

The Examiners

...Examining the Scripture daily to see whether these were so... Acts 17:11

PLAGUE

Plague is a "stroke" of affliction, or disease, sent for the purpose of divine chastisement (Numbers 11:33; 14:37; 16:46-49; 2 Samuel 24:21). Plague is usually painful, virulent and in the form of deadly diseases, (Lev. 13:3, 5, 30; 1 Kings 8:37), or severe calamity (Mark 5:29; Luke 7:21), the ancient Israel called it "the judgment of God" (Ex. 9:14).

Plague, literally means to whip, to scourge, to hit with a blow) refers to a highly contagious and deadly diseases as in viral infection. In the ancient world, the primary carrier of a plague virus (*Bacillus Pasteurella Pestis*) is fleas from rats which then infect human beings¹.

The Hebrew word for plague is translated 49 times as pestilence. Each occurrence is accompanied by words such as famine, blood, wild beasts, death, and disobedience of God by the Israelites (Exodus 5:3, Leviticus 26:25). There are dissimilar types of plagues in the Bible like the famous ten plagues of Egypt:

(1.) The river Nile was turned into blood, and the fish died, and the river stank, so that the Egyptians loathed to drink from the river (Ex. 7:14-25).

(2.) The plague of frogs (Ex. 8:1-15).

(3.) The plague of lice (Heb. kinnim, properly gnats or mosquitoes; comp. Ps. 78:45; 105:31), "out of the dust of the land" (Ex. 8:16-19).

(4.) The plague of flies (Heb. *arob*, commonly known as. dog-fly), Ex.8:21-24.

(5.) The *murrain* (Ex.9:1-7), (very grievous ulcer) or epidemic pestilence which devastated vast numbers of cattle in the field. A warning was given prior to its coming.

(6.) The plague, of "boils and blains," (inflammations breaking out in pustules) like the third, was sent without warning (Ex.9:8-12). It is called (Deut. 28:27)., "the boil of Egypt." "The magicians could not stand before Moses" because of boils and blains infected their bodies.

(7.) The plague of hail, with fire and thunder (Ex. 9:13-33). Warning was given of its coming. (Ps. 18:13; 105:32, 33).

(8.) The plague of locusts, which covered the whole face of the earth, so that the land was darkened with them (Ex. 10: 12-15). The Hebrew name of this insect, *arbeh*, points to the "multitudinous" character of this visitation. Warning was given before this plague came.

(9.) After a short interval the plague of darkness succeeded that of the locusts; and it came without any special warning (Ex. 10:21-29). The darkness covered "all the land of Egypt" to such an extent that "they saw not one another." It did not, however, extend to the land of Goshen.

(10.) The last and most fearful of these plagues was the death of the first-born of man and of beast (Exodus 11:4, 5; 12:29, 30). In this study, we are going to deal only with plague of diseases related to divine discipline. It is not the objective of this study to make a pathological analysis of the different viral diseases.

Plague was so feared by the ancient people that Solomon prayed for relief from it before it should come on Israel (1 Kings 8: 37).

Relief could come only when the believers repented and sought God (2 Chronicles 7:13-15). Plague or pestilence was severe divine judgment upon ancient Israel for collective sins of the people, such as:

- Rebellion against God
- Prolonged carnality
- Disobedience to God
- Compromise
- Idolatry
- Mixed marriages
- Immorality

Plague was also executed by God against Israel because of abuses and misconduct of their leadership like:

- Mental attitude sins
- Corruption
- Heinous crime
- Conduct unbecoming
- Idolatry

In the years before modern medicine, there was no known cure for plague and other viral infection. In ancient Israel, the word plague was loosely used for any kind of skin disease and rashes. The priests (Levites) were responsible in determining the condition of the victim, whether the disease is harmless or if it is necessary to isolate the victim (Leviticus chapters 13 and 14).

The Philistines presented golden mice and tumors to the Hebrews when they returned the Ark from Ashdod (1 Samuel 5:1-). The mice represented the carrier of the virus while the tumors represented the enlarged glands caused by the plague.

Numerous plagues (infectious diseases) were recorded in the Bible such as:

- Leprosy
- Boil

- High fever
- Hemorrhage
- Inflammation
- Scabies
- Tumor
- Skin diseases
- Itch
- Worms

MODERN DAY PESTILENCE

AIDS -Acronym for *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, the most fearsome of the sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs. It is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), now known to be a *retrovirus*, an organism first identified in 1983. HIV is transmitted through the body fluids, mainly blood and genital secretions².

Retrovirus - Any of a family of viruses (*Retroviridae*) containing the genetic material RNA rather than the more usual DNA. In 1998 researchers from Rockefeller University reported that they had found HIV in a 1959 blood sample from the Congo in central Africa. They believe this indicates that HIV began spreading from monkeys to humans in the late 1940s or early 1950s, although it did not reach epidemic proportions among humans until the 1970s.

HIV is an RNA retrovirus. Viewed under an electron microscope, it has a dense cylindrical core that encases two molecules of viral RNA genetic material. A spherical outer envelope surrounds the core. For the virus to express itself and multiply within an infected cell, its RNA must be converted to DNA. It does this by using a built-in enzyme known as reverse transcriptase (since the transfer of genetic information from DNA to RNA is known as *transcription*, and retroviruses do the reverse of this). Retroviruses include those causing AIDS and some forms of leukemia.

The biological and geographical origins of HIV have been widely debated. Related viruses have been observed in animal populations, such as certain African monkeys, but these animal viruses did not produce the disease in humans. Researchers now think that HIV probably arose when the monkey virus mutated into a form that have could infect human beings.

HIV virus could be a liaison agent that carries out the judgment of God in time. It has reached the epidemic proportion because of human manipulation. HIV virus existed in monkeys for an unknown period of time without doing any harm.

EBOLA virus is a highly virulent *filovirus*, or thread virus, that causes a disease called Ebola fever. The virus was discovered in 1976 in the Ebola River area in northern Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo). Since then some isolated cases and four major outbreaks have occurred: in 1979 in Zaire and Sudan, in 1995 in Zaire, in 1996 and 1997 in Gabon, in 2000 in Uganda, and in 2001 in Gabon. In these outbreaks a total of about 1,100 people have been infected, and over 800 of them have died, but the real death statistics were not publicly disclosed.¹

There is no effective treatment, nor is a preventive vaccine available to date. Fortunately, the virus is not easily transmitted. Direct contact with a victim's virus-laden blood or other body fluids appears to be the only mode of transmission. The origin of the Ebola virus is unknown, but scientists suspect that it lives in wild animals that are unharmed by its presence. Several strains of the virus exist, and some do not cause illness in humans. It is possible that God will unleash and use Ebola virus to afflict human in epidemic proportion because of rejection of the Gospel and rejection of Bible doctrine by the believers.

Hantavirus is a family of at least eight rodent-borne viruses, some causing hemorrhagic fever. These viruses have been identified in Asia, Europe, and North America. The virus is transmitted when people inhale the dust containing urine and feces from infected rats and mice. A form of hemorrhagic fever with kidney failure has been known in Asia for about 1,000 years.

Cholera is an acute infectious disease in humans caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. Infection usually occurs from drinking contaminated water.

Dengue fever, a sporadically epidemic disease of warmer climates, is caused by a virus transmitted by the *Aedes* mosquito, which also spreads the yellow fever. Although painful, dengue fever usually ends in complete recovery within a few weeks; symptoms include acute fever, pains in body joints, headache, fatigue, sweating, and a rash.

Typhus is any of several infectious diseases, each caused by a different rickettsia microorganism. Louse, or epidemic, typhus is the most serious form; the infectious organism, *Rickettsia prowazekii*, lives only in humans and body lice. The louse's infected feces reach the human bloodstream through scratches in the skin or settlement of the feces in the mucus membranes of the eye or the respiratory tract. The major symptoms are intractable headache, extensive skin rash, and high fever. The mortality rate is significant in untreated persons over 50 years of age.

Malaria means "bad air" in Italian, reflecting the pre-1880 view that the disease was caused by gases from the swampy regions where many cases occurred (see also miasma). In 1880, Charles Laveran observed a protozoal parasite in the blood of an afflicted patient. In 1898, Ronald Ross found that the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito transmits the parasites into the bloodstream.

*The Hutchinson History Reference Suite 2002

Influenza is an infectious disease of the respiratory system caused by the influenza virus. It is probably the last remaining pandemic (worldwide) infection in humans. When new strains of influenza virus arise, they spread rapidly, infecting millions of people and causing many deaths.

Approximately every 10 years, influenza pandemics have been caused by new strains of type-A virus. Epidemics, or regional outbreaks, have appeared every 2 to 3 years for influenza A and every 4 to 5 years for influenza B. The pandemic of 1918 is estimated to have killed 22 million people throughout the world. More than 500,000 deaths were recorded in the United States³.

SARS, Acronym for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome is the latest and the most threatening virus in the world today. The economic threat is greater than the death toll. The Asian Development Bank warned that East Asia could lose nearly \$28 Billion in income if the region fails to control SARS by September 2003⁴.

Outbreak of retrovirus in different parts of world almost in the same period of time is not due to natural biological mutation but rather has been genetically engineered by humans. It is not possible that the same existing virus in animal and human would mutate under various condition without experimental laboratory process. The outbreak of HIV, Ebola, and SARS viruses are not natural but experimental. They are not the work of God but the genius of paranoid scientist hired by the government with the intention to rule the world.

The outbreak of Ebola, AIDS and SARS come about exactly when there was some political conflict between the nations where the virus originated and the most powerful nation. God is allowing an evil nation to destroy other evil nations by means of man-made viruses. Man-made viruses have become a silent weapon of mass destruction.

God instructed Israel through Mosaic Laws concerning basic principles related to human hygiene, control and quarantine of infectious diseases minus proper medical treatment (Leviticus 13-14). The basic principles of hygiene and proper preventive measures cannot be disregarded, but real protection comes from God. The very Person who controls the entire universe is directly concerned about the welfare of the believers.

During the Hypostatic Union of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mosaic principles related to isolation of patients with infectious diseases were disregarded in Israel. Lepers were roaming around the vicinity of Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus personally touched and healed them, disregarding hygiene as prescribed by the Mosaic Law.

Satan aimed to bring dread and fear upon every human being (especially upon the children of God) to destroy their volition toward the Word of God. Satan wanted to control and enslave believers with fear and anxiety, tempting them to lose their poise and composure. Fear of contracting infectious diseases is pointless and useless, since there is nothing we can do to prevent the divine judgment of God. The best protection against infectious diseases is spirituality and living inside the will and plan of God.

More outbreaks of contagious diseases are coming after the Rapture of the Church. We are living in a dispensation where in no prophecy related to Israel will occur. The intensifying cases of viral outbreak are just a normal part of our dispensation, and it will continue to increase as the Tribulation is getting closer. As believers in Christ, we have to prepare for the worst while always trusting God for the best. More outbreaks of infectious diseases are coming ahead of us.

¹ The Pictorial Ency. of the Bible –see plague

² Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 2003

³ Grolier 2003 Interactive

⁴ The Manila Bulletin – B-1, May 10, 2003

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