

The Black Death - I

Will discuss:

- i) causes
- ii) symptoms
- iii) spread of plague
- iv) beliefs about the plague
- v) economic and religious effects on England

INTRODUCTION

Black Death: Name for plague which swept across Asia then Europe in the middle of the 14th century, killing millions and changing the lives of those who remained.

Two types of plague:

bubonic and pneumonic.

HOW IT SPREAD 1

Bubonic plague:

- a) carried in blood stream of fleas living on rats
- b) plague germs blocked stomach-fleas hungry
- c) rats died: fleas left, sometimes to humans
- d) disease spread from East as black rats moved westwards with traders and invading armies.

CAUSES

Pneumonic symptoms:
Black spots, fever, coughing up blood as lungs collapse.
Death for 100% in about 2 days.

Bubonic symptoms:
Buboes: swelling under arms and at top of thighs. Boils too.
Not as bad in winter.
Death for 70% in 4-7 days.

HOW IT SPREAD 2

Pneumonic:
Passed by breathing, and sneezing

SPREAD OF PLAGUE

1338-1346 Plague spread from central Asia carried by traders and Mongol invaders

1347 Mongols deliberately infected Italian trading base

Fleeing traders took plague to Messina in Sicily, then Italy.

By 1349 the plague had spread to Wales, Ireland and Scotland.

June 1348 plague hit Melcombe Regis, Dorset, then East to London

Passed on through Europe via trade routes

The Black Death- II

BELIEFS

Cures involved praying, fasting, flagellation, or cutting wound to drive out infection.

Beliefs affected attempts to cure the plague

Many believed plague was a punishment sent by God or due to infected air.

EFFECTS ON ENGLAND-SUMMARY

Affected the church and how people saw the church

Hundred Years' War was interrupted

Affected the economy

Killed about 1 million people or between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the population

Statute of Labourers:

- Fixed wages at the 1347 level.
- Fines for landlords who paid more.
- Workers refusing to do as instructed could be imprisoned.
- Commutation before: change back to labour services unpopular.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS-WAGES AND PRICES

Landlords has to pay or face ruined farms

Prices:

At 1st spare food led to a fall in prices. But then less farming done and prices rose because of a food shortage.

Wages:

Shortage of labour led to increase wages by 4-5 times previous level.

The Black Death-III

Complaints about priests taking private services for money

People's main concern was with gaining forgiveness for sins and avoiding terror of going to hell

Flood of recently widowed, illiterate, priests.

AFFECT ON CHURCH AND RELIGION

Priests looked after poor which led to a shortage of priests

Some priests wanted more money.

Church lost people's trust for many reasons:

Churches abandoned and services not held.

Church said that anyone could hear the last rites

Terrible tragedy

CONCLUSION

Not the last plague

Affected the lives of the millions it killed or spared.

DEFINITIONS

Bubonic plague: a type of plague passed by fleas and rats. This was one of the two plagues that made up the Black Death. The name comes from the buboes or swellings that occurred under a victim's armpits and at the top of his thighs.

Pneumonic plague: The second of the types of plague that made up the Black Death. A fatal disease, it was passed by breathing and sneezing. It is pronounced 'newmonic'.

Trade routes: The routes taken by ships, from port to port, as people who bought goods in one country and sold them in another (traders) travelled between these countries.

Flagellation: the practice, used during the Black Death, of whipping oneself (or someone else) as a punishment to free oneself from the sins the flagellant thinks he may have committed. By freeing himself from sin a man may avoid being sent to hell or suffer another of God's punishments such as being given the plague.

One Hundred Years' War: A war between England and France fought, on and off, between 1337 and 1453. The countries were fighting over who should control substantial parts of what is now modern-day France.

Population: The number of people who live in a particular place. We usually look at the population of a country as a whole.

Statute of labourers: A law passed in 1351 which tried to change where people worked, who they worked for and how much they were paid back to the level of 1347, the year before the Black Death.

Landlord: A man who owns land (often a substantial amount of land) and allows other people to use that land in return either for money (renting) or for them working for him (a labour service).

Commutation: Instead of doing a particular piece of work for a landlord (such as guard duty or fixing a road) a peasant may wish to make a payment so that he can spend that time working on his own land. This payment is known as a commutation or we say that a service has been commuted.

Peasant: This is often used as a general name to describe a poor farmer who lived during the Middle Ages. Strictly speaking, it refers to someone who produces enough food from his own land for himself and his family and no more.

Illiterate: Someone who is unable to read or write. This was a particular worry during the Black Death because a large number of men who were illiterate became priests. It is difficult to imagine how someone who was illiterate could understand the Bible, which was in Latin, and so help those who attended church worship God.

Fasting: To go without food, often in an effort to free oneself from sin and so avoid being punished by God.

Last rites: The words that are said, usually by a priest, shortly before someone dies. The aim is to free someone from their sins so that they can go to Heaven.