

## Why did these things happen?

1. God came down and rescued his people because of who he is and what he is like. God is fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. Notice it's not because of what they're like; and we'll see later on they're really a bunch of ratbags. So God doesn't rescue them because they're better than anyone else or they're more holy than anyone else or even that when he rescues them they're just going to be so appreciative to God and they'll worship him faithfully. No, God doesn't rescue them because of what they are like but because of what he is like. He was a god who was faithful to his promises.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> reason want to ask the question a bit different – Why did these things happen like this? God could have if he wanted to just changed Pharaoh's mind at the start and saved his people from slavery like that or he could have gone to the nuclear option from the start. If he knew that Pharaoh would let the people go when he killed the firstborn he could have just done that. Why this whole sequence of plagues? Remember in chap. 5:2 when Moses first goes to Pharaoh, Pharaoh says, "Who is this Lord? I don't know him?" And he makes things harder for the Israelites. Well later, as God is about to unleash the first plague in ch 7:3 God says I will harden Pharaoh's heart; I will lay my hand of judgement on Egypt; and all Egypt will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it. Every nation will know in fact. Most nations had a land. And people would say oh, this is Assyria and these are the gods of the Assyrians who protect them and give them this land. The Israelites don't have a land, but everywhere they go for the next 40 years every nation knows that this is the nation whose God demolished Egypt. 40 years later when they come to Jericho the people in Jericho are scared stiff – they remember that the Israelites God brought the plagues and brought them across the red Sea.

The Egyptians had many gods. A god for the water, for the mountains, for particular animals, for life, for death and so on. And you went to worship the appropriate god for your particular need. So God is going to show that he is the Lord over each and everyone of these other gods of Egypt – the 10 plagues would show this.

But it's interesting how it starts isn't it? At first the magicians are able to copy the plagues that God through Moses brings down – changing water into blood; bringing frogs over all the land. What's going on? The magicians aren't like our illusionists and magicians, doing tricks; they are not just tricksters. There's some serious evil work going on here – some serious evil power. They are channelling some serious black spiritual magic. So what God is doing in these plagues is that he is revealing that he is not like the other gods. He is not just one more god that can be offered to the Egyptians; he is completely different.

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague in chapter 8: 18 the other magicians, the other gods cannot match it. And they actually say, "This is the finger of God."

God isn't limited; in every plague he's in control of the water, the sun, the animals, and even death,

God can't be put in a box like the other Egyptians gods. God showed that he was supreme over all the Egyptian gods. By the time we get to the last one, many Egyptians acknowledge that the Israelite God is the most powerful and that they are in the wrong. Only the true God can reverse these plagues; they don't bother asking their own gods, who are not gods anyway.

But God also has an eye to the other nations – to be a blessing to other nations. God brought them out of Egypt to be his treasured possession, not because they were so great but because he wanted the rest of the nations to look at them and see some kind of pale reflection of a holy God; and he wanted the rest of the nations to come to the mountain of the Lord, to come to Jerusalem to worship God, to meet him there. In Revelation we see that God's endgame is to have people from every nation gathered around God's throne. This wasn't an afterthought; this is what God planned from the very beginning, before creation. Even as he is passing judgement on Egypt God is revealing himself to the Egyptians.

3. So, what do we do with this? Stories are really important; they shape us; how we think about the world etc.; It's esp true of the stories we tell about ourselves; the stories we tell about where we came from and why we have become what we are like today. Moses saw that the events that were taking place were the stories that were going to define Israel as a nation. This is what is happening in chap 12 – there's instructions for the Passover; but they're intermixed and littered with instructions to keep commemorating this event. These words would be a liturgy, they would be repeated year after year; by their children and their children's children and by their children's children's children, for generations to come. Ex. 12:24-27 – the Passover was their special defining moment. NB "spared OUR homes", not their homes – this was about us; we are the Jewish people. This event defines us. So as they celebrated, they weren't saying this was something that God did once years ago; they are saying we were slaves in Egypt, we were rescued by God. That's what it means for us to be Israel. Now, we are not Jews, I don't think there are any here; Passover doesn't have the same significance for us. But fortunately for us, Jesus took the Passover and reinterpreted it for us – the Last Supper. As they sat around, eating the lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs; Jesus reinterpreted those events. Jesus is saying as he says the words in Luke, the story that is going to define them and so in turn us as followers of Jesus is the story of the events that were going to unfold over the next 24 hours. The story of Exodus is a redemption story, a rescuing story, God coming down and conquering the principalities and powers, rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt. The Gospel, Jesus' death and resurrection is a rescuing story, God the Son coming down taking on human flesh and then conquering the principalities and powers of this world through a sign of enormous power, but also through his humiliation on the cross. It was through his humiliating death that Jesus defanged Satan. As Jesus went to the cross he became our Passover lamb; he bore upon himself the plague of God's judgement and sin so that the wrath of God might pass over us. And just as the Passover is the story that defines the Jews so the cross is the story that defines us, of what it means to live as a follower of Jesus; what it

means to be a community of his people that gather together like we are doing this morning. We are those who have been redeemed from slavery to sin; we have been washed clean in the blood of the lamb. So when we take part in the Lords Supper in a few moments we are not just remembering, but we are declaring that we are the ones for whom Christ died; his death covers my sin and I'm throwing my lot in with him.