

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2025: Exodus

Lesson 4 “The Plagues”

Read for this week’s study

Exodus 7:8–10:29; Numbers 33:4; Romans 1:24–32; Psalm 104:27, 28; Isaiah 28:2, 12–17; Isaiah 44:9, 10, 12–17.

Memory Text

“So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses” (Exodus 9:35, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. God vs. gods
- III. Who Hardened Pharaoh’s Heart?
- IV. The First Three Plagues
- V. Flies, Livestock, and Boils
- VI. Hail, Locusts, and Darkness
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. A farmer was trying to get his donkey to move, but the beast wouldn’t budge. He got a stick and wacked it over the nose. Then the farmer spoke to the donkey and it started moving. When someone asked the farmer why he did that, he said, “If you want the donkey to listen, you have to get its attention first.” While we don’t approve of cruelty to animals, the story sounds a lot like the plagues of the Exodus. Pharaoh’s attention span for God was a bit limited. It took the plagues to get his attention and earn his respect for the God of the Hebrews. Why do you think Pharaoh was so resistant to the idea of letting the Hebrews sacrifice in the wilderness? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. As we go through the story of the Exodus, it is extremely important to notice at the very beginning that the plagues brought by Moses were not directed against the Egyptian people, but against their gods. The Egyptians worshipped more than 1500

- deities. Moses was demonstrating that Yahweh was far more powerful than any or all of the Egyptian gods. Each plague hit at least one of them. For example, *Hapi* was the god of the Nile. Water is the source of life and so the Egyptians had invented the god *Hapi* and worshipped him as the provider of life. The first plague showed the helplessness of the god of the Nile to protect Egypt. *Heget* was the frog god. Instead of producing life, the Nile produced a plague of frogs. *Geb* was the god of the earth. From the dust of the earth, Moses produced gnats. From the third plague on, Pharaoh's magicians were completely unable to duplicate the actions that Moses brought upon the Egyptians by the power of Yahweh. God was not being cruel, the Egyptians needed to know that they had placed their religious trust in the wrong places. The Exodus was a microcosm of the cosmic conflict. (Tuesday's Lesson)
3. Read Exodus 7:8-15. What lessons are here in this first confrontation between the God of the Hebrews and the gods of Egypt? What kind of gods do we tend to trust in today? (Sunday's Lesson)
 4. Nine times in the book of Exodus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was ascribed to God (Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). Another nine times the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is ascribed to his own thinking and actions (Exod 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35). Who then was really hardening Pharaoh's heart? (Monday's Lesson)
 5. Read Exodus 7:14 – 8:19. What happened in the context of these three plagues? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 6. Read Exodus 8:20 – 9:12. How do these plagues illustrate both the greatness of God's power and the human ability and freedom to reject Him? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 7. Pharaoh's problem wasn't intellectual; he had enough rational evidence to make the right choice. Instead, it was a problem of his heart. Pharaoh's heart was too hard, or stubborn, to make the right decision, the sensible decision. How much of decision-making is based on the head and the heart, respectively? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 8. Read Exodus 9:13 – 10:29. How successful are these plagues in getting Pharaoh to change his mind? (Thursday's Lesson)
 9. The more specific the miracle (details of timing, content, and place), the harder it is to attribute to coincidence. "God gave to Pharaoh the most striking evidence of divine power, but the monarch stubbornly refused to heed the light. . . . The seeds of rebellion that he sowed when he rejected the first miracle, produced their harvest." PP 268 (Friday's Lesson)
 10. How could someone become as self-deceived as Pharaoh was? People can become so entrapped by sin that they make one disastrous decision after another. What other Bible characters, besides the Pharaoh of the Exodus, made the same kinds of mistakes? (Friday's Lesson)
 11. At one point, amid the devastation that Pharaoh had brought upon his own land and people, he declared, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I

and my people are the wicked ones.” This is a wonderful sounding confession. How do we know that it is not a genuine one? (Friday’s Lesson)

Further Study with Ellen White

Could our eyes be opened, we should see forms of evil angels around us, trying to invent some new way to annoy and destroy us. And we should also see angels of God guarding us from their power; for God’s watchful eye is ever over Israel for good, and He will protect and save His people, if they put their trust in Him. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. {EW 60.1}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty. {PK 487.1}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4} {FE 124.1}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. {MB 142.1}

It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept. The human mind is endowed

with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture (*Redemption: or the Miracles of Christ*, pp. 112, 113). {1BC 1120.5}

God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. {5T 120.1}

We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. {5T 120.2}

When God sent Moses to Pharaoh, he had light, but Pharaoh resisted, and every resistance brought up a heavier stubbornness. Did God put a power upon him that he could not turn to the light? No, it was indifference to evidence. The stubbornness of Pharaoh was because light was shining that he would not receive.—MS 15, 1894. {2MCP 724.4}

It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men willfully reject the Spirit, and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul. {DA 321.3}

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. {GC 36.1}

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. {DA 258.6}

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. {MH 131.1}