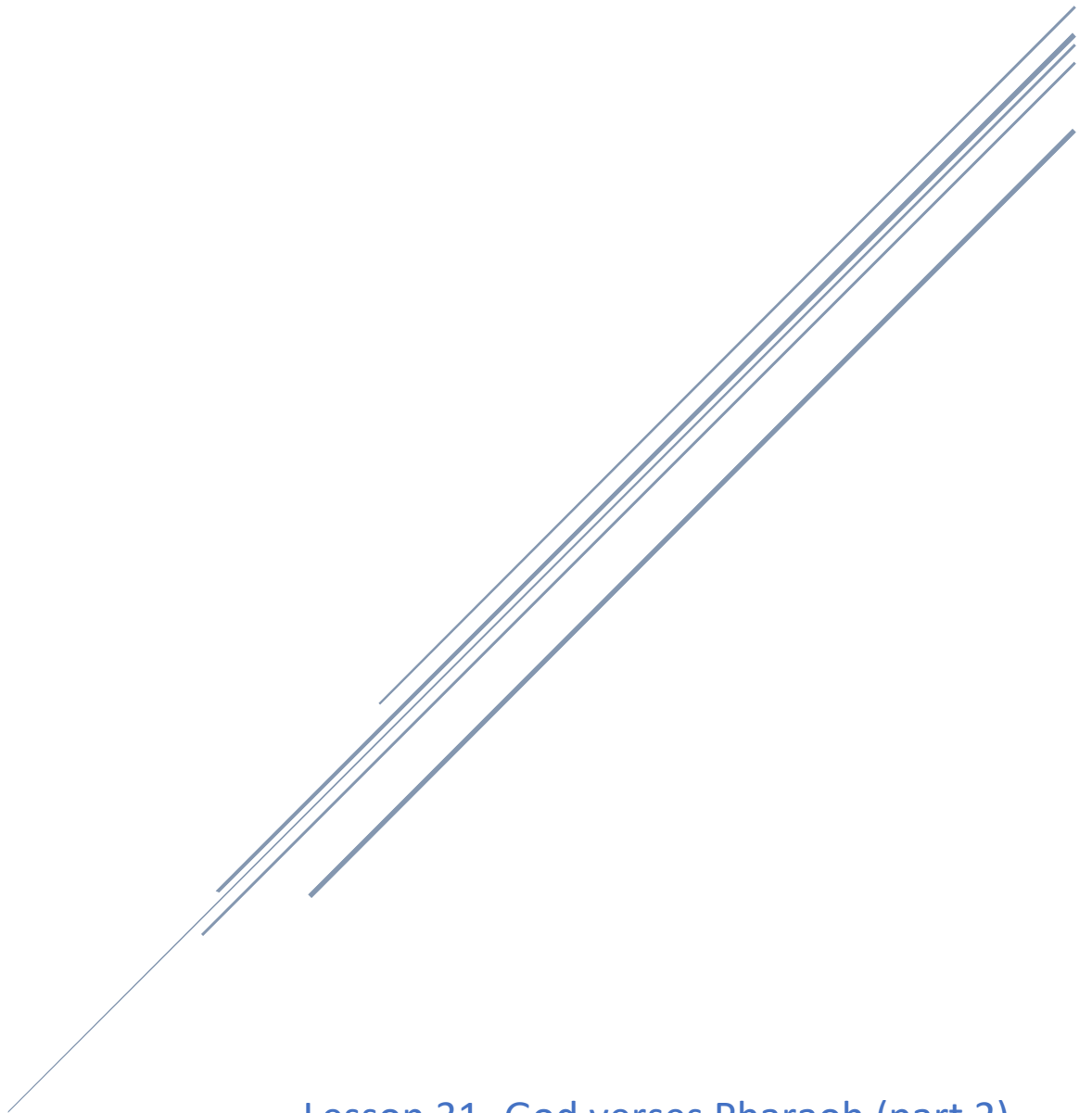


THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, AND US

Understand the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, and Our place in God's plan



Lesson 31- God verses Pharaoh (part 2)
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Introduction

We have explored the first few plagues and signs God performed to show Pharaoh, and Egypt, that Yahweh is the only true God. Not only this, but they were intended to cause Pharaoh's heart to change so he would release Israel to go and serve God in the Promised Land.

Each plague is also a direct attack from God on the Egyptian deities. God is engaging in a type of evangelism. He is showing the Egyptians they must turn from their false gods who are fake and worship the only true living God.

We will explore more plagues in part two of God verses Pharaoh.

Sixth Sign/ Fifth Plague: Death of Livestock

Exodus 9:1-7

Next, God instructs Moses to go back to Pharaoh and give him another warning. This time God says a severe plague will strike all the livestock, horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. Notice in verse four, the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. Nothing that belongs to the people of Israel will die during this plague.

Verse five says the Lord set a specific time He would do this. Why do you think God did this?

The results of this plague was Egypt's livestock were killed, but none of Israel's. The other result just like we have seen before is Pharaoh did not repent. Instead, he hardened his heart even more stubbornly.

This is called a plague in many Bibles. The King James Version calls it murrain. This is an old English word for plague, pestilence, or disease. We are not told the precise type of disease, but God sent some type of severe pestilence, or plague disease, upon the livestock.

Why do you think the death of their livestock was a hard hit to Egypt?

Not only was God judging the wealth of Egypt by killing off massive amounts of their livestock, He was yet again showing Egypt that Yahweh has power over their false gods. Many Egyptian gods and goddesses were symbolized and depicted as some type of livestock.

There was Buchis, the sacred bull of Hermonthis, and Mnevis, who was worshiped at Heliopolis. Sometimes bulls were considered to embody the gods Ptah and Ra. But the chief bull was Apis. At the temple in Memphis, priests maintained a sacred enclosure where they kept a live bull considered to be the incarnation of Apis. When the venerable bull died, he was given an elaborate burial. Archaeologists have discovered funeral niches for hundreds of these bulls near Memphis.¹

The Egyptian queen of the gods was the goddess, Isis. She was depicted with cow horns. The goddess Hathor was depicted with a cow head. We could keep going but you see the idea that livestock for the Egyptians was both a source of great economic wealth and viewed as sacred, divine, and used to depict their false gods and goddesses.

Specifically, cows were considered very sacred by the Egyptians and worshipped for many different reasons. This makes sense when we see in Exodus 32 that Israel rebelled against God and made the golden calf and bowed down to it. Why a cow? Israel witnessed cattle worship for 400 years in Egypt. This became incredibly common to see people worship cow statues as images of their gods.

God showed Pharaoh and Egypt once again Yahweh is the only one true God. God judged all of their livestock god/goddesses.

We need to make one point of clarification before we move on. The wording in verse six is that, “*All the livestock of the Egyptians died.*” However, we will see in the plague of hail that God warns people to bring in their livestock from the field or else they will be destroyed. How could all the livestock be killed in verse six, but yet there are more livestock that yet can die in Exodus 9:19?

There are a couple of possibilities. Let me quote from two famous Old Testament scholars who have attempted an answer that I believe is highly probable.

“In the words ‘*all the cattle of the Egyptians died,*’ *all* is not to be taken in an absolute sense, but according to popular usage, as denoting such a quantity, that what

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 262–263.

remained was nothing in comparison; and, according to v. 3, it must be entirely restricted to the cattle *in the field*.”²

It is highly likely that the word *all* does not literally mean every single livestock. Rather, like we so often do in English, we use the word *all* to speak of ‘a great many amount.’

The other point these scholars make that is good for us to see is God seems to have focused only the livestock that was already pasturing in the fields. This means the livestock in the barns were excluded.

Sixth Sign/Fifth Plague: Boils

Exodus 9:8-12

God instructs Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of *soot and kiln* (ashes of sorts). They are to throw it in the air and it will become like fine dust over the land. Boils will break out in sores on both people and animal.

Note in verse eleven that Pharaoh’s magicians could not stand before Moses because the sores on them broke out so badly.

Many have speculated what were these boils. The word in Hebrew is used a few other times in the Old Testament. In fact, it is often translated as leprosy. It is possible these boils were a severe form of leprosy. Others have speculated it was a type of smallpox. The word can be translated literally as a severe sore, blister, or ulcer. Imagine many of these burning and itching across your body. This was an intense skin disease that broke out.

This recorded plague is interesting for several reasons. Notice that God did not let Moses go warn Pharaoh like he had before. Also, we do not have it recorded like other plagues that Pharaoh begged Moses to pray for God to stop the pain. It makes us wonder if these boils/sores ever went away.

Again, Israel was protected from this plague.

The Egyptians believed that the gods helped them learn medicine and that the gods created diseases and could cure diseases. They worshipped the god Amon-Re, the creator god, that was called a physician who heals. Thoth was the Egyptian god over the healing arts. Imhotep was the god of medicine.

² Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 316.

Sekhmet was the most famous Egyptian god over disease. In fact the priests of Sekhmet formed one of the oldest medical fraternities of history.

“This is reflected in the fact that Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess, was supposed to have had the power of both creating epidemics and bringing them to an end. A special priesthood was devoted to her called *Sunu*. Amulets and other objects were employed by the Egyptians to ward off evil in their lives.”³

Once again, Yahweh showed Egypt that He alone has the power over life, health, sickness and disease.

Seventh Sign/ Sixth Plague: Hail

Exodus 9:13-35

God warns Pharaoh again before this plague. God specifically says Pharaoh will feel the plagues from this point on personally. God furthermore says this is so that Pharaoh can know there is none like God in all the earth.

Let's notice verses 15 and 16.

God says by now He could have truly put out His hand and destroyed Pharaoh and the rest of the Egyptians. They would have been completely cut off from the earth. But, God has allowed Pharaoh to remain up to this point so that God can show His mighty power before Him. Not only this, God says He has raised Pharaoh up for this moment.

God told Pharaoh that while he considers himself deity on earth, the harsh reality is Pharaoh is nothing. God, and God alone, had let Pharaoh rise to power. It was God who had allowed Pharaoh to be who he was. Why? So that this moment could come for God to demonstrate to the stubborn Pharaoh that Yahweh is the only true God with all the power.

Furthermore, God says it was so that His name would be proclaimed in all the earth. The plagues are a form of evangelism!

God warned Pharaoh that he was still exalting himself and God would bring him down.

The plague this time will be hail fall from the sky like Egypt had never experienced before. God gave a merciful warning. He warned that everyone must get their livestock

³ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 272.

and their other possessions out of the field and put under shelter or else they will be destroyed.

Notice verse 20, those who feared the word of the Lord obeyed this warning. Even many of Pharaoh's own servants obeyed God this time. Verse 21, many left their animals and their servants out in the field because they had no regard for God's word.

The end result was hail struck both man and beast left outside. Trees and plants were not excluded either. Israel was spared once again.

God once again showed the Egyptians gods had no power to stop the mighty hand of Yahweh.

Pharaoh makes another false confession.

He says he has sinned and admits the Lord is right. He begs Moses to ask God to stop the hail. He promises to let them go this time.

Moses warns Pharaoh that he knows he does not truly fear God yet. Once the hail stopped, Pharaoh sinned again. He hardened his heart. He did not let Israel go.

Conclusion

We see in round two of our study of the plagues that God is winning, and Pharaoh is losing. God proves time and time over that He alone is God. He alone as the power over everything the Egyptians worshipped.

Next time we will finish the plagues and talk about the big one, the Passover event.