

Locusts
Exodus 10:1-20

September 26, 2021

HDBC

Natural disasters have been a part of history since Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve opened the door to sin and allowed it to invade all of God's good creation. The first man and woman were not the only ones impacted by their sin. Every part of creation was negatively impacted. Before sin, there were no destructive **tornados, hurricanes or earthquakes**. There were no **crop-killing droughts**. There were no **raging fires** destroying the beautiful forests and the animals living in them. There were **no tsunamis, flash floods or volcanic eruptions**.

But we live in a Genesis 3 world where these things happen. In the short span of this generation we have seen all those things around the world and we experienced most of them right here in our own nation.

In her memoirs, Laura Ingalls Wilder recalled the day a strange dark cloud descended on the Minnesota prairie:

Plunk! Something hit Laura's head and fell to the ground. She looked down and saw the largest grasshopper she had ever seen. Then huge brown grasshoppers were hitting the ground all around her, hitting her head and her face and her arms. They came thudding down like hail.

The cloud was hailing grasshoppers. The could was grasshoppers. Their bodies hid the sun and made darkness. Their thin, large wings gleamed and glittered. The rasping whirring of their wings filled the whole air and they hit the ground and the house with the noise of a hailstorm.

Laura tried to beat them off. Their claws clung to her skin and her dress. They looked at her with bulging eyes, turning their heads this way and that. Mary ran screaming into the house. Grasshoppers covered the ground, there was not one bare bit to step on. Laura had to step on grasshoppers and they smashed squirming and slimy under her feet.

Grasshoppers beat down from the sky and swarmed thick over the ground. Their long wings were folded and their strong legs took them hopping everywhere. The air whirred and the roof went on sounding like a roof in a hailstorm.

Then Laura heard another sound, one big sound made of tiny nips and snips and gnawings . . . The grasshoppers were eating. You could hear millions of jaws biting and chewing. Day after day the grasshoppers kept on eating. They ate all the wheat and the oats. They ate every green thing—all the garden and all the prairie grass. The whole prairie was bare and brown. Millions of brown grasshoppers whirred low over it. Not a green thing was in sight anywhere.

She never forgot that day or the hunger and hardship that followed. Her family was brought to the edge of ruin. It was something she would tell her children and grandchildren. It would become part of her story.

Locusts would also become part of the story of Moses and the people of Israel. In fact, all ten plagues would become a major part of their history and of their story. This morning we are going to see that there is more revealed for us in this plague than simply the invasion of locusts. So, I'm only going to deal with it today. We'll get to the ninth plague next week.

Read text. Exodus 10:1-20. Divide text into three sections.

1. Divine explanation (1-2)

Notice in the first verse we are once again confronted with the fact that God has hardened Pharaoh's heart. Throughout the exodus narrative we have seen that Pharaoh has hardened his own heart and that God has also hardened Pharaoh's heart. **Hebrew word** means *to make heavy*. The sense is *to make someone stubborn or unyielding*. What are we to make of this?

1) Both are true

God did harden his heart. Pharaoh did harden his own heart.

2) Pharaoh was responsible for his own actions

God's action did not negate Pharaoh's responsibility. He was guilty for his own actions. God's action did not rise to the level of absolving Pharaoh of his own responsibility.

3) God acted with a purpose

There will always be things about God's sovereign actions that we will not fully understand. But we can be assured that He always acts with purpose. That is certainly true in this case with Pharaoh. Some of those are expressed in this text. Three are revealed.

a. To perform signs

Obviously God could have gotten his people out of Egypt instantly and miraculously. But He wanted to perform these signs before the Egyptians and before the Hebrews. This was not just about bringing them out of Egypt. He could have caused Pharaoh to release them after the first plague. But He wanted all ten to be part of this event. Individually and collectively these plagues were designed to do more than simply change Pharaoh's heart. That brings us to number 2.

b. To create a story

God wanted these ten plagues to become part of Israel's story. Note verse 2. God wanted Moses to tell the story to his son and in his grandson. It was to become part of their history and was to be passed down from generation to generation. And it was.

Deut. 6:20

*When your son asks you in the time to come . . . then you shall say to your son, "we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt **with a mighty hand**. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes.*

Kids love stories. Imagine those young Hebrew children in the generations to come asking dad to tell them a story. He sits down and relates the glorious story of how God humbled the mighty Pharaoh and rescued them from slavery. He would move from one plague to another. I can see the wide-eyes of a child hearing the story for the first time and especially the part about the last plague. Then wanting to hear it again and again. It was a story of salvation and redemption and it was their story!

c. To confirm his identity

*That you may **know that I am the Lord**.* The third purpose stated by God is that they would have confirmation of who He was. He was the Lord. He was God, the creator. He was the only God and was worthy of worship. Each time they retold the story, it would remind them of the identity of God and would crush the notion of multiple gods.

So, there was a divine explanation of why God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

2. Futile negotiation (3-11)

In the next several verses we see a very familiar scene. Moses demands that Pharaoh let the people go, promising a serious problem if he does not. Note the statement in verse 3; *how long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me (God)*.

Pharaoh needed to humble himself but he continued to refuse. Therefore, God would take the initiative and do to Pharaoh what he was unwilling to do to himself. He has already suffered through seven plagues, yet remained resolute in his resistance to God. We know the rest of the story, so we know it will take all ten plagues. There is an interesting thing to note. Back in chapter 1 when Pharaoh made the Hebrews his slaves it literally says **he humbled them with forced labor**. Now, he is the one who is being humbled by God. He could have humbled himself but he chose not to.

Every person faces a similar choice. We will either humble ourselves and yield to God, who He will humble us. Either way, we will all not only stand before God but will bow before God. The Bible is clear on this point. So, where are you in this decision? Are you humbling yourself before Him?

According to verse 7, Pharaoh's advisors have had enough. They beg him to let the Hebrews go. They point out that Egypt is already destroyed. They seemed to be aware that it could get worse, if their boss persisted.

So, Pharaoh tried to negotiate. He offered a compromise. The men could go and worship, but their families would need to stay behind. This would assure that they would come back. Of course this was unacceptable to God. **This was not a negotiation. God was looking for an unconditional surrender. He still is! Are you unconditionally surrendered to Him?**

3. Devastating invasion (12-20)

The rest of this section simply records the invasion of the locusts and the devastating effects they had on the land and the people. **The scene was horrific**. It was worse than anything they had ever seen or heard about and would be worse than any future invasion of these creatures.

The daily consumption of a single locust equals its own weight. Doesn't sound like much. But a full-scale swarm covers several hundred square miles, with 100-200 million locusts per mile.

John Davis writes, *The locust is perhaps nature's most awesome example of the collective destructive power of a species. An adult locust weighs at a maximum two grams, yet its combined destructive force can leave thousands of people with famine for years.*

In the 1920s and 1930s locusts swept across Africa and wiped out five million square miles, an area almost double the size of the United States.

This was another humiliation for Egypt's gods. They worshipped **Min**, the patron god of the crops. They worshipped many other gods associated with crops. They depended upon those gods to keep them fed. God was showing that their dependence was ill-placed.

Pharaoh did what he always did. Offered a weak confession and asked for relief. He was a hardened sinner who had no intent of yielding to God. He simply wanted immediate relief. **He was like so many today. They have no thought of eternity. They only want to feel good now and be left alone.**

God did what He had previously done. He sent the locusts away. This was not because He was tricked by Pharaoh. He knew Pharaoh was not sincere. He brought an end to this plague simply so He could move to the next one.

Takeaways:

1. God acts with a noble purpose and plan

Even something as difficult for us to grasp as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was done with a noble purpose and plan. There are times when we are unable to process with our finite minds what God is doing. So, we trust Him.

2. God adds to your story in the good and bad of life

We wish God would only allow good in our lives. That would be easy, comfortable, fun. But our story would not be complete. **Imagine your story in you could erase all the bad.**

To appreciate the blessings of deliverance we have to go through the struggle of bondage. **To fully appreciate the blessing of healing we have to go through the pain of sickness.** I'm not saying God causes the negative, but He uses them for His glory and our good . . . writing them into the story of our lives. By the way, I don't think our stories end in this life. We will take

them with us to Heaven, but will have perfect clarity about just how good God was to us. So, watch for how God is adding to your story.

3. Remember the importance of sharing your story

Make sure your kids and grandkids know about the things God has done in your life, the challenges that He has brought you through, the victories He has provided for you. Share it with other believers, realizing that they can benefit from hearing how God has worked in you. But remember, as you share, that it's **more about Him than about you**. Keep the focus on what He has done, not what you have done.

4. Continual rejection of God's call will end in tragedy

What happened to Pharaoh was a tragedy. But it was a tragedy that did not have to happen. It is also a picture of a greater tragedy, **the tragedy of divine judgment that comes to all who persistent in saying no to God's loving offer of salvation.**

Don't think of it as God choosing to send you to hell because you have said no to him. The truth is this. You are already on your way to hell. God is lovingly calling you to trust Him. When you do, He forgives your sins, adopts you into His family and changes your ultimate destination from Hell to Heaven.