



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. A person sitting next to me just might be the most stubborn person in this room!

2. The seven last plagues are God's way of punishing the wicked over a longer period of time (rather than just zapping them).

3. The seven last plagues are poured out on the earth for the exact same reason as the plagues of Egypt.

4. The devil believes he will ultimately defeat God with overwhelming numbers.

5. The seven last plagues represent the close of probation.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

► READ Revelation 16 (NIV)

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. 3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died. 4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

"You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; 6 for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." 7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. 9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. 10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. 12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

15 "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."

16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. 17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

« Why did God send the plagues on Egypt in the Old Testament? Do you see any parallels in these plagues?

» **Vs. 1-5: The first three bowls** - The first three bowls parallel the first three trumpets (8:7-12) in that they affect (in sequence) the earth, the sea and the fresh waters. Yet the bowls do not merely repeat the earlier series. The intensity is greater. The trumpet series affected one-third of the earth, sea and fresh water respectively (as well as a third of the sun, moon and stars), while the judgments introduced by the bowls have no such limitation.

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

» **Vs. 6-7: True and just are your judgments** - The heart of the judgment hymn is the ironic pronouncement in verse 6: for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve. The sentiments are similar to those expressed in the Jewish book Wisdom of Solomon, reflecting on how the plagues were appropriate to the Egyptians' sins: "In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts, which led them astray to worship irrational serpents and worthless animals, you sent upon them a multitude of irrational creatures to punish them, so that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins" (Wis 11:15 NRSV). In Revelation the same principle applies: those who shed the blood of martyrs are themselves punished with a plague of blood.

« How are God's punishments full of justice, love, and kindness?

» **Vs. 8-9: The fourth bowl** - The only similarity to the Exodus story is the defiance of those who suffered from the plague. But their reaction here goes well beyond Pharaoh's persistent hardness of heart. They cursed [literally "blasphemed"] the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him (v. 9). The "eternal gospel" call to "fear God and give him glory" (14:7) has had no visible effect on a defiant and rebellious world.

» **Vs. 10-11: The fifth bowl** - The plague of darkness marks a return to the theme of the Exodus, when there was darkness over Egypt, "darkness that can be felt" (Ex 10:21). A kind of cumulative effect of the first five bowls sets in as people gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores (v. 11; compare the "painful sores" of verse 2). The verdict after five plagues is the same as after four: they refused to repent of what they had done (v. 11).

« Why do people refuse to repent and follow God today?

• **Vs. 12-16: The sixth bowl** - The common feature between the sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl is the great river Euphrates (v. 12; compare 9:14). Here, instead of 200 million cavalry (9:16-17), John sees the kings from the East coming across the Euphrates (v. 12), representing the kings of the whole world assembled for a great battle (v. 14). The comparison between these spirits and frogs is the only link between this plague and the Exodus (see Ex 8:1-15).

» **Vs. 13: Three impure spirits that looked like frogs** - They work signs in support of the evil trinity just as the false prophet did miracles in support of the beast (13:13-15) and the magicians in Egypt worked wonders for Pharaoh (Exod. 7:22; see also Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9-10). Zoroastrianism, the dominant religion of Persia before the seventh century B.C., seems a better source for the imagery. In that tradition, animals were divided into good and evil categories, similar to the Hebrew clean and unclean animals, and the deity associated with the evil animals was the frog. Zoroastrianism saw the frog as "the bringer of plagues, and the agent of Ahriman, the power of darkness, in his struggle against Ormuzd, the power of light" (Barclay, 1960:2.169).

« What do you think is the devil's plan for the final battle between his followers and God?

» **Vs. 15: One who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed** - That is, who stays awake; who doesn't fall asleep; who keeps watch. The verb is used in the sense of "wake up" in 3:2, 3. "Remains clothed" can mean "keeping his clothes on" but it may also mean "keeps his clothes ready (to put on)." "Shamefully exposed" translates the Greek "they see his shame," where "shame" is regarded by many as a euphemism for "private parts" of the body.

« What do you think God means by us staying awake and having our clothes ready?

» **Vs. 16: Armageddon** - In the Hebrew Bible, Megiddo was the name of a fortified city and a plain in northern Palestine. The plain of Megiddo was strategically located, a kind of natural battlefield and the scene of one notably disastrous battle, the defeat of King Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron 35:20-24). "Megiddo" may have had connotations similar to "Waterloo" in a more modern setting. But there was no Mount Megiddo nor any mountain near Megiddo.

» **Vs. 17-21: The seventh bowl** - In place of a battle, the plagues come to an end with a word from God: out of the temple ... a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done." These words parallel Jesus' last words on the cross (John 19:30) and mark the end, not chronologically, but in the sense of completion: God's justice is complete (11:17-18). There will be no new series of seven judgments.

« In light of how God has used plagues in the past, and the finality of the seventh bowl, what event is this...And what does it say about God's character?

MY PRAYER...

1. How might I be becoming resistant to repentance and following God with my whole being?
2. How spiritually awake and clothed am I right now?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?



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