

May 25, 2008

The Winner Is...

It was one of those moments I'll never forget, an uh-oh moment where I went uh-oh; things weren't quite the way I expected. I was in college; I was with my girlfriend, who's now my wife, in the car. She had been taking some classes in college and she had written a term paper on witchcraft and she asked a lot of questions and sometimes to the point where it began to annoy me. I think that maybe was the whole goal sometimes in her questioning. But one time she asked a particular question and I don't even remember exactly what it was I was so traumatized. But my response was a rather empathetic no to which she looked at me. I remember we were driving on the 5 freeway down in southern California we were right in Costa Mesa and she looked at me she lowered her voice and she said, "bloody frogs eat gnats and flies while cows get boiled in the hail and locusts eat in the darkness until the first born die." Uh-oh she's a witch! That was the first thought that went through my mind Oh my word she did this term paper and she's actually gotten into this stuff. Well after a long pause, it seemed very long to me, she began to laugh. I didn't think it was funny and I said something about it to which she began to laugh uncontrollably and then she said, "It's not a curse it's the plagues I had to memorize the plagues for my Old Testament class. I just put it together like that so I would remember them I thought it sounded kind of spooky. Pretty neat huh?" Thank goodness if it wasn't for that class I don't think I could have married her.

But those plagues we learned about them in Sunday school. We saw them in Cecil B. DeMill's The Ten Commandments and we probably would have a hard time if we were asked to list all ten of them. But those plagues are one of the most significant events in all of history. What did they really mean and what did they really accomplish? Well they accomplished four things. First they accomplished the release of God's people as He had foretold. Secondly they decimated Egypt both physically and economically. Thirdly, and more importantly, they decimated the Egyptians spiritually. How? All the plagues targeted a specific one or combination of Egyptian gods or goddesses. This is truly a battle of the gods and God had a plan. He summarized it in Exodus 7:5 where we read, "And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." Let me stop there for a minute. If you look at this in your Bible or as it is printed in your bulletin you will see that Lord is spelled all capital letter this is one of the ways that we

distinguish the different names of God in the Bible. Whenever we see LORD it is the Hebrew "I Am" or in this case "He is" or "He will be". The third person form of the verb I am. So God is saying that the Egyptians will know I am the great I Am. I am God. How will they know this? Back to Exodus 7:5, "And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it." Notice, God doesn't even give reference to the Egyptian Gods they are false gods, the creation of the mind of man therefore God doesn't even stoop down and lower himself to speak their names. All he says is Egypt and as for Egypt the nations that created these gods and oppressed God's people? God will stretch out His hand against them. Again notice God doesn't even have to use all His power He doesn't say, "In my full fury and wrath I will defeat them and overcome them." He doesn't say, "I'm going to really let them have it and give them everything I got." No he says, "I'm going to stretch out my hand". Think of that, stretching out your hand, it's almost a casual use of power. It's really a rather insignificant use of power but yet that little stretching out of hand is going to decimate the Egyptian religious system. With that Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and the plagues begin.

The first is the bloody the Nile turned into blood. The Hebrew word for blood here never denotes the red color of blood; rather it treats blood as a substance. So this is not that the Nile just turns red. There are many scientists who say this obviously was a flood season and red clay was coming down from the mountains and it gave it the appearance of a reddish hue when the sun would set on it. No the color red isn't what's denoted here it's a substance change it is changed it looks, it smells, it feels, it tastes like blood. But it also showed God's superiority over the Egyptian god Hapi, the god of the Nile as well as the God Khnemu, a water god and Anqet, a water goddess. It targets all of them because it hits the Nile but also all the water that's stored in wood and stone jars or vessels. All the water gods are affected by this first plague throughout the land of Egypt.

The second plague is frogs and with that God targets the goddess Heqt, who represented resurrection or after life. Next is gnats or mosquitoes this was the god Kheper, the god of beetles and flies. Now so far the Nile, the frogs and the gnats affects all of the land of Egypt including the land of Goshen. I'm sure that there were people looking at this going oh this is just a strange natural occurrence and this is really bad and ugly but its affecting everybody, Moses had nothing to do with this. So the next plague is like a repeat now its flies. It's still attacking the god Kheper but this time it's now limited to the Egyptians its like God saying now look see it really is me. I'm showing you I have power over all the land those first

three got the attention of everyone but now I'm going to hammer the Egyptians and the Israelites take notice. I am your God I'm saving you from all of this. From this point on everything affects the Egyptians. The fifth plague is the death of livestock. This attacks the god Apis, the sacred bull or the god of the livestock. Literally God kills him. Next there is the boils, this is the god Imhotep, the physician god. He has no power over the Egyptian people they are all getting sick. Next is hail, which wipes out the crops, this is the goddess Nut, the goddess of the sky. God controls the sky and He lets loose with fury with hail. Now in the movie Cecil B DeMill, the hail hits the ground and turns into fire, the reference in the Bible is thunder with massive lightning and hailstorms. Next is locusts, this affects the god Seth, the god of the crops, and destroys whatever the hail left. In other words Nut and Seth could not protect the crops.

Next comes darkness and there is a reason darkness is held towards the end. Because this affects a whole slough of gods. The sun was a source of the great power, the Egyptians felt, and the head sun god was RA, he was the most powerful of the sun gods, however, there was also Horus, this was another sun god who served Ra. There was also Khepera, this was the god that was in charge of waking Ra up to make sure he would rise and there was Atum, yes where we get the name Autumn from, the setting sun god. This is the one who lets Ra know its time to set. God takes them all on and covers the land in darkness just the land of Egypt there still light in land of Goshen where the children of Israel were. God is the light of the world.

Finally number ten, the terrible one, the death of the first-born son. This attacks the god Bes, who was the protector of the family and Ka the god or life force of all Egyptians. And it also attacks Pharaoh, pharaoh's first born son dies, pharaoh, the Egyptians believed, was an incarnation of the gods. So with this last one the death of the first born their protector their life force their god incarnate are all destroyed which takes us back. The plagues accomplished the release of God's people, the decimation of Egypt physically, economically and spiritually and number four you heard it. They would know that God is God in this battle the winner is the Lord. Which brings us to today.

Is He the God in our lives or are we worshipping others gods. I would like to read a little devotion I read this past week it says, God did not tolerate the idolatry of Egypt and He won't tolerate it in us either. How many of us have an idol in our lives right now? What is there in our lives that keeps us from breaking free from the bondage that Satan has placed us under so that we cannot worship God, work in His kingdom or be a

productive member of the body of Christ. What do we place on a pedestal that is higher than Jesus Christ or more importantly than our service to Him? I wonder how many Christians are worshipping the sun god this morning out on the beaches of the world instead of being in the house of God. I wonder how many Christians are worshipping the Nile god because they are out on rivers and lakes fishing, boating or having a party? I wonder how many Christians are worshipping their god of the sky, the earth or the crops with their activity at the playground, parks, gardening? It takes us back God defeated the Egyptian Gods He won that battle. In the New Testament he won the next great battle. He defeated sin, death and the power of the devil. We need to look and we need to say this is our God. We need to be like Thomas who when he saw the Lord Jesus after he His resurrection and said, "My Lord and my God." We need to look at God and say He is the great I am.