

Series: God Is Jealous #1815

Title: Exodus 7

God Vs. the gods

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We are talking about the divine perfection of the Living God, which is He is jealous. The Only God is a jealous God. He is intolerant of rivalry and unfaithfulness. He zealously protects His glory and His sole right to be worshiped and obeyed. A couple of days ago we read in Exodus 34 about God telling us directly His Name is Jealous and what He thinks about the many false gods the Israelites are sure to encounter in the Promised Land.

Then, last time, we consulted Isaiah chapter 44 to answer this question: what is a god? Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says a *god* (small g, a false god) is, quote, “what is not God (capital G).” That is, any god who is not *The* God is no god at all. Those are mere idols, icons, fetishes, and graven images all made up from human imagination. They are myths. They are fake. They are useless in offering a person any help or harm. Gods (small g, plural) do *not* exist! They have no life. They have no being. They have no intelligence. They are ridiculous. And the men and women who make and worship them are fools.

And yet, human history is packed, crammed full of fools. Sinful human beings have been crafting and worshipping false gods since sin entered this world, and this continues right to the present day. Let’s think about ancient history, Bible times. Think about the empires mentioned in Scripture – some of them, at least. The Hittites were an Anatolian people who ruled the area of what is now modern day Turkey. Their chief god was Tarhunna, known as the weather god or the “weather god of heaven,” or “the lord of the land of Hatti.” The Hittites are mentioned plenty in the Old Testament. We just read them in Exodus 34, and you might remember Uriah the Hittite, husband of Bathsheba whom King David had killed.

Next, consider the Assyrian Empire and one of their chief gods Ashur. He was a city god whom became a national god. Or the ancient Babylonian Empire. We read plenty about them in the Scripture. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar? Marduk was their top god, also known as Bel or Lord. Next came the Persians and the god Ahura Mazda, known as the supreme god, because many gods were worshipped in the Persian empire. Then came the Greek and Roman empires, which brings us right into the New Testament. And within these global empires, oh my, the gods and goddesses are so many in number that we hardly have time all week to name and describe them. Last week I finished reading a lengthy book about the ancient Greek deities and mythological figures and I nearly had to make a spreadsheet to keep them all straight there are so many!

Let me give you just a few. The Greeks called the king of the gods Zeus, the Romans Jupiter. He was the king of the pantheon of gods and goddesses. There was the goddess Hera (the Romans called her Juno). She was wife of Zeus and goddess of the family. Poseidon (god of the ocean, named Neptune by the Romans). Aphrodite the goddess of love (Venus to the Romans). Apollo the god of the sun and medicine and archery (the Romans also called him Apollo). And just to name one more: Hades the god of the underworld. The Romans called him Pluto. The Greeks and the Romans had a god or a goddess for *everything!* Trust me, I am barely scratching the surface with these names. Their whole culture and worldview was built upon idolatry.

“Oh,” someone says, “that’s ancient history, Swallow! Nobody worships those anymore.” Well, I have to agree with you there. I don’t know too many people living in fear of Zeus today. *But*, all our society has done is come up with new idols to worship. Haven’t you heard of the goddess Taylor Swift? Or the god LeBron James? Don’t they call him “The King.” Or, for those of you listening outside America, have you heard of the god Lionel Messi? And we worship our money, our power, our phones, we worship sex, comfort, and entertainment and we make gods and goddesses out of those who have the best of these things. In many cases we have turned our own identities into icons of self-worship (the terrifying, negative effects of social media).

Listen, all of these, *all of these*, compete with the God of this universe. All of these are rivals of His. And He does not tolerate these rivals. He will not accept the *unfaithfulness* these created in the ancients and these create in us. There is only One God and He alone is worthy of faithfulness and worthy of worship, and honor, and glory, and praise. I’ve got news for Taylor Swift and for LeBaby (that’s what I call him; what do you expect, I’m from Boston!); you’re *not* God, no matter how many delusional, adoring fans you have!

Now, if you are observant and listening closely you will have noticed I missed an ancient empire. There was a glaring gap in my list of world empires that appear in Scripture. What did I miss? Yes! The Egyptians! One of the greatest world super powers of all-time. And if you have studied the Egyptians then you already know they were an idolatrous people. Like the Greeks and Romans that came later, it seemed they had a god for everything. And these contended with *The God* in an epic battle of the gods. We read about this in the Book of Exodus and you can turn there now. Open to Exodus chapter 7. Beginning today and carrying over into next time, I want to tell you about the plagues and the gods and goddesses of Egypt.

I want you to see the jealous God in action. This is the God whose name is Jealous proving to the Israelites and to the Egyptians themselves that only He reigns and rules! There is no god but *this* God. I am reading the Book of Exodus chapter 7, beginning in verse 5. Please give ear to the Word of God. This is what He says, **“The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.”** With this statement the True God says I will demonstrate the supremacy of my Being when I strike the Egyptians and bring My people out of Egypt. What follows are ten plagues that God brings upon this idolatrous people and their Pharaoh.

Let’s read the first of these, still in Exodus 7, verses 14-21. Exodus 7.14-21. **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. ¹⁶ You shall say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.’**

¹⁷ Thus says the Lord, ‘By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. ¹⁸ The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.’ ¹⁹ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of wood* and in *vessels of stone.*’

²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that *was* in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned to blood. ²¹ The fish that *were* in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.”

This was the first plague. The blood was everywhere! All the water was bloody water. Verse 19, “There will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of wood* and in *vessels of stone.*” Even the water kept in people’s homes (the drinking water in the vessels of wood and stone) was blood red and undrinkable. This presented a monumental problem for the Egyptians who revered the Nile River and desperately needed its water. *And* the Egyptians worshipped at least three gods related to the Nile. These were Hapi (also called Apis), the bull god, god of the Nile; Isis, goddess of the Nile; and Khnum, ram god, guardian of the Nile among others.

So that by turning the Nile to blood, what is *The God* doing? He is pitting Himself against these false gods and goddesses and saying, in a resoundingly clear way, “I AM GOD. There is no god, but Me.” The God whose name is Jealous, He is showing off His jealousy in a very vivid manner.

Well, we do not have time today to move on to the other plagues, but we will. This is important so that we can understand just how jealous God is for His Name, for His honor, and for His glory. God zealously protects His identity among all these other man-made deities. Read ahead in Exodus 7 and following and then join us next time as we continue to discover who *God* is.

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