

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: THE GODS OF EGYPT

To understand more about how the ten plagues were judgments against specific Egyptian false gods.

Read the Text:

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.” (Exodus 12:12, ESV)

Study the Text:

The Judgments Against the Egyptian Gods

Having now studied thoroughly the ten plagues (or “wonders”) that God performed through Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, Egypt, and the Israelites, let us now consider how these plagues correspond specifically to some of the false Egyptian gods of this time. These plagues were not simply supernatural acts, but they were specific acts of judgments on well-known Egyptian gods. Below is a breakdown of each of the plagues with the corresponding Egyptian god connected to it.

PRE-PLAGUE: THE STAFF INTO A SERPENT AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST UADJET AND APEP

Apep is also symbolized as a serpent and is seen as the god of disorder and chaos, and is sometimes even symbolized as a dragon. Given the usage of the Hebrew *tanniyn* (sea monster, dragon) to describe these serpents (as opposed to the more typical Hebrew *nachash*), Apep is likely also in mind here.

PLAGUE #1: BLOOD IN THE NILE AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST APIS, ISIS, KHNUM

The Nile was revered in worshipped in Egyptian culture, and there were corresponding Egyptian gods connected to it. *Apis* (sometimes called *Hapi*) was the god of the Nile along with *Isis*, the goddess of the Nile. *Khnum* was an Egyptian god known as the guardian of the Nile. When God strikes the Nile with blood it is as if He has killed these three gods. Moreover, everything in it died as well, causing the land to stink of death (Ex. 7:21). This was a vivid illustration of the war the LORD was waging on the idols worshipped in Egypt.

PLAGUE #2: FROGS AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST HEQET

The second plague of frogs is a direct attack on *Heqet*, the goddess of fertility and magic. That the LORD floods Egypt with frogs that become a nuisance would have created a lot of cognitive dissonance in that frogs were revered. There are a number of frog amulets that have been uncovered in archeological digs throughout the centuries that show the Egyptian commitment to Heqet. Of course, all of the frogs eventually die and also stink up the land (Ex. 8:14), signifying that the LORD had killed this god as well. Interestingly, after this attack on the goddess of magic, the court magicians are no longer able to contend with Moses and Aaron (see Ex. 8:18), as if their magical power has been stripped because their goddess has been killed. It also interesting that frogs are later associated with deceiving spirits in the book of Revelation, given their connection to the goddess of sorcery (Rev. 16:13).

PLAGUE #3 AND #4: GNATS AND FLIES AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST UATCHIT

The third plague of gnats is an attack on the Egyptian goddess *Uatchit*, a god associated with swarms of flies (her Hebrew name is literally “swarm”) and the protector of life, especially that of the Pharaoh. Uatchit was an Egyptian god closely associated with the protection of Pharaoh. Her image is often found in several burial sites of both Egyptian kings and queens to symbolize her protection. That the swarms of gnats plague Egypt signifies that the LORD is actually the one in control of swarms. The fourth plague of flies is an intensified version of the gnats, further driving home God’s sovereign power over swarming insects and signifying that Pharaoh’s protection has been shattered.

PLAGUE #5: DEATH OF EGYPTIAN LIVESTOCK AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST HATHOR AND APIS

The fifth plague causes all of the Egyptian livestock to die, a judgment against *Hathor*, the goddess with a cow’s head, and *Apis*, the bull god. That God could kill the Egyptian livestock while preserving the Israelite livestock once again indicates not only His sovereign power over the people, but also over the false gods they worshipped. The death of these animals symbolize the death of the gods that represent them.

PLAGUE #6: BOILS AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST ISIS AND SEKHMET

The sixth plague of boils is a judgment against *Isis*, the healing goddess, and *Sekhmet*, the goddess with power over disease. The LORD is essentially trolling Egypt with boils so as to show that their goddesses that they depend upon to bring healing were unable to contend with the one true God.

PLAGUES #7 AND #8: HAIL AND LOCUSTS AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST NUT, OSIRIS, SET, AND HORUS

The seventh and eighth plagues of hail and locusts are an assault on *Nut*, the sky goddess, *Osiris*, the god of crops and fertility, *Set*, the god of desert storms, and *Horus*, the god of the sky. That these plagues originate from the skies shows God’s sovereignty over the territory of Nut. That the plagues destroy the crops is a shot at the god meant to protect and bless the crops, Osiris. And Set, the god of desert storms, has no power to stop the storms that come from the desert. Likewise Horus has no power to stop the attack of plagues from coming from his domain.

PLAGUE #9: DARKNESS AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST RA AND AMUN-RA

This ninth plague of darkness is the LORD’s slaying of the Egyptian sun god, *Ra*. Ra was one of the most important Egyptian gods in the pantheon of gods, and was even believed to have ruled over Egypt as the first Pharaoh. Not only was he the god of the sun, but also over kings, and the sky. He is later fused together with another god, Amun, and known as Amun-Ra. Amun-Ra was a creator of unequal power. The instantaneous darkness would have been seen as the sudden killing of Amun-Ra, stripping him of his power to produce light. Both light and dark belong to the LORD, and no one else (Gen. 1:3; Is. 45:7).

PLAGUE #10: DEATH OF FIRSTBORN AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST MIN AND PHARAOH

The final plague that included the death of every firstborn in Egypt in a home that did not have the blood of the Passover lamb over it was an assault on not only Min, the god of reproduction and fertility, but also Pharaoh himself, who was seen as the “firstborn of the gods.” The death of his child would have been seen as the death of a god. This plague, while certainly the harshest for all of the inhabitants of Egypt, was also the harshest for Pharaoh himself. Not only had every major god on which the Egyptians depended and worshipped been slain in brutal undeniable ways, the attacks from the LORD have met Pharaoh in the most personal of ways. This plague would have struck at the deepest beliefs about his own self-importance over the people, and his assumption that his own son would one day rule as a god as well. God’s wonders that He demonstrated through Moses and Aaron were certainly assaults on “all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt” (Ex. 12:12).

What About Now?

The biggest takeaway is the fact that God will not share His glory with any other false god or religion. God says through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols." He not only will not share His glory, but in the events of Exodus He makes clear to all who were watching and for the generations after that would hear the stories that He has desecrated, dismantled, and destroyed the false deities of the Egyptian people. And He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Genesis 1:3. Who established light? Who has authority and command over light?

2. Read Isaiah 45:7. Who creates the light and dark? What does this say about the pantheon of Egyptian gods that are gods of light and darkness, sun and night?

Day Two

1. Read Isaiah 42:8. What does this passage say about God's glory? What does this imply about other false gods?

2. Read Hebrew 13:8. What does this teach about Jesus Christ? Practically, what does this mean for you?

Day Three

1. Read Revelation 16:13. How does this correlate to the book of Exodus and the Egyptian goddess Heqet?

2. Read Job 37:18 and Psalm 78:23. What do these verses teach about who is sovereign over the skies?

Day Four

1. Read Ezekiel 29:9. How does God handle the arrogance of Egypt?

2. Read Exodus 12:12. Who does God judge through the plagues in Exodus?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 29 Discussion: Destroying Idols

The story of the plagues in Exodus are more than simply judgments on a rebellious nation; they are judgments on their gods as well. Each plague specifically targets one or more of the pantheon of gods in Egypt. God is a God who destroys idols; He shares His glory with no one. Talk as a group about the danger of idols in your life today, and what you need to do to be free of them.

1. Icebreaker: Are idols still prevalent today?
2. What are some of the most popular idols in your culture?
3. What idol do you personally struggle with the most?
4. What steps do you need to take to destroy your idols?
5. How do idols impact your faith? Your attendance to church or Bible study? Your family?
6. How can the church equip you to better identify idols in your life?

Takeaways:

1. Each of the ten plagues is an assault on one or more of the Egyptian gods.
2. The final plague is an assault on Pharaoh himself, who was thought to have been a god.