

## EXODUS 10

### INTRODUCTION

We need to keep in mind the truth that the exodus event is not merely a confrontation between Israel and Egypt. As we have seen over the previous weeks there is much more to it than that. We are being allowed to witness a contest between the God of Israel and the false gods of Egypt, one of which was Pharaoh himself who was believed to be an incarnation of the god 'Ra'. Even behind this contest there is of course the ultimate conflict between God and Satan.

The various plagues that came upon Egypt are God's way of bringing Pharaoh and the so called other gods of Egypt to their knees. In the first 7 plagues we have seen how God has shown the feebleness of seven of the Egyptian gods. However God is doing more than exposing false gods for what they are; his intention is to bring glory to his name.

### 1. LEARN THE LESSONS (vs. 1-2)

In the opening verses we have an explanation to what has been going on in the earlier plagues. God is sovereign and as the sovereign Lord he has been hardening hearts of Pharaoh and his officials so that he might demonstrate his power among the people. The consequences of that will be to teach future generations including our own some very important lessons. What are those lessons?

a) The first lesson to learn is that the plagues are a judgement of God upon Pharaoh and his people because of their refusal to obey the word of the Lord, which came through Moses and Aaron. The verb that is translated 'dealt harshly' (v 2) has the idea of mockery at its heart. God has made a toy of Egypt; he is playing with them, teaching them again and again that he is God and that he must be obeyed. God could have wiped Pharaoh and Egyptians from the face of the universe but he has been kind to them and patient with them and he is showing that sin against God brings its consequences, which is the judgement of God.

But Pharaoh did not learn the lesson. That is the lesson that we need to learn as well this morning as we come near the end of the plagues. God does judge sin and he does it in this world. But his judgement on sin in this world is only a foretaste of the final and ultimate judgement at the end of the age. Last week was national aids week. Is not the illness Aids a temporary judgment upon our world. There are thousands dying of aids especially in parts of Africa, but have we learnt the lesson. No!

For how we cope with it is to promote safe sex rather than promoting sex within marriage only and faithfulness within the marriage relationship. It is interesting that in Uganda, which has a very serious aids problem, the number of aids victims is decreasing rapidly. Why? They changed their policy and promoted abstaining from sex until you have a stable relationship. It's not ideal, but it does prove a point. Have we learnt any lessons since that awful day of 9/11?

We have learnt lessons about terrorism but have we learnt anything about what God is saying to our nation. We could go on and on and on, floods, earthquakes, foot and mouth, social breakdown. Yet as a nation we are like Pharaoh have not learnt the lessons. If we've learned the lessons from the book of Exodus then perhaps we would have escaped at least some of the disasters that have come upon us personally or nationally.

The Israelites were to pass on the lessons of the Exodus to their children and their children's children. That's what we should do as well. Many of the children of our nation are growing up not knowing the story of the Exodus and as a result they are being denied the opportunity to see the greatness and power of God. That is the second lesson that we need to learn

b) The second lesson is to learn that God is the Lord (Jehovah). These plagues are a real encouragement to God's people for we learn that God is Jehovah the great powerful and sovereign God. This is the effect it had on Moses father in law Jethro in Exodus 18. Moses tells him about the plagues and the deliverance from Egypt and Jethro's response is one of assurance that now he knows that God is greater than all the other gods (18:11).

This is the very reason that the events of the Exodus are recounted in many Psalms (Psalms 78:9-16 and Psalm 105:31-35). For those of us who have children; make sure we pass these stories on to our children so that they might know that God is the sovereign creator and ruler of this world and to him we are accountable.

One thing the theory of evolution has done to our nation is to remove God from it. As a result the idea that no one is ultimately in control is presented to us and that of course leads to a great sense of hopelessness. If there is no one in control then there is no purpose to life, and if that is the case then what is the point of living? Sadly some people have taken that sense of hopelessness to the extreme by taking their own lives.

You see these truths are vitally important for how we live our lives, if things happen by sheer chance and bad luck and if no one is in control and if we are accountable to no one then we simply can do what we like and live by our own moral standards. That is a recipe for disaster, as society will fragment if it does not have a purpose and that is what we see in the Western world. Christian here is two truths that we must believe and preach and live our own lives by. God is sovereign, He is in control and he is the one who does judges our sin and he speaks to us through his providences.

Once people understand that and realise the full implications of those truths then we can provide the answer to sin, which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and his work on the cross on behalf of sinners. We can and will only redress the balance in our nation if we preach the gospel and the gospel must begin with who God is and what he has done in creation before we can present Jesus as their Saviour.

## 2. THE PLAGUE OF LOCUST (vs. 3-20).

The pattern is now very familiar to us; the 8<sup>th</sup> plague begins like many of the others, God commands Moses to go to Pharaoh. This time however Moses is to directly rebuke Pharaoh for his failure to humble himself before the Lord. Pride is only another outcome of failing to recognise who God is. Pharaoh is once again told that failure to humble himself and obey will bring a plague of locusts upon the land.

Locusts could cause real devastation upon a nation because of the way they eat the crops of the land. Egypt was aware of the problem so they worshipped a god known as 'Senehem' who was supposed to be the divine protector against ravages from pests. But Moses warns Pharaoh the locusts will come and cause real devastation they will consume anything that is left after the destruction caused by the plague of hail (v 5).

There is nothing that their so-called god will be able to do about it. Having delivered his message Moses gives Pharaoh no time to respond. Moses knows what Pharaoh has to say with a hardened unbeliever there comes a time when dialogue must be concluded, all that needs to be said has been said, Pharaoh is not repenting but instead he is wallowing in his sin.

That is always a sad moment but we experience that to don't we. We have shared the gospel with some people, we have been forthright with them told them they are sinners and must repent. But they have failed to do so and show no sign of softening towards God. In fact it seems as if they are

becoming harder towards God. Then it might well be that God lays it on our hearts to say no more to them, all that needs to be said has been said; that person is left alone to wallow in their sin.

It is of course right to continue to pray for that person for it might well be that our turning from them might be the means God uses to bring them to their senses.

Even Pharaoh's counsellors (v 7) disagree with Pharaoh's unyielding stance. But even they have no real desire to give in to the demands of God. For they recommend that Pharaoh let the men go (not people as in NIV), which of course falls short to what God is demanding. In verse 11 it seems as if Pharaoh has accepted their advice. He brings Moses and Aaron back into his presence (v 8) and tells them to go and worship. He then asks who Moses is planning to take with him and Moses tells him that he is taking everyone (v 9).

God has demanded that all God's people should be freed but Pharaoh is trying to negotiate with Moses. He is keen to keep some control and is determined to show that he is still in control of all that is going on.

But Pharaoh will not let everyone go, only the men that is the deal and he drives Moses and Aaron out of his presence (v 11). The Lord calls for Moses to stretch out his hand and an east wind brought locust into Egypt (v 13). Normally Locusts approach Egypt from the south thus their coming in an east wind again highlights that this is no normal event, this is from God.

By the way if you watched that programme last Sunday evening about Moses what that programme tried to do is explain abnormal plagues in a normal way. They left much of the biblical detail out and left the final plague the death of the firstborn completely out. Anyone who reads Exodus with honest eyes and with some understanding cannot but help but conclude that this is God's work. The devastation of the plague of locusts was great (vs. 14-15).

Now what has all this got to do with us today? Well in the bible a plague of locust is representative of God's judgement upon people. This is how it is used in the book of Joel (2:1-2) and we see the same idea in the book of Revelation (9:1-12). This is the fifth trumpet and John sees a star that has fallen out of heaven to earth. This represents the devil's present position having rebelled against God. Satan is given a key to the abyss and out of the abyss comes thick smoke and out of the smoke comes locusts.

What does all this mean? Well the abyss is hell and here Satan releases from hell his demons that go about the earth reaping havoc but these locusts don't touch the land but the people. So you see this is what is happening today, Satan by his power is ruining people's lives, he blinds their minds (2 Corinthians 4:4) keeps people in his grip (Ephesians 2:2) and all of this happens with the permission of God. God does not stop Satan from carrying out his wicked plots in the hearts of people for God uses even the work of Satan as a punishment and a warning to sinners in order that they might repent (9:21).

Do you see the havoc caused by Satan in your life, that is all part of God's judgement upon you because of sin but it is also a warning to us to show us our need to respond to God's word and to do so wholeheartedly and not like Pharaoh who wanted to negotiate terms with God. God does not change his word for you or me. He does not change his definition of sin for us and he demands total repentance and a turning to Jesus Christ.

Failure to do so will ultimately lead to a final and ultimate judgement in hell itself. The plagues are warnings to us today not to negotiate with God we simply must repent and come to him in faith through Jesus or face the consequences. Pharaoh chose to face the consequences.

Even though it appears that he is repenting (vs. 17-19). He is going further than he has gone before but he still wants to manipulate the situation his own way. The plague stopped again through the intervention of God and through the prayers of Moses but Pharaoh's heart is still hard and the people are still in slavery (v 20). You know this shows how hard the heart of unbelievers can become. Even though Egypt is falling apart all around Pharaoh he will not soften his heart towards God; in fact the text is emphasising that it is God who is calling the tune and it does this by emphasising that God is involved in hardening Pharaoh's heart.

We all have seen this happen; haven't we? People's lives are in a mess as they stagger from one problem and trial to another. Their sin leads them further into sin and the consequences of their sin are very severe. But someone comes along and shares the gospel with them; here is good news, forgiveness of sin and freedom from the power of evil. But what do they do? O they want to have their circumstances eased, they want their problems solved so they might try and bargain with God.

They might even ask Christians to pray but will they repent and turn from their sin that has brought them so much misery. No they will not, their hearts are hard and in the end they respond as if the gospel was going to do them harm rather than bring them joy and freedom. If you are an unbeliever could this describe you, you are in need of the gospel but yet rejecting it?

Don't be like Pharaoh, repent come to God on his terms and see the power of God freeing you from the power and grip of sin and Satan. Or is your heart so hard today that you will leave this building again this morning unsaved and still on the road to hell.

### 3. THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS (vs. 21-29)

I don't really have time to go into this plague in great detail but it arrives without any warning to Pharaoh. It is a plague of darkness that is so thick that you can almost feel it. This is another attack on the Egypt gods and in particular their sun god Amon-Ra. This darkness lasted for three whole days (v 22). Although the darkness caused chaos for the Egyptians it was a different story for the Israelites. For the Israelites there was light (v 23). As a result Pharaoh commands Moses to go but he is to leave behind their animals.

But this is not what it seems for the word that is used for leaving the animals behind really means that the animals would be detained. Pharaoh still thinks he is in control and is determined to prove it; he still will not humble himself before the Lord God. Once again Moses rejects Pharaoh's offer; they need the animals for their sacrifices and for their living (vs. 25-26). But Pharaoh does not allow God's people to go free. He demands that Moses leaves his presence never to return and Moses assures him that he will indeed never return.

Pharaoh has rejected God by rejecting Moses; he will now be left to bear the consequences of that decision. This chapter finishes on a frightening note, he has been given warning after warning, and he has rejected them all now he will be left alone to face those consequences. If you are still an unbeliever, if you are still rejecting the gospel then please heed the warning and turn to God through Jesus Christ.

Don't keep rejecting God for who knows but God might grant you your desire and never again disturb your conscience. He might leave you in your sin and in that case you will have to face the consequences of your sin both in this life and in eternity itself. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God so turn to him while there is still time and if you do so you will move from the darkness of God's judgement into the light of God's marvellous grace.

Amen