

THE INCREASING SEVERITY OF THE PLAGUES

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 8:20-32; 9:1-12

LESSON 54 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 8:20-32

²⁰ And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

²¹ Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of *flies* upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of *flies*, and also the ground whereon they *are*.

²² And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of *flies* shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the earth.

²³ And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.

²⁴ And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of *flies* into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of *flies*.

²⁵ And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.

²⁶ And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?

²⁷ We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Fourth Judgment: A Plague of Flies

1. Pharaoh is warned of the plague of flies, Exodus 8:20, 21.
2. Moses tells Pharaoh that the Israelites will be spared from the plague, Exodus 8:22, 23;

Psalm 34:7

⁷ The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Psalm 91:9, 10

⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is my* refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;
¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

II Chronicles 16:9

⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

3. The plague is sent and Pharaoh attempts a compromise with Moses and Aaron, Exodus 8:24-29;

Exodus 3:18

¹⁸ And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Genesis 46:34

³⁴ That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

4. The Lord answers Moses' prayer, but Pharaoh retracts his promise and hardens his heart again, Exodus 8:30-32;

Proverbs 11:3

³ The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

II The Fifth Judgment: A Plague of Murrain on the Livestock

1. Pharaoh is warned of a plague on the livestock, Exodus 9:1-3.
2. Israel is again exempted, Exodus 9:4.
3. Further to prove it to be a miracle, a time is set for this plague to begin, Exodus 9:5.
4. The plague is sent, Exodus 9:6.
5. Pharaoh investigates the fact that Israel's cattle were spared, but still hardens his heart, Exodus 9:7.

III The Sixth Judgment: A Plague of Boils

1. The plague of boils is sent without warning, Exodus 9:8-10;

Deuteronomy 28:27, 35

²⁷ The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

³⁵ The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

2. The magicians are affected along with all the Egyptians, Exodus 9:11.

3. The Lord permits Pharaoh's heart to be hardened even more,

to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

²⁸ And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.

²⁹ And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.

³⁰ And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

³¹ And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.

³² And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

Exodus 9:1-12

¹ Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

² For if thou refuse to let *them* go, and wilt hold them still,

³ Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which *is* in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain.

⁴ And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all *that is* the children's of Israel.

⁵ And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.

⁶ And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of

Exodus 9:12;

Proverbs 29:1

¹ He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.;

Revelation 16:2, 11

² And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image.

¹¹ And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds..

NOTES:

The Reason for the Plagues

We have seen, in our previous lesson on the first three judgments of God that were poured upon Egypt, that each of the plagues was directed at some part of the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians. The purpose of this was to demonstrate that there was no other God but Jehovah, the God of Israel; and to show the Egyptians that they were worshiping gods with no power even in the parts of the universe over which they were supposed to exercise dominion.

The devouring of the Egyptian serpents by the serpent, which sprang from Aaron's rod was a miracle directed against the serpent worship of Egypt, and also against the enchantments of the magicians. The serpent was a god to them but it could not defend itself against the omnipotent hand of the God of Israel. The turning of the water into blood, likewise, was an assault against their sacred Nile river. And the plagues of frogs and lice tended to bring their idolatrous worship into contempt. In this lesson we shall see that the plagues of flies, murrain on the cattle, and boils on both men and beasts were also attacks on the same idolatrous practices.

We do not read of any attempt on the part of Moses to expose the magicians. He knew his God and was content, for himself, in the superior power shown when God revealed Himself in the burning bush and later in the miracles before the elders of Israel, which reached their climax when Aaron's rod swallowed the rods of the magicians. God answered, through Moses, the satanic duplication of the plagues with still greater miracles, until one was reached that they could not duplicate. Then their own confession left no need for refutation. Our part is not necessarily to defend the Gospel. If we are faithful in presenting it, it will defend itself.

The fact to be established was the personal existence and supremacy of the God of Israel. It is true that the Israelites had earned and were entitled to their civil freedom by the years of servitude they had endured. But the basis of the plea for their release was not this fact. It was that their God had the prior claim to their services and allegiance, and also that Pharaoh, too, was obligated to obey Him.

So often, when we were in sin, we felt the convicting hand of God reproofing us for our evil ways. It was easy to give up some particular sin -- one that particularly annoyed us -- hoping that action would appease God and still the voice of conscience. But God was not reaching for a temporary removal of some sin, but a complete surrender to His will and a forsaking of every sin. No doubt Pharaoh would have been glad to make a bargain with the Israelites for their freedom, as one man to another; but we can see that the real issue of all their litigations was far greater. He did not want to give full allegiance to Israel's God, but preferred to remain in his idolatrous state. From that we can learn a great truth. When God speaks to us by His Word, there is no use parleying or attempting to compromise the issue with Him. If we would receive anything from God we must be willing to go to the heart of the issue and make a full surrender.

Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

⁹ And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast.

¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

¹² And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

Swarms of Flies

Ample warning was given Pharaoh before the plague of flies was sent. He was told that if he did not obey the command of the God of Israel, swarms of flies would come upon them. There is little doubt but that a plague of this kind, with its uncleanness and disease-carrying property, is about the most loathsome thing that could come upon a nation. But Pharaoh disregarded the warning -- and consequently the flies came.

God is not unmindful of His own. In later years, the Psalmist, perhaps while thinking of this very time of tribulation in Egypt, wrote that "neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." The Lord never forgets those whose hearts are perfect toward Him and whose trust is in the Almighty. And the Israelites in Egypt were certainly no exception.

Notice the tenderness and great love manifested in God's words: "I will put a division between my people and thy people." The gods of Egypt never gave such assurances to the poor, deluded worshipers who daily followed their ritual of devotions. They had a zeal that would defy duplication in any field of activity. The so-called gods of the Egyptians could have no concern for their subjects. There is only one God! All other gods are the inventions of Satan, devised by him to deceive men and substitute something to fill the vacancy that was designed to be filled only by God Himself.

The full force of the corrupting plague brought forth a desperate concession from Pharaoh: "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." But this compromise was not enough. God does not parley nor bargain with man. He demands complete, entire obedience; and nothing less will do. If it was impossible for Israel to sacrifice in Egypt at the beginning, it was still impossible. Egyptians, loyal to their animal gods, would never stand by and see those gods offered in sacrifice to another Whom they did not know. Moses intended to follow God completely, and he insisted upon the original demands. Again the ruler sought to compromise, with this restriction: "Ye shall not go very far away." Moses accepted Pharaoh's permission for the Israelites to leave, and he prayed to the Lord; and at the appointed time there was not a fly left in Egypt -- which was, in itself, a great miracle.

Murray upon the Cattle and Livestock

The change in Pharaoh's mind, after the plague had been withdrawn, opened the issue again; and Moses appeared in the royal court to plead Israel's cause and to warn Pharaoh of the fifth plague which was to come upon the Egyptians, but from which Israel was to be exempt. The plague came because Pharaoh refused God's terms, and when its fury had passed throughout all Egypt, Pharaoh sent to see if Israel's cattle were affected. What he discovered should have convinced him that the God of Israel was working against Egypt, for not one of Israel's cattle was stricken.

We are told that flies and other insects were worshiped as gods, and the coming of such huge swarms of flies that corrupted the land would certainly fill the Egyptians with disdain for their fly-god. The murrain took a terrible toll of the livestock in Egypt, all of which were worshiped. Every god of theirs was being attacked and discredited by the God of Israel.

Boils upon Man and Beast

The sixth plague, boils upon man and beast, was another fatal blow to more of the gods of Egypt. It was given without warning. We are told, in secular history, that it was a custom among many of the people to offer human sacrifices to their gods along with great burnings of various kinds to appease the wrath of certain deities. After a sacrifice was over they would take handfuls of the ashes and throw them into the air, to float down over those in attendance. The purpose of this was to arrest evil. But now God

reversed the whole omen. God instructed Moses to take ashes from the furnace -- to bring to nought their custom -- and sprinkle them toward Heaven. When the ashes descended a severe plague broke out on man and beast. Even the magicians were afflicted and could no more stand before Moses because of the boils.

The Apostle Paul tells of two, Jannes and Jambres by name, who we suppose were among the magicians, saying they were reprobate concerning the faith, and stating that they could proceed no further in their time because their folly was manifest unto all men (**II Timothy 3:8, 9** ⁸ Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. ⁹ But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was.). We hear no more of the magicians after this plague of boils. They had seen the hand of God perform miracles that could not be duplicated with their powers. They had seen the same Hand lift the plagues at an appointed time -- which was in most instances a greater miracle, in the eyes of man, than the sending of the plagues. But it appears that they still continued reprobate concerning the faith, and eventually the full fury of God's wrath consumed them.

The Great Tribulation

There is a solemn parallel between these plagues of Egypt and a period of judgment that is coming upon the world. We are told, in the book of Revelation, of many severe plagues that will be visited upon the world in that time of the outpourings of God's wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. It follows the same pattern that God set up in His judgment of Egypt and should provoke a heart-searching on our part that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass.

We see that these judgments came upon Egypt because they were wholly given over to their own worship of anything but God. They came upon Egypt to overthrow and dethrone their pagan gods and enthrone the true God in His rightful place. They came in judgment upon all the rejecters of God and those who gave themselves over to false delusions.

After the Lord comes, at the Rapture, the full fury of the Great Tribulation will break upon this world. During this time of tribulation God will pour out His wrath and judgment. It will be directed against the Antichrist and all his followers, those who have sold themselves to that man of sin and who have received his mark in their hands or foreheads. The plagues of Egypt, as terrible as they were, cannot be compared in intensity with the plagues that will be released upon the world when God's wrath is poured out in that period. Egypt's plagues are warnings to us. They will help us, if we take heed to them, to escape the terrible day of God's wrath and make sure we are members of that mystical body, the Bride of Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. What warning was given Pharaoh prior to the plague of flies?
2. What distinction was given the Children of Israel at this time?
3. What effect did the plague have upon Pharaoh?
4. Did Pharaoh keep his word?
5. What was the fifth plague, and what was affected by it?
6. Why did Pharaoh send investigators into the land of Goshen at this time?
7. In what way were the magicians affected in the sixth plague?
8. Why did the Lord permit Pharaoh's heart to be hardened?
9. What are the plagues in Egypt a type of?
10. Who will be exempt from the fury of God in the last days?