

## Exodus: The Way Out of Ignorance

### Welcome/Prayer

#### Foreword

We've been exploring the Old Testament book, *Exodus*, in the sermon series, "The Way Out," appropriately titled because *exodus* literally means an "exit or departure." In the preceding lessons of this series, we discovered that God can and will provide us a way out of all places and situations that hold us captive, including our past, despair, and insignificance. For this study, we're going to consider the plagues God used to demonstrate that ignorance was *not* so bliss for the Egyptians and the Israelites, and we'll see how God provided His people the way out of the ignorance that was holding them captive.

#### Introduction

Our study resumes with Moses' return to Egypt where he approaches Pharaoh and emphatically declares that Pharaoh release the Israelites from captivity. Instead of complying, Pharaoh increased their misery and made their work more difficult. Pharaoh's defiance is a clear demonstration of his ignorance. In fact, it was not only did Pharaoh who did not know the Lord; the Israelites did not seem to know Him either. Accordingly, the plagues that God sent were not solely for Pharaoh and the Egyptians; they were for the benefit of the Israelites, as well. The plagues were intended both to rescue God's people and to reveal God to His people, thus providing them with the way out of their ignorance.

1. Why do you think it took so many plagues to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites from captivity?
2. How were the Israelites ignorant of God, His will, and His ways?
3. What are some common misconceptions people have about God?

#### Preparation

Read the following text related to today's message:

##### **Exodus 5:1-2 (NLT)**

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness."

<sup>2</sup> "Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

#### Break it Down

When it comes to knowledge about God—who He is and what He can do—many of us can rightly be considered ignorant. Through a quick survey of the plagues, we're going to look for a way out of our ignorance about God. Until we overcome our ignorance about God and His ways, we are held captive by our own false notions of Him. Accordingly, unless we come to a more accurate and complete view of Him and His character, we will never live as the Lord intends us to live.

1. Have you ever had ideas about God that you later found were untrue? Explain.
2. What are some ways we learn about who God is and what He can do?

### **What do the plagues tell us about who God is and what He can do?**

#### **The Lord rules over creation.**

When we look at the plagues in the order they were inflicted on Egypt, notice that all belong to God's created order. Yet, in many ways, the plagues were reversals of the natural events set into motion at the creation of the world. As such, the plagues served as acts of God's judgment. Pharaoh finally recognized this after the seventh plague of hail, for he asked Moses to pray to God for it to stop. Moses' responded by saying, "...the thunder and hail will stop, and you will know that the earth belongs to the Lord." (Exodus 9:29b NLT)

The earth does indeed belong to the Lord. He created it, and He sustains it. He can and will use His creation to accomplish His eternal purposes. The plagues give us the knowledge that God can overcome any earthly obstacle; nothing is beyond His ability to change or reverse.

1. What evidence is there that "the earth belongs to the Lord?"
2. What have you learned about God through creation?
3. Why is it significant that the Lord rules over creation?

### **The Lord is supreme over all others.**

At various times in the plagues, there were conflicts with Pharaoh's magicians. The sorcerers and wise men were able to replicate a few of the plagues, but the Lord proved the truth Moses proclaimed: "Then you will know that there is no one like the Lord our God." (Exodus 8:10b NLT) Again, before the plague of hail, God forewarned, "Then you will know that there is no one like me in all the earth." (Exodus 9:14b NLT)

While we see that there is no equal to God among men and women, the plagues also show us the Lord rules supreme over all other gods. The Egyptians were a polytheistic people; there was a god for everything. Thus, the plagues may be considered attacks on each of the Egyptian gods that represented those elements that were affected. God Himself suggested this to be true when He declared before the final plague of destruction, "I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt for I am the Lord!" (Exodus 12:12b NLT) God subsequently proved His sovereignty over everyone and everything. When we understand His supremacy, we realize the way out of ignorance that holds us captive to/by people and/or idols. Only God is suitable and worthy to run our lives.

1. Why do you think Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate some of the plagues and not others?
2. What are some of the "gods" (i.e., idols) in our culture? Discuss how and why the Lord is superior to all of them.
3. How and where have you experienced God's sovereignty and superiority?

### **The Lord makes distinctions among people.**

In the course of the plagues, there were several noteworthy distinctions. Most notably is that God carefully chose who and what would be affected by the plagues: "I will make a clear distinction between my people and your people." (Exodus 8:23a NLT) In particular, the Lord blessed His people and cursed His enemies. The plagues show us that God actively opposes those who oppose Him, and He makes distinctions among people by watching over those who follow His commands while allowing those who rebel against Him to suffer the consequences of their actions. Through the plagues, the Lord was showing His people the way out of ignorance so that they might really know who He is and what He could do.

1. Share about a time or situation where you've felt that God was making a distinction between you and someone else.
2. Do you believe that God judges persons in this lifetime? Why or why not?
3. What evidence is there that God makes distinctions in His judgments against humanity?
4. Why is it significant that the Lord makes distinctions among people?

### **Conclusion**

Although sometimes we might prefer *not* to know everything about a situation, ignorance definitely is not bliss when it comes to knowledge about God. When we recall the story of the Israelites' deliverance from captivity in the book of Exodus, let us remember the way out of ignorance that God showed them through the plagues, and respond to His mercy with worship and prayer through faith with thanksgiving.

1. How has your knowledge of God affected your worship? Obedience? Faith?
2. What do you know to be true about the Lord? How does that knowledge affect your life?
3. Do you know God in a personal way? If not, begin that relationship by putting your trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

### **Close in Prayer**