

Article of the Month – May 2011

Missions & Eschatology (1) – Exodus

By Steef van 't Slot, Ph.D.



There are good reasons to write about this topic, because of the future nature of God's Kingdom and the fact that World Missions seek to speed up the Lord's return and the glorious manifestation of His Kingdom on earth. There is also a direct connection between doing missions to see the Kingdom break through in power, and its agents on earth who suffer to see it come to completion. Therefore, these articles also intend to contribute towards the preparation of the church in general and missionaries in particular to

suffer for the King, His Mission and the Kingdom.

That is why I intend to deliver ten issues on this topic. During this year we consider five OT books; after that five more follow on NT books. We now start with the book of Exodus, and particularly consider the eschatological implications of the Plagues that took place in Egypt.

It is good to look at the wider biblical picture of the Plagues. When we understand the eschatological connotations of Ex. 5-12 we will read the narrative of the Plagues from a different but richer perspective and it will be lifted from the level of mere history to the level of prophecy yet to be fulfilled. Then it becomes of great importance for God's people worldwide today, as well as for their behavior in relationship to the world.

There are certainly similarities between the redemption of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses¹ and the ultimate redemption of God's people at the end of time. Also there will be similarities between the Great Tribulation that is yet to come, and the Plagues that befell Egypt. We can not go into many details concerning these things, but a few need to be mentioned in order to grasp the important prophetic elements of Exodus.

The *first* remarkable aspect is that as Israel's redemption drew near, at first their circumstances worsened.² Their slavery became a full-fledged tribulation. Jesus said the same would apply to His people of the end-times.³

In the *second* place we see that *after* the Plagues had taken place, the Israelites left Egypt and travelled to the desert. This reminds us of what we read in the book of Revelation,⁴ where the woman⁵ is given shelter against the rage of the devil, *after* (or possibly during) the time the ordeals of the Seven Trumpets take place.⁶

¹ About 1447 BC

² Ex. 5

³ Matt. 24:21,22

⁴ Rev. 12:14

⁵ The woman is understood to be an image of the Church

⁶ Rev. 8, 9 & 11

A *third* aspect that draws our attention consists of the two occasions where we read that such a Plague 'had never happened in Egypt before, nor will it happen again'.⁷ This reminds us of the way Jesus described the Great Tribulation of the end times.⁸

Fourthly, in the book of Revelation we see the ministry of the two witnesses, reminding us of the ministries of Moses and Elijah.⁹ Both of them appeared at the Mountain of Transfiguration to speak with Jesus about His departure (Greek: ἐξόδοϛ, exodus) which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.¹⁰ Moses appeared at the critical time (*Israel's* tribulation in Egypt, just prior to the exodus), and he appeared again at the critical time in *Jesus'* life (before He entered His tribulation, prior to His exodus from death). Finally he¹¹ appears at the critical time of the Great Tribulation, just prior to the ultimate liberation of *the Church*.

A *fifth* element we see in the similarities between the Song of Moses in Exodus and its parallel in the book of Revelation.¹² The fact that the text in Revelation is called 'song of Moses' links the two passages in a way that gives prophetic relevance to the Exodus-narrative. The consequence is, that the still future events in Revelation find illustrations in the history of the Plagues of Egypt. Such scriptural links are not coincidental; therefore both passages should be understood as complementary and as each explaining certain details of the total.

A *sixth* aspect is that Israel was *in Egypt* (not yet *out of Egypt!*) at the time that the Plagues raged over the country. On *five occasions* God said: 'I will deal differently with the land of Goshen' (where Israel lived).¹³ We can not say with certainty that Israel was not affected by *any* of the Plagues, but it does not *say* they were; whereas these five occasions, saying that they were *not* affected seem to establish the principle that God keeps His people safe *in the midst of tribulation that befalls others*. If this principle is established in the OT, there seems to be no reason why it would not be eschatologically applicable in the NT.¹⁴ These arguments all seem to speak out *against* the theory of a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church, as expected and preached by many. Israel, God's people of old had no easy way out. Neither had Jesus. So, what makes us think His bride will?

⁷ Ex. 10:14; 11:6

⁸ Matt. 24:21

⁹ Rev. 11:5,6

¹⁰ Luke 9:31

¹¹ It will be someone whose ministry strongly resembles that of Moses; it will *not be a reincarnation of Moses* – since the Bible does not teach such thing

¹² Compare Ex. 15 with Rev. 15:3,4

¹³ Ex. 8:22; 9:4,26; 10:21-23; 11:7

¹⁴ Rev. 3:10 is often misinterpreted as if 'to keep from' would mean 'to snatch out'. The Greek τήρέώ, tereoo, however, means 'to guard, take care of' or 'to keep watch' – and therefore rather states the opposite of such wrong interpretation

