

One More Plague

Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-42; 13:17-22

As we continue through the book of Exodus, please remember something very clearly in your mind. It is that all of these experiences of God's people Israel in the Old Testament are written as examples for us, we who are God's people of the New Testament church.

1 Cor. 10:11 "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

To go even further, all the experiences of the people of Israel in being delivered out of Egypt point us to the deliverance that we have in Christ. For Christ was with them, too!

1 Cor. 10:1 "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

This afternoon we reach a climax in that deliverance of God's Old Testament people.

11:1 "And the LORD said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt."

We've studied nine so far. Water turned to blood. Frogs. Lice. Flies. Pestilence on the livestock. Boils. Hail. Locusts, to eat what the hail had left. Then darkness. All of them leading up to this grand finale. Death. The tenth and final plague, which immediately brings about the very thing which God has planned and purposed all along--the redemption of his people. And that redemption was accomplished with a direct connection to,

I. THE JUDGMENT OF DEATH.

And it was a just judgment.

11:4-6

We read that that actually happened.

12:29-30

Why so severe? Why so harsh? Why so universal--every house, even to the servants. And to the animals. The death of every firstborn.

The firstborn would represent the whole race, the firstborn represents the strength and honor and the power of the whole family. So when God killed the firstborn, he demonstrated his ability to kill everyone, he showed the Egyptians that He had absolute power to judge them finally and completely. He held in his hands the keys to their very life and death.

So we see the judgment and justice of God.

Ex. 4:22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn."

It was the promise of justice. And God keeps his promises. It was the same promise God had made all the way back in the Garden of Eden,

Gen. 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

We know that they did eat. And they did die. That's the judgment made even clearer in the pages of the New Testament,

most especially,

Rom. 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death.”

James 1:14 “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

And this threat of judgment hangs over all men even today

Heb. 9:27 “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

This is such a clear and concrete concept.

A. Death as the punishment for sin.

And that’s the basis of the gospel invitation, for unless the punishment of death is proclaimed as the just reward of sin, unless hell is proclaimed as the place and experience of eternal torment, then the proclamation of the gospel is rather empty, amounting to little more than what is commonly called “moralism.”

Just do good. Be a good person, that’s what God wants you to be.

There’s no redemption in that--no need for redemption. Just be good. Do good. Be a good person, and you will go to heaven. Yet that is not true, because “There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.”

Rom. 3:23 “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

So it is instead, that only if you recognize that you are “dead in trespasses and sins,” can you begin to understand that salvation means you shall be “made ... alive together with Christ.”

Salvation means to be brought back from the dead. So that the when we read the first half of Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death,” we can also read the second half, “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So this tenth plague is not so much about the death of the firstborn in Egypt as it is the life of all those among named among Israel. We see in this history of the Old Testament people of Israel,

B. Escape from death as the gift of life.

11:7

The Lord does make a difference, doesn’t he! We’ve seen that with many of these plagues. And the difference is simply this--they get his justice and we get his mercy. God makes a distinction, he discriminates, such that those who are of Israel shall escape death. And that image is the consistent picture of our eternal salvation.

So we have for us in this Old Testament passage of Exodus the preeminent example of,

II. A MIRACULOUS SALVATION.

The point isn’t that the firstborn of Egypt died. Rather, the point is that the Israelites were saved. This was the historical experience of salvation. It was external, to be sure. It was national. But still real, in the figurative truth of the Old Testament. It is written “for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” It is for our edification, and training in righteousness.

The event we call the exodus is the clearest external picture of that which God accomplishes in us as Christians today, namely our salvation.

430 years they had been in Egypt. The best we can figure out through biblical passages and historical records, the Exodus would have taken place in 1446 BC. Thus the date for Joseph's first entering Egypt would go back those 430 years, to 1876 BC.

You might realize that in Acts 7, Stephen mentions that the descendants of Abraham "would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years." Rather than presume a contradiction, it is not difficult to see Stephen's use of a round number, still accurate and true. As a round number, 400 is true. As the precise dating, it is exactly 430 years.

As we study Exodus 12, those years are now ending. With a multitude of 600,000 men, and by implication then around 2 million people total, men, women and children. From just a handful to 2 million, in just 430 years. Such a great blessing, as we studied God's promise back in the early chapters of Exodus.

We will study the solemn observation of this exodus next time, namely the passover. We'll look all the symbolism of that feast and its fulfillment in the New Testament. That's why I have divided up these chapters the way that I have. Next time, the passover. For today, the event itself. Salvation for God's people.

A. God redeems his people with his own supernatural power.

That's been such an emphatic theme through this whole section on the plagues, plagues which interestingly correspond to ten of the Egyptian gods. God is judging the gods of Egypt by showing forth his own vastly superior supernatural strength.

Obviously, this show of power climaxes with this judgment of death upon the firstborn, even the firstborn of Pharaoh himself.

It is Moses who makes this declaration to the servants of Pharaoh,
11:8

Notice how clearly God explains his purpose, even for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.
11:9

That is a direct statement of purpose. God hardened Pharaoh's heart such that Pharaoh would not heed Moses and let the people go. And he did it for a very specific purpose, so that He, God, could multiply his wonders in the land of Egypt. God did it so that he could show off! Show off his power, his own supernatural power.

We saw this before,

Ex. 7:3 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

So what is the connection for us? We read about Stephen in, Acts 7:36 "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear."

So it is that the miraculous signs performed by Moses to show forth the power of God in salvation are intended to point us to the prophet like Moses whom God will raise up for his people. And that prophet is Jesus. Go back to Acts 3, the conclusion of Peter's second sermon after Pentecost,

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

The prophet like unto Moses is God's servant Jesus. And Jesus is the one whose power it is that redeems his people today, in spirit and in truth. Jesus is the one who accomplishes that work within our hearts that is represented so well by the work of Moses in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt.

And what is that work? Redemption. Salvation. He made us alive, we who were dead in trespasses and sins. That's how the Bible describes this supernatural redemption. Those who are dead being made alive.

And it is by the supernatural power of God that we are redeemed. It is by the supernatural power that we are delivered out of bondage to sin and raised from the dead. That is our miraculous salvation. And like Israel, we enjoy with that salvation rich blessings.

B. God redeems his people with abundant blessings.

This is something you ought not to miss in the book of Exodus. God's people didn't just leave Egypt. They weren't simply forced out in haste by an angry king. They left with great riches heaped upon them by the Egyptians.

11:1-3

"The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians." They plundered the Egyptians.

12:31-36

One last plague, death. And through this sentence of death, God makes a distinction. A distinction between Egypt and Israel. To the one, the judgment of death. The penalty and the curse their sin had earned. To the other, life. And so this picture of the exodus of Israel out of Egypt is a picture for our benefit today, it is a picture of God's work of salvation today.

So it is, today I set before you life and death. In the words of Moses,

Deut. 30:9 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live."

Choose life.

God makes the same separation today. With the gospel of Jesus Christ, I set before you life and death.

1 John 5:11 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

It really isn't that difficult. It really isn't that complicated.

Rom. 10:8 “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”