

INTRODUCTION:

God has used nine plagues, each progressively more severe than the one before, to demonstrate His supreme power and authority as the one and only true God. He has used a powerful nation to demonstrate His power to the entire world. He has used this opportunity to turn His chosen family into a chosen nation. These events will begin the process of God making His people into a witness through which the entire world may come to know Him. They are His firstborn son and out of them will ultimately be born the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. The final plague will provide deliverance to God's people and will mark the beginning of His people's calendar. God will use it to establish the pattern of worship for all generations. It is no coincidence that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ will one day immediately follow the Passover, which remembers and celebrates the events surrounding the final plague and exodus. Through the final plague God delivers His firstborn son—the nation of Israel—from the slavery and oppression of Egypt. Centuries later on the anniversary of this great event, God will deliver all people who will follow and abide in Him through His one and only Son, Jesus Christ. The plagues of the Exodus mark deliverance of God's people and judgment of those who oppress them. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will mark the beginning of a period of grace through which Jews and Gentiles may be saved through the blood of the Lamb. As the deliverance of Israel was preceded by ten plagues, Christ's second coming will be preceded by the Great Tribulation—a series of escalating chastisements falling upon the world. Like the plagues of the Exodus, at first they will be a discomfort to all peoples, but then God will make a distinction, punishing only those who oppose His will and oppress His people. And ultimately, God will deliver all who abide in Him and claim His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior.

THE LAST PLAGUE:

The fourth and deciding round of the conflict consisted of only one final plague—the death of the firstborn of every family in Egypt. This plague would distinguish between the death of Egypt's firstborn and the preservation of Israel's firstborn. The final plague would be the ultimate blow to the Egyptians, taking away from them “the firstfruits of all their manhood.” God will use this event to establish the pattern through which He is to be worshiped and to begin teaching His people how to be in relationship with Him.

(Final plague announced.)**Exodus 11:1-8**

(1) Now the LORD said to Moses, *"One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.* (2) *Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."* (3) The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people. (4) Moses said, *"Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, (5) and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. (6) Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. (7) But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'* (8) *All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out."* And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

(9) Then the LORD said to Moses, *"Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt."* (10) Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

Comments:

The final plague is announced to Pharaoh the last time they will ever meet. Pharaoh had just said to Moses, *"Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!"* And Moses had responded saying, *"You are right; I shall never see your face again!"* (Exo. 10:27-28) Therefore, Moses will never again face Pharaoh because Pharaoh will not listen for his heart has been hardened by God for God's purpose. While not explicitly stated, by implication it would seem clear that from

this point on Moses is speaking to God’s people, giving them instructions regarding what they are to do to prepare for the final plague and exodus from Egypt.

(Final plague executed.)

Exodus 12:29-36

(29) Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. (30) Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. (31) Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, *"Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. (32) Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."* (33) The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, *"We will all be dead."* (34) So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. (35) Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; (36) and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Comments:

These verses indicate that there has been a dramatic shift in how God’s people are viewed by the Egyptians and by Pharaoh. First and most obvious is that after the last plague the Egyptians and Pharaoh desperately desire their departure, which is a dramatic change from before when they were unwilling to let them go. Second, we are told that God has given His people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, meaning that they now have a deep respect for both Moses and the Hebrew people, who have previously been objects of scorn. Finally and possibly most profound is the change in Pharaoh’s attitude and respect for the Lord. When Moses first asked him to let Israel go he responded saying, *"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"* Now, he not only is willing to allow the Hebrews go and take their flocks and herds but he even asks for a “blessing.”

BEGINNING OF JEWISH CALENDAR, PASSOVER AND FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD AND CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN:

The final plague will mark the beginning of the Jewish calendar, the Passover and the following Feast of Unleavened Bread and consecration of the firstborn. God establishes the pattern of how the event will be remembered and celebrated even before it takes place. God has been in control of all things from the beginning and thus knows exactly what is about to happen. He has instructed His people to ask the Egyptians for silver and gold, knowing that it will be given to them when His people are expelled from Egypt, and thus, providing the materials that will be later needed to build the articles of worship when His tabernacle is built per His instructions in the wilderness.

(God begins the Jewish calendar.)

Exodus 12:1-2

(1) Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, (2) ***"This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you."***

Comments:

The Jewish calendar, based on lunar rather than solar months as our present calendar, had its beginning at this time. The first month was called Abib (Ex. 13:4) until the exile. The name Abib means “ears of grain” and was an appropriate name since it was a harvest month. After the Babylonian exile it was called the Babylonian name Nisan (see Heh. 2:1; Esth. 3:7) which eventually replaced the Hebrew name Abib. On modern calendars it corresponds to the latter part of March and the first part of April.

(The Passover of the Lamb)

Exodus 12:3-13

(3) ***"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. (4) Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. (5) Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. (6) You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month,***

then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. (7) Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. (8) They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. (9) Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. (10) And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. (11) Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste -- it is the LORD'S Passover. (12) For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the LORD. (13) The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.’”

Comments:

God was very specific in His instructions. The Passover lamb is to be selected on the tenth day of the month and then slaughtered and eaten the evening of the fourteenth day of the month with nothing remaining the next morning that has not either been eaten or burned. Blood from the lamb shall be put on the doorposts and lintel as a sign so that the “destroyer” (supernatural agent of God’s judgment) will know that the house’s occupants are God’s people. The meal is to be eaten with God’s people dressed as if ready for travel. Every element of the Passover commemorated what God was about to do through the final plague to deliver His people.

Jesus, while celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples, will institute the Lord’s Supper. In the Passover meal the body of the lamb is eaten and the blood used as a sign in remembrance of God’s deliverance of Israel. In the Lord’s Supper Jesus, the Lamb of God, taught His disciples to use bread and wine to represent His body and blood as a sign and in remembrance of His sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. Jesus instituted the new covenant and added new meaning to God’s peoples’ understanding of deliverance. Like the Passover lamb, Jesus’ bones would not be broken but He would shed His blood for the deliverance of us all.

(The Feast of Unleavened Bread)**Exodus 12:17-20**

(17) “You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. (18) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. (19) Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land. (20) You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”

Comments:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins with the Passover meal on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month and continues for seven days. The fact that the bread is unleavened (no yeast added so it doesn't rise) is symbolic for the haste in which the people will leave. There will be no time to allow bread to be leavened and rise.

(Consecration of the First-born.)**Exodus 13:1-2, 11-15**

(1) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."... (11) "Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, (12) you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. (13) But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. (14) And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. (15) It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' (16) So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

Comments:

The consecration of the firstborn is a reminder that God spared the firstborn of Israel from death, both man and beast. Therefore, they belong to God and must be redeemed (a price must be paid in order to gain possession of them).

Verse 16 calls for the deliverance of God’s people to become a sign on their hand and as a “phylacteries” (frontlet band) on the forehead. Jewish people have followed this command quite literally. The story of the Exodus redemption did become for them, as instructed, “a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead.” Scripture passages from Exod. 13 and Deut. 6 and 11, written on small scrolls, are placed in leather containers, which are then fastened to the forehead and left arm.

THE EXODUS:

God’s people would *“be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years”* just as God had so long ago stated to Abraham in Genesis 15:13. But just as God told Moses, He delivered His people from Egypt at the exact time of His choosing and according to His plan. During their time in Egypt a family of people had become a great nation. Having delivered them through great power and miracles, God would now begin the process of making them into a chosen people to bear witness that He is the one true God.

Exodus 12:37-41

(37) Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. (38) A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. (39) They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. (40) Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. (41) And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Scriptures from the New American Standard Bible.

Comments from Zodhiates’ study Bible and The Shepherd’s Notes on Exodus by Broadman & Holman Publishers.