

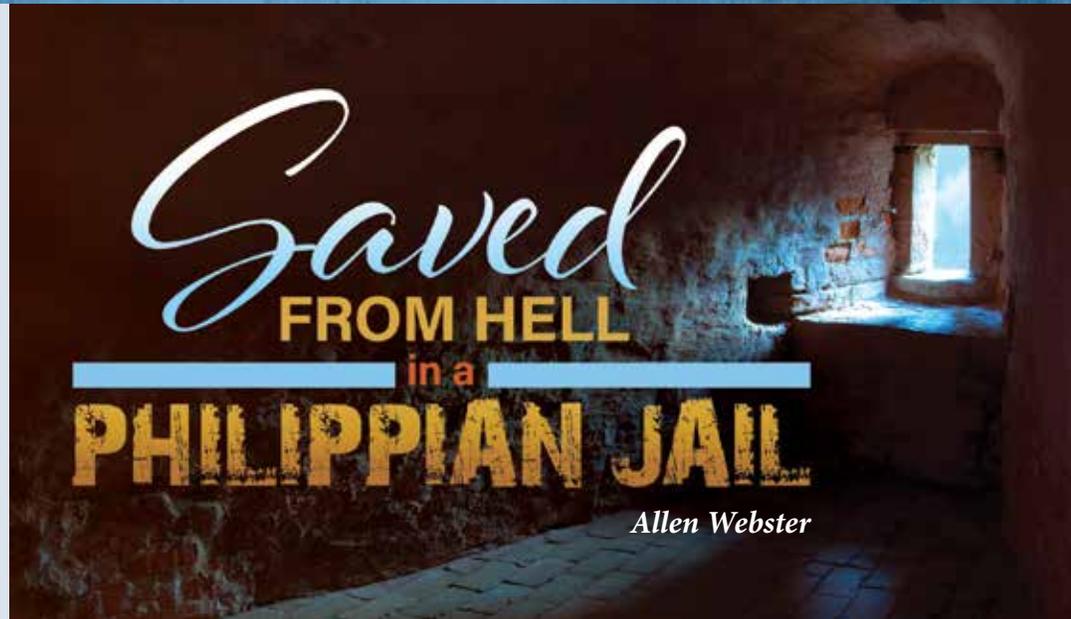


HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 2



Salvation has been found in many unlikely places. Men's hearts have been warmed by God's love in Antarctica and their bodies baptized in deserts.

Christ has been confessed in Muslim countries, risking persecution, and in Communist nations where God had been declared dead.

Missionaries have found a single receptive soul among the teeming millions in urban population centers and converted whole villages in earth's most remote extremities. Battlefields and bars have often hosted impromptu Bible classes.

The young have been saved on university campuses and the old in nursing homes. The illiterate have been drawn to the Friend of Sinners and university professors to the Teacher of Nazareth. Many just entering accountability choose Christ, and others are snatched from Satan on their last day of life.

On the other hand, one can go to hell from anywhere. Citizens living in the Bible Belt of a Christian nation may be as far from God as the staunchest atheist in the most secular nation. A home with a dozen Bibles can be as degenerate as one that has

none. Those reared in Christian families may be prodigals. Preachers can forsake the gospel they once preached. Those living beside church buildings may never attend a single service.

Still, all things being equal, a good environment aids God's cause and a bad one lends itself to the devil's work. Perhaps, therefore, it is harder to go to heaven from a prison than any other place on earth.

This makes the Philippian jailer's rescue even more remarkable. (Read Acts 16:25-34.) This man, having his prisoners safely locked away for the night, went to sleep neither expecting nor desiring rescue (Acts 16:23-24). About midnight, startling events began unfolding that forever changed his life.

HE FOUND LIFE AT THE PRECIPICE OF DEATH

It all began with an earthquake. Awakened, his first thoughts were of the prisoners. Seeing the doors open, he assumed what any warden would: *They've escaped!*

His second thoughts were of consequences. They were not of the there-goes-this-year's-bonus or no-promotion-for-me-now variety. It was far more serious.



Guards who let prisoners escape were executed (Acts 12:19). He knew how this would play out. An interrogation would find he had slept at his post. Disgrace, beating, and execution would follow.

Hopeless, he decided to save them the trouble. He would fall on his sword and that would be that. When they found the empty prison, they would also find a dead warden. They would fill out the paperwork, chase down the prisoners, and appoint a new jailer.

How Paul knew what was going on outside his cell and inside the jailer's mind is unknown (perhaps by miracle), but his voice called out of the darkness at just the right moment. To this suicidal man at death's door, he said, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (16:28).

Startled, the jailer must have thought: *Who said that? Is this true? Why would criminals stay in a prison with open doors?* He found it so.

Then it hit him. *I almost died.*

Flight or fight adrenaline hit his bloodstream. His thoughts raced. *What if I had done it? Where would I be now? I'm not ready to die! I've never made peace with my Maker. If there is a heaven, I'd have missed it. If there is a hell, I'd be in it.*

At that moment—probably for the first time—the idea of being lost hit him.

What was I thinking?

How far was the sword from his vital organs when Paul's voice arrested it? Six inches? Three? How many seconds was he away from his last breath? Sixty? Thirty?

Surely, he stood on the brink of the eternal chasm with his toes over the edge. Yet he stepped back. As Jude might phrase it, he was pulled from the fire in which the rich man woke up (Jude 1:23; cf. Luke

16:19–31). That horrible place is described as a lake of fire (Revelation 21:8) that is never quenched (Mark 9:46). Once he plunged into that darkness, there was no way back (Hebrews 9:27; Luke 16:26).

Any person can be on death's precipice at any time. There is but a step—a car accident, a heart attack, a stray bullet—between any man and death any day. We are wise to prepare—and stay prepared—to proceed to the next world on short notice (1 Samuel 20:3; Luke 12:20; James 4:14).

He was as close to a hopeless judgment as any man has ever been, yet there, in that Philippian jail, he was rescued from hell.

HE RECEIVED THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE ANSWER TO LIFE'S GREATEST POSSIBLE QUESTION

The jailer was a man of few words. We know of only twenty-three words he ever said, but among them is this question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The Bible contains about 3,300 questions, but this is the greatest of all. No poet, bard, philosopher, or scholar has surpassed this short, simple query. It is the greatest because it is universal (Romans 3:23), personal, is about our deepest need, deals with the longest duration, and implies both divine grace and human responsibility.

Acts 16:31 is one of the great verses of the Bible. God's briefest answer to man's deepest question has two parts:

- A blessing: You will be saved.
- A condition: Believe on the Lord Jesus.

"What must I do to be saved?" is asked three times in Acts:

- By the Jews on Pentecost (2:37).
- By Saul of Tarsus (9:6).
- By the jailer (16:30).

Surprisingly, each time a different answer was given:

- To the Jews: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (2:37–38).
- To Saul: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (9:6; 22:16).
- To the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31).

Combined, there are three answers: (a) Believe; (b) Repent; (c) Be baptized.

Why three? Does God have no definite plan to save? Does He require different things? No, He is always fair and equal (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 2:11).

Everyone must make the same trip; some are just farther down the road than others. Suppose you were on the road to Philippi and asked a passerby, "How far is it to Philippi?" He says, "Three miles." A mile farther you ask, "How far to the city?" The answer: two miles. You keep walking: "How far?" "A mile." The same question received three answers but all were correct.

A senior asks, "What must I do to obtain a PhD?" Her advisor replies, "Finish high school. Get a college undergraduate degree. Then get your master's degree. After that apply to a doctoral program." A college graduate who asks this is not told to "complete high school, and enroll in college." He has done these. One with a master's degree gets an even shorter answer.

The same is true regarding salvation.

- Those on Pentecost believed (2:37), so they were told to repent and be baptized.
- Saul had believed and repented (9:5–9), so he was told to be baptized.
- The jailer had done none of the three.

Believe was the first thing he had to do, so Paul told him that. Yet like the blind man who said, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" (John 9:36), the jailer needed more information. He did not know this "Christ." He had never been to a church service to hear a gospel sermon.

When his household arrived, Paul taught "the word of the Lord" (16:32), explaining who Jesus is and what He requires. We can know what he taught by simply observing what they did.

Between midnight and sunrise they completed the same three requirements as the others—believing (16:34), repenting

(indicated by washing stripes, 16:33), and baptism (16:33), resulting in salvation, service, and rejoicing (16:34).

HE LEARNED AND OBEYED THE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE NIGHT

The jailer went from pagan to Christian in less than six hours. That might be the all-time record.

In some ways, his is the most remarkable conversion in the New Testament. Pentecost was larger and was accompanied by a greater miracle, but conversion was a natural progression for Jews looking for the Messiah, once convinced that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 2; Galatians 3:26). The conversion of Cornelius, although he also was a Roman, is less surprising, for he had been exposed to Judaism and was sympathetic to the true God (Acts 10). Saul of Tarsus was a more noteworthy turnaround; but a devout person turning to pursue a better religion is not unheard of (Acts 9).

Yet this Roman jailer would never have read Jewish prophecies. Philippi was nothing like Cornelius' post in Joppa. He was not a devout man looking for a life path.

He simply desired salvation enough to make a drastic change literally overnight (cf. Matthew 13:44).

ONCE OFFERED SALVATION, HE DID NOT EAT, DRINK, OR SLEEP UNTIL HE POSSESSED IT

The jailer was baptized "the same hour of the night," which was sometime after midnight (Acts 16:25, 33). The church would meet in Philippi the next Sunday (16:40), but he did not wait a few days. It would be easier after daylight, but he did not even wait until sunrise.

This decision reflected his wisdom in taking advantage of his opportunity (Ephesians 5:16). Paul would be released and move the next day. It is consistent with baptism's purpose: Why wait to be saved? (Mark 16:16). It is consistent with other conversions. In Acts, as soon as one knew the gospel, he obeyed it—whether after a Sunday sermon, midweek, or midnight.

- The three thousand on Pentecost were baptized the same day (2:38–41),
- As were the Samaritans (8:12),
- And Lydia (16:15).

- The Ethiopian was baptized as soon as he found adequate water (8:35–38).
- Saul was told not to delay, and obeyed as soon as he knew what to do (9:18; 22:16).

HE WAS INTRODUCED TO THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD BY THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

What would it have been like to hear Paul preach about Jesus? The chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) speaking of the One who saved him by His grace? The jailer likely never knew how blessed he was to have had this man assigned to his watch.

Consider how unlikely it was that this Roman would ever become a follower of Christ. Jesus had lived, taught, and died in a distant land. He had nothing in common with Jesus. They spoke different languages, wore different styles, ate different foods, and held far different worldviews. Jesus' death by crucifixion was at the hands of the jailer's own national army. Romans despised the Jews (Acts 16:20), Jesus' nation.

Decades had passed. The gospel had only recently arrived in his area. He had no interest in it. He had just locked up the only preachers of it. None of his family or friends or acquaintances were Christians. In fact, there was only one Christian family on the whole continent—and he didn't know Lydia from Thyratira.

Yet—somehow—he still became a Christian.

That "somehow" is the love of Jesus. Salvation is beyond us; it lies in Him. It is not of achievement, merit, works, or worth, but of trust, submission, obedience, and faith (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5–7; Hebrews 5:8–9). Our trusting obedience saves us only in the sense that it makes a way for Christ to save us.

Jesus is the hero in all conversions. He came to earth. He lived among us (John 1:14). He died for us (Romans 5:6). He longs to save us (2 Peter 3:9). He lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus wants to rescue you. Have you believed, repented, and been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins? Remember, you can go to heaven from wherever you are.

*If you want to become a Christian,
we would count it an honor to assist you.
Visit Sunday!*

The Best Things

"The best things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things of life."

—Robert Louis Stevenson

"I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High."

PSALM 7:17



God's Plan for Saving Man

- God's Grace:** Ephesians 2:8
- Christ's Blood:** Romans 5:9
- The Holy Spirit's Gospel:** Romans 1:16
- Sinner's Faith:** Acts 16:31
- Sinner's Repentance:** Luke 13:3
- Sinner's Confession:** Romans 10:10
- Sinner's Baptism:** 1 Peter 3:21
- Christian's Work:** James 2:24
- Christian's Hope:** Romans 8:24
- Christian's Endurance:** Revelation 2:10



The Family

The family is like a book—
The children are the leaves,
The parents are the covers
That protecting beauty gives.

At first the pages of the book
Are blank and purely fair,
But time soon writes memories
And paints pictures there.

Love is the little golden clasp
That bindeth up the trust;
O, break it not, lest all the leaves
Should scatter and be lost.

—Spoken by Samuel G. Dye, at the funeral
of Ann Lane Larkin, September 9, 1924

I don't expect anyone to fully ap-
preciate that a mother makes more
decisions in one morning than the
Supreme Court makes in three years.

—Erma Bombeck

Grandchild's View

My grandson was visiting one day
when he asked,
"Grandma, do you know how you and
God are alike?"
I mentally polished my halo, and asked,
"No, how are we alike?"
"You're both old," he replied.

—Author Unknown

"A merry heart does good"

PROVERBS 17:22

For more material on the home and family,
fathers and mothers, husbands and wives,
grandparents, and family finances, go to
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Being a Kid Is Tough

"One of the great puzzles in my life
is when Daddy spansks me for smok-
ing a cigarette butt he threw away. And
Mommy sometimes washes my mouth out
with soap for saying a word that I learned
from her. Ever since I can remember, my
parents have taught me not to tell lies,
but the other day Mommy sent me to the
door to tell a salesman that she was gone.

Maybe when we get big and our folks get
little, we can enjoy the privilege of telling
whoppers. You know, being a parent must
be fun . . . but being a kid is tough, with so
many restrictions."

Remember that every word spoken
before our children and every action
observed contribute to the formation of
their character. —Author Unknown

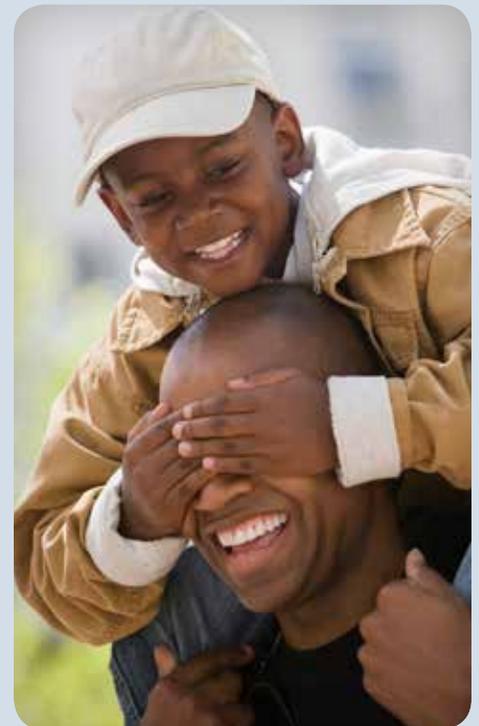
Surprise Your Parents

There's always something you wish your
children would do, such as not tossing
clothes inside out into the hamper. Here's
my wish list of phrases I'd like to hear my
children say. Not all the time—just once
would be nice.

1. "You're so cool, Dad."
2. "Who cares if the TV is broken?"
3. "Pass the broccoli, please."
4. "What! No kiss?"
5. "No, thanks. It's too expensive."
6. "It's a hard choice. Everything
sounds great."
7. "Bored? How could I be bored?"
8. "I've already made my bed."
9. "It was my fault."
10. "That's okay. None of my friends are
allowed to do it either." —Larry Rout

*"My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
and forsake not the law of thy mother."*

PROVERBS 1:8



HE FINISHED FIRST, in 211th Place

David Sargent told the story of Josh Ripley. The Applejack Invitational Cross Country Meet in Lakeville, Minnesota, was underway when Andover High School runner Josh Ripley heard something unusual.

He was in the first mile of the 2-mile junior varsity race held on September 16, but he stopped to see what was wrong.

"I had heard this scream, and as I rounded a corner, he came into view," Josh said. What he saw was a competitor from Lakeville South, Mark Paulauskas, who had been injured.

"He was against a fence holding his ankle, and it was bleeding pretty badly," said Josh.

Josh picked him up and started running with him in his arms. "He just picked me up and started carrying me and trying to calm me down. He said, 'It's going to be OK. I'm going to get you to your coaches,'"

Mark said, estimating that he was carried about a quarter of a mile.

The two runners finally reached a point in the course where they came into the view of their coaches. There was the 6-foot-5, 185-pound Josh, from Andover High, carrying the 5-foot-5, 100-pound Mark, a freshman at Lakeville South High, in his arms.

Josh handed off the injured Mark to his coach. Mark was taken to a hospital emergency room, where doctors determined he had been accidentally spiked by another runner's shoe. It took twenty stitches to close the gash.

Having made sure Mark was in the care of his coaches, Josh resumed the race. He was dead last when he returned to the course, but he passed 50 other runners to finish 211th out of 261 runners.

However, he was greeted like a winner at the finish line. Mark's coach and teammates met him to thank him.

"I'm just incredibly grateful for what he did," said Mark.

Jesus taught by His example and message that we should live outside of ourselves and serve others (Mark 10:45). Paul wrote, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:4-8).

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 22:2

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "New Testament Timeline" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).



Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State: _____
 Phone: _____

Questions taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue

What's Her Name? 1. Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4); 2. Food and wine (1 Samuel 25:18); 3. Michal (1 Samuel 18:27) 4. Dress modestly, do good works (1 Timothy 2:9-10); 5. 60 (1 Timothy 5:9); 6. Marry (1 Timothy 5:14); 7. Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 23); 8. Timna (Genesis 36:12); 9. Philippi (Acts 16:12-14); 10. Images (idols) (Genesis 31:19); 11. Mandrake (Genesis 30:14); 12. A scarlet thread in the window (Joshua 2:18); 13. Aaron (Luke 1:5); 14. Tamar (Genesis 38:12-15). 15. Rebekah (Genesis 15:2; 24:15-19); 16. Delilah (Judges 16:18); 17. Jochebed (Numbers 26:59). 18. Jael (Judges 4:18-21); 19. Rahab (Joshua 2:1-6); 20. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:20; 2:18-21).

Heaven and Hell, Do Tell

Directions: Find your answers in Psalm 9:17; Matthew 5:22, 29; 7:13-14; 18:3; 22:30; 25:46; Mark 9:46; Luke 16:22-23; John 14:2; Acts 1:9; 7:49; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 3:2; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 7:9-11; 20:10, 15; 21:1-16.

True/False:

1. There will be marriage in heaven.
2. The path to hell is narrow because God loves all.
3. The road to heaven is narrow.
4. Punishment for the unrighteous is forever.
5. Satan will be tormented forever.
6. Heaven is a literal place that God has prepared for His children.
7. Jesus preached about hell.
8. Heaven is described as a beautiful city.
9. We must have faith as a child to enter heaven.
10. Jesus ascended into heaven.
11. Jesus will be confessed as Lord even in hell.
12. Those not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

Short Answer:

1. It is better to live without _____ if they offend you than it is to go to hell.
2. "The wicked shall be turned into _____, and all the _____ that forget God."
3. Those not found in the book of life will be cast into the _____ of _____.
4. "God spared not the _____ that _____, but cast them down to hell."
5. "Where their worm dieth not, and the _____ is not _____."
6. "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in _____."
7. "Set your _____ on things _____, not on things on the earth."
8. "I beheld . . . a great multitude, which no man could number, of _____, and kindreds . . . stood before the throne."
9. "Heaven is my _____, and earth is my footstool."

THEY BURNED TRUTH

They burned Truth in the marketplace,
And thought their work complete;
But next day, with a smiling face,
They met it on the street.

They threw it in a dungeon damp,
And thought it was no more;
But lo, it walked with lighted lamp
Among them as before.

They scorned and ostracized it,
And ordered it to depart;
But still it dwelt in all the land
And challenged every heart.

—Author Unknown

"The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

1 PETER 1:25

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free, and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems, as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at gbntv.org.

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When Jesus Arrived Late



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Don't see the topic you need? Visit www.housetohouse.com for more subjects.

VOLUME 22:2



10 PLAGUES

Jehovah God vs. gods of Egypt

The plagues of Egypt are well known, but a deep study reveals that each was a direct challenge to the various Egyptian gods and goddesses. The plagues affected the Egyptians' physical senses as well as their hearts with reminders that Jehovah God was far superior to any of their gods. He exercised power at will while the Egyptian gods remained helpless against Him.



PLAGUE 1: WATER TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14–25

The Egyptians were also able to turn water to blood, including the death of the fish and a smell that prohibited even trying to drink the water. Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

The Nile was the source of Egypt's power. There are several gods in their pantheon that draw life from the river.

Khnum was the guardian of the river's source.

Hapi was the god of annual flooding of the Nile and the lord of the fish.

Osiris had the Nile as his bloodstream.



PLAGUE 6: BOILS Exodus 9:8–12

This was the first plague to affect the body directly. God made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptian priests were unable to appear in court.

Isis was the goddess of health and Imhotep was the god of healing.



PLAGUE 7: HAIL Exodus 9:13–35

This plague affected the agriculture and livestock that was left in the field. Such a storm of hail was unique to Egypt.

Nut was the goddess of the sky. Her father Shu, god of the wind and air, was a calming god.



PLAGUE 2: FROGS Exodus 8:1–8:15

The Egyptians also produced frogs. Piles of dead frogs filled the land with a foul odor.

Heqt was an Egyptian goddess with the head of a frog.



PLAGUE 8: LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1–20

This plague would be told to Pharaoh's sons and grandsons, serving the purpose of showing God's power for generations.

Neper and Nepri were the god and goddess of grain. Set was the god of disorder.



PLAGUE 3: GNATS OR LICE Exodus 8:16–19

The gnats or lice came up from the dust of the earth. The Egyptian priests could not duplicate this miracle. They declared, "This is the finger of God."

Geb was the god over the dust of the earth.



PLAGUE 9: DARKNESS Exodus 10:21–29

It was so dark for three days that the darkness could be felt.

Ra, the god of the sun, was the most worshipped and revered god in Egypt after the Pharaoh. Jehovah God showed He had power even over the mightiest of the Egyptian gods.



PLAGUE 4: FLIES Exodus 8:20–32

This was the first plague that affected only the Egyptians.

Khepri had the head of a beetle and also moved the sun.



PLAGUE 10: DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29–36

Establishes the Jewish Passover festival.

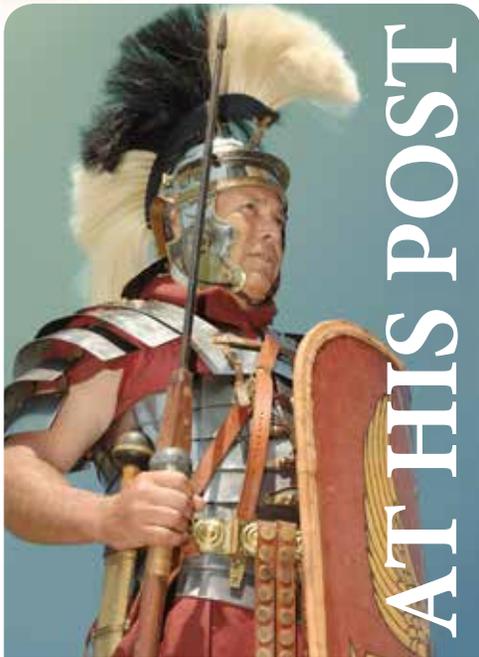
This plague was a judgment on all Egyptian gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had ordered the killing of Israelite babies, and now the firstborn of all Egypt was killed.



PLAGUE 5: SICK CATTLE Exodus 9:1–7

God continued to distinguish between the Israelites and the Egyptians. This plague affected only the Egyptian herds.

Hathor was a fertility goddess who was often depicted with the head or horns of a bull and sometimes as a bull wearing the symbols of Hathor.



When Pompeii was destroyed, many were buried in its ruins. These were later found in very different situations.

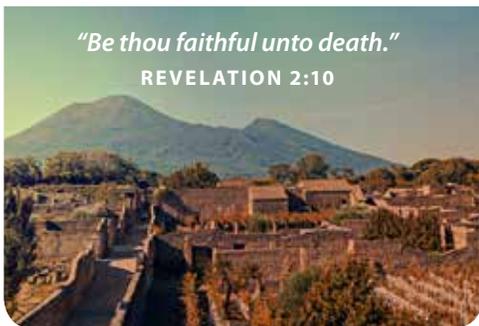
Some were in the streets as if they had been attempting to escape. Some were found in deep vaults as if seeking security. Some were found in lofty chambers as if trying to get above the lava.

Where did they find the Roman sentinel? He was standing at the city gate where he had been placed by his captain, with his hand still grasping the war weapon.

There, while the heavens threatened him; there, while the earth shook beneath him; there, while lava streams rolled, he had stood at his post; and there, after a thousand years had passed, was he still found.

May we as Christians stand to our duty, in the post at which our Captain has placed us. —Author Unknown

"Be thou faithful unto death."
REVELATION 2:10



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