

## Exodus I – Notes

### X. *Plagued to Death*

06-Aug-06 Exodus 9:13-11:10

*Theme:* *The ten plagues teach the knowledge of God throughout time and space to encompass all of creation and all of eternity.*

*Key Verses:* Exodus 9:14-16 <sup>14</sup>For at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. <sup>15</sup>Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. <sup>16</sup>But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

#### Review

Last week we looked at plagues two through six. All of these plagues have three common results: First, Pharaoh's gods were humbled; second, Pharaoh's magicians were humiliated; and third, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. These plagues and all the plagues in general, teach us: 1) the meaning of salvation; 2) the purpose of life; 3) the folly of idolatry; 4) the superiority of faith; and 5) the consequence of rebellion.

The second plague is frogs covering the land. Pharaoh asks Moses to intercede for him, and Moses prays for God to stop the plague. God answers Moses' prayer, and piles of dead frogs begin rotting all over Egypt. Once the plague relents, Pharaoh hardens his heart.

The third plague comes unannounced. Dust of the earth is transformed into gnats which cover everything in Egypt, including the court magicians. They are unable to duplicate this wonder, and are left to acknowledge "the finger of God." Of course, Pharaoh and his hard heart pay no attention.

The fourth plague of flies begins to damage the land, bringing corruption with it. This is the first plague with a distinction. From this point onward, God will differentiate between Israel and Egypt. God acts to redeem Israel even as He judges Egypt with His plagues. Pharaoh makes a second concession: he is willing to let Israel sacrifice to God, as long as it is in the land of Egypt. Moses will not compromise, and Pharaoh relents. However, once the plague is over, Pharaoh reneges on his promise and hardens his heart yet again.

The fifth plague is a pestilence directed toward the livestock of Egypt. This is a grievous plague, as it kills many animals and impacts the national economy of Egypt. Pharaoh could scarcely believe his ears when he heard that none of the livestock of Israel had been ill. Still, he refuses to let Israel go, his heart even harder and heavier than before.

The sixth plague impacts the people of Egypt directly for the first time. Moses throws the ashes of the furnaces of oppression into the air, and the hand of the LORD sends the fine dust throughout the land until it settles as boils and sores upon the people of Egypt. This plague not only humiliated the court magicians, but it also defeated them: they could no longer stand in front of Moses. This time, the LORD hardens Pharaoh's already hard heart.

#### Introduction

Hail, locusts, darkness, and death – these are the subjects of the last four plagues to hit Egypt. We are entering our third and final week of study on the plagues. We will look at the final trio of

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God's wonders, followed by an introduction to the capstone of the plagues – the death of the firstborn. As we finish up our study on the plagues, notice what God says about His purposes. God is not simply interested in punishing Egypt or rescuing Israel – that would be too small a thing. Rather, His purposes spread throughout space and time to encompass all of creation and all of eternity.

### A. Plague 7: Hail (9:13-35)

#### 1. *God's Purpose (9:13-17)*

The seventh plague begins like the first and fourth plagues. Moses is commanded to go before Pharaoh in the morning and proclaim the same message: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me” (9:13). However, this time God amplifies His message through Moses in verses 14-16.

First, God tells Pharaoh that He is sending all of His plagues or wonders to the heart of Pharaoh – that hard, heavy heart. Pharaoh had set his heart against God. He had set himself up in opposition to the LORD, and now God was going to demonstrate to him the folly of that position. God's plagues are being “sent out” against Pharaoh in the same way that Pharaoh will soon “send out” the children of Israel (the word in Hebrew is the same). Pharaoh may think he is in control of the situation, but he would be wrong. God's reason for sending out His plagues to Pharaoh's heart is so “that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth” (9:14). Again, we come across the concept of knowledge. Pharaoh had claimed he did not know the LORD (5:2), but through the plagues he would learn far more about God than he ever dreamed!

Along the way, Pharaoh gets a lesson in spiritual relativity. He thought he was big and powerful, the king of Egypt, the master of his domain. But now he is given true insight into the source of his power and the strength of his rule – he is only on the throne because God has propped him up! (9:16a). God could have wiped him out with the first plague – in fact, God didn't need any plagues if that were His only purpose. Rather, God chose to demonstrate His power through Pharaoh, and there was nothing Pharaoh could do to stop it. Pharaoh thought he was the BMOB (big man on campus), but now he learns that he is nothing more than a mote in God's eye. Relative to God, he was nothing.

Pharaoh is in way over his head. What God is doing in Egypt is far bigger than Pharaoh's little country. God is not content just to have Pharaoh know who He is. He has bigger fish to fry. God's second main purpose in bringing judgment upon Egypt is to bring glory to His name throughout the earth (9:16b). When Shell was introducing its new IT infrastructure around the world, they used this slogan: “Global reach, local touch.” That's what God is doing here; His local touch on Egypt would have a global reach. Other nations would hear of God's wonders and tremble. In Joshua's day, the Gibeonites had heard of God's wonders and feared (Jos. 9:9). Hundreds of years later, in the days of Samuel, the Philistines remembered God's plagues on Egypt even as they were plagued when they captured the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:7-8).

#### 2. *God's Warning (9:18-26)*

In the fifth plague on the livestock, God announced the plague would happen “tomorrow” (9:5). Likewise, the seventh plague of heavy hail is scheduled for “tomorrow” (9:18). God is giving the Egyptians a warning, 24-hours notice to get prepared. But God's warning goes well beyond that. He specifically exhorts Egypt to “gather your livestock” into barns to escape the deadly hailstorm that is sure to come (9:19). In this warning, we can see the grace and mercy of God.

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Although Egypt is under severe judgment, if Egyptians will listen to the word of God, believe it, and most importantly obey it, then they will not suffer. This warning is especially a test for Pharaoh to see if he would hear the word of the LORD and obey it.

God's word does not go out and return void. Verses 20-21 give us the two responses of Egyptians. Some of them received the warning and acted upon it, making sure that their servants and livestock were sheltered from the storm. Those who obeyed the warning "feared the word of the LORD" (9:20). This attitude of fear is often the way reverence and worship to God is expressed in the Old Testament. Thus, it is possible that some of the Egyptians were converted through the plagues. Certainly, more than just ethnic Israelites left Egypt in the exodus (12:38). Perhaps some of those who feared the LORD in this seventh plague were spared and joined themselves to God's people.

But sad to say, most Egyptians ignored the warning and left their servants and livestock out in the fields. As Exodus 9:30 and the rest of the plagues account makes clear, those who feared God were only a small minority; the majority of Pharaoh's servants as a whole had no regard for (no fear of, no reverence toward, no submission to) the LORD.

The hailstorm that God unleashes is like no other storm ever seen. The hail is "heavy" (*kabed*) like Pharaoh's heart (9:18, 24). This hailstorm is so devastating that the later Scriptures often picture God's judgment in terms of hail coming down from heaven to strike God's enemies (Jos. 10:11; Ps. 18:12; Is. 28:2, 17; 30:30; Ez. 13:11-13; 38:22). The hailstorm is accompanied by thunder and fire (probably severe lightning). These manifestations of the storm often symbolize God's presence, as they did at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16; 20:18). Although the onset of the storm comes when Moses stretches out his hand (probably holding the "rod of God") toward heaven (9:22-23), it is God Himself who sends the storm and is present within it.

The text doesn't say how big the hail was, but I am thinking baseball to softball size and maybe even bigger. In any event, it was deadly to any human or animal caught outside. It knocked down trees and wiped out the crops of the field (9:25). There were only two places to be safe: indoors within the land of Egypt, or anywhere within the land of Goshen. Once again God makes a distinction between His people and the Egyptians.

### 3. Pharaoh's "Confession" (9:27-35)

A word on the timing of this plague: in the parenthesis of 9:31-32, we learn that the crops damaged by the hail were flax and barley, because they were ripening in the fields. However, later crops such as wheat and spelt were virtually unaffected. Mackay points out that flax and barley are sown in November and harvested in March. The ripening of the barley and the blossoming of the flax indicates that this plague likely took place in January, about two months before the tenth and final plague and the exodus from Egypt. This timing is another indication of God's mercy to Egypt. Although the flax (for linen) and barley (coarse bread and beer) were destroyed, the wheat and spelt (similar to wheat) had survived. If Egypt had repented of their national sins after this seventh plague, they still would have been able to harvest their main food crop for the year. If only Egypt would repent, if only Pharaoh would repent ...

<sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>Entreat the LORD, that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer" (Exodus 9:27-28).

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What are we to make of Pharaoh's "confession"? As subsequent verses make perfectly clear, Pharaoh is not really confessing his sin and repenting from it. As Mackay puts it: "Pharaoh is admitting that he has made a mistake (miscalculation), but he is not being portrayed as truly repentant: though he admits his sin, the story shows that he still kept on sinning." Pharaoh was not sorry about his sins; he was only sorry about the consequences of his sins. All he wanted was relief from the punishment he justly received (9:28). Once the plague of hail was abated, Pharaoh went right back to his hard-hearted ways (9:34-35); not only himself but also "his servants." Pharaoh's heart disease is spreading!

In verse 29, Moses agrees to stop the plague. His agreement doesn't indicate belief in Pharaoh. Moses full well understands that Pharaoh is showing remorse, not repentance; he knows that Pharaoh and his servants do not fear the LORD (9:30). Instead, Moses agrees to pray to God to stop the plague in order for another important lesson to be taught: "that you may know that the earth is the LORD's" (9:29). This is a third purpose statement, again related to knowledge. We are to know and understand the sovereignty of God in creation. God's sovereignty over the creation is amply demonstrated by His ability to turn the plagues on or off at will.

### **B. Plague 8: Locusts (10:1-20)**

#### *1. God's Purpose (10:1-6)*

God's purposes in the seventh plague were all related to knowledge: 1) personal knowledge of His power; 2) knowledge of the global reach of His glorious name; and 3) knowledge of His sovereignty over all creation. Pharaoh was given these lessons, but unfortunately he did not learn them. In addition to God's power and sovereignty, the seventh plague also demonstrated God's grace and mercy, by giving the Egyptians time to prepare, time to repent, and even another chance by not wiping out all their crops at once. Although a few Egyptians "feared the word of the LORD," most did not regard His word and hardened their hearts.

As we come to the eighth plague, we see another purpose for God's wonders – so that the knowledge of the LORD may be passed on to future generations:

<sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him, <sup>2</sup>and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD" (Exodus 10:1-2).

It is not enough that Pharaoh has knowledge of the LORD, or that the entire earth has knowledge of the LORD. God's people have a responsibility to pass on that knowledge to their children and grandchildren. We are to raise our children up in the "training and admonition of the LORD" (Eph. 6:4). We are to teach them the great acts of God's salvation, starting with the exodus, but we shouldn't stop there. We are to teach our children about the great Savior of sinners, our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

As Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh to announce the eighth plague, notice that while the message is the same – "Let My people go that they may serve Me" (10:3) – the attitude of the presentation is different. Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh knowing full well the hardness of the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants. They hardened their hearts at the end of the seventh plague, and God is supernaturally hardening their hearts at the start of the eighth plague as well.

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The eighth plague is locusts. Later on, another locust plague will be used by God to bring judgment upon His own people (Joel 1:2-4). The locust plague is the one-two punch to follow the hail. What crops and plants the hail didn't destroy, the locusts will devour. The intensity of the locust plague is emphasized in verse 5-6. Like the second plague of frogs, the locusts will get into all the houses of Egypt. The locusts will be so numerous that they will completely cover the land, eating everything in their path. The theme of creation reversal continues in this plague: all growing things are to be destroyed. This plague will utterly devastate the fragile economy of Egypt and threaten to plunge Egypt into a famine.

Currid points out an interesting contrast in verse 6. While the Israelites were to think of the future and tell their children and their children's children about the wonders of God, the Egyptians could only look to the past. Their fathers and their father's fathers had never seen such a destructive day as the coming plague of locusts. While Egypt can only remember her glorious past, the people of God are instructed to teach their future children about their glorious God.

### 2. *Pharaoh's Proposal (10:7-11)*

Although the hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hard, their minds weren't dull. They recognized disaster when they heard it, and they pleaded with Pharaoh to give up and let the men of Israel go. Pharaoh takes their advice and offers his next concession to Moses. Pharaoh is willing to let Moses take the men of Israel out to worship the LORD, but he will not permit the women and children to go. Effectively, Pharaoh is holding the women and children hostage for the safe return of the Hebrew men. He is still not submitting to God's command to let all of the people go. Of course, Moses immediately rejects this compromise – everyone in Israel must be permitted to worship God. Women and children come first! Ryken points out:

This seemed like a reasonable offer, but Pharaoh was making two false assumptions. One was that the women and children didn't count. Pharaoh assumed that when it came to performing religious duties, men were the only ones who mattered. If the Israelites wanted to worship, then why did everyone have to leave? Why not just let the men go and get it over with? Part of the answer, of course, was that God wanted freedom for all His people. God wanted to give the Israelites something to tell their grandchildren, which they could only do if they took their children with them. But there was also an important spiritual principle at stake: Worship is for the whole family, from the oldest to the youngest. God wants all His people to praise Him.

Pharaoh's other false assumption was that he could bargain with God. He assumed that he and God were on more or less equal terms, and therefore he could negotiate from a position of strength. But there would be no compromise. God does not discuss terms; He dictates them. What He demanded in this case was nothing less than Pharaoh's unconditional surrender. It was all or nothing, which is why God was not impressed with Pharaoh's offer to let the men of Israel go.

### 3. *God's Plague (10:12-15)*

Thus, the locusts come to Egypt, right on schedule. God sends an east wind to blow the locusts to Egypt. Just as hail is often used in Scripture to indicate God's judgment, the east wind is another tool of judgment in God's arsenal (*cp.* Ps. 48:7; Jer. 18:17; Ez. 19:12; 27:26; Hos. 13:15; Jon. 4:8).

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The impact of the locusts was exactly as advertised. They covered or darkened the land, a preview of the darkness of the sun to come in the next plague. They completely devoured all the vegetation left in Egypt; nothing green or leafy remained. Verse 14 calls the plague “very severe.” Here is our old friend, the Hebrew word *kabed* (heavy) to describe yet another plague. It seems that while Pharaoh was “heavy hearted,” God’s response was “heavy handed.”

### 4. Pharaoh’s “Confession” (10:16-20)

For the second time, Pharaoh “confesses” his sin and asks for the plague to be removed. He seems really shaken by the intensity of the plague and its impact on his country. However, just as in his “confession” during the seventh plague, all Pharaoh is truly interested in here is relief from punishment, not repentance of sin. His confession is incomplete; he has no desire to change his behavior and submit to God’s authority.

Once again Moses prays to God for relief, and once again God hears and answers the intercessory prayer of Moses. This time He sends a west wind to blow the locusts back out of Egypt, where they drown in the Red Sea. This is a foreshadowing of what will happen in the exodus, when God will drown the Egyptian army in the Red Sea (*cp.* Ex. 14:28).

## C. Plague 9: Darkness (10:21-29)

### 1. Palpable Darkness (10:21-23)

The last plague of the third triad comes unannounced, following the previously established pattern. This last plague is three days of palpable darkness. On the surface, this doesn’t sound too bad, especially after weathering the hailstorm and locust swarm. While it is true that the physical impact of this plague was not as severe, the psychological and religious impacts must have been profound.

Along with the Nile River, the sun was the most worshiped and revered object in Egypt. By completely darkening the sun for three days, God was attacking the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon – Amon-Ra, the sun god. Pharaoh himself was considered to be the incarnation of the sun god (Bentley). Currid explains the importance of the sun god in Egyptian mythology:

For them his rising in the east was the symbol of life and resurrection. He was the creator-god. However, when Amon-Ra sank in the west this was understood to represent death and the underworld. When Yahweh wills it, the sun is darkened, and Amon-Ra is hidden and unable to shine upon his worshippers. During the ninth plague Amon-Ra does not rise and does not give life; his realm is death, judgment and hopelessness.

Once in Oregon we hiked into a mile-long lava tube with only a small lantern for light. When that lantern was shuttered, we were immediately plunged into complete darkness. It wasn’t a pleasant feeling, even for a minute.

This wasn’t just any darkness; it was the complete and utter absence of light. It wasn’t just a blackout of the sun – all sources of light were extinguished. For three days, not even a candle would burn or a fire light up in Egypt. There was no lightning, no stars, no moonlight; just complete, profound darkness. Verse 21 describes it as a “darkness which even may be felt.” This was a supernatural darkness that could be sensed and touched. It was dense and oppressive. In a word, it was terrifying. This was a return to the primordial chaos before the creation of light on the first day (Gen. 1:2). God’s process of de-creating Egypt is almost complete.

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I believe the three-day period of darkness is significant. Throughout the Scriptures, three days represents a journey from death to life. For example, the three-day journey of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1-14); the three-day journey requested by Moses to Pharaoh for Israel to worship God (Ex. 5:3); and the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the fish (Jon. 1:17). Of course, all these three-day journeys foreshadow the three-day period between Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4), the ultimate journey from death to life. However, in this case, the three days of darkness represent that Egypt is on a journey from life to death. There is no resurrection for them; there is no light at the end of the tunnel. All that awaits Egypt is the death of the firstborn in the tenth plague and then the death of their army at the Red Sea. The entire story of the plagues has been a journey from life to death for the Egyptians.

Meanwhile, it has been a journey from death to life for the children of Israel. While the Egyptians curled up into fetal positions in the palpable darkness, all the land of Goshen was ablaze with light. The spiritual significance of this contrast couldn't be clearer. The Egyptians were in spiritual as well as physical darkness. Darkness is often used in Scripture to indicate sin, rebellion, and death (*cp.* 1 Sam. 2:9; Job 15:30; 17:13; 18:18; Ps. 88:12, 18; 143:3).

On the other hand, the presence of light represents truth, holiness, and purity. It is the absence of darkness. 1 John 1:5 tells us that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." God is the source of light; we must come to Him for spiritual light. Jesus describes His ministry in terms of light and dark when He quotes the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>16</sup>The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16, quoting Isaiah 9:2).

Paul describes this same transfer from spiritual darkness to spiritual light through Jesus:

<sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup>He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:12-13).

And the book of Proverbs sums up the contrast between light and darkness in Scripture:

<sup>18</sup>But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. <sup>19</sup>The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble (Proverbs 4:18-19).

### 2. *Pharaoh's Deal (10:24-26)*

Once again, Pharaoh is shaken by the latest example of God's power, and he offers another deal to Moses. Pharaoh will now concede to let the women and children go with the men to worship the LORD. The only things he will hold back are the herds and flocks of Israel. Of course, Moses is not about to accept this latest compromise from Pharaoh.

The herds and flocks were necessary from several important perspectives. First, they were a source of wealth for Israel. No doubt Pharaoh wanted the Israelite animals, since virtually all of his had been killed through pestilence or hail. Second, they were a source of nourishment for Israel. A cow is "hamburger on the hoof." Since the Israelites were going into the wilderness, they would need food, nourishment that Pharaoh wanted to withhold. Third, the animals were needed as a source of sacrifice. How could the Hebrews worship their God without any sacrificial animals? Thus, Pharaoh was attempting to dictate the terms of worship. Finally, the herds were required to go with Israel because when they left, they were to receive "lovely parting

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gifts.” The laws of slavery in the Pentateuch indicate that a freed slave should receive liberal gifts from his master (Dt. 15:13-15). The basis of this law was the exodus itself. Thus, the herds and flocks of Israel were part of the just and rightful bounty that Israel deserved as recompense from Egypt for their many long years of service in slavery.

### **3. Pharaoh’s Death Threat (10:27-29)**

After Moses rejects the latest flawed deal from Pharaoh, the interview ends badly. Pharaoh loses his temper and threatens Moses with death if he ever comes back into his presence again. Pharaoh’s dark heart, hardened by God and hardened by himself, will no longer tolerate the presence of Moses and the words of light and life. Perhaps surprisingly, Moses agrees with Pharaoh’s assessment – the prophet will never again come into the presence of Pharaoh. Pharaoh will never again have the opportunity for real and sincere repentance. His window of opportunity has finally closed. By driving away Moses, Pharaoh is sealing the death warrant of Egypt. Pharaoh is not really rejecting Moses; he is rejecting God. “Of course, this too is according to God’s plan. By having Pharaoh cast Moses out of his presence, God is in effect casting Pharaoh out of His presence” (Enns).

### **D. Plague 10 Announced: Firstborn (11:1-10)**

Thus we come (at long last!) to the announcement of the tenth and final plague of Egypt. The organization of chapter 11 is somewhat confusing. Verses 1-3 are God’s words to Moses regarding the tenth plague. Most commentators believe that these verses are a parenthesis – that is, they were given to Moses before his final interview with Pharaoh, but inserted here to introduce the subject of the tenth plague. Others (such as Currid) opine that God could have spoken directly to Moses at this point in the narrative while he was in the Egyptian court. Verses 4-8 describe Moses’ final words to Pharaoh, explaining the nature of the tenth plague to the Egyptian king. It seems from the context that these verses are a continuation of the interview at the end of chapter 10. That is, Moses agrees with Pharaoh that he will never see him again, but before he leaves the royal presence, he delivers this parting message. Finally, the last two verses of chapter 11 provide a fitting summary and conclusion of the ten plagues.

Motyer points out that this last plague is set apart from the others by four features. First, ultimate success is predicted at the conclusion of this plague. This is the plague that will break the will of the pharaoh: “He will surely drive you out of here altogether” (11:1). Secondly, this wonder is to be initiated without any mediation from Moses or Aaron. Although God is the author of all the plagues, in the first nine either Moses or Aaron did something to initiate the plague, such as raise a rod or throw ashes into the air. Furthermore, in this plague, God would not use animals, pestilence, or natural disasters to fulfill His will; this time, the LORD Himself would directly intervene (11:4; 12:12). Third, the segregation of Israel would occur in a different manner. In the previous six plagues, God distinguished between Israel and Egypt – the plagues hit Egypt and spared Israel. In the tenth plague, the Israelites would have to act in faith to God’s word in order to be spared the impact of the plague. Thus, passive obedience now must be replaced by active obedience. The Israelites must make a stand beneath the blood of the lamb to declare they are the people of God. The final difference in this plague is the way it is introduced. Chapter 11 is a long introduction to the plague. However, the plague itself does not occur until deep into chapter 12. Thus, there is a lengthy separation between the announcement of the plague and its fulfillment, a separation that is filled by the preparations for the Passover and the exodus of God’s people.

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### 1. *God's Word to Moses (11:1-3)*

God's word to Moses in 11:1-3 tells us that the end is finally in sight. Way back at the burning bush God had told Moses that Pharaoh would eventually let Israel go and that they would depart Egypt with great spoil (3:20-22). These verses simply refresh our memory of those words and make us anticipate the final buildup to the eventual exodus.

It is no surprise that the fame of Moses had spread throughout Egypt (11:3). The only thing that is surprising is that it took so long for the Egyptians to want the Israelites to leave. And that timing, of course, was also in the providential hand of God. For nine long plagues, He had been hardening hearts, but now in this tenth and final plague, the hearts of Egypt would finally be favorable towards Israel. No doubt much of that favor (that allowed the plundering of Egyptian wealth) was directed toward removing the source of affliction from their midst.

### 2. *Moses' Word to Pharaoh (11:4-8)*

Moses' word to Pharaoh in 11:4-8 announces the tenth and final plague: the death of the firstborn. Every household in Egypt, from the greatest to the least, would suffer a death. The poorest maidservant slaving away at the handmill all the way up to Pharaoh himself would be affected. Even the firstborn animals would die. Pharaoh will ultimately be "plagued to death."

This final plague is an example of the justice of God. Long ago, the Egyptians had tried to slaughter the children of Israel by throwing them into the Nile River. Now at last, God is responding in direct retribution for the sins of all Egypt. Since the nation of Israel was God's "firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22), God would exact judgment upon the firstborn sons of Egypt. This is an example of the *lex talionis* – the "eye for eye" justice of the Old Testament law.

In another example of "poetic justice," the cries of Israel during their many decades of enslavement (*cp.* 2:23; 3:7, 9) would be offset by the "great cry throughout the land of Egypt" (11:6). The Israelites had cried out underneath the sinful oppression of Egypt; Egypt would cry out in response to the just wrath of God.

In 11:7 we have the final "knowledge purpose" given for the plagues: "that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." God makes distinctions; this is the clear teaching of Scripture. He chooses Abel but not Cain; He chooses Isaac but not Ishmael; He chooses Jacob but not Esau; He chooses Israel but not Egypt. The difference does not lie in any inherent worth in the chosen ones, for they are sinful and unworthy. The difference lies in the inscrutable will of God. Paul delights in this doctrine of election:

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." <sup>16</sup>So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." <sup>18</sup>Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens (Romans 9:14-18).

Moses final word to Pharaoh is a sharp rebuke. He tells Pharaoh that after the final plague all of the king's servants will beg Moses and Israel to leave. And with that parting shot, Moses stalks off in righteous anger, reflecting the anger of the LORD over the sinfulness and wickedness of Pharaoh and his hard and heavy heart.

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### 3. *Summary of the Plagues (11:9-10)*

The last two verses of chapter 11 are a fitting summary of the entire plague narrative. Pharaoh's intransigence was the vehicle God used to multiply His wonders in Egypt through the administration of Moses and Aaron. And the intransigence of Pharaoh was accomplished through the hardening of his heart, as ordained by God. There are no loose ends here. The plan of God was coming together, exactly as He had foreseen it.

#### Conclusion

##### 1. *Theological, Christological, and Practical*

In this introduction to the seventh plague (9:14-16), God gives two major purposes for His actions: 1) personal knowledge of God's power; and 2) global knowledge of God's name. A third purpose is given at the end of the seventh plague: 3) knowledge of the sovereignty of God over all creation (9:29). A fourth "knowledge purpose" is given at the beginning of the eighth plague: 4) knowledge of God's great salvation passed on to future generations (10:1-2). The final purpose is given in the introduction to the tenth plague: 5) knowledge of the justice of God's sovereign election (11:7). This knowledge, concerning God's holy character and righteous actions, is not to be confined to one place or one time. It is not only for the Egyptians or Israelites of Moses' day. The knowledge of God was to spread to all nations and all generations. Thus, God uses the ten plagues to extend true knowledge of God throughout space and time to encompass all of creation and all of eternity.

God's purposes are still the same today. He has a global reach and a local touch. His local touch impacts individual sinners. Salvation comes at the personal level, as our hearts are changed by God to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ – His character and actions. Pharaoh's heart was changed, but instead of being softened to receive God's grace, it was hardened to resist it. Pharaoh never learned the lesson; he continually resisted God (11:9-10). As we have seen, God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to come to repentance, but repentance never came.

<sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

But there is also a global reach to the work of Jesus Christ – an aspect of global glory as the name of Christ is lifted up throughout creation:

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

How are we to respond? Learn the lessons that Pharaoh did not. Learn that God is: 1) omnipotent; 2) glorious; 3) sovereign; 4) eternal; and 5) just. Submit to the one who has the power of life and death over your immortal soul. Teach your children and grandchildren the doctrines of grace. Praise God for who He is and what He has done. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3).

Close in Prayer.

Next week: Lesson 11 – Remember the Feast – Ex. 12:1-28; 12:43-13:16