

Exodus – Lesson 9

The Plagues on Egypt – Part 3

Read Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-42

1. (a) What had God done to the heart of the *Egyptians* throughout the various plagues (see 11:1-3)? How can this be explained, given the *suffering* the Egyptians have gone through?

The Egyptians had begun to *honor* the Israelites (i.e. to “*favor them*”). This respect may have been born out of a sense of fear. Clearly the plagues had gotten the “attention” of the Egyptian people; they were willing to give the Israelites much of their possessions, possibly under the hope that they would leave and save Egypt from further devastation. God had worked in the hearts of the people, both through the plagues and through his Spirit, to make the people treat the Israelites favorably, in spite of the fact that they were shepherds and detestable to the Egyptians earlier.

- (b) Why is this attitude towards the Israelites *essential* to the Exodus?

This attitude is essential for a number of reasons: 1) the Egyptian people would no longer be intent on keeping the Israelites in Egypt, even though they provided much labor as slaves. When the Israelites eventually *did* leave, the Egyptians would probably wipe their brow and breathe a sigh of relief, 2) the Egyptian people *might* place some pressure on Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Although Pharaoh was treated as a god by the Egyptians, they may have finally come to the reality that their “god” was far inferior to the God that was bringing these devastations, and may have brought some pressure to bear upon Pharaoh to bring this sad chapter to an end. Note: historically, this position may not be feasible, given the *militaristic* nature of the 18th Dynasty and the power of Thutmose III (who preceded Amenhotep II), 3) the attitude of the Egyptians towards the Israelites may have helped to serve *the Israelites* in their quest to leave. With the Egyptian people giving to the Israelites (slaves) much in the way of silver and gold, the Hebrews may have had a good deal more *confidence* to leave and follow their “unknown” God into the wilderness. This will become an issue later when the people’s resolve and confidence begins to wane.

- (c) To what status had *Moses* risen to throughout Egypt (see 11:3)? What does this say about the *position* of Moses as he relates to Pharaoh and the role of Pharaoh before his own people?

Moses had risen to a position of high status and power, given his ability to “call down” trouble upon the people; he had garnered a great deal of respect *both* from the general populace and from the leadership surrounding Pharaoh. This may have led to Moses being seen in a “greater” position than Pharaoh in the eyes of many, given his ability to do things that Pharaoh was unable to do. It is important, however, to temper how *much* influence this popularity actually had on Pharaoh (as is demonstrated in the continued failure of Pharaoh to relent) given that *he* considered himself a god and had military and economic power at his disposal to use against Moses and the Hebrews.

2. (a) What *attitude* does Moses have when speaking to Pharaoh in verses 4-8? Why do you think he speaks in this way?

The end of verse 8 says that Moses went out from Pharaoh with “hot anger” meaning that he had spoken to Pharaoh with an attitude of disgust, anger, and (maybe) a bit of hatred for Pharaoh for what Pharaoh had refused to do. It is possible that Moses had become so “fed up” with Pharaoh’s stubbornness that he now treated Pharaoh with complete disdain and a sense of “parental” anger, as one who comes to a childlike individual and commands him to do what is right. This may have flowed out of the position that Moses now garnered with the majority, a position that Pharaoh had consistently snubbed.

(b) What is the *final* plague that Moses threatens Pharaoh with? Why do you think this plague caused Pharaoh to finally let the people go?

Moses threatens Pharaoh with the death of the *firstborn* of every living thing in Egypt, from the firstborn of the cattle to the firstborn of the Egyptian servant up to, and including, the firstborn of Pharaoh himself. This plague would be the logical *end* to the plagues because the only higher step that God could take would be the destruction of every person in Egypt. In essence, the plagues had reached their logical conclusion: the only next thing the Egyptians could experience would be their complete annihilation. Pharaoh is forced to let the Hebrews go out of sheer self-preservation. Everything else up to this point had been painful, but any future resistance would be suicidal.

(c) Compare Exodus 11:4-6 to Luke 2:7; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18; and Revelation 1:5. List some of the ways that Jesus is spoken of as the "*firstborn*."

Jesus is spoken of as 1) the firstborn son of Mary and Joseph (i.e. a literal firstborn son of human parents), 2) the firstborn "*among many brothers*" (i.e. the firstborn of a spiritual family under God the father), 3) the firstborn "*of all creation*" (i.e. the greatest and most precious of all persons in the universe as the only-begotten Son of God and the Creator of all things), 4) the firstborn "*from the dead*" (i.e. the first to be raised from the dead in resurrection), 5) the firstborn "*of the dead*" (i.e. the judge and ruler over all people by virtue of his position).

(d) How do the events of this final plague on Egypt *foreshadow* the redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ?

It is through the death of the firstborn in Egypt that God was able to redeem his people from the slavery of Egypt. It is through the death of the firstborn Son of God that God is able to redeem his people from the slavery of sin and death. This final plague *foreshadows* the redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ in that *God* kills his firstborn Son in order to provide a way of escape for *his* people. The elect are brought out of the slavery of sin and death into a promised land and a personal relationship with God through the death of a firstborn Son. In this case, however, God chooses not to kill human firstborn sons again but, instead, chooses his own Son to die as the payment for redemption and as the propitiation for his own wrath against sin and death.

3. (a) Read Exodus 12:33. What is it that the *Egyptians* are afraid of that could happen next?

The Egyptians are afraid of further plagues, particularly their own demise (see 2b above). They are in a hurry for the Hebrews to leave in order that the God of the Hebrews might not smite them again.

(b) What *emotion* permeates the departure of the people from Egypt (see 12:34,39)? Why?

The emotion was one of *haste* – the attitude of "let's get out of here now!" They had this attitude 1) because God told them to, and 2) they knew that this fickle Pharaoh (who had changed his mind many times) might change his mind again. They are anxious to get out before they are, once again, enslaved. This is a logical response: people who are slaves (or are imprisoned unjustly) are more than anxious to leave their captors behind when freedom is given, and this is certainly true of the Hebrews who have watched God do amazing things in their sight. It is also possible that 3) they were excited about getting the chance to "meet" this God that they had lost touch with in the wilderness, but this is not really expressed in the text.

(c) List at least two things from the *promise* of Genesis 15:13-14 that are fulfilled at the Exodus.

The Exodus fulfills three things from this great prophecy given to Abraham: 1) the amount of time (i.e. 400 years) is completed at the Exodus, 2) judgments of all kinds against Egypt come to an end with the Exodus, 3) the people leave Egypt with great amounts of plunder.

(d) What do you think the phrase “*it was a night of watching by the Lord*” (ESV) or “*it is a night to be much observed unto the Lord*” (KJV) in 12:42 means?

The phrase is a *foreshadowing* of the symbolism established in the Passover – the people were to “observe” this day as a feast of remembrance forever, a constant reminder of what *God* had done to bring the people out of Egypt. However, the idea *behind* this observance is that *God himself had been watching over the Israelites as his special people* and the Passover/Exodus was the reality of God’s care for them. God watched over them and protected them and grew them into his special people, and then carefully guided them out of Egypt by his loving hand. The Passover, then, was a celebration of the love of God as he manifests his nature in keeping his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and lovingly caring for a people he calls his own. This, obviously, is a strong New Testament concept, as well, as it is expressed in Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb.