

The Ten Plagues of Egypt



A 10 Session Bible Study



By Pastor Chris Mullis

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Introduction

Written December 13, 2023

What follows is the first in a series of sermons I wrote and preached at Pleasant Grove Methodist Church in the early fall of 2020. This was during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was entering 6 months at the time and people were starting to settle into the idea that COVID was going to be a deadly and persistent plague on our lives for some time (and no one knew for how long). There was still great fear about the pandemic. Many knew people who died of COVID or who had been severely sickened. Others had survived with only mild illnesses. Everyone's lives had been disrupted. There were shortages of basic supplies in stores. Businesses had closed. The future was uncertain and no one knew what trial might come next. Who would have imagined these difficulties possible prior to mid-March of 2020? A sermon series on the 10 plagues of Egypt seemed very timely as we looked back at Biblical history of a superpower from the ancient world who had their lives turned upside down by a series of unprecedented plagues.

As I write this introduction, people in the United States have largely (and thankfully) moved beyond the disruptions of COVID-19. However, the message of these sermons from the fall of 2020 continue to be important. Therefore, I offer them for your reading and u to discuss them in a small group as you study God's Word. Please do remember as you read, these were originally drafted as sermons intended for preaching. Therefore, they may at times come across awkward in written form. Preaching a sermon is not always the same as reading one. However, I pray you will still find the information meaningful as you seek to grow in faith.



Suggested Format for this Study

The following format is a suggestion that has worked well for me, but feel free to adapt it to your teaching style and the resources available. Each lesson can easily be adjusted to last between one hour and an hour and a half.

Pre-Study Preparation

I recommend providing participants with a schedule, which can be created using the “Schedule Template” document. This helps keep everyone informed of the material to be covered in each session. Additionally, you might consider starting with an “Orientation” session. This will give you a chance to introduce yourself, get to know the participants, distribute study materials, explain the study format, and answer any questions they may have.

It can also foster community to offer light refreshments at the beginning of each session. Participants can sign up to take turns providing simple snacks, such as coffee and cookies. This not only helps set a relaxed tone but also gives participants a sense of ownership in the study. They can sign up for refreshments in the "notes" section of the “Schedule Template.”

Weekly Materials

Each week, participants will receive a sermon to read in preparation for the following session. I suggest distributing one sermon at a time to help participants stay focused and not read ahead. However, feel free to provide all the sermons at once if that works better for your group.

General Session Format

Below is a general format for each small group session:

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)**
 - Begin by welcoming participants and offering an opening prayer.
- 2. Optional Introductory Video (5-10 minutes)**
 - You may choose to show a creative video to introduce each week's topic. Several options are available, including three music videos by David Crawford:
 - For the orientation session (or another session as appropriate): “Summary of Egypt’s 10 Plagues (Original Music Video by David Crawford)”
 - For session 5: “The Bovine Perspective (Original Song by David Crawford)”
 - For session 9: “Darkness (Original Music Video by David Crawford)”
- 3. Group Discussion (20-30 minutes)**
 - After the introduction, guide the group through a discussion based on the questions in the “Small Group Guide” at the end of each sermon.
 - Your role as the facilitator is not to have all the answers but to guide and encourage meaningful conversation. The provided questions are a starting point—

feel free to adapt or ask follow-up questions based on the group's thoughts and interests.

- While some discussions may naturally stray from the topic, it's important to discern whether these tangents are worth exploring or if it's time to steer the group back to the main topic.

4. Intercessory Prayer (5-10 minutes)

- End each session with a time of prayer. Allow participants to share any praises or concerns, and then pray over them as a group.
- It can be helpful to keep a list of these requests to follow up on them in future sessions.



The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Written in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this series will help people see that God is still Lord of all and we must to turn to Him for salvation through His son, Jesus Christ. God wants everyone to know He is in supreme command of everything in Heaven and on Earth. No political leader, army, empire, or supposed other “god” has any power above Yahweh, the God of the Bible. Through the Ten Plagues of Egypt, God proved to everyone that He is the Great I AM, the One True Living God.

Date	Topic	Notes:
	Introduction and Orientation	
	Plague 1 – The Nile Turns to Blood – Ex. 7:14-25	
	Plague 2 – Frogs – Exodus 8:1-8	
	Plague 3 & 4 – Gnats & Flies – Exodus 8:16-24	
	Plague 5 – Death of Livestock – Exodus 8:30-9:7	
	Plague 6 – Boils – Exodus 9:8-12	
	Plague 7 – Hail – Exodus 9:13-28	
	Plague 8 – Locusts – Exodus 10:1-20	
	Plague 9 – Darkness – Exodus 10:21-29	
	Plague 10 – Death of the First-Born Sons – Ex. 11:1-8	

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 1 – The Nile Turns to Blood

Written September 20, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 7:14-25

Exodus 7:14-25

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn, and he still refuses to let the people go. **15** So go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes down to the river. Stand on the bank of the Nile and meet him there. Be sure to take along the staff that turned into a snake. **16** Then announce to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you, “Let my people go, so they can worship me in the wilderness.” Until now, you have refused to listen to him. **17** So this is what the Lord says: “I will show you that I am the Lord.” Look! I will strike the water of the Nile with this staff in my hand, and the river will turn to blood. **18** The fish in it will die, and the river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink any water from the Nile.””

19 Then the Lord said to Moses: “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and raise your hand over the waters of Egypt—all its rivers, canals, ponds, and all the reservoirs. Turn all the water to blood. Everywhere in Egypt the water will turn to blood, even the water stored in wooden bowls and stone pots.’”

20 So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood! **21** The fish in the river died, and the water became so foul that the Egyptians couldn’t drink it. There was blood everywhere throughout the land of Egypt. **22** But again the magicians of Egypt used their magic, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hard. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had predicted. **23** Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind. **24** Then all the Egyptians dug along the riverbank to find drinking water, for they couldn’t drink the water from the Nile.

25 Seven days passed from the time the Lord struck the Nile.



Purpose

God tells us why He sent ten plagues on Egypt in Exodus 7:5 – “When I raise my powerful hand and bring out the Israelites, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” Again and again in the book of Exodus, God repeats the definitive statement, “I am the Lord!” to Moses, the Hebrews, and Pharaoh and the Egyptians. In fact, God says “I am the Lord!” no less than 36 times

throughout the book of Exodus. God wants everyone to know that He is in supreme command of everything in Heaven and on Earth. That no king, no Pharaoh, no army, no empire, and no other

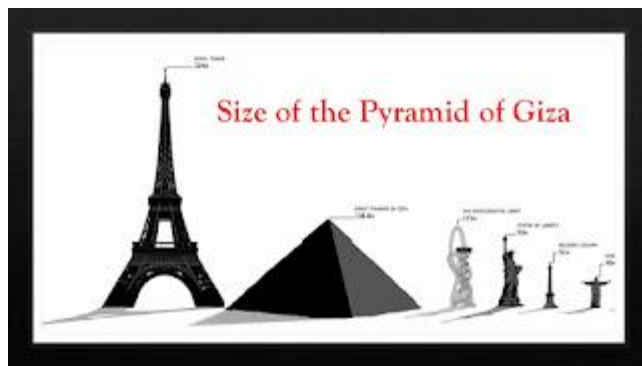
supposed “god” has any power above Him. And through the ten Plagues of Egypt, God is going to prove once and for all to everyone that He is Yahweh, the Great I AM, the One True Living God. My greatest hope as we go through this series about the 10 plagues of Egypt (and as we live through this plague of COVID-19) is that everyone knows beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God is still Lord of all and we need to turn to Him for our salvation through His son, Jesus Christ.

In order to really appreciate what God proved by delivering the Hebrews (AKA, the Israelites) from Egypt, you have to understand a few things about ancient Egypt.

Egypt Compared to the USA

First, Egypt was a vast and powerful Empire. Egypt was unified as an empire around 3,100 BC. It is one of the oldest civilizations on earth. For

reference, Christ lived on earth about 2,000 ago. Now, that's a long time ago. However, that's not even halfway back to when Egypt was founded. Egypt unified as an empire in over 5,000 years ago! That's incredible!

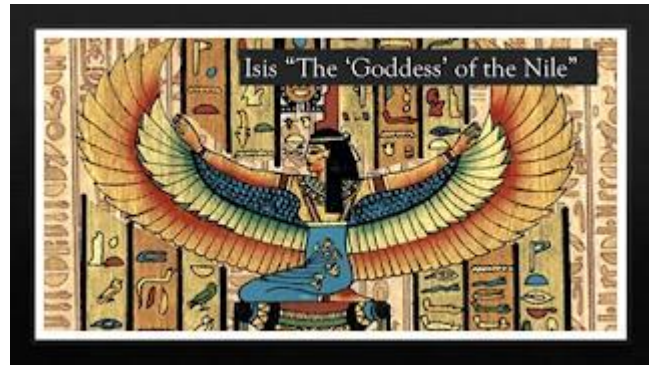


Egypt was the most successful empires of the ancient world. Of course, they are famous for the great pyramids, one of the great wonders of our world. In this picture to the left, you can see a comparison of the great pyramid of Giza to other famous structures. Notice the statue of liberty on the chart. Now that statue is quite grand (if you've ever seen it, you know). However, look how the sheer mass of the pyramid dwarfs Lady Liberty. The Egyptians did this

without computers, calculators, or mechanized equipment. Their empire boasted incredible wealth, power, regional influence, peace, and security. They are known to this day for their music, medicine, philosophy, art, and literature. They invented hieroglyphics to write down their history, religion, and ideas long before most ancient people even knew how to write. Egypt was the superpower of their day and their influence persisted nearly ten times as long as the United States of America has even been around.

Egypt had a complex religion of over 2,000 deities. There were gods for everything. Egyptians made gods from what they saw—animals, natural features, and the sun, moon, and stars. Egyptian gods had to be controlled by sacrifices and religious ceremonies. If you did the right magic, the god's had to do what you asked. It was important to control the Egyptian gods

because they didn't care about humans. This might be hard for modern people because most of us grew up with a Christian concept of a benevolent God who is holy, righteous, and compassionate. So, when we think of God, we probably think of a good God. Egyptian gods were not like the Christian God. Egyptian gods were greedy, selfish, and lustful. They just wanted to enjoy the pleasure of being a god—often at the expense of humanity. Egyptian gods resembled more of what Christians might call demons. They would lie, cheat, steal, and use people to get what they wanted (or just abuse people for their own entertainment).



Among the thousands of Egyptian gods, some that were supposed to be among the most important and powerful were Appis (pronounced 'happy'; the god of the Nile River, the source of life), and Isis (the goddess of the Nile and supposed divine mother of Pharaoh), Khnum (the guardian of the Nile). The ten plagues with which Yahweh struck Egypt through Moses, attacked the very gods the Egyptians believed were in control of the world. One by one, God shows that He is the Lord; He is in complete control and can do whatever He wants and no other god, no demon, no army, no empire, and no Pharaoh can stop Him.

Look at what God did in this very first plague. The Nile was the most important feature of Egypt. It was the empire's lifeblood—it made agriculture and civilization possible in the middle of the desert (not to mention fishing and transportation as boats traveled up and down the river like tractor trailers drive up and down I-75 today).

And so God attacked the most important asset of the Egyptian empire. He turns the Nile river into blood. He says, "Ok, you think the Nile River is your life blood. Fine, I'll turn your river into actual blood! You think you can commit genocide and take little Hebrew babies and drown them in your "amazing" river? Their blood is on your hands and in your river. So, let's make it official! I'll show you what your river looks like to me! It is filled with the blood of your murders."

In the process, God exposes the impotence of some of the most important "gods" in Egypt. Appis was supposed to be the god of the Nile. Isis was the goddess of the Nile. Khnum was the guardian of the Nile. Where were they when God struck the Nile? There were three of these gods against Yahweh. Why couldn't they protect the Nile? Because they are nothing. Exodus 7:14, "I will show you that I am the Lord."

Egypt's Experiment with Monotheism

I'm no expert in Egyptian history or religion. However, some very interesting things happened in Egyptian history (and this is according to secular—not religious—



Egypt's Experiment
with Monotheism

scholars). One is that a foreign people group ruled in Egypt for several years. This group, the Hyksos, ruled in Egypt about the time the Bible says Joseph rose to second in command of the empire when the Hebrews came to live in Egypt. Could the Hyksos have been the Hebrews?

Another interesting phenomenon occurred about the same time. One Pharaoh, Akhenaten, started to favor one god above all the other gods in Egypt. Soon he decided that that one god was the only god. Could this have been the influence of Yahweh's people living in Egypt? Could Joseph's influence have led some of the Egyptians to reject their idols and false gods toward the One True God? Maybe.

Ultimately, the Egyptians rejected Joseph's people and his God, and chose to delve back into their idolatry. When Akhenaten died, Egypt delved back into their traditional pantheism. This also seems to follow the biblical narrative that says the Egyptians forgot about Joseph and began to resent the Hebrews and eventually made them slaves and turned to genocide. That is why God is leading His people out of Egypt in Exodus to give them their own land where they will serve as His representatives to the whole world.



God Bless America

Well, Ok, I'm a nerd. I love this stuff! You may not. So, what does all this have to do with you today? I'm glad you asked!

There are so many parallels for us today. Obviously, we are in the midst of a global plague. I don't know if God sent COVID-19 on us the same way He sent ten plagues on Egypt (I sure hope not! What if COVID-19

and all the troubles of 2020 are just the start? What if 2021 gets even worse?) Whether God sent COVID or not, I say we all make sure we turn back to God because I'm tired of this!

There are more parallels between the ten plagues of Egypt and your life in America today. Egypt was a superpower of the Ancient world. Who is the superpower of our times? America. Again and again in the Bible, God is the God who stands up for the oppressed against the powerful. Why is that? One of the biggest reasons is because when people get powerful, they often feel like they don't need God anymore and they turn their backs on Him. They grow selfish. Eventually they may get so bad they are willing to do the same kinds of things Pharaoh did. Thinking he was a god, Pharaoh ordered the enslavement of the Hebrews and then resorted to genocide to wipe them out by drowning their babies in the Nile River.

In America, we are some of the most privileged and prosperous and powerful people in the world. According to Gallup, the median household income around the world is \$9,733 per year.^[i] What's the annual income at your house? The average for Dalton is 43,076.^[ii] So, there's no denying we have it pretty good. We've worked hard to get where we are. We also owe a lot to our ancestors' struggles, the military for protecting our nation, and many others. However, I pray we never, ever, ever forget that our blessings and security come from

God. Lord, forbid we ever begin to think America's greatness is due to our businesses or military or system of government or philosophy or anything else. God forbid we forget He is the one who grants and protects our peace and prosperity. For when we do, we are going right down the same road as Egypt in Exodus. God might have to come in and remind us, all our "gods" are nothing! God, and God alone, is the Lord.

Whether or not God specifically sent COVID-19, I pray it wakes us all up to the truth that we are not in control. We never really were. A tiny little virus shut down the entire world. Do you still think you are in control? How many plagues will it take to convince you otherwise?

Conclusion

This is the Lord's word to you today. Repent of your sin and arrogance and idolatry and turn to the Lord through Jesus Christ.

Well, what Pharaoh did is indicative of the way some people will respond to the Lord. Exodus 7:23, "Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind." You see, Pharaoh hardened his heart. He was stubborn. He said to himself, "It's just a thing, a coincidence. It will pass. I'll be fine. Life will return to normal. I'll still be in control." And unfortunately, that's the way some who read this message may respond. You will be stubborn and harden your heart. You'll say, "I'm not gonna change. This ain't that big a deal. I'm still in control. I'll be fine." And you will *return to your "palace" and put the whole thing out of your mind.*

But, I pray that will not be your response. I pray you will recognize the Jesus is Lord. I pray you will repent of your sin and turn to Him. Get down on your knees and pray for forgiveness. And start today to follow Jesus with your whole heart. For Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

[i] <https://news.gallup.com/poll/166211/worldwide-median-household-income-000.aspx#:~:text=Country%2Dlevel%20income%20closely%20related%20to%20Payroll%20to%20Population%20results&text=WASHINGTON%2C%20D.C.%20%2D%2D%20The%20median,according%20to%20new%20Gallup%20metrics.>

[ii] <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/dalton-ga-metro-area#:~:text=In%202017%2C%20Dalton%2C%20GA%20had,%2443%2C076%2C%20a%205.55%25%20increase.>

Small Group Guide for Plague 1

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 1 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Reflection on the Plague:** Start with a general reflection on the first plague. How does the turning of the Nile into blood convey God's power and message to Pharaoh?
2. **The Egyptian Gods:** Discuss the significance of God targeting the Nile, considering it was vital to Egyptian life. How does this challenge the Egyptian gods, particularly Appis, Isis, and Khnum?
3. **Purpose of the Plagues:** Explore the purpose behind the plagues, as stated in Exodus 7:5. How does God's repeated declaration, "I am the Lord," emphasize His supreme authority?
4. **Egypt vs. USA Comparison:** Reflect on the comparison between ancient Egypt and the United States. How does the story of Egypt serve as a warning or lesson for us today?
5. **Parallel to Current Times:** Discuss the parallels between the plagues and the current global situation, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. How can we turn to God in times of crisis?
6. **Power and Oppression:** Explore the theme of power and oppression in the narrative. How does God stand up for the oppressed against the powerful, and how does this relate to our modern context?
7. **Repentance and Turning to God:** Discuss the call to repentance and turning to God in the conclusion. How can we apply this message in our lives today?
8. **Personal Reflection:** Encourage participants to share personal reflections on how the story resonates with them and how they can apply its lessons.

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 2 – Frogs

Written September 27, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 8:1-8



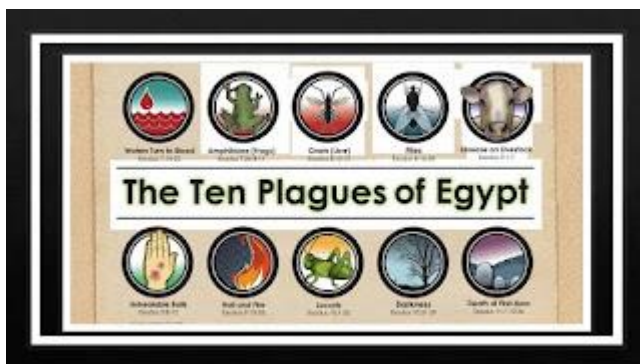
Last week we saw that Moses turned the Nile into blood to punish Pharaoh for not letting God's people leave slavery in Egypt. The Nile was full of blood for seven days. However, Pharaoh was stubborn and wouldn't let God's people go. So, God sent another plague.

Exodus 8:1-8

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go back to Pharaoh and announce to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. 2 If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs across your entire land. 3 The Nile River will swarm with frogs. They will come up out of the river and into your palace, even into your bedroom and onto your bed! They will enter the houses of your officials and your people. They will even jump into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 Frogs will jump on you, your people, and all your officials.’”

5 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Raise the staff in your hand over all the rivers, canals, and ponds of Egypt, and bring up frogs over all the land.’” 6 So Aaron raised his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the whole land! 7 But the magicians were able to do the same thing with their magic. They, too, caused frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and begged, “Plead with the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people. I will let your people go, so they can offer sacrifices to the Lord.”



Egyptian Idolatry

Ancient Egypt was an impressive civilization. I learned last night while we were playing Apples to Apples as a family that Egyptians were the first to popularize the idea of applying scents to armpits, usually using cinnamon and other spices that wouldn't turn rancid in the heat. They invented one of the first forms of writing. They constructed remarkable

buildings such as the Great Pyramids and Temples and tombs that are still considered great wonders of the world today.

Yet, Egypt was mired in sin. As a very powerful empire, they abused their power to mistreat neighboring peoples. They enslaved the Hebrews and then tried attempted genocide by forcing the Hebrews to throw their baby boys into the Nile River. They were also guilty of idolatry,

Idolatry may seem a mild sin when compared to things like slavery and genocide. However, idolatry is a gateway sin. Idolatry replaces the One True God with a god of your own making. In the ancient world, people would often craft an idol out of stone or wood into the shape of a god they imagined. They could make their idol *look* however they wanted it to look. But here's the thing. Not only could they make their supposed god (which was not really a god at all) *look* they way they wanted. They could make their god embody whatever they wanted. They could make the fake god say, do, believe, and condone whatever they people wanted.

One of the most heinous atrocities of the Egyptians was forcing Hebrews to throw their baby boys into the Nile River. Now, there is a natural repulsion in every human heart at even the thought of taking a helpless infant and throwing them in a river to drown. I know that's wrong. You know it's wrong too. It doesn't matter what language you speak, what color is your skin, or from what time in history or what country you come from. Every human being instinctively knows killing babies is wrong. We know it because God created us with a natural sense of right and wrong. We value life because God values life. We want to protect the powerless because God protects the powerless. We were made in God's image. Even though we are warped by sin, we still reflect His character. As America's founding fathers expressed, "We hold these truths to be self-evident..."

But we also want to do what we want to do. We don't want God restricting our behavior (I'm speaking in a worldly sense here). And so, if we don't like what the One True God says, then we'll just change it. "Let's just make a minor adjustment here. There! I like this god much better!" And then someone else comes along and says, "Yeah, but I don't like that other thing about God. I would much rather God were this instead of that." And they make another little change to god to make Him the way they want him to be. And this can go on and on and on until the god you are left with doesn't look like the One True God at all.

And so, as Romans 1:21b-23 says, "...they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles."

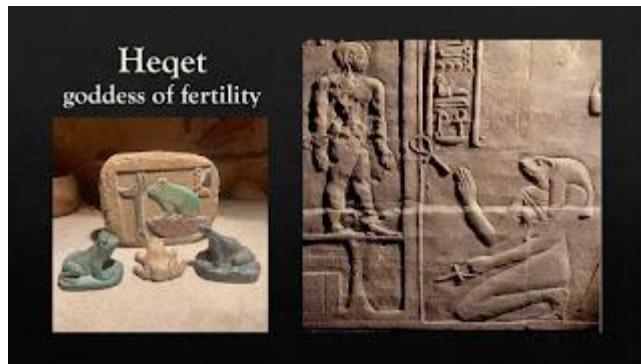
When people start compromising the truth and start making their gods to be they want them to be, it's not long until your "gods" start condoning things like drowning Hebrew babies in the Nile River. The Egyptians were smart, intelligent, creative, resourceful people. Unfortunately, they turned into utter fools because they turned their backs on the truth in favor of lies. (America, be warned!)



Anchored in the Truth

Do you realize how incredibly blessed we are to have the Holy Bible? The Bible helps us know the Truth. It guards us from forgetting the character of God and recreating Him into whatever we want Him to be. The Word of God doesn't change. The same story about the ten plagues of Egypt we're reading today is the same story Jesus read 2,000 years ago. We read the same

stories and characteristics of God that people have always read. These words haven't changed, and they won't change. Now, everyone can read the words for themselves and come to their own conclusions. And honest people may all come to slightly different conclusions. That's why we have Methodist and Baptist and Pentecostals, etc. However, though we have varying interpretations, we are all anchored to the same Holy Bible. We are like ships floating at anchor in the open sea. We may drift this way and that, but we won't drift off into never land because we are anchored. And so, a Methodist ship may float to the left and a Baptist one may float to the right, but we are still in the same general area. It is when we sever the connection to Scripture that we float away into crazy heresies that have nothing to do with the One True God of the Bible. Some have done this. Some are doing this now. They don't like this or that about God and what His Holy Word says in Scripture. So, they decide to disregard the Bible. And in doing so, they are doing something like the Egyptians who made idols to represent gods the way they thought they should be or the way they wanted them to be.



But Why Did God Send a Plague of Frogs?

Egypt had thousands of gods. "Instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles." And one of their most important gods was the goddess Heqet, which they imagined looked like a frog. She was the goddess of fertility. Egyptians imagined that Heqet was the wife of Knum, the guardian

of the Nile River. (Remember how last week we saw the One True God turned the Nile River into blood, proving that Knum could not protect the Nile from God because Knum has no real power?) The Egyptians believed Knum formed the bodies of new children on his potter's wheel and then their frog goddess breathed life into them. An Egyptian mother giving birth depended upon the frog goddess to hasten birth. New mothers-to-be often wore amulets depicting Heqet sitting in a lotus.

Frogs were sacred in ancient Egypt. They were not to be trampled upon. God—the One True God of the Bible—has a sense of humor, don't you think? It's like He said, "Ok. So, you think frogs are sacred. You think these slimy creatures represent your fertility goddess? OK. I'll give you so many frogs you won't know what to do with them! You won't be able to walk without

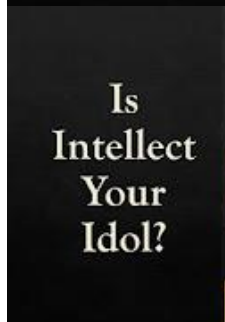
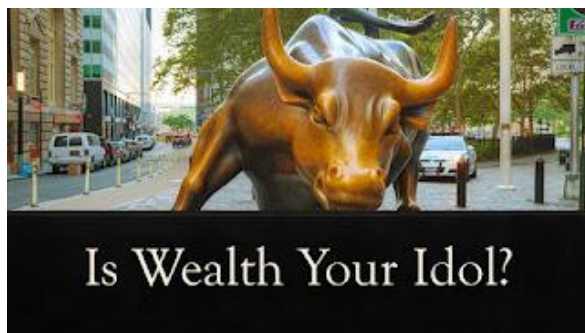
stepping on 10 or 15 of them with each stride! They're going to be in your houses and in your bedrooms and even in your beds. Let's see you try to make some babies while you've got frogs crawling all over you!"

Once again, the God of the Hebrews shows the Egyptians that their gods are nothing. If Heqet is real, why didn't she (or any of the other Egyptian gods) stop this nonsense? They couldn't. Only Yahweh, the Great I Am of the Hebrews has any real power.

What's Your Favorite Idol?

I doubt anyone reading this today actually bows down to worship a statue of a frog. But Americans have their idols too. Tim Keller states in his book Counterfeit Gods, an idol is "anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give." If we're honest with ourselves, I think many may realize we have idols today too.

So, what's your favorite idol?



The things we turn into idols aren't necessarily bad in and of themselves. Frogs aren't evil. They have their place. They are living creatures God made and they are important to the environment. But they are not gods. Children are an important blessing God gives us to nurture and love. But they are not gods. Money, intellect, national pride... none of these things are evil in and of themselves. It is when we expect them to do for us what only God can do that we run into trouble. It is when they are more important to us than God that we sin. It is when they absorb our heart and imagination more than God that we are heading towards destruction.



Closing

What are you clinging to as an idol that you need to let go of today? I invite you to repent of your idolatry and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. He will forgive you and show you who God really is in the most accurate way. And where do you see what Jesus is like? It's not the popular image of Jesus that's been made up by our world. It's not what *you* think about Jesus. (You don't get to make Jesus whatever you want him to be.)

Jesus is not necessarily what the "experts" says about him. (Experts sometimes turn out to be fools.)

Your Bible is where you read the most accurate description of who Jesus is and what he did and what he expects from us. John 3:16 may be the best summary of it all where it says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." That's a great summary. But let's don't stop there. Read the Bible. Study it. Trust the Jesus you find there and *follow him*.

Small Group Guide for Plague 2

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 2 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. Connection to the Bible Story:

- What stood out to you in the description of the second plague of frogs in Exodus 8:1-8?
- How do you think the Egyptians, especially Pharaoh, reacted to the sudden invasion of frogs in their homes?

2. Idolatry in Ancient Egypt:

- Discuss the concept of idolatry in ancient Egypt and how it was intertwined with their religious beliefs.
- How did the Egyptians' idolatry contribute to their mistreatment of the Hebrews, including the act of throwing baby boys into the Nile?

3. Idolatry as a Gateway Sin:

- Reflect on the idea that idolatry is a gateway sin. How does compromising the truth about God lead to other moral distortions?
- Can you think of examples in today's world where people may compromise their beliefs to create a god of their own making?

4. Anchored in the Truth:

- Share your thoughts on Pastor Chris's analogy of being anchored in the open sea. How does the Bible serve as an anchor for our beliefs?
- In what ways does the unchanging nature of the Bible protect us from drifting into false beliefs?

5. The Humor in God's Response:

- Explore the humor in God's response to the Egyptians' idolatry, specifically with the plague of frogs. How does God challenge their belief in the frog goddess Heqet?
- What lessons can we draw from God using creatures the Egyptians held sacred to demonstrate His power?

6. Modern-Day Idols:

- Pastor Chris mentions various potential idols in today's context. Which of these do you think is most prevalent in our society?
- Reflect on your own life and consider if there are any idols that might be subtly taking precedence over your relationship with God.

7. Repentance and Turning to Jesus:

- Discuss the invitation to repent of idolatry and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. How can recognizing and letting go of our idols bring us closer to God?
- Share personal experiences or insights on how repentance and trusting in Jesus have positively impacted your spiritual journey.

8. The Importance of Scripture:

- Emphasize the significance of reading and studying the Bible. How does it provide an accurate description of who Jesus is and what He expects from us?
- Encourage group members to share examples of how studying the Bible has deepened their understanding of Jesus.

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 3 & 4 – Gnats & Flies

Written October 4, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 8:16-24



Introduction

Ancient Egypt was an empire with thousands of gods they believed protected their way of life and made them great. In their pride and arrogance, Romans 1:25 explains, “They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself...”

The God of the Hebrews, Yahweh, my God, the only true God we read of in the Holy Bible is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The gods of the Egyptians evolved over time. It is sometimes hard to determine who their supposed gods were. One century a god may be depicted as a swarm of flies. Then, the Egyptian empire would change. A new dynasty would come to power and the culture and politics of the empire would change and their gods would morph according to people’s imaginations. The god of the flies would evolve into a vulture or a snake. These gods could be changed, because they weren’t really gods at all. They were only the imaginations of people. They were created to serve the purposes of the leaders of the empire.

When God spoke to Moses in a burning bush, He said, "My name is Yahweh," which means, “I am who I am.” In other words, no one gets to make up my character or who I am or what I do. I am real. I am eternal. I make up my own mind. I don’t change. You don’t make me what you want me to be. I made you and *you* must conform to the person I made you to be, not the other way around.

And so, Yahweh, decided to pour out justice on the evil Egyptians and prove He is the supreme Lord of all, and all the idols and false gods people worship are nothing. Through 10 plagues, God shattered every false notion of the Egyptians and brought Pharaoh’s empire to its knees to deliver the Israelites from bondage. He proved there is only one God and his name is "I Am."



Uatchit, The Egyptian Lord of the Flies

The Egyptians believed in a goddess called Uatchit (pronounced Wadjet). She started out as the supposedly as the protector of lower Egypt and was depicted as a vulture. When the empire unified, she became the protector of the entire empire. She was often depicted with the head of a vulture or a fly (and later a cobra) and was said to live in the swamps among

the papyrus reeds. Uatchit was supposed to be Pharaoh's protector. With an all-seeing eye, she could see trouble coming and warn him. But none of that mattered, because this false god was impotent against the One True and Living God of our Bible.

God sent to swarms of insects as the third and fourth plagues of Egypt—first gnats and then flies. Now, the exact nature of the third plague is a bit of a mystery. The Hebrew word used we usually translate as *Keenim* can also mean fleas or lice. Now any of these insects would be awful. Lice and fleas infest and bite. Gnats swarm and get in your eyes and nose. But the Hebrew word *Keenim* carries with it the idea of flying *and* biting or stinging. So, imagine biting/stinging gnats or flying fleas and lice! Yikes!

And the fourth plague is flies. Not only are flies a nuisance, but they also often transmit parasites and disease. I was on a mission team in El Salvador a few years back and we had terrible trouble with flies. They weren't any more numerous in El Salvador than they are in Georgia where I live. However, the flies in El Salvador carry an amoeba. If they land on your food, they you will also get the amoeba and it will cause severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Almost everyone on our team contracted the amoeba and had to take medicine to get rid of it. Now, imagine ancient Egypt swarming with flies, possibly contracting diseases and having no modern medicine to combat it. It must have been terrible.

Well, the Egyptian false god, Uatchit, apparently didn't warn Pharaoh or do anything to stop the gnats and flies. Isn't she supposed to see everything? Isn't she supposed to be the goddess of swarms who protects Pharaoh and lives in the swamps where these insects live and breed?

The Most Important Commandment Deuteronomy 6:4-5

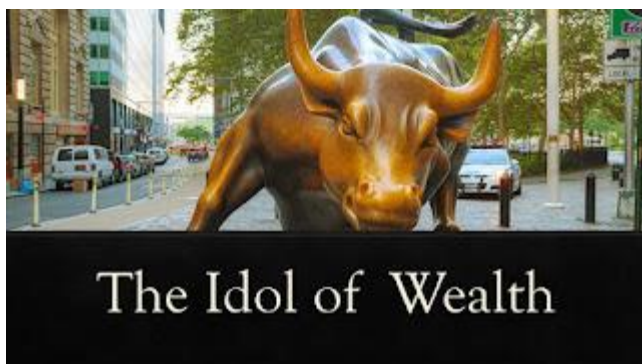
"Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength."

Only One God

There is only one God. Most people are familiar with Jesus teaching that we should love our neighbor. Jesus said this is the *second* most important commandment (and that it is like the *first* most important commandment). What is the *most* important commandment? Jesus told us the most important commandment too. Quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Jesus said, "Listen, O

Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength." There is only one God. All other gods are idols and false gods. They are nothing. And in order to truly love your neighbor, you have to start by loving God.

Sadly, people still worship idols today. There are some listening to this message who worship idols. It may not be a statue, but you have turned a thing God created into the one you love more than God "with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength." In his book Counterfeit Gods, Timothy Keller says an idol is "anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give." If we're honest with ourselves, I think many realize we have idols today too.



The Idol of Wealth

People are often surprised to learn that Jesus taught about money more than any other subject. The word money is mentioned 70 times in the Gospels. Forgive is only mentioned 38 times. And 11 of the 40 parables Jesus told were about money or used money to make the point. You see, Jesus knew, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.” (Matthew

6:21). And He knew that greed and wealth idolatry are rampant. And so, he said: “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” (Luke 12:15) And he also said, “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.” (Matthew 6:24)

People who worship the idol of wealth do three things: They love it, they trust it, and they obey it.

People who worship wealth, love money. They dream about it and how to make more. They imagine all the things they can buy with money. They may be jealous of others who have more money and scheme for how they can “win” in the competition to be wealthiest. They believe having more money will improve their social status. People who love wealth are willing to sacrifice in order

to have more. Some things they may sacrifice are their time, their family... their principles... their relationship with God... 1 Timothy 6:10 warns, “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” [Jesus to the rich young ruler...]

People who worship wealth trust money to keep them safe. If they don’t have enough, they feel vulnerable and out of control. They are constantly worried about how they will make it if something goes wrong. They long to have enough money so they can feel in control. Money makes them feel safe. They can handle the problems they face, because they can buy their way out of their problems.

The problem is money is usually not the answer you think it is. Ask someone who was wealthy who unexpectedly lost it all. Jesus told a parable about a farmer who had an especially abundant harvest. He decided to build bigger barns to store up all his wealth thinking, “Now I can live the

3 Things People Do Who Worship Wealth :

1. They love it
2. They trust it
3. They obey it





good life because I will have everything I need. But the Lord spoke and said, "You're a fool! Tomorrow, you will die and then who will get all your surplus?"

People who worship wealth obey their master. Ironically, people who think money will give them freedom and security find their idol becomes a cruel master that enslaves them. They have money and can't

imagine living without it. And often, the wealthiest people still feel they don't have enough and they must have more. Soon it becomes clear, money is not serving rich people. Rich people are usually serving their money.

It is human nature to want more, more, more. when we are 15 or 16 years old, we say, "If I just had a car!" Then we get a car, and we soon say, "If I just had a reliable car!" And we get a reliable car and we're finally satisfied, right? No! Then we say, "If I could just have a bigger car!" And then we say, "If I just had the best car!" The person who constantly wants more, newer, better things has become enslaved by their insatiable addiction to money and the things money can buy. They are slaves.

Slaves must obey their master. Those deeply enslaved to the false god of wealth will lie, cheat, and steal to get more money. They will justify all kinds of evil to earn and protect their "god"—tax evasion, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, bribery. They will hoard their wealth while others starve and say, "It's not my problem. They should have managed their money better." People who worship wealth have broken both the first and second most important commandments. They don't really care what God thinks and they don't care about their neighbor either—as long as they are rolling in the dough. But Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God." (Matthew 4:4)

By His Word, God can make mana fall from the sky to satisfy our every need as He did for the Israelites as they traveled to the Promised Land. By His Word, Jesus multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish into enough food to feed thousands of people. Do you want to rely on God or would you prefer to make a god of your own choosing to satisfy your needs. That's the core issue. We don't want to be beholden to God. We want to be in control.

Something happened when my son was two or three years old that really illustrated this principle of sinful human nature to me. I had a bag of Doritos and my little boy wanted some, so I would give him a chip every time he asked. I made up my mind I was going to give him as many as he wanted; all he had to do was ask and I would give him more—one chip at a time. But very soon, he was bored of this game and just wanted me to give him the bag. Even though I told him he could have as many as he wanted, that wasn't good enough; he wanted to hold the bag. And this is how we are with our Heavenly Father. It's not good enough for us to rely on God who is willing to give us everything we need and want. No. We want to hold the bag.



The Spiritual Practice that Smashes the Idol of Wealth

Greed is a sneaky sin. Greed is rampant in our culture. And yet, very few people think greed is a problem for them. “It must be someone else.” Here’s a simple test. Do you obey God’s command to tithe? Tithing is giving 10% of your income to God’s Church. It is the *minimum* standard God gives in the Bible for what people are

supposed to give to God’s Church.

According to nonprofitsource.com, the average church-going Christian only gives about 2.5% of their income. Only five out of one hundred Christians actually obey God’s command to give the *minimum*. 5 out of 100! Now, whenever a preacher starts talking about tithing, people get upset. They start making all kinds of excuses for why don’t or why they aren’t required to give the tithe. The fact is people are simply trying to justify themselves. They don’t want to give the tithe; maybe they are ashamed they don’t give the tithe and so they make excuses. Could it be they are protecting their idol? One thing is certain, they are not obeying the One True God who said, give a tenth of your income to the Lord through His Church.

Jesus on the Cross

Now, God is a God of grace. He is patient and He is good. When we were still sinners, He came as Jesus to die for us on the cross. Now, it is not that we deserved salvation, but that we desperately needed it. Christ gave his life for us *while we were still sinners* so that we can be forgiven *when we repent of our sin and turn to God*. Repentance means to turn away from sin and our false gods and turn to the One True and Living God who gave His life for us on the cross.

Aren’t you glad Jesus didn’t give to us the way most Christians give to Him? How would you feel if Jesus only gave, 2-3% for your sake? (That would still be more than we deserve.) How much did Jesus give? Did He only give 10% or His life and blood on the cross? No. He gave it all. Therefore, even if you are giving a tithe of your income, you are still 90% short.

Jesus doesn’t want your money. He wants your whole heart. Jesus gave His all for us and I want to give Him my all too. Don’t you?

Small Group Guide for Plagues 3 & 4

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 3 & 4 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Exploring Idolatry in Modern Contexts:** The sermon touches on the concept of idolatry, both in ancient times and in the present. What are some modern forms of idolatry that we might encounter in our daily lives? How can we identify and address them?
2. **The Nature of God:** The blog contrasts the unchanging nature of Yahweh with the evolving nature of the Egyptian gods. How does the constancy of God influence your faith and how you live out that faith?
3. **The Power of Wealth:** The sermon discusses the idolatry of wealth. In what ways can the pursuit of wealth impact our spiritual lives? Have you observed or experienced situations where wealth became an idol?
4. **Understanding Tithing:** Tithing is presented as a spiritual practice to combat the idolatry of wealth. How do you understand tithing in your own life? What are the challenges and blessings associated with this practice?
5. **Relating to the Plagues of Egypt:** The plagues of Egypt were a demonstration of God's power over false gods. Can you think of any personal experiences where you felt God's intervention was clear in your life, especially in situations where you felt overwhelmed or challenged?
6. **Lessons from the Plagues:** What lessons do you think the third and fourth plagues (gnats and flies) were meant to teach the Egyptians and the Israelites? How can we apply these lessons to our lives today?
7. **Jesus' Sacrifice and Our Response:** Reflecting on the notion that Jesus gave everything for us, how does this influence your approach to giving—whether it's time, resources, or talents?
8. **Personal Reflection on False Gods:** Have you ever had to confront a false god in your life (like wealth, status, or something else)? How did you overcome this, and what role did your faith play?
9. **Impact of External Circumstances on Faith:** The sermon mentions a mission trip to El Salvador. How do external circumstances, like travels or significant life events, affect your understanding and practice of faith?
10. **Application of Scripture to Daily Life:** How can we use the teachings from Exodus and Jesus' commandments to navigate the challenges of modern life, especially in a world that often values material success over spiritual growth?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 5 – Livestock

Written October 11, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 8:30-9:7



Exodus 8:30-9:7

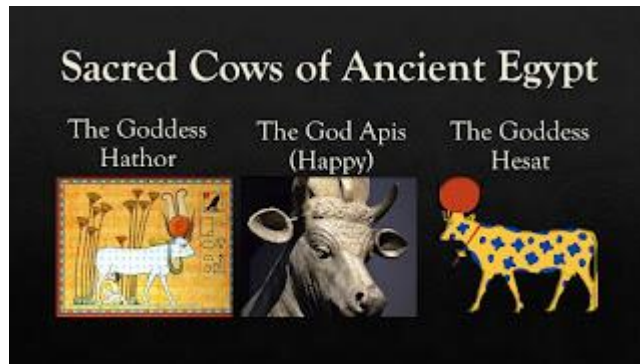
30 So Moses left Pharaoh's palace and pleaded with the Lord to remove all the flies. 31 And the Lord did as Moses asked and caused the swarms of flies to disappear from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. Not a single fly remained. 32 But Pharaoh again became stubborn and refused to let the people go.

9:1 "Go back to Pharaoh," the Lord commanded Moses. "Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. 2 If you continue to hold them and refuse to let them go, 3 the hand of the Lord will strike all your livestock—your horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep, and goats—with a deadly plague. 4 But the Lord will again make a distinction between the livestock of the Israelites and that of the Egyptians. Not a single one of Israel's animals will die! 5 The Lord has already set the time for the plague to begin. He has declared that he will strike the land tomorrow.'"

6 And the Lord did just as he had said. The next morning all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but the Israelites didn't lose a single animal. 7 Pharaoh sent his officials to investigate, and they discovered that the Israelites had not lost a single animal! But even so, Pharaoh's heart remained stubborn, [a] and he still refused to let the people go.

Introduction

Can you name the plagues so far? Blood, frogs, gnats, flies, and now the death of Egypt's livestock. Exodus tells us again and again that God sent the plagues to prove to Egypt and everyone that there is only one God, Yahweh, the Great I Am, Lord of all. (Ex 17:17 - By this you will know that I am the Lord... Ex 6:6 - Then you will know that I am the Lord your God... Ex 10:2 - ...that you may know that I am the Lord. Ex 12:12 - ...I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord.)



Sacred Cows of Ancient Egypt

As Modern people, we can't underestimate the importance of livestock to ancient people. They provided food, transportation, cultivation for farms, and they carried goods from place to place. Livestock were a symbol of power, wealth, and status and Egypt owned tremendous

amounts of livestock.

The Egyptians made gods and goddesses of the things that were important to them. And since livestock were very important, they have many gods fashioned in the image of cows. There was Hesat, the goddess who was said to provide humanity with milk to sustain life. In particular, Hesat was said to suckle the Pharaoh and several ancient Egyptian bull gods.

There was also a cow goddess named Hathor, who was the mother of the sky god Horus and the sun god Ra, both of whom were connected with kingship. Thus, Hathor was the symbolic mother of the pharaohs. The Egyptians believed Hathor helped deceased souls in the transition to the afterlife.

They also believed in a bull god called Apis (pronounced Happy). Apis served as an intermediary between humans and other powerful deities. In the Egyptian myth, Apis was sacrificed and then reborn. Apis was represented by a live animal mascot (sort of like UGA, the mascot of the University of Georgia). Religious leaders would identify a black calf by the markings that identified him as Apis. He was venerated throughout life and buried in an expensive funeral with a tomb and mourned until a new Apis was found.



God brought judgment on Egypt's gods and goddesses. Through the fifth plague, God intentionally poured out judgment on Egypt's pride, wealth, and livelihood while exposing their perverted sense of what is sacred. All the livestock of the Egyptians died. ("All" is a hyperbolic statement. In plague 7, we will see God warning to

Egyptians to protect their livestock from the hail. So it wasn't that all the livestock of

Egypt died in the fifth plague, but so many died it seemed like they all died. However, some apparently survived to be threatened by the seventh plague.)

Pharaoh's Hard Heart

Now you would think one plague would be enough to turn Pharaoh and Egypt around. Yet here we are on the fifth plague and Pharaoh still will not let God's people go. (I pray COVID-19 is enough to convince America to turn back to God; I would hate to think there are still five or ten more plagues coming.)



A number of times throughout this story, we read about Pharaoh's stubborn heart. Sometimes it says, "Pharaoh hardened his heart..." (Ex 8:32). In other places, it says, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." (Ex 9:12). The two sort of go together. God always gives us a choice to obey. However, when you disobey again and again, your heart becomes hard and it can grow so hard it is nearly impossible to change. That was Pharaoh. And God chose to use Pharaoh's hard heart to make an example for all the world for all time to see.

We must also remember Pharaoh and Egypt were under demonic influences. When a person or a people reject the truth of God for false gods as did Egypt, it opens them up to all kinds of evil influence. Demons are real and they are always willing to come in and pretend be gods. And if you let them (thinking they will serve you and give you what you want), it won't be long before those same demons will take over your life. This is always the case with idol and false gods. You start out thinking they will serve you, but you end up serving them as slaves.

We must never forget there is a spiritual battle raging all around us, though unseen. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Some people today think demons are an outdated idea. They think the demonic possessions of the Bible were merely mental or physical disorders ancient people could not diagnose; so many today believe people in the Bible were ignorant and we know better. However, we must remember that Jesus acknowledged demonic influence as a legitimate problem for people. Are we so intelligent as to disregard Jesus' worldview? Isn't it a bit arrogant for modern people to assume

we *always* know better and that the ancients always misdiagnosed mental/physical disorders as demon possessions? We now live in a world that dismisses the idea that *any* malady at all could be caused by demons. Consider: Are we not in as much danger now as the ancients were then of misdiagnosing a serious problem if we arrogantly dismiss their experience as absurd?

We live in a rational age. That means we believe in science and logic and critical thinking. If you want to know if something is true, then test it, study it, verify it scientifically. We have taught ourselves that science is the answer, that science is black and white. However, we are not as smart as we think we are. And the “experts” (the modern equivalents of ancient high priests) are not as infallible as we think they are either. One of the things we have all seen this year is how wrong the experts can be. The very same experts (the CDC and Dr. Fauci) who confidently proclaimed in March, “You don’t need to wear a mask.” In fact, they even had the attitude that you were being ridiculous and ignorant if you were wearing a mask. A few months later, they completely changed their message and now say the exact opposite of what they said in the beginning. Added to all this mixed messaging is the politics. The virus is real and a serious problem. However, who you support politically has a lot to do with what you believe about the virus and how we should handle this pandemic. And all sides use science and data to support their opinion.

I’m not here to take on side or the other. I’m just making a point. We are not as smart as we think we are. How people use science is not black and white nor does it have all the answers. People will arrogantly scoff at you as irrational & ignorant one day and then completely change their story the next day. Science and facts might be unbiased, but the way people *use* science and facts is a product of what they believe.



The Idol of the Intellect

My purpose today is not to debate the science and politics of COVID-19. My purpose is to expose an idol in our lives. According to Timothy Keller in his book, Counterfeit Gods, an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and

anything that you seek to give you what only God can give.” And if we’re honest, I think we’ll admit that a lot of people today—maybe even you—trust more in the intelligence of modern humanity than you do in the ancient God of which the Bible tells us.

Some will say, “Pastor, don’t you think it can be both? Can't we trust science and God?” Listen, I believe in the importance of education. I have a Bachelor of Science degree and master’s degree from Emory University. Education is important and God gave us intelligence and wants us to use. Furthermore, He gave us tools like science to better understand our world. However, we have to be careful we don't start thinking we're so smart we don't need God.

The more I know, the more I realize I don’t know. As modern people, we often raise intellect and rational thinking to a god-like state. It has come to the place that many people don’t think they even need God anymore. Religion is just an outdated myth (some think it even a handicap to society). It's just stupid when your intelligence turns you away from God.

Proverbs 3:5 advises, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding." Verse 7 warns, "Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil." And Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall." We have grown very proud in our modern, intellectual world.



Evil Influences

Are we too smart, too rational to think that demons could influence our world today? Here are some signs that dark forces may be at work behind the scenes.

The first sign is hard to see because it's hidden. People won't see it

coming. The fact that the Enemy remains hidden is a sign to watch for in and of itself. The Devil is real, but he doesn't want people to know it. He will try to convince people he doesn't exist and that anyone who says he does is just ignorant and superstitious.

A second sign of demonic influence is that people will twist what God says. In the Scripture, we see Satan twisting God's Word. This is how he tempted Eve in the Garden in Genesis. He didn't deny God's Word outright. He changed it. He said to Eve, "Did God say you can't eat any fruit in the garden?" That's not what God said. Then he told Eve God denied Eve something good by withholding the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "He knows if you eat it, you will be like God..."

Satan even quoted Scripture when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, quoting Psalm 91 out of context to tempt Jesus to leap off a high place so that “angels will protect you” and prove that Jesus is God's Son. Of course, Jesus knew better and quoted Scripture (Deuteronomy) right back at Satan saying, "You must not put the Lord to the test."

Another sign of demonic influence in the world is that people will do evil things. Of course, people will always do evil things, as long as we are led by a sinful, fallen nature. However, we look around and we see people doing particularly evil things—things previous generations could have never imagined. Don't we see there is dark evil in the world today? Isn't it obvious when a crazy person walks into a school and starts randomly shooting innocent children?

Demonic influence is getting especially bad when people call evil good and good evil. It's gotten to where the average person today is really confused, because we can't hardly tell right from wrong anymore. Society's rules change all the time.

Have you noticed the subtle way hero stories are being recast in our generation? When I was a boy, I loved superhero movies and it was real clear who were the good guys and who were the bad guys. Superman was the hero and Lex Luther was the archvillain. However, the trend in movies over the last couple decades has been to recast all these stories. They now want to tell the story from the villain's perspective and show he's not such a bad guy after all. In fact, he (or she) may actually be the real hero and the apparent hero is really the villain. Part of this is just an attempt at interesting storytelling to bring new life to an old story. It was interesting the first time it was done, but now it's been done so much it's become the norm. And I think it reflects a deeper issue in our culture. Many today have decided (or are questioning) if good is really good or if evil is really good. There is a reversal of roles happening before our eyes. Things that were considered undeniably repulsive and wrong a generation ago are glorified today. And things we always accepted as good are now called evil.

When demons are manipulating your culture, it isn't long until people deny or replace God. Soon, you don't even have to hide it anymore; the demons can come out in the open and people won't be repulsed at all. People will welcome them, idolize them, worship them--just like they did in ancient Egypt.

Romans 1:24-27 – “So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise!

Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.”

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Closing

There is still time to turn to God. We live in a free society. It may be hard to reject the norm of idolatry and paganism. You may be ridiculed and have to sacrifice some things you've come to cherish and depend upon, but it won't get you killed. Unfortunately, if our nation continues down the road we

are headed, spurred on by our favorite demons, we may soon come to a place I don't want to imagine. Now, more than ever, is the time to turn to God through Jesus Christ. We must put God before all else, above all the other counterfeit gods in our nation: wealth, power, relationships, intellect, entertainment, etc. Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."

Turn from your false gods to the One True and Living God—the One who gave His life on the cross to redeem you from slavery to sin. If you choose something else above God, know this: your days are numbered. Your world and everything in it, all your false gods will soon fall—just like the false gods of Egypt.

For there is only one Lord—Yahweh, the Great I Am.

Small Group Guide for Plague 5

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 5 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **The Symbolism of Livestock in Ancient Egypt:** The sermon describes how livestock were not only economically important in ancient Egypt, but also held religious significance. How does the death of the livestock challenge both the economic and religious foundations of Egyptian society? Can you think of modern parallels where something holds both practical and symbolic importance in our lives?
2. **The Concept of Sacred Cows:** Discuss the idea of "sacred cows" in our own society. What beliefs, practices, or institutions are considered untouchable or beyond criticism in our culture? How should we as Christians approach these "sacred cows"?
3. **Pharaoh's Stubbornness:** Explore the theme of stubbornness as seen in Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go. How does stubbornness manifest in our own lives, especially in relation to acknowledging God's will? Can you share personal experiences where letting go of stubbornness led to spiritual growth?
4. **Understanding God's Judgments:** The plagues can be seen as God's judgments on the false gods of Egypt. How should we understand and interpret God's judgments in the Bible? What do these stories teach us about God's character and power?
5. **The Role of Demonic Influences:** The sermon suggests that demonic influences can lead people away from God. How do we discern such influences in today's world, and how should we as Christians respond to them?
6. **Science and Faith:** The sermon touches on the relationship between science and faith, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. How do you balance trust in science with faith in God? Can you share experiences where faith and science have complemented each other in your life?
7. **The Idol of Intellect:** Discuss the concept of intellect as an idol. In what ways can an overemphasis on human intelligence and understanding lead us away from reliance on God?
8. **The Power of Turning to God:** Reflect on the closing message about turning to God amidst a world of false idols. How can we actively turn away from societal idols and focus more fully on God?
9. **Applying the Lesson of the Plague to Modern Life:** How can the story of the fifth plague speak into the current challenges we face in our society? Are there areas in our lives where we need to recognize God's supremacy?
10. **Personal Reflection on Idols:** Ask each member to reflect on what might be an "idol" in their own life. This could be something that takes precedence over their relationship with God. How can the group support each other in refocusing on God?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer and Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 6 – Boils

Written October 18, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 9:8-12



Exodus 9:8-12

8 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a brick kiln, and have Moses toss it into the air while Pharaoh watches. 9 The ashes will spread like fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, causing festering boils to break out on people and animals throughout the land.”

10 So they took soot from a brick kiln and went and stood before Pharaoh. As Pharaoh watched, Moses threw the soot into the air, and boils broke out on people and animals alike. 11 Even the magicians were unable to

stand before Moses, because the boils had broken out on them and all the Egyptians. 12 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and just as the Lord had predicted to Moses, Pharaoh refused to listen.

Exodus 12:12

“...I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.”

Exodus 17:17

“By this you will know that I am the LORD...”

Introduction

Can you name the plagues so far? Blood, frogs, gnats, flies, the death of Egypt’s livestock, and boils. Can you name the ones still to come? Hail, locust, darkness, and the death of the first-born son.

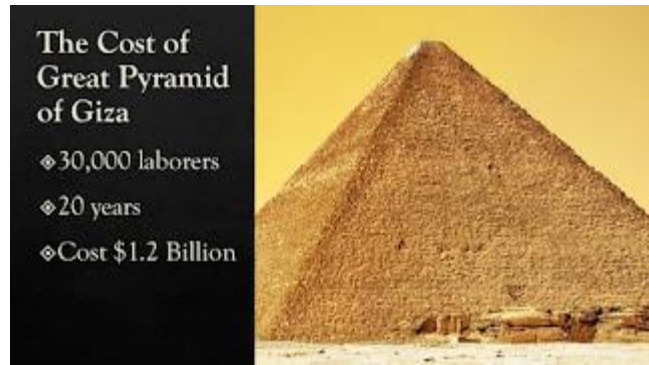
God used all these plagues to prove to Pharaoh and Egypt and everyone there is only one God, Yahweh, the Great I Am, Lord

of all. For He said in Exodus 12:12, “...I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.” And in Exodus 17:17 He said, “By this you will know that I am the LORD...”

Ancient Egypt was a great civilization that lasted some 3,000 years. One of the ways they demonstrated their greatness was by building impressive monuments. Each successive Pharaoh

was pressured to build bigger and better structures to demonstrate they were greater than the Pharaoh's who came before them. This heavy burden forced Pharaoh's to marshal all the empire's resources and tens of thousands of laborers and slaves to construct remarkable tombs to glorify their legacy.

In order for build the Great Pyramid of Giza, it took about 30,000 people 20 years at a cost of \$1.2 billion dollars (by today's standards). Do you know which Pharaoh built the Great Pyramid of Giza? Me either. You would think for \$1.2 billion we would know. But the vast majority of the world doesn't really care. (By the way, I Googled it and it was Pharaoh Hemiuunu.)



An Empire of Idols

Egypt believed in thousands of gods and goddesses, of which Pharaoh was the earthly representative. I can't imagine the pressure it puts on a person live up to people's expectations that you are a god. I can't imagine the pressure Pharaoh felt because he actually believed he was a god, knowing all his own flaws. That was the lie with which they deluded themselves.

And because life is unpredictable—and life in the ancient world was incredibly unpredictable—the Egyptians believed gods could bless them one day and curse them the next. And so, the Egyptians sought to appease and control their deities through sacrifices and magical incantations. Much of the mysterious writing with which the Egyptians decorated their buildings were magical spells intended to ward off evil spirits and enlist the help of benevolent ones.

Among the thousands of Egyptian Gods, one important goddess was Sekhmet, the goddess of war and healing. “She is depicted as a lioness. She was seen as the protector of the pharaohs and led them in warfare. Upon death, Sekhmet continued to protect them, bearing them to the afterlife.”^[1] But Sekhmet was powerless to help when Moses reached into the brick kiln for a handful of dust.



Do you remember how Pharaoh forced the Israelites to make bricks to build his temples and tombs? Now God has Moses use the ashes from the brick kilns to afflict the Egyptians with

festering boils. Boils broke out all over the Egyptians, but not a single Israelite was affected. Can you imagine the horror and humiliation for Egyptians as they suffered while they saw their slaves--the Hebrews the viewed as less than human--being spared. Even Pharaoh's magicians were covered from head to foot with the awful misery. And where was the protection and healing of the Egyptian goddess? She has no power to stop Yahweh.

What are our gods today? According to Timothy Keller in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give.”



The Love Idol

According to the Beatles, “All you need is love.” God made us for love and to love and there is a deep longing for it in every human heart. Unfortunately, instead of finding love in God and healthy human relationships, we usually turn love into an idol where sex and romance takes the place of God in our hearts. These are such important idols in our culture we don’t even see them as idols. In

fact, I may get in trouble just for trying to expose them as a myth. (Nobody likes it when you smash their idol.)

The general myth of love in our culture right now is portrayed in a thousand movies and love songs. It’s a powerful myth. We sing the love songs and believe the lies, even though we know they’re unrealistic. We watch the movies with teary eyes and a yearning in our soul. The myth is imbedded in our worldview. The details for each story are different, but it generally goes something like this.

A little girl begins dreaming from an early age that, one day, she will have a beautiful wedding to celebrate her ultimate achievement—finding true love. For out there, somewhere, is the man created just for her—her soulmate—the one who will fulfill her deepest needs. He will be tall, dark, and handsome. (Ladies, you can insert whatever physical traits you prefer here because they aren’t as important as what how the man acts.) The girl’s greatest dream is that she will find her one true love and he will fall madly in love with her. He will get down on one knee and propose in the most romantic way. They will have the beautiful wedding of her dreams and spend the rest of their lives together. He will cherish her and give her everything she needs. They will have kids and he will take care of her and their family. And they will live happily ever after. Now all you have to do is fill in the details a bit and expand the story and you have the makings for a romantic comedy that could make millions on the silver screen. You’re welcome.

Men have a slightly different love myth, but it pairs well with the feminine myth. Men grow up believing that somewhere, there is a woman so incredibly attractive he will know “she’s the one”

as soon as he sees her. He will be so smitten he will do anything to win her love. She will be everything he's ever wanted in a girl. Because of her, he won't even want to look at another woman. Sex with her will be so amazing he will be in heaven! Therefore, he will gladly dedicate his life to making her happy and she will cherish him as her provider and protector and hero. He will sacrifice anything for her because life without her would be meaningless.

It's just harmless stuff, right? Except, that somewhere deep down we believe this stuff. The fact is, there is no man or woman out there that can live up to the myth we've made up in our minds. Tragically, this kind of thinking actually hinders true love. Love is not what another person does for you. Love is what you do for others. Love is sacrificial. It's not about how the other person makes you feel or what they do for you. Love is giving without expecting anything.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 tells us the characteristics of true love. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." Real love is Jesus dying on the cross for sinful humanity. In fact, the Bible says Jesus dying on the cross is the example of love between a husband and wife. Which image do you trust? Do you trust the popular image of love portrayed in our society or the image of love God give us in His Word?

The First of the Ten Commandments

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other gods before me."

Conclusion

The very first of the 10 commandments from Exodus 20 says, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other gods before me."

This commandment lays the groundwork for all the other laws and commandments God gave us. Why is it so important that we

worship only God? Some complain God is jealous and egotistical. That's not true. God is actually selfless. He is thinking of us as He gives these commands. If you have any other gods, you will not be able to love God and you will not be able to experience God's love for you in its fullness.

When we cut God out of first place in our heart, we create a huge hole that nothing else can fill. Our deepest desire is love—and it's the only kind of love God is able to give. So many of the love songs and love stories we cherish, we cherish because they portray an idealized love that only God can give. Unfortunately, when we seek that love from mere mortals, they will not be up to the task and we will be woefully disappointed. Meanwhile expecting that love from people cuts us off from the true source of perfect love—Almighty God.

It is not that God is spiteful and refuses to love us if we don't love someone else besides Him. No. It's amazing that He still loves us despite our unfaithfulness. Perhaps an illustration will help. Suppose you are married and you cheat on your spouse. You have damaged the relationship terribly. Even if your spouse stays with you, there will be an offense in your psyche that hinders your relationship. This illustrates our condition with God. We have broken that relationship with our sin. Every time we turn to an idol, we are cheating on God—chasing after fulfillment in some fantasy that can never deliver what it promises. We chase this fantasy until discover it is an illusion. Then we either settle for the disappointing illusion or we chase after a new fantasy, ending with the same results again. All the while, our One True Love is watching, heart breaking, as He sees—not only our betrayal and unfaithfulness, but also knows with His all-knowing wisdom that--we are inflicting wound upon wound on our own souls.

And so, God came as Jesus came and lived among us. He is the perfect representation of true love. It is not that we love him, but He loved us. While we were still sinners, Christ came and died for us. He has made a way for us to come back to God.

Won't you repent of your sins and turn to God?

Stop believing the lie that there is some person out there whose love is going to "complete you". Only God, thru Christ, can complete you. And when you trust Him, He will save you and teach you to love others--maybe even someone you could marry and spend the rest of your life with. Even if you remain single your whole life, you will still be completely complete because in Christ you have everything you truly need.

[i] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekhmet#:~:text=In%20Egyptian%20mythology%2C%20Sekhmet%20\(%2F,well%20as%20goddess%20of%20healing.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekhmet#:~:text=In%20Egyptian%20mythology%2C%20Sekhmet%20(%2F,well%20as%20goddess%20of%20healing.)

Small Group Guide for Plague 6

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 6 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Understanding the Symbolism of Boils:** The sixth plague involved boils breaking out on Egyptians. What does this plague symbolize in terms of God's power and judgment? How does this relate to the idea of God challenging the Egyptian gods and their supposed control over health and disease?
2. **The Role of Physical Afflictions in Spiritual Lessons:** How can physical afflictions, like the boils in the plague, teach us spiritual lessons? Can you share a personal experience where a physical challenge brought about spiritual growth or insight?
3. **The Idol of Perfection:** The sermon talks about the pressure Pharaoh felt to be seen as a god, despite knowing his own flaws. In what ways do modern societies idolize perfection, whether in physical appearance, achievements, or lifestyle? How does this affect our spiritual lives?
4. **The Concept of Love as an Idol:** The sermon discusses how love can become an idol in our culture. How can our understanding of love be distorted from what the Bible teaches? What does true, biblical love look like, and how can we strive to embody it?
5. **Critiquing Popular Culture's Portrayal of Love:** Reflect on the portrayal of love in popular culture, as described in the sermon. How do these portrayals compare with the biblical understanding of love? How can we as Christians navigate these cultural messages?
6. **The Importance of the First Commandment:** Discuss the significance of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," in the context of the sermon. Why is this commandment foundational for our faith, and how does it relate to the story of the plagues?
7. **Seeking Fulfillment in God vs. Idols:** How does the pursuit of false idols, whether they be perfection, love, or something else, affect our relationship with God? How can we ensure that God remains the primary source of our fulfillment?
8. **Pharaoh's Hardened Heart:** The recurring theme of Pharaoh's hardened heart is central to the plagues narrative. How does this concept speak to the dangers of repeatedly ignoring God's will?
9. **God's Judgments and Modern Implications:** How should we understand and respond to God's judgments as depicted in the Bible? What are the implications for our lives today?
10. **Personal Reflection on Idols:** Ask each group member to reflect on what might be an "idol" in their own life. How can they work towards removing this idol and focusing more on their relationship with God?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 7 – Hail

Written October 25, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 9:13-28



Egyptian Government and Society

Ancient Egypt was a theocratic monarchy. What that means is, Pharaoh (their king) ruled by mandate of the gods. In America, “we the people” vote to choose our president, senators, representatives, and other leaders. In ancient Egypt, they believed the gods chose their leader—and it was Pharaoh. What a convenient system they had. Do you see?

The leaders of Egypt created gods to explain everything, who supposedly control everything—from the weather to fertility and the harvest, the protection of the nation, etc. The leaders of Egypt told the people to say prayers and sacrifice to the gods to ensure their help and protection. And these “made up” gods chose Pharaoh to lead the people. So, if the people believe these “gods” chose Pharaoh, then whatever Pharaoh says, the people have to do or else it will bring down their wrath. So, Pharaoh was able to rule with absolute authority.

Attributing divine authority to national rulers is one of the oldest tricks in the book. Kings and governments have used it throughout history. In fact, it was not until a wild bunch of independent thinkers we know as the “Founding Fathers” got together and put their ideas to work that anyone had the guts to really challenge this notion. At the time, King George was the ruler of the British Empire. Most of the world accepted the king derived his right to rule from God. One of the reasons it was so hard for the American colonies to break free from British rule was that everyone believed it meant rebelling not only against King George, but against God who chose the king to rule.



One of the reasons it was so hard for the American colonies to break free from British rule was that everyone believed it meant rebelling not only against King George, but against God who chose the king to rule.

Never-the-less, our founding fathers believed King George’s actions—his “history of repeated injuries and usurpations” (as the Declaration of Independence states)—had overwhelmingly proved he was a tyrant rather than a king operating under God’s authority. And therefore, the founding fathers laid forth all their reasons why they were rejecting the king's rule and seeking independence.

Our ancestors won a hard-fought war to gain our independence. And many have made tremendous sacrifices to maintain our freedom for the last 244 years so that we can continue to be ruled by a “government of the people, by the people, for the people”.

Well, God showed that the ancient Egyptian idols were nothing. God could have destroyed Egypt with just one plague, but He opted for 10 instead so that He could draw it out and bring judgment on all of Egypt’s so-called gods—like Set, who was supposed to be the god of chaos and storms. So, in the 7th plague, God brought chaos through a terrible hailstorm—the likes the Empire had never suffered before. Massive hail stones dropped from the sky, raining down death and destruction to everyone not protected by a substantial shelter. Egypt’s storm god, Set, was silent, offering no help or relief.



The Idol of Patriotism

I was born in Maryland. We moved to Macon, GA when I was still very young. Before we moved, I lived just outside of Washington DC for a short time. Some of my earliest childhood memories are of driving around the capital and seeing all the beautiful national monuments. One of the most iconic is the Washington Monument, which is actually based off of the obelisks the

ancient Egyptians used to build to glorify the power of their empire.

There’s nothing wrong with statues or national monuments. They help us honor our heroes and remember our most important values. However, we must be careful not to turn love for our country into an idol. And, as a pastor, I must warn you of something important. Your nation’s leaders probably won’t mind if you bow to the idol of *patriotism*. It works in their favor. They may even encourage it because the more devoted you are to the country, the more it helps them. Why would they care if you choose to love your country more than God?

Now, patriotism is not a bad thing. We don’t usually turn bad things into idols. We take good things and idolize them. According to Timothy Keller in his book, Counterfeit Gods, an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give.”

I really struggled with how to present the next part of the message. I went round and round and just couldn’t break through to find the words. So, after praying about it, I felt God leading me to simply ask you a series of questions. These are just designed to make you think as you look deeply into your own heart.

To whom do you pledge
your primary allegiance?

First Question: To whom do you pledge your primary allegiance? God or Country?

Whenever I ask this question, people usually say, "Can't it be both?" And on the surface, the answer is yes. You can pledge allegiance to both God and your country. Jesus was asked a similar question about a very hot topic in his day. The Pharisees didn't like Jesus and so they tried to trap him with a question: "Should we pay taxes to

Cesar?" They knew that common people in Jesus' day hated the Romans as foreign oppressors who were extorting money from God's chosen people. So, if Jesus said you should pay taxes to Caesar, it would discredit him with the people. On the other hand, if Jesus said no, then the Roman military would arrest him. Jesus' answer was perfect. He asked the Pharisees for a coin and asked, "Who's image is on this coin?" It was Caesar's. So, Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but give to God what belongs to God." You see, we are all made in God's image. His image is stamped upon our heart. So, give money (which really isn't that important) to Caesar and give your heart (your everything) to God.

You can give your allegiance to both God and your country, but one must be primary. Jesus also said, "You cannot serve two masters. For you will either hate the one and love the other; or you will love the one and hate the other." So, to whom do you pledge your *primary* allegiance?

If I asked you to recite the pledge of allegiance, could you do it. Most would proudly stand and begin, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...", but stop. Why did you choose that pledge? You assumed I mean the American pledge. Why did you choose that one over the pledge to the Christian flag? Perhaps you didn't know there was a pledge to the Christian flag. More likely, it's because you simply assumed when I asked "Pledge of Allegiance" that I meant the pledge most children grew up saying every morning at school. Do you see? The state has done a much better job indoctrinating us all than has the church. (The Pledge of Allegiance to the Christian Flag: *I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands; one brotherhood, uniting all mankind in service and in love.*]

If you had to choose
between being an American
or being a Christian, which
would you choose?

Next Question: If you had to choose between being an American or being a Christian, which would you choose?

Again, people will always ask, "Can't it be both?" Of course, it can. You can be an American and a Christian—but one *must* be primary. For God will not be second to anyone or anything. And most Americans aren't going to push this issue very far because it risks potentially pointing out that

we really have made a choice and maybe the choice is America first and God second. We don't want to see that in ourselves, so we avoid this question and sit on the fence. Most people will be

“Both American and Christian.” But if you had to choose, which would it be?

It might be easy to deceive ourselves in answer this question. So let me ask a few more things that might reveal something we've never thought about. Do you fly a flag at your home? Which one? Almost all the homes I see as I drive around my community fly the American flag. Is that the one you fly? Why did you choose that flag? The obvious answer is you are American. You may never have even given it much thought. But if you are a Christian, you are a citizen of God's Kingdom and there is a Christian flag. Why, as a Christian, do you choose to fly an American flag instead of a Christian one?

My goal here is not to judge anyone. You may have good reasons. But I suspect most people have never given this much thought. And I also wonder if we do give this much thought if it might reveal our subconscious primary identity as either Christian or American.

Last question: Do you believe you would be safer living as an atheist in America or as a Christian in Saudi Arabia? Why? Perhaps it is because you believe we are more protected in the US because we have better laws and are under the watch of a strong military but in Saudi Arabia, we would be vulnerable without that protection. What if God specifically sent you to Saudi? Would He protect you? Would His protection in Saudi Arabia be stronger or weaker than the US military is in America?

Now, let's dig in a little deeper. I asked about your safety. Did you think of safety primarily in terms of protection of this temporary life rather than considering it from an eternal perspective? In other words, what probably came to your mind was whether you would be physically safe. You probably didn't think about the safety of your soul. You were worried about your life (this life). Why? The early Christians saw this life as something they would gladly sacrifice for the sake of God's Kingdom. They viewed life from the perspective of eternity. Have we grown so comfortable with this life and the things of this world that we cherish it above eternity?



The Election

I will be so glad when this election cycle is over. People are going crazy. Everyone is so ramped up like this election is the end all and be all and it makes people who are normally kind and civil act very badly. To be sure, this is an important election, but it's not an excuse to behave badly. I think some people think the stakes are so high because they believe the outcome of this election will

either preserve or damage an idol they have in their life. Their “America” will either be preserved or destroyed based on who wins.

I'm not as concerned because my future is not tied up with the success or failure of this nation. I care—don't get me wrong. I care, but the stakes aren't as high for me because my hope is in the Kingdom of God. Whether America rises or falls, my hopes rest in the Lord who said in Exodus

20:1-2, “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 20:1-2)

Invitation

Who rescued you? Who preserves you? Who will you honor and trust to preserve you in the days ahead regardless of the outcome of this election? Who will you choose to serve?

Joshua 24:15, “Choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? **But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.**”

Joshua 24:15

“Choose today whom you will serve.
Would you prefer the gods your
ancestors served beyond the Euphrates?
Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in
whose land you now live? But as for me
and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

Small Group for Plague 7

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 7 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Theocratic Monarchy vs. Democracy:** The sermon contrasts ancient Egypt's theocratic monarchy with modern democracy. How does understanding this difference help us appreciate the biblical story of the plagues? How do our modern political beliefs and systems shape our interpretation of these events?
2. **Divine Authority and National Leaders:** Discuss the concept of attributing divine authority to national leaders, as was common in ancient times. How does this compare to our modern understanding of political power and authority?
3. **The Idol of Patriotism:** The sermon introduces the concept of patriotism as a potential idol. What is the difference between healthy patriotism and idolizing one's country? How can Christians balance love for their country with their primary allegiance to God?
4. **Allegiance to God vs. Country:** Reflect on the question posed in the sermon: To whom do you pledge your primary allegiance, God or country? Discuss how this question challenges or affirms your current beliefs and practices.
5. **Christian Identity in a Secular Nation:** Consider the challenge of living out a Christian identity in a secular nation. How do we navigate this while remaining true to our faith? Share examples from your own life.
6. **The Impact of Political Climate on Faith:** The sermon touches on the current political climate and its impact on people's behavior. How should Christians respond to the political environment, especially during contentious times?
7. **Election and Faith:** With the mention of the upcoming election in the sermon, discuss how our faith informs our approach to politics and voting. How do we balance our civic duties with our spiritual convictions?
8. **Perspective on Life and Eternity:** Reflect on the idea of viewing life from the perspective of eternity, as mentioned in the sermon. How does this perspective influence our daily decisions, priorities, and interactions with others?
9. **Understanding God's Sovereignty:** How does the story of the seventh plague – hail – demonstrate God's sovereignty over nature and human affairs? What does this teach us about trusting God's control over our lives and our world?
10. **Personal Reflection on Idols:** Encourage each group member to reflect on potential idols in their own lives, especially in the context of nationalism or patriotism. How can they work towards prioritizing their relationship with God?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 8 – Locusts

Written November 8, 2020, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 10:1-20



The Ancient Egyptian Board Game "Senet"

My wife and I were watching a documentary on ancient Egypt the other day. They were excavating an Egyptian tomb and they discovered artifacts of an ancient Egyptian board game called Senet. How cool is that? The ancients played board games! you can still buy and play the Senet board game they played today.

One of the marks of a successful culture (at least by worldly standards) is the ability to enjoy entertainment. You have enough surplus time and resources to stop working just to survive and just enjoy life. In America, we take our entertainment for granted because we are in one of the most prosperous nations in the world. Do you realize that 99% of the people in our world today will never visit Disney World? 90% will never take a vacation to the beach or even go to an amusement park. These are luxuries most Americans can do because we can afford them while most people in the world are too busy just struggling to survive.

God wants people to be able to enjoy life. He said, "Remember to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy..." (Exodus 20:8) And, "On that day no one in your household may do any work..." (Ex. 20:10) "For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested." (Ex. 20:11) God didn't want His people to have to work all the time and never have time to rest and enjoy life.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day turned the Sabbath commands into legalistic regulations that were a terrible burden for people. They were no fun at all. They were always upset with Jesus because he didn't follow the Sabbath commands the way they thought he should. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27). The commandment to rest on the Sabbath is one of the great gifts God gave humanity. We need to time rest. And God wants us to enjoy life.

The ancient Egyptians were a very powerful and prosperous empire. They had time and wealth to enjoy board games, theater, sporting events, and other entertainment. Unfortunately, they did not appreciate God for blessing them with the resources to enjoy life. Instead, they worshiped idols. And through 10 plagues, God punished them for their idolatry.

Locusts

When I was a child, I heard that strange sound in the trees in late summer. It sounded like a whining buzzing that started soft and grew louder and louder and then was echoed in another section of trees. I asked my mom what it was and she said they were locusts. It wasn't until I



was older that I learned they weren't locust, but cicadas. Cicadas are not locusts but are related. In fact, cicadas, crickets, katydids, grasshoppers, and locusts are all cousins.

I went to a Cub Scout camp once with my dad and they had us play a game. In the morning, they challenged us all to find a critter to bring to a critter race that evening. My dad and I found a frog. I thought we had

the race in the bag that evening with our speedy little frog when we gathered around a big circle they had drawn on the ground that evening. We all placed our critters in the center of the circle and began yelling for our critters to go. The first one outside of the circle would be the winner. All the critters started moving and I thought my frog might win. But then a lone grasshopper leaped into the air and spread its wings and flew off into the woods never to be seen again. In one move, the grasshopper won the race.

Locusts are the swarming phase of certain kinds of grasshoppers. Grasshoppers usually live alone, but under certain circumstances they multiply radically and become social. They join together and create huge swarms.



According to National Geographic, a desert locust swarm can cover 460 square miles and pack between 40-80 million locusts into less than a square mile (18-36 billion locusts in a swarm).



To put it in perspective, a typical swarm of desert locusts could completely cover Whitfield County in Georgia where I live and nearly half of neighboring Murray County all at once. A typical swarm of locusts can eat 423 million pounds of vegetation per day! And the Scripture tells us the swarm that plagued Egypt was the worst "in the history of Egypt".

Unconditional Surrender

It's no wonder Pharaoh and his officials want relief. They've already endured 7 plagues and their empire is in ruins. So, Pharaoh starts bargaining with Moses. "You can go worship your Lord in the wilderness, but who is going?" Moses says, "We are all going--men, women, children, and even the animals." And Pharaoh says, "No. Only the men can go!"

Now, there's an important principle you need to understand. You cannot bargain with God for your salvation. Jesus came to make a way for you to be saved from sin and death, but you are only saved through surrender; and you must surrender, unconditionally. You can't say, "Lord, I will give you this part of my life, but I'm going to keep that part of my life for myself." No. That will never do. You must give God your whole life. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "One day, God elevated him [Jesus] to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."



The Idol of Pleasure

Egypt was an empire with thousands of idols and false gods. But YHWH (pronounced Yahweh), the God of the Hebrews, our God, the only true and living God, sent 10 plagues on Egypt to expose the impotence of all Egypt's false gods so that all nations and generations would know that there is only one God—the Lord.

We have idols today too—even in our modern world. God designed people to worship. Trying not to worship is like trying not to breathe. People just can't do it. Even if someone doesn't believe in God, they will still worship something. They will worship money or power or their country or their leaders or people they admire. They may even worship themselves. One of the idols we worship is pleasure and entertainment.

Now as I said before, God wants us to have time to rest and enjoy life and have pleasure. He commanded us to rest on the Sabbath. This was originally not some stiff religious regulation; it was God telling His children, "You got to take some time to stop and smell the roses!"

Work can become an idol, but so can the pursuit of pleasure. Many in our time bow down to the idol of *Hedonism*. Hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure and sensual self-indulgence.

There's nothing wrong with enjoying life. God wants us to enjoy life. But any time we take something that's *good* and treat it like a *god*—treating it as more important to you than God, letting it absorb your heart and imagination more than God, and expecting it to give you what only God can give—we are worshiping an idol. And idols always fail us and hurt us.

We all want to be happy and enjoy life. Ironically, the one thing that *guarantees* you will not be happy and enjoy life is if you spend all your time in the pursuit of pleasure. You may find some fabricated, false sense of happiness. Others may even look at you from the outside and envy your "happiness", but that's only because they can't see how unhappy you are on the

inside. With hedonism, all your “happiness” is as empty and false as the impotent idols of Egypt.

In contrast to hedonism, the two most effective ways to find the greatest real pleasure in life are to 1) be thankful, and 2) help others.



First of all, be thankful.

Being grateful is not just the polite thing to do. When we give thanks, it actually increases our capacity to enjoy our blessings. You see, when we are unhappy, we often think the solution is to get more things or more experiences that will make us happy. However, that is rarely the real solution. Most often after we get the things or experiences we wanted, the satisfaction

they give goes away so quickly and all we can think about is the next thing or experience we have to have.

The solution is to learn to be truly thankful for what we have. Our thankfulness magnifies the pleasure we receive from the things and experiences. Amy Harris issued a challenge in her Youth Moment last week—to name one thing for which you are thankful each day. That is a great habit—especially this month. But don’t stop in November. Be thankful every day. Get a journal and each day write down some of the things for which you are thankful. Another idea is to get a jar and some slips of paper and each day write down some things for which you are grateful and put them in the jar. From time to time--especially when you may be feeling down--take out your journal and read from your gratitude list. Or dump out the slips of paper from your "gratitude jar" and read them. You will find it cheers you up and brings your new joy. (My family does a gratitude jar all year long and we read the slips together on New Years Day after dinner.)



Second, help others.

Another great way to experience true and lasting pleasure—a pleasure that soaks down deep into your soul—is to help others. Nothing brings joy like helping someone. As Christmas draws nearer, we remember the old cliché--it is better to give than receive. It's a cliché, but it's true.

Scientific studies show that helping others boosts happiness.^[i] It increases life satisfaction, provides a sense of meaning, increases feelings of competence, improves our mood and reduced stress. It can help to take our minds off our own troubles too.^[ii]

Don't look at helping others as a burden you have to bear. Carrying a heavy load doesn't sound like fun and it won't bring you much joy either. So, help others with a cheerful heart. It's not some religious duty you *must* fulfill in order for God to love you. God already loves you! Think about just how much *He* loves you. Now, turn around and help somebody else and you may find it is the most fun you've ever had.



Holy Communion

Jesus gave us a special meal to remind us how much God loves us. The last meal Jesus shared with His disciples--what Christians call Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. At the meal, Jesus took bread and gave it to his disciples and said, "This is my body, which is given for you." After the meal, he took a cup of wine and said, "Drink from this all of you, for this is

my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. And as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me." That meal symbolized the way Jesus would die on the cross for our sins. And every time we celebrate Holy Communion, it does three things that can help us experience true joy in this life and for all eternity.

First, it reminds us how God helped us. Jesus left the glorious perfection of Heaven to come down to our broken world. Doesn't feel good to know God loved you so much He gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life?

Second, Holy Communion offers us the opportunity to be truly thankful. Holy Communion is sometimes called "The Great Thanksgiving," for in it we give thanks for what Christ has done. This is not just being polite. It is an act that increases our capacity to experience joy as we the depth of God's love that prompted Him to leave the glory of Heaven for our sakes.

Third, Holy Communion is a sacred ceremony, that God uses to empower us to help others just like Christ helped us. His Spirit fills us and enables us to love people like God loves them. And we can help people. And helping people brings us joy.

So, I pray today you will stop trying to find joy through hedonism--a relentless pursuit of pleasure. Instead, turn to God and find true and lasting joy as you learn to be thankful and seek to help others the way God helped you through Jesus Christ.

[i] [1] Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12(2), 66-77.

[ii] Midlarsky, E. (1991). Helping as coping. *Prosocial Behavior: Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12, 238-264

Small Group for Plague 8

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 8 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Cultural Prosperity and Entertainment:** The sermon starts by discussing ancient Egyptian board games as a sign of cultural prosperity. How does the ability to enjoy entertainment and leisure activities reflect a society's overall wellbeing? How do we balance the pursuit of enjoyment with other aspects of life in a spiritually healthy way?
2. **The Sabbath and Rest:** Reflect on the biblical command to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. How does this commandment relate to our modern lives, especially in a culture that often prioritizes busyness and productivity?
3. **Appreciating God's Blessings:** The Egyptians didn't appreciate God for their prosperity, leading to the plagues. How can we ensure we are properly acknowledging and thanking God for our blessings, especially in the context of prosperity and entertainment?
4. **Understanding the Plague of Locusts:** Discuss the significance of the plague of locusts in the context of the Egyptian empire. What message was God sending through this specific plague?
5. **The Concept of Unconditional Surrender to God:** The sermon emphasizes the importance of unconditional surrender to God for salvation. How can we apply this principle in our daily lives, especially when faced with societal pressures and personal desires?
6. **Pleasure and Hedonism as Idols:** The sermon mentions the idol of pleasure and the pitfalls of hedonism. In what ways can the pursuit of pleasure become detrimental to our spiritual well-being?
7. **Gratitude and Helping Others:** Discuss the ideas of being thankful and helping others as ways to find true joy and pleasure in life. Can you share personal experiences where these practices have brought joy to your life?
8. **The Impact of Holy Communion:** Reflect on the role of Holy Communion in reminding us of God's love, offering an opportunity for thankfulness, and empowering us to help others. How does participating in this sacrament enhance your spiritual journey?
9. **Finding Joy in God vs. Worldly Pleasures:** How can we find a balance between enjoying the pleasures of life and not allowing them to become idols that replace God in our lives?
10. **Personal Reflection on Lifestyle Priorities:** Encourage each group member to reflect on their own lifestyle priorities. Are there areas where entertainment or pleasure might be taking precedence over their relationship with God?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 9 – Darkness

Written November 15, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 10:21-29

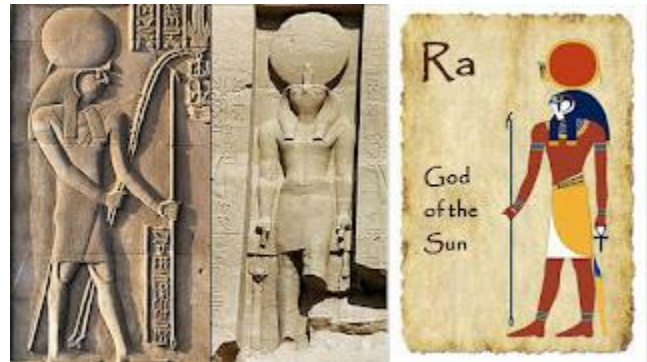


Introduction

Egyptians worship thousands of different gods and goddesses—deities they conjured up from their own imaginations. The most important god among them was the sun god, Ra. “Ra was believed to rule in all parts of the created world: the sky, the Earth, and the underworld. He was the god of the sun, order, kings, and the sky. Ra was portrayed as a falcon and shared characteristics with

the sky god Horus. The Egyptians believed all forms of life were created by Ra.”^[1]

Yahweh, the one true God revealed in the Bible, sent 10 plagues to show everyone that the gods of Egypt were nothing. Yahweh is Lord of all. In the 9th plague, God sent darkness and it was a direct assault on the Egyptian god, Ra. The Egyptians believed every evening when the sun set below the horizon, their god, Ra, descended into the underworld. Through the night, Ra journeyed through the underworld and was reborn at dawn as the rising sun.



Egyptian religion was all about bringing order to chaos. Their religious traditions sought to maintain the natural order of things. And their myth about Ra’s daily cycle of death and resurrection assured them that life in Egypt would continue as usual and Egypt would continue as the most powerful empire in the world. The Egyptians believed that--like the cycle of night and day--dark times in their empire would always be followed by light as predictably as the daily cycle of light.

Darkness

And then our Lord sent darkness on Egypt for three days. The darkness Scripture describes is not just the darkness of night or of a naturally occurring eclipse. The plague of darkness lasted three days. This is a supernatural event. (It brings to mind the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the whale or the three days Jesus was sealed in a tomb after crucifixion.)

Darkness

- ◆ Verse 21 - “a darkness so thick you could feel it.”
- ◆ Verse 23 - “people could not see each other, and no one moved”
- ◆ Also in verse 23 - “But there was light as usual where the people of Israel lived.”

Verse 21 says it was “a darkness so thick you could feel it.” A few years ago, Kelly and I took the kids to the underground sea near Athens, TN. This is a deep cave, in which is an underground lake. We used flashlights and there were lights on the walls of the cave passages. However, at one point our guide said, “OK. Now we are going to turn off all the lights so you can experience absolute darkness.” And with that, she turned out all

the lights and you couldn't even see your hand a couple inches in front of your face. That's the kind of darkness God sent on Egypt.

Verse 23 says, “people could not see each other, and no one moved”. And this went on for three days. “But there was light as usual where the people of Israel lived.” This is a principle for you to understand. If you follow the Lord, you will have light in your life—for Jesus is the ‘light of the world.’ But if you reject God and turn to idols, you will be lost in darkness, a darkness so thick you can feel it wrapping its evil hands around you, closing in until it’s too late.



The Idol of Tradition

As we draw near to Thanksgiving, I'm reminded of how important tradition is. We all probably have important traditions we keep every year. My mother and my extended family (my siblings and their children) have had a tradition of gathering for a Thanksgiving meal, usually the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Sometimes this has been at my house and other times at

my mother and sister's house. This year, because of COVID, we decided it's best to not gather so many people from different households together in one large gathering. Many of you may be altering your family traditions as well. It's a little sad, but I'm choosing to focus on all the good things God is doing and all the things I have for which to be thankful.

Tradition can be a good thing. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism and one of the greatest Christian leaders of the last 500 years, included tradition among the four most important ways we can know God. The first and most important is Holy Scripture, but there is also tradition, reason, and experience. Traditions can help us learn from past experiences as we remember and honor those who have gone before. (Aren't you glad you don't have to learn everything the hard way through personal experience. Think about how dangerous that would be!)

Yet Wesley also taught that when tradition and Scripture are in conflict, you must always follow Scripture and not tradition. And when reason and experience show your tradition is wrong or dangerous, you must break with tradition.

Tradition is a good thing, unless we make it into an idol—making it more important than God, letting it absorb our heart and imagination more than God, and expecting it to give us what only God can give. You know traditions have become idols when they can't be changed no matter what. Idols are disgusting to God because they separate us from God and plunge us into darkness.

If you don't believe tradition can become an idol in church, you may be as blind as the Egyptians were during the plague of darkness. "Tradition" is an idol that is erected right in the sanctuary of many churches. As a young pastor, you learn very quickly to be careful how you deal with people's traditions in church. (You learn or you won't be a pastor for very long.) Ironically, we even have a name for these unbreakable traditions; we call them "sacred cows."

One example of tradition becoming an idol comes from an experience early in my ministry. A church was getting ready for their summer Vacation Bible School. Their new children's minister was decorating the church. She decorated the sanctuary with the theme for the children's lessons. Unfortunately, a group in the church became very angry that she had (in their eyes) desecrated the sacred space of the sanctuary. That was a sacred cow for them. Decorating a sanctuary for VBS may seem like a silly tradition to get so worked up about, but that is because it's not *your* tradition. What is *your* sacred cow (whether it's at church or somewhere else)?

For many, nostalgia about "the way the world used to be" becomes an idol. We look back fondly at the way things used to be in "the good old days" and it blinds us to the good days God is giving us right now. Or worse, it keeps us from moving forward into the new good God wants us to have tomorrow. Some look at the 1950s in America as a golden age when everything was at its best; they think, "If we could just go back to the way things were then." Perhaps they forget that in the 50s, America was still segregated--black people were not afforded equal rights and equal access as white people and it was a great stain on our nation's integrity. I'm very glad things have changed for the better. The truth is the "good old days" weren't as "good" as we think. We conveniently forget all the bad of those days and only recall the sweet memories. Ironically, we often only see the bad things of our current situation while overlooking the good.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day devoted their whole lives to God, yet they rejected the *Son of God* when he came to them. They were threatened because he challenged their traditions. And so, Jesus said, "You can't put new wine into old wineskins." (Matthew 9:17 paraphrased)

I have heard it said recently, nostalgia is the enemy of Jesus' mission. Jesus told his followers, "go and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19). Meanwhile, so many Christians spend their time arguing about what style of songs we should sing in church or whether we should wear dress clothes or go casual. Perhaps we argue about these things because we want to focus on our comfortable traditions instead of going out as soldiers of Christ. When the church worships the idol of traditions, it forsakes Jesus' mission and becomes irrelevant. Sanctuaries grow empty and churches close. Jesus said, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Paraphrase Matthew 310)

What is *Your* Mission?

- ◆ Worship the Lord
- ◆ Share Jesus' love
- ◆ Tell people what Jesus has done for you
- ◆ Invite someone to church

What is Your Mission?

The Church is not a building. The Church is the people. All who follow Jesus as Lord and are saved by His grace are the Church. We are each one stone in a living Temple. And we have a sacred purpose. To tell the world about Jesus, to share His love, and to make disciples.

So, what is your mission? How are you going to live out your mission this week to bring the light of Christ to our dark world? May I make some suggestions?

Worship the Lord, not just by what you do on Sundays at church. Worship Him all week long; let your actions be your praise. Turn away from all else--even traditions--and follow the Lord.

Use every opportunity to share Jesus' love with others. Jesus said "They will know you are my followers by the way you love one another. It's not your political views or the football team you follow. It's your love that shows people you are a Christian.

Tell someone what Jesus has done for you. If Jesus has made a difference in your life, then tell people about it. This is what it means to be a witness and Christians are called to be witnesses for Christ.

Invite someone to church. It's never been easier to invite people to church. All you have to do is attend an online worship service on Facebook live and click the "share" button to share the service with a friend. Invite people to church--whether it is for an online service or onsite.

So then, go and make disciples of all nations...

[i]<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ra#:~:text=Ra%20was%20believed%20to%20rule,with%20the%20sky%20god%20Horus.&text=All%20forms%20of%20life%20were%20believed%20to%20have%20been%20created%20by%20Ra>.

Small Group for Plague 9

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 9 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **The Significance of Darkness:** Reflect on the symbolism of the plague of darkness, especially in relation to the Egyptian sun god, Ra. What message was God conveying through this specific plague?
2. **The Role of God vs. Idols:** Discuss the idea of the Egyptian gods being creations of human imagination, in contrast to Yahweh as the one true God. How does this distinction influence our understanding of divine power and authority?
3. **The Importance of Traditions in Faith:** The sermon discusses the role of tradition in the Christian faith and its potential to become an idol. How can we balance the value of traditions with the need to remain open to new ways of expressing and living out our faith?
4. **Nostalgia vs. Mission:** Consider the idea that nostalgia can be an enemy of Jesus' mission. Share your thoughts on how looking back at the "good old days" can hinder our ability to live out our Christian mission today.
5. **Challenging Sacred Cows:** Reflect on your own experiences with "sacred cows" in the church or personal life. How do we identify when a tradition or practice has become an idol?
6. **Darkness as a Spiritual Metaphor:** Explore the concept of spiritual darkness. How can experiencing dark times in our own lives lead to greater understanding and reliance on God?
7. **The Idol of Tradition vs. New Wineskins:** Discuss Jesus' teaching about new wine and old wineskins in relation to the sermon. How does this teaching challenge us to rethink how we approach our faith and traditions?
8. **Personal Mission and Witnessing:** How can each of us live out our mission as Christians in a world that often seems filled with spiritual darkness? Share practical ways we can witness to others about Jesus.
9. **The Role of Worship and Service:** Discuss the importance of worshiping God not just in church, but in our daily actions and interactions. How can our everyday lives reflect our worship of God?
10. **Being a Light in Darkness:** How can we, as followers of Christ, be a source of light in a world that often experiences darkness, both literally and figuratively?

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Plague 10 – Death of the First-Born Sons

Written November 22, 2020 by Chris Mullis

Exodus 11:1-8



Introduction

The people in the Bible were real people living in the real world. Don't ever forget that—especially as we consider this terrible 10th plague. Every 1st born through the land of Egypt died as the Angel of Death passed over the land--from the firstborn son of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the lowest servant, even the firstborn among the animals died. (COVID has affected all of us. Most of

us know of someone who has had it. The 10th Plague affected every family personally. In one dark night, every single family had someone die.)

Some would question why God would send such a terrible plague. Well, I'm not one to question God's judgments (nor am I one to lightly blame God for every disaster that comes). This passage clearly says God is the one who sent the plague. There is a biblical principle that a person reaps what they sow. How did Egypt treat the Israelites? Pharaoh issued a terrible edict that every male child born among the Hebrews must be thrown into the Nile river. Do you remember that? Moses was one of those baby boys that was to be murdered in the Nile river. He escaped miraculously by the hand of God. And now that same Moses is the instrument that God used for retribution against Egypt. What comes around, goes around and the judgment you use against others is the same judgment that will be used against you.

This was the most terrible plague of all that struck Egypt as the Lord brought judgment on all of Egypt's false "gods". It was caused by Egypt's sin (which had persisted for centuries) and arrogance and the stubbornness of their leader, Pharaoh, who refused to surrender to God and let His people go.

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Consequences of Sin

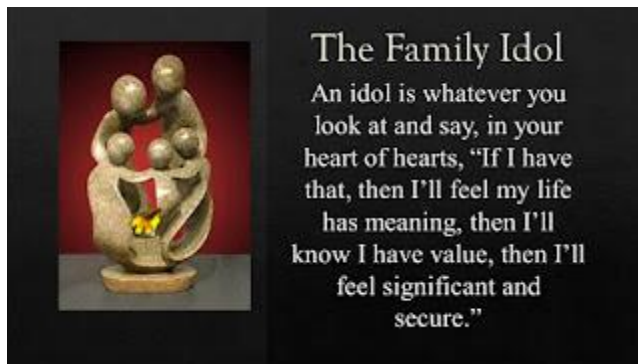
The first lesson for you today is this: Your sin and idolatry doesn't just affect you. The effects of sin spread from you to others like a virus. Pharaoh's son died on that fateful night when the Angel of Death passed over Egypt carrying out God's judgment. But other Egyptians—perhaps more reasonable people who were less cruel than Pharaoh—

suffered the same fate as they watched their firstborn sons struck down because of their nation's sins.

So, when you suffer because of your own sin, you may think you are getting what you deserve and the price is paid. But who is paying the price for the suffering and evil your sin brings on your family and your neighbors? The sins of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth (and others) aren't just deadly to you. When you sin, it affects everyone around you—especially the people you care about most. The effects of our sin can continue for generations. You may still be suffering the effects of some of the sins your parents, grandparents, or great grandparents—alcoholism, abuse, etc. These sins have a ripple effect down through the generations. Your sins today may have a similar effect on your children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren.

I believe God is calling people today to surrender to Him—just like He was calling for Egypt's unconditional surrender through Moses. The 10th plague shows the deadly consequences when we stubbornly refuse to listen to the Lord—even though He comes to us again and again. It hurts us and even those we love most.

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”



The Family Idol

Throughout this series, I've tried to show you that we have idols in the modern world just as much as the ancient Egyptians. Whereas they worship gods fashioned after frogs and cows and snakes, many people today worship idols of money, power, pleasure, patriotism and other false gods. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that,

then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure."^[1]

Idols don't necessarily start out as bad things. They often begin as very good things but become idols to us because we make them the ultimate things. Then, they become our gods. Even family can become an idol.

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, family is on the hearts and minds of many people. We want to gather with those we love most and most people have a strong tradition of visiting family during the holidays (even if their relatives annoy them).

Jesus was once teaching when he said something very challenging about family. "As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. Someone

told Jesus, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to you.” Jesus asked, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Then he pointed to his disciples and said, “Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!” (Matthew 12:46-50)

In Jesus’ Kingdom, family isn’t defined by our genetics—those who are our biological brothers and sister. Out brothers and sisters in the truest sense are the people who share our common goal to do the will of God (our Heavenly Father).

Jesus’ earthly family—in the beginning of his ministry—thought he’d lost his mind. They saw their relative saying things that threatened the political authorities and attracted huge crowds of followers. They wanted to take him home and shut him up. They couldn’t see he was doing the will of God. (Or maybe they were too afraid to care.)

Some people would argue, “Yes, but the Ten Commandments say you must ‘Honor your father and mother’.” (Ex 20:12)”. Yes, that is true. But that is the fifth of the Ten Commandments God gave. The very first one says, “Do not worship any God but the Lord.” (Exodus 20:3) And the second one says, “Do not make idols of any kind.” (Exodus 20:4)

When we put our family before the will of God, we turn them into idols and worship them ahead of God. The results are terrible. Idols lead us into darkness. They always disappoint and destroy lives. We *should* love our earthly family, but if we hold our children so tight we treat them like our gods, we will crush them under the weight of unfair expectation they cannot fulfill. If we treat our parents like gods, they will be destroyed by the impossibility of living up to the role of God. Our brothers and sisters are only our equals. No mere mortal can ever fill the shoes of God and to expect them to is insane and inevitably leads to suffering.



Jesus is Our The Passover Lamb

The Israelites slaves in ancient Egypt were spared the horror of the 10th plague. Each family was to choose a perfect lamb or goat without any defects. They were to sacrifice the animal and smear some of its blood on the sides and top of the doorframe to their home. The blood would mark their household as belonging to God and everyone inside would be covered by the blood and the

Angel of Death would Passover their home without bringing harm to anyone inside.

The Israelites were no better than the Egyptians. They were sinners too. But the blood of their “Passover Lamb” signified they were in submission to God and therefore, God forgave their sins and gave grace instead of judgment. (Incidentally, the same escape was available to the Egyptians. They could choose to apply the blood to their doorframes as well and there is good

reason to believe some did. Of course, in doing so, they were turning their back on the gods of Egypt and turning toward the God of Israel. And if they did, they were spared.)

So, in the morning after the 10th plague, it says “There was not a single house [in Egypt not covered by the blood] where someone had not died.” (Exodus 12:30). I can’t imagine. But this is the terrible cost of sin.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus Christ. Pointing to Jesus, John said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In 1 Corinthians 5:7, it says, “Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.” The Gospels tell us Jesus was arrested and crucified during the Jewish holiday of Passover—the holiday when they commemorated God’s deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt after the 10th plague. Jesus is the Son of God. His blood pays the price for our sin. And when we surrender to God—turning from our sins and idols and false gods and turning to God—Jesus’ blood, the blood of the Lamb, covers us and delivers us from death and slavery caused by sin.

Invitation

These 10 plagues are not just stories and myths. They happened to real people like you and me. As we struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic, I pray it has opened your eyes to your own vulnerability and mortality. I hope you realize how desperately you need the saving power of God in your life. I pray, it will not take another 9 plagues (like it did for the Egyptians before they surrendered unconditionally to God). Please turn from your sins and turn to God today. It doesn't just affect you; it affects everyone.

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” Let’s pause for a moment of silence to reflect on our sin, confess them to God, and allow God to cleanse us with the blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

You are going to need help to walk with the Lord. Please contact me and let me know of the decisions you’ve made so I can help you in your next steps.

[i] pages xvii and xviii of *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters*

Small Group for Plague 10

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Watch Plague 10 Intro Video

Discussion Questions

1. **Understanding the Severity of the Tenth Plague:** Reflect on the impact and severity of the tenth plague. Why do you think God chose such a drastic measure as the final plague?
2. **The Principle of 'Reaping What You Sow':** Discuss the biblical principle of reaping what you sow, especially in the context of Pharaoh's actions towards the Israelites and the resulting plagues.
3. **The Ripple Effect of Sin:** The sermon suggests that sin affects not just the sinner, but also those around them. Share your thoughts or experiences on how personal actions can impact families, communities, and even generations.
4. **Idolatry in the Context of Family:** The sermon discusses the concept of family becoming an idol. How can we love and value our families without allowing them to take the place of God in our lives?
5. **Jesus as Our Passover Lamb:** Discuss the symbolism of Jesus as the Passover Lamb. How does this concept deepen your understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus and its significance for salvation?
6. **The Consequences of Idol Worship:** Reflect on the sermon's message about the dangers of worshipping idols, whether they are tangible objects, concepts, or even people. How can we ensure we keep God as our foremost priority?
7. **Tradition vs. Scriptural Truth:** How do we discern when a tradition is beneficial and when it has become an idol or a barrier to our relationship with God?
8. **The Role of Confession and Forgiveness:** Consider the sermon's invitation to confess sins and seek forgiveness. How does this practice affect your spiritual life and relationship with God?
9. **Challenging Personal Idols:** Identify potential idols in your own life. How can you work on addressing these idols to focus more on your faith and relationship with God?
10. **Support in Walking with God:** Discuss the importance of community and support in walking with God, especially after making significant spiritual decisions or changes.

Intercessory and Closing Prayer

Dismiss