

# **"The Plagues of Egypt"**

*The Present Truth* – February 14, 1901

E. J. Waggoner

Pharaoh did not listen to the message God sent him, that we learned about last week, but instead of letting God's people go, he gave them more and harder work to do. God wanted to show to Pharaoh that "no idol is anything," and that the false gods he worshipped could not even save themselves, much less those who trusted in them.

It was necessary for the Children of Israel to learn this too, and so God sent plagues upon Egypt, each one of which was to show the people that the gods they worshipped had no power to help them. The Lord told the Israelites that these plagues were sent so that "ye and Pharaoh shall know that I am Jehovah."

You have all heard of the ten plagues of Egypt, and no doubt some of you can tell in their order just what they were. First came the turning of the water into blood. The River Nile was worshipped by the Egyptians, as the Ganges now is by the Hindus. Rain very seldom falls in the land of Egypt, and nearly all the water that the people had came from the Nile which at certain seasons overflowed its banks and watered all the surrounding country.

But instead of looking to the Fountain of Living waters, from whom comes all the water in the world, the Egyptians worshipped the Nile, the channel through which it came to them. So now its sacred waters were turned into a curse instead of a blessing to them. All the fish in the river of blood died, and their decaying bodies made the waters still more corrupt.

Then, coming forth from the river, multitudes of frogs swarmed over the land, made their way into the houses, and were found even in the king's bedchamber, and upon the bed. They got into everything in the houses, even in the kneading-troughs in which the bread was made, and the ovens where the food was cooked. The plague was so great that Pharaoh asked Moses to pray that God would take it away. So God caused the frogs to die, and their dead bodies were piled up in heaps. They filled the land with their dreadful smell, and made it still more corrupt. Thus again the river was made the source of trouble, instead of the good that they expected from it.

Then came the plague of lice upon man, and beast throughout the land. This impure insect was specially hateful to Egyptians, and no priest was allowed to approach the altars of Egypt with any such thing upon his body. To make sure that they were perfectly free from everything of the kind they shaved the heads and bodies every few days. But now upon the priests, as upon all the people, came the horrid plague of lice, which must have put a stop to all their acts of worship, because they could not go near the altars until they were free from it. Then even the magicians said, "This is the finger of God."

Another of the gods of Egypt was Beelzebub, the Fly-god, who was supposed to protect them from the swarms of flies that sometimes visited the land in the very hot weather. They thought that this idol had the power to remove them. But now "divers sorts of flies" came in myriads, darkening the air, filling the houses, and even covering the ground; and Beelzebub had no power to drive them away. So again they were taught the powerlessness of their idols, and were obliged to look to the God of the Hebrews to help them.

The next plague came upon one of the favourite gods of Egypt. Nearly all animals are worshipped by the Egyptians. You have most likely heard of their sacred bulls, and will remember that when the Israelites fell into idolatry in the wilderness they made a god in the form of a calf—a golden calf. In destroying their cattle the Lord was showing them the folly of all such worship, and that He is the Supreme God over all.

The Egyptians sometimes offered human sacrifices to the god of evil, whom they called Typhon. The victims were burned alive, and then the ashes were gathered together and thrown up into the air by the priests, who supposed that evil would be kept away from every place to which any atom of the ashes was carried by the wind.

God told Moses to take some of the ashes from the furnace, and cast it into the air, and the dust should be carried all over the land of Egypt, and make boils and blains come upon all the people. No doubt the priests had used this means to try to protect themselves from the plagues, but this itself became another plague, and brought them trouble instead of help. So again they were shown that there was no help except in the God of Israel.

An army of locusts and caterpillars, that came and went only at the bidding of Moses, and "did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruits of their ground," showed them the folly of trusting in their god Serapis, whose work was supposed to be to protect the country from locusts.

The chief gods of the Egyptians, as of all other heathen nations, were the sun and moon, which they worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris. They were supposed to rule the light and the elements, to give good or bad weather, and the plagues of hail and darkness were specially against them. For three days and nights the sun and moon were hidden from the Egyptians by a veil of thick darkness that might be felt.

Yet the Israelites "had light in their dwellings," for the true Sun of Righteousness whose glory is but dimly reflected in the sun and moon, was with them.

Still the hard heart of Pharaoh would not submit to Jehovah, who delivered him from all these plagues, as soon as he asked to have them taken away, for God wanted to help and save him. But after each plague, as he and the other Egyptians refused to acknowledge the true God, their hearts got harder, and they went into deeper darkness.

Yet God give them one more opportunity. He showed Himself to them in the tenth plague as the God of Judgment, that they might know what would be the result of turning away from the light He had given them. About this terrible plague, and the deliverance of the Israelites, we must talk next week.