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Disease Epidemics and Bible Prophecy

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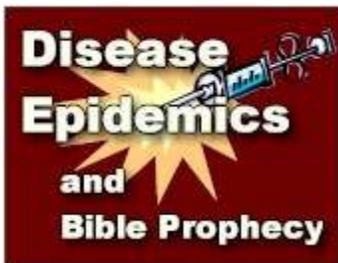
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The world has been subject to new strains of microbes, whether bacteria or viruses. Many of these diseases are immune to various antibiotics that have helped stem the spread of diseases in prior decades. Miracle drugs of the past such as penicillin are beginning to have little or no affect on these new and powerful mutant diseases. Scientists are concerned and worried. Some use the phrase “of biblical proportions” to characterize the catastrophic affects that some of these new microbes may bring to mankind. In other words, new and powerful bacteria and viruses are emerging that will not be controlled by vaccines or drugs presently on the market. The specter of widespread disease epidemics is now a reality.

What Does the Bible Say?

Does the Bible have anything to say about disease epidemics that will occur as we approach the end of the age? We should start with Matthew chapter 24 where Jesus gives His last instructions to His apostles a few days before He was crucified.

Matthew chapter 24 gives an outline sketch of events in the last generation before the second coming of Christ. Jesus states in these few verses that several events are to occur in areas of the world, particularly in Judea, Galilee, and at Jerusalem, which will affect the whole world. We need to look at some of these events, as Jesus and the apostles looked westward toward the city of Jerusalem from the summit of the Mount of Olives. This thumbnail sketch by Jesus is the central prophecy we should refer to if we are want to comprehend events just prior to the Second Advent of Christ.

Yes, other sections of Scripture describe these prophetic accounts. The Book of Revelation is one, and

another is the Book of Daniel. Other whole prophecies in the Old Testament as well as certain sections of the New Testament give us information to put on to the skeleton, so to speak, of the events mentioned in this Olivet Prophecy.

Matthew Chapter 24, The Olivet Prophecy

Let us look at what Christ Himself said would develop at the end of the age just before His return.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show him the buildings of the temple.”

• **Matthew 24:1**

Jesus then said unto them, **“See you not all these things?”** that were in front of them. They were looking westward at the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. They were seeing a beautiful panoramic view of that splendid Temple and the majestic city of Jerusalem as it existed in the time of Jesus.

“And Jesus said unto them, ‘See you not all these things [He meant in front of them]. Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives ...’”

• **Matthew 24:2–3**

The words above tell exactly where they were, at the summit of the Mount of Olives looking west at Jerusalem and the Temple.

“The disciples came to Him privately saying, ‘tell us when shall these things be.’” The **“things”** He was talking about were the buildings of the Temple, Jerusalem, and their future destruction. They wanted to know **when** these things will occur, **“and what shall be the sign of Your coming,”** both His advent **“and of the end of the world [eon].”** In this case it means **“the end of the eon”** [or age]. It does not mean the destruction of this earth. The apostles were looking for the end of this evil age and the emergence of the Kingdom of God on earth, which would be a new, beautiful, and a millennial age. That age will be a time when Jesus would be on earth ruling for 1,000 years. It will be a time of peace, joy, and prosperity.

They wanted to know about the time periods of these things Jesus was talking about, the time when they would occur. They were also interested to know about certain signs that would introduce His coming to this earth and for the end of the age. Jesus gave them specific teachings so they might know about these major events. These teachings are also for you and me today because many of the things that Jesus is talking about pertain particularly to the end of the age and not to the period back then. Only superficially, shall we say in “type,” do many of these things refer to the period back there. Some things Jesus mentioned did take place some 40 years later in a superficial sense, but not in a complete and fully developed sense.

They wanted to know about the when, the where, the why, and the how of the end time. That is why they used the expression **“the end of the age.”** It is true that the apostles in the 1st century talking to Jesus thought these events would take place in their generation. They found out later that these things would occur much later. You and I are on the verge of entering that **“end of the age”** period that Jesus talked about here. So, He answered and said unto them — and He is also saying unto you and me,

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

• **Matthew 24:4–5**

False Christs

He said, **“many shall come in my name.”** They come in the very name and by the authority of Christ saying that I am Christ. They will admit Jesus is the true Christ, the Messiah. Today in our western world, Christianity is the central religion in which most people claim that Jesus is the Christ. And though there are a variety of different beliefs and denominations, the great majority of people in our western world (some by the heart and

some by emotion) admit willingly and religiously proclaim Jesus to be the Christ.¹

That was the part of the prophecy Jesus said would transpire and it certainly has. But He said, “**many shall come in my name,**” by my authority, and state that He truly is the Christ, but in doing so they “**shall deceive many.**” To anyone rational who has common sense and who believes Jesus and what He is saying, we ought to conclude that if the “**many**” say that He is Christ (and they say that), then “**many**” are deceived. Do you understand? The “**many**” are deceived; only the few will not be deceived. Therefore, the many that accept that Jesus is the Christ today, or in the period just prior to the Second Advent of Christ, they will be in deception.

There are other prophecies given by the apostle Paul, by John, and other apostles that describe that same teaching very clearly indeed. The “**many**” who say that Jesus is the Christ are deceiving the “**many**” in the world. Jesus goes on to say in verse 6 **when** this begins to take place,

“And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but THE END is not yet.”

• *Matthew 24:6*

What does He mean by “**the end**”? He meant “**the end of the age**” mentioned in verse 3. These events are preliminary to the end. These are the birth pangs that are a prelude to the new age to come with the Second Advent of Christ. He compares the events of the end of the age (a generation of around a 40-year period) to a woman who is in pangs just prior to birthing a baby.

“You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not troubled for all these things must come to pass but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places.”

• *Matthew 24:6–7 (see also Luke 21:10–11)*

First, famines have been around throughout generations since Jesus made these statements almost 2000 years ago. But He says there will be incidences of famine which will show an increase above the normal frequency as the end times come to pass.

We are familiar with the famines that have recently taken place because of drought conditions and civil unrest in the Sudan, in Ethiopia, in Somalia, and in Rwanda and various other areas of the world.² It says that there will be — what He means is an increase in — famines in “**diverse places.**” It will not afflict all areas of the earth. It means in various regions of the earth but not throughout the entire earth until the end described in the book of Revelation. These events are the birth pangs.

Pestilences — Diseases, Plagues, and Epidemics

Second on the list after famines is this word “**pestilences.**” That brings us to the subject of this lecture concerning the end time. “**Pestilences**” means disease epidemics. The translation “plagues” is also used often. In the last 100 years, life spans have improved due to these reasons: [**Reason 1**] our knowledge of medicines, [**Reason 2**] safer medical procedures, [**Reason 3**] development of new technology.

Editor’s Note and Addendum: Actually, the increase in lifespan also increased because of [**Reason 4**] healthy lifestyles. This fourth factor is most important. Advances in public sanitation (clean water and proper waste disposal), personal hygiene (proper washing of our food, our bodies, and especially our hands with clean water), more balanced and diverse diets (due to great increases in trade), lowered infant and maternal mortality rates (again due to improved prenatal and birthing cleanliness), and medical advances in pain medication and emergency care, all have provided improved health for populations of advanced nations against the great diseases of the past. In the last 150 years, longevity of populations of

¹ While people may claim to believe Jesus is the Christ, but most will **not** understand that “Christ” actually means “Messiah.” Nor will they understand the meaning of the term “Messiah.” See my article “[Christ and Messiah.](#)” DWS

² In 1994. Over 10 years later, famine has returned to those very same places in 2005. More will follow. DWS

developed nations rose considerably. Life expectancy for less developed nations is not much higher than in ancient times up through the mid-1800s. See the article in Britannica.com: "[Public health - Progress in public health | Britannica.com.](#)" DWS

During the 1918 outbreak of influenza, nearly 700,000 people died in the United States alone with 20 to 40 million deaths worldwide, even in the most advanced and most sanitary locales, urban or rural. The great fear is that an equally dangerous pandemic will arise.

Our civilization should be at the place where pestilences are diminished tremendously. Up to now [1994, 2005, and since the coronavirus began in 2020] that has been the case. While many pestilences have been brought to a manageable level in our society, some diseases have been suppressed completely, or so they say. Smallpox, according to health authorities, now is virtually wiped out. About 100 years ago it was a major disease killing millions throughout the world. Other diseases have been handled effectively by various drugs and treatments discovered and used by medical professionals. Our lives and living conditions, especially in western civilization, have improved tremendously over the last 100 years.

As I stated [in 1994] at the beginning, news outlets such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, other magazines like *U.S. News and World Report*, and medical journals such as *Lancet* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* are now telling us that there are looming on the horizon a number of new diseases. They are based upon some of the older diseases but microbes, viruses, and bacteria are resisting drugs developed in the last 50 to 70 years.

Penicillin does not have the effect it had when first introduced to kill bacteria normally associated with a variety of diseases which were devastating in the past. This is a fact and medical scientists are beginning to be concerned about what is happening in the world. Diseases are now increasingly immune to the potency of drugs used to combat them. They are growing and thriving in some bodies in a way that drugs cannot cope with. Medical authorities are seeing on the horizon a major catastrophe, or catastrophes plural, if new means cannot be found to cope with emerging mutant diseases.

While modern medical science has been able to cause some sicknesses to diminish almost to extinction, the Bible says the generation preceding the Second Advent of Christ will find great pestilences returning. It is important for all of us who love the Holy Scripture to be aware of these things. I am not mentioning this to be an alarmist. I am not holding a sign up saying "prepare, for the end is near." In fact, the end of the age is a prophesied event which will be a wonderful thing to take place. The Kingdom of God will appear and bring utopia to earth.

The Bible foretells several catastrophic events — disasters — that will occur prior to Christ's Second Advent. Many of these disasters will be brought about by humanity itself. But be sure of one thing, most of the past pestilences mentioned in the Scriptures have been allowed by or even caused by God Himself through the agency of an angel. In many cases God's own angel, the Angel of the Lord, has caused considerable damage, as far as the medical health of Israel and surrounding nations are concerned. When the prophecies were fulfilled in those times God Himself intervened on various occasions to cause plagues, disease epidemics, or in scriptural language, pestilences.

Many of these things, however, can also be accomplished by the efforts of man. God sometimes allows mankind to see their own follies, to witness and experience their own misdemeanors and felonies they themselves embrace. Sometimes we must learn major lessons to comprehend that God is the One whom we ought to believe and trust, and have faith in all the time.

So, pestilences are a part of the events mentioned to occur in an increasing way as we approach the end of the age. The Gospel of Matthew goes on with "**famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places,**" not just in one place — not everywhere — but in diverse places (Matthew 24:7).

It says in verse 8, "**all these are the beginning of sorrows.**" The prophesied sorrows or travails are just prior to the Second Advent of Christ back to earth. He goes on through the rest of this prophecy to verse 14:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in ALL THE WORLD for a witness unto ALL NATIONS; and then shall THE END come.”

• **Matthew 24:14**

“THE END” again means the end of the age.

As an aside, you know there is a “Gospel of the Kingdom”? There is also the “Gospel of the Mystery” (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 6:19). They are different gospels yet similar in some ways. They come from the same God and the same Christ. The “Gospel of the Mystery” is mature teaching. [See my Commentaries, “The Mystery, A Definition” and The Mystery, Its Implications.” DWS]

This “Gospel of the Kingdom” is an older teaching. It will be preached throughout the world and then the end will come. In fact, both the gospels of the Bible will be given a full display to those whom God is calling at this end of the age. You and I are privileged not only to know the “Gospel of the Kingdom” but also the mature Gospel that the apostle Paul taught in the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and in what we call the Pastoral Epistles: First and Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Those mature books go beyond the “Gospel of the Kingdom.” The “Gospel of the Mystery” is expansive and embraces all creation in the final and mature teachings of God.

A Sequence of Events in the Book of Revelation

The sequence of events in Matthew chapter 24 is repeated by the apostle John in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation was composed by Jesus Christ Himself, but John wrote it down for us. In the 6th chapter of the book of Revelation we have the sequence of events of Matthew chapter 24 again delineated in different, highly symbolic language, yet it can be easy to understand. Chapter 6 talks about the opening of the 7 seals of the book of Revelation. Chapter 6 specifically shows the first 6 of those seals.

The book of Revelation up to chapter 16 inclusively discusses the 7th seal and what will happen at that time. But as a preliminary to the opening of the 7th seal (which describes the final series of end time events), we have these preliminary occurrences which Christ said in Matthew chapter 24 were birth pangs, “**the beginning of sorrows,**” that are discussed in Revelation chapter 6 in symbolic language.

The Seven Seals

WARS. The first seal is opened, and John sees a man sitting on a white horse. He “**had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer**” (Revelation 6:2). This has to do with the wars between nations that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24:6.

Then the Lamb opens the second seal (Revelation 6:3). The events follow in order remarkably the events mentioned by Jesus Himself in the Olivet prophecy. John sees and hears the second beast who says, “**Come and see,**” and peace is to be taken from the earth. There will be killings over the earth with “**a great sword.**” This also corresponds to “**wars and rumors of wars**” from Matthew 24:6–7.

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, ‘Come and see.’ And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.”

• **Revelation 6:5**

FAMINE. A balance is to give weight to something. Now what is it? It says (verse 8): “**A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see you hurt not the oil and the wine**” It means that the wheat and the barley, the staples of food that people depend upon, will be measured out in a very delineated way. It shows that famine is coming on. However, note that the high-priced goods such as oil and wine would still be around. But you cannot live on oil and wine. They are the niceties of life. It is wheat and things of that nature that you need to live. He is talking about famine.

PESTILENCES. What comes on the scene after famine? Back in Matthew 24:7 it said “**pestilences.**”

“I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked, and behold a pale horse:

and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."

• Revelation 6:7–8

Death and Hell

I want to point out something that many of you may not have realized before. This is figurative language, true, but I have come to understand what **"Death, and Hell"** means here. Did you note that the Death Angel is riding a horse? This is the description of an angelic personage who is riding a horse, symbolic to be sure, but at the same time clearly understood if you recognize what is going on.

And it says, **"and Hell,"** which is the word *hades* in Greek, the place of the dead, the unseen, **"followed with [after] him."** In fact, you have two horses here. Only the first one is mentioned, the pale horse. But another angel, called Hades, the angel of Hades, is riding on another horse following him. That is what it says. These are angelic creatures being mentioned.

- In the Old Testament you will find that it was **"the Angel of the Lord,"** the Death angel, who went over the Egyptians and caused them to suffer and die in great numbers (Exodus 11:1–12:30).
- The Death Angel, when David committed sin by numbering Israel to go to war, came to the Israelites and killed 70,000 of them (2 Samuel 24:1–17).
- In the time of Isaiah and Hezekiah when the Assyrian army was on the verge of attacking and overcoming Jerusalem, **"the Angel of the Lord"** came and killed 185,000 of the Assyrians in one night by a plague — a pestilence (Isaiah 37:33–36).

These examples show God can quickly cause plagues and disease epidemics to have instant catastrophic effects. He has done so in the past. He will do so in the future.

So here in Revelation 6:7–8 is the pale [*green* in Greek] horse with another horse following the pale horse. On the pale horse is a personage by the name of **"Death,"** the angel of Death. On the other horse following him is an angelic power by the name of **"Hades,"** the unseen, or as in the KJV, **"hell."**

Pestilence, Again

Verse 8: **"Power was given unto them ...,"** both the Death angel and the Hades angel, to kill **"the fourth part of the earth, to kill [1] with sword, and [2] with hunger, and [3] with death."** That word **"death"** means by pestilence, by sickness, by disease epidemics. **"... and [4] with the beasts of the earth."** The beasts of the earth will come and proliferate throughout certain areas of the world and kill people. Revelation 6:9 starts the 5th seal. Later in verse 12 we come to the 6th seal. In chapter 7 we get to the 7th seal.

Pestilence will be used by the Death Angel just as pestilence was used in the Old Testament several times to bring judgments on this earth, whether those judgments are upon Gentile people, such as Egyptians or Assyrians, or upon the Israelites when they disobeyed in the past.

In Leviticus chapter 26 there are a series of blessings and curses given by God. Great blessings would come if the Israelites obeyed God. But there are also a series of 5 curses, 5-fold types of judgments to be put upon Israel, getting worse and worse until God would finally take them out of the land of Israel and put them into a captivity whether it be to Assyria or Babylon, which is what happened back in the 7th and 6th centuries before Christ.

Among the things mentioned in Leviticus chapter 26 also are pestilences. God is the one who brings these pestilences upon people. All the plagues of the Bible are engineered, initiated, and accomplished by God Himself, usually through the agency of His own **"Angel of the Lord,"** sometimes called the Death Angel. This is the same angel described in Revelation chapter 6. This angel will bring about pestilences on the earth.

That should give you comfort, because if you are within the will of God, if you are doing what God wants you to do, if we put our trust in Jesus Christ and in His word and in the Father Himself — if He is the One who engineers pestilences, then He can also keep you away from those, just as He did with the Israelites when the 10 plagues afflicted Egypt.

Those plagues were engineered and initiated by God while the Israelites were protected by the blood that was over the door post. This is given to you and to me for us to realize that if the pestilence judgments shown in the Old Testament are given by God, then He can protect you and He can protect me.

King David Brings Plague Upon Israel

Remember in 2 Samuel 24:1–21 when David wanted to number Israel? He wanted something more from that census than just finding out how many Israelites there were in northern Israel and Judah. He was going to do something with those people that he had numbered. David told Joab, who was the commander of the armed forces, to go and to number Israel. It took Joab over 9 months to do it. David was preparing the Israelites for war, to conquer Assyria up north, to conquer Egypt in the south. After all, he had the economic power to do it at the time, or so he thought. He also had the manpower to do it. He had the support of the people behind him because they were united under his rule at that time. But God had told David not to do that. Nathan the prophet showed David that God did not want him to fulfill his plans.³

Three choices of punishment were given to David. Which one did he pick? The last one was for three days **pestilence** and that was the one David picked. The Death angel killed at that time 70,000 Israelites. David's heart smote him when he heard what had happened. Right at the last, here was the Death Angel, the Angel of the Lord, with his sword drawn, standing on the north quarter of Jerusalem over the threshing floor of Ornan. He was about to unleash his sword with another disaster — pestilence — upon the people of Jerusalem as well. That was when David finally woke up and petitioned God to spare Jerusalem and to bring the trouble upon himself.

David was a man after God's own heart, but he made serious mistakes time and again. Thank God David repented of his sins and learned some vital lessons or the deaths could have been worse. You and I can read and learn from David's experiences. After all, how many of us are perfect in the things that we do? Many times we make mistakes. We have these examples to show us in the scripture that if we do like David did and repent of the ways that we had planned in the future, then God can answer us and protect us as He did David.

As mentioned above, a sudden pestilence killed many, such as when the Assyrians attacked Israel in the time of Isaiah and King Hezekiah of Judah, God sent the Death Angel again, the Angel of the Lord (2 Kings 19:35–37). There we find that in one night 185,000 Assyrian armed men were killed and it was by a plague, by pestilence. That again was done by God. So, if God does those things, He can protect those that He does not want touched by the affliction.

Psalm 91

We have a marvelous portion of scripture which all of us should understand and rely upon as we approach this end of the age when pestilences are predicted to take place. It is Psalm 91.

There are 150 Psalms in the Bible divided into 5 separate sections or books.⁴ Those sections are in a prophetic context that shows you events to occur at the end of the age. The 3rd section goes from Psalm 73 to Psalm 89. It talks about a time when the Temple will be destroyed and a great tribulation will come on the earth. When you comprehend what the whole of the Psalms (all 5 books of the 150 Psalms) are showing us, you will discover that some of those Psalms are pertinent to:

- The time Jesus talks about in the Olivet prophecy,

³ In fact, it would have been easy for Israel, or for David, to know how many Israelites were in the country if it was just a simple census being done. All a person would have to do is to count the number of half shekels given by every man above 20 years of age. Whether he was poor or whether he was rich, all had to give that half-shekel. If you count the half shekels you would find the number of men. Obviously you could double that for the women, and the children and you could know about how many there would be. But that was not the reason that David was having a census back there. *ELM*

⁴ See Dr. Martin's book, [Restoring the Original Bible](#), particularly "[Appendix One, Preliminary Suggestions for the Structure of the Psalms](#)." *DWS*

- The time when the first seals of the book of Revelation are opened, and
- The time when the Death Angel and Hades angel bring death and destruction upon the earth.

The 4th division (Psalms 90 to 106) speaks of a time when God will finally come to earth and establish a great period of peace and prosperity here on earth. Just before that happens we find that Psalm 91 is put within that context so that people might understand that God will save us at that time. He will protect us from the plagues that He will unleash upon this earth. Keep in mind that not all plagues are ones that God Himself unleashes. Remember, those plagues described in the Bible are ones God engineered and initiated.

There are other types of plagues which mankind has caused (knowingly or unknowingly), and God allows such things to occur. He allows them to show humanity certain lessons that we need to learn on how to take care of ourselves or how to avoid certain actions in life which could bring us into sickness, into disease, into illness. We need to understand these things as best we can. Once we understand the proper context then it becomes very pertinent to you and me for the future just on the horizon. **Psalm 91** is something not just for the past but for the present and for the near future.

All the 5 books of the Psalms are in a particular context. When you learn the 5 divisions in their proper arrangement you will see a type of story thread going throughout the whole book of the Psalms. In Psalm 90 the 4th division is introduced which goes from Psalm 90 to Psalm 106. This 4th division answers to the great millennium that God will bring on this earth. The end of this age will take place, and a new age will begin which will last for 1000 years.

A few Psalms in this 4th book give a “prelude” to that millennial age. **Psalm 90**, which was written by Moses, introduces the 4th book by introducing this millennium, to be initiated by Christ, and then we have **Psalm 91**.

It is interesting that in **Psalm 90:4** Moses notes that **“a thousand years are in [God’s] sight but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.”** This gave an inspiration to the apostle Peter in 2 Peter chapter 3 and in other Jewish literature available at the time of Peter. They understood there was to be a Sabbath of 1000 years to emerge on earth and the Second Advent of Jesus would introduce it. We have a hint to that 1000 years in verse 4. But then Moses goes on to explain how mankind is very frail, he lasts only 70 years or at most 80, or by reason of strength a little bit more. But humans do not live much longer than that after the flood.

Moses introduces this to show that even in the age to come, the 1000 years, mankind will continue to be frail and even at that time will have to depend upon God for their sustenance and preservation. Note that Moses, who wrote about the 70 to 80 years of man’s longevity, himself lived to be 120 years of age and his eye was not dimmed. He was just like a 40- or 30-year-old man all the way to his death. Joshua, who succeeded Moses, only lived 110 years. Joshua said his strength and eyesight were the same as when he first came out of Egypt some years before. But under normal circumstances Moses said that mankind is quite frail, he will usually live about 70 years, maybe 80, or by reason of strength a little longer. To show that mankind needs help from God, even through the millennium, mankind will live only a short length of time. In the Great White Throne Judgment period, it will be a little longer.

Psalm 91 is an introduction dealing with events just prior to the commencement of the millennium, so people will understand the traumatic events are an initiation to the new age soon to begin. **Psalm 91 is a Psalm for today**; and for the near future, though it had application at times in the past. It certainly was in existence in the time of Jesus and the apostles for them to read and to apply.

However, when you understand the overall context of the Psalms in their prophetic environment you find it is intended primarily for you and for me, and for people living in that period just prior to the Second Advent, into that generation in which Jesus said there would be famines, wars, droughts, and pestilences.

Examination of Psalm 91

Verse 1: **“He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”**

This is a promise to those people living at that time.

“I will say of YHWH, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I will trust.’ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from **the perilous pestilence.**”

• *Psalm 91:2–3*

Do you see what is being talked about? The pestilence foretold by Jesus to occur before His second coming.

Psalm 91 talks about the pestilence mentioned in the book of Revelation. So what will happen? We want deliverance from this. Read how that deliverance can come:

“Surely **he shall deliver you** from the snare of the fowler and from **the perilous pestilence**. He shall cover you with his feathers and under his wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flies by day, **nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday**: A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand but **it shall not come nigh** [near] **you**.

Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked [they will perish]. Because you have made YHWH which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, there shall no evil befall you **neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling**, for He shall give His angels charge over you **to keep you** in all your ways. They shall **bear you up** in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

• *Psalm 91:3–12*

Satan the Devil used verse 12 against Jesus when he tempted Him in the wilderness, but Jesus was not seduced by it. This reference refers to a future time when there will be pestilence and terrible times. There is a protection for those who know what the truth is and who put their faith in Jesus Christ at this time.

“You shall tread upon the lion and adder [snake]: the young lion and the dragon [serpent] shall you trample under feet. Because he has set his love upon **Me**, therefore **will I deliver him: I will set him on high**, because he has known **My** name. He shall call upon **Me**, and **I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.**”

• *Psalm 91:13–16*

That is the end of **Psalm 91**. It is a remarkable promise.

The next Psalm is **Psalm 92**, the Psalm of the Sabbath Day, and in this case it does not mean the weekly Sabbath but the millennial Sabbath. (It could mean the weekly Sabbath but the weekly Sabbath as Paul explained in the book of Hebrews was itself indicative of a 1000 year Sabbath.) First comes 6000 years of man’s existence, and then begins a Sabbath of 1000 years. The “Gospel **of** the Kingdom” is a gospel **about** that Kingdom which will be on earth during that 1000 years (see Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33; 1 Corinthians 15:24). It is primarily intended for Israelites or those who want to join Israel. (Read Dr. Martin’s article, “[Salvation and the Kingdom of God](#).”)

Look at **Psalm 93**, the very first words: “**The Lord** [YHWH] **reigns ...**” It is a Psalm about YHWH reigning over a kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 94 is about how God has to straighten out some problems with that kingdom.

Psalm 95 is about the Rock of Salvation, a great king (verse 3), who rules over all the people of earth.

Psalm 96, also speaks of the millennium.

“**O sing unto the Lord** [YHWH] **a new song: sing unto the Lord** [YHWH], **all the earth. Sing unto the Lord** [YHWH], **bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day ... among all people.**”

• *Psalm 96:1–3*

Psalm 97, “**The Lord** [YHWH] **reigns**” (actively, not from heaven).

Psalm 98, “**the Lord** [YHWH] **has made known His salvation, His righteousness has He openly shown in the sight of the heathen.**”

Psalm 99, “**The Lord** [YHWH] **reigns.**”

Continuing **through Psalm 106**, this entire section of Psalms speaks about the millennial period, the end of the age. Remember what the disciples asked Jesus? “**When**” will these things take place. And “**What**” will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? This entire section is an introduction of the new age, the millennial age to occur on earth.

The **pestilence** that Jesus mentions in the Olivet prophecy is described in Psalms 91, but it shows that people can have protection at that time if you trust in God. God has used pestilences in the past especially to introduce a new age on earth. When the Israelites came out of Egypt **the 10 plagues** that took place there, amongst them pestilence, devastated Egypt, a new age commenced at that time. We find things like that happening throughout biblical history.

The Bible says that before the great and glorious millennium takes place right on the horizon to us, when Jesus comes back the second time, there will be a decimation of population. Read Isaiah chapters 24 and 25.

There will not only be **pestilence**, there will even be things from outer space that will hit this earth, according to prophecy.⁵ Keep in mind that those things can be alleviated through our prayers, but they are prophesied to take place. Great numbers of people, according to the prophecies, shall perish and many of them by **pestilence**. (See Dr. Martin’s article “[The Repentance of God and The Influencing of God.](#)”)

Pestilence — Examples in History

The major occurrences of **pestilence** that swept through the Roman Empire after the time of Christ had a profound effect from that time forward. In the last part of the 2nd century around 180 AD, major outbreaks of **pestilence** and **plague** swept through the Roman Empire. The historian Edward Gibbon estimated (and modern historians agree he was on the right track) the number killed was about half the people in the Roman Empire, who suffered and died because of **plague** that swept through in the last part of the 2nd century AD. Those **pestilences** had a profound effect on history from that time forward.

They did not wait long for another **pestilence**. The former lasted about 10 years. Another series of **pestilence** again hit the Roman Empire starting around 250 AD and lasted about 15 years. Almost as many died at that time.

If you want to know when the major **plagues** really hit the Roman Empire, look at the time of Justinian beginning in the year 535 AD and lasting well over 70 years. In the early part of the 6th century AD, **plagues** were devastating all the Roman Empire: North Africa, Italy, as well as the capital of Constantinople. Belisarius, the Roman general, caused wars to take place in the Balkans, Palestine, Italy, and he finally went through North Africa. The effects of his wars decimated to the populace. **Plague** followed.⁶

The Roman historian Procopius, secretary to General Belisarius and an eyewitness, uses a prodigious figure to show the number of people that were killed, an exaggeration certainly. But it has been estimated as much as 80% of the Roman Empire died in a period of 70 years. So, what caused the Dark Ages to emerge in Europe? It was a time when the population decreased to a low level, and did not recover for almost 400 years until the time of the Crusades in the 1100s and 1200s. The Dark Ages developed because great numbers of people were wiped out primarily by plagues and disease epidemics, as well as wars and famine. The 6th century

⁵ Dr. Martin’s “[The Asteroid Destruction, Its Timing and Purpose](#)” and “[The Destruction of the World in Prophecy](#)” both deal with the subject of destruction from beyond our atmosphere. DWS

⁶ See Pauline Allen, “The ‘Justinianic’ Plague,” *Byzantion* 49 (1979): 5–20, and the excellent article by Christine A. Smith, “Plague in the Ancient World: A Study from Thucydides to Justinian” *The Student Historical Journal* 1996–1997. See a more recent general explanation in “[Justinian's Plague \(541-542 CE\)](#)” in the online World History Encyclopedia, which also has a useful 12 minute video about world-wide plagues: “[Plagues and Pandemics in the Ancient and Medieval World.](#)” DWS

AD was devastating in Europe. It is no wonder the Dark Ages came on the scene.

Do you know why Islam, led at first by Mohammed, was able with small armies to come out of Arabia and to conquer vast areas? Although Mohammed himself died about 632 AD, all Egypt was taken over, and Jerusalem was conquered in 639 to 640 AD. Soon Islamic armies conquered Persia and within 100 years had taken over all North Africa. By 711 AD they were into southern Spain and then they went over the Pyrenees Mountains and into what we call France today. If it were not for the victory of Charles Martell and the Franks at the Battle of Tours, Gibbon says instead of a Christian church called St. Paul's on the river Thames in London, there would be a Mosque at the present time.

Why was Mohammed with a small band of Arabs able to conquer the Arabian Peninsula? Why were relatively small but powerful Arab armies able to conquer the eastern part of the Roman Empire and all North Africa and well into Spain within a matter of 100 years? It was because the populations of those lands had been decimated. There were very few people around to raise armies, fight, and resist invasion. The populations decreased because of wars, then famines, and finally pestilences, before the Arabs arose.

Some Causes of Pestilence

What caused those pestilences to take place? Many were man-made. I do not have all the answers, but I will say this: historians need to look seriously, and particularly medical historians, at what caused some of the pestilences to break out in the first place.

Many say bubonic plague is the major problem, but that does not answer all the questions in all cases. The Black Death of the middle of the 1300s AD was certainly caused by Bubonic Plague. About one third, maybe one half of Europe's population in some areas was wiped out, even more in some regions. Many of the Jews were blamed for some of these plagues, wrongly of course.

The Black Death set back civilization for about 100 years. Civilization was returning to a nice degree of development in what we might call the Renaissance period of the 1200s. Then the 1300s came along and suddenly the Black Death was coupled with what is called "the Little Ice Age" that took place when cold came down over the whole of northern Europe. (The New World was not discovered until 1492. It could have been discovered much earlier had not the Black Death and the Little Ice Age taken place.)

The Bible speaks of God causing plagues. It could be that God wanted to cause the Roman Empire to go through various phases so that a certain type of Christianity *would* develop. By the time of Constantine, the whole of the Roman Empire basically went over to a certain type of Christianity. It was not the Christianity of the apostles of the 1st century, but a new type of Christianity which was nothing more than Hellenistic paganism in which the names of Christ, the apostles, and the doctrines of the New Testament, plus Hellenistic paganism was propitiated and promoted. That is the type of Christianity you and I have been saddled with ever since.

We need to ask ourselves, why do these things happen? In the Bible it says that God brings pestilences. I suppose we could say that the pestilence of the 2nd century happened because God wanted them to occur. That is true. Maybe the same thing happened in the 3rd century and maybe that was the reason for the great plagues of the 6th century, or even the Black Death of the 14th century. That certainly could be reasoned from the scripture. But there are other things that bring about pestilences on this earth and some of these things are brought about by man himself.

These are things we should consider because as we approach this end of the age we are beginning to see new diseases coming on the scene, new afflictions that have never appeared in the past. However, perhaps they have appeared in the past and we have not recognized them.

What was that disease that spread throughout the Roman Empire in the last part of the 2nd century AD? If you look at the social system established in Rome in the middle of the 2nd century even the Emperors devoted themselves to certain social practices which are looked upon by the Bible as being wrong and many people were going over to them (as many are doing today). It could have caused disease epidemics to go throughout the various cities and areas of the Roman Empire. Only the country areas seemed to survive some of these

great plagues that took place.

The apostle Paul talked about actions that are reminiscent of things occurring today. I do not have all the answers to this myself. I am asking for an investigation into these matters, but we ought to be able to look at the scripture and see if we do not find God telling us about the follies of man and how problems can come along even in a medical way, and some of these plagues prophesied to occur are caused by men. That is, God allows them to occur because of the depravity of men, women, and then civilization.

In the 1st chapter of the book of Romans the apostle Paul wrote an introductory section. He explained why the Romans needed to repent of their ways, and why all mankind needed to repent. Certain things being done that were wrong from a biblical point of view. He says that God was made known to all people in the past in particular ways. But he says that:

“The WRATH of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

• *Romans 1:18*

What Paul’s statement “... **who hold the truth in unrighteousness,**” means is that they may know the truth, but they hold it back, and God will hold them accountable. He goes on to tell some of the things they were doing, in verse 23:

“... And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up ...”

• *Romans 1:23–26*

This describes the Roman people back in the 1st century, and by the middle of the 2nd century it was getting even worse, that even the Roman Emperors themselves, particularly Hadrian, were going over to some of these practices as were many in that society.

Some of my statements may seem judgmental; I do not intend them to be. I give these illustrations from the Holy Scripture as suggestions to investigate the rise of certain epidemics that occurred in the past. It is most interesting that the greatest devastation of all in the 6th century AD, when plagues just swept throughout the entire world, was a time when Christianity was coming into its own in the biggest way. But Christianity and its practices at that time were quite different in the time of the apostle Paul.

In the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries AD, men were flocking to monasteries to be hermits living with men. Women were separating themselves to be with women and we find monasteries coming up everywhere. When you have things like that happening — I am going to be very blunt about it — you find not men with women, but you find men with men taking place. You find it all over in many cases.

I am not the only one who has noticed this. Others have said we need to look at the historical periods when there have been outbreaks of women with women, and particularly when you find men with men. That is what the apostle Paul is talking about. It may be relevant for what is happening in our own world today and for the pestilences that are on the horizon for us.⁷

“And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense [just reward] of their error which was meet [or fitting]. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

• *Romans 1:27–28*

⁷ See Dr. Martin’s article “[Healing and Christian Atonement](#),” especially the section “Sickness and Sin” where biblical examples of God using pestilence as punishment are pointed out. See also, “[Healing and New Testament Teaching](#).” DWS

This is most interesting if you analyze it. The apostle Paul condemns women being with women in a sexual way. He also condemns men being with men in a sexual way. But in this context the women with women do not have any of “**that recompense**” showing up in them — but men do.

In the 1st century activity of this nature produced in men things that we see being produced again at the end of the 20th century with AIDS [and other wasting diseases, *DWS*]. I do not know (and I must say that bluntly) whether the apostle Paul is talking about that, but he very well may be. We likely will identify in history more “outbreaks” (as they are called in medical terms today), of diseases that have been around for generations. There was a considerable amount of activity, as the apostle Paul is talking about here, in the middle of the 2nd century. In the 2nd century we find major plagues. In the 6th century AD when we find that many people went into monasteries and retreats on a grand scale, we have sudden disease outbreaks.

I do not want to simplify this whole situation. This is something that medical historians need to look at very carefully. But the problem of AIDS was even known in my view (and Paul shows it quite clearly here) in the 1st century AD amongst the Romans because he says “**that recompense**” is seen in men, but it is not seen in women. Most amazing.

Close Contact With Animals

There is another thing that mankind does. Humans encountering animals in the wrong way, can get diseases from animals and then transmit them through various means to men that can cause plagues. Many of our European ancestors, like to keep animals and stay with animals. We like horses, cattle, pigs, and other farm animals around all the time. Is there anything wrong with that? The answer is no. We get milk, meat, hides, and various things from animals. In early Europe going back into the Middle Ages, animals stayed in the homes of our ancestors, sometimes in the bottom to keep the house warm. In Europe and Asia, we have been used to animals being around quite a bit.

When the Americas were developed after the time of Columbus, our ancestors came over and they had their animals with them. Many animals that we have today, like the horse, were reintroduced to the new world. When the Europeans, the Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Dutch, or whoever, came into the new world, they brought their animals with them.

When the Americas were discovered, many Indian peoples (and the same occurred with the Aborigines in Australia), they were not people who were close to animals. They were hunters. They did not keep many animals close to them like we do.

The frequent contact with animals meant that the immune systems of Europeans could deal with several of the diseases that arise from animals and men living near each other. They developed immunity to those things. When our ancestors came into the New World, they brought their animals with them. They also brought diseases that they had been familiar with as children and became immune to, but the Indian people were not around animals like our ancestors had been. They could not cope with the diseases that our ancestors were used to and adapted for when growing up. To this day in the United States most of us, because of our being close to one another and close to animals on farms in the old days, still get our chicken pox or other childhood diseases as we call them. They do not kill us off however.

Do you know what happened when they encountered the Indigenous people here in the Americas, the Indians? In many cases 90% of them were wiped out because of simple afflictions that our ancestors dealt with and had immunity. They had no immunity to many of these illnesses and entire populations were wiped out.⁸

Our state called Massachusetts was named after the Massachusetts Indians. There was a large population of Massachusetts Indians in that area when our Plymouth forefathers established themselves. Do you know

⁸ When the Spanish came to Mexico from Cuba they unknowingly brought smallpox with them which ran rampant through the native populations. The Central American Indians in turn gave the Spaniards syphilis which they took to Europe. Some Caribbean islands were so depopulated that Europeans brought slaves from Africa to repopulate the islands with workers. See the web lecture notes by Dr. Ian Carr, “[Plagues and Peoples, the Columbian Exchange](#)” *DWS*

there is not one single Indian of that tribe left today? They all disappeared, man, woman, and child, over 250 years ago, and the people of Massachusetts today are made up of English, Irish, Germans, people with African origin, etc. In other words, they are made up of general Americans, but there is not a single Massachusetts Indian left. They were not used to the same environments that our ancestors were.

We need to find out what is causing diseases. Some of the new diseases that we are finding could come from animals that are misused, maybe in Africa, and coming over here. They even say that some of our AIDS problems come from monkeys, or the misuse of animals. That may have been the case. Who knows? I am not certain.

[**Editor's Note:** Information is available about routes of transmission. Some information is new since 1994 and 2005. See: "[How do diseases jump from infecting animals to infecting humans? | HowStuffWorks.](#)"]

I know one thing; the Bible in the Book of Romans has a clear description that if certain antisocial practices are done (according to the Bible they are antisocial) they can have a reverberation on individuals and society. I am not saying that judgmentally. I say what it says in Romans. (See Dr. Martin's 1983 article, "[Homosexuality and the Bible.](#)")

We must look at medical reasons why some of these plagues developed and spread widely throughout the Roman Empire. No one knows what caused the plagues of the middle and last part of the 2nd century AD. Some say it may have been bubonic plague but who knows? No one knows for certain what caused the major plagues of the 3rd century that wiped out tremendous numbers of people in the Roman Empire. No one knows for sure what caused a breakout of the major plagues which lasted for 70 years and brought on the Dark Ages.

But you know, with our modern medical understanding that we have at the present time, if we can use some of the biblical teachings as hints on some of these things, perhaps we can develop a means of investigation to find out what caused these diseases of the past and diseases that are prognosticated for the future. Whatever the case, we can know this: mass diseases, pestilences, and illnesses will take place according to the Holy Scripture. Jesus said to the disciples that there will not only be wars but there shall be famines, droughts, and there will be pestilences.

Top medical scientists are saying that our modern sophisticated drugs are unable to cope with new mutants that are arising, of even the common diseases that we thought were controlled. Things are changing and they are changing very quickly. The Bible says as the time moves toward the end of this age pestilences will break out again.

That is the reason I feel Psalm 91 is placed in that place for a reason. It is right at the very beginning of the period introducing the millennial age to come. The apostles asked Jesus when the end of the age will take place. He told them of these events and amongst them was pestilence. Here is Psalm 91 judiciously placed at the very beginning of the section in Psalms that speaks about the new age to occur in the future. What we find here is some instruction, some comfort for us that we can come through this period triumphantly. This world needs to understand that many plagues come not only directly from God (though the biblical ones do come from Him), we sometimes create our own plagues by practices we do in life.

We do not know all the answers yet, but the Bible says to keep watching these events because pestilences were prognosticated by Jesus Himself to come just prior to the Second Advent. We are approaching that age now but remember you have Psalm 91. It is a Psalm which you can trust and put your faith in. It shows that your faith and trust in God will bring you through these perilous times.

Ernest L. Martin, 1994
David Sielaff, 2005, January 2023

Addendum:

Read my August 2015 article "[God and Demographics](#)" It will give additional information about the history and future of human population. All was, is, and will be under God's control. DWS