

Episode: Promised Land Series No. 04

Narrator: Second Israelite Elder

Primary Scriptures: Exodus 5-14

Story Summary: Bricks without straw, the plagues, leaving Egypt, crossing Red Sea

Location: Egypt

Time: c. 1526 BC Birth of Moses

c. 1446 BC The plagues and exodus

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Exodus 5:2; 6:2-3, 6:9; 7:6; 10:7, 10:9; 12:24, 12:36; 13:8; 14:13-14, 14:31

When the Israelites choose God, they are probably expecting to be immediately released from slavery and given plenty of food. Instead, their hardship increases as Pharaoh decides they should also gather the straw for the bricks they were making. Both Moses and the Israelites were quick to question God.

God uses Pharaoh to show God's power. Think of each of the plagues as representing an important god or value of the Egyptians. Every time God imposes a plague, it demonstrates that he is much more powerful than the Egyptian gods.

The Israelites want immediate relief from their slavery, but God knows it is much more important to show his omnipotence, revealing the impotence of the Egyptian gods. God knows it will be simple to get the people out of Egypt, but nearly impossible to get Egypt out of the people.

The deaths of the firstborn of all the Egyptians was the last sign needed. This tenth plague is the basis for the Passover celebration that will be celebrated by God's own firstborn Son on the night before he is crucified.

God finally makes it more painful for the Egyptians to stay the same than to make a change. God instructs the Israelites to get treasures from the Egyptians on the way out. He knows the people won't need the treasure for themselves since they will be in the desert, but the valuables will be used for something much more important to them than personal riches.

Genesis 12:31-32 indicates that Pharaoh thought he was only releasing the Israelites to go worship in the desert as Moses had originally requested, and expected them to return. Genesis 14:5 describes Pharaoh's change of mind when he learned the Israelites had fled Egypt and had no intention of returning. Pharaoh may or may not have understood that his change of mind was in accordance with his hardening heart that God had imposed on him.

The crossing of the Red Sea is one of the most famous of all Bible stories. It is God's final blow to show his complete domination over the government and the gods of Egypt. The Israelites know they cannot ever return to Egypt, and they should be completely convinced of the power of God and his love for them. How long will their devotion last?

Discussion Questions:

1. Exodus 5:22-23 tells of Moses' reaction after finding that Pharaoh took away the straw from the Israelites. Do you read those verses as Moses disbelieving God or more just wanting to understand what God is doing? Read Exodus 6:9-12 and see if your position changes.
 2. Exodus 6:12 shows that Moses did not have complete faith in God's power before the plagues. Do think his faith grew as the plagues progressed? When do you think Moses became fully convinced of God's power?
 3. To modern people, the ten plagues seem random and a little weird. Would it seem differently if the writer of Exodus had specifically correlated an Egyptian god with each of the plagues?
 4. Read Genesis 15:13, and obvious reference to the Israelites' time in Egypt. How does that verse impact your understanding of God's foreknowledge of the future?
 5. God planned for the Israelites to take immense wealth from the Egyptians. Why did he do that? What good would it do them in the desert?
5. He planned for some of it to be used in the building of the tabernacle. He may have held out hope that they would act in such a way that he could take them straight to the Promised Land.

Application Questions:

1. From the very first meeting of the elders with Moses until Moses dies more than forty years later, the Israelites seem to cycle between belief and unbelief. But that cycle seems to be very correlated with their expectations of whether things will be easy or difficult. Do you find your level of belief wavering depending on the difficulty of circumstances?
2. Have you known people who walked away from their faith in God? Why did they do so?
3. What does it mean to have a hard heart? If you have ever felt like you had one, how did it get softened?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Throughout the story of the plagues, God hardens Pharaoh's heart. What does it mean to have a hard heart? Could Pharaoh have chosen not to have a hard heart?
2. This story tells us God visited the plagues on all the Egyptians even though Pharaoh who was the only one resisting God. How does this fit your concept of a loving God?
3. It took overwhelming, disastrous force to get Pharaoh's attention. What does it take to get your attention? What kind of force is the most effective?