

The admiral was deeply troubled. Here he was stranded with a hundred men just off the shore of a remote island. His ship had suffered severe damage from a storm at sea, so much so that he considered himself fortunate just to get to the safety of this natural port. He couldn't take this ship in its present condition back out to sea. So he sent some men off in a smaller vessel for help. But now, here he was, with a ship full of men which he had to confine to the ship.

Happily, the admiral knew something about this island. He had stopped here briefly on a former voyage. He knew that the native islanders had been friendly then. But he was worried. Because the admiral knew how rowdy his men could be. And they needed food to survive. The islanders were their only source of food. If his men offended the nationals, they could be doomed for sure.

So the admiral hatched a plan. He would have his men stay on board the ship until help came, and he would trade trinkets and equipment that they could spare for food supplies. The islanders were happy to oblige, and life continued smoothly for several months. But as month after month passed without help arriving, the sailors became more and more restless. Why couldn't they go ashore? Finally, after being in port for 6 months, half of the crew snuck off the ship one night. By the time the admiral found that they had gone ashore, it was the next day and too late. Predictably, the rowdy sailors not having been on land for over a year, had become boisterous, plundering a village offending the islanders.

The admiral quickly got his men back aboard ship before blood was shed. But now he was in a real mess. The offended islanders vowed to stop giving them any food. Soon they would run out of supplies and starve if help didn't soon arrive. What was the admiral to do?

It was as he was studying in his small cabin that a plan came to him. The admiral sent a message to the island chief that his god was very displeased with their decision to withhold food. As a sign of his displeasure, his god was going to remove the moon from the sky. And then the sun wouldn't rise dooming the island. The local chief laughed at this preposterous threat. And his whole tribe ridiculed this white admiral with him. Threatening to remove the moon and the sun - what an empty threat. But then it happened. That very night, the islanders watched in horror as the full moon gradually became darkened.

The chief led his leaders to the harbor in the middle of the night as the admiral had hoped. The admiral must pray to his god to restore the moon to the sky or else the whole island would be doomed. They would promise to continue to bring food free of charge. The admiral promised that he would do what he

could. Later that night, the moon came back into view, and the sun, of course, came up normally the next day. The islanders were convinced that the admiral's god was greater than theirs, and they continued to bring food to the ship until help came in a few more months.

We know today what happened that night. When the admiral was in his cabin, looking at his almanac, he discovered that a full lunar eclipse was predicted for that certain night. He used the event to his own advantage, in effect tricking the islanders. But the struggle that ensued that night was an age old one - the attempt to prove one's gods superior to another's.

We have heard a great deal about this admiral's first voyage in 1492. But it was this event off of the island that we know today as Jamaica that allowed Christopher Columbus to get his crew safely back across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

Today, many have a tendency to look back with a condescending attitude on these former generations. But while most people in the world today do not worship gods of wood and stone, the ancient struggle that former generations faced is just as real. Gods of science and medicine and education and technology are being advanced by all modern nations in an attempt to gain superiority over each other. And among those who are sensitive to spiritual matters, many are wondering whether the God of Christianity is greater than Allah or the innumerable gods of the Hindu or Buddhist worshippers.

We have been looking at 8 pictures that Moses gives of Jehovah God as he led the Israelites in a song of praise immediately following that great deliverance at the Red Sea. We have seen the progression of the song to its halfway point now. First, Moses extols the Saving Lord who delivers his people. Then he speaks of the Warrior Lord who fights for his people. Last time we looked at the Majestic Lord who is awesome in his greatness and power. Now this morning, we want to look at the Preeminent Lord - the God who is greater than all others who would claim the name god and demand allegiance from people. And Moses didn't have to use trickery or deceit to demonstrate God's superiority, for the Lord God had just evidenced his preeminence in a most remarkable way. Notice this picture of the Lord as we read Exodus 15:11,12:

*11 "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? 12 You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them.*

Now it is very important that we again remember the historical context in order to understand why Moses is so careful to present this picture of the preeminent Lord here.

The nation of Israel had just been delivered from being slaves in Egypt. Egypt was one of the most polytheistic nations in these days. The Egyptians worshipped literally hundreds of gods. They had gods for everything. And the generally accepted belief was that Egypt was the most powerful nation in the Middle

East because their gods were the strongest.

Now we must understand Egypt's religious and political situation to fully understand why God used the 10 plagues to deliver his people from their bondage. Many have wondered why God used these plagues? Why not bring his people from their bondage in another way? Why not just send the angel of death to strike down all the Egyptian soldiers as happened when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian soldiers in King Hezekiah's day as recorded in 2 Kings 19? Why not direct Moses to form an army and use them to defeat the Egyptians as God did through Ehud, or Deborah and Barak, or Gideon or one of the other Judges? Why use plagues? And why 10 plagues?

Well, there is a short verse that is often overlooked almost at the end of the Exodus deliverance account that gives an answer to that question. I am sure that Moses had many of the same questions that we have. I am sure that he wondered why God was bringing plague after plague as Pharaoh's heart remained hardened. But then God said to him as recorded in Exodus 12:12 just before that last plague of the death of the firstborn, *On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn - both men and animals - and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. For I am the Lord.*

It must have been like a light bulb going off in Moses brain as he realized the purpose of these plagues. The plagues were designed to be a direct assault of the true and living God on those false deities of Egypt who were held up in the Middle East as being the strongest gods of all. The Lord God was going to prove himself to be preeminent over all other gods. So Jehovah picked out those who were considered to be the top 10 - the strongest Egyptian gods - and he challenged them to a duel.

\*Khnum was the guardian of the Nile and Hapi the spirit of the Nile; The Preeminent Lord challenged these gods of the very important Nile which was the lifeblood of Egypt to a duel and turned their waters into blood.

\*Hept was the god of resurrection who was worshipped in the form of a frog; the preeminent Lord challenged him to a duel and flooded the land with frogs.

\*Seb was the god of the earth; the preeminent Lord challenged him to a duel and covered the land with gnats.

\*Khephera was the sacred scarab; the preeminent Lord challenged him to a duel and covered the land with flies.

\*Hathor was the mother goddess who was worshipped in the form of a cow; the preeminent Lord challenged her to a duel and brought a plague on all the cattle.

\*Imhotep was the god of medicine and health; the preeminent Lord challenged him to a duel and

inflicted boils on all the people temporarily ruining their health.

\*Nut was the goddess of the sky; the preeminent Lord challenged her to a duel and rained down hail from the heavens.

\*Seth was the protector of the crops; the preeminent Lord challenged him to a duel and sent locusts to destroy all the crops.

\*Re, Aten, Atum and Horus were all gods and goddesses associated with the Sun. The preeminent Lord challenged them all to a duel and caused darkness to cover the earth.

\*Osiris and Isis were the god and goddess who supposedly gave and sustained life. The preeminent Lord challenged them to a duel and caused the death of the firstborn all over the land.

In these 10 plagues, the God of heaven was proving himself to be the preeminent Lord. So it should not surprise us at all that having seen God win challenge after challenge, Moses and the Israelites sing about the Lord who is preeminent over every other who would be called god.

HOW IS GOD THE PREEMINENT LORD? What is it about the Lord Jehovah that makes him preeminent over every other? Moses could have gone on for the rest of the Bible giving reasons for the Lord's preeminence, but for his immediate purposes, he chooses just 3 reasons for the Lord's preeminence - it must have been for preachers so that they would have a good 3 point outline. I would invite you to note these 3 reasons with me this morning.

#### 1. THE LORD IS PREEMINENT IN HIS PURITY -

*\*Who is like you - majestic in holiness.*

We saw last week that God's majesty means his greatness or awesome character. One of the major areas of God's greatness is found in his holiness. God is majestic or great beyond measure or perfect in his holiness. God's holiness is his purity, his righteousness, his absolute moral perfection, his separation from all that is defiled or impure.

You see, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Lord God over the other national deities was the fact that the gods of Egypt or Babylon or Canaan all were very willing to allow sinful indulgences of the flesh. Immorality didn't matter to them - just as long as they were appeased with sacrifices. In fact, immoral conduct was encouraged. Each nation had religious houses of prostitution where worshippers could go and make sacrifices to their gods through immoral conduct. It was obvious that this type of supposed worship just reflected the sinful desires of the depraved human nature. People had developed these religious practices so they could turn their wickedness into virtue. They could fulfill their own sinful desires and then pat themselves on the back and proclaim themselves to be righteous.

So today, the gods of technology or science or education don't demand any kind of a moral standard. Those who worship at these altars can be as immoral or perverted as they want to be and nobody questions or even seems to care. Pornography is the major industry of the internet and is vehemently defended as freedom of speech. As if the founders in their wildest imaginations would have ever imagined condoning perverted pictures of sexuality as they composed the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment guaranteeing freedom of religion and speech. But the true and living God is a God who is majestic in holiness. He is a God who does have moral standards. And He has revealed those standards to us in his Word. He expects His creatures to reflect his character in their actions, and has promised to hold them accountable for their actions in the future. These standards that reflect his character are for their good. But they necessarily run against the grain of the program that God's enemy is trying to promote and the sinful desires of the flesh.

One of the ways that we can tell if we are indwelt by and growing in our relationship with the true and living God of the Bible is by examining our concern for moral purity in our lives. Now, we will never come to the place on this earth were we are perfectly sinless. We will only reach that state when we receive our resurrected, glorified bodies. But as we grow in our relationship with the preeminent Lord who is majestic in holiness, we should become more and more concerned with our own moral purity as well.

In the south east part of England there is a very interesting natural well of water. When the sea comes in at high tide, this well is completely under the briny salt water. But when the sea goes out at low tide, people can still come and drink fresh and pure fresh water from its natural springs. The ocean waters are not able to contaminate it because there is a source of natural fresh water that continually flows from within. That natural phenomenon is a spiritual picture of the Christian's life. Jesus once gave this invitation at the Jewish feast of Tabernacles: *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. John 7:37,38.*

The person who is born again into God's family receives the very nature of God within him. This means that the Preeminent Lord who is majestic in holiness lives within and flows forth as a stream of living water.

2. But in the second place, notice that THE LORD IS PREEMINENT IN HIS PERSON -

*\*Who is like you - awesome in glory.*

*\*Hebrew word translated glory here literally means- a song or hymn sung to praise the Lord. The idea is that God is so preeminent in his person that we cannot help but sing praises of adoration to his name. In our praises we reveal his person and thereby glorify him.*

Just a year before his death, Franz Joseph Haydn was convinced to attend a grand performance of his

own oratorio *The Creation* in Vienna. The aged composer was very weak and sickly and had to be wheeled into the concert hall in a wheelchair. His presence brought an electrifying effect to both the musicians and the audience. The chorus sang as never before; the orchestra played with brilliance; and the audience was poised on every note. As the orchestra and chorus burst forth with full power into the passage, *And there was light*, the audience could not contain itself any longer. A crescendo of applause spontaneously broke out and the crowd rose as one to its feet honoring the aged composer. But it was Haydn's response that gave the whole crowd another perspective. He began to become very agitated. And he struggled to his feet out of his wheelchair pointing his fingers to the sky and yelling, *No, No, Not for me but for Him. From heaven comes all.* Haydn's exertion proved to be too much for him and he collapsed back into his wheelchair exhausted. But even as he was being wheeled back out of the concert hall, he had made his point. Here the audience had become so intense in their recognition and praise of the musician that they had forgotten about the One of who he wrote, the One who made it possible for Him to compose at all. The Composer was just a weak old man; the preeminent Lord remained God over His entire universe.

The Lord is preeminent in His person. Gifted people come and go on this planet. Human gods even come and go. None of these Egyptian gods who were so revered in Moses' day are even seriously recognized as deities today. But the Preeminent Lord continues to be worshipped from generation to generation, century to century, millennia to millennia. For He alone is preeminent in his person.

### 3. Finally, THE LORD IS PREEMINENT IN HIS POWER -

*\*Who is like you - working wonders. You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them.*

We don't have time to discuss how the preeminent Lord toyed with those gods of Egypt. It is certainly true that God's enemy has great power. The power of the fallen angelic world is far greater than any human potential. And the Exodus account records how Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the first several miracles that Moses performed by the hand of God. The staff becoming a snake, the water turning to blood, even producing frogs. We don't know how they were able to duplicate these miracles even as we don't know how God was able to execute the plagues. Supernatural power is beyond our human comprehension. But the inspired record gives us the account.

But then God began to move beyond the realms of the enemy's power. And the court magicians begin to shake their heads and proclaim to Pharaoh, *This must be the hand of God.* This is beyond our capabilities. It's almost as if God were toying with them. Starting with something that they had the power to duplicate so that their confidence could get puffed up, and then moving into uncharted waters of power leaving them flailing and drowning in the wake. Nor did God stop until He had thoroughly impressed even

the most hardened skeptic. He completely changed the heart of Pharaoh who was considered to be a deity in his day. And when those waters of the Red Sea crashed down upon those Egyptian armies - there was nothing left to be proved. God had completely subdued his enemies. He had humiliated all his opponents who claimed to be gods. He had delivered His people with His outstretched hand. He had proved himself to be preeminent in strength and power.

Yes, there is no question that the Lord God who created and sustains all things is the preeminent Lord.

\*He is preeminent in his purity - *Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you - majestic in holiness.*

\*He is preeminent in his person - *Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you - awesome in glory.*

\*He is preeminent in his power - *Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you - working wonders?*

As we conclude our service with the celebration of the Lord's Table, we are remembering the supreme example of God's preeminence. Only the true and living God could provide the complete sacrifice for the sin of the human race. Only the true and living God could completely defeat the Devil, the depravity of sin and even Death itself.