

“THE SERVANT OF THE LORD” – A Study of the Life of Moses**“Preaching Plagues – Part Two” (Exodus 8:1-32)**

Pharaoh had challenged the authority of Jehovah. The Lord would now demonstrate His great sovereign power and wisdom to the proud monarch. God has millions of ways to deal with any man who opposes Him. He is in control every step of the way. The destiny of Egypt was in His hands. By the end, the most powerful man in Egypt would be pleading for God’s mercy.

PLAGUE TWO – FROGS

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants. And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. (v1-5)

The Lord showed His grace and mercy to Pharaoh by giving him a warning of what would happen if he did not repent of his rebellious heart. The proud king received ample warning from the Lord that unless he repented, life would be a lot worse. We also have received ample warnings from God’s perfect Word of the consequences of disobeying it.

This second plague of the frogs might seem somewhat humorous to us, but it was a serious judgment on the Egyptians. Frogs had great spiritual significance. Deffingbaugh explains,

In the Egyptian pantheon the goddess Heqet had the form of a woman with a frog’s head. From her nostrils, it was believed, came the breath of life that animated the bodies of those created by her husband, the great god Khnum, from the dust of the earth. Therefore frogs were not to be killed.

So by stretching out His hand by sending a plague of frogs Jehovah was demonstrating His sovereign power over the gods of Egypt. The Lord was showing the Egyptians the foolishness of worshipping a frog-god! It was also very humiliating for the great Pharaoh to be paralysed by some frogs.

And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD. (v6-8)

The Egyptians would have been familiar with seeing frogs but the sheer volume of numbers could not be easily explained away without supernatural intervention. We are told these frogs, “covered the land of Egypt.” They entered Pharaoh’s bedroom and even into the ovens of the Egyptians. We can only but imagine the frustration and disgust they must have caused. The

Egyptian magicians were, once again, able to imitate the miracle, but they were not able to remove the scourge of the frogs from the land.

Pharaoh's resolve began to weaken as he discerned the power of God. Previously, he had sneered, "*Who is the LORD?*" (Exod. 5:2). Now Pharaoh pleaded, "*Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.*" Pharaoh had discovered who this Jehovah was that he challenged. He also recognised that he needed the help of the Lord to remove the plague. Sadly, this was not the beginning of a true repentance.

And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank. (v9-14)

Moses showed grace and humility in his response, "*Glory over me.*" In other words he was telling Pharaoh that he did not want any glory for what had happened and if there was any for man he was content to let Pharaoh have the glory for making the request. Moses then gave Pharaoh the choice as to when the frogs would be removed, "*when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?*"

Pharaoh did not request an immediate removal but just on the following day. Probably he was hoping that the frogs would depart before the morrow so that he could avoid facing the fact that the Lord had power over this. Such is the deceitfulness of sin. His request revealed that his repentance was not genuine. However, this choice of Pharaoh only gave God the opportunity to demonstrate a further example of His sovereign power because the Lord's timing was perfect, "*And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.*" All the Egyptians could see that God alone was sovereign in this matter.

The consequence of the death of the frogs was not a pleasant one for the Egyptians. The dead frogs had to be gathered up in heaps and their decaying bodies left a stench over the land. This further plague would have been a constant reminder to the Egyptians of their folly in opposing the power of the Lord.

PLAGUE THREE – LICE

But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. (v15-17)

When the pressure of the crisis had gone Pharaoh hardened his heart against the will of God. This is very typical of human nature. All too often people utter promises to serve the Lord when they are in a tight spot. Yet as soon as the crisis passes, the promise is forgotten.

This third plague of the lice arrived unannounced. We can only but imagine the great discomfort this plague of lice was to the Egyptians. The plague of the frogs and on the Nile was uncomfortable but this plague would have been intolerable. These lice would be a continual source of irritation.

This plague would have been embarrassing for the Egyptians who prided themselves on their hygiene rituals. In particular, it would have hindered the priests who had to be ritually pure before they could worship their gods. The infection of the animals by the lice put a halt to their animal sacrificial system. The irony was that their gods were powerless to help them. Jehovah had shut down all the religion of the Egyptians.

And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (18-19)

This time the magicians of Pharaoh were unable to replicate the miracle of the lice plague, even though they tried. There is a limit to the devil's powers. Often people make a wrong judgment of the devil's capabilities. Some make the mistake of underestimating the devil's powers by dismissing them as unreal whereas others swing to the other extreme in overestimating his power. Satan is not the equal but opposite power in this world to God. The devil's power is real, but it is limited. God's power is real and infinite. The devil is subject to God's sovereignty and will.

The irrefutable evidence of the sovereign power of God led these ungodly men to confess, "*This is the finger of God.*" They recognised that there is a power greater than their own. We do not hear of these magicians speaking or trying to imitate God's power again. The finger of God silenced His enemies. We are not told whether any of the magicians repented and trusted Jehovah. Perhaps some of the magicians were among the "*mixed multitude*" who left Egypt with the Israelites (Exod. 12:38). Nevertheless, Pharaoh would not heed the evidence and this confession from his own magicians who were intimately acquainted with spiritual things. Amazingly, he continued to harden his heart.

PLAGUE FOUR – FLIES

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. 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. 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. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be. 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. (v20-24)

We now have the fourth plague and the beginning of the second trilogy of plagues, which will cause destruction, "*the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.*" The plagues progressed in groups of three from discomfort (plagues 1-3) to destruction (plagues 4-6) to dread (plagues 7-9) before the ultimate final plague of death.

This plague was going to be different from the other three of the initial trilogy as this plague would not affect Israel, “*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.*” Israel felt the effects of the first 3 plagues. This may have been a warning and punishment on them for their idolatry. But now the Lord wants to focus His greatest judgment on the Egyptians. So there were two miracles here – one that the flies appeared in the swarms and two that they kept only to the areas populated by the Egyptians. Clarke observed,

Though He is the Lord of hosts He has no need of powerful armies, the ministry of angels, or the thunderbolts of justice to punish a sinner or a sinful nation; the *frog* or the *fly* in His hands is a sufficient instrument of vengeance.

And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. 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? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.
(v25-27)

This is the first time we see Pharaoh seeking Moses and Aaron. There was a hint of desperation in his words now. Previously he had boasted, “*I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go*” (Exod. 5:2b). Now, the chastened monarch offered an alternative, “*Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*”

The Lord had commanded that they were to go outside the land to sacrifice, “*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*” (Exod. 3:18). So Moses rejected the negotiated offer to sacrifice in Egypt, “*We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.*” As well as the moral reason why he could not agree to Pharaoh’s offer, Moses explained this was impractical as the Egyptians would abhor such blood sacrifices and turn on the Israelites, “*shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?*”

It is clear that God was building character and strength in Moses. It would have been very easy for Moses to compromise, as many politicians do, but he refused to compromise even a little. He knew that God demanded complete obedience to His commandments. Moses feared God more than he fears Pharaoh. The doubting and fearful servant was now becoming bolder in the Lord’s service. Moses also knew that big sins were the consequence of seemingly small sinful compromises. CH Spurgeon once warned,

Oh! take heed of those small beginnings of sin. Beginnings of sin are like the letting out of water: first, there is an ooze; then a drip; then a slender stream; then a vein of water; and then, at last, a flood: and a rampart is swept before it, a continent is drowned. Take heed of small beginnings, for they lead to worse.

The principle Moses was standing on is still true today. God is a God who wants us to fully follow His commandments. To have a testimony of faithfulness we have to be tested. We all face similar “Egyptian compromises” today.

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. 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. And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the Lord. 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. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go. (v28-32)

When Moses rejected Pharaoh's opening offer in these negotiations, Pharaoh tried again with another offer of compromise, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness." This time the compromise was, "only ye shall not go very far away." He was willing on the surface for them to go a short distance but not the three days journey commanded by the Lord. Indeed, the fact that Pharaoh even tried to bargain with the Lord's word only reveals his proud unrepentant heart. The real thing Pharaoh was interested in was relief from God's judgment, "intreat for me."

Moses went out from the presence of Pharaoh and interceded for the Lord's grace. However, as soon as the Lord took away the plague we read, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." No matter what judgment and evidence of His power that God sent upon this man's life, he refused to bow the knee and humble himself before his Creator. It was not a lack of evidence but his corrupt heart that refused the truth. All Pharaoh wanted was relief from the suffering but not the Lord. The heart of fallen man is extraordinarily resistant to truth. But God was not finished yet with Pharaoh. He would pay a terrible price for his rebellion.

*At His call the dead awaken,
Rise to life from earth and sea;
All the powers of nature shaken
By His look, prepares to flee.
Careless sinner, what will then become of thee?*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the categories of the plagues?

2. Can the devil do supernatural signs and wonders?

3. What examples are there of God's sovereignty in this chapter?

4. What have you learned from this chapter?
