

EXODUS

THE FINGER OF GOD

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sermon study summary

September 18, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Israelites, slaves in Egypt for 400 years, called out for God's intervention. God raised up Moses to free the Israelites from Pharaoh who resisted both Moses and God and made Israel's life miserable. God encouraged Moses, declaring this was according to His plan and purpose, and that Pharaoh was no match for the living God. The resultant plagues would declare God's supremacy over Pharaoh and all of Egypt.

They were supernatural events, judgments on sin and rebellion. Consider that if God was vindictive in nature, He would only need one display of power to wipe out Egypt. Instead, He sent ten plagues of gradually increasing potency. If they were not to wipe out Egypt, what were their purpose?

Judgment on Egypt and the subsequent exodus of the Israelites were only part of the purpose. Ultimately, it was that they would know the character and nature of the one true God, revealed through the signs of the plagues (Ex 7:4b-5). This revelation would reach beyond Egypt to the world. Through each plague, God was extending an opportunity to all of Egypt to come to know Him. Egypt was pluralistic. Pharaoh knew many gods, but he didn't know the God of the Israelites (Ex 5:1-2). God showed His character by demonstrating His absolute superiority over the Egyptian gods.

Prior to the plagues, Moses turned Aaron's staff into a serpent. When Pharaoh's magicians produced serpents, they were swallowed by Aaron's. This introductory event foreshadowed Egypt's defeat. (The same word, 'swallowed', was used later to describe when the waters of the Red Sea swallowed the Egyptians.) The first plague turned the waters of the Nile into blood (Ex 7:19-21). The second produced frogs, opposing the frog deities the Egyptians worshipped. While the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate the miracle, they could not reverse it. They only added to it. Yet, at the third plague, that of gnats, the magicians were foiled and declared the superiority of Israel's God (Ex 8:18-19a). By defeating their gods, God was inviting the Egyptians, especially Pharaoh, to come to know Him.

Pharaoh was the front man for the Egyptians. God spoke to Pharaoh through Moses. As a result of the plagues, Pharaoh would come to know that Yahweh is God, and by association, so would the Egyptians. We see a stubborn Pharaoh, hardening his heart, and intentionally deciding to reject God. We see God exposing what is in Pharaoh's heart and giving him many opportunities to repent. While at times it appeared that Pharaoh was close to repentance (Ex 8:8-10), he held on to his stubborn heart by saying 'tomorrow' rather than 'today' to end the plagues.

Pharaoh is representative of all who are determined to go their own way and refuse to submit to God. Pharaoh is much like us. Israel, too, was immersed in the polytheistic Egyptian culture. The plagues were so that they also would know God (Ex 6:7-8). It was to teach them God's love, grace, power and ultimate plan for their lives which would sustain them in the trials ahead and be passed down to future generations. It was also so that the entire world would come to know God (Ex 9:15-16). Through the Jews, God would bless the world through Jesus.

God is unique, supreme and has no rivals. He alone is worthy of our worship, service, and loyalty. He is merciful and forgiving to those who humble themselves. Every breath we take is from Him. So, soften your hearts and find satisfaction in Him, giving praise to Him.



EXODUS

sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What animal or insect do you find most frightening? Why?
2. Tell of a time when you witnessed a miracle, natural disaster, or extreme natural event (volcano, weather, etc.). What was your reaction?

UP – PURSUE GOD

3. *Read Ex 5:1-2, 7:4b-5, 9:15-16. Skim through Ex 7-8:15.* What might the magicians, Pharaoh, other Egyptians, the Israelites, the surrounding nations, and yourself learn of the character of God?
4. What do you think is the basic issue between God and Pharaoh? What do we learn about Pharaoh in these encounters? Eg. Why did he wait until 'tomorrow' to remove the plague of frogs, etc.?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" That is a statement anyone could make today, or when you are having a spiritual conversation. How might you respond to that? How do we demonstrate to others what God is like?
6. What 'gods' in today's society may we need to contend with personally and when evangelizing? How can we discern 'magicians' who try to imitate God's work in our lives and hinder our trust in the Lord?

THE WORD (NIV)

Exodus 5:1-2

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.'"

²Pharaoh 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 7:4b – 5

Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. ⁵And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

Exodus 9:15 – 16

¹⁵For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. ¹⁶But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

Recall your spiritual journey from being hard or indifferent to God to His softening your heart to Him. Journal it as a reminder. Has anything taken the place of God in your heart, dulled your conscience, or hardened your heart? Invite Him today to be the highest object of your worship, affection, service and loyalty.

This week's writers: Gene Gibbs, Karen Gibbs, Sandi Somers, Elsa Henderson and Jorel Quemuel

