

THE TEN PLAGUES

God Sends 10 Terrible Plagues to Free the Israelites from Pharaoh

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT LESSON:

1. Read Aloud

Choose someone to read the passage aloud to the family. Watch for Word Alerts (over).

2. Recount

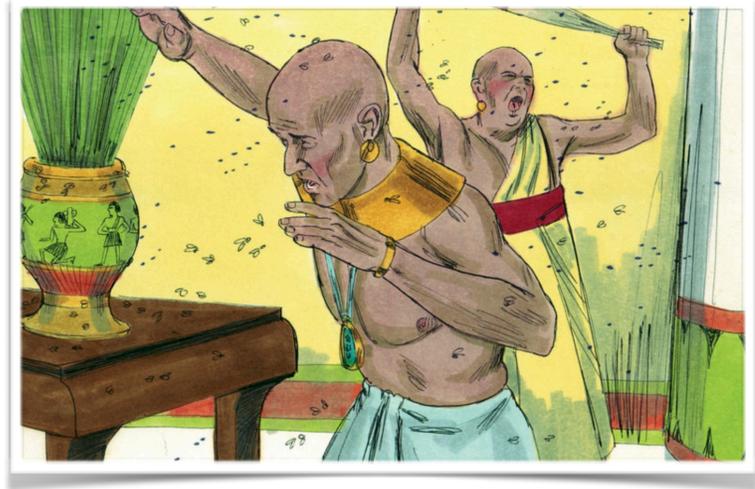
Ask people to explain what they just heard.

3. Ask Questions

What do they think about the story? What does it tell them about God? What does it tell them about human beings, and our relationships with one another and with God?

3. Help Interpret

Offer some of your own insights from the discussion here, and help develop their understanding by asking questions and gently guiding them toward the answers. They might disregard a lecture, but when they discover a connection on their own, it will be truly rooted in their minds.



Moses sees the Burning Bush

In our last lesson, God spoke to Moses in a Burning Bush (which symbolizes the Theotokos!) and called Moses (and his brother, Aaron) to deliver His message to Pharaoh and the people of Israel.

This week, we read of the 10 Plagues God sent to Egypt, to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free. This is often understood on both the historical reality level, and at the level of the Christian spiritual life: God works to deliver us from the Egypt of our sinfulness (we are bondage to sin when sin is habitual and ingrained.) St. Gregory of Nyssa said, “Each man makes his own plagues when through his own free will he inclines toward these painful experiences.”

The first plague God sends to Egypt turns the Nile River’s water to blood. Compare to Christ’s first miracle, which turns water to wine (which becomes, of course, the blood of Christ in the Eucharist.)

WORD ALERTS!

As we read through the Bible, we'll notice important words that keep coming up again and again, drawing attention to the connections that God uses to teach us. We want to take note whenever we find a Word Alert in the Scriptures!

- Several of the plagues affect not only the Egyptian people but their **cattle** as well. We see this throughout the Bible. For instance, in the Book of Jonah, when Nineveh is delivered, their cattle are as well. Back in the Garden of Eden, Adam was given dominion over the animals and when Adam & Eve fell, all of creation fell with them. Even though animals didn't sin, they live in a fallen state, subject to death and suffering, right along with the humans who have dominion over them.
- In the first plague, **water becomes blood**. Both water (baptism, cleansing) and blood (sacrifice) are major watch words in the Bible, and the transformation recalls both the water-into-wine miracle and the transformation of wine into the Blood of Christ at the Eucharist.

God continually sends plagues to Egypt, but Pharaoh does not relent. Sometimes he totters on relenting, but he always revokes his agreement soon after. The Scriptures say that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart" but this reflects the idea that God is in control of everything, which is true. It is also true that Pharaoh was prideful and lusted for power; he participated in the hardening and darkening of his heart. God gives him opportunities to relent and to show humility, but he never does.

The final two plagues point to Pascha: the ninth plague is three days of darkness. Just as Christ spent three days in Hades, Egypt spends three days in a kind of darkness that 'could be felt' — a profound darkness, reflecting perhaps inner darkness, as those who were faithful to God did not live in darkness, but in light. The darkness depended on the spiritual state of the individual.

The tenth plague is the death of the firstborn child of men and beasts. Just as Christ, firstborn and only begotten Son of God, will die on the cross, we see the firstborn dying in Egypt. The Hebrews are given a Passover means of escaping this fate.

What do we mean by Re-Entry?

On Sunday morning, we gather together for Divine Liturgy, and the priest begins, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages." He is announcing and blessing the Kingdom of God, which we are entering together in faith and love. The people respond, "Amen," signifying their agreement, their fervent desire to enter into the Kingdom. In Holy Communion, the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We receive the divine, and it transforms us. We complete the Divine Liturgy and then go out into the world, carrying Christ and the Kingdom within us. Let's think about how are we to re-enter the world; how will we guard the grace that we have received? How will we prepare ourselves to go out?

