

Exodus 7:14-11:10

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Date: 05 July 2015

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[0 : 0 0] What sobering texts are before us this morning. Through work, stoppages, picnics, fireworks, display of flags and other expressions, every 4th of July, our nation celebrates our independence.

Such was declared by our founding fathers when they felt that we had been politically shortchanged by our mother country, Great Britain.

So the battle was fought, the victory was won, and here we are 239 years later.

We enjoy the freedoms, but we also shoulder the responsibilities that go along with being a sovereign nation.

Millennia before the 13 colonies declared themselves free from British control, the God of heaven demanded his people's freedom, their release, if you will, from an oppressive Egyptian nation.

[1 : 3 1] We've heard it, haven't we? Let my what? People go. Repeated, even in our text, a half a dozen times, and as we look at the broad text, we're taking plagues one through nine together.

Obviously, we don't have the time to deal in detail with the text, but there are things on either end and some things in between that are really worthy of our sober reflection and prayer and action.

Even though the Lord had said, let my people go, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He refused to let the sons of Israel go free. But judgment time had come in Egypt, and the plagues were really God's instruments, instruments in his hand.

We're going to look, as David has read, at plagues one and nine today. But in the process, we will observe patterns that were true of all of the plagues.

And before we get to those particular plagues, I want to highlight a few things that I believe will be helpful along the way. even as we listen today, but I hope these will be sort of tools or resources to help you in your understanding of these plagues.

[3 : 0 4] First of all, let's look briefly at the pattern of the plagues, and then we'll talk briefly about the purpose of the plagues. There is a discernible pattern in plagues one through nine.

They can be really divided into three different cycles of three. As a matter of fact, take a look. You see there, even in our text, there is the command that you see, and we find that in chapter 7 and verse 16.

Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far, he had not obeyed. Okay? So, as a matter of fact, take a look over to chapter 8 and verse 20.

Chapter 8, verse 20. That begins the actual, the second cycle of three. And in the first two times, we see there in the fourth plague, we notice in verse 20, the let my people go.

All right? You see it there? Look at chapter 9 and verse 1. We see it again. Again, see, these are the first two plagues in the second cycle.

[4 : 32] Okay? So, it's sort of like the saying, let my people go. It's a warning from God. Give my people freedom, or else, there's the command what to do, and there's a warning that if you don't do it, something is going to happen to you.

So, we see this phrase is repeated in the two cycles there. But then, as you look at the last plague of the cycle, 4, 5, and then 6, and the 6th plague begins in chapter 9 and verse 8.

You see it there? And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, take handfuls of soot from the kiln and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh.

Here's the idea. Plagues one and two within the cycle, there is the command and the warning that follows.

And then, there is this, it's no command, but there's an action either by Moses or Aaron that is done without the prompting of let my people go or else.

[5 : 43] Again, you see that in plagues one and two, there is this command to let them go, and then there is, if you don't do it, not if you don't do it, but take a look at it there, in verse, third plague, there's the stretch out your staff.

Again, it's no previous command, no warning, but just do something. Okay? God is calling Moses or Aaron to do something. Two warnings, and then just do something. Two warnings, and then just do something.

You see that in each of the three different cycles within the scheme of plagues. A discernible pattern. Again, it's not just seemingly random.

There is, let my people go or else, let my people go or else, and then God tells Moses or Aaron simply to do something. And you will see that pattern in each of the three cycles of the plagues.

So there is the pattern of the plagues, but then there's the purpose of the plagues. Turn back over to Genesis chapter 15, because this is where God spoke to Abraham 400 years prior to the Exodus as far as what was going to happen to a particular nation that had held his people captive.

[7 : 14] Genesis chapter 15, verses 13 and 14. For the Lord said to Abraham, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there.

Present situation in Egypt 400 years going forward. But, and here it is, I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Okay? 400 years before, the purpose of the plagues becomes clear. They are for judgment against the nation that is holding the children of Israel captive.

Similarly, we see in numbers 33 and 4 that the Lord says this, on their gods in reference to Egypt, also the Lord executed judgments.

The plagues were God's judgment against Egypt and her gods. There's a pattern that we see in particularly plagues 1 through 9.

[8 : 29] There's the command, there's the warning, and then there is God calling either Moses or Aaron just to do something as it relates to that third plague in the cycle.

The Lord's judgment plan included 10 plagues. and through the heartening of Pharaoh's heart, the Lord was going to keep rolling plague after plague, and in doing so, God's glory was going to be on display in the land of Egypt.

Both for the Egyptians to see, but also the children of Israel. Hopefully, this would bolster their faith as they see the God of Israel in a sense flexing his muscle in this foreign land.

Look, several that you may know passages even in our text today. Look at chapter 7 and verse 17.

Thus says the Lord, by this you will know that I am the Lord. again, he's going to show, he's going to demonstrate who he is.

[9 : 45] He's flexing his muscle. If you look at chapter 8 and verse 10, there's another one. And he said, tomorrow, Moses said, be it as you say, that you may know that there is no God like our God.

He's going to demonstrate his uniqueness. he's going to demonstrate his supremacy there. The uniqueness of God is on display.

No God like our God. Chapter 8, verse 10. Look at chapter 8 and verse 22. But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen where my people dwell so that no swarm of flies shall be there that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.

look at chapter 9 and verse 29. And I love this because we hear echoes of Psalm 24 in it. Moses said to him, as soon as I've gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord.

The thunder will cease and there will be no more hell so that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. Again, he's demonstrating who actually is in control.

[11 : 02] but particularly look in chapter 9 verses 13 through 16 because this really makes it quite clear as it relates to what God is doing.

Look at verse 13. Then the Lord said to Moses, rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, here it is, let my people go that they may serve me.

For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself and on your servants and on your people so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.

For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence and you would have been cut off from the earth. Basically this.

He said one thing I could have cut you off real quickly. could have zapped you got you out of the way but notice this. Look at verse 16 very clear but for this purpose I raise you up to show you my power so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

[12 : 20] Demonstration God's power exercising his control demonstrating that God was in fact the supreme God of all the earth.

The uniqueness of God in all the earth and thus Pharaoh's heart hardened again and again and even in that God is using that and showing his power in the midst of that.

Well pattern purpose of the plagues but particularly notice the first of the ninth of the nine plagues that was read in our hearing.

As a matter of fact as I look at these two readings I think that God is showing number one that he is the Lord of life in Exodus chapter 7 verses 14 through 25 and then he's demonstrating that he is the Lord of light in chapter 10 verses 21 through 29 he's demonstrating that in a land where there were supposedly deities or gods that were actually in control of those very things but God in a sense shows that these are not actually in control but that he is this is the first again back to chapter 7 this is the first in the cycle of the three our text begins with the Lord reminding Moses about the condition of Pharaoh's heart you see that in verse 17 verse 14 the

Lord said to Moses Pharaoh's heart is hardened he refuses to let the people go he refuses to release God's people from under his control but this is quickly followed by the command that we see in verse 15 therefore go to Pharaoh in the morning as he's going out to the water stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him and put take in your hand the staff that is turned into a serpent remind him what I've said that is to let my people go warning what is to come and this first plague really targeted the Nile river and in doing so it was really hitting the nation where it really hurt because in that day the Nile was the very source of life for Egypt it was a key source for economic security its waters were the means by which goods were transported from one place to another and shutting down the

[15 : 27] Nile would be like shutting down the interstate a major interstate in our day was also used for irrigation crops were watered through the Nile the annual flooding guaranteed the fertility of the top soil this was a major major source in that day and the Nile was a source of drinking water and for fish for eating 4,000 miles the river stretched the river was so significant in that day that there was an ancient hymn to the river that says this hail to thee O Nile that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive and as one would think that the gallery of the gods in Egypt would include a god that was associated or really several gods that were associated with the Nile the main one was one called

Hapi the god of the flood the god of fertility and Hapi was depicted as a man with a female breast and a pregnant stomach to indicate it was the god of fertility but the turning of the Nile into blood was really demonstrating the supremacy of the lord just so you know who's actually in control the lord is not Hapi the Egyptian god over the Nile and other water sources the lord then predicted what it would be i will strike the Nile and notice where this setting was Pharaoh was going out to the Nile and it will turn to blood as they was was reading that this morning i mean that is the word that comes in i know that there are different theories and ideas as far as what this really was but as we look and see here i mean this was water turning to blood we know what happens every saint patrick's day here in chicagoland don't we the waters of the chicago river are dyed green but then sooner or later it sort of disappears it dissipates whatever folks this wasn't red dye here to the point that fish are going to die lack of oxygen the river had a stench this was judgment huh and it was cause for panic and for alarm the source of life had become a stench bearing source of death and corruption and the lord demonstrated who it was that was actually in control who was actually the life giver judgment had struck in the land the judgment that

I mean as we look back and see it as we look forward we think of revelation and these some of these judgments are actually would be reprised at the end of the era hail and fire and various kinds of things signs of divine judgment that often times we are really want to put our fingers in our ears and quite frankly we would rather not hear so Moses and Aaron verses 20 through 25 they execute and it happened just as they had predicted the water in the land blood all the various water sources sitting water but Pharaoh all magicians did the same thing and because they did it and we saw that on last week probably likely some kind of demonic power underneath what was going on as far as their ability to duplicate what

Moses and or Aaron had done but nonetheless as we see that the magicians verse 22 of Egypt did the same thing by their secret ark so that Pharaoh's heart remained hardened and he would not listen to them as the Lord had said Pharaoh turned and went to his house and he did not take this to heart judgment had struck his heart was heartened and it would go on to round two and God would continue to get glory his hardness of heart meant that another plague was on the way and another flag meant another opportunity for the Lord's supremacy to be displayed and recognized the Lord was the Lord of life what we see here can be likened to a commander calling upon various weapons he's calling in fire power that he has at his disposal he's king of the universe he's

Lord over all the earth and he all things are at his soul and each of the weapons fit the nature of the enemy that was being targeted he's the Lord of life not Hoppy or any other lesser God and we can go on and see the various other plagues that are there through which the Lord literally wrecked the land of Egypt even to the point that the Pharaoh's people said can't you see what's going on here don't you see that we're done we're cooked but as we turn over to the ninth plague chapter 10 not only is he the Lord of life he is the Lord of light as we see here the

[22 : 20] Lord said to Moses stretch out your hand chapter 10 verse 21 toward heaven that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt a darkness to be felt notice this is the last the third in the cycle of three there's no let my people go it's just he's going and he's doing Moses stretches his hand toward heaven and darkness engulfs the land now folks this is darkness with a capital D a darkness that could be felt lights were out in Egypt as directed by the Lord and this was a darkness that was darker than dark it was the darkness of God's judgment I mean it was like when you closed your eyes and you open your eyes there was no difference and just think about how something like that can mess with you psychologically if there's no distinction between having your eyes open and closed for about three days but that was not supposed to be because in

Egyptian theology Ra the sun god was in control of the sun and the moon but when the lord had hit the switch so to speak and turned the lights off who can turn it on when he's in control and even as the other gods of the land had bitten the dust and were humiliated such was the case here and again some would posit for the blackout it was actually a sand storm!

would say it's that they and there are actually terrible kinds of lord commandeered forces of nature at his purpose and certainly he can do that but it seems best to see this as another demonstration of god's miraculous power and that was the cause of the power outage in that day we know of course that darkness has significance in scripture beyond this particular passage it's particularly noteworthy in the gospels where we find this particular word in Luke chapter 23 was now about the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour when the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two three days of darkness in Exodus three hours of darkness in the gospels but in both places in Exodus and the gospel the darkness was a prelude to death and eventually deliverance they were also on the threshold of freedom but darkness was this sign of judgment deep deep darkness this got

Pharaoh's attention a little bit but even in the midst of this darkness over there light where the children of Israel dwell and in verse 24 he tells him go serve your little ones may go with you and let your flocks and herds remain behind and so forth there was the dialogue and on and on and it ends up that Moses tells him as you say I will never see you basically Pharaoh was telling Moses get out of my face you know so okay!

you won't see my face again the gods of Egypt were no gods at all and allegiance to give to them was in vain the one greater there was one greater and up to this up to this point he had won every round that there was in plagues one through nine through the hardness of heart of the ruler God was getting a lot of air time if you will in Egypt his greatness and his worth and his glory and his supremacy were on display and because of that the Egyptians were deflated and hopefully the faith of God's people was bolstered in the midst of all of this according to chapter 11 verses 1 through 3 Moses stock had begun to rise in Egypt God's people were favored to the point that they would not leave empty handed the

[26 : 59] Lord had called for the deliverance of his people and the powerlessness of the gods of Egypt was exposed lessons from the plagues the folly and vanity of idolatry is vain to trust in any god less than god they in fact are powerless the folly of lesser things things that purport to have power and influence things that make one feel good and better and secure things that we are tempted to put our trust in for freedom and liberation the dynamic power on display in the world over the existing powers seen and unseen anticipates the gospel and the work of Jesus Christ Paul puts it this way in Colossians you were dead in your sins and your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made alive together with him having forgiven you us all of our trespasses canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands and he set it aside nailing it to the cross and here it is he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him that is in Christ through the death of

Christ who is the Lord of life and life listen to his words I am the resurrection and the life and he that believes in me though he were dead yet shall he live I am the light of the world he that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life he who the sun sets free is free indeed the cry of the human heart is akin to that which to that of an African slave known as Sinku if you saw the movie Amistad you know what I'm talking about American slave ship and he was one of the African slaves that were brought over and his passionate words the cry of the human heart echoes his words give us free basically give us freedom there were shackles around his neck and his arms and his legs that they were visible but his cry was give us free give us freedom and we search for that kind of freedom and lesser gods of this age gods that are really no gods at all that can offer no freedom that can grant no liberty the gods we choose to create or we choose to serve create bondage rather than freedom but

Jesus is the Lord of life and light who sets our souls free how does he do! he does it through his! and resurrection so I urge you this morning to reject the folly of hard heartedness and idolatry and embrace the lordship of Jesus Ž Ž Thank you.