

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY TEN

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

Nothing is more miserable than enduring God's wrath. For some people, it softens them. For others, it only hardens.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PEOPLE'S hearts don't harden overnight. The hardening process can take years, and often no single cause contributes to the calcification.

Sometimes it's a result of victimization. In their woundedness, some people determine never to be vulnerable again. To protect their hearts, they cut themselves off from relationships and from hope. Healing is possible for these hurting people, and we should never stop reaching out to help.

For others, heart-hardening is a learned trait. Making demands and being stubborn gets them what they want in life. When they realize their stubbornness is ruining their relationships, however, many of these hard-hearted individuals eventually seek the help they need.

Some people are just inflexible by nature. Before you stitch together two words of a request, their "no" slices it apart. They plug their ears whenever someone asks anything of them. Their minds are closed, their will is iron, and their hearts are rocks—and they like it that way. What can soften such a person when nothing seems to help?

It usually takes a devastating event to crack open this person's stubborn pride. In Moses' day, God used plagues to jack-hammer Pharaoh's heart, but this proud king remained hard. Amazing! Carcasses of dead animals lay rotting in fields stripped bare by locust, disease broke out, people were starving . . . and Pharaoh didn't shed a tear. We can't imagine a more desolate landscape than Egypt after the plagues or a more miserable soul than Pharaoh's.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll examine the plagues that God sent to pry Pharaoh's fingers open and free the Hebrews. There's more than destruction in the plagues, though. God proclaimed a message through them, and if our hearts are receptive, we'll hear it loud and clear.



Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Enter your study with awe for God's power. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you understand the Scriptures and appreciate Christ who saves.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Why should Pharaoh listen to me?” Moses objected in desperation to the Lord (Exodus 6:30). Matched against mighty Pharaoh, Moses felt like a nobody. How did God steady His trembling servant in *Exodus 7:1–5*? What did the Lord say would happen?

How did God demonstrate His might over the Egyptians in *7:6–12*?

Pharaoh witnessed this miracle, but he turned a deaf ear to Moses. So, the Lord brought “down [His] fist on Egypt” (7:4) with a series of judgments in the form of ten plagues.

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10



Observation: The Devastation of the Plagues

Focus your *observation* on contrasting and comparing the plagues in Exodus 7–10.¹ Let's begin by making two general observations.

First, *God's judgments were thorough*. The plagues affected every Egyptian, and they inflicted greater and greater harm. The first nine plagues were grouped in sets of three and culminated in the tenth plague, which was the most severe. Moses announced each plague before it struck, except every third plague, which God unleashed without warning.

Second, *none of the plagues softened Pharaoh's heart*. Yes, Pharaoh finally released the Hebrews, but his heart hardened again when he commanded his army to chase them down. Sometimes even the severest judgments won't break a person's rock hard will.

Use the charts below to observe the details of nine of the plagues and how they compare to each another. At the end of the study, we've provided a complete chart that offers a side-by-side comparison of all ten plagues.

Blood, Frogs, and Gnats Exodus 7:14–8:19		
Plague	God's Judgment	Pharaoh's Response
Nile Turned to Blood 7:14–25		
Frogs 8:1–15		
Gnats 8:16–19		

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

Insects, Livestock Disease, Boils Exodus 8:20–9:12		
Plague	God's Judgment	Pharaoh's Response
Insects <i>8:20–32</i>		
Livestock Disease <i>9:1–7</i>		
Boils <i>9:8–12</i>		

Hailstorm, Locusts, Darkness Exodus 9:13–10:29		
Plague	God's Judgment	Pharaoh's Response
Hailstorm <i>9:13–35</i>		
Locusts <i>10:1–20</i>		
Darkness <i>10:21–29</i>		

Look back over the charts, and write down the repeating patterns that stand out to you.

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

What statement did God repeat about Himself in *Exodus* 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 16, 29; 10:1–2? Why do you think the Lord’s declaration was so prominent?

Six times, the Lord issued His message to Pharaoh: “Let my people go, so they can worship me” (7:16; 8:1; 8:20; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3). What do you think is the significance of the Lord repeating this command? What central theme in Exodus does it highlight?

Also, notice the repetition: “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” “Pharaoh’s heart remained hard,” or “he became stubborn” (*Exodus* 7:3, 13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34–35; 10:20, 27). What do you think is the significance of repeating Pharaoh’s hardness of heart? What central theme does Pharaoh’s defiance illustrate? And God’s sovereign control of Pharaoh?

The people of Egypt never went against their leader, yet he was the one responsible for the plagues. Humanly speaking, he was the cause.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Message of the Plagues

God sent the plagues to do more than just free His people. What main message through the plagues did He proclaim, according to Moses’ words to Pharaoh in *Exodus* 9:15–16?

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

In the chart at the end of the study, review the list of Egyptian gods targeted by the plagues. God directed the plagues against Egypt’s gods to prove what point, which Jethro later verbalized in *Exodus 18:10–11*?

Many of the plagues didn’t touch the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived (*Exodus 9:6, 25–26; 10:22–23*). What message did God proclaim by afflicting the land selectively?

Pharaoh’s magicians turned their staffs into snakes (*Exodus 7:11–12*) and replicated the first two plagues (*7:22; 8:7*). How could they perform these supernatural deeds? Pagans “sacrifice to demons” when they make offerings to idols, wrote Paul (1 Corinthians 10:20). The forces of darkness enabled the magicians to perform counterfeit “signs and wonders,” like the future antichrist will perform (2 Thessalonians 2:9). And yet, their power was limited.

What did the magicians acknowledge in *Exodus 8:17–19*? What message did God proclaim through the mouths of these evil men?

God was preparing His people to be a nation wholly devoted to Him and to reflect His glory in the world—so that *even idol-worshippers* will declare Him as Lord. Summarize the points in God’s “sermon” of the plagues that He wanted His own people to hear.

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

The child of God who walks in the Spirit can walk without fear of demonic invasion. There's an example in Exodus. The Egyptians were under the black cloud of plagues, but the Israelites were protected. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Plagues to Come

In Jesus' apocalyptic vision in Revelation, John saw four angels unleashing three plagues (*Revelation 9:17–18*). And then, later, he saw seven angels strike humankind with seven more plagues, "which would bring God's wrath to completion" (15:1). Read the following verses and write down the future plagues that mirror the ten plagues of Egypt:

Revelation 16:2: _____

Revelation 16:3–4: _____

Revelation 16:10: _____

Revelation 16:17–21: _____

How will future unbelievers subjected to these horrors respond like Pharaoh, according to *Revelation 9:20–21; 16:9–11*?

It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God and suffer His judgment. But, even in His judgment, there is mercy for those who soften their hearts and turn to Him for help.



Application: The Lord's Message to Us and Our Response

God's message in the plagues boils down to two principles. First, *when God judges, He does a thorough job*. No matter how strong the forces of evil may grow, they are no match for the power of God's righteous justice. What feelings does God's judgment on Egypt stir in your spirit?

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

Second, *when God blesses, He holds nothing back*. Four hundred and thirty years of prayers were answered when God acted on behalf of His people. What hope does this account of God’s mighty power stir in you?

The plagues were expressions of God’s flawless justice, but they were also symbols of His grace. Salvation is available for anyone who cries out to Him. Close your study in a moment of praise for God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, who reigns in justice and who offers mercy even for the most hard-hearted people.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for holding nothing back in Your justice and Your blessings. You never leave me to endure life’s injustices alone. You are here with me. I trust in You and know that the earth and all that is in it belongs to You. You are the Lord of all! In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

[insight.org](https://www.insight.org)

Plagues That Preach

Exodus 7–10

The Plagues of God and the Gods of Egypt Exodus 7–12			
Plagues and Warnings	Extent	Pharaoh's Response	Names of Targeted Egyptian Deities
Nile turned to blood (7:14–25)	The land of Egypt (7:21)	Hardened his heart, Refused to listen, Indifference (7:22–23)	Hapi: the Nile Isis: the Nile Khnum: guardian of the Nile
Frogs (8:1–15)	The entire land (8:6b)	False promised, Hardened his heart, Refused to listen (8:8, 15)	Heqet: birth (a frog's head)
Gnats (8:16–19) <i>No warning</i>	The entire land (8:17)	Hardened his heart, Refused to listen (8:19)	Set: the desert
Insects (8:20–32)	The entire land of Egypt (not Goshen) (8:24)	Falsely promised, Hardened his heart, Oppressed Hebrews (8:25–29, 32)	Re: sun Uatchit: possibly the fly
Livestock epidemic (9:1–7)	Egyptians' livestock (not Hebrews') (9:6)	Hardened his heart, Oppressed Hebrews (9:7)	Hathor: goddess (cow's head) Apis: fertility (the bull) Mnevis: Heliopolis' sacred bull
Boils (9:8–12) <i>No warning</i>	Throughout the land (9:9)	God hardened his heart, Refused to listen (9:12)	Sekhmet: disease Sunu: the pestilence Isis: healing
Hailstorm (9:13–35)	All of Egypt (not Goshen) (9:25–26)	Falsely promised, Hardened his heart, Oppressed Hebrews (9:27–29, 34–35)	Nut: sky Osiris: crops and fertility Set: storms Seth: crops
Locusts (10:1–20)	The entire land of Egypt (10:14)	Falsely promised, God hardened his heart, Oppressed Hebrews (10:16–17, 20)	Nut: sky Osiris: crops and fertility Seth: crops
Darkness (10:21–29) <i>No warning</i>	The entire land of Egypt (not Israelites) (10:22–23)	Falsely promised, God hardened his heart, Oppressed Hebrews, Banned Moses (10:24–28)	Re, Aten, Atum, Horus: sun Nut, Hathor: sky goddesses
Death of the firstborn sons (11:1–12:32)	Throughout the land of Egypt (not Hebrews) (11:6)	Banned Moses, Banned Aaron, Released Hebrews (12:31–32)	Min: reproduction Isis: protected children Heqet: goddess of birth (Pharaoh's firstborn son, a god)

The material on Egyptian deities given in this chart was drawn from John D. Hannah, "Exodus," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Scripture Press, Victor Books, 1985), 120; John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie Books, 1978), 43; and John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 79–152.

