

Surviving the Coming Tribulation: How to Escape the Seven Last Plagues

Adapted from a message
presented by E. Lonnie Melashenko
during "The Voice of Prophecy Speaks"

A number of years ago, Flight #316 with 68 passengers sat on the runway at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. Authorities delayed the flight for hours. The hours stretched into a day. Two days. For three long, dreary days, Flight #316 just sat there.

What was the problem? United States authorities wanted to be sure one particular passenger aboard that plane wasn't leaving against her will. Her husband had defected from another country to the United States. Then he wanted her to join him. So she came here.

Now the question was, had she been pressured to leave? Did anybody force her to board the plane? That was her husband's fear. She was leaving, but why?

With television cameras

Many say they accept the gift of salvation, but then reject Jesus' gift of restoration.

whirring and reporters' cameras clicking, this woman stood in the presence of officials of both nations and made her final statement: "I love my husband. But he made his decision to stay here. And I have made mine to leave." And she walked away!

U.S. Immigration wanted to know, "Had she spoken freely? Without coercion? Did anybody force her to say this?" But she made her decision. And so after 72 hours on the runway, television lights switched off, reporters hurried to the

telephones, and Flight #316 lifted into the evening sky.

End Time Held Back

Is the ship of time being "held" on the runway—waiting for certain passengers to make up their minds? According to the Book of Revelation that's the assignment for four special angels.

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree" (Revelation 7:1). [Bible texts are from the New King James Version, except as noted.]

Winds on a leash! Angels holding back the winds of war and destruction. Holding back the flight of time. Turning aside disaster. Blunting the power of wars and hurricanes and floods. Restraining the winds of terror and violence. Holding the hourglass on a slant so that the last grains of sand will not flow

through. Forbidding history from signing out just yet. Because God is unwilling to wrap it all up until every man and woman has decided by their own free choice, what they want to do with their eternal future.

Prophecy warns us that one day soon the winds will be unleashed. They'll blow with a fury that defies imagination. Why are the angels holding the winds? Holding our flight?

"Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried



Illustrations: Kurt Reichenbach

with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads'" (Revelation 7:2, 3).

Angels are holding back the winds—until God's people are sealed in their foreheads. With some sort of visible tattoo? No. Millions of men, women, and children will be so in love with Jesus that they will say, "Lord, I want to be marked as one of Your children forever! I accept. I obey Your forever seal!"

But other millions—the majority, unfortunately—will say in their hearts (or by their actions), "No thank You, Lord. I know You died to save me. But I don't want to be sealed. I choose to go another way—my own way."

It hurts Jesus so much to hear men and women say that they want to accept the gift of salvation that cost Him so much; but then reject His gift of restoration. So He keeps waiting a little longer, holding our plane on the runway of time because He doesn't want a single one to be lost. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Final Choices Honored

One day soon every living person will have completely made up their mind—to choose Jesus, or not to. God knows their decision is irrevocable, so the fateful decree goes forth: "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:11, 12).

That decree is the close of probation. For men and women on Planet Earth there'll be no more changing of camps after that. Not because God wants to be arbitrary. Not because He wants to cut anybody off. Rather, the decree simply reflects the fact that individuals have made their final

choice. And God will honor those choices. It's time for the flight to take off.

Notice what the prophet Daniel says will happen:

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:1, 2).

The winds will blow and we'll be ushered into a time of trouble such as this world has never known! The seven final judgments of God—the seven last plagues—will be released upon the enemies of God. The predictions of Revelation will reach their final fulfillment. The last grains of sand will finally slip through the hourglass.

But the prophet Daniel encourages us, Jesus will return and God's people will be delivered!

Let me remind you of a technique of God. God's great Bible prophecies are consistent. They reveal a God who is predictable. The way God has worked in the past, He will work again today: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). "All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Sobering Parallel in Exodus

The Old Testament miracles during the Exodus when ten plagues fell on Egypt—but God's people escaped—are extremely important. They provide a sobering parallel to the final exodus from Planet Earth. By studying them, we'll discover how we can escape the seven last plagues during the final tribulation.

Before God rained plagues on Egypt, He sent Moses and Aaron to

tell Pharaoh, "This is God's message: you don't have to receive these plagues. If you cooperate with God, He'll bless you. Thus says the Lord

The close of probation isn't God's arbitrary way of cutting anyone off. It simply honors people's final choices.

God Jehovah, 'Let My people go.'" But Pharaoh wouldn't budge. Refused. Hardened his heart. Insulted God.

Ten calamities then began exploding one by one like Patriot missiles.

First, the Nile River, worshiped by the Egyptians, turned to blood. Fish died and all the water in Egypt became blood for seven days. But Pharaoh still refused to let God's people go.

Next a plague of frogs infected the land. Millions of them—in their food, their beds, everywhere. Pharaoh stubbornly refused to budge.

A plague of lice came next. The arrogant ruler still wouldn't agree to let the people go. The Bible tells us the first three plagues fell on both the Hebrews and the Egyptians. But after that, things got more serious and the plagues fell only on the ungodly Egyptians.

The fourth plague came: stinging, venomous flies. It was epidemic—so awful it swept through the land.

Then the fifth plague came, destroying livestock. The stench of death was pervasive. Pharaoh wondered whether the animals of the Hebrew people had been protected as Moses predicted. "Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go" (Exodus 9:7).

The sixth plague fell. Boils on man and beast. Head to toe—miserable boils! Still the obstinate monarch refused to release the children of Israel.

Next, a plague of hail, laced with lightning and thunder—a

stupendous sight, with lightning running along the ground, like carpet bombing by B-52s! Every living plant and crop and tree was flattened. For a few fleeting moments Pharaoh actually toyed with the idea of obeying God and letting the people go. But when the bombardment abated, so did his good intentions.

The eighth plague hit: a cyclone of locusts eating every plant the hail didn't get! Can you imagine Pharaoh's counselors pleading with him, "No more plagues, please! Pharaoh, it's over—please! Let the slaves go!" But still the king refused.

Then came three days of mysterious darkness. So cold, so intense, so bitter and oppressive, it could be felt. But rebellious Pharaoh continued to defy the God of heaven.

Finally the tenth plague. The climactic grand finale. The slaughter of all the firstborn. "And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh . . . to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn

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of livestock" (Exodus 12:29).

But where the blood of a lamb had been sprinkled on the doorposts in obedience to God's instructions, not one home was touched. Thousands of anxious Israelite firstborns must have stayed up till midnight asking, "Daddy, did you sprinkle the blood on the doorposts? Like God instructed?" "Yes, dear, and the angel has passed over."

Throughout the vast kingdom of Egypt the wailing cries of mourners could be heard—even in proud Pharaoh's household, as with trembling legs and anguished voice he finally screamed to the children of Israel, "Get out of Egypt. And hurry. Or, we'll all die!" At the stroke of midnight, the children of Israel were on their way to the Promised Land!



History to Be Repeated

What does this 3500-year-old story have to do with us today? Revelation tells us it's profoundly significant here in the 21st century! History will be repeated. The events on Planet Earth during the final tribulation will parallel the Exodus story. This time, seven plagues will be global catastrophes. They will culminate in the final exodus of God's people from spiritual Egypt and our planet in rebellion!

I don't mean to be critical of Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" books, because he clearly admits his books are fiction, not necessarily Bible truth. But here's something Tim LaHaye misses in these books. He says God's people won't be here for the plagues. We'll be raptured, out of here! We'll be up there in heaven with front row seats looking down on all this.

Look again at the Bible record. The children of Israel didn't get to avoid the plagues. They endured affliction and tribulation before their glorious deliverance from Egypt. They were there when the plagues were falling all around them on the Egyptians.

Revelation clearly says God's church will be here on earth, going through affliction as we witness the outpouring of the seven last plagues on the wicked right before Christ's coming. But just as God delivered His people then, so we'll experience the miracle of being preserved from the plagues by God's angels.

One Final Appeal

Before those plagues begin, the everlasting Gospel will have been preached to all the world. The call of the second angel's message to "come out of Babylon" and false systems of worship will have been given. The third angel's message will have been proclaimed. God makes one final appeal, "Please everyone, you can escape the plagues! Listen!"

"Anyone [who] worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand . . . shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:9, 10).

That's the most awesome warning in all the Bible! It is only

when the issues are plainly set before the inhabitants of earth, only when the final crisis forces every individual to make an irrevocable decision—to choose between the commandments of God or the commandments of men—that's the only time anyone receives the mark of the beast and the seven last plagues.

Probation's door closes

The seven last plagues will be global catastrophes culminating in the final exodus of God's people from spiritual Egypt.

forever. But God's church is still here on this planet. Which infuriates Satan, who goads the wicked into passing a death decree against everyone who won't accept the mark of the beast. They declare, "Destroy them!" And God responds, "Enough! They've gone too far. It's over, My children! They have rejected My last message of mercy." And the seven last plagues come. That's when Revelation 14:10 says wicked people will "drink of the wine of the wrath of God."

The solemn announcement is made in heaven: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11, KJV).

Christ's work as our Great High Priest in heaven has ended. Every case has been decided for eternal life or eternal death. The door of God's mercy is shut. And just before Jesus descends in glory, earth's inhabitants are plunged into one final great "time of trouble such as never was," spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

Protected, Not Raptured

According to the Bible, God isn't going to snatch away His

people—not until after the plagues are over. We'll be here on earth, right until the end! But we'll be protected, just as were the children of Israel during their plagues. No, we won't be free from difficulties and suffering. It will be a time of trouble for everyone. In fact, our wildest imagination can't comprehend the magnitude of its

reality, as the wicked now drink the cup of God's wrath unmingled with mercy!

John was given a sneak preview of this terrible time of trouble. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven

angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (Revelation 15:1).

The seven last plagues bear some striking similarities to the ones that fell upon Egypt.

"And the first [angel] went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:2, KJV).

Could these be sores similar to the cancerous boils suffered by the Egyptians? Revelation 13 says this vial specifically targets the United States—and every country where the mark of the beast is legislated and

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observed.

Imagine the impact such a plague will have on 21st century society! Schools close. Factories shut down. Stores won't be able to open. Hospitals overflow with people seeking emergency treatment, but doctors and nurses are suffering from the same affliction. Millions die. Will we, too? No. Just as the Israelites had the sign of the blood on the doorposts that caused the

destroying angel with the plague of death to “pass over” them, so God’s people have a sign—a seal—which causes the angel with the vial to pass over them.

Wicked people will still be suffering from their sores when another calamity strikes: “And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea” (Revelation 16:3, KJV).

Creatures of the sea wash ashore. What a stench! People stumble over one another to escape their beach homes. Governments had declared, “You can’t buy food for the family or milk for the baby, because you don’t have the mark of the beast.” Now God turns the tables and no one can get food.

Another plague follows: “And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood” (Revelation 16:4, KJV). Just think! A person turns on the faucet to get a drink, and instead blood gushes out! The angel says all this is God’s “strange act,” that God’s justice is finally being mysteriously vindicated.

“Thou art righteous, O Lord . . . because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink” (Revelation 16:5, 6, KJV).

Good News Amidst Trouble

But in all this there’s some good news. While the wicked are perishing of thirst because they have nothing to drink but blood, God’s people who walk righteously have a fantastic promise! “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isaiah 33:16, KJV).

Then “the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:8, 9, KJV).

But God’s people? God promises a cloud will protect them! Air conditioning, like the children of Israel had!

“And the fifth angel poured



out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented

poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, 'It is done.' And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great

great time of tribulation comes and the plagues begin to fall?" There's only one way.

Only Way to Escape

The Bible says it's the very same way people escaped the Flood in Noah's day. The same way the children of Israel escaped from Egypt. The same way it's been throughout all salvation history. Sprinkling the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts of our lives!

If we want those destroying angels with their Patriot missiles to pass over our homes, then you and I have to follow God's explicit instructions and make the one necessary preparation now. Apply the blood!

And just as God spared His faithful people during the plagues in Egypt, just as He rescued them; just as God spared Noah's family in the tribulation days of the Flood; just so when the seven last plagues fall in the final tribulation, we'll be spared and escape only if we've accepted the blood of the Lamb as our sacrifice and allowed His blood to cleanse us from our sins.

Do you see the parallel? We've sprinkled the blood on our doorposts. And just as God delivered His people in Egypt then—He's going to do it again for us.

Have you chosen which side you'll be on: God's side or the side of a rebel angel? Once destruction begins, it will be too late to change sides! Probation's door will close forever. That's why God is pleading with love today.

Friend, won't you place yourself on Jesus' side now? Under the protection of His blood? The saddest words men will ever utter will be: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Perhaps you've heard the story of a lumberjack in Australia who built a little cabin at the edge of the forest. One day, as he returned home from work, he was stunned to find his little cabin just a heap of smoldering ruins. He walked over to the place where his chicken coop had

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not of their deeds" (Revelation 16:10, 11, KJV).

It's a total reversal—from solar-atomic heat and global warming big time, to freezing cold! Operation Deep Freeze. Notice, this text reveals something very interesting.

Evidently not all the plagues are going to be universal, nor fatal. This plague particularly falls on the seat of the beast power—double intensity for what she measured out to God's saints. Darkness so deep and dark it can be felt!

Then comes the sixth plague—with the great final battle, Armageddon.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:12-14, KJV).

Revelation 16:16 tells us that's when the whole world gets involved. It's the final conflict. But right in the middle of Armageddon, suddenly it's all over!

"And the seventh angel

earthquake . . . And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Revelation 16:17-21, KJV).

It's hard to get our minds around the immensity of this disaster, hammering our planet! Hail the weight of a talent? That's 57-pound hailstones! Can you imagine the devastation? What could possibly be left after the seventh plague?

But before everyone is

Jesus interrupts the chaos and conflict, delivering His people and ending the saga of sin, sickness, suffering, and selfishness.

destroyed, Jesus Himself personally interrupts the chaos and conflict, riding forth in majesty and power and glory with all the armies of heaven to deliver His people.

Finally we're rescued. Finally we're raptured! Finally we're home. Thank God, we're home at last! It's all over. Jesus comes to end the saga of sin, sickness, suffering, disease, sadness, and selfishness.

Are you thinking, "Sure hope I'm on God's side then! Can I be certain of God's protection when this

stood. All he found was a mound of ashes. Some burned wire. Aimlessly he shuffled through the debris.

Then he noticed a lump of charred feathers. Idly, he kicked it over. And four fuzzy, little baby chicks scrambled out, miraculously protected by the wings of a loving mother hen.

Absolute Assurance

In the most beautiful and meaningful language of Scripture, God poetically says that's what He longs to do for every one of His children on earth when the plagues fall: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psalm 91:1, 4).

Here's the wonderful assurance God gives to those who choose to follow Him: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is thy refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee" (Psalm 91:5-11, KJV).

Could anything be more reassuring? When the time of trouble and tribulation comes and the plagues begin to fall, when there's no place to hide—your Heavenly Father wants to protect you! He wants to save you in the hour of destruction!

He's able to protect you just as a mother hen gathers her little chicks under her wings. The question is, will you let Him? Will you turn your life over to Him?

The choice is up to you. Today, not then. It's too late then. God wants you to be with Him throughout eternity, but He cannot make your decision for you. You are the only one who can make that decision. Don't wait. Do it today.

