

Exodus 5-10

Aim of lesson

To show the great power of God actively used against the Egyptians, who defied him, and to show the mercy of God in protecting his people Israel.

Background study

The six chapters will need to be studied thoroughly in order to select the most important verses for this lesson. Seek suitable pictures, e.g. locusts and their effect on vegetation, storm damage, the river Nile, etc., together with pictures of nomads, slaves and Egyptian courtiers. These will help to make the story memorable.

Isaiah 19:5-10; Psalm 105:26-35; Ezekiel 29.

Suggested outline of lesson

Start by showing a colourful illustration of the enthroned Pharaoh. Describe his absolute authority and his awe-inspiring presence. By contrast present a picture of Moses, a man of eighty, tanned and rugged, dressed in sandals and a simple woollen robe, and carrying a staff. Explain how understandable was Moses' reluctance to stand before the king and give him orders from a God whom he did not recognize. The discouraging reception he and Aaron received, and the cruel punishment inflicted upon the slaves, perplexed Moses and caused him to turn to God again. They went to Pharaoh the second time, reassured of God's firm intention to rescue the Israelites, at great cost to Egypt. Moses was reminded of the power vested in him to prove to the arrogant Pharaoh that God was Lord of all.

Note down a list of the plagues in the correct order. As each of the plagues is described, write them on a blackboard or display sheet. Use descriptive language to help the children to understand what a plague is, and how inescapable are the effects.

1-4: Blood river, frogs, gnats and flies

The first three plagues affected all the land of Egypt. A map of Egypt will illustrate how vital is the river Nile to the prosperity of the country. The great river was their pride and source of life. How alarming then would be the turning to blood of the water on which they depended. Pharaoh, thinking it was a magical trick, was not impressed. Describe the unavoidable discomfort and revulsion caused by the infestation of frogs, as they got into food stores, beds, clothing, in fact, everywhere. Similarly the gnats would have been a great source of irritation - there was no escape from them. It would appear that these three plagues affected the Egyptians and the Israelites alike, so that all were made aware of God's control over the forces of nature. However, Pharaoh continued to be unmoved.

Before recounting the fourth plague (flies) read together in class chapter 8:22 to show that in order to demonstrate that he was in absolute control, God was now to protect his people from the sufferings to be inflicted upon Egypt. Pharaoh reacted by sending

for Moses and Aaron and conceding that they could worship their God just outside the borders of the land, but as soon as the plague was removed he broke the agreement.

5-6: Animals and humans

The fifth plague (affecting farm animals) introduced a new type of affliction, that of disease and destruction. Emphasize the seriousness of this plague. The people witnessed the dying of the animals that supplied them with food and clothing, as well as beasts of burden and means of transport - all suffered alike. Pharaoh, knowing that the Israelites had large flocks, sent messengers to find out the position in Goshen. On learning that they were completely unaffected, as Moses had predicted, he was angry and more obdurate than ever.

The incidence of disease became progressively worse, so that the next plague (boils) affected human beings, causing pain and great distress.

7-8: Locusts and hail

Summarize God's declaration, chapter 9:13-19. Up until now the plagues had been signs to demonstrate that the Lord was the one true and almighty God but, from that moment, the very lives of the people who served this rebellious king were to be at risk. The following verses show that some of the Egyptians had learned to respect the God of Moses, believed his words and, in taking note of the warning, were saved from the effects of the hail. Once again Pharaoh was sufficiently moved to summon Moses and Aaron. This time he agreed to release the people; but again when the plague ceased, he went back on his word as God had warned Moses he would do.

When threatened with locusts, Pharaoh's servants persuaded him to speak to Moses and Aaron again but, when Moses made it clear that a total exodus was required, he became furious and drove them out of the palace. (The plague of locusts is best depicted with the aid of pictures of the absolute devastation which they cause to all plant life). But despite Pharaoh's distress at the widespread destruction, he refused to relent.

Relevance to the children's lives

Do you remember how reluctant Moses was about doing what God asked him to do? Why did he hesitate? However, unlike Pharaoh, Moses was not stubborn and he made up his mind to do his best. Do you think he continued to be afraid each time he approached Pharaoh? It seems that Moses grew braver and more confident each time; it was just the first time which was very hard. Can we learn a lesson from Moses about how to face up to difficult tasks? (This can be applied to making a moral stand or, more generally, to facing up to unpleasant necessities, e.g., dental or hospital appointments, making new friends, changing schools, etc.)

9: Darkness

The plague of darkness would have had an especially frightening effect on the Egyptian people, whose chief object of worship was Ra, the sun god. The total darkness, which could be felt and which lasted for three days, would create the impression that the sun had been extinguished and would strike terror into their hearts. Pharaoh tried bargaining with Moses and Aaron but, when the demands were repeated, he shouted at them in fury and

threatened to have them killed if they dared to come to him again. Moses, realizing that the climax was about to be reached and that only one last punishing plague remained, calmly agreed that this was indeed their last meeting.

In telling the story, convey the increasing stubbornness of Pharaoh and emphasize the growing courage and confidence of Moses and his brother and the reputation they earned among the people. The Egyptians became afraid of them while the Israelites grew to respect and have confidence in them. The faith of the people in God developed as they witnessed his miraculous protection of them from the sufferings they saw inflicted upon their enemies. Their own health was unimpaired, their crops and cattle unscathed and, while darkness struck the enemy with fear, the Israelites enjoyed light from God, the source of all light. These people who had been the broken slaves of the mighty and cruel Egyptians were now strong and confident, while their taskmasters were ruined and brought low.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, Teach us not to be stubborn, but help us to be like Moses and Aaron and bravely do our best for you. Amen.

Memory verse

"The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt" (Exodus 7:5).