

THE INCREASING SEVERITY OF THE PLAGUES

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 8: 20-32; 9 :1-12

LESSON 54 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Every man's judgment cometh from the LORD" (Proverbs 29:26)."

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 8:20-32

²⁰ 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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Magicians' Power Broken

By the time the third plague struck Egypt, the magicians found they were powerless to imitate the work of Moses. Even their limited power was broken, and we never hear again of any supernatural work they performed.

But God had only begun to show His wonder-working power. We remember that He had said He would show the Egyptians who was God; and as they continued to harden their hearts against Him, He sent still greater plagues.

The Rod of God No Magic Wand

In the first miracle God told Moses to throw down his rod, and it became a serpent. In the first and second plagues he stretched the rod over the water; and in the third plague Moses smote the land with the rod, and the dust became lice. But in the next three plagues we hear nothing about the rod. It was not a magic wand that could perform any miracle; but the power of God behind the rod brought about the supernatural. When God threatened the land with flies He said they would appear the following day; and they did, without any apparent command from Moses. God's power was not limited to the use of the rod.

Separation of God's People

Another revelation of God's power was seen in this new plague. It seems that the first three plagues also came upon the Hebrews; but as the troubles became greater, God divided His people from the Egyptians, and spared them the torments that the enemies of God had to go through.

If this had been such a plague as the next one that was to strike, the disease that killed the cattle, one might say that it did not spread as far as the land of Goshen. But who can keep flies from going where they want to? There were huge swarms of flies; they were in all the houses and all over the ground. There was no dividing line between Goshen and the rest of Egypt that the flies could see. Why is it that the thousands of miles of ocean does not overflow the land, especially where there is a flat beach and nothing to keep back the water? Because God has said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11). The Egyptians were yet to learn who *was* the Almighty God! So God kept the flies where He wanted them.

Pharaoh's Partial Yielding

The flies greatly distressed Pharaoh, and he sent for Moses and Aaron to come to rid the land of this plague. He promised them they could make their sacrifices, but he wanted them to stay in Egypt to do it. The Children of Israel could not do that for several reasons. In the first place, God had told them to go into the wilderness, and they must obey Him exactly. Later, when the Law was given to Israel, God emphasized the fact that He did not want His children to worship in just any place, but only where He ordained (Deuteronomy 12:11; 14:23; 15:20; 16:2).

Another reason was that the Egyptians worshiped the animals that the people of God sacrificed; and if the Jews should kill those animals in the sight of the people of the land, they would suffer the wrath of the Egyptians. Pharaoh seemed to see their point, and finally agreed to let them go into the wilderness if they did not go far. But as soon as the flies were gone — there was not even one little fly left when God took them away — he took back his promise. The promises of wicked men cannot be trusted at all.

The Sacred Cow Dishonored

Archaeologists have found inscriptions in Egypt which state that the Egyptians worshiped at least 2200 different gods. One of their most important ones, they said, sometimes came to earth in the form of a cow; so the people would never kill a cow for fear they might kill one of their gods. In India today the "holy" cow is allowed to wander through the streets, and even into stores, without being molested. When the fifth plague struck Egypt, all the useful animals died, including the cattle of the Egyptians. Our God did not pay any attention to their mythical gods, and brought to nothing the power they were supposed to have.

Pharaoh knew that the Hebrews needed cattle and sheep to offer as sacrifices to their God, so he sent someone to see if there were any alive in Goshen. Not one of their animals had died! But still Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, and would not yield.

We know there are people today who set their hearts to do evil; and the more God deals with them through trouble, the more bitter they become. Rather than call upon God for mercy, they curse Him because of the affliction. What a terrible judgment awaits such a person!

Sore Boils upon the Egyptians

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.

Exodus 9:1-12 ¹ 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.

⁸ 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.

The sixth plague to come upon the Egyptians was boils, not only upon the people, but also upon the beasts. If you have ever had a boil, you know what terrible suffering must have accompanied this plague. The Scripture does not state whether Moses said anything to Pharaoh about this approaching affliction; but he stood before the king and threw ashes into the air, which became a fine dust that blew all over the land of Egypt — except Goshen — and caused the boils to break out. Evidently Moses and Aaron walked around among the dust, too, but they did not get any boils because God was taking care of them.

The magicians were powerless to keep the boils off themselves, and they were so terribly afflicted that they could not even stand before Moses. They had served Satan faithfully, but what reward did they get for it? Satan not only makes people believe a lie, but after they have served him faithfully he pays them off in much suffering and trouble; and in the end they will receive God's heaviest judgments.

Through all these trials we can see the mercy of God to the sinners. He could have taken their reason from them, or He could have killed them outright, but He still gave them a chance to repent. He was showing them the power of the true God, so they could never say that the reason they were lost was that they did not know the right way.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Name the fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues.
- 2 Did God have to use the rod to bring the plagues?
- 3 Why did the flies stay out of the land of Goshen?
- 4 Can we trust the promises of wicked men?
- 5 Why was it such a blow to the Egyptians when the cattle died?
- 6 What made the boils come upon the people?
- 7 Could the magicians keep the boils from coming on themselves?

