

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#984- PLAGUES AND PESTILENCE: Nature Unleashed

It is interesting to do a simple word study on what the Bible says about "Plagues" and "Pestilence".

To be honest, you have to remember that this is only a matter of semantics. There are things that old King James called "plagues" that you and I might not connote in the same manner (i.e. the issues and leprosies in Leviticus 13-15). While, by the same token, there are some things that don't get specifically called "plague" or "pestilence" and we might very well expect them to be so delineated (i.e. the overwhelming infestation of locusts, cankerworms, caterpillars, and palmerworms spoken of in Joel 1/3).

Even at that a simple word study may open some windows of understanding for you in this study...

- Genesis 12- Because of Sarai, Pharaoh has troubles? Disease? Setbacks?
- Exodus 12-17 An easy one... 10 plagues on Egypt.
- Leviticus 13/14 Leprous and hemorrhaginous plagues of both men and structures.
- Numbers 11- A plague that resulted from gluttony.
- Numbers 14- 10 cowardly spies die as the result of plague.
- Numbers 16/17- We'll deal more with this event in our next section...
- Numbers 25- Adulterous rebellion at Baal-peor brought on a plague.
- Deuteronomy 28- Disobedience will bring on a plague.
- I Samuel 5/6- Philistines received plagues for taking the ark captive.
- II Samuel 24- David's punishment is a plague upon the land.
- II Chronicles 21- Jehoram's rebellion brought on a plague.
- Jeremiah 34/38/42/44- Five repetitions of the phrase "sword, famine, and pestilence".
- Ezekiel 6- Ezekiel echoes the same three as Jeremiah.
- Zechariah 14- Plagues predicted as part of the "great day of the Lord".
- Mark 3- Various diseases and infirmities were viewed in the category of "plagues".
- Mark 5- Her hemorrhage is seen as a plague... just as Leviticus 15 said.
- Revelation 16- Another easy one... seven last plagues.

In Conclusion: What does this simple word study teach? The Bible writers used those terms ("plagues" and "pestilence") for a variety of life disasters. Sometimes they are just the natural part of living in an infected world and other times they are decidedly supernatural events and occurrences.

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**One Clear Intervention:** In the Numbers 16/17 account of the rebellion led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram we see very clearly that God does choose, at times, to intervene by utilizing some disaster as his rod of discipline.

Let's paraphrase this story a bit...

- 16:1 A jealous Levite and two bitter Reubenites are disgruntled.  
:2 They spread the discord among 250 leaders of the people.  
:3 They said to Moses and Aaron, "You've assumed the leadership inappropriately, after all, we are all equal before God... of course we'd like to be *more* equal!"  
:4 Sometimes Moses is amazingly naive.  
:5 "O.K.," Moses responds, "Let's let the Lord decide.  
:6-7 "We'll have a test..."

- :8-10 "Korah, you're already a man of privilege. How much more do you covet?"
- :11 "Aaron's nobody in this dispute. You're really angry at God!"
- :12 Moses summons Dathan and Abiram and they refuse to come.
- :13-14 They responded like children throwing a tantrum - a complete lack of logic.
- :15 Moses knew he was innocent of the accusations. It was all God's doing.
- :16-19 The test commences.
- :20-21 The Lord says, "I'll deal with this rebellious cancer!"
- :22 "Oh Lord, please temper your response!"
- :23-27 "I assure you, only the guilty will be punished."
- :28-34 The primary rebels are destroyed.
- :35 Their immediate followers also fall.
- 17:1-5 The aftermath of the judgment.
- :6 The grumbling reveals that the seed of rebellion remained.
- :7-9 Again Moses and Aaron show themselves to be somewhat naive.
- :10 The Lord tests Moses and Aaron by saying, "They will all die!"
- :11-13 Moses and Aaron intercede for Israel.
- :14 14,700 fall in the plague.

**In Conclusion:** Does this open new vistas to you about the Lord and his "plagues"?

**The gods of Egypt:** Here's a short listing of the various deities of Egypt that the Lord was challenging as He took on Pharaoh's pantheon...

- |                                             |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Amun-re- The Sun/king of the gods           | Osiris- god of the afterworld         |
| Thoth and Khons- moon gods                  | Nut- goddess of the sky               |
| Geb- god of the earth                       | Hapi- god of the Nile/flood cycle     |
| Amun- god of nature's hidden powers         | Ptah- god of craftsmanship            |
| Maat- goddess of truth, justice, and order  | Apis- the sacred bull of Memphis      |
| Isis- birds sacred to Thoth, wife of Osiris | Horus- falcon god/the living Pharaoh  |
| Bastet- the cat goddess of joy and love     | Hathor- the cow goddess of childbirth |
| Khnum- the ram god of one creation account  | Anubis- jackal god of the dead        |
| Sobek- crocodile god of the temple pools    | Seth- evil brother of Osiris          |
| Sekhmet- lion goddess, wife of Ptah         | Amon- the multiple spirit god         |
| Bes- lion-headed dwarf                      | Thoueris- hippopotamus for fertility  |
| Shu- god of the air                         | Ba- winged spirit of the dead         |
| Nephtys- goddess of women                   | Neith- guardian of the stomach        |
| Serket- scorpion/guardian of intestines     |                                       |

**In Conclusion:** This is just a sampling. The whole soap opera was really quite complex and made even more difficult by the fact that there were three competing schools of "theology" (Memphis/Thebes/Heliopolis).

*Little wonder Pharaoh asked, "Who is this god that I should listen to him?"*

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