

Exodus 7:14-10:29

The Plagues

I. Intro

The stage is set: Pharaoh refused God's command, and now God will send His judgments on Egypt in the form of 10 plagues.

By way of reminder:

A. Moses draws our attention to at least FIVE reasons for these plagues.

(For more detail see previous lesson)

Frist, they will serve to fulfill His promise in Genesis 15:14 to judge the nations that persecute the Jews.

Second, they will also serve as a way for God to reveal His power and greatness. The people will learn that YHWH alone is God, and that He is superior over all the gods of Egypt

Third, the plagues were a means for hardening the heart of Pharaoh.

Fourth, they will show how those who reject His word, His mercies and His way of forgiveness will experience His wrath

Finally, the plagues remind us that God will distinguish between the Egyptians and his people, the Israelites.

B. Each plague seems to highlight a different key lesson although there is a great deal of overlap.

We saw last time

- The bloody water - the people dug around for clean water rather than turning to The Lord. This illustrates how all the hard work in the world will not fix what only turning to God can repair

- The frogs - Pharaoh, although plagued wanted one more night with the frogs. This serves to illustrate those who are unhappy with their life and yet unwilling to let go of the sins that plague them
- The lice- Pharaoh's counselors are beginning to see the hand of The Lord yet he is still unwilling to surrender to God. Often people will hold out even when friends and family are coming to Christ and being changed by him
- The flies - for the first time a distinction is made between Israel and Egypt.
 - Also the first of a series of compromises pharaoh suggests rather than allowing the people to depart that they stay in the land to worship

Earlier he had suggested that Israel stay in Egypt to sacrifice (8:25-26)

Moses' response is quite revealing. He says that if they compromise and remain they are still abominable to Egypt.

I think this is an important point for us to understand today. My wife and I were discussing a recent Q&A by a prominent pastor who is a very good and godly man. When asked regarding the Bible's stance on homosexuality he seemed to waiver a bit as though he were being very careful not to offend anyone. After he finished the next question was whether he believed Jesus was the only way. If we concede certain biblical truths for the sake of fitting in to culture we will still be outcasts. The gospel is foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew. It is better to remain faithful to the word of God. After all culture has been wrong numerous times in the past. It was the culture of Egypt to murder Jewish children, it was the culture of Canaan to burn babies to molech, it was the culture of Nazi Germany to murder Jews, it was the culture of America to enslave people and all the while the Bible has stood opposed to it all.

This time we will focus on the final 6 plagues

The 5th Plague – Livestock

Exodus 9:1-7

1-6. Moses was once again sent to pharaoh with a warning, if the people were not freed the livestock of Egypt would be killed with pestilence while Israel once again was spared and protected

Another plague will affect livestock, which means that this must have affected only those that were in the fields and not those that were in the barns of the Egyptians

This plague provides another warning and another chance for Pharaoh to turn to God

7 - response

Exodus 9:7

*Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. **But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go***

His sin was beginning to cost the nation dearly. The initial plagues were more of a nuisance, but now the economy is beginning to be drastically affected. Things will grow increasingly worse as pharaoh continues in his rebellion.

We read that his hard became hard

Something we often forget is that when we harden our heart to God we end up with a hard heart toward God.

It is possible for our hearts to become so hard that we can no longer hear or respond to God

This happened to Saul. After years of refusing to obey The Lord he reached a place where he could no longer hear the voice of God

1 Samuel 28:6

And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did

not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

Here we find pharaoh unable to repent even when his whole world is collapsing

One more thought -

Moses once again emphasizes the distinction made between Israel and Egypt.

- 9:4 - makes a difference
- 9:6 - not one of Israel's livestock died
- 9:8 - not even one of Israel's livestock died

This was not true of all the plagues and we understand both biblically and experientially that there are times when God protects His children and other times when they are forced to suffer the consequences of other people's sin. Not all of Israel worshipped idols but the whole nation fell to Assyria.

The 6th Plague – Boils

Exodus 9:8-12

9:8-11 explains that without warning Moses and Aaron cast ashes into the air and the boils began to break out on people all over the land.

Here we might notice the natural side of the plagues; bloody water killed massive amounts of fish and caused frogs to leave the Nile. As the frogs died the land was filled with rotting fish and frog carcasses. Gnats and flies would carry diseases from these animals through the land. That couples with the diseases that were killing the livestock would ultimately infect the general population who began to break out with skin diseases.

Like all pestilence fame, fortune, position and power did not protect against the disease and even those in Pharaohs court were affected.

9:12-

Just as predicted pharaoh refused to bow to YHWH

A key truth found in scripture and illustrated in daily life is that **tragedy will not change your life**. It is possible that it will get your attention but it will not change your life.

Many have undergone extreme hardship only to go right back to their former way of life. The secret to a transformed life is to read the word and do what it says

If your current condition has grabbed your attention then take the necessary steps to get your life right with The Lord and to establish that relationship by daily adherence to the word

One of the more interesting stories in the New Testament is recorded in John five. We find a group of people with a variety of physical infirmities who have gathered around a pool of water in hopes that an angel would stir the water and fix their problem. When Jesus appears he ignores the legend of the water and instead speaks to the man. It is his adherence to the word of Jesus that leads to a change in his life.

We do not need a miracle or a a tragedy, what we need is to simply turn to Christ, cling to His promises and allow the Spirit of God to transform us

The 7th Plague – Hail

Exodus 9:13-35

9:13 - We read that the request given to Pharaoh by Moses has not changed.

Exodus 9:13

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me,

I wonder if pharaoh ever thought to himself, "Why doesn't God speak to me?"

The reality is that God has been speaking consistently to Pharaoh and he is refusing to listen.

If you have been praying for direction in your life and not getting an answer, perhaps it is time to examine whether there are other things God has been saying and you are refusing to obey.

A passage from Jeremiah 42 illustrates this truth rather vividly

The people were interested in receiving direction from God so they called Jeremiah and asked him to pray for them. They declared,

Jeremiah 42:6
Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

When Jeremiah returned with the word of The Lord they responded

Jeremiah 43:2
"You speak falsely! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.'

Same is true of a person who is living with boyfriend, committing adultery involved in a wrong relationship. Why should God keep speaking if you refuse to listen

This is one of the longer discourses between Moses and pharaoh. Like the others Moses warns pharaoh of what is coming, but this time insight is also given as to **why** the plagues and **why** pharaoh refused

Why the plagues

Vs 16- The plague was designed as a way for God to show himself to the whole world. **This remains the desire of God today**

Although Egypt was clearly being judged for their sins (Much of their sins is seen in the attempted genocide recorded in chapter 1-2) the plagues were also **designed to reveal** that YHWH is the only true and living God. All the gods of Egypt were being exposed as impotent.

In the same way God desires today that all the world know

Him. To reach that goal He has given His Son, His Word and His church. As believers we should consider ourselves as

On display for the world to see

1 Corinthians 4:9

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

Spectacle is from the Greek word for theater. Believers are on stage every day to show God to the world

We are light of world, city on a hill

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Why pharaoh refused

Pharaoh refused because **he exalted himself** above the word of The Lord

A few years ago in a small village in West Africa I saw a beautiful picture of placing ourselves under the authority of the word of God. While singing a worship song the people began to take their bibles and place them over their heads. I turned to a translator and asked about this peculiar act. He responded that the song referred to the authority of the Bible and the people were showing that they believed the Bible to be the authority in their lives.

Pharaoh clearly missed the point. It seems that the driving force behind his rebellion was his pride.

Pride is the chief of all sins because it is the source of sin.

- It is first among the list of things that God hates

Proverbs 6:16-17

These six things the Lord hates,

*Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,*

- It was the sin that drove the devils rebellion

Isaiah 14:12-15

Ezekiel 28:11-18

- While pride can cloud our judgment, cause us to be careless, exalt us above others and create a rift in relationships the most dangerous aspect of pride is that it keeps men from God

It is pride that leads a person to think they do not need God.

This pride is completely irrational because we are wholly dependent upon a God

Job 12:10

*In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?*

Job 33:4

*The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Daniel 5:23

And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.

Paul points out that even the secularist understands this

Acts 17:28

for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

- Humility is a requirement for entering heaven

James explains that God resists the proud and gives grace only to the humble

James 4:4-6

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

But He gives more grace.

Therefore He says:

"God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble."

James describes a case where pride causes someone to continue in sin even as the Spirit of God jealously works in them

Years ago I visited the the church of the nativity in Bethlehem. This ancient church was built on the site that the ancients believed was the birthplace of Christ. The most memorable thing about the cave for me was a doorway called "The door of humility" As we bowed in order to enter the site we were told that the doorway was lowered to require anyone who entered to have to bow to the cross situated at the front of the church. This would provide safety for those fleeing from invaders who refused to bow to Christ

9:18-21 - clear warning is given along with an opportunity to respond.

Noone in Egypt could blame God for what was happening. The blame was Pharaoh's for hardening his heart to God and the peoples for ignoring the warnings.

Verse 20 & 21 are placed in contrast to one another.

We are told that those who **feared** the word responded while those who did not **ignore**d and suffered.

Notice the words that are set in juxtaposition to one another

Fear / did not regard

To fear is to show reverence and in this specific case refers to obedience

Not to regard is to give no attention to or concern for

Deliverance from the plague was achieved by those who gave their attention to the Word of God and made decisions accordingly.

9:27-35 - the response

Pharaoh called on Moses to pray for the plague to stop but once again as soon as the plague stopped Pharaoh's heart grew hard

Moses highlights a key point in 9:27 when Pharaoh realizes his sin

Exodus 9:27

And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked."

It is possible to come to grips with the fact that we are sinners and still fail to put trust in Christ to deliver us. Confession of sin without calling on the one who can save is vain

We also discover another key to the hardness of Pharaoh. In addition to being proud we also learn that he did not fear God

Exodus 9:30

*But as for you and your servants, I know that you **will not yet fear the Lord God.**"*

The fear of The Lord might be best understood as a desire to live pleasing to God.

One man put it like this;

"The fear of The Lord is a deep seated reverence for God that causes men to want to please Him at all costs"

I appreciate the phrase, "at all costs" true fear of God means that I will, lay aside anything that does not please Him

The Bible has much to say about the fear of God

Leads to wise decisions

Proverbs 9:10

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Creates proper attitude toward sin

Proverbs 8:13

*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.*

Motivates holiness

Proverbs 16:6

*In mercy and truth
Atonement is provided for iniquity;
And by the fear of the Lord one departs
from evil.*

Produces true life

Proverbs 14:27

*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
To turn one away from the snares of death.*

The 8th Plague – Locust

Exodus 10:1-20

10:1-3 - we read another warning. Let my people go or else.

It is worth noting that in verse 2 The Lord makes it clear that the things He is doing are designed to be passed from one generation to the next.

Biblically speaking it is the responsibility of the parents to train up children in the way of The Lord. Our homes should be seminaries where are children are learning the word of God and the ways of God

Pharaoh will suggest in 10:8-11 that Israel leave the family behind and go sacrifice. The devil is always attempting to get us to neglect the spiritual education and discipleship of our children. He is more than happy for you to leave it to the church because he knows at best your kids are her only a couple hours a week

10:4-6 - this next plague will be in the form of a plague of locusts that will devastate the nation

J Sidlow Baxter describes the impact locusts swarms have had upon nations

Exodus 10:7

Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?"

Pharaoh thought that the problem with his nation were the believers and as a result he attempted to suppress or destroy them at all costs. **What he failed to see was that it was his attack upon God, His word and His people that was actually destroying his nation.** What was once a powerful empire and the delight of the nations was being weakened by rebellion against the ways of God. Egypt is not an anomaly. The same is true of any nation that seeks to remove the influence of God.

Proverbs 14:34

*Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people.*

I cannot help to see parallels in the modern world.

Almost every day we see immorality heralded as a form of free expression or even as a civil right while at the same time righteousness is looked upon almost as if it

were a disease.

Those who suggest that certain behaviors or lifestyles are sinful are considered to be intolerant and looked upon almost as a virus that must be destroyed.

It is not that the world does not like religion, but like Pharaoh who suggested they worship without any personal cost the world calls out for moderation. If you are willing to be a Christian without letting it affect your behavior, your family or your political and social viewpoints then by all means be a Christian. But those who dare to trust in, stand upon and live by the Word of God will not be tolerated and must be stopped.

How sad that the very thing Pharaoh thought would save his nation is the very thing that destroyed it.

10:8-11 - Pharaoh offers another compromise

10:12-20 - the plague comes and pharaoh pleads for the locust to flee. After they are removed his heart once again hardens

The 9th Plague – darkness

Exodus 10:21-29 -

Once again this plague comes without warning.

The land is struck with darkness for 3 consecutive days. What an odd sight this must have been as there was light in Goshen.

Without trying to be overly mystic this is an apt illustration of what remains true for the child of a god today. People are groping through life without the benefit of a light to guide them. People are attempting to marry, raise kids and make life decisions in the dark. But the child of God has light. The psalmist declared that the word of a God is a light for our path. While on the one hand I got married without a manual, on the other hand I have everything I need to ensure a good and godly marriage. E same is true of having children and navigating my

way through life.

Let the word of a God guide you. Don't try to go at this alone

10:24-26 - again pharaoh suggests a compromise. This time they should offer but leave their possessions behind. In essence he is suggesting that they don't give too much to God.

We are constantly faced with the pressure between giving to The Lord and keeping back for our wants and needs. The Bible gives some basic guideline that will help you make the decision regarding what to offer to The Lord financially

First, Jesus reminds us of the importance of storing up treasures in heaven not just on earth.

Second, Paul spoke of the way to give. He said we should;

Lay something aside 1cor 16:2

Give as we purpose in our hearts 2cor 9:7

Give cheerfully 2cor 9:7

Give sacrificially 2cor 8:3

If we sow sparingly in giving we will reap sparingly as well 2cor 9:6

Thirdly, Malachi exhorts us to trust that the Lord will provide Mal 3:10

The 10th and final Plague – death of firstborn

Exodus 11

God promises Moses that his final plague is the one that will result in their release.