

02

SESSION TWO

The Sending of the Plagues

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we see how to find comfort through knowing and resting in the God of all glory and grace. We find comfort when we recognize God's unrivaled supremacy and when we embrace God's redemptive promises. We also trust God to reveal His glory by confronting and defeating all the enemies of goodness and justice.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 6:2-9; 7:14-18

THE POINT

God demonstrates His glory by comforting His people and confronting those who oppose Him.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

As students arrive, provide them with name badges and instruct them to write either what their name means or some characteristic that describes them. Allow time for students to introduce themselves to one another using their name meaning or characteristics.

- **Why is it so different to think in terms of someone's character or personality than just his or her name?**
- **Why is it important to know a person's character or personality if you are going to be in a relationship with them?**
- **Would having a relationship be easier if you had more knowledge of someone's character beforehand? Why or why not?**

Share that the name "Yahweh" is based on the Hebrew verb "to be" and is a combination of the consonants YHWH and the vowels of the word *Adonai* ("Lord"). "Jehovah" is based on English and means the same thing. "LORD" (with small caps) also means the same. This name expresses God's exclusiveness and covenant loyalty. It also indicates that God is not just a superior power or force but is a Person. In the Old Testament, the name came to describe the God who was present to save and was supremely able to deal with all circumstances.

Option 2

Begin the session by playing a game of Simon Says. Before you begin, announce that the person who wins the game will be awarded \$50. Play until one student wins. However, instead of awarding the winner with real money, give him or her a \$50 bill of play money from a board game. Ask the winner the following questions:

- **Did you have any doubts in your mind about whether or not I would really provide such a large prize? What was your reaction when you didn't receive the prize you were promised?**

Reward a real prize to the student for being a good sport. (A \$5 gift card is a great option.)

- **What is one promise that someone's made to you and kept? How did that strengthen your relationship with them?**

Point out that God never fails to keep His promises. There isn't a single promise in the Bible that He has broken.

- **What is one promise that someone's made to you and kept? How did that strengthen your relationship with them?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God demonstrates His glory by comforting His people and confronting those who oppose Him.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Moses:** biblical patriarch; chosen by God to lead His people out of captivity and to the promised land
- **Pharaoh:** ruler over Egypt

PLOT

In the previous session, we saw how God not only hears the cries of His people, but He responds by promising redemption. God has not forgotten the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is still unfolding His plan of redemption that began in the garden and would one day make all things right. God has chosen Israel to play a significant role in that redemption—to be the corridor by which all other nations will be blessed. And He will see to it that Israel is delivered not only for their good and joy, but for His glory as well.

In this session, we see God's glory and grace through the unleashing of the plagues against Pharaoh and the false gods of Egypt. And through it all, we learn that God has unrivaled supremacy. He alone is God, and He alone is worthy of all praise and glory.

TIMELINE

GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED

God displays His glory among all the peoples.

JUDGE AND SAVIOR

Even in the midst of His judgment, God provides a means of salvation.

THE RED SEA

God continues to provide for His people by parting the Red Sea.

GOD COMFORTS HIS PEOPLE

In the previous session, we saw how God commissioned Moses and his brother, Aaron, to deliver a message to Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites. As Moses and Aaron encounter Pharaoh, we see God reassuring Moses that He is in control (Ex. 6:1). Then God comforts Moses by giving several promises:

Then God spoke to Moses, telling him, “I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I did not reveal My name Yahweh to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land they lived in as foreigners. Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are forcing to work as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore tell the Israelites: I am Yahweh, and I will deliver you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and free you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am Yahweh your God, who delivered you from the forced labor of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am Yahweh.” Moses told this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their broken spirit and hard labor. (Ex. 6:2-9)

- **Make a list of the promises of God in this passage. What promises do you think would have been most meaningful to the Israelites?**
(p. 16, PSG)

Promises provide us with hope of what is to come. In the midst of darkness, promises remind us of the glory of God. Here, we find that God gave Moses several awesome reminders.

Consider these four “I will” statements: God says: (1) “I will deliver you” (Ex. 6:6a); (2) “I will redeem you” (6:6b); (3) “I will take you as My people, and I will be your God” (6:7); and (4) “I will bring you to the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (6:8). These four statements highlight God’s work of salvation. Let’s take a closer look at each:

Liberation

God said, “I will deliver you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and free you from slavery to them” (Ex. 6:6a). This is a picture of salvation. God is going to bring His people out of slavery and deliver them. God will liberate the people from bondage through his mediator Moses. This will be accomplished by grace

through faith; it isn't something that Israel earned. The purpose of this liberation is that they might worship the Almighty God. And, as we will see in Exodus 15, the people celebrate their liberation.

Redemption

In Exodus 6:6b God said, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment." With the exception of Jacob's blessing in Genesis 48:16, this is the first we see of the word *redeem*. Later it is used in Exodus 15:13, where the people are singing of God's redemption. In both cases it is the Hebrew word "gaal." When a person is the subject of this verb (as God is here), the word is "goel." God is the "redeemer," the "goel."

Adoption

God said, "I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am Yahweh your God, who delivered you from the forced labor of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7). This shows the familial nature of salvation. It reminds us of the doctrine of adoption. God is going to take Israel as His people. He has already called them his "son" (4:22). This is a display of God's matchless love.

Inheritance

"I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession" (Ex. 6:8). God promised His people that they will have a possession. This promise was first mentioned to Abraham. (See Gen. 12:7.) Later, in the book of Joshua, we see the people entering, conquering, and inhabiting the land. These people had nothing. They were slaves in Egypt. But God is going to give them an inheritance—all by His grace.

GOD CONFRONTS THOSE WHO OPPOSE HIM

Despite these amazing promises in chapter 6, Moses and the people still struggle to believe God's plan. (See 6:9-13,26-30.) In 6:10-13, God told Moses to go back to Pharaoh, yet Moses' response was one of unbelief and despair. Moses responded to God with confusion. He couldn't understand how Pharaoh would listen if the Israelites wouldn't even listen. But once again, God charged Moses and Aaron to go confront Pharaoh and finish the mission.

In addition to comforting His people, we now get to see another way that God revealed His glory: by confronting false gods. The following chapters reveal God's judgment on the Egyptians through a series of severe plagues. Today someone may look at these plagues and say, "Are you kidding me? This scene is bizarre! Is God a cosmic jerk? Is he trying to annoy the Egyptians?" Or they might be tempted to say, "This is silly and hard to believe."

It's certainly strange and severe. But we must understand that there's something bigger going on than what we see at first glance. God is judging not only the Egyptians, but also the gods of Egypt. In Exodus 12:12, God says that he is going to perform the last sign, the death of the firstborn, and in so doing

he is executing judgment “against all the gods of Egypt.” This is also repeated in Numbers: “for the LORD had executed judgment against their gods” (33:4b).

The plagues fell on all the areas of life that were supposed to have been protected by Egypt’s gods. God put His glory on display by judging these false gods. He’s the Almighty.

As we take a closer look, we will see that God’s first display of superior power is appropriate: a miracle on the Nile River:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hard: he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. Tell him: Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let My people go, so that they may worship Me in the wilderness, but so far you have not listened. This is what Yahweh says: Here is how you will know that I am Yahweh. Watch. I will strike the water in the Nile with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it.” So the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over their rivers, canals, ponds, and all their water reservoirs—and they will become blood. There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers.” Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded; in the sight of Pharaoh and his officials, he raised the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile was turned to blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad the Egyptians could not drink water from it. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their occult practices. So Pharaoh’s heart hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Pharaoh turned around, went into his palace, and didn’t even take this to heart. All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink because they could not drink the water from the river. Seven days passed after the LORD struck the Nile. (Ex. 7:14-25)

The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt. Essentially, Egypt couldn’t exist without the Nile. It was responsible for transportation, irrigation, water, food, and the setting of the calendar. This type of catastrophe would be similar to cutting off all oil supplies, the stock market collapsing, drinking water being contaminated, and having no food in the grocery store. It would be total chaos. It’s no surprise that the Egyptians worshiped the Nile as their creator and sustainer. At least three deities were associated with the Nile. But God totally humiliated these gods when he turned the mighty Nile into blood. (See also Ps. 78:44; 105:29; Rev. 16:3-7.)

The magicians countered the miracle. But the fact that the people were digging for water shows that while Egypt’s magicians repeated the sign, they

TIMELINE

THE WILDERNESS

Israel is to walk in faith and follow after God on their way to the promised land.

THE GOLDEN CALF

Israel commits idolatry against God.

THE COMMANDMENTS (PART I)

God gives Israel instructions on how to relate to Him.

couldn't cleanse the water from the Nile. Nevertheless, Pharaoh refused to "take this to heart" (v. 23).

Overall, the dominant theme in these passages is this: "You will know that I am Yahweh" (Ex. 7:17; see also 8:10,22; 9:14,16,29; 10:2). God lets everyone know that He alone is God. We must not miss this overarching theme in the midst of all the details of the plagues. God's desire is to be known and worshiped.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes the natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The truths we see in this Old Testament story are taught in the New Testament as well. For instance, Paul said that Jesus "gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). Spiritually, God sets us free from slavery and our inability to keep the law through the mediator, Jesus Christ. This occurs only by grace through faith; we haven't earned this. The purpose of our release, like the Israelites, is worship.

Not only that, but Paul said of God's choice of Israel, "to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4). In redemption, God has rescued us from a dreadful situation, but there's more! Through adoption, God brings us into His very own family. This is privilege! (See 1 John 3:1.)

Finally, The New Testament draws on this idea of inheriting the promised land to the believer's hope in the new heavens and new earth. By Jesus' resurrection, we have an "inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). Peter said this inheritance is awesome ("imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading") and assured ("kept in heaven for you"). Jesus told us that the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

For reasons like these, we can continue to live in obedience, even when it is difficult. We can rest in God's promises and trust in God's sovereignty as we make the one true God known to everyone on the earth.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why is it easy to put our trust in things we can see (money, homes, people, etc.)? Why is it more difficult to rely on the One who is invisible?** *The writer of the book of Hebrews said of Moses: "By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for Moses persevered as one who sees Him who is invisible" (11:27). In a similar fashion, we endure by relying on Him who is invisible.*
- **When was the last time you were discouraged by God's timing or lack of intervention in a difficult situation? What truths about God helped you through this time?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **Why should God's deliverance in our lives lead us to genuine worship?** *Genuine worship is a natural response of the heart that understands it has been rescued and redeemed, not by itself or through good works, but by Christ who saves.*
- **What are the false gods our society turns to for security?** *Reputation, good grades, work, insurance, home security systems, etc. Of course, that is not to say any of these things are bad in and of themselves—only that when placed on the throne of our hearts, they become false gods within our lives.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

When you think about it, God could have obliterated Pharaoh at a moment's notice, but He didn't. God's ways aren't our ways. There are things that happen and timing of events that may not make sense to us, but in the end put God's glory on full display. This means that even in our confusion and sometimes disappointment, God's ways are just and good, and they inevitably benefit us in the end.

- **Share of a time when you felt disappointed and questioned God's ways and goodness.** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How can this session help alter the way you view those disappointing times?** *Answers to this question will vary.*



HEART

In Exodus 7, the text says on a few occasions that Pharaoh's heart was hardened (vv. 14,22), which consequently prevented him from listening to the word of the Lord. Instead of allowing the series of plagues to convince him to release the Israelites, Pharaoh continued to resist the word of the Lord, and therefore became more hardened as a result. Eventually, God gave him over to the hardening of his own heart, which eventually resulted in his own death.

- **How is it that sin causes us to turn our hearts from God and His Word?** *Sin not only causes disobedience to God, but also unbelief in His Word. Because sin would make us think that disobedience to God would be more beneficial and more joyful than obedience to Him, it draws us away from His Word in unbelief.*
- **What are some ways we can guard our hearts from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin?** *One way we can do this is practice what the psalmist taught us in Psalm 119:11, namely, that by hiding God's Word in our hearts, we will be less inclined to sin against Him.*



HANDS

Like Moses and Aaron, God calls us to war against the powers of this world that keep people in bondage to sin and suffering. These powers might be things from our own fear of rejection or failure in our abilities to putting our trust in cultural messages that promise happiness in sinful pleasures that ultimately can't deliver.

- **When have you, like Moses, felt that God was asking you to do something you couldn't do?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How can resting in God's promises and trusting His sovereignty help you be obedient to Him?** *Knowing that God is faithful to keep His promises we can walk faithfully and with full assurance in the mission He has given us.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, point out item #5 to the students, which contains an informational chart of the plagues of Egypt and each false god they were directed against.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/storystart15)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject