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## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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#### THE PLAQUES (8:1-10:29)

##### Introduction

Here, God begins to deliver Israel by showcasing his sovereignty over Egypt through the plagues. By repeatedly hardening Pharaoh's heart, God creates an environment in which His gracious salvation of Israel may be fully acknowledged. Ultimately, these chapters depict a power contest between the Lord (represented by Moses and Aaron) and the gods of Egypt (represented by Pharaoh). Although Pharaoh resists and disobeys the divine word, God will eventually overpower him until he submits and releases the people.

##### The Big Picture

God demonstrates His supremacy over Egypt and His faithfulness to Israel by sending plagues against the Egyptians while protecting Israel from the plagues' destructive effects.

##### Gospel Glimpses

**THE WORD OF GOD.** These chapters emphasize that the driving force behind the judgment of the plagues is the word of God. Just as God's word was the primary means by which he created the world (Genesis 1), so is His word the primary means by which He saves his people through judgment against Egypt. Similarly, the Son of God came to earth as the Word of God (John 1:1), and through him God again brought salvation through judgment. However, in the case of Jesus, He as the Son and Word of God took God's judgment upon Himself in order to bring salvation to His people.

**CONQUERING OUR ENEMIES.** Bound up with God's salvation of Israel was His conquering of their enemies. When the Egyptian magicians mimicked Aaron's initial sign by turning a staff into a serpent, Aaron's staff swallowed theirs (7:12). This event foreshadows the significance of the upcoming plagues: by them God is powerfully conquering Pharaoh and Egypt in order to save his people. Likewise, the gospel of Jesus is not simply the Good News that we are saved from the divine wrath that our sins deserve, but also that through Jesus God has inaugurated His kingdom and is conquering all our enemies, the fiercest of which is satan, the original serpent. In Revelation 12:10, after seeing satan conquered and cast out of heaven, John hears a loud voice exclaim, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down."

## Whole-Bible Connections

**CREATION UNDONE.** The plagues are depicted as a destructive undoing of the created order in Egypt. The plague of blood on “all their pools of water” (Exodus 7:19) corresponds to “the waters that were gathered [lit. “pooled”] together” to make the seas in creation (Genesis 1:10). The frogs (Exodus 8:1-7) correspond to the “swarms of living creatures” from the waters (Genesis 1:20). The gnats (Exodus 8:16-19) correspond to the “creeping things” on the earth (Genesis 1:24). The flies (Exodus 8:20-24) correspond to the “flying things” (Gen. 1:20). The livestock (Exodus 9:1-7) corresponds to the “livestock” that Adam named (Genesis 2:20). The hail (Exodus 9:22-26) and locusts (Exodus 10:1-15) together destroyed “all the plants in the land” (Exodus 10:15), corresponding to the “plants” and vegetation of creation (Genesis 1:12). The darkness over Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23) reverses God’s first creative act of making light (Genesis 1:3). And finally, the death of the firstborn (Exodus 11:4-5) corresponds to the creation of the first humans (Genesis 1:26). Similarly, the New Testament says that, at the end of time, God will again undo creation in a final act of judgment, after which He will re-create the world in righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13).

**HARDNESS OF HEART.** Throughout the plague narrative, Pharaoh’s heart is unswervingly hard. It is variously stated that Pharaoh’s heart “was/is hardened” (Ex. 7:13, 14; 8:19; 9:7, 35), that Pharaoh “hardened his heart” (8:15, 32; 9:34), and that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10). This hard-heartedness prevents Pharaoh from obeying God’s word and releasing Israel, and so results in his just judgment. Psalm 95:8-11 notes that this exodus generation of Israel also hardens their hearts after leaving Egypt, which similarly results in their not obeying God’s word and thus receiving God’s judgment. The psalmist takes this opportunity to exhort his readers not to harden their hearts like that generation did, an exhortation that the writer of Hebrews picks up and applies to his Christian audience, encouraging them to hold fast to Christ: “For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion’” (Heb. 3:14-15).

## Theological Soundings

**HOLINESS.** To be “holy” means to be set apart, and although the word “holy” does not occur in these chapters, these stories show again and again that Israel was set apart for God. While addressing Pharaoh, God repeatedly refers to Israel as “my people” who are to be released (Ex. 7:16; 8:1, 20, 21, 22, 23; 9:1, 13, 17; 10:3), while Egypt is “your people” who will suffer the judgment of the plagues (8:3, 4, 9, 11, 21, 23; 9:14, 15). Further, as the plagues go on, Israel is increasingly set apart from the Egyptians. By the third plague the magicians are no longer able to replicate Moses and Aaron’s signs (8:18; 9:11), and beginning with the fourth plague the land of Goshen is set apart and protected from the devastating effects of the plagues (8:22; 9:26). Widening our scope, we can see that Israel’s salvation stems out of God’s own holiness (3:5) and will result in their being established as God’s “holy nation” (19:6).

ELECTION. The doctrine of election states that God sovereignly chooses whom he will save and whom he will not. As Paul notes, this doctrine is evident in God choosing Isaac over Ishmael (Rom. 9:6-7) and Jacob over Esau (vv. 10-12). However, Paul's argument for election reaches its climax by recalling God's hardening and rejection of Pharaoh: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills" (Rom. 9:17-18). Pharaoh therefore serves as an example of one whom God has not elected unto salvation.

### **Glossary of Terms**

*Satan: A spiritual being whose name means "accuser." As the leader of all the demonic forces, he opposes God's rule and seeks to harm God's people and accuse them of wrongdoing.*

**Please answer the following questions:**  
**Exodus Chapter 8**

1. Although this section is primarily concerned with God's judgments against Pharaoh and Egypt, on several occasions Moses intercedes with God on behalf of Pharaoh (Ex. 8:12, 29; 9:33; 10:18). Why might these intercessions be recorded throughout this section? What do they contribute to this narrative filled with judgment?
2. How long after the Nile turned to blood before Moses was sent again to Pharaoh? (Exodus 8:1)
3. What does Moses say will plague Egypt this time? (Exodus 8:2)
4. Why do you think God chose this plague?
5. Where would the frogs be found and where did they come from? (Exodus 8:3-5)
6. What did the magicians do in verse seven? (Exodus 8:7)
7. What does Pharaoh promise if the frogs are removed and where would they remain? (Exodus 8:8-11)
8. When was Moses to pray for Pharaoh? Why did Moses give Pharaoh the chance to choose when this miracle would take place? What would this teach the Egyptians and Pharaoh about God? (Exodus 8:9-10)

9. What ultimately happened to the frogs? What was Pharaoh's response? What principle does this teach us about human nature? (Exodus 8:13-15)

10. What plague followed frogs? What transformed into this plague? (Exodus 8:16)

11. What did the magicians do? What was affected by this next plague? (Exodus 8:17-18)

12. What did the magicians eventually tell Pharaoh? (Exodus 8:19)

13. Where did God tell Moses to go and confront Pharaoh again? And what did the Lord send next? (Exodus 8:20-21)

14. What about the land of Goshen and why? (Exodus 8:22-23)

15. What does Pharaoh ask Moses to do? How do you think Pharaoh viewed God in this instance? (Exodus 8:25)

16. Several times throughout the plagues, Pharaoh attempts to bargain with Moses and dictate the terms of his obedience. He offers to allow Israel to sacrifice within the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:25), to allow them to sacrifice but "not go very far away" (8:28), for only the men to go (10:11), and for the people to go without their flocks and herds (10:24). All of these bargains are rejected. What are some ways that we attempt to "bargain" with God when it comes to our obedience?

17. What reason does Moses give for not doing as Pharaoh requested? (Exodus 8:26)

18. What does Moses want to do instead in this verse? (Exodus 8:27)

19. What does Pharaoh promise this time and with what condition? (Exodus 8:28)

20. What does Moses warn Pharaoh not to do? What happened after the flies left? (Exodus 8:29-32)

### **Exodus Chapter 9**

1. What name is given to God in 9:1?

2. Where was the next plague to come and what did it include? (Exodus 9:2)

3. What distinction would be made between Egyptian livestock and Israelite livestock? (Exodus 9:4)

4. What happened to the livestock? (Exodus 9:6)

5. What was Moses to throw into the air before Pharaoh? (Exodus 9:8)

6. What would the soot become, what would it cause? (Exodus 9:9)

7. What was the difference between this and previous plagues directly? Why do you think there was this progression of severity?

8. Why could the magicians not stand before Moses? (Exodus 9:11)

9. According to Exodus 9:14-16, why did God bring these plagues against the Egyptians? What is therefore the ultimate goal of God's judgment of His enemies?

10. What is significant about the magicians' reaction to this plague? What does this show us about the power of their pagan religion?

11. When Moses next goes to Pharaoh what does he tell Pharaoh God will send this time? (Exodus 9:14)

12. What could God have already done? (Exodus 9:15)

13. For what purpose had God raised up Pharaoh? (Exodus 9:16)

14. What was God going to send? What precautions does he tell the Egyptians to take? (Exodus 9:18-19)

15. Who heeded this precaution? (Exodus 9:20)

16. What did Moses do to bring the hail? (Exodus 9:22-23)

17. What came with the hail? (Exodus 9:23-33)

18. What did the hail do? (Exodus 9:25)

19. Where did it not hail? (Exodus 9:26)

20. What does Pharaoh admit? (Exodus 9:27)

21. What does Pharaoh promise? (Exodus 9:28)

22. Where would Moses pray? (Exodus 9:29)

23. What did Moses know, according to verse thirty? (Exodus 9:30)

24. What was destroyed, and not destroyed and why? (Exodus 9:31-32)

25. How did Pharaoh sin again, according to these verses? (Exodus 9:34-35)

## **Exodus Chapter 10**

1. Why was Pharaoh's heart hardened, according to verse one? (Exodus 10:1)



2. What was Moses to tell his children and grandchildren? (Exodus 10:2)
  
3. What was next to come into the country? (Exodus 10:4)
  
4. What would they cover, devour? (Exodus 10:4)
  
5. Who had never seen anything like this? (Exodus 10:6)
  
6. What did Pharaoh's officials say to Pharaoh? (Exodus 10:7)
  
7. At various points, certain Egyptians recognize God's power throughout the plagues. During the plague of hail there are some who "feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh" and rush their slaves and livestock inside (9:20). Some of these servants also later implore Pharaoh to release Israel, saying, "Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" (10:7). In light of Pharaoh's attitude, what do these responses contribute to the story?
  
8. Who did Moses say would be going into the desert? (Exodus 10:9)
  
9. What does Pharaoh accuse Moses of in verse ten? (Exodus 10:10)
  
10. Who does Pharaoh say should go? (Exodus 10:11)
  
11. What brought the locust and how did they cover the ground? How much green was left in Egypt? (Exodus 10:13-15)

12. Who does Pharaoh say he has sinned against? (Exodus 10:16)

13. What removed the locust, to where? (Exodus 10:19)

14. What kind of darkness was to come and how long did it last? (Exodus 10:21-22)

15. What could no one do? (Exodus 10:23)

16. What about the Israelites? (Exodus 10:23)

17. Pharaoh says the women and children may go this time, but what is to be left behind? Why was this not satisfactory? (Exodus 10:24-25)

18. What does Moses say must not be left behind? (Exodus 10:26)

19. What does Pharaoh say to Moses in verse twenty-eight? (Exodus 10:28)

20. What does Moses say in agreement in this verse? (Exodus 10:29)