

TEXT Revelation 15:1; 16:1-21

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Luke 23:28-30; Revelation 6:15-17; 8:1-13

OBJECTIVE The students will have the ability to tell that at the Great Tribulation, the wrath of God will be poured out upon the ungodly because of their rejection of Him. This will be a time of fear, darkness, and torment when great plagues will be sent upon the earth.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. — Matthew 24:22

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. — Matthew 24:22

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

Chapter Eight

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

The Tribulation Plagues

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Revelation was written about A.D. 81-96 by John, the Apostle who had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos because of his faith. Political prisoners were banished to Patmos and put to hard labor in the mines there. It is interesting to consider that it was during perhaps the most difficult time of John's life that God revealed to him the warnings to the churches of Asia and prophecies of events to come. It is the only Book in the New Testament that is exclusively prophetic in character.

John lived at a time of terrible persecution of the Early Church when vast numbers were crucified, burned to death, or thrown to wild animals. Peter and Paul had been put to death and possibly others of the Apostles. It is said that 40,000 Christians had suffered martyrdom. However, in that abyss of darkness and sorrow, John

received and recorded a Revelation of Jesus Christ such as none other has witnessed.

The historical interpretation of the Book considers it to be a forecast, or panorama, of the Church's trials, struggles, and final victory, as well as God's final judgments upon unbelieving mankind.

Revelation 16:1 begins with a command to the seven angels to "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." These ministers of divine justice were ready to execute vengeance upon transgressors, but they could do nothing until they received this divine command. Nothing can be done without the permission of God; and in the manifestation of justice or mercy by Divine agency, there must be positive command.

YOUR OPENER

The Tribulation Plagues

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KEY VERSE: Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. — Matthew 24:22

RESPONSES

1. This time of trouble comes upon the earth because of men's sins. The discussion should center around the fact that the wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven upon all those who have rejected His call and have not obeyed His Word. These are finally left to go through the Great Tribulation.

2. These are the seven last plagues. Naturally, a discussion should include other happenings in Revelation such as the opening of the seals with resulting war, famine, and death (Revelation 6:1-8); the sounding of the seven trumpets, with the locusts and other severe problems (Revelation 8:7-13; 9:1-20); the tyrannical reign of the Beast (Antichrist). It will be spiritually profitable to discuss that during this time the overcoming saints will have been caught up in the Rapture and are at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. See I Thessalonians 4:14-17; II Thessalonians 2:3-10.

During the period known as the Great Tribulation, there will be misery, suffering, trouble, and sorrow such as this world has never known. It will be a time of God's wrath upon the earth because of mankind's rejection of God's love and mercy. Human language could never paint the horrible picture that will unfold here on earth during this time. We try to imagine as best we can, using the insights that the Word of God gives us, yet it is certain that our minds grasp only a small portion of the horror that will be the experience of those who live on the earth during this fearful period.

1. After the saints are raptured, the term "tribulation" is never mentioned again in Holy Scripture. Instead, the term "wrath of God" is mentioned thirteen times from Revelation 6:16 to 19:15, during which time "they repented not," is mentioned three times. Using Romans 1:18 as a reference, tell why this time of trouble comes upon the earth.

2. What is the time frame of the plagues listed in our text, as compared to the other happenings in the Book of Revelation?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

3. The plagues spoken of in Revelation 16 are literal and are not meant to be spiritualized or symbolized. List the seven plagues mentioned.

4. Compare the reaction of Pharaoh to the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7:13), to the reaction of the people on the earth at the time of the seven plagues.

5. Describe what takes place when the sixth vial is poured out.

6. Give the meaning of Jesus' words, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and the words of the great Voice out of the Temple of Heaven, "It is done."

3. Plague 1 — grievous sores

Plague 2 — sea became blood

Plague 3 — rivers became blood

Plague 4 — sun scorches

Plague 5 — darkness

Plague 6 — Euphrates River dried up

Plague 7 — thunder, lightning, earthquake, cities fall, islands and mountains move, hail,

Allow your students to offer their answers and briefly discuss the results of each plague. It might be interesting to parallel these plagues to those sent upon Egypt, which are recorded in Exodus, chapters 7-12. In conclusion you should help your students see that just as surely as the plagues pronounced upon the Egyptians occurred, so these plagues mentioned in Revelation will also take place.

4. God hardened Pharaoh's heart and the people on earth will blaspheme God. Discuss with your class that this reveals to us the condition of men's hearts—even in times of great distress they are unrepentant.

5. The spirits of devils gather men together to fight against the armies of the Lord. This is the Battle of Armageddon. Discuss with the students that though evil and sinfulness in the earth is more prevalent than ever before, God is indeed in control. He will cause even the ungodly to move as He gives consent for the final battle before the Millennial Reign of Christ on earth.

6. The meaning of Jesus' words was that the plan of salvation, arranged from the very foundation of the world, was now fulfilled and completed. The words of the great voice seemed to indicate that with the pouring out of the last vial, God's judgments against ungodliness were in the process of summation. An epoch of human history had come to an end. In discussing this question it should be pointed out that the last vial was poured out into the air, indicating a widespread scope. We are told in Scripture that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, thus indicating that the last vial was directed toward Satan and all his emissaries. We know that the Antichrist's influence comes to a quick close on earth following the pouring out of this last vial.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Do you think the plagues mentioned in our text are really going to happen? Explain your answer.

What is a plague?

Why do you think God will allow the Tribulation plagues?

What does the word tribulation mean?

What were some of the events mentioned in our ANSWER story? Which one had the most impact on Nick?

What other time in history did God send plagues upon wicked, unbelieving people? Who were the people and what were the circumstances?

What name is given to the battle which will be fought by all the kings (leaders) of the earth? All the forces of evil gather to fight against whom? Who wins?

What promise is given to those who read and heed the prophecies in this Book?

THINGS TO DO

Have each student name some horrible disease, natural disaster (flood, earthquake, etc.), or horrible accident, such as the sinking of the Titanic. Then ask them to imagine all these things put together at the same time, explaining how the Tribulation will be even worse.

Show the students pictures of hiding places: caves, locked rooms, behind rocks, etc. Next, compare some of the Tribulation plagues that are mentioned to the plagues on Egypt during Moses' time. The plagues of Egypt never touched God's people in the land of Goshen—God's hiding place for them. On the same order, the plagues during the Tribulation will not touch the people of God who have gone on to be with Jesus in Heaven.

Bring a baseball. Ask if anyone has ever been hit by a baseball. Then relate it to a hailstorm. Hail will come

down, not only as big as a baseball, but weighing about one hundred pounds each! Can anyone survive? Use these suggestions to stress the importance of being ready to meet God.

Bring pictures of famine, earthquakes, destruction, wars.

Have your class make a large poster or bulletin board divided into upper and lower halves. On the upper portion, illustrate the events in Heaven such as the Marriage Supper, and saints on white horses. On the lower part illustrate the Tribulation plagues which will occur on the earth at the same time.

Answers for ANSWER

