THE GREAT ESCAPE
A Study Of The Book Of Exodus
Session 5  June 28, 2017

THE PLAGUES HIT THE LAND OF THE NILE

Review:  At the age of 80, Moses was an outcast, banished from Egypt, and living in the wilderness with his wife and family.  No longer royalty, he was now a herder, taking care of the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro.  Then, one very ordinary day, God spoke to him through the burning bush and gave him the divine commission to lead the Jews out of Egyptian bondage:

Exodus 3:7-10

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; [8] And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [9] Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. [10] Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Instead of the liberating response Moses sought, the Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he made matters even worse for the captive Jews:  Exodus 5:9  Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.

Moses might have quit the assignment, but God reassured him:  Exodus 6:1  Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

Followers of Christ who are of “advanced years” (definition: old timers!) take heart in the life of Moses and Aaron:  Exodus 7:7  And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.  We are apparently never past the point of effective service to our Lord.
God wanted Pharaoh to submit to His from his own free will. The ruler refused to do so; and God began to apply pressure by sending horrendous plagues into his land.

### BLOOD

Exodus 7:20-25

And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. [21] And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. [22] And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said. [23] And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. [24] And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. [25] And seven days were fulfilled, after that the Lord had smitten the river.

Sidebar: Although the main plot of this biblical story is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, there are THREE SUB-PLOTS that are also very thought-provoking in these
chapters of Exodus:

- The actual confrontation between Yahweh, God of Israel, and the man-made gods of Egypt
- The changing reactions of the leaders of Egypt: in the beginning sarcastic, mocking, relatively light-hearted toward Moses - but as God dealt with Egypt they became much more serious about him and God
- The actual story of Moses - faced with severe pressures (often even from his own people) to compromise, yet he remained unswerving in his loyalty to God and his perseverance to the task at hand

The Waters Of Egypt Turn To Blood

Not only was the Nile the source of water for the Egyptians, they also worshiped it as a god. The Nile is the longest river in the world, stretching across Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda for 4,132 miles. Unlike most rivers, the Nile flows from south to north, finally emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. The ancient Egyptians constructed multiple temples and monuments by the river and even to this day agriculture and urban developments flourish along the banks. The modern-day Nile has been irrigated extensively and features multiple dams. The Aswan Dam in particular limits the extent of flooding. This huge dam, 364 feet high, and completed in 1970 at a cost of over a billion dollars, changed the face of Egypt in our day.

In each of these Ten Plagues, God made it clear to any observant person that the Egyptian gods were less than nothing and could not save Pharaoh nor his people from divine wrath. Their rejection of the real God brought about suffering among them. Why? Because all mankind was created for God’s pleasure. Yes, that means you, too! The Egyptians refused to accede to that fundamental of life, and thus short-circuited their entire existence.

You can deny God pleasure because you have free will, but there is a price to be paid for it.

The Egyptians depicted the Nile as Hap, a fat man with the breasts of a woman, which indicated the powers of fertility and nourishment. The Nile was the life-blood of Egypt but it had to be water to be their “life blood.” Now that river becomes blood – and it was no longer life, but death.

This was but the beginning of terrible sorrows for both Pharaoh and the people he was supposed to protect.
FROGS

Someone has keenly observed that these plagues can be categorized into four groupings:

- The first three, blood, frogs and gnats – loathsome and inconvenient
- The second three, flies, livestock and boils – painful and costly
- The third three, hail, locusts and darkness – appalling
- The fourth, the death angel – deadly! The wage of sin is death.

Exodus 8:1-15

And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may servce mc. [2] And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: [3] And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: [4] And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

[5] And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand
with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. [6] And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. [7] And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

[8] Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord. [9] And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? [10] And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God. [11] And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. [12] And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. [13] And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. [14] And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank. [15] But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

Frogs! Untold numbers of them everywhere. One of the key sub-plots of Exodus is God’s supremacy over the Egyptian deities. One of those “deities” was HEKA, a frog-headed goddess.

The Egyptians regarded the frog as a sacred emblem of creative power. The great multiplication of frogs, whereby they became an annoyance and a curse, was a trial and strain to the Egyptian religious system. The Egyptians were not to kill them, yet their “gods” were destroying all their comfort, all their happiness. Their animal worship was thus proved absurd and ridiculous.

Does it strike you as strange that there is such a movement today to protect animals (the ban by some on wearing fur, etc.,) and in the meantime we kill babies in the womb? It is safer in America to be a mink than a baby human.

This peculiar kind of frog was known by the scientific name of Rana Moscaica. It resembled our toad and is a disgusting object which crawls rather than leaps and it croaks incessantly. To have the whole country filled with these disgusting reptiles, to be unable to walk in the streets without stepping on them, to find them not only occupying one’s doorstep, but in possession of one’s house, in one’s bed chamber, and to hear their dismal
croak all day and all night, to see nothing but their loathsome forms wherever you looked, to be in perpetual contact with them and feel the repulsion of their cold, rough, clammy skin, would be perhaps as severe a punishment as can well be conceived. Phoenias, a disciple of Aristotle, reported that there appeared once such a number of these frogs that they filled the houses and the streets. The water was infected, and the food unearable. You could scarcely set your foot upon the ground without treading upon great heaps of them, and as the people were vexed by the smell of the great numbers which died, they fled the region altogether.

INTERNET SOURCE

You and I might think today, “How outlandish that those people would actually worship a frog!” But we have ridiculous gods in America, too. We worship at the shrine of immorality and end up with diseased minds, sick bodies and corrupted values. We worship the booze bottle and end up with foul bodies, broken homes, crashed vehicles.

Pharaoh could not stand the frogs and told Moses the Israelites could leave. But when relief came, his old heart was hardened once again. There comes a time, like sealing wax, when no more softening will come. The heart remains frozen in time. The mind is “set” and will change no more. And eternity comes - and the person is not saved.
Pharaoh learned a vital lesson: MORAL AVALANCHEs ARE NOT EASILy ARRESTED OR STOPPED ONCE SET IN MOTION. Once a person sets himself or herself against God and His righteousness, an entire process begins which results in eternal death.

Now...here comes the third plague:

**LICE (GNATS)**

Exodus 8:16-19

And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. [17] And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. [18] And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. [19] Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

These insidious pests came without any advance warning.

How interesting that the priests of Egypt could somehow somewhat produce something akin to the first two plagues but they could not do so this time. Satan can only go so far and then God says, “No more!” Hebrews 2:14 (New King James) Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil...

**FLIES**

Exodus 8:20-32

And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. [21] Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. [22] And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. [23]
And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be. [24] And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

[25] And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. [26] And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? [27] We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us. [28] And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me. [29] And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. [30] And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the Lord. [31] And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one. [32] And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

These awful creatures were actually worshiped by the Egyptians as they believed their sun-god Ra catered to them. They had been known to appear suddenly along the Nile. Their bites were painful. There had been occasions when these creatures drove people from their homes.

FIRST COMPROMISE

By this time in the plagues, Pharaoh was not willing to simply free the Jews, but to compromise. His first effort: Go ahead and worship your God but do so in Egypt. Egypt, in Scripture, is a "type" of sin. "Worship God but don't give up your sinful life." Or "Be a Christian, if you must, but not a narrow one. Stay in Egypt."

SECOND COMPROMISE

Secondly, Pharaoh said, "Leave Egypt...but just don't go very far away." Some believers in Christ never get far from salvation.

Check out their testimonies. They always refer to salvation. But what about since then? What have you done since you first believed? What progress, if any, have you made?
THIRD COMPROMISE

Pharaoh then said to Moses, “Go ahead with your adults into the wilderness, but leave your children here in Egypt.”

My parents died decades ago without leaving much materially to my brother and me - totaled perhaps $500. But their legacy was of inestimable value: our church, until the end a Christian home, guests there such as missionaries, evangelists, musicians. To this day our attitude toward Christ’s church is at the top rank because of their legacy.

Friend...what have you gained IF YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR CHILDREN IN EGYPT?

DEAD LIVESTOCK

Exodus 9:1-7

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. [2] For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, [3] Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain. [4] And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children’s of Israel. [5] And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. [6] And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. [7] And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

MURRAIN is a name given to a fatal cattle disease. It affected not only flocks and herds, but also camels, horses, donkeys, etc. The record of its onset right after the plague of flies makes it probable that it was an epizootic, whose germs were carried by these insects. Cattle plagues have been destructive in Egypt and other parts of the world even in recent years. It should be noted that with MURRAIN when humans touch the putrid carcasses they get severe boils.

Note verse 6: “....but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.” This so infuriated Pharaoh that he took back any and all previous offers to Moses.

BOILS
Exodus 9:8-17

And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. [9] And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. [10] And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast. [11] And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. [12] And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses.

[13] And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. [14] For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. [15] For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. [16] And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. [17] As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

The Egyptian priests had to be physically fit in order to be accepted by the people of the Nile. Now, suddenly, they break out in sickness, in boils. That alone made them unfit to serve in their pagan temples. With one devastating thrust of His anger, God brought the false worship in Egypt to a sudden halt. Even Pharaoh and his royal household were affected by these painful boils.

The plague of boils was another declaration of God’s power. First, it took but a couple handfuls of soot to cause the spread of boils all over Egypt, a miracle in itself. Second, the use of soot to cause boils was an overruling of ordinary laws of nature as soot was actually used to cure boils. The Egyptians looked to their god of medicine, Thoth, who was unable to cure the boils.

Additionally, we see a “measure for measure” retaliation from God upon these oppressors as the boils disfigured them, a retribution for hurting the Jews, often disfiguring them with harsh physical abuse.

Once again, because of the boils, Pharaoh’s heart was temporarily moved, but when the boils were gone, he toughened up once again, reneging on his previous promises. And God relentless pressure on him would be increased once again.
HAIL

Exodus 9:18-30; 35

Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. [19] Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. [20] He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: [21] And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field.

[22] And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. [23] And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. [24] So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. [25] And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. [26] Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

[27] And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. [28] Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. [29] And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's. [30] But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God. [35] And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

This was an unprecedented disaster to the Egyptians. Hail and fire - that means hail and lightning. We know something about lightning here. The Scriptures say there had never been anything like this in Egyptian history. People caught outside of shelters were killed. And still....Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

NEXT WEEK: The final three plagues and we will spend most of the time on the Death Angel and PASSOVER.