

Exodus Chapters 9-10 - John Karmelich

For my newcomers, we're in the heart of the "10 Plagues". This story is famous among other reasons as a key event in the famous movie, "The 10 Commandments". With that statement out of my system, as I studied these chapters I pondered: "Why do most people refuse to turn their lives over God?" As most of you know, I write these studies for believers. Again as most of us know, being a Christian means we obey what Jesus does command us to do! After He was resurrected, He commanded his disciples (that includes us!) are to make disciples "everywhere". It's based on Matthew 28:16-20. To me, the Gospel's such a simple and positive thing. It makes me wonder why anyone would turn down that offer! Let me state it for the record: God paid the complete price for sin Himself, He loves us and wants our lives for His glory. It includes the fact we'll never be good enough to please God based on how we live. We are told to live as He commands not to earn His love but to be a witness for Him. That's old news for most of us. So why do people refuse to turn to Him? That's an underlying question in these chapters.

In this lesson we cover plagues numbers 5 through 9. If God wanted to, He could have just killed all of the Egyptians in one big swoop. There was a reason (ok a number of them) why God desired to drag it out over 10 plagues. A key reason is each of the plagues was in effect to rebuke the existence of all of the things the Egyptians worshipped. It is also to show that as long as there are other options available; people refuse to trust in God. The reason I'm getting into all of this is if we're called to use our lives as a witness for Jesus, it's essential to know what we're dealing with in terms of resistance as a witness for Him. It's essential to understand why people won't accept the Gospel message and why people will not give their lives to Jesus. I find that it comes down to ego. People think they can avoid accountability to God by ignoring Him!

Before I begin, remember that some people will get it. You wouldn't be reading this unless a person or a group told you about Jesus and it lead to you and me giving our lives to serve the living God, and use our lives based on that truth. Still if we're going to make that effort we must know who and what we're dealing with. Yes spiritual resistance exists and Satan blinds the hearts for those who refuse to believe. Obviously we don't know who will be saved, so we're called to witness to all people. Whether we like it not, that's our "marching orders" from God Himself, so we might as well accept it!

With that said, let's look at these chapters and pay attention to how the Egyptians and their leader react to what God's doing. Hopefully, it'll give us clues as to how to be a witness for Jesus and teach us why people refuse to believe. If you wonder why God created people who He knows will spend eternity in hell, the answer is He allows free will. God will never force us to love Him so therefore He allows lots of people to turn from Him. He works through people (us!) to lead others towards Him. I know that is old news to most of us, but it's good to remind ourselves of that truth! Ok then, time for more plagues!

The next plague on the list is for God to strike the Egyptian livestock. The original Hebrew implies it's just the working livestock, which explains why there is more livestock around later in this chapter. God will get to that plague in a second. First He gives a speech to Moses to explain what He's about to do in that plague. God informs Moses of the starting time of the plague and that it won't affect Israelites, but just the Egyptians. It's God's way of saying I and I alone am in charge of things so deal with it! Despite the plague the Pharaoh said in effect, "No way Jose"! That's because Egypt had other assets so he's not willing to "bend to God" knowing he's got other options! Did God know this? Of course, God's doing all of this to show all the Egyptians and even the Israelites who's really in charge of the world!

Time for #6: The short version is "boils". Think of it as some sort of disease that gets boils to appear all over one's body. Moses took some soot (think of ashes from a dead fire). The text mentions that it came from a burning brick oven (think of what the Israelites were required to build for all the hundreds of years). Bottom line is Moses threw some of this soot in the air. The text says the magicians couldn't stand before the Pharaoh as they were ceremonial unclean from the boils. Ask yourself why would the Pharaoh say no after seeing all of this? Could just be pride! Could just be that he didn't want all of the Israelites to leave the country. It could be because each plague ended and Pharaoh figured so much for that trick. As most of us know "pride" dies hard. Therefore it's time for #7:

This plague was hail. First remember that Egypt is desert country. Most years they'd only get about an inch of rain. Hail was practically unheard of. This hail was so severe there were even fireballs from an electrical storm that went with this! Before the hail, God told Moses to say to the Pharaoh, "Hey bud, if I (God) wanted to I could have killed you in a nanosecond. I'm dragging this out for a reason!" (That's my paraphrase)! God said in effect, "I'm dragging it out so My name will be proclaimed everywhere!" As an example, over 400 years later when the Israelites were fighting the Philistines (a group that lived in the land of Israel), that group said, this is the God who did all the damage to the Egyptians. My point is what happened in Egypt was noticed! Meanwhile back to the hail plague: Before it began Moses did warn that anyone who feared God should put their livestock in shelter as the hail was going to be bad! Realize where the Israelites lived, there was no hail.

During the storm it got bad enough that Pharaoh wanted a meeting with Moses. I keep picturing Moses traveling to the Pharaoh in the storm. Did the clouds part for him? Did he have a special umbrella? It is just one of those strange visuals I keep thinking about. This time the Pharaoh actually said he would let them go. However Moses knew God said he wouldn't so Moses just said I'll end this plague as soon as I'm out of here. Then of all things, we get a crop report during all of this. The essential point is even though these plagues were destroying everything, there's one kind of wheat that peaks later. Again, we get the reminder that if people can turn to anything other God, they'll hold out because they don't want to change the status quo! Anyway when the storm stopped the Pharaoh said, "No way Jose" again!

This leads #8: Locusts. This one came with a warning to Pharaoh. The short version is millions of the creatures stormed the land and ate anything left! Even the Egyptian servants said, "Your highness, it is time to give in, the land is ruined". Pharaoh does what Satan does with us: try to get us to compromise with God's desire for our lives. Pharaoh wanted the Israelite women and children to stay so they'd be a reason for the Israelite men to return! Bottom line it didn't work, so here came the locusts! Obviously, God isn't to be messed with or compromised with! So after the locusts did their damage, God drove all of those insects the Red Sea to end plague #8.

Plague #9 was darkness. The text said it was so thick the darkness could be felt and it lasted for a total of three days. Again, where the Israelites were, it wasn't there. To me it's much more than say a storm with really dark clouds. Whatever this was, they couldn't even put lamps in their homes! To me this is a bit like the first chapter of Genesis when "darkness was over the face of the deep" and God's light did come in the picture. (This was a few days before the sun was mentioned.) My point is when one turns from God one can become so hardened it's like total darkness of what's important in life. The chapter's ending is poetic. Pharaoh tells Moses in effect, "Get lost. If you see me again you'll die!" Moses then replied "You got it, you'll never see me again!" That leads to the big final plague which is the topic of the next lesson.

As we wrap up this lesson, obviously most people aren't that hard to God. Most people give Him "lip service" or simply don't give it much thought. The bottom line here is that life without God eventually

leads to death. It may not be this dramatic, but turning from God is in effect an eternity of darkness! A horrible thought, but also reality. I'm reminded of a great late bible teacher (Walter Martin) who would say, "If they're not willing to listen to Jesus, give them Moses!" What he meant in effect was if people do not want to hear the good news of eternal salvation, one must know the bad news of what'll happen for eternity if one refuses to believe the Gospel truth! On that harsh note, that's a wrap for this one!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John