

## 2025 Q3 Exodus - Lesson 4

### The Plagues

by Russell L. Atkins, PT

#### SABBATH

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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).

The task of Moses would have been much less difficult had not many of the Israelites become so corrupted that they were unwilling to leave Egypt. Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 260

From the lesson:

A farmer was trying to get his donkey to move; the beast wouldn't budge. So, the farmer took a thick branch and walloped it. He again spoke to the donkey, who then started moving. When someone asked the farmer why that worked, he replied, "Well, first you have to get its attention."

Putting aside whatever issue one might raise about cruelty to animals, there is a point to be made here, especially in the context of the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Moses has been given his marching orders and goes to Pharaoh with God's famous words, shalach et ami, which is, "Let My people go!"

Pharaoh, however, does not want to let God's people go. The Scriptures never explicitly explain why Pharaoh was so reluctant, despite the military threat that the Egyptians feared the Hebrews could pose (see Exod. 1:10). Most likely, as is often the case with slavery, it was pure economics. They were cheap labor, and so he didn't want to lose whatever economic advantages these slaves gave him. **Thus, he was going to need some persuasion not only to get his attention but also to change his mind.**" [emphasis mine].

Was the point of the plagues to get Pharaoh's attention or change his mind or was it to get his attention and give Pharaoh the **opportunity** to change his mind?

Didn't God know the outcome from the beginning?

The bringing of the plagues on Egypt shows us that even God knows the beginning from the end, he still gives us freewill to reject His methods and Laws and suffer the unavoidable outcomes of that rejection.

To be fair, the lesson self corrects in Sunday's lesson, but I'm not sure what the point of this donkey story is. I think if attention needed to be had and minds needed to be persuaded, it was in the Israelites and the citizens of Egypt, more than Pharaoh. God foreknew that Pharaoh would *temporarily* relent ONLY after the death of his firstborn, and even though God loved Pharaoh, and gave him every opportunity, Pharaoh alone bears the responsibility for his choices.

## **SUNDAY**

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### **God vs. gods.**

I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. (Exod. 12:12, NIV)

What kind of "judgement" was God bringing on Egypt's gods?

Were the Israelites and Egyptians brought to a position of "judgement" as well [specifically - were they to make "judgements" regarding the differences between God and gods]?

Are there any other texts that come to mind?

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water. (Revelation 14:6, 7)

Consider the metaphor[s] regarding this Exodus experience. As has been mentioned before in our class, stories in Scripture are actual events happening to actual people at a time / place in history, but have broader meanings with respect to the cosmic controversy between Jesus and Satan.

- Israelites = humanity.
- Slavery in Egypt = Slavery to sin.
- Plagues = Life's experiences / losses that make us yearn for something better. These are either brought by God, allowed by Him, or the consequences of our choices.
- Literal Exodus = The point where we decide to follow God's leadership, and leave our sinful state.

Note: He immediately led the group to the shore of the Red Sea, hemmed in by mountains on either side with an impassable sea in front and the pursuing Egyptian army behind them for the purpose of strengthening their faith. They had no choice but to rely on Him, and he parted the Red Sea symbolizing the baptism [dying to self] and walking through on dry ground. He will lead us into places, events, and relationships to test and strengthen our faith and reliance on Him.

There are many other object lessons from this: The golden calf, pillar of cloud / fire, God's presence on Sinai, The Sanctuary theater, water from the Rock, Wandering in the desert, Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the loss of faith before entering Cannan, etc.

Many well meaning Christians want to draw parallels between the plagues of Egypt and the plagues afflicting earth just before Christ comes. What are some key differences between the two sets of plagues?

1. God exercises power to bring the plagues of Egypt. The plagues before Christ's return occur when God STOPS using power [to restrain Satan and his forces].
2. The plagues of Egypt were for the purpose of transformation of hearts & minds regarding the impotence of Egypt's gods. The end time plagues occur AFTER humans have made a choice to ally themselves with God and His methods, or Satan and his methods.
3. The plagues of Egypt function as a method of making the Israelites and Egyptians dissatisfied with their situation and yearning for something better. The end time plagues are the outworking of people's choices in accordance with the Laws of God [Design Protocols for Life and Reality], AND a revelation of Satan's character in dealing with his children.

From the Lesson:

The upcoming battles were going to be between the living God and the Egyptian “gods.” What made things worse was that Pharaoh considered himself to be one of those gods. The Lord did not fight against the Egyptians, or even Egypt per se, but against their deities (the Egyptians venerated more than 1,500 gods and goddesses). The biblical text is explicit: “On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord” (Exod. 12:12, ESV). Later, it is once again emphasized, this time when Israel’s journey from Egypt was recounted: “The Lord had brought judgment on their gods” (Num. 33:4, NIV).

The "upcoming battles" were going to be between the Living God [Creator] and Satan [created being]. Every false "god" is but a manifestation of Satan and his character or his attempts to misrepresent God's character.

From the bottom section in Sunday's lesson:

How can we allow the Lord to have sovereignty over any of the “gods” seeking supremacy in our lives?

Is sovereignty the source of the problem?

Was the Lord's sovereignty the cause of the original controversy?

Doesn't an understanding of the distinction between Design and imposed law eliminate the need to argue about sovereignty?

## MONDAY

### Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

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From the Lesson:

Nine times in Exodus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God (Exod. 4:21; Exod. 7:3; Exod. 9:12; Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; Exod. 11:10; Exod. 14:4, 8; see also Rom. 9:17, 18). Another nine times Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; Exod. 8:15, 19, 32; Exod. 9:7, 34, 35). Who hardened the king's heart—God, or Pharaoh himself? It is significant that in the Exodus story of the ten plagues, in each of the first five plagues, Pharaoh alone was the agent of his heart hardening. Thus, he initiated the hardening of his own heart. From the sixth plague on, however, the biblical text states that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 9:12). **What all this means is that God strengthened or deepened Pharaoh's own choice, his willful action, as God had told Moses He would do (Exod. 4:21).**" [emphasis mine].

Did God strengthen / deepen Pharaoh's choices? If so, how?

We went over this last week, but let's revisit it.

- **The law of truth:** You can never avoid the truth; you can only delay the day you deal with it.
  - When truth is embraced and accepted, it displaces lies and frees a person from fear and misunderstanding, elevating and ennobling the individual. Truths build together into beliefs, constructs, and perspectives that form our understanding of reality, leading us back to trust in our Creator God. In trust, we open our hearts and experience the indwelling Spirit of God that transforms and ennobles us to be beings of love rather than beings of selfishness. All truth comes from God and, if followed, will lead back to God.
  - When truth is rejected, our understanding is confused, our mind is damaged, **our heart is hardened**, and we slowly become less capable of understanding reality — the truth of God's kingdom and the world around us. Such individuals will one day face the truth, but it will be painful and destructive to them as they still hate the truth and want to flee from it, even begging for the mountains and rocks to hide them from reality (Luke 23:30). [emphasis mine] <https://comeandreason.com/design-laws-of-god/>.

Through repeated rejection of Truth, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. God created the Laws that govern life and reality, therefore He will take the credit or blame for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, even though Pharaoh was free to embrace Truth and live.

## TUESDAY - THURSDAY

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### The Nine Plagues.

The lesson brings out some interesting points regarding the different "gods" shown to be worthless in the plagues. I don't want to wade through the details of which god was supposed to control what -- I want to take a bigger picture approach. In the teachers quarterly, the author notes some patterns with regard to the plagues.

From Tuesday's Lesson:

Of course, only the living God is the Source of life, the Creator of everything, including water and food (Gen. 1:1, 2, 20–22; Ps. 104:27, 28; Ps. 136:25; John 11:25; John 14:6). Changing water into blood symbolizes transforming life into death. Hapi was not able to provide and protect life. These are possible only through the power of the Lord.

God [Love] takes great risk of being misunderstood. Some of the Egyptians / Israelites could see God as the source of death, instead of the only source of Life. God met them where they were in their moral development, and got their attention.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Prov. 9:10.

From the Teacher's Edition of the Lesson:

1. The first nine plagues may be divided into three clusters, or groups, of three plagues. The tenth plague is unique and separated from the rest. The people will need a special time and provision to face it.
2. The first nine plagues affected all three habitats created by God in Genesis 1: the heavens (plagues seven to nine), the earth (plagues three to six), and the waters (plagues one and two). Collectively, these plagues allude to de-creation. **[ed: I would suggest God's intent was to make the point that believing in ANY false god leads to death -- the opposite of creation.]**
3. The first nine plagues intensify, becoming more and more severe in the process of time, as Pharaoh stubbornly refuses to let God's people go in order that they might freely worship their Creator Lord. The first three plagues were mild, quick, and did not cause death. The next three plagues (plagues four to six) were more serious and harmful, as they destroyed livestock and afflicted humans with skin sores. The following three plagues (plagues seven to nine) were more devastating, involving the death of people and animals but also the destruction of crops.
4. Generally speaking, each plague fell after a clear warning and plea to surrender to the Lord's demand. Surprises occurred, but devastation was announced beforehand and could be avoided. An exceptional warning is given before the first two plagues and the tenth, but see also

transparent warnings in the introductions to plagues four, five, seven, and eight.

5. Before plagues three, six, and nine, there is little to no confrontation with Pharaoh.
6. The first three plagues fell on the Egyptians and the Israelites, but all the remaining plagues came only upon the Egyptians.
7. Prior to the occurrence of the first plague, God performed a miracle before Pharaoh: Aaron's staff became a snake that ate all the magicians' snakes. Yet, "Pharaoh's heart became hard" (Exod. 7:13, NIV).
8. The last plague was the most destructive because each family that was not under the protection of the blood of the lamb was affected by the death of its firstborn son. Before the last plague fell, God, in His mercy, gave the people three days of darkness for reflection, meditation, and repentance, as well as instruction on how to avoid the final devastation.
9. It is after the sixth plague that the record declares that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Exod. 9:12, NIV; see also Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; Exod. 11:10; and also Exod. 14:4, 8, 17). During the first five plagues, it was Pharaoh who hardened his heart (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; Exod. 8:15, 19, 32; Exod. 9:7; Exod. 9:35). Before the actual story about the ten plagues, there are two predictions by God stating that He, the Lord, will harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 4:21, Exod. 7:3).
10. Magicians could imitate only the first two plagues. When the third plague occurred, they aptly stated: "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19). Later they themselves suffered with boils (Exod. 9:11; see also the urging of Pharaoh's "officials," Exod. 10:7, NIV).
11. The plagues also can be gathered into pairs: plagues one and two are connected with the river Nile; plagues three and four are flying insects (gnats/mosquitoes and flies); plagues five and six resemble each other, with pestilence occurring on animals and boils on humans; plagues seven and eight describe damage to crops; plagues nine and ten are related to darkness—one to physical darkness and the other to the ultimate darkness, namely, death of the firstborn.
12. It is interesting to note that the Lord specifically invited Pharaoh seven times to " 'Let my people go' " (Exod. 5:1; Exod. 7:16; Exod. 8:1, 20; Exod. 9:1, 13; Exod. 10:3) and once used a negative conditional phrase: " 'If you do not let my people go, I will send . . . ' " (Exod. 8:21, NIV). Pharaoh consented after the second, fourth, seventh, and ninth plagues (Exod. 8:8, Exod. 8:25–28, Exod. 9:28, Exod. 10:24), but, in the end, refused to let the people go to worship the Lord (Exod. 8:15, Exod. 8:32, Exod. 9:35, Exod. 10:27). He even asked Moses to pray to end specific plagues and to pray also for him (Exod. 8:8, 28; Exod. 9:28; Exod. 10:16, 17). Only after the tenth plague did he summon Moses and Aaron and commanded them: "And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also" (Exod. 12:31, 32).

## 2025 Q3 Questions & Answers #2

1. I am struggling answering one question that comes up when I try to explain Design Law concept. People ask “but why did Jesus have to suffer and die?” Can you please give me a concise one sentence answer that Penal Substitutions might understand?

A: <https://comeandreason.com/why-did-jesus-have-to-die/>

You need to exercise your understanding and presentation abilities to strengthen them. No one else can do this for you.

2. Why doesn't the rest of christendom use the catholic 'sign of the cross'?

A: I don't know.

3. Off topic, but what does being “equally yoked” in courtship leading to marriage actually mean through a Design Law lens or from what God originally intended for us. As an SDA, I am confused as to how much agreement in beliefs of ie sleep death, Sabbath...we should let play into our decision. Should we be focused more on fruit/character of the other person through Design Law. Is marrying outside of SDA truly frowned upon for our protection or just a made up imposed rule.

A: <https://comeandreason.com/unity-versus-division/>.

Unfortunately, marrying within the SDA denomination does NOTHING to guarantee success. Our divorce rates, addiction rates, spousal / child abuse rates, pornography use, etc is no different than the rest of mainstream Christianity -- and Christianity is no different than the non-religious.

I would recommend focusing on character issues [ed: I'm still single and nearly 60, so take with a bucket of salt]. How well do they naturally conform to Design Laws - especially the Law of Liberty.

4. Pastors usually teach that God does not hear the prayers of those who are not saved, that only the saved can pray to Jesus and that he relays those prayers to God the father (ROMANS 8:34). Yet Dr Jennings mentioned in a video that faith healers who don't believe in God can pray for other people and even animals and the prayers are working as healing takes place. Where are pastors going wrong in their understanding of prayer and how does this change the way we understand Jesus making intercession?

A: Pastors teach many things about God that are untrue. Do not surrender your independent thought processes to an authority figure -- your pastor, me, Tim, the Pope, Dr Fauci, etc.

I can't speak for every pastor, but many think Jesus is making intercession with his Father in order to get Him to be forgiving, less angry, more merciful, etc instead of what's actually happening. The entire Godhead, and all of the heavenly hosts are interceding with humanity. We need the intercession, not God.

5. What year did Dr Jennings discover the integrated evidence based approach to interpreting the Bible and what year did he start publicly teaching the design law view of the Bible?

A: I believe around 2010-12, but Tim may have a different answer.

6. Why did Jesus tell Mary not to touch him as He had not yet gone through the Father? What needed to happen? Please explain.

A: I suspect that Jesus restricted Mary from touching him so she could remain "ritualistically" clean [Lev. 21:11 and Num. 19:11-13, even though the "ceremonial" law was destroyed at the Cross. As for "I have not yet gone to my Father", I think that's self-evident, He needed/wanted to see His Father.

7. Regarding the issue of buying/selling in end times. Most think of a financial transaction to purchase material items. The more I read It keeps coming to me that buying/selling may involve things not tangible ...like when the Lord says...Come buy from me gold that has been refined in the fire, the parable of the pearl of great price, parables in Matthew 13, the various other stories involving treasure and selling (giving up) what you have to buy that which is precious and eternal. Thoughts?

A: I agree with your insights. I think it may well be human restrictions on purchasing actual commodities via a "social credit" system [already in place in China], Central Bank Digital Currencies [CBDC's] being developed in nearly all first world nations, vaccine passports [already happened 4-5 years ago], hyperinflation [c.f. Weimar Republic 1920's], and restrictions I can't even think of. In addition, as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, those who have delayed their preparation [Parable of the Ten Virgins], may find themselves searching for comfort, grace, love and come up empty.

8. Peace and blessings. When did Moses wrote [sic] the book of Genesis and the book of Job was it before the Exodus are after [sic]? If it was before, why didn't he have the issue at the burning bush?

A: I don't actually know the dates. It's reasonable to conclude that Job & Genesis were written before Exodus as the literal Exodus had not yet occurred. I suspect Moses wrote Exodus as it was happening in real time.

I'm not sure I understand your question with the burning bush, however. What issue are you asking about?