

EXODUS 7–13

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers Exodus chapters 7–13.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

The LDS study guide focuses on the theme: “Remember This Day, in Which Ye Came Out from Egypt.”

Plague after plague afflicted Egypt, but Pharaoh still refused to release the Israelites. And yet God continued to demonstrate His power and give Pharaoh opportunities to accept “that I am the Lord” and “there is none like me in all the earth” ([Exodus 7:5; 9:14](#)).

Meanwhile, Moses and the Israelites must have watched with awe at these manifestations of God’s power in their behalf. Surely these continued signs confirmed their faith in God and strengthened their willingness to follow God’s prophet. Then, after nine terrible plagues had failed to free the Israelites, it was the tenth plague—the death of the firstborn, including Pharaoh’s firstborn—that finally ended the captivity.

This seems fitting because in every case of spiritual captivity, there truly is only one way to escape. No matter what else we may have tried in the past, it is with us as it was with the children of Israel. It is only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Firstborn—the blood of the Lamb without blemish—that will save us.

You might be thinking that all sounds very Christian. However, one will need to dig further and ask, **“What does the sacrifice of Jesus save us from and for?”**

The LDS understanding is that Jesus saves us from the lasting effects of physical death but does not provide the kind of salvation that the Bible describes.

The LDS resources also emphasize softening one’s own heart, following instructions, and symbols of the Passover that remind of Jesus Christ, his Atonement, and the sacrament. These are all good opportunities to share Jesus and the true gospel.

Biblical Focus

The LORD fights the battle for his people and delivers them. As the annual Passover celebration reminded God’s people Israel of their salvation from slavery in Egypt, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper reminds us of our spiritual salvation from slavery to sin, death, and the devil.

EXODUS 7-10

The stage is set for God to do something BIG. The Israelites were greatly oppressed, and the nation's spirit was broken. Their leader, Moses, had only brought about further abuse for them, and their God seemed to be only a myth of the past. So often, God acts in the worst places and predicaments, where hope is not faint but entirely dead. It was finally time for God to reveal his power and authority.

God chose to rescue his people through a series of plagues. He knew what would happen with each event and had each phase planned. He would show his people who he was and the lengths he was willing to go to rescue them through the subsequent plagues.

We, like the Israelites, were also helpless to free ourselves from the slave master of sin and the bonds of death. Jesus stepped in to fight the battle for us. LDS friends will probably agree with this statement unless they fully understand how helpless we are against sin and what complete salvation *actually* means.

The plagues were divine judgment against the Egyptians who enslaved and abused God's people. When God turned the Nile to blood, he declared war against the deities of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile. From the Nile, they received their livelihood and life itself. Without it, they would not exist. One by one, God used the plagues to make the various Egyptian gods look powerless and non-existent.

The Egyptian gods were geographically bound and only had power in their respective realms. On the other hand, the God of Israel could traverse all natural realms, and his strength and prominence were present everywhere. This omnipresent and omnipotent God would have been a shock to the Egyptians.

Watching the state of Pharaoh's heart throughout this section is alarming. Ten times the account states Pharaoh hardened his own heart and ten times God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Was it unfair for God to harden a human heart? The opposite questions might be more appropriate. Was it fair that God allowed Pharaoh so many chances to believe before God hardened his heart? Is it fair that God brings anyone to faith? Is it fair that he would provide rescue for anyone? Why should he be patient with anyone? Human depravity makes us all enemies of God deserving of his wrath and punishment.

Because it appears that Joseph Smith was uncomfortable with God hardening Pharaoh's heart, The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of Exodus changes the words to say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, NOT God. Additionally, the LDS commentary on this section and the JST then credit those willing to believe and encourage people to have a "soft heart."

In contrast, the Bible teaches that we have a heart of stone that God has to take away and replace with a new heart. Undoubtedly a conversation about what God does will make LDS members uncomfortable since the control is removed from them and put in God's hands. Remember, you are witnessing to hearts of stone, and only the power of God and his Word will soften them. Keep sharing the gospel.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Ezekiel 36:26

Mormons often talk about Heavenly Father as an all-loving God who provides a way/plan for everyone to live with him (or at least with Jesus or the Holy Spirit) in one of his three heavenly kingdoms. Even though their theology still teaches about divine judgment in hell (called Outer Darkness), most LDS members believe God wouldn't *actually* send people there, or if he does, it will only be the worst of the worst.

Does the action God threatened against Pharaoh and the Egyptians seem too harsh? Let us remember the many and varied stern warnings God had given through these plagues over an extended period, perhaps months or even years. Even though the Lord had increased their intensity, Pharaoh (and the other Egyptians) became more set than ever in their stubborn unbelief. Indeed, God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love. But there does come a time when he must act in his perfect justice and carry out his threats of divine retribution. If that were not true, then his threats would be meaningless, justice would go unsatisfied, and God would not be God. This account shows how God, in love and justice, will deal with sin and unbelief.

The God who is serious about his gracious promise to save is equally serious about his threat to punish all disobedience and unbelief. The detailed record of the plagues demonstrates that God means what he says and will do what he has promised he will do both when it comes to mercy and justice.

Conversation Starters:

- **How did God show mercy to the Egyptians? Compare the divine judgment here to how God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah. What are the similarities and differences between them?**
- **Why do you think God took the time to discredit the individual Egyptian gods?**
- **God gave the first three plagues to the Israelites too. Did they deserve his judgment? What was God showing his people when he stopped plaguing them?**
- **What opportunities did Pharaoh have to believe? Did he deserve more chances? Do we “deserve” the opportunity to come to faith?**
- **Why is God's judgment over sin and unbelief offensive to the human mind and heart?**
- **Is God fair?**

Sharing Personally:

When I read about all of the plagues in Exodus 7–10, I am reminded of the power and prominence of God. He is a God who is everywhere and has power over all things and all people.

I am reminded that I, too, have been hard of heart and am thankful that God has given me a new heart and a new nature through the faith he has given me to trust in him and his Word.

I am thankful that God is the one who has given me a heart transplant. If it was up to me to create in myself a new heart inclined towards God, I could not do that.

Additional Resources:

You can learn more about how and when to talk with Mormons about God's judgment in the article [Judgment and Justification](#) on TILM.org. Additionally, you could direct LDS members to the article [What Will Happen to You on Judgment Day](#) on BeYePerfect.org.

EXODUS 11–13

The Passover, life and death, and a new year

Darkness, death, destruction, and despair fill the pages of Exodus 12, but it is also a beautiful picture of divine deliverance. As you study the Passover, look for connections to Christ's work of redemption, the final judgment, and the ultimate rescue that will take place at the end of time.

Every firstborn son would die—those belonging to Pharaoh's household, the slave women, even the cattle. God's punishment was comprehensive. No Egyptian household would be untouched by death. The wrath of God is severe. Can you imagine the wailing that took place that night?

The wailing of the Egyptians is contrasted with the peaceful night that Israelites experienced. Not even a dog barked. It certainly doesn't take much to alarm a dog, yet even they were relaxed and resting in the safety of God's mercy. The same peace will rest upon believers when the terrifying final judgment comes. The question is, "Why?"

As God instructed Israel to recreate their calendar, he marked this day as the beginning of a new definition for Israel. God changed their identity and status from "slaves" to "his children." For hundreds of years, the nation of Israel would celebrate and reflect on Passover until its fulfillment in the coming Messiah.

Believers can make a connection to the Israelites' identity change. We are all slaves to sin by nature, but now we have a new identity as adopted sons and daughters of God. Mormons believe that all people are spirit children of God. The concept of a change in status, from God's enemies to God's children, is unfamiliar. It will be important in this section to help them see that by nature, we were enslaved in a way that was much worse than for the Israelites.

God's instructions for the Passover were extensive and full of rich symbolism that pointed ahead to the coming Messiah. The LDS resources emphasize the necessity of *following the instructions*. This instruction focus corresponds well with the usual human-centered emphasis in the Mormon Plan of Salvation. However, what saved the Israelites that night was not their "following the instructions" but rather the object of their faith and faithfulness, the blood on the doorframe which connected to God's deliverance. The Israelites put the blood on their doorframes and then looked to it for salvation because of the trust God had given and grown in them. Their faithful obedience resulted from the deliverance with which God provided them. It was not the cause of it.

"When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down."

Exodus 12:23

As you discuss this with your LDS friends, change the focus from obedience to the rescue. Here is an opportunity to dwell on the rich symbolism of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the world's sin. The blood on the door was a sign for the Israelites for generations to come. One day, the Messiah would be sacrificed like a lamb, and the wrath of God would pass over those who look to the lamb slain and his blood shed for them.

"You were redeemed ...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

1 Peter 1:18–19

Jesus was the fulfillment of the Passover. Jesus was the last and perfect lamb sacrificed for the world's sins. All of the other lambs slain and sacrificed pointed towards this ultimate saving act. The night before he died, while he and his disciples participated in the Passover meal, Jesus instituted the sacrament (or the Lord's Supper).

The LDS resources include connections between Passover and the sacrament of Holy Communion, providing ample opportunities to share the gospel. When Mormons participate in the sacrament each week, their focus is on the covenants they have made with God, and when they partake, they are recommitting to those promises. The focus is on humans doing something for God rather than the other way around.

Building off of the connection between the Passover and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Christians can take this opportunity to talk about the covenants that Jesus has made with them and how he reminds his people of forgiveness in the bread/wine and body/blood given freely for them.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’”

Matthew 26:26–28

Conversation Starters:

- **How did God change Israel's identity?**
- **What was God teaching his people through the Passover lamb?**
- **How does the eating of the lamb connect to the Lord's Supper?** (Consider when Jesus instituted the sacrament.) **What was the purpose of the lamb's blood? How does it relate to the blood of Christ?**
- **Knowing that this part of scripture is also a picture of the final judgment, how does it make you feel? Fearful? Confident?**
- **What will save us from God's wrath on the day of judgment?**

Sharing Personally:

In Exodus 12, when I read about the lambs' blood covering the Israelite doorframes, defending them from the wrath of God as it passes over, I am reminded of the blood of Christ that will cover me, as the wrath of God will pass over me on Judgment Day.

Like the Israelites resting peacefully in their homes on that first Passover, I can rest in peace each night knowing that God's wrath on sin has already been poured out on Christ on the Cross. Now each time I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I am reminded of Jesus' body and blood given and shed for me for the forgiveness of my sins. Each week as I stand empty-handed waiting to receive the bread and the wine, I am aware that there is nothing that I have done to make myself right with God but that he has done everything necessary for me to be made right with

him. As the Israelites looked in faith to the lamb of the Passover, I look to the ultimate Passover Lamb in faith.

Additional Resources:

To learn more about how and when to talk with Mormons about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper please see [A Humanitarian by Giving Us His Supper](#), from the study of *God—The Ultimate Humanitarian* on BeYePerfect.org or [chapter 16 of the book by the same name, available in our online store.](#)