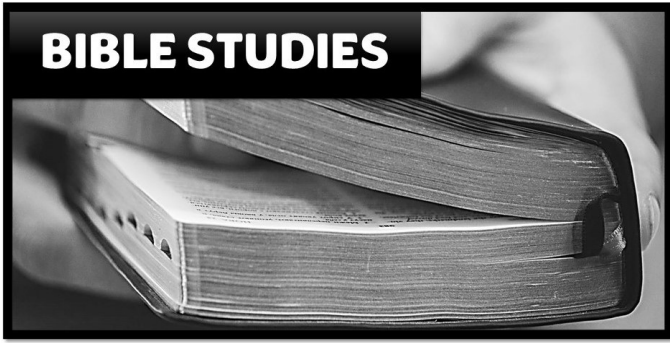


## BIBLE STUDIES



### AN OUTLINE: THE TEN PLAGUES

**Scriptures:** Exodus, Chapters 7-12

#### THE PURPOSE FOR THE PLAGUES (EXODUS 7:1-5)

- A public demonstration of God's power.
- A pouring out of God's wrath.
- God's judgment on other gods (Exodus 12:12).
- A testing time for the children of Israel.
- Spiritual types (examples) that point to sin, Christ, and the plan of salvation.

#### THE ORDER OF THE PLAGUES

The first nine plagues are grouped together in sets of three. They were progressive in nature, showing the severity of God's judgments. The first three plagues affected *comfort*: (1) the water turned to blood, (2) frogs, and (3) lice. The second three plagues came against *possessions* and *body*: (4) flies corrupting their land, (5) cattle dying, and (6) boils and blains (or sores). The last three plagues brought destruction and death: (7) hail, (8) locusts, and (9) darkness stopping any work or activity.

The last plague was separate from the others as it was to reveal a special type (example or shadow) to Israel concerning their deliverance from Egypt's bondage and the deliverance from sin that was to come with Jesus Christ. Notice, with each group of plagues, a warning came with the first two, showing God's mercy, but no warning came right before the last of each group (plagues 3, 6, and 9). This is a lesson that God will not always strive with man.

#### #1 - THE PLAGUE OF BLOOD (EXODUS 7:14-24)

Hapi was the god of the Nile. Due to its necessity for supporting Egypt's economy, the Nile river was worshiped. This plague was God's judgment. All the water in Egypt turning to blood is an accurate picture of a life ruined by sin. All the fish in the river died. This plague was also God's judgment against Pharaoh's orders to have every Israelite baby boy

thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:22). The Hebrews hated to drink of it, for it represented the death of their children. Now, no one could drink of it.

#### #2 - THE PLAGUE OF FROGS (EXODUS 8:1-14)

The Egyptian god Heka (or Heqet) was considered the toad goddess, the goddess of resurrection and procreative powers. Frogs were sacred, and to kill one (even accidentally) could be a death sentence. Frogs were in the houses, beds, ovens, and kneading troughs, but they were unable to kill them due to their sacredness. "The extreme cleanliness of the Egyptians rendered this visitation peculiarly disagreeable" (commentary). Yet, when Pharaoh was asked how soon he wanted the frogs destroyed, he said, "Tomorrow." Truly, his heart was hardened.

#### #3 - THE PLAGUE OF LICE (EXODUS 8:15-19)

The god of the earth, or vegetation, was called Geb. Because the lice came out of "the dust of the land," it was God's way of showing the powerlessness of this god. Some translators say the lice were swarms of gnats that crept into the eyes and nose. Because Pharaoh had hardened his heart after the second plague, God gave no warning and thus no opportunity for Pharaoh to avoid this plague. The magicians could not replicate this plague and had to admit, "This is the finger of God."

#### #4 - THE PLAGUE OF FLIES (EXODUS 8:20-24)

Khephi was the god of insects. In this plague, the insects were everywhere, out of control, and Khephi was unable to stop them. The *Septuagint* describes these as, "The dog-fly, flies which stick fast in the skin, lance it with a sharp proboscis, and suck the blood." In this and the following plagues, God made a "division" between Egypt and the land of Goshen (the Israelites), further proving who was sending the plagues (the God of Israel).

#### #5 - THE PLAGUE OF MURRAIN (EXODUS 9:1-7)

Murrain is an infectious and often fatal disease of cattle. The Egyptians worshiped the bull god (Apis or Menvis) and the cow goddess (Hathor). Neither god could prevent this plague or the deaths of the cattle, horses, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep. "And *all* the cattle [livestock] of Egypt died." This virus did not kill any of the "cattle of the children of Israel."

#### #6 - THE PLAGUE OF BOILS (EXODUS 9:8-11)

The Egyptian god Thoth (or Imhotep) was a god of medicine, intelligence, and wisdom. Yet, this god

was no help when Moses took ashes from the "furnace" (or brick-kiln), scattered them into the air, and all (man and beast) whom the ashes touched became afflicted with boils. "[Egypt] had oppressed Israel in the furnaces [making bricks], and now the ashes of the furnace are made a terror to them" (commentary).

#### **#7 - THE PLAGUE OF HAIL, THUNDER, AND FIRE (EXODUS 9:13-26)**

God revealed He was using Pharaoh to "shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." The pharaohs were believed to be gods, but God was using this false god (Pharaoh) to make Himself known as the one-and-only God. The hail came at the critical time of harvest. The hailstorm was so fierce (killing man and animals) that God's mercy sent a warning to shelter in houses and sheds.

Many of Pharaoh's servants believed "the word of the LORD" and protected their servants and cattle. The Egyptian gods Nut (sky goddess) and Seth (protector of crops) were shown to be powerless in this plague.

#### **#8 - THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS (EXODUS 10:3-15)**

"The fact that the wind blew a day and a night, before bringing the locusts, showed that they came from a great distance, and therefore proved to the Egyptians that the omnipotence of Jehovah reached far beyond the borders of Egypt, and ruled over every land" (commentary). The locusts covered "all the land of Egypt." Throughout history, there have been many reports of large clouds of locusts, but never like this: "Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such."

In this plague, whatever was not destroyed by the hail was devoured by the locusts. Locusts were greatly feared by the Egyptians, and they trusted in their gods Anubis (god of the fields) and Isis (protector against locusts). Of course, these gods were powerless as well.

#### **#9 - THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS (EXODUS 10:21-23)**

The darkness was "over the land of Egypt." It was a darkness that could "be felt." The Egyptians "saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." The sun god (Ra or Amon-Re) had no power against this plague. To the Egyptians, it must have seemed as though Ra was dead.

This plague teaches of the great spiritual darkness there is when people are in sin's bondage. It is God's will to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and [release] them that sit in darkness out of

the prison house" (Isaiah 42:7). It is His desire that all His people have "light in their dwellings."

#### **#10 - DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN (EXODUS 11:1-10)**

The tenth plague would finally bring about Israel's deliverance. Each plague had revealed there was a power greater than all the gods of Egypt. This last plague was against Pharaoh himself, whom the Egyptians worshiped as a god (said to be the literal son of Ra). God considered Israel His "firstborn" and warned if Pharaoh refused to let His people go, "I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Exodus 4:23). Pharaoh did not listen, and in the end, his kingdom was destroyed, his firstborn son died, his army drowned, and ultimately, Pharaoh lost his own life.

While many other Egyptian gods could be included in this list, the lesson is, the God of the Israelites proved He is the only true God, and there is great danger in worshiping other gods. Psalm 16:4 (in another translation) warns, "Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more." Years later, God was still telling His people: "Go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt" (Jeremiah 25:6).

Yet today, God is exposing the falseness of all other gods. While most people are not worshiping idols of wood or stone or gods of nature, anything that takes first place in our lives instead of God is an idol. Just as in this account of the Ten Plagues, God is still saying, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3); "I am the LORD thy God . . . and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me" (Hosea 13:4).

When the Israelites (in obedience to God) applied the blood of a lamb to their doorposts, the death angel passed over. They were spared from death and could leave the bondage of Egypt. Likewise, when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to the sinner's repentant heart, he is spared from the sentence of death and set free from the bondage of sin.

The captivity of Egypt is a type of someone in sin's bondage. It is a place of spiritual darkness, where the gods of this world have the first place in the hearts of the people. Just as the plagues devoured the wealth and health of the Egyptians, sin takes its toll on people. Thankfully, through the death of God's only Son (Jesus), a way of escape has been made. The true God has been revealed, and all the captives of sin can go free!

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