

Message #17

Exodus 11:1-10

This final plague has been called the plague that is “the great sign of sovereignty” (Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, p. 262). **The difference between this plague and the others is that this plague will effectively secure the Exodus.** This plague will be used by God to force the Egyptians to let the Israelites go.

No matter how bad things look, one thing we always must remember is that God has the sovereign power and ability to turn things around, according to His Word and will and His plan. When God purposes the redemption of a nation or an individual, nothing in this world can stop it.

You may have the most powerful political leader in the world against you and he will not be able to stop what God wants done. God is the Sovereign God and this is certainly a lesson He wants His people to understand.

GOD’S SOVEREIGN PLAN IS FOR ISRAEL TO LEAVE EGYPT AND GOD SOVEREIGNLY USES ONE MORE PLAGUE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN.

Now this final plague will not become a reality until Exodus 12:29-36. This plague bridges the gap between the plagues and the Passover. Obviously the killing of the firstborn has tremendous Passover ramifications for it would be the firstborn, only begotten Son of God whose blood could save us and cleanse us and keep us from experiencing the wrath of God.

We may recall that the darkness plague led to a heated exchange between Pharaoh and Moses (10:28-29). Apparently before Moses left Pharaoh’s presence for good, the events of chapter 11 unfolded. This is a powerful chapter that reveals much about the sovereignty of God:

SOVEREIGN POINT #1 – What God tells Moses He is going to do. 11:1

I am sure by this point that Moses is getting sick and tired of standing before Pharaoh and talking to Pharaoh. But by this time, Moses has learned when I go before Pharaoh with the full authority of God, amazing things do happen.

In this plague, God tells Moses that He is going to bring one more plague on Pharaoh and Egypt. This will be a plague that will demonstrate the ultimate level of His sovereignty. He also informs Moses that after this plague, not only will he let Israel go, he will drive them out of the area completely. The Hebrew means that after this final plague, Pharaoh will completely let the Hebrews go and will be supportive of letting them go. Finally, the fulfillment hour had arrived.

The confidence that Moses has to face off with Pharaoh, who threatened him, comes from the fact that he knows the Word of God. God’s Word told Moses precisely what would happen and when you know the Word of God precisely, you do have a confidence to you.

SOVEREIGN POINT #2 – What God tells Moses to say to the Hebrews. **11:2**

We may recall that when God predicted that Abraham's family would be down in Egypt for 400 years, God told him that when they leave they will leave with great possessions (Gen. 15:13-14). God had told Moses the same thing when He first called him (Ex. 3:21-22). God always fulfills His promises literally and the time has come for Israel to leave Egypt and she is not going empty-handed.

Each male Hebrew and each female Hebrew was to ask their Egyptian neighbors to give them articles of silver and articles of gold. This represents years and years of unpaid wages that were owed these Hebrews. God has His way of getting His people their back pay. You may think you can cheat God out of His money or cheat God's people out of their wages for a while, but in the end, God will see to it that He gets what is coming to Him and His people.

Just imagine you going to your neighbor and requesting that your neighbor gives you articles of silver and gold. By the way, this request is being made to an unsaved Egyptian world. In all reality, the unsaved Egyptians are going to fund the program for the Hebrews.

Now keep in mind at this point, the entire Egyptian world realizes it is futile to try and stand against God and His Word. Any Egyptian with a logically thinking brain realizes it is pointless to try to stand against God. So this request is being made in the backdrop of everything that has happened. These Egyptians would be glad to see the Hebrews go and be glad that finally the horrible plagues would end.

What we do learn from this is that God can do such a powerful work in people's minds who are even unsaved to the point that they actually support the projects He wants to accomplish for His own people.

SOVEREIGN POINT #3 – What God did for the Hebrews and for Moses. **11:3**

Now keep in mind that the Israelites had been slaves to the Egyptians. These were not the kind of people that most Egyptians originally wanted to socialize with. However, God changed their minds. God made the Hebrews favored and esteemed by the Egyptians and he made Moses highly favored and greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

This is why the Egyptians were willing to get behind the Hebrews and give them their gold and silver. God was turning their minds to do this. These people did not just give the Hebrews a few things. They had enough to build the Tabernacle with all of its furniture and utensils as well as enough to make all of the priest's garments.

Apparently the only person who could not see how important Moses or the Hebrews were, was Pharaoh, whose heart God was hardening. The ability to see the value of the Hebrews and the ability to see the value of Moses was a sovereign work of God. It was a supernatural influence.

SOVEREIGN POINT #4 – What Moses communicated to Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

11:4-8

Now we may notice from **verse 8** that when Moses speaks in **verse 4**, he is apparently before Pharaoh and he begins by saying, “Thus says the LORD.” What this would mean is that Moses is not in before Pharaoh just sharing his devotional thoughts about life and what he thinks should happen. He is laying out exactly what God’s Word says right before Pharaoh’s face.

Moses said in **verses 4-5** that God was going to go out into the midst of the Egyptians at about midnight and that all of the firstborn Egyptian children and cattle would die. It did not matter how prestigious your position whether you were a Pharaoh or a slave, if you were an Egyptian firstborn you would die. It did not matter if you were a firstborn male or female; you would die.

We may remember that God called Israel His firstborn son and nation (Ex. 4:22). Since Pharaoh did not care about that and actually tried to kill Jewish male babies (Ex. 1:15-22), God said you will reap what you have sown. As Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “the Lord was simply paying Pharaoh back with his own currency” (*Be Delivered*, p. 63). Just compensation is always a biblical principle.

God would carry out this plague at midnight. Midnight was the time when most people of the world are sound to sleep. **What this teaches us is that this plague would be a gentle plague that would let the firstborn sons and daughters and animals die quietly in their sleep and not as a result of some violent physical struggle.**

In **verse 6**, God tells them that there will be an outcry in all of Egypt such has never has occurred before or will ever occur in Egypt again. That word “outcry” refers to a loud grief wailing. In other words, this plague would affect everyone in Egypt and the sting of the death of the firstborn would cause a national mourning by the next morning.

Now think for a moment about the firstborn children who were young children. They had not done anything against the Israelites. They had no part to play in the oppression or the enslaving of Israel. They would appear to be totally innocent. Yet when God sends His judgments it affects everyone, even innocent children.

The fact that God also includes firstborn cattle again shows the special connection God makes between human life and animal life. This plague would cause massive carnage and dead bodies all over the Egyptian world. Thousands and thousands of humans and animals would die.

Then in verse 7, Moses rubs salt into the wound by saying that nothing at all will happen to Israel. A dog won’t even bark when all this is taking place and in the end everyone will know there is a major distinction between Egypt and Israel.

The reference here to the dog communicates a couple of important points. First, not even a dog of the Hebrews that most consider to be insignificant, will be harmed in any way. Second, the death will come in such a silent and secret manner that not even a dog will bark.

Countries would be very wise to remember this very important point. There is a major distinction between Israel and every other nation in the world.

The death of firstborn cattle and people clearly suggests the importance of first things. We have the responsibility as God's people to give God the first fruits of our labors. On the first day of the week, we have a responsibility to see that God comes first with our substance and our worship. God is the God who is the source of our life and everything we have and wise people honor God with everything they are and everything they have.

Now some have said that it doesn't seem fair that God would kill so many innocent firstborn children by this plague. But let's think about four facts about this:

(Fact #1) - God is the one who gives life and the one who can take life. He controls, it we don't.

(Fact #2) - God always does what is right and we are in no position to question Him because we don't always do what is right.

(Fact #3) - All humans, including children, have sinned against God and received the death penalty and therefore, any individual's death is perfectly just at any moment.

(Fact #4) - God's grace is seen in the fact that He did not kill all the Egyptians, but in fact let most of them live, even when some of them had killed His own people.

Now in **verse 8**, Moses paints a humiliating picture for Pharaoh that would not have set too well with him in all of his pride. Moses said this plague will cause all of your loyal servants to defect from you and bow down before me and they will request that I and my people leave Egypt. In other words, the Israelite people will abandon Pharaoh and his political views and goals and will rally around Moses and the Hebrew people.

Pharaoh considered himself to be a god and he considered that his firstborn son was also a god. The true God would show that the Egyptian gods were nothing. This death of the firstborn would shatter their polytheistic beliefs pertaining to all of their gods.

As Moses left he was hot. Moses was angry with Pharaoh primarily because he had dared to threaten him and he stormed out from him and he was raging mad.

Actually Moses didn't need to get angry. He could just state the truth and leave and know that God would do exactly what He said He would do. Moses will become angry on five different occasions but keeps a calm, clear head (11:8; 16:20; Lev. 10:16; Num. 16:15; 31:14). However, Moses will become angry on one occasion with a hot head that will prove to be very costly (Num. 20:10-12).

It is interesting what Moses does when he is angry. He does not verbally explode. He does not start threatening Pharaoh, he simply turns and leaves.

What we have is Pharaoh angry at Moses at the end of chapter 10 and Moses is angry with Pharaoh at the end of chapter 11.

SOVEREIGN POINT #5 – What God would do with Pharaoh. **11:9-10**

God would harden Pharaoh's heart so that He could multiply His wonders in the land of Egypt. God wanted to add two more wonders to the list—the death of the firstborn and the parting of the Red Sea, which would end up drowning many of these hard-hearted Egyptians.

The scary thing here is that Pharaoh was not going to let Israel go because God caused him not to let them go. Pharaoh's response is irreversible. By a sovereign edict of God, Pharaoh could not do anything except have a hard heart against God's Word and will. God had made his heart this way, which was perfectly consistent with his own nature so that He could display His great miraculous power.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth and after He had performed many miracles and had confronted many Jewish people with truth specifically about believing in Him for salvation, the Apostle John wrote these words in John 12:37-40:

“But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, ‘Lord who has believed our report? And to whom was the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ For this cause they could not believe for Isaiah said again, **HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.**”

The thing that is so horrible is that the tragedy of God hardening the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians is the same tragedy that was repeated in Israel with God's own nation and people.

You may think it really doesn't matter whether or not you respond to God's Word and conviction. We all need to be warned, the same God who hardened the heart of Pharaoh in the days of Moses and the same God who hardened the hearts of the Jews in the days of Jesus, is the same God who can harden our hearts right now.

Two Parting Questions:

Question #1 - Have you ever believed on Jesus Christ and acknowledged that to God? Have you ever cried out to Jesus Christ and invited Him into your life?

Question #2 - Has God's Word and God's Spirit been convicting you of something of which you refuse to respond or yield?