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Exodus 7-11

God's Exodus People: What It's Like To Meet God

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet your childhood hero or someone famous you've always kind of liked? Imagine for a moment what it would be like to shake the hand of Neil Armstrong or Buzz Aldrin, to hold the hand of the first men to walk on the moon. Or what would it be like to hug Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King Jr., those who faced racism and social injustice head on and overcame?

Maybe some of you want to meet a TV or movie star, like Aubrey Hepburn, George Clooney, or Chris Pratt. I'd like to meet Chris Pratt. Although, I'd also be interested in meeting celebrity chefs Rachael Ray or Gordon Ramsay if they'd cook me dinner.

A student at the University of Texas at Austin met [Bill Gates](#).¹ Bill and Melinda donated \$30 millions to build a new Computer Science Complex at the school, and the day of the ribbon cutting ceremony Bill Gates came to campus. A Computer Science Major named Elynn Lee was tasked with giving him a 5-10 minute tour. Understandably, she was a little nervous. She practiced what she going to say for two days leading up to the tour, but she was still so shaken she was pacing and trying not to panic right before his arrival.

Then, Bill Gates and his entourage arrived early. He walked up to her, she reached out her hand to shake his hand, and she introduced herself, "Hi, I'm Elynn." His response was a casual and simple, "Hi, I'm Bill." In that moment, she relaxed, and gave him the tour. In her words, "Mr. Gates nodded intently and was genuinely interested in what I was saying (or at least seemed to be) and was just overall very chill... he was particularly excited when I mentioned that the labs were open 24/7!"

The person I'd like to most meet is [Timothy Keller](#), a church-planter, author, and pastor who helped found Redeemer Presbyterian in NYC. He came to [Gordon-Conwell](#) last year, and I got to meet his wife, Kathy, but I have yet to meet him. He walked right by me. I literally could have reached out and grabbed him, but I figured I didn't want his first experience meeting me to be that way. I'd rather we go for a long walk on an autumn path, visit a bookstore together, and then eat Five Guy's for dinner...

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet God? In Exodus, Moses meets God in a burning bush. He asks God his name and God says, "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14), which means "I will be what I will be." In Exodus, whenever it talks about God as "the LORD" that is God's special name "Yahweh." So whenever I talk about "God" today, I don't mean an abstract deity, or just a general type of god, but Yahweh, the Lord, the God of the Bible. What would it be like to meet that God?

Exodus 7-11 tells us the story of God sending miraculous plagues on Egypt. Why did God do this? The purpose of the plagues is for God to introduce himself. He introduces himself three ways: as Savior and Judge, as the one true God, and to all nations. Let's break down the **Purpose of the Plagues**:

Purpose #1: God introduces himself as Savior and Judge.

¹ What Is Bill Gates Like In Person? April 4, 2013. Quora, contributor (Accessed 1.26.2017). All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

Moses has already gone to Pharaoh to tell him to let the Israelites go, but Pharaoh increased their workload. This was very discouraging for the Israelites and Moses, but God assures him that he is still good and that he will deliver them. Now God tells Moses to take his staff and throw it down before Pharaoh where it will turn into a snake (7:9). He does so, and when the magicians do the same thing, Moses' snake/staff eats theirs.

God actually makes a point of Moses using his staff as part of his plan. This is because a **shepherd's staff** has a lot of meaning. A good staff is straight all the way to the top where it circles back on itself, like a cane. This is called a shepherd's crook. The crook is used to pull sheep out of the mud, out of water, to rescue and save them. But the straight rod is used for discipline, to wack sheep or predators.

I wanted you to be able to visualize what I'm talking about so I brought my **cane** from home. I got this from doing karate and I sleep with this cane under my bed so if someone breaks in I can give them a good wack. You can use a cane for offense or defense. God is using Moses' staff to introduce himself as a **Savior** who delivers his people out of slavery, but also as a **Judge** who punishes evildoers.

God introduces himself as Savior to the Israelites.

Israel has been in a foreign land with foreign gods for 400 years. So God re-introduces himself to them as their savior. **Exodus 6:7** says, "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians." (NIV®)

God sends ten plagues on Egypt, from turning the water into blood, to frogs, lice, flies, and more. In half of these plagues, the flies, the livestock, the hail, the darkness, and the death of the firstborn, the plagues affect the Israelites differently than they affect the Egyptians. For the fourth plague, Moses is to tell Pharaoh this:

Exodus 8:21b–23a ... The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them.²² "But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land.²³ I will make a distinction between my people and your people..." (NIV®)

Have you ever seen that clip in *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark*, where the lead bad guy in the white suit is arguing with Indiana. As he argues, a fly lands on a chin and crawls into his mouth. Turns out Steven Spielberg cut a few frames so that it would look like he ate it. This plague is kind of like that. There are flies everywhere! They're in the air, on the ground, in the houses, the temples, in your face, your mouth but not for the Israelites. God is demonstrating what it looks like for him to save them.

Although God doesn't spare the Israelites from all the plagues, like the frogs and gnats, he does for some of the really bad ones. When God kills all the livestock in the fields, he only kills those belonging to the Egyptians and spares the Israelites' (Ex 9:6). When God sends thunder, hail, and flashing lightning on the land, he hails on the whole land except for Goshen, the land of the Israelites (9:25-26). When God covers the land of Egypt in darkness, darkness you can feel, for three whole days, the Israelites still have light (10:23). God is demonstrating his salvation belongs to any who belong to him.

At Luray Caverns in Virginia, during the cave tour, the guide turns off the lights so that you can experience complete darkness, darkness so dark you can't see your family or tour guide and you just hope they turn the lights back on. The wonderful truth God is teaching the Israelites is that anyone who belongs to him, will never walk in darkness (John 8:12). Do you walk in the light or darkness? The Egyptians walk in darkness.

God introduces himself as Judge to the Egyptians.

Exodus 7:4b–5 ⁴ ...Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. ⁵ And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.” (NIV®)

God uses the plagues to demonstrate what his judgment looks like. He targets the Nile, the source of life, vitality, and trade for Egypt. Then he targets their homes, their air, their livestock, their crops, and their firstborns. God’s judgement is devastating economically and socially, but each judgment is fair and just.

For example, in the seventh plague, God sends hail on Egypt. **Exodus 9:8** says, “Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh.” (NIV®) Remember how Pharaoh forced the Israelites to make bricks? They would have baked the bricks in furnaces just like this one. As Tim Chester writes, “...the source of Israel’s oppression becomes the source of Egypt’s judgment. The punishment fits the crime.”² Even the very last plague, the worst one of all when God takes the lives of every firstborn baby in Egypt, is just. The previous Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives throw every baby boy into the Nile river.

Even as God introduces himself as judge to the Egyptians, he extends them **opportunities to repent**. Moses tells the Egyptians to bring their livestock in so they’re not killed by the hail. It says that some of Pharaoh’s officials did fear “the word of the Lord” and brought their slaves and livestock inside. Towards the end of that plagues, even Pharaoh has an opportunity to repent.

Exodus 9:27-28 ²⁷ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. “This time I have sinned,” he said to them. “The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. ²⁸ Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t have to stay any longer.” (NIV®)

One of the ways we **test repentance** is by looking for longterm change. You can never truly tell if someone has repented the first day or week after they’ve said they’re sorry. Pharaoh’s repentance wasn’t true. He changes his mind so they can't leave (9:34-35).

Is God your Savior or Judge?

What separates knowing God as your savior or your judge is **repentance**. Repentance means turning from sin and heading a different direction, a new way that pleases God. God is the savior of anyone who will honestly confess their sins and align their lives to him. This doesn’t mean you have to be perfect, but that when the Holy Spirit tells you about your sins, you tell your God your sorry and ask him to change you.

If you don’t know God as your Savior, then God is your judge. Friday we watched *The Prince of Egypt*. It’s a wonderful movie that shows the plagues of Egypt. If you watch carefully, you see something special. When the Israelites leave Egypt, two Egyptian soldiers drop their weapons and go with them. They pop up again at the red sea, then again on the other side. We don’t know for sure if any Egyptians left with the Israelites, but I believe they did. You and I, we’re the Egyptians! None of us are born Christians. We’re all foreigners who God invites to join his family. If you woke up this morning with God as your judge, you can go to sleep with God as your savior. *Is God your Savior or Judge? Purpose of Plagues #1: God introduces himself as Savior and Judge.*

Purpose #2: God introduces himself as the one true God.

² *Exodus for You* by Tim Chester (Page 78).

When you first read the story of God sending the plagues on Egypt, they seem kind of random, but they're not. In each plague, the God of Israel proves his power over the false Egyptian gods and their powers. **Exodus 12:12** says, "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. (NIV®)

A couple weeks ago I said God's true battle is not just against Pharaoh, but who Pharaoh represents. Pharaoh wore a cobra on his crown, the Uraeus. This points back to the snake in the garden of Eden, Satan (Genesis 3:15). God's real battle is with the serpent, Satan. Moses first miracle is to turn his staff into a snake that eats Pharaoh's snakes. Through the plagues, God systematically overcomes and counters Satan's powers.

God counters the false gods that claim to give life.

The first plague, when Moses turns the Nile to blood, counters the Egyptian god Osiris. He is the "God of the afterlife, death, life, and resurrection" and "His black-green skin symbolizes re-birth."³ The Nile is his bloodstream.⁴ In the Nile plague, God shows he, not Osiris, has the real power over life, death, and the afterlife. There is no other resurrection God but the God of the Bible.

Apply: Where do you look for your life? What makes you happy? Netflix just released a documentary on minimalism. It follows two guys and their journey to be free of stuff. One of the guys, Joshua Fields Millburn, reads a quote from his book, *Everything That Remains*. He tells the story of how he reacted when his mother died, and he got divorced, both in the same month. He went shopping at IKEA. He writes:

"But even while Rome is burning, there's somehow time for shopping at IKEA. [...] See, when I moved out of the house earlier this week, trawling my many personal belongings in large bins and boxes and fifty-gallon garbage bags, my first inclination was, of course, to purchase the things I still "needed" for my new place. You know, the basics: food, hygiene products, a shower curtain, towels, a bed, and umm ... oh, I need a couch and a matching leather chair and a love seat and a lamp and a desk and desk chair and another lamp for over there, and oh yeah don't forget the sideboard that matches the desk and a dresser for the bedroom and oh I need a coffee table and a couple end tables and a TV-stand for the TV I still need to buy [...] And now that I think about it I'm going to want my apartment to be "my style," you know: my own motif, so I need certain decoratives to spruce up the decor, but wait, what is my style exactly, and do these stainless-steel picture frames embody that particular style? [...] What espresso maker defines me as a man? Does the fact that I'm even asking these questions mean I lack [what] make me a "man's man"? How many plates/cups/bowls/spoons should a man own? I guess I need a dining room table too, right? And a rug for the entryway and bathroom rugs (bath mats?) and what about that one thing, that thing that's like a rug but longer? Yeah, a runner; I need one of those, and I'm also going to need..."

It's easy to buy into the lie that things will make us happy. At its core it's the lie that something besides God can give me life. This week I'm launching a new Life Explored class on Wednesday evenings for seven weeks that exposes the false gods we hope will give us life, and offers a solution, God himself. I hope you'll come and see how, in practical, everyday terms... *God counters the false gods that claim to give life.*

God counters the false gods that claim to give power.

³ Wikipedia contributors. Osiris. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. January 26, 2017, 20:36 UTC. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Osiris&oldid=762126689>. Accessed January 26, 2017.

⁴ Plagues and gods info adapted from Dr. Jeffrey Niehuas's *Theology of the Pentateuch* class handout from GCTS spring 2011.
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In the fifth plague, God kills every “livestock in the field”, including cattle. The Egyptian bull god Apis represented strength and fertility.⁵ When the Israelites create and worship the golden calf at Sinai, they're asking Apis for power. In Memphis, the capital of Egypt where Pharaoh probably ruled during the plagues, a nearby temple housed a live sacred bull representing Apis.⁶ In the 1850s, an archeologist discovered 24 stone sarcophagus there, each weighing as much as 70 tonnes, built for housing the remains of sacred Apis bulls.⁷ This picture is of one of those coffins currently housed at the Louvre. When God slays all the cattle, he symbolically kills Apis. He's saying, “I have the true power, not these false gods.”

Apply: Where do we search for power today? For most of us, it's in money. I liked opening with that story of the student Elynn meeting Bill Gates for the first time. Why is it so amazing to meet someone like him? For some of you, it's because he's a brilliant tech pioneer, but for most of us it's because he's worth \$84 billion dollars. When we think about him, we begin to daydream what it would be like to have that kind of money. We could buy anything we want, go anywhere we want to go, we'd finally have control over our lives. We'd finally have true power. Money is deceptive, because it's just paper. It's not true power. If money is your god, and you can tell if it is if you're constantly thinking about it or if you don't give your first portion to God, God promises to take down that idol. True power lies not in money, or fame, or success, but in the God who determines all of those things. *God counters the false gods that claim to give power.*

God counters every person who thinks they're God.

In the last two plagues, of darkness and the death of every firstborn, God specifically targets Pharaoh. Oman Ra (or Re) is the chief Egyptian god, the sun god. He was so important Ramses II actually built a temple housing a statue of himself, “Amon Ra (the sun god)” and another “god of the rising sun.”⁸ In this temple, the sun illuminates their faces twice a year for “29 minutes”, on Ramses II's birthday and his coronation day. The Pharaohs thought they were the sun god. The firstborn of Pharaoh was believed to be the incarnation of Oman Ra. In other words, Pharaoh, and his firstborn son, were respected like they were the god Ra.

Apply: We live in a culture where we prioritize ourselves. Where we're told over and over again that the individual is lord of their own life. I know that if I were to ask you who is your one true God, you'd give the right answer. But is that how really how we tell who our God is? We discover who our god is by reviewing what gives us life and what makes us feel powerful, and if the answer is anything but God, we're really claiming to be god, aren't we? When we decide what is right, good, and true, we're claiming to be god. When we live in ways that we know don't please god, we're climbing up onto god's throne and trying to rule in his place. If God has saved you, he promises to dismantle you, because he loves you that much. *God counters every person who thinks they're God.*

By the end of the plagues, God has thoroughly dismantled Egypt's false gods. What's God purpose in the plagues? #1 *God introduces himself as Savior and Judge.* #2: *God introduces himself as the one true God.*

Purpose #3: God introduces himself to all nations.

⁵ I first learned about the Apis bull and the sun illuminating the face of Ramses II from Logos' Exodus course on Audible.

⁶ We think the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C., so it's debatable on whether or not these bulls were buried yet, but it's clear the Apis bull was a sacred part of Egyptian religion (1 Kings 6:1).

⁷ Wikipedia contributors. Serapeum of Saqqara. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. January 7, 2017, 22:18 UTC. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Serapeum_of_Saqqara&oldid=758844268. Accessed January 26, 2017.

⁸ <https://memphistours.wordpress.com/2012/02/> (accessed 1/26/2017).

All throughout the story, God tells us his purpose. But one of the clearest places comes in the middle of the plague of hail. In **Exodus 9:16** God says to Pharaoh, “But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” God wants the Israelites to know who he is, and the Egyptians too, but also the Assyrians, Persians, and Babylonians. When the Israelites finally arrive in the promised land, the Canaanites will have heard about their god too. They meet a prostitute named Rahab who even says, “We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt...” (Joshua 2:10a).

God’s ultimate purpose is to offer all people salvation. God made one of Moses’ great ancestors, a man named **Abraham**, a promise. He promised him that through his descendants he would bless every single nation on earth (Gen 12:1-3). At Egypt, God is beginning to introduce himself to the whole world so that anyone from any nation can be saved. The plagues are not just an act of judgement, they’re an act of grace.

Did you know that these plagues still introduce us to God today? They tell us what it’s like to meet God, but not just any god. They tell us what it’s like to meet the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Every Bible story whispers his name. These plagues point forward to Jesus.

- **Moses** turned the Nile into blood for his first plague. **Jesus** turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana for his first miracle (John 2:1-11). Moses’s miracle created death, but Jesus’ brought life.
- **Moses** threw soot in the air and boils broke out over people’s bodies and skin. **Jesus** willingly laid down his body to be flogged and scourged so that you could hardly tell he was a man (Isa 52:14).

The plagues tell us the **gospel**. Tim Chester writes again, “At the cross, the plagues fell on Jesus, the Son of God.”⁹ The plagues fell on Jesus! *The plagues fell on Jesus so that God’s grace falls on me.* Grace means a gift I don’t deserve. Forgives, love, holiness, we get all those because Jesus took our punishment. He died in our place to satisfy God as **judge** but also as **savior**.

- **Moses** stretched out his hand and darkness so dark you can feel it fell on the land for three days. At the cross, **Jesus** stretched out both of his hands and darkness descended on the land for three hours. Then Jesus himself descended into that darkness for three days, tasting death for us (Mark 15:33, Matt 12:40).

The plagues fell on Jesus so that God’s grace falls on me.

- **Moses** warned Pharaoh that his firstborn son would die if he didn’t let God’s people go, but he didn’t listen, and his innocent son died. **Jesus** is the innocent firstborn Son of God who chose to die for you and for me so that he could stand before God the Father and say, “Let my people go.” (Rev 1:5)

The plagues fell on Jesus so that God’s grace falls on me. You want to know what it’s like to meet God? Let me introduce you to Jesus.

The plagues fell on Jesus so that God’s grace falls on me.

Preview: Come back next week to hear how God saves his people from the final plague through a meal.

⁹ *Exodus for You* by Tim Chester. (page 81)

Revelation 1:5b-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.
(NIV®)