

Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 4:05 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Session on Exodus 9:13-22-10

"For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness!" (Psalm 95:7-8)

Last week, we discussed the second cycle of plagues that God inflicted on Egypt, because Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the children of Israel be freed from bondage and allowed to go serve Him! The "swarms of flies" came into the house of Pharaoh and into the houses of his servants and throughout all the land of Egypt, except for the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel lived. Then, after Pharaoh initially agreed to allow the children of Israel to go on a 3-day journey into the wilderness to "sacrifice to the LORD...as long as they didn't go very far away," he hardened his heart again and "did not let them go." And so, the LORD caused a "severe pestilence on all the livestock of Egypt," but not on the livestock of the "sons of Israel"! Then the LORD caused "soot from a kiln" (or, ironically, from a furnace used by the Israelites to bake bricks for their taskmasters) to become fine dust that caused "boils to break out on man and beast," throughout all the land of Egypt, so that "even the magicians couldn't stand before Moses"! And this time, Exodus 9:12 says, "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh," and he didn't let the people go"--just as the LORD had told Moses it would be!

That brought us to last nite's lesson on Exodus 9:13-11:10, and a third set of plagues that God would inflict on Egypt! Hail, locusts, and darkness!

O the woes of a "hardened heart"!

Again, the LORD (Yahweh) warned Pharaoh about more plagues to come if he didn't "let My people go"! Plagues, He said (in Exodus 9:14), "so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth"! And He reminded him also that "by now" He could have "cut him and his people off from the earth," if He had chosen to do so, but that He allowed Pharaoh to remain, "in order to show His power and proclaim His name through all the world"! (He's a God of mercy and grace!)

Romans 9:17 puts it this way: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth!'"

And so, verse 23 says, Moses (and not Aaron!) "stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire running down to the earth and flashing continually in the midst of the hail...such as had not been in all the land of Egypt...and it struck all who were in the field...both man and beast"! (Except in the land of Goshen, "where the sons of Israel were"!)

Pharaoh was so "struck" that he "sent for Moses and Aaron" and, for the first time, confessed that he had sinned and that the LORD "was the righteous one," and that if Moses would "make supplication to the LORD" (and take away the hail!), he would let the people go! Sounded so

sincere, with all the right words; but as soon as the thunder and hail ceased, he again "hardened his heart" and would not let the "sons of Israel" go! Bad choice!

All of which brought on plague #8! Locusts!

Exodus 10:1-2 says that the LORD told Moses that He, in fact, had "hardened" Pharaoh's heart and the hearts of his servants, and performed these signs among them "so that they (God's people!) might tell them what God had done, in the hearing of their sons and grandsons...and know that I am the LORD"! (Reminds us of the words which would later be given to Moses, in Deuteronomy 4:9--"Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and grandsons...!")

And so, Moses gave the same kind of warning to Pharaoh! This time about the coming locusts which, he said, "would fill your house, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians"--but then added: "something neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have ever seen"! (How ironic! God is so family-oriented!)

And then it happened! The LORD directed an east wind (as only He can!), and locusts came and so covered the land that the land was "darkened" and "nothing green was left on tree or plant"! All of which brought on another hurried call from Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron again, and another shallow form of repentance, and another request for Moses to make another "supplication" to his God! And, as might have been predicted, after the LORD caused a "very strong west wind to drive all the locust into the Red Sea," the heart of Pharaoh was "hardened" again! Another time!

But it gets worse, as we see the progression of plagues! Plague #9, and darkness over the land of Egypt! Verse 21 says "even a darkness which could be felt"! As with all the plagues, this one would strike at the very heart of Egypt's key deities! The plague of darkness was a particular strike against the power of Egypt's sun god, "Ra"! Shepherd's Notes states that "the LORD literally turned out the lights of this false deity"!

Interestingly, Constable notes that the world had begun in total darkness (Genesis 1:2) and that now Egypt had returned, in essence, to that same chaotic state! Genesis 1:3-4 says, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light! God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness!"

Constable also quotes a source (writer Richard Patterson) who "argued convincingly" that the origin of much of the "apocalyptic imagery" in the Old Testament derives from this Exodus event"! For example, Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them! And, speaking about the promise of a coming Messiah, Isaiah 60:1-2 says, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you!"

And so, we see this metaphorical expression carried over into the New Testament as well! In the parable of the marriage feast, Jesus described hell "as a place of outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" And in Acts 26:18, the apostle Paul described his mission as one "to open the eyes of the blind so they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God..."!

II Corinthians 4:4-6, Paul writes: "In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God...For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ!"

We could go on! Ephesians 5:8 says, "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light!"

Well, back to Exodus 11 and the LORD's promise of "one more plague"! The "ultimate blow" to the Egyptians--death of the first-born (without the shedding of blood), and deliverance of God's people from bondage, with implications and applications for all the ages to come! And we also see in this passage, the preparations God is making for His peoples' coming "exodus" from Egypt, and other things to follow!

Somewhat surprisingly, we see how the Lord actually "gave the people (speaking of the children of Israel) favor in the sight of the Egyptians," and how even Moses himself "was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people"! Wow! How great is our God!

God had a way of working things out in the world of "His people" (the children of Israel) in that day, and He has a way of working, just as did then, in our world today, and in the midst of the chaos in our nation, and in our world today! And it's something we not only need to recognize ourselves but something we need to celebrate, and pass on to our children, and grandchildren, and leave as a legacy for future generations!

Men go with God this week and be a blessing! And, remember (as Hebrews 3:13 says), "to encourage one another as long as it is still called 'today,' so no one will be "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," or "exhaust the patience of the LORD through disobedience" (if that is indeed possible, as Shepherd's Notes notes)!

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