

Exodus 10:8-20
Plague 8: Locusts (pt. 2)

The eighth plague that God brings on the Egyptians is the onslaught of locusts

- This, in addition to the other seven plagues, brought a dramatic impact to the entire climate of Egypt

Locusts are mentioned several times in the Bible

- God sought to use these devouring animals on a few different occasions

The threat of a locust invasion was one of apocalyptic proportions

- Locusts factor in with the prophetic books
- Locusts are oftentimes used as a means of God's judgment

This is what we find here in Exodus 10

- The attack of locusts was an act of God's judgment on the Egyptians
- Specifically, an attack on Pharaoh and his obstinate attitude

Last week, we began looking at this 8th plague

- We looked specifically at verses 1-7

We learned a bit more theology in the opening verses

- God was the One ultimately responsible for hardening Pharaoh's heart
- God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to bring all the signs and plagues upon Egypt
- God was humiliating Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Egyptian gods
- God was giving Israel a story that was to be passed on to their children and grandchildren

Through Moses, the LORD asked Pharaoh, "**How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?**" (10:3)

- Thus far, the king of Egypt had displayed pride, arrogance, and stubbornness

If Pharaoh didn't humble himself (and we know that he didn't), then the LORD would send locusts upon the land

- The locusts would cover the land of Egypt, making it dark
- The locusts would devour every bit of vegetation that was left over from the hail plague

Overwhelmed by the thought of the land being totally devastated, the servants of Pharaoh ask him, "**How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?**" (10:7)

What will happen next?

- How will Pharaoh respond?

Let's read Exodus 10:8-20

In these verses, we will examine three elements related to the 8th plague of locusts

- Interaction between Pharaoh and Moses
- Invasion of locusts on Egypt
- Impact of the plague on Pharaoh

I. Interaction between Pharaoh and Moses (10:8-11)

8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh.

In verse 6, we saw that after Moses had delivered the threat of locusts, “he turned and went out from Pharaoh”

- His job was done
- He had passed on what Yahweh had told him to say

Pharaoh was left alone with his servants

- They counseled him to “let the men go”

This was in direct opposition to what Yahweh had stated many times earlier

- “Let My people go” (8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 4)

Would Pharaoh do as his servants counseled him?

Verse 8 tells us, “Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh”

- They were ushered back into the presence of the King

We can, with probability, safely assume that Pharaoh was in his palace

- Presumably in a place of safety and refuge

and he said to them, “Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?”

Pharaoh’s opening words are remarkable, “Go, serve the LORD your God!”

- Is he giving up that easily?
- Is the Exodus about to take place?

Once again, we know the rest of the story

- We know that Pharaoh will not let the Israelites go just yet

It seems that Pharaoh is listening to what his servants told him in verse 7

- Let the men go!

Pharaoh asks the question, “Who are the ones that are going?”

- In other words, “Who are you planning on taking with you?”

By asking this question, the king of Egypt is still trying to control the situation

- He is trying to be the one who gives the final approval

9 And Moses said, “We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD.”

Moses politely yet firmly tells Pharaoh

- Young and old
- Sons and daughters
- Flocks and herds

Moses is stating, “We are packing up and leaving with everything and everyone.”¹

- This would be a total removal

The purpose by which everyone must leave is, “**we must hold a feast to the LORD**”

- There would be a celebration to the LORD!

Moses wasn't about to cave in to Pharaoh's limitations

- God had not said, “Let My men go.”
- God had said, “Let My people go.”

Worship is for everyone

- Not just for the men

You have no doubt heard me quote the question of the Westminster Shorter Confession²

- What is the chief of man?
- To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever

But let me restate that another way

- What is the chief of end of women?
 - o To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever
- What is the chief end of children?
 - o To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever

Worship isn't relegated only to men

- Even in the Egyptian culture and religion, women played a role

Besides, this was just another way for Pharaoh to try and retain control of the situation

- With the women and children staying in Egypt, the men would have to come back

In this way, the women and children would be a type of hostage³

- They would be a guarantee that the men would return

But God was arranging it so that the entire Israelite population – along with some Egyptians – would permanently leave Egypt

- This is why Pharaoh has objected up to this point

10 Then he said to them, “Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind.

11 “Not so! Go now, the men *among you*, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire.” So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Pharaoh is enraged when he hears what Moses proposes

- The king of Egypt fully understands what Moses is insinuating

¹ John D. Currid, *An EP Study Commentary, Exodus*, 218.

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word, Exodus*, 298.

³ Michael Bentley, *Travelling Homeward*, 131.

Moses wants the entire Israelite nation to leave

- As we have just seen, God wanted the entire nation to leave
- Not just the men

Pharaoh responds with biting sarcasm, “Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go!”

- In other words, “There is no way that I will voluntarily let you take everyone with you!”
- “You will need Divine intervention in order for me to let all of you go!”⁴

In modern-day vernacular, Pharaoh would have said

- “Oh no, you’re not!”⁵
- “No way, Jose!”

As if that wasn’t enough, Pharaoh tells Moses, “Take heed, for evil is in your mind.”

- Evil?
- Since when is obedience considered evil?

Pharaoh has become so hard-hearted that he considers the obedience of God’s people to God’s command to be “evil”

- Of course, it is “evil” to Pharaoh because he realizes that he would lose total control of Israel
- Once Israel leaves, they would not come back

Pharaoh demands that Moses and Aaron go along with his compromise idea

- “Go now, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire.”

Knowing that Moses won’t settle for this compromise, the end of verse 11 tells us that Moses and Aaron “were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence”

The negotiations break down

- Both parties are unwilling to budge⁶

So far, the conversation between Pharaoh and Moses isn’t going well

- So God will now bring the locusts on Egypt

Pharaoh has made a conscious choice not to obey God

- He has made a conscious choice not to humble himself before Yahweh

God is just to bring about the consequences for his actions

- Disobedience cannot be tolerated

Pharaoh needs to learn a vital lesson⁷

- You can’t bargain with God!

God doesn’t want part of your life

- He doesn’t want part of your love
- He doesn’t want part of your focus

⁴ John L. Mackay, *A Mentor Commentary, Exodus*, 184.

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 365.

⁶ Cornelis Houtman, *Historical Commentary on the OT, Exodus, Vol 2*, 100.

⁷ Ryken, 298.

God desires to be Lord of your life!

- Lord of your love
- Lord of your focus
- Lord of your money
- Lord of your desires

We only deceive ourselves if we think that God is pleased with the little that we give Him

- He isn't impressed when we give Him the leftovers

- **Interaction between Pharaoh and Moses**

II. Invasion of locusts on Egypt (10:12-15)

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left."

Now was the time for action

- Pharaoh had made up his mind
- He wasn't going to comply with the LORD's command

So Yahweh tells Moses, "**Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt**"

- The locusts would obviously arrive from the sky, so this is a fitting gesture

Notice the scope of the plague, "**over the land of Egypt**"

- Nothing is said about Goshen being protected
- Whether it is or isn't, we are not told

The devastation from the locusts would be incalculable

- They would "**eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left.**"

The 7th plague of hail was devastating

- But it wasn't totally devastating

What was left over by the 7th plague was devoured by the 8th plague

- There seemed to be a little bit of hope before
- But there wouldn't be much hope after the locusts were finished

13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

In verse 12, the LORD told Moses what to do

- Here in verse 13, Moses obeys the LORD

We do note one difference between verse 12 and 13⁸

- In verse 12, Moses was told, "**stretch out your hand**"
- In verse 13, Moses "**stretched out his staff**"

⁸ Douglas K. Stuart, *NAC, Exodus*, 250.

The staff, as we have seen throughout the plague accounts, was used as a visible representation of the power of God

- Its use here in verse 13 would be to bring on the Divine miracle of the plague of locusts

This would not be merely a natural occurrence

- This would be the hand of God at work

But how can Moses stretch out his hand/staff over the land of Egypt?

- Think of how small Moses is compared to the land of Egypt

It was a symbolic action

- Moses could have turned in all four directions
- A 360 degree, panoramic view⁹

God responded and He “**directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night**”

Notice the role of God in this verse

- He directed the east wind
- He brought in the locusts

We discussed earlier in the book of Exodus how some scholars view the plagues as nothing more than a natural occurrence

- A natural phenomena

But this can't be explained just as a natural occurrence

- God is obviously behind these plagues

Look back with me at Exodus 10:1-2, “**Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and how I performed My signs among them; that you may know that I am the LORD.’**”

- Verse 1 – “**that I may perform these signs of Mine**”
- Verse 2 – “**how I performed My signs among them**”

God brought in the locusts through the east wind

- This wind blew “**all that day and all that night**”

This shows us that the locusts came from a great distance¹⁰

- God's power doesn't have limits
- The whole earth is at His disposal

In Exodus 10:4, Moses told Pharaoh that the plague of locusts would take place “**tomorrow**”

- If he didn't repent and humble himself before Yahweh

We are told that the wind blew for an entire day bringing the locusts in

- That is a long time of the wind blowing
- Think of the countless number of locusts that would invade the area of Egypt!

⁹ Ibid., 250.

¹⁰ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 1*, 322.

The end of verse 13 tells us, “**and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts**”

- All through the night, the locusts were being brought in

14 And the locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; they were very numerous.

Just as Pharaoh was warned in verse 5, so it happens

- “**the locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt**”

Moses uses a two-word summary to describe the impact of the locusts

- “**very numerous**”

The word for “**numerous**” has been used before in the Exodus account¹¹

- It describes Pharaoh’s heart as being heavy or stubborn (7:14)
- It describes the “**great**” swarms of flies (8:24)
- It describes the “**severe**” pestilence that attacked the Egyptian cattle (9:3)
- It describes the “**heavy**” hail that devastated the land of Egypt

The locust attack was not only great or severe

- It was “**very**” great

There had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again.

It doesn’t surprise us, then, that verse 14 tells us, “**there had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again**”

- This attack of plagues was unprecedented
- Nothing like it had ever been seen before!

Of course, we are talking about the land of Egypt

- Not the entire world

We know from the book of Joel, for instance, that locusts would invade the southern kingdom of Judah¹²

So this verse here in Exodus 10 cannot be used to say that the accounts in Joel (and other Biblical passages that mention locusts) are not realistic or accurate

- God is talking about the land of Egypt

15 For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened;

Verse 15 continues the detail of the devastation of the locust plague, “**They covered the surface of the whole land**”

- Think of this visual picture
- Locusts covering the entire surface of the land

¹¹ Currid, 220.

¹² Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 240.

The land was covered so much with locusts that “the land was darkened”

- The locust plague symbolized the darkened state of Egypt¹³

Locust plagues have been described as darkening the sun¹⁴

- Their density seems to cover the effects of the sunlight on a given area

One can only imagine how the Egyptians awakened the next morning

- But instead of there being light, it was a strange, eerie darkness¹⁵

and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt.

Locusts devour vegetation

- That is part of what they do

Locusts aren't picky, either

- They consume any type of vegetation

We see that described here in verse 15

- “they ate every plant of the land”
- they ate “all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left”

A summary statement of the effect of these locusts is given

- “Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt”

If we look at verses 12-15, let's note the many times that “all” or “every” is mentioned¹⁶

- every plant of the field; all that the hail has left (12)
- all that day and all that night (13)
- all the land of Egypt; all the territory of Egypt (14)
- the whole land; every plant; all the fruit; all the greenery; all the land of Egypt (15)

We have noted that the plagues have increased in severity

- This is certainly far more intense and severe than anything we have seen before!

Think about what God has brought about through the locusts

- Vegetation is gone
- Plants are gone
- Fruit is gone
- Nothing green is left on the trees or plants

What would be the result of this?

- Famine!¹⁷

¹³ Currid, 221.

¹⁴ Mackay, 186.

¹⁵ Houtman, 100.

¹⁶ Mackay, 187.

¹⁷ Davis, 132-33.

The book of Genesis ended with the chosen family of Israel moving to Egypt

- Because there was food in Egypt

But now God will soon have His people move to the Promised Land

- Because there is not enough food in Egypt

Egypt had been the land of plenty for so long

- But with a series of Divine judgments, the land is destitute!

What an impact these locusts have had on Egypt!

- Words fail us to describe just how debilitating this must have been

Would this make an impact on Pharaoh?

- Would this bring him to his knees?

- **Interaction between Pharaoh and Moses**
- **Invasion of locusts on Egypt**

III. Impact of the plague on Pharaoh (10:16-20)

16 Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron.

We are not given a specific timeframe of how long the locusts have been ravaging Egypt

- But it doesn't appear to be long

We are told here in verse 16, "**Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron**" (emphasis mine)

- What a change from verse 11 where Moses and Aaron were "**driven from Pharaoh's presence**"

Before, Pharaoh was in control (or so he thought)

- Now, Pharaoh is desperate and frantic

But what will Pharaoh say?

and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

For the second time, Pharaoh admits his sin

- 9:27, "**I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones**"
- 10:16, "**I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you**"

There is progression in his awareness of his sinfulness

- He realizes that his sin is "**against the LORD your God**"
- He also admits that he has sinned "**against you**" (Moses and Aaron)

17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me."

Sin requires forgiveness

- So Pharaoh says, "**please forgive my sin only this once**"

This is a first!

- The king of Egypt asking forgiveness!

But this wasn't a complete brokenness

- He said, "**please forgive my sin only this once**"

In other words, "I promise not to bother you again! Just forgive me this one time!"¹⁸

He also says, "**make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me**"

- He asks Moses and Aaron to pray for him
- Specifically, that Yahweh would "**remove this death from me**"

How does the king of Egypt view the 8th plague?

- "**death**"

This gives us remarkable insight into how totally devastating and impactful this plague was on Egypt

- We have the king's own words!

18 And he went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD.

Without any discussion or comment, Moses leaves the presence of Pharaoh

- Not because he was driven out (cf. 10:11)

Moses leaves the presence of the king and "**made supplication to the LORD**"

- Once again, Moses prays for Pharaoh

We have to marvel at Moses' patience¹⁹

- Time and time again, Moses has prayed for someone who only reverted back to his own sinful ways

At no point does Moses lash out at Pharaoh

- He simply prays for Pharaoh

19 So the LORD shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea;

The grace of God is certainly seen here in verse 19

- "**the LORD shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea**"

God responded favorably to Moses' request

- He shifted the wind from east to west
- He reversed the direction of the wind

Verse 19 mentions "**Red Sea**" for the first time

- This is the same body of water which God will soon part so that the children of Israel can cross²⁰

¹⁸ Kaiser, 366.

¹⁹ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 132.

²⁰ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*, 137.

not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt.

The land of Egypt was covered with locusts

- But after the LORD reversed the wind direction, we are told, “not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt”

God didn't merely thin out the locusts

- He removed every single locust from Egypt!

How can someone attribute this to nature?

- This is the power of God at work!

20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

Verse 20 tells us, “but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart”

- This is what we saw back in verse 1 of Exodus 10

Had Pharaoh hardened his heart before?

- Yes

But now God shows that He is ultimately in control of the king's heart

- He was actively hardening Pharaoh's heart

In response to the Divine hardening, Pharaoh “did not let the sons of Israel go”

- He refused to humble himself
- He refused to send Israel out

Yet again, we see that Pharaoh falls woefully short of the Divine goal of repentance

- Yes, he recognized his sin
- Yes, he asked for forgiveness
- Yes, he temporarily humbled himself

But this was not true repentance

- He was just putting on an act!

In Hebrews 12:17, we are told that Esau “found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears”²¹

- Pharaoh, much like Esau, feigned repentance
- But it was not a Biblical repentance

The apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 7, describes the contrast between worldly repentance and Biblical repentance

- “For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death*” (2 Cor 7:10)

Biblical repentance results in salvation

- Worldly repentance results in death

Do you realize that during the Tribulation, God will once again send locusts on the Earth?

- He will send unique locusts as a means of judgment

²¹ R. Alan Cole, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Exodus*, 100.

Listen to these verses from Revelation 9

- “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them. 7 And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. 8 And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions. 9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. 10 And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.” (9:1-10)

What a terrible description!

- What a day of torment that will be!

Notice that the locusts here in Revelation 9 do not eat the vegetation

- However, they torment those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads

Don't you wish there was a way to avoid this?

- A way out?

There is!

- Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!
- Repent from your sins!

If you don't repent, then God will pour out His wrath on you

- Not just with locusts

But with His full fury and wrath for all eternity!

- Hell!

Don't be like Pharaoh

- Don't bargain with God
- Don't refuse to humble yourself before God
- Don't try and fake repentance