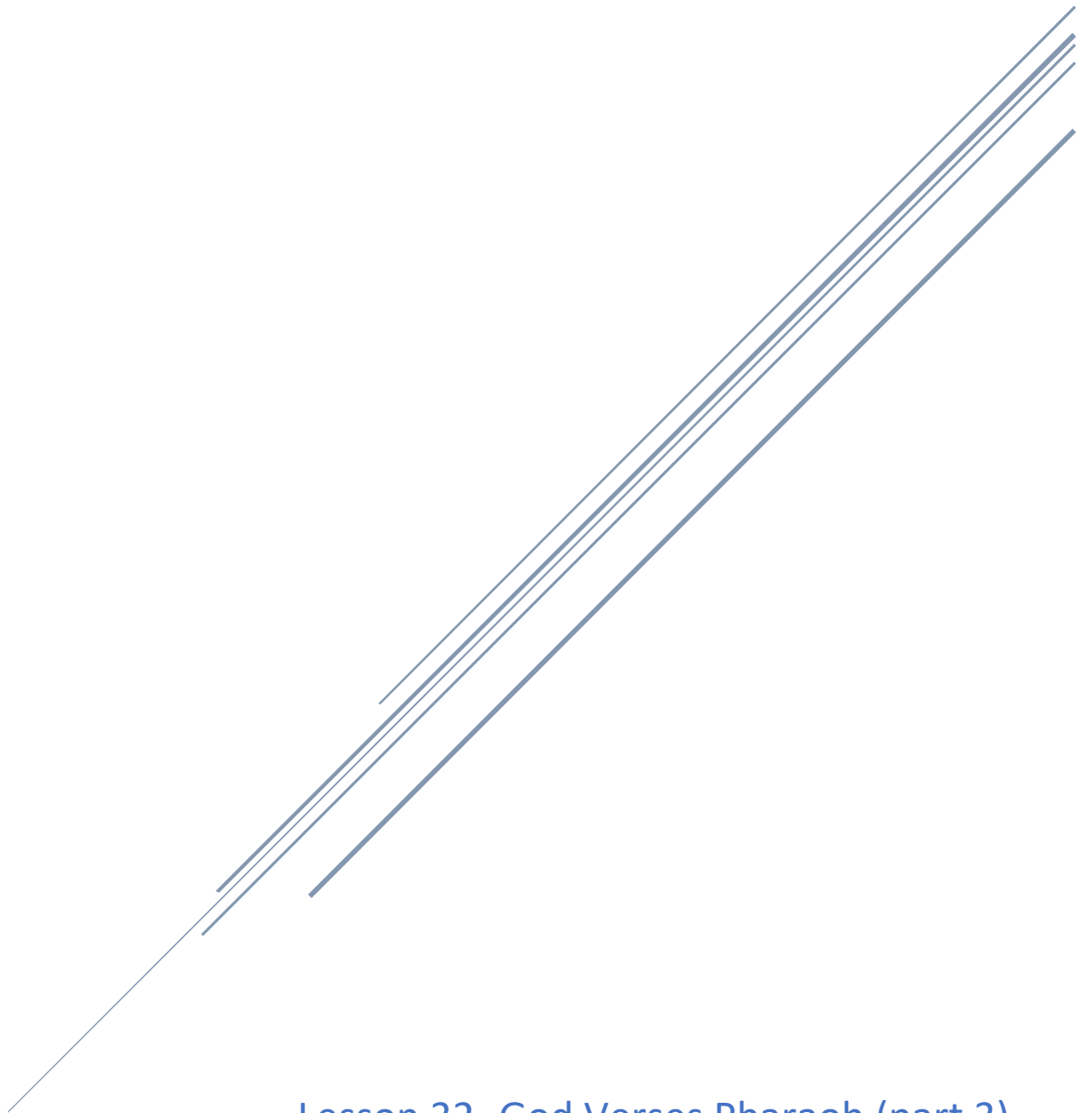


THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, & US

Understand the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, and Our place in God's plan



Lesson 32- God Verses Pharaoh (part 3)
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Introduction

In this lesson we pick up and look at more plagues leading up to the final event, the Passover.

As we go along, please notice how God continues to show judgment on Egyptian gods and at the same time gives Pharaoh more chances to repent.

Eighth Sign/ Seventh Plague: Locusts

Exodus 10:1-20

We first note that in verses one and two, God explains to Moses once again why He is doing these things. He has given Pharaoh many chances to repent and let Israel go, but God knows Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh is hard hearted and arrogantly promotes himself above God.

Despite the six plagues and the seven signs so far, Pharaoh has only falsely repented. He tells Moses that he will let Israel go. Then, as soon as God stops the pain from a plague, Pharaoh wickedly goes back on his word.

God explains to Moses that His actions have hardened Pharaoh's heart. God says Pharaoh's hardening of his heart is part of the plan. This lets God carry out all of His judgments on Egypt. God will continue to judge Egypt so that Israel's future generations will know that Yahweh is truly the one true God who delivered them from bondage.

Verse two says in the ESV, "how I dealt *harshly* with the Egyptians." In the NASB it reads, "how I *made a mockery* of the Egyptians." There is mild debate over the best way to translate this from the Hebrew language. Many scholars say a good way to understand what God meant here was, "how I *made an example* of the Egyptians." Another good way to translate it is, "how I *humiliated* the Egyptians."

God intended to judge the pagan wicked nation of Egypt to the extent all other nations would hear of it and know God is the one true God. God wanted to show Egypt that their gods and goddesses were nothing. Only Yahweh was real.

Moses once again warns Pharaoh what is coming if he will not repent and let Israel go. He warns in verse four that locusts will come about if Pharaoh does not repent.

God warns Pharaoh that whatever crops and vegetation the hail left behind, the next plague would destroy even that. The locusts will come about and eat away the rest of the Egyptian agrarian economy.

Verse six says not only would the locust destroy what was left of the crops, they would become a great annoyance to the Egyptians. They would be in their homes, they would be everywhere.

This time, Pharaoh's advisors begin to question his sanity. They cry out to Pharaoh reminding him that Egypt has essentially been destroyed by Moses and His God, why does Pharaoh not just let them leave? Pharaoh hears this and thinks he can negotiate with Moses.

Pharaoh says he will let them go, but only the men. The women and children must stay behind. Pharaoh says this is what Moses wants anyways. Moses told Pharaoh that Yahweh wants all of his people, men, women, and children, to leave and go worship Him.

This was something very odd to the Egyptian culture. They permitted all people to engage in worship of their gods, but only the men were granted to be present for the more important religious events and rituals. This was probably very odd to Pharaoh that Moses insisted their God truly wanted the women and children just like the men to come before the Lord.

Why do you think it is significant that Yahweh equally called for men, women, and children to go worship Him?

Pharaoh doesn't give Moses a chance to argue with him, Moses is driven out. In response, God simply tells Moses to raise his staff and then the locusts would come about.

Moses stretched out the staff and it says an east wind brought about swarms of locusts (verse 13). There were so many locusts it says it was unlike anything Egypt had ever seen before. They left nothing green on any tree or plant in Egypt.

It is important to see how God can at times cause things to come into existence by His own words and at other times He uses the natural order He has already created to cause His will to come about. In verse thirteen it says God directed an east wind to bring in the locusts. God didn't create these special locusts, He used the winds to bring masses of them in.

Locusts are merely grasshoppers that have hatched and grown under ideal conditions in the sandy soil where grasshopper eggs are deposited. Instead of a survival rate of a few per thousand, they survive by the hundreds per thousand. In the larval stage they rub together so frequently as to produce the characteristic brown exterior pigmentation, as opposed to the green color associated with grasshoppers that hatch in relatively greater isolation.¹

The quote I shared above gives us an idea of how devastating these locusts were to the Egyptian agrarian economy. They were bigger than grasshoppers and in more numbers. They would have decimated the Egyptian crops and plants.

As predicted, Pharaoh called for Moses and begged him to pray that God stop the locusts. He swore he had sinned and that this time he would let Israel go. Moses prayed and God caused another wind to come up and drove the locusts into the Red Sea so that none were left.

Once again, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he went back on his word to let Israel go (verse 20).

As we have explored with each plague, it seems God was issuing a judgement upon the Egyptian gods. It is highly likely that each plague was a direct threat to not just one god, but many different Egyptian gods.

The Egyptians of old have been known to worship as many as 1,500 gods on record that historians have accounted for. I have only stuck with the major ones they revered as most significant.

It is possible that with the plague of locusts, God was issuing a judgment upon a god like Amon. Amon was the god of the wind and the breath of life. God used an East wind to bring in the destructive locusts and He used a western wind to drive them away. God showed the Egyptians that their god of the wind was false.

Ninth Sign/ Eighth Plague: Darkness

Exodus 10:21-29

This next plague God did not give a warning to Pharaoh. He told Moses to stretch out his hands to the sky and that darkness would come over the land of Egypt. What is interesting about this darkness is God says it would be, "a darkness that may be felt."

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 251.

Can you imagine it being dark to the point you can feel it? I imagine this was a type of darkness where there was no ambient light whatsoever. No moon light, no star light, nothing but pitch blackness.

Darkness struck and it lasted for three days. It says in verse 23 that no one could see one another. Everything stopped since no one could get up and leave to do anything.

However, Israel's land of Goshen had light for them to see.

Why do you think complete darkness may have been worse for ancient peoples versus modern times?

We must remember in their day, no electricity, no lighting, etc. Darkness this black for three days would have literally brought the entire cavillation to a halt. They had no night lights and things we enjoy to help light up our darkness.

This time, Pharaoh tells Moses that everyone can go serve the Lord. The women and children are allowed to leave. However, once again Pharaoh adds a condition. He says the flocks and herds must be left behind in Egypt.

Why do you think Pharaoh won't let the flocks leave?

Moses tells Pharaoh they have to have the animals to offer the burnt sacrifices to the Lord. After this, Pharaoh's heart became hardened more again. He refused to let them go.

Notice in verses 28-29 a very harsh exchange between Pharaoh and Moses. Pharaoh warns Moses that after he leaves Pharaoh's presence this time, Moses had better make sure he never sees Pharaoh again or else he will kill him. Pharaoh had become so bitter, so hardened that he now threatens Moses' life personally.

Moses lets Pharaoh know that he is correct in what he has said. He said, "I will never see your face again." Moses did not mean this in the sense he agreed with Pharaoh, he meant it as a threat back to Pharaoh that God was finished with Pharaoh and his time was up.

Once again, God showed the Egyptians gods powerless. Egypt had more than one god they worshipped whom they believed held power over light and darkness. The chief over all gods was Re. He was the sun god. The Pharaoh's took part of the titles after him and were called the Sons of Re.

Another god, Aten, was a sun god whom they believed held power over the solar rays.

These are just two examples of gods that the true God, Yahweh, proved were false and could offer no help to Egypt.

The Tenth Sign/ Ninth Plague: The Passover Event (Death of Firstborn)

Now we come to the final plague and the major event that set the stage for God's relationship to Israel from this point forward.

Exodus 11

God tells Moses that only one more plague He will perform, and this time Pharaoh will finally let Israel go. Not only this, God instructs Israel to request silver and gold and other provisions from their Egyptian neighbors.

God will not just deliver Israel out of Egypt, He will let Israel plunder the Egyptians like a conquering invading army who won the war.

In this lesson I simply want to introduce what God will do but hold off diving into the details in our next lesson. This event is highly significant for the rest of the Bible's storyline.

I honestly cannot express in adequate words here how important this Passover was for Israel. It set the course for Israel's relationship to God. It became the start of their calendar year as a nation. Many times throughout the Bible the Passover event that delivered Israel from Egypt is referred to. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper while taking the Passover meal with His disciples. This is a very significant event.

Let's look at some of the verses to help us set the context so we are ready to dive in the details next lesson.

In verse three, God granted favor to Israel and Moses in the sight of the Egyptians. Also, even Pharaoh's servants esteemed Moses. Because of this, Egypt will willingly give the Israelites many of their treasures.

Moses warned the Egyptians what was going to happen. About midnight, the Lord will move through Egypt and strike dead the firstborn. Notice in verse five, no one is excluded. It says from the slave girl all the way up to Pharaoh's own house. Even the firstborn of the cattle will not be spared.

Verse six says there will be a great cry in all of Egypt like never before. However, in verse seven Moses says that not even a dog will bark against the people of Israel.

Why? God says so that the people will see how God makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

The indication in verse eight is that Moses' sayings in 11:1-7 were said while in the same setting of 10:29. Meaning that when Pharaoh warned Moses to never see his face again, God told Moses what to say immediately afterwards. Moses was able to tell Pharaoh and his court before leaving the warning about the Passover event to come.

Moses left Pharaoh in hot anger it says.

God told Moses in verse nine that nonetheless Pharaoh will not listen, once again. God will multiply His wonders in all Egypt. Verse ten adds some commentary that Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh yet God hardened his heart. Pharaoh refused to let Israel go all this time.

What we will see next time is the details God gives Moses to Israel about the Passover. We will examine why God did what He did. How He set up the Passover to be a symbol for Christ's work to come and die on the Cross. We will see the response from Egypt once the Passover happened.

Conclusion

So far with each plague we see God give warnings to Egypt. Pharaoh refuses to listen. He cut himself off from God's grace. He refused to repent and believe.

It is worth our time to see how in each plague there are two outcomes with one event are. On the one hand God issued judgement on Pharaoh and their false gods. On the other hand, God was giving salvation to Israel.

This is how God works today through Jesus Christ. Jesus' death and resurrection show two things in one event. On the one hand, God is a God of justice who must judge all sin. He judged the sins of people on His own son and He suffered for it. On the other hand, God showed people through Jesus' sacrifice that He is also a God of mercy and grace.

This is the wisdom and power of God. God can show both mercy and justice with the same event.

Jesus says in John 3:17-18 that God sent Jesus to the world not to judge it but to save it. The one who believes in Jesus is not judged, however the one who does not believe *has been judged already*. With Christ God showed both His judgment and mercy.

The question is which side are we on? Will we be hardened in our hearts and refuse to repent like Pharaoh? If so, we will face God's judgment in Christ. Will repent, be humbled, and seek God's forgiveness? If so, then we will receive God's mercy in Christ.