

The Plagues

Message 2 of 8 in the series: "Exodus"

A. Exodus is a story about God rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt and fulfilling the promises He'd made to Abraham 500+ years earlier.

"Then the Lord said to Abram, 'You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But **I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.**'" Genesis 15:13-14 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God always keeps His promises... in His time. "But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." 2 Peter 3:8-9 (NLT)

1. Exodus is a story about God humbling a prideful tyrant and making a way possible for the Israelites to plunder their cruel masters on their way to freedom. "But **I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand forces him.** So I will raise my hand and strike the Egyptians, **performing all kinds of miracles among them.** Then at last he will let you go. And I will cause the Egyptians to look favorably on you. They will give you gifts when you go so you will not leave empty-handed. Every Israelite woman will ask for articles of silver and gold and fine clothing from her Egyptian neighbors and from the foreign women in their houses. You will dress your sons and daughters with these, **stripping the Egyptians of their wealth.**" Exodus 3:19-22 (NLT)
2. Exodus is a story about God working in Moses' life to change him from an excuse-making fugitive into the mighty leader God had created him to be. "'Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for **I am sending you** to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.' But Moses protested to God, 'Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?' God answered, '**I will be with you.**'"

Exodus 3:9-12a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Exodus is a story about people like us. "These things happened to them **as examples for us.**" 1 Corinthians 10:11a (NLT)

"For **God is working in you**, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

B. Unsurprisingly, Pharaoh didn't want to let Egypt's entire slave labor force go free when Moses and Aaron told him that God had commanded him to do so.

"Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" Pharaoh said, '**Who is the Lord, that I should obey him** and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.'"

Exodus 5:1-2 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! Pharaoh believed he was a god and could decide what was best for himself and his people. He had no desire to obey the Lord. This is pride, and it is a great sin.

1. Pharaoh shrewdly knew how to discourage the Israelites and turn them against Moses, Aaron, and the Lord. "...Moses and Aaron, why are you distracting the people from their tasks? Get back to work! Look, there are many of your people in the land, and you are stopping them from their work.' That same day Pharaoh sent this order to the Egyptian slave drivers and the Israelite foremen: 'Do not supply any more straw for making bricks. Make the people get it themselves! But still require them to make the same number of bricks as before. Don't reduce the quota. They are lazy. That's why they are crying out, "Let us go and offer sacrifices to our God." Load them down with more work. Make them sweat! That will teach them to listen to lies!' ...The Israelite foremen could see that they were in serious trouble... As they left Pharaoh's court, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them. The foremen said to them, '**May the LORD judge and punish you for making us stink before Pharaoh and his officials. You have put a sword into their hands, an excuse to kill us!**'"
2. God used Pharaoh's schemes to begin teaching Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the Israelites how to trust Him regardless of their circumstances. "Then Moses went back to the LORD and protested, '**Why have you brought all this trouble on your own people, Lord? Why did you send me?**' Ever since I

Exodus 5:4-9, 19a, & 20-21 (NLT)

came to Pharaoh as your spokesman, he has been even more brutal to your people. And you have done nothing to rescue them!’ Then the LORD told Moses, **‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels the force of my strong hand, he will let the people go. In fact, he will force them to leave his land! ...** Therefore, say to the people of Israel: “I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. **Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt.** I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!” So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, **but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery.**” Exodus 5:22-23, 6:1 & 6-9 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Following God isn’t always easy, and He never promised us that He will handle things the way we think He should. “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. **‘And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.’**” Isaiah 55:8 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God often uses hardship and difficulty (even when we’re doing God’s will) to mature us. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work **so that you may be mature and complete**, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4 (NIV)

C. Through ten miraculous plagues, God proved that He alone is God.

1. Through the plagues, the Lord systematically proved He is infinitely stronger than all the deities of Egypt. “I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, **for I am the Lord!**” Exodus 12:12b (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We are to worship no other gods. “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. **You must not have any other god but me.**” Exodus 20:2-5 (NLT)

2. Through the plagues, God exposed Pharaoh’s magicians as counterfeits. “These teachers oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith. But **they won’t get away with this for long**. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres.” 2 Timothy 3:8-9 (NLT)
3. When God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, He wasn’t taking Pharaoh any place he didn’t already want to go. “But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them... Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks... So, **God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired.**” Romans 1:18-19, 21a, & 24a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Stubbornness and pride always bring pain and destruction. “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! “...if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” 1 John 1:9 (NLT)

“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.” Acts 3:19 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read Exodus 7:1-12:12. Then discuss the following questions:

1. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul says that the things that happened to the Israelites in Exodus are to serve as examples to us. In what ways are we like Moses, Pharaoh, and the Israelites? What can we learn from them?
2. Read Exodus 7:8-13. When Moses and Aaron performed miraculous signs in front of Pharaoh, his magicians were able to duplicate some of them. How were they able to do this? (2 Timothy 3:8-9, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15) Why does God warn us to stay away from people who practice witchcraft and divination? (Deuteronomy 18:9-13)

3. What do the following verses teach us about stubbornness and pride? (Proverbs 16:18, 1 Samuel 15:23, Jeremiah 11:8, Romans 2:5) Why does God detest both?
4. The Egyptians worshiped many gods and trusted them to provide everything from crops to children to military victories. Worshiping statues seems silly to us, but what “idols” do we bow down to in our culture? In what do we place our identity/security/hope more than God? (Colossians 3:5, 2 Timothy 3:1-5)
5. Read Exodus 5:19-23. When Pharaoh took away their straw for making bricks, the Israelite foremen blamed Moses for their hardship. Moses in turn blamed God, but nobody blamed wicked Pharaoh. Why do you think we often blame God for hardships brought on by the sinful decisions we or others make?
6. Review the handout on the 10 plagues. How significant is it to you that through the plagues God systematically proved He was infinitely stronger than all the deities of Egypt? (Exodus 12:12 & 20:2-5)
7. Why do you think the Lord wants us to tell our children and grandchildren the stories in Exodus? (Exodus 10:1-2, Psalm 78:4-8 & 41-55)
8. Read Exodus 9:15-16. Why didn't God punish the Egyptians for the hundreds of years they enslaved, mistreated, and murdered the Israelites by destroying them with one fatal plague?

The Ten Plagues:

Plague #1: The Nile River and all free-standing water in Egypt is turned to blood. (Exodus 7:14-25)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Apis & Isis, god and goddess of the Nile.

Result: The fish in the Nile die, the river stinks, and the Egyptians are forced to dig new wells for drinking water. Pharaoh's magicians are able to duplicate the miracle. Pharaoh's heart remains hard.

Plague #2: Egypt is covered with frogs. (Exodus 8:1-15)

Egyptian Deity defeated: Heqet, frog-headed goddess of birth.

Result: Pharaoh's magicians are able to duplicate this miracle, too. After Moses asks the Lord to kill the frogs, they are piled up in rotting heaps all over Egypt. Pharaoh's heart remains hard.

Plague #3: Egypt is infested with gnats. (Exodus 8:16-19)

Egyptian Deity defeated: Set, the god of the desert.

Result: Pharaoh's magicians are unable to duplicate this miracle and declare it to be "the finger of God." Pharaoh's heart remains hard.

Plague #4: Egypt is infested with swarms of flies. (Exodus 8:20-32)

Egyptian Deity defeated: Uatchit, goddess of the Nile Delta, particularly the marshes and insects.

Result: No flies are found in the region of Goshen where the Hebrews live. Pharaoh initially promises to let the Israelites go, but after God removed the flies, he changes his mind.

Plague #5: All Egyptian livestock die. (Exodus 9:1-7)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Apis, the bull god of fertility, and Hathor, a goddess with the head of a cow.

Result: Pharaoh sends people to investigate and discovers that none of the Israelite's livestock died. Pharaoh stubbornly refuses to let the Israelites go.

Plague #6: People and animals are covered with festering boils. (Exodus 9:8-12)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Sekhmet, the goddess with power over disease, and Sunu, the pestilence god.

Result: Pharaoh's magicians can't advise him because they are covered with boils, but the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses to listen.

Plague #7: The worst hailstorm in Egyptian history destroys crops, trees, and any unsheltered people or animals. (Exodus 9:13-35)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Nut, the sky goddess, and Osiris, the god of crops.

Result: No hail fell in Goshen. Pharaoh admits he has sinned but changes his mind when Moses prays for the storm to stop because he realizes the wheat crop hasn't come up yet and is undamaged.

Plague #8: Locusts devour every green thing left in Egypt. (Exodus 10:1-29)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Nut, the sky goddess, and Osiris, the god of crops.

Result: Pharaoh's officials urge him to let the Israelites go, but after Moses asks the Lord to remove the locusts, God hardens Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh refuses to listen.

Plague #9: All of Egypt except for Goshen is plunged into darkness for three days. (Exodus 10:21-29)

Egyptian Deity defeated: Ra, the Sun God and chief Egyptian deity.

Result: Pharaoh initially agrees to let the Israelites go. God hardens Pharaoh's heart, and he changes his mind, even threatening to kill Moses if he comes back again.

Plague #10: The firstborn of all people and animals in Egypt die. (Exodus 11:1-12:33)

Egyptian Deities defeated: Pharaoh, who was considered to be a god; and Horus, the god of kingship, healing, and protection.

Result: Pharaoh and the Egyptian people urge the Israelites to leave and never come back, showering them with money, jewels, clothing, etc. on their way out.