

God always gets the last word

As Christians, we are fighting in a war – Ephesians 6 vv 11-12 says “Wear the full armour of God. Wear God’s armour so that you can fight against the devil’s clever tricks. Our fight is not against people on earth. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness. We are fighting against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places.”

The good news is that despite many battles that we may win or lose, in the end, God will have the last word.

Revelation 21 vv 3-7 “I heard a loud voice from the throne. It said, ‘Now God’s home is with people. He will live with them. They will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone.’

The one who was sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted.’

The one on the throne said to me, ‘It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give free water from the spring of the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. All those who win the victory will receive all this. And I will be their God, and they will be my children.’”

Along the way there will be many battles and God will address issues directly in order to show His power. One of the most awesome examples of this is in the book of Exodus.

Joseph had been second in command to the Pharaoh of the time and he and his people lived harmoniously in Egypt, however:

“Later, Joseph, his brothers, and all the people of that generation died. But the Israelites had many children, and their number grew until the country of Egypt was filled with them. Then a new king began to rule Egypt. He did not know Joseph. This king said to his people, ‘Look at the Israelites. There are too many of them, and they are stronger than we are! We must make plans to stop them from growing stronger. If there is a war, they might join our enemies, defeat us, and escape from the land!’”

Exodus 1 vv 6-10

So the plan was that they would make the Israelites into slaves and kill all the baby boys born to the Israelites by throwing them into the river Nile. Moses was one of the babies born during this time. His mother hid him for as long as she could and eventually put him in a basket amongst the papyrus reeds in the river. His sister Miriam watched as Pharaoh’s daughter went to bathe and spotted the basket with the baby in. She felt sorry for him because he was crying and told Miriam to fetch a Hebrew woman to look after the baby, so Miriam got her mother!

Eventually Moses (which means “to pull out”) was given back to Pharaoh’s daughter as her son but Moses knew he was a Hebrew and when he grew up he killed an Egyptian for beating an Israelite slave and ran away from Pharaoh.

Exodus 2 vv 23-25 “A long time passed and that king of Egypt died. But the Israelites were still forced to work very hard. They cried for help, and God heard them. God heard their painful cries and remembered the agreement he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the troubles of the Israelites, and he knew that he would soon help them.

God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush on a mountain. Exodus 3 vv 4-12, 19-21 tells us “The Lord saw Moses was coming to look at the bush. So he called to him from the bush. He said, ‘Moses, Moses!’

Moses said, ‘Yes, Lord.’

Then God said, ‘Don’t come any closer. Take off your sandals. You are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Moses covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, ‘I have seen the troubles my people have suffered in Egypt, and I have heard their cries when the Egyptians hurt them. I know about their pain. Now I will go down and save my people from the Egyptians. I will take them from that land and lead them to a good land where they can be free from these troubles. I have heard the cries of the Israelites, and I have seen the way the Egyptians have made life hard for them. So now I am sending you to Pharaoh. Go! Lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’

But Moses said to God, ‘I am not a great man! How can I be the one to go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?’

God said, ‘You can do it because I will be with you. This will be the proof that I am sending you: After you lead the people out of Egypt, you will come and worship me on this mountain.’

‘But I know that the Pharaoh will not let you go. Only a great power will force him to let you go, so I will use my great power against Egypt. I will cause amazing things to happen in that land. After I do this, he will let you go. And I will cause the Egyptians to be kind to the Israelites. They will give many gifts to your people when they leave Egypt.’”

So Moses took Aaron with him to Pharaoh to demand that he let the Israelites go but he didn’t recognise who God is and so refused to lose his workforce. He made it even harder on the Israelites so they wouldn’t listen to Moses and sure enough they complained to Moses that it was bad enough already and he had just made it worse. Moses complained to God that not only did Pharaoh not listen to him but the Israelites won’t listen either, and once again he was told to go to Pharaoh and demand he let the Israelites go.

This time Moses and Aaron were given a “trick” to do to show Pharaoh that they had been sent by God; Aaron threw his walking stick to the ground and it became a snake but Pharaoh’s magicians were able to do the same thing. Aaron’s snake ate the Egyptian ones but Pharaoh wasn’t convinced!

So God had to hit Pharaoh where it hurt in order to make him listen and sent 10 plagues that directly opposed the gods he worshipped. (Any descriptions of the gods are how the Egyptians imagined or depicted them – they were never living beings).

1. The plague of blood: Hapi was worshipped as the water and fertility god. He was known as Lord of the Fishes and Birds of the Marshes, so although associated with the river Nile, he was not “the Nile god”. Hapi was depicted as a plump man with large breasts (representing fertility) and blue or green skin (representing water) wearing the false beard of the pharaoh and papyrus reeds on his head.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh is being stubborn. He refuses to let the people go. In the morning Pharaoh will go out to the river. Go to him by the edge of the Nile River. Take the walking stick that became a snake. Tell him this: ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you. He told me to tell you to let his people go worship him in the desert. Until now you have not listened to the Lord. So the Lord says that he will do something to show



you that he is the Lord. I will hit the water of the Nile River with this walking stick in my hand, and the river will turn into blood. The fish in the river will die, and the river will begin to stink. Then the Egyptians will not be able to drink the water from the river.” Exodus 7 vv 14-18

Pharaoh ignored what Moses and Aaron had done. He turned and went into his house. Exodus 7 v 23

2. The plague of frogs: Heqet was the goddess of childbirth and fertility. Her epitaph was “She



who hastens the birth” and was associated with resurrection and the annual flooding of the Nile that brought with it new life. Frogs symbolised fruitfulness and new life which is why Heqet is depicted as a frog or a woman with a frog’s head. It is thought that her priestesses were trained midwives.

So Aaron raised his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs began coming out of the water and covered the land of Egypt.

The magicians used their magic to do the same thing—so even more frogs came out onto the land in Egypt! Exodus 8 vv 6-7

Pharaoh told Moses if he got rid of the frogs he would let the Israelites go the next day. Moses said that God would only leave frogs in the river so he knew it was God who did it, but of course Pharaoh changed his mind once the frogs had died!

3. The plague of lice (also called the plague of gnats): Geb was god of the earth; it was said that barley grew on his ribs and he was depicted with green patches of vegetation all over his body. He was also a god of the harvest.



Aaron raised the stick in his hand and hit the dust on the ground, and everywhere in Egypt the dust became lice. The lice got on the animals and the people.

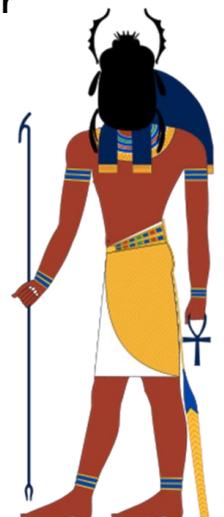
The magicians used their magic and tried to do the same thing. But the magicians could not make lice come from the dust. The lice remained on the animals and the people. So the magicians told Pharaoh that the power of God did this. But Pharaoh refused to listen to them. Exodus 8 vv 17b-19a

4. The plague of swarms (also less correctly translated as the plague of flies): **If you don’t let my people go, then [swarms of] flies will come into your houses. The [swarms of] flies will be on you and your officials. The houses of Egypt will be full of [swarms of] flies. They will be all over the ground too! But I will not treat the Israelites the same as the Egyptians. There will not be any flies in Goshen, where my people live. In this way you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land.**

Exodus 8 vv 21-22

It is believed that the “swarms” would have been swarms of scarab beetles. Khepri was an insect god whose head was a scarab beetle. These insects were considered sacred to the Egyptians so to be plagued by them was a real insult! This was the first plague to only affect Egyptian people.

Moses went into the desert and offered sacrifices to God and He removed the swarms but Pharaoh still refused to let His people go.



5. The plague on livestock: The Apis bull was chosen from an actual herd but then worshipped as the embodiment of the god Ptah. Once the bull had been confirmed as the incarnation of a god (black calf with white triangular marking upon its forehead, a white Egyptian vulture wing outline on its back, a scarab mark under its tongue, a white crescent moon shape on its right flank, and double hairs on his tail), it was housed in plush quarters, given only the best food, and provided with a harem of the best cows. The lucky animal would live in the lap of luxury until its death when it would be mummified and buried with full honours. Ptah was a great protector of Egypt.

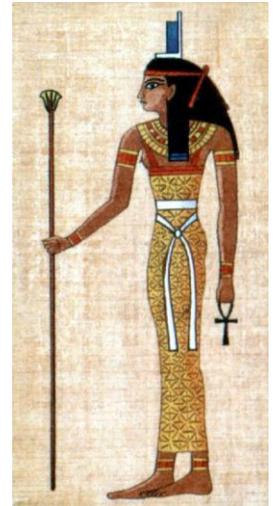


[The Lord] will cause all of your horses, donkeys, camels, cattle and sheep to get sick with a terrible disease. But the Lord will treat Israel's animals differently from the animals of Egypt. Exodus 9 vv 3b-4a

6. The plague of boils: Iset (Isis) is one of the oldest gods; her priestesses were skilled healers and midwives, and were rumoured to have magical powers. The challenges were gradually coming up against the more highly regarded of the gods.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Fill your hands with the ashes from a furnace. Moses, you throw the ashes into the air in front of Pharaoh. This will become dust that will go throughout the land of Egypt. Whenever the dust touches a person or an animal in Egypt, sores will break out on the skin."

The magicians could not stop Moses from doing this, because even the magicians had the sores. This happened everywhere in Egypt. Exodus 9 vv 8-9, 11



7. The plague of hail: Nut was the personification of the sky and the heavens. She is alleged to be always touching all four corners of the earth with her hands and feet whilst arching over it. As the mother of Isis, she is supposedly the barrier separating the forces of chaos from the ordered cosmos in the world. Her epitaph is "I am Nut, and I have come so that I may enfold and protect you from all things evil."

God says **"This time, I will use my full power against you, your officials, and your people. Then you will know that there is no god in the world like me. So at this time tomorrow, I will cause a very bad hailstorm. There has never been a hailstorm like this in Egypt, not since Egypt became a nation. Now, you must put your animals in a safe place. Everything you own that is now in the fields must be put in a safe place. Any person or animal that remains in the fields will be killed. The hail will fall on everything that is not gathered into your houses."**

Some of Pharaoh's officials paid attention to the Lord's message. They quickly put all of their animals and slaves into houses.

The only place that did not get hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. Exodus 9 vv 14, 18-20, 26

Everything that was in the fields or already growing in the fields was destroyed. God had blatantly opposed the goddess Nut and everything she was worshipped for!

8. The plague of locusts: Osiris was god of agriculture, son of Nut and husband/brother of Isis; the only deity who is referred to simply as "god". Every harvest, he was symbolically killed and his body broken on the threshing room floor, but after the annual Nile flood, life would return to the land and the crops would grow again.

So Moses raised his walking stick over the land of Egypt, and the Lord caused a strong wind to blow from the east. The wind blew all that day and night. When morning came, the wind had brought the locusts to the land of Egypt. The locusts flew into the country of Egypt and landed on the ground. There were more locusts than there had ever been in Egypt. And there will never again be that many locusts there. They covered the ground, and the whole country became dark. The locusts ate every plant on the ground and all the fruit in the trees that the hail had not destroyed. There were no leaves left on any of the trees or plants anywhere in Egypt. Exodus 10 vv 13-15

The Egyptians believed it was up to Osiris how good the crops and the harvest would be; they trusted that life would return each year but God made the locusts destroy everything and Osiris couldn't stop Him!

It looked like Pharaoh was starting to get the point ... he asked Moses to forgive him for his sins ... but The Lord made him stubborn again and he didn't let the people go.



9. The plague of darkness: **Then the Lord told Moses, "Raise your hand into the air and darkness will cover Egypt. It will be so dark you can feel it!" So Moses raised his hand into the air and a cloud of darkness covered Egypt. The darkness stayed in Egypt for three days. None of the people could see each other, and no one got up to go any place for three days. But there was light in all the places where the Israelites lived.** Exodus 10 vv 21-23

Ra, the sun god was considered to be the king of the gods or father of the gods. Old Kingdom pharaohs built sun temples in which to worship Ra. Primarily identified with the noon sun, he represented light, warmth, and growth. Even *he* could not stop the darkness!



10. The plague on the firstborn: Every pharaoh was given the title High Priest of Every Temple. He represented the gods on Earth – to Egyptians, their pharaoh was a living god. They believed that when he died he would achieve eternal life for himself and his people. Pharaohs were usually the sons or declared heirs of the preceding pharaoh.



Moses said to the king, "The Lord says, 'At midnight tonight, I will go through Egypt, and every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, to the firstborn son of the slave girl grinding grain. Even the firstborn animals will die. The crying in Egypt will be worse than at any time in the past or any time in the future. But none of the Israelites or their animals will be hurt—not even a dog will bark at them.' Then you will know that the Lord has treated Israel differently from Egypt. Exodus 11 vv 4-7

In order for the angel of the Lord to pass over the houses of the Israelites, they had to kill a one-year-old male lamb, make a meal for their family and use the blood to mark the top and

sides of the doorframe where they ate the meal.

So that night Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said to them, “Get up and leave my people. You and your people can do as you say. Go and worship the Lord.” The Lord caused the Egyptians to be kind to the Israelites, so the Egyptians gave their riches to the Israelites. Exodus 12 vv 31, 36

When the Israelites left Egypt, they got to the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army were following them, so again they were afraid. **Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”** Exodus 14 vv 13-14 This is echoed in Ephesians 6 vv 13-14a (following on from the earlier verses about the armour of God): **Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ...**

They had faith, stood firm and God miraculously parted the Red Sea so that they could walk through the middle, then the sides re-joined and Pharaoh’s army were drowned but it is understood that Pharaoh survived.

The Israelites then wandered in the wilderness for 40 years! God was still providing for them during this time even though it felt like “out of the frying pan, into the fire”! When they were spiritually ready, God let them move forward.

When we are freed from the oppression of sin, it doesn’t mean we’re going to have an easy ride but we have to keep strong and trust God. If we doubt Him or stop doing His work, He will not leave us but we will not move on until we are back on track. God will always have the last word.

We also read in the book of Revelation (which is a prophecy about the end of time as we know it) that there will be seven plagues upon the earth – the seven bowls of God’s anger – sores (on those who take the mark of the beast i.e. don’t worship Jesus), sea turns to blood, rivers and springs turn to blood, sun burns the people with fire, darkness covers “the beast’s kingdom”, river dries up, massive earthquake and hailstones. These are obviously very similar to the plagues that were sent on Egypt in Exodus. This is the final battle of the war where God directly opposes Satan. We need to make sure that we are in God’s kingdom, not “the beast’s kingdom” so that we do not have to battle through unnecessarily on the wrong side or fighting in the wrong army.