Fulfilled Prophecies

Why Revelation Has Plagues Like Egypt



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Why does the book of Revelation describe plagues that sound almost identical to the plagues God brought upon ancient Egypt?

† We find water turning to blood, darkness covering a kingdom, painful sores, frogs, hail, and judgments upon rivers and seas. These similarities aren't accidental. They're part of the Bible's consistent language of covenant judgment.

† God used the Exodus judgments against Pharaoh to

demonstrate His authority, deliver His people, and punish a nation that refused to obey Him (Exodus 7:4-5; 12:12).
† Centuries later, Israel became guilty of the very sins for which Egypt had been judged. Jerusalem rejected God's messengers, persecuted His servants, and ultimately rejected and crucified the Messiah (Matthew 23:34-37; Acts 7:51-52).
† Revelation deliberately draws upon the Exodus because God was bringing judgment upon another oppressive covenantal system, the unfaithful Jerusalem of the first century (Revelation 11:8; 18:24).
† The first Exodus delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. The final covenantal Exodus delivered God's people from the bondage of the Old Covenant system and established the completed New Covenant order in Christ (Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrews 8:13).
† Revelation wasn't predicting a second worldwide Egyptian plague crisis thousands of years later. It was announcing the approaching judgment of the covenant nation that had become spiritually like Egypt.

The City Spiritually Called Egypt

Revelation 11:8

And their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

† This verse establishes the geographical and covenantal identity behind Revelation's judgment imagery. The city was spiritually called Egypt, and it was the place where Jesus was crucified, Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34; 23:33).
† Jerusalem wasn't literally ancient Egypt. God was describing its spiritual condition through the history of a nation that had resisted His authority and oppressed His people (Exodus 5:1-2;

Matthew 23:37).
† The same city was called Sodom because its corruption and covenant unfaithfulness resembled the wickedness previously condemned by the prophets (Isaiah 1:9-10; Ezekiel 16:46-49).
† Once Revelation identifies Jerusalem with Egypt, the repeated Exodus plagues become understandable. The imagery points toward God's covenant judgment against the city that had rejected His Son (Matthew 21:33-43; 23:35-38).

The First Exodus Established The Pattern

Exodus 7:4-5

When Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My armies, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I extend My hand over Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.

† The Egyptian plagues weren't random demonstrations of supernatural power. They were deliberate judgments through which God confronted an oppressive ruler and delivered His covenant people (Exodus 3:7-10; 6:6).
† Pharaoh refused to release Israel, even after repeated warnings. His resistance brought escalating judgments upon the nation until the final plague resulted in Israel's deliverance (Exodus 8:1-2; 12:29-33).
† The Exodus became a foundational pattern of redemption and judgment throughout Scripture. God judged the oppressor, distinguished His people, and brought them into a new relationship of freedom and covenant responsibility (Exodus 19:4-6; Deuteronomy 4:34).
† Revelation applies this established pattern to the first-century covenant crisis. The persecuting city faced judgment while Christ brought His redeemed people into the freedom and

inheritance of the New Covenant (Galatians 5:1; Hebrews 12:22-24).

Water Turned To Blood In Egypt

Exodus 7:20-21

So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants; and all the water that was in the Nile was turned into blood. Then the fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.

† The Nile River was essential to Egypt's agriculture, commerce, and survival. Turning its waters to blood demonstrated that Egypt's prosperity couldn't protect it from God's judgment (Exodus 7:17-19).

† This judgment struck at the foundation of Egyptian life and exposed the inability of Pharaoh's kingdom to resist God's authority (Exodus 7:22-25).

† Revelation uses the same imagery because the judgment against Jerusalem followed the same divine pattern. A nation that had shed innocent blood was approaching the consequences of its covenant rebellion (Matthew 23:35-36; Revelation 16:5-6).

Blood In The Waters Of Revelation

Revelation 16:3-4

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

† The similarity to Egypt is unmistakable. Revelation describes water becoming blood, deliberately recalling the first Egyptian

plague (Exodus 7:20-21).
† The imagery communicates the severity and completeness of divine judgment within the prophetic vision. It doesn't require us to predict that every ocean and river on the physical earth must literally become blood (Isaiah 13:9-13; Ezekiel 32:7-8).
† The surrounding context identifies bloodshed as the moral reason for the judgment. Those responsible for persecuting God's servants were receiving judgment corresponding to their actions (Revelation 16:5-7; Matthew 23:34-36).
† The first-century fulfillment concerns the judgment of the persecuting covenant order, not the destruction of the planet's entire aquatic ecosystem (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-10).

The Plague Of Darkness In Egypt

Exodus 10:21-23

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out with your hand toward the sky, so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt." So Moses reached out with his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.
† Darkness was another judgment against Pharaoh's kingdom. It demonstrated God's authority over the created order and exposed the helplessness of a nation that refused His command (Exodus 10:24-29).
† The distinction between darkness in Egypt and light among Israel also demonstrated that God knew how to preserve His people while judging their oppressors (Exodus 8:22-23; 9:4).
† The prophets later used darkness to describe the downfall of nations, rulers, and established political orders. This became a recognized feature of biblical judgment language (Isaiah 13:10;

Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10).

Darkness Over The Beast's Kingdom

Revelation 16:10-11

And the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

† Revelation again uses the language of Egypt. Darkness falls upon a kingdom that resists God's authority, just as darkness fell upon Pharaoh's kingdom (Exodus 10:21-23).

† The immediate object of this bowl is the throne of the beast. The passage identifies the judgment's target rather than requiring the entire physical universe to become dark (Revelation 13:1-8; 16:10).

† The people's refusal to repent also resembles Pharaoh's hardened resistance. Judgment exposed their rebellion, but they continued to oppose God (Exodus 9:34-35; Revelation 9:20-21).

† Within the first-century setting, the beastly power and the unfaithful covenant city belonged to the same historical crisis of persecution and judgment, although Revelation distinguishes the beast from Babylon (Revelation 17:3-6, 16-18).

The Plague Of Painful Sores

Exodus 9:10-11

So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses tossed it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on every person and animal. The soothsayer priests could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the soothsayer priests as well as on all the Egyptians.

† The boils demonstrated that even Egypt's religious specialists couldn't protect themselves from the judgment God had announced (Exodus 9:8-12).
† The plague affected the people who belonged to the kingdom resisting God's command. Their political and religious authority couldn't provide deliverance (Exodus 8:18-19).
† Revelation repeats this pattern when judgment falls upon those identified with the beast and its worship (Revelation 13:15-17; 16:2).

The First Bowl Of Revelation

Revelation 16:2

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and a harmful and painful sore afflicted the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

† The correspondence with Egypt's boils is direct. Revelation presents painful sores as judgment upon those aligned with the persecuting beast (Exodus 9:10-11; Revelation 13:16-17).
† The mark identifies allegiance within Revelation's conflict over worship and authority. The judgment is directed against those who participate in the beast's opposition to God (Revelation 13:12-17; 14:9-11).
† This vision belongs to the approaching first-century judgment announced at the beginning and end of Revelation. It isn't evidence that a modern identification system must fulfill an ancient prophetic warning (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-10).

The Plague Of Frogs In Egypt

Exodus 8:5-6

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Extend your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" So Aaron extended his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came

up and covered the land of Egypt.
† The frogs were part of the escalating judgments against Pharaoh. What belonged to Egypt's ordinary environment became an overwhelming source of distress (Exodus 8:1-4).
† Pharaoh's temporary willingness to negotiate didn't produce lasting obedience. Once relief came, he hardened his heart again (Exodus 8:8-15).
† Revelation later uses frog imagery in connection with deceptive spiritual influence and the gathering of hostile rulers for judgment (Revelation 16:13-16).

The Frog Imagery In Revelation

Revelation 16:13-14

And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the entire world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

† John explicitly says the spirits appeared like frogs. He wasn't predicting an invasion of literal amphibians. He was using recognizable Exodus imagery to portray deception and opposition to God (Exodus 8:5-6; Revelation 16:13).
† Their appearance from the mouths of the dragon, beast, and false prophet emphasizes deceptive communication and the gathering of opposition against God's purposes (Revelation 13:11-14; 19:20).
† The language of gathering rulers for battle also draws upon the Old Testament prophets, who described nations being assembled for divine judgment (Joel 3:1-2; Zechariah 14:2).
† Within the fulfilled perspective, this imagery belongs to the first-century conflict that culminated in the judgment of

Jerusalem and the vindication of Christ's people (Luke 21:20-22; Revelation 19:1-2).

The Plague Of Hail In Egypt

Exodus 9:23-26

So Moses reached out with his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire flashing intermittently in the midst of the hail, which was very heavy, such as had not occurred in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck everything that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, from people to animals; the hail also struck every plant of the field, and shattered every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, was there no hail.

† The hail judgment demonstrated God's authority over the land, its agricultural resources, and the people who depended upon them (Exodus 9:18-22).

† God distinguished the land of Goshen from the rest of Egypt, again demonstrating His ability to protect His people while bringing judgment upon their oppressors (Exodus 8:22-23; 9:26).

† Hail also appears elsewhere in Scripture as an instrument of divine judgment against hostile powers. Its prophetic significance was established long before John wrote Revelation (Joshua 10:11; Isaiah 28:17).

The Great Hail Of Revelation

Revelation 16:21

And huge hailstones, weighing about a talent each, came down from heaven upon people; and people blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because the hailstone plague was extremely severe.

† Revelation's enormous hailstones recall the Egyptian plague while intensifying the description of divine judgment (Exodus 9:23-26).
† The people respond by blaspheming God rather than repenting, repeating the pattern of hardened resistance already associated with Pharaoh (Exodus 9:34-35; Revelation 16:9, 11).
† The preceding verses identify the collapse of the great city and the judgment of Babylon. The hail belongs to that same prophetic scene rather than an unrelated worldwide disaster (Revelation 16:17-20).
† In the fulfilled interpretation, Babylon represents unfaithful Jerusalem, the city held responsible for the blood of God's prophets and saints (Matthew 23:35-37; Revelation 18:24).

The Covenant Curses Behind Revelation's Plagues

Deuteronomy 28:58-60

If you are not careful to follow all the words of this Law that are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. And He will bring back on you every disease of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you.

† This passage is one of the strongest connections between the Egyptian plagues and Revelation's judgment language. Moses warned Israel that covenant rebellion would bring upon them the very diseases and judgments associated with Egypt (Deuteronomy 28:15, 27).
† The nation delivered from Egypt was warned that it could experience Egypt-like judgment if it abandoned God's covenant requirements (Deuteronomy 28:45-48).
† The covenant curses also included foreign invasion, siege,

famine, and national devastation. These judgments closely correspond to Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 28:49-57; Luke 21:20-24).

† Revelation's plague imagery therefore isn't merely a collection of dramatic similarities. It draws upon the covenant sanctions that God had already announced through Moses (Leviticus 26:14-33; Deuteronomy 28:58-61).

† Jerusalem's first-century judgment was the culmination of Israel's covenant rebellion, not an unexpected change in God's dealings with His people (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 21:22).

The Seven Bowls And The Completion Of Judgment

Revelation 15:1

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

† John identifies these as the last plagues because they bring the announced judgment to its completion. The emphasis is upon the completion of the prophetic judgment being revealed (Revelation 15:5-8; 16:17).

† The number seven communicates completeness throughout Revelation. The seven bowls present the full outpouring of divine judgment against the powers and covenant city under condemnation (Revelation 1:4; 5:1; 16:1).

† These judgments belong to the events John said must soon take place. Their fulfillment wasn't postponed for thousands of years after the original recipients received the prophecy (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-7).

† The completion of the Old Covenant judgment prepared the way for the fully established New Covenant order symbolized by the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 8:13; Revelation 21:1-3).

The Song Of Moses And The Lamb

Revelation 15:2-3

And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who were victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

† This passage confirms that Revelation intentionally connects the first Exodus with Christ's completed work of redemption. The redeemed sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Exodus 15:1-2; Revelation 14:1-3).

† Moses led Israel out of physical bondage under Pharaoh. Christ delivers His people from the bondage of sin and the condemnation associated with the former covenant order (John 8:34-36; Romans 8:1-2).

† Israel celebrated its deliverance after passing through the sea. Revelation presents the victorious saints worshiping God beside a heavenly sea, using Exodus imagery to celebrate their victory (Exodus 14:29-31; 15:1-2).

† The Lamb is greater than Moses because His redemption establishes the everlasting covenant relationship that the earlier Exodus anticipated (Hebrews 3:3-6; 9:11-15).

† Revelation's plagues and its song of victory belong together. Judgment against the oppressor and deliverance of God's people are two sides of the same redemptive story (Exodus 6:6-7; Revelation 19:1-7).

Jesus Identified The Generation Of Judgment

Matthew 23:35-36

so that upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of

Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

† Jesus identified the generation that would experience the accumulated judgment for the persecution of God's righteous servants. He didn't assign that judgment to an unidentified generation thousands of years in the future (Matthew 23:29-34).

† The same bloodguilt appears in Revelation's description of Babylon. The city was held responsible for the blood of prophets, saints, and those killed upon the earth (Revelation 17:6; 18:24).

† Jesus had already pronounced judgment upon Jerusalem and its religious leadership. Revelation develops that same judgment through prophetic images drawn from Egypt and Israel's covenant curses (Matthew 23:37-38; Revelation 16:5-6).

† The repeated identification of the guilty city, the persecuted saints, and the approaching judgment places Revelation within the historical crisis of the first century (Luke 11:49-51; 21:20-22).

The Days Of Vengeance

Luke 21:20-22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus gave His disciples a recognizable historical sign. Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies, and those in Judea were to flee rather than remain in the city (Luke 21:20-21).

† He called these the days of vengeance and connected them

to the fulfillment of what had been written. The covenant warnings given through Moses and the prophets were reaching their appointed conclusion (Deuteronomy 28:49-52; Daniel 9:26-27).

† The Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provide the historical setting for this judgment. The city and temple were devastated, bringing the Old Covenant temple order to its final historical end (Matthew 24:1-2; Hebrews 8:13).

† Revelation's Egyptian plagues belong within this same covenantal judgment framework. They announce the downfall of the city that had become spiritually like the nation from which Israel had once been delivered (Revelation 11:8; 18:21-24).

The New Jerusalem After The Judgment

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† Revelation doesn't end with the destruction of Jerusalem. It reveals the New Jerusalem, the covenant dwelling place of God with His redeemed people (Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:26).

† The first Exodus brought Israel out of Egypt and eventually into the promised land. Christ's greater redemption brings His people into the heavenly Jerusalem and the blessings of the New Covenant (Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22-24).

† The New Jerusalem isn't presented as another earthly political capital replacing the old city. It represents the completed covenant relationship in which God dwells among His people through Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:22-23).

† The old Jerusalem experienced covenant judgment, but the New Jerusalem remains open to those who come to Christ. The invitation to receive the water of life continues (Revelation 21:25-27; 22:17).
† This is the great movement of Revelation, from covenant judgment to completed redemption, from the unfaithful city to the bride of Christ, and from bondage to the freedom of God's everlasting Kingdom (Galatians 4:24-31; Hebrews 12:28).

Historical References

† Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian and eyewitness to the Jewish-Roman War, recorded the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in The Jewish War, Books 5-6. His account describes famine, internal violence, bloodshed, and the burning of the temple.
† Josephus described severe suffering during the siege, including starvation and the collapse of ordinary life within the city. These events provide historical evidence of the devastating judgment Jesus had warned would come upon Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).
† Josephus also recorded extraordinary signs associated with the period before Jerusalem's destruction, including unusual heavenly phenomena and warnings interpreted as omens. These reports are historical testimony, not independent proof that every symbol in Revelation occurred literally (The Jewish War, Book 6, Chapter 5).
† Tacitus, the Roman historian, also described the conflict surrounding Jerusalem and reported unusual signs and religious expectations associated with the period (Histories, Book 5, Chapters 10-13).
† Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, preserved the tradition that Christians in Jerusalem had received a warning and

relocated to Pella before the city's destruction (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5).

† This tradition corresponds to Jesus' instruction that His followers should flee when they recognized Jerusalem's approaching desolation (Luke 21:20-22).

† These historical writers confirm the reality and severity of Jerusalem's first-century catastrophe. They don't independently establish every proposed connection between the bowls and particular siege events, but their testimony supports the historical setting in which the fulfilled interpretation understands Revelation.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Revelation's Egyptian plagues remind us that God is faithful to His promises, including His promises of judgment and redemption. What He announced through Moses, the prophets, and Jesus wasn't forgotten (Deuteronomy 28:58-61; Luke 21:22).

† We don't need to live in fear that the oceans will someday turn to blood or that enormous hailstones must destroy the modern world. Revelation's first-century time statements direct us to the fulfillment of its announced judgment (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-10).

† The judgment of Jerusalem demonstrated the seriousness of rejecting Christ and persecuting His people. God's justice wasn't abandoned, and His covenant promises weren't left incomplete (Matthew 23:35-38; Revelation 19:1-2).

† We're no longer waiting for another Exodus from an earthly covenant system. Christ has already accomplished the greater redemption and brought His people into the freedom of the New Covenant (Galatians 5:1; Colossians 1:13-14).

† We don't belong to the old Jerusalem that came under

judgment. Through Christ, we've come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the assembly of those who belong to God (Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:26).

† The Kingdom of Christ isn't waiting to be established through another series of global catastrophes. We've received a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, and our calling is to worship God with gratitude and reverence (Hebrews 12:28; Colossians 1:13).

† The same Lord who delivered Israel from Egypt has completed the greater redemption through Jesus Christ. We can live with confidence because His covenant victory has already been accomplished (John 8:36; Hebrews 9:15).

† Our responsibility today isn't to search world events for another fulfillment of Egypt's plagues. It's to proclaim Christ, live faithfully, love one another, and invite others into the life He freely offers (John 13:34-35; Revelation 22:17).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why does Revelation repeat so many of the plagues from Egypt?

A: Because the Exodus established a biblical pattern of judgment against an oppressive power and deliverance for God's people. Revelation applies that imagery to the first-century covenant crisis involving Jerusalem, the beast, and the vindication of Christ's people (Exodus 7:4-5; Revelation 11:8; 15:1-3).

Q: Does Revelation actually identify Jerusalem as Egypt?

A: Yes. Revelation describes the great city as spiritually called Sodom and Egypt and identifies it as the place where the Lord was crucified. That points to Jerusalem, not ancient Egypt (Revelation 11:8; Luke 13:33-34).

Q: Were the plagues of Egypt literal while Revelation's plagues

were symbolic?

A: The Exodus narrative presents historical judgments upon Egypt. Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy

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