

## Sin Leads to Death: The Final Plague

---

Zach Carter

Exodus: Redeemer and Redeemed / Exodus 11:1–10; Exodus 12:29–32

---

### Discussion Questions

1. The introduction emphasizes the importance of understanding the severity of our sin before we can appreciate the cure provided by Jesus. Discuss how realizing the gravity of sin has changed your perspective on God's grace and the sacrifice of Jesus.
  2. Reflect on the sermon's point that God's judgment is certain (Exodus 11:1-3). How does the certainty of God's judgment influence your daily life and decisions?
  3. Consider the sermon's observation that God's judgment is total (Exodus 11:4-10). How does the inclusivity of this judgment (affecting every firstborn in Egypt) challenge modern perspectives on God's justice and mercy? Discuss the balance between God's holiness and His provision of a way out through obedience and faith.
  4. The sermon states that God's judgment brings about salvation (Exodus 12:31-32). How does this paradox of judgment leading to salvation manifest in your own spiritual journey or understanding of the gospel?
  5. The sermon concludes with the idea that God's judgment and salvation are rooted in His character of holiness and love. Discuss how the character of God as both holy and loving has become real in your personal life or community experience.
  6. Reflect on the act of faith required in the Exodus story—covering one's home with the blood of the lamb—as compared to the act of faith required in the New Testament, trusting in Christ. How does this comparison help you understand the continuity of faith in God's promises from the Old Testament to the New Testament?
- 

### Introduction

If we have not reckoned with the righteousness of God, we will come to passages like this one today and scorn or scoff and could be deluded to think that God is wicked for doing such a thing.

Here is why that is a grave mistake: to say “They didn’t deserve it” is to say “I don’t deserve it.” To do so would be to ultimately reject Jesus, for reasons I’ll soon explain.

You will hear good news today, but you have to see how severe the disease is before you will ever look for its cure.

#### Exodus 11:1–10 ESV

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. <sup>2</sup> Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.” <sup>3</sup> And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people. <sup>4</sup> So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, <sup>5</sup>

and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.<sup>6</sup> There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.<sup>7</sup> But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.<sup>8</sup> And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”<sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

And [Exodus 12:29-32](#)

### **Exodus 12:29–32 ESV**

<sup>29</sup> At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.<sup>30</sup> And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.<sup>31</sup> Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said.<sup>32</sup> Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!”

**Textual Idea:** The tenth and final plague is a judgement so uniquely devastating that it breaks the will of Pharaoh and causes him to eject the people from Egypt.

**Sermon Idea:** God’s judgement leads to the salvation of his people.

I want to make a few textual comments for why our passage is broken up like this. Part of the reason that the plagues are divided into three triads with the tenth plague offset is the textual purpose of Moses has.

By putting the Passover meal in the middle of the this plague, we see that God brings salvation through judgement. Life prospers in the land of death for those who love the Lord.

## **1. God’s judgement is certain (11:1-3)**

### **Why Break the Passage Up Like This?**

- One of the clues that this plague is different is the separation of the announcement (here) and the event (12:29-32).
- Moses inserts this here, so that subsequent generations understand the meaning of the Passover. Those who do not do as Moses says—those who harden their hearts or scoff at God’s Word here—will not escape the plague because they live in Goshen.
- **Here, and throughout all of Scripture, salvation from judgement belongs to those who hear and obey the Word of God.**

### **See the Certainty of the Result God Wills**

- It is a terrifying thought that the first nine plagues were warm-ups for this tenth and final plague. But, God knew all along—and regularly reminded Moses—that this was the order of operation:

#### **Exodus 3:19–20 ESV**

<sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

### **Exodus 4:23 ESV**

<sup>23</sup> and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’ ”

### **Exodus 6:1 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

- This final plague makes it obvious that the Egyptian pantheon was powerless in the face of Yahweh. Some scholars even suggest that the Exodus was such a cataclysmic event that it contributed to the decline of the fairly stable Old Kingdom into the turbulent First Intermediate period.
- God allows the Israelites to ask for tribute from their neighbors to speed them along their way. This, presumably, will be used to make the features in the tabernacle and more.
- “Moses was very great” does not quite mean that he was popular. Instead, he is infamous.

## **2. God's judgement is total (11:4-10)**

- Right off the bat, please notice a severe difference between even this plague and the last one. Can anyone spot what is missing? “Let my people go.” **It is too late for Pharaoh. Please see that as long as today is called today it is not too late for you.**
- Here, however, Yahweh wants Pharaoh to know what is happening and to know how extensive the judgement will fall. What does he say?
  - i. Every single firstborn in Egypt will die, including the heir to the throne.
  - ii. It does not matter whether the child was a slave girl milling grain or the first cow from a heifer.
- While some commentators point at this as a retributive judgement—remember that Pharaoh killed the Hebrew boys—the death of the first born animals. What seems to be in view is the holiness of God. You see, the law of God—[Ex 13:13](#)—will declare that every first born animal belongs to the Lord, but that if an animal is not fit for sacrifice it can have a substitute. There are no substitutes found within Egypt, anywhere. God's salvation is exclusive. There are not even substitutes for the cows in the field.

## **3. God's judgement will be executed (12:29-30)**

- One of the most striking things about this plague is just how concise it is. Egypt's role in the story of God's people is nearly conclusion. Moses spills no more ink.
- Throughout the Bible, there is a clear and causal link between sin and death. So, we ought to see that sin causes death.
- When God judges the world at the end of all things, there is not a sacrifice for anyone outside of Christ. If we do not know how great the gap is between us and God, we will assume everything is okay. But it's not. You cannot make yourself right with God by doing “good enough.”

## **4. God's judgement brings about salvation (12:31-32)**

- You see, ultimately the death of the firstborn here is what led to the salvation of the people out of Egypt. They entered as refugees, suffered as slaves, and processed out as victors with all of their possessions. God's salvation does not leave them as beggars.
- Precisely because of the way that God institutes the Passover in the context of deliverance and judgement conditions the way we are to think about salvation.
  1. The evidence of God's glory is everywhere. Evidence enough to see that the Lord is God.

2. God's glory and His people's good means he cannot set aside the hardness of people's hearts. He must deal with it!
  3. In the final plague on Egypt, the judgement falls on anyone who has not covered their home with the blood of the lamb. The same for Jesus. Why else does John say "Behold the Lamb"?
  4. The act of faith, acting as if God's promise are true, in the Exodus included the act of preparing the meal and doorpost. In the New Testament age, the life is the same: act because you believe the promise of God is true and trust in Christ. That simply means that you are not going to try to cover you own life, but claim Christ as your own.
- You see, because God's judgement is certain, total, and will be executed, an equally sufficient substitute is necessary. God provided the means at Passover and we'll learn later in the law. However, a final sufficient substitute was necessary, which is why God took on flesh ([John 1:14](#)) and went to the cross.
  - You see, even in the midst of judgement, there is a means for redemption. Because God's judgement is certain, total, and will be executed, God's salvation is equally certain, total, and effective because they spin for the essential characteristics of who God is—holy and love.

## Bibliography

Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.

Janzen, Mark D. "The Ten Plagues of Egypt: A Socio-Spatial Analysis (Exod 7:3–12:36)." In *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Pentateuch*, edited by Barry J. Beitzel. Lexham Geographic Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022.

Kennedy, T. Michael. "Egypt, Plagues of." Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

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