waters turning to blood today are usually the work of selfish man corrupting the earth under the influence of the Prince of selfishness. Could the time come when God will allow mankind to destroy one of our main sources of life? This doesn’t sound like a stretch to the ecologically minded reader, as, in a 2016 study, Boris Worm and colleagues concluded that “the societal consequences of an ongoing erosion of [ocean] diversity [due to overfishing] that appears to be accelerating on a global scale... is of serious concern because it projects *the global collapse of all taxa [species] currently fished by the mid-21st century.*”³⁰ As Paulien notes:

“Death and destruction are at work in the world on a large scale. This leads me to believe that **the plagues are not the direct working of God. They are the outworking of Satan’s way of running things. He is like the thief who comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. God is the source of abundant life instead** (John 10:10). To the degree that this is an ecological disaster, the author of Revelation wants us to understand that **there is a demonic incitement behind the deterioration of the environment. The decline of the environment is the way things go when Satan is in charge.**”³¹

³⁰ Boris Worm, Edward B. Barbier, Nicola Beaumont, *et. al.* “Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services,” *Science*, vol. 314, no. 5800 (November 2016), p. 790, <https://tinyurl.com/59r5cwfp>. Worm likewise observed that “exploitation has depleted large predatory fish communities worldwide by at least 90% over the past 50–100 years.” Ransom A. Myers and Boris Worm, “Extinction, survival or recovery of large predatory fishes,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, vol. 360, is. 1453 (January 2005), p. 13–20, <https://tinyurl.com/6yy2aj4d>. Aside from overfishing, scientists say that “With continued high emissions, by 2100, most species (87%) are projected to experience a high risk of adverse climate impacts...” Daniel G. Boyce, Derek P. Tittensor, Cristina Garila, *et. al.* “A Climate Risk Index for Marine Life,” *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 12 (June 2022), p. 854–862, <https://tinyurl.com/2yc9m47z>. Though I don’t yet understand the nuances of global warming, I do see that man is having a tremendously negative impact on our environment and is quickly destroying it. Overfishing, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, mass coral bleaching, oil spills, noise pollution, PFAS (forever chemicals), and the staggering decline of biodiversity is evidence enough of this fact.

³¹ Jon Paulien, *Commentary on Revelation Chapter 16*, p. 4–5, <https://tinyurl.com/PaulienRev16>.

The 3rd Plague is poured out on “**the rivers and springs, and they became blood.**” Revelation 16:4. The location of this plague is identical to the 3rd Trumpet’s location, which likewise fell on “**the rivers and on the springs of water.**” Revelation 8:10. Unlike this Plague, the Trumpet informs us that the rivers and springs were corrupted when the star that fell from heaven (Satan) “fell on one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water.” Is the purpose of the 3rd Plague for God to show that He is a bigger destroyer than Satan by destroying all of the waters when Satan only destroyed a third? Or is the 3rd Plague the result of God allowing Satan to run the show to further expose Satan’s destructive character and kingdom?³²

The pouring out of the bowl of God’s wrath in the 4th Plague results in men being **scorched with fire** and heat (Rev. 16:8-9). The cause of this plague is not definitely stated, but the language is reminiscent of nuclear war or global warming. If the sinful and greedy actions of man are, in fact, directly destroying the earth, it makes sense that Revelation says God will “destroy **those who destroy the earth**” (Rev. 11:18). Since God is often described as doing what He allows, it seems that all God has to do to destroy the earth is to let us destroy it ourselves. Notwithstanding, we see that those affected by this plague again “**slandered the Name of God**” (Rev. 16:9 LSV), evidently viewing Him as the cause of their destruction instead of their own actions under the influence of Satan. Those who suffer these plagues, like many today, “ruin themselves by their own stupid actions and then blame the LORD.” Proverbs 19:3 (GNT).

³² After this plague we hear the voice of “the angel who had authority over all water.” Revelation 16:5. This is interesting because the apocryphal Book of Enoch also describes angels, in the context of the flood, that “were over the powers of the waters.” According to the Book of Enoch, the flood occurred because God commanded these angels to “**let loose all the powers of the waters** which are beneath in the earth **in order to bring judgement** and destruction on all who [abide and] dwell on the earth.” Enoch 66:1. This is in harmony with the Scriptural account of the flood that says man had already corrupted the earth by his sinful lifestyle (Gen. 6:11-13; Is. 24:3-6), and the only thing holding everything together was the Spirit of Christ (Gen. 6:3; Col. 1:17). When these told God to “Depart from us,” “what can the Almighty do for them” (Job 22:15-17 KJV) except leave them to their own devices (Is. 54:7-9) and command the angels that restrained disaster (Rev. 7:1) to leave them alone (Hos. 4:17)? Could some of the plagues operate in a similar fashion?

For more information on the flood, please see Adrian Ebens, *Agape: A Revelation of the Father’s Character of Love* (Father of Love, 2017), ch. 13, <https://tinyurl.com/AgapeBook>; Greg Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, vol. 2, p. 1121-1142.

After experiencing this plague, they “repented not to give him glory” or, “speak well of God.”³³ If they are right that God smites those who reject Him with fire, is it a wonder that they don’t speak well of God? Jesus’ disciples once asked Him if He wanted them to “**command fire to come down from heaven, and consume**” the people who rejected Him, but He “turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.** For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save *them*.” Luke 9:54-56 (KJV). I wonder if the people scorched with fire in this plague would react differently if they knew this story.

The 5th Plague is poured out on “**the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness...**” Revelation 16:10 (KJV). Is this darkness from “**the Father of lights**” (Jam. 1:17 KJV), in whom “is no darkness... at all” (1 John 1:5)? Or is it the result of **the Prince of darkness** (John 14:30; Eph. 6:12) and his agents? In Revelation 17:8, we see the beast described as coming “out of the bottomless pit,” the Abyss. Could this Abyss be the equivalent of the “throne of the beast”? This would be significant since the fallen angel—the Destroyer—opens the Abyss in the 5th Trumpet, releasing smoke that brings darkness (Rev. 9:1-2). In this case the Abyss—the throne of the beast—would be the source of darkness! So when darkness is poured out on the Papacy in the 5th Plague, the source of this darkness is her own throne!

If the evidence we’ve look at so far doesn’t convince us of the satanic activity in the plagues, the 6th Plague leaves little room for us to doubt this reality:

Revelation 16:12–16 (RSV) ¹²The 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. ¹³And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs; ¹⁴for they are **demonic spirits** [active subject], **performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble** [active verb] **them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.** ¹⁵(“Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!”) ¹⁶And **they assembled them** at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.

³³ Tonstad, *Revelation*, p. 228.

In this passage we see that “they [active subject] assembled [active verb] them”—this clearly identifies the active agent of the 6th Plague. “They” are clearly the “demonic spirits,” and the group which they assembled are “the kings of the whole world.” Thus, we can see throughout the Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues that the demonic element is the *cause* of the world’s sufferings, not God.

As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end. The same way the first plagues unfolded will be the same way the last plagues shall be poured out. When all have made their decision to either accept or reject Christ, He will—in His “wrath”—command the guardian angels of the wicked to “let them alone,” since “They are joined to their idols.” Hosea 4:17 (KJV). Once the protection of God is removed, the Destroyer will have complete rule over the human family, and “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time,” but God’s people “shall be delivered, every one that *shall* be found written in the book.” Daniel 12:1 (KJV).

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

You've been reading an adapted excerpt of my book, *Forbidden Fruit: When Obeying God Becomes Illegal*. If you liked what you've read here, then you'll love the full book! In it we will look at topics such as:

- What happens during the 7th Plague
- What will happen at the Battle of Armageddon
- The identity and final fate of the seven-headed beast
- The origin of evil and suffering
- How the two trees in Eden correspond to the Seal of God and Mark of the Beast and what they will be in the final conflict
- Reconciling passages about the destruction of the wicked by fire and the non-violent character of Jesus
- And much more!

Who's the Bigger Destroyer, Jesus or Satan?

Some people believe Satan is a Destroyer, but many Christians believe that in the end God will be the ultimate Destroyer when He pours out the Last Plagues and flexes His omnipotent muscles.

This booklet challenges that traditional interpretation focused on retribution. As we consider the plagues from Egypt to Revelation, we will learn many things, such as:

- How the plagues of Egypt might be describing an ecological collapse triggered by the sins of man
- How God can be described as actively causing what He simply allows
- Why Revelation describes Jesus as being crucified in Egypt (Rev. 11:8)
- Striking parallels between Revelation's 7 Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues that expose the source of all suffering

Whether you're a skeptic or a believer, this exploration of cause-and-effect in Biblical judgments will challenge you to reconsider the nature of divine intervention, human responsibility, and the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Discover a God who warns, protects, and grieves - rather than one who actively destroys his children.