

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church

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DHW

The Book of EXODUS

Chapter 8

LESSON 8

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the LORD bestowed on Moses the power and authority to confront Pharaoh so that the latter would let the children of Israel leave Egypt. But the LORD also said to Moses that Pharaoh would not so easily let the children of Israel leave Egypt. He would harden Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh would only let the children of Israel go after having severely dealt with by Him. In chapter 7 the first of a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt happened – the river Nile and all the waterways of Egypt became blood thus rendering the water undrinkable and useless. Yet Pharaoh did not relent, instead his heart was again hardened.

In this chapter, three more plagues would follow the first – the plagues of frogs, lice and flies. Pharaoh seemed to relent after the second plague but once again Pharaoh took back his word. The plagues can only be

explained in no other way except that they were designed, planned and performed by God.

The LORD God showed that He was in control. As we study this chapter, we shall learn important truths about the LORD our God and some precious spiritual lessons that will help us in our Christian walk in life.

The following is a broad outline of the chapter:

- 1) Pharaoh was warned about the plague of frogs if he refused to let the children of Israel go [8:1-7];
- 2) Pharaoh promised to let the children of Israel go if the plague of frogs was taken away [8:8-15];
- 3) The LORD smote the land with lice which the Egyptian sorcerers could not replicate [8:16-19];
- 4) Pharaoh was warned about the plague of flies if he refused to let the children of Israel go to serve the LORD [8:20-24];
- 5) Pharaoh promised to let the children of Israel go with one condition [8:25-32].

STUDY THE WORD

The Plague of Frogs

Moses approached Pharaoh on the LORD'S instruction with the request to let the children of Israel go so that they might serve the LORD.

Pharaoh was warned that if he refused to let them go, the LORD would smite the land of Egypt with frogs. This was the second plague in which Pharaoh was warned. The extent of the plague was told to Pharaoh. The river is a reference to the Nile and it would be infested with an abundance of frogs. The frogs would enter into their houses, bedrooms, their beds, kitchens, ovens, and kneading troughs. The plague would afflict Pharaoh, his people and even his servants [vv. 2-4]. Moses then told Aaron to stretch his hand over the streams, rivers and ponds to cause the frogs to afflict upon the land of Egypt. Aaron acted accordingly and the frogs came out upon the land of Egypt. Interestingly, the Egyptian sorcerers could replicate the plague but they could not prevent or reverse it, which is more practical and beneficial. It teaches one thing that the power of the LORD cannot be overturned but the LORD could allow it to become worse.

The plague of frogs must have discomfited the Egyptians miserably. Imagine turning in to sleep at night to find frogs in bed with you; the kettle to boil water and out jump the frogs; and walking on the streets stepping on frogs—frogs here, frogs there, frogs everywhere, not forgetting the croaking noise they all would make!

The Egyptians associated the frog with their goddess of Heqt (*pronounce heget*). It had the body of a woman but the head of a frog. This frog-headed female deity symbolized fertility and helped women in child-birth. It would assure the Egyptians of a good harvest for the frogs would appear in greater numbers during the time when the Nile was flooding, and when the women were in childbirth. But this time, the frogs had become problematic and a nuisance. The Egyptian sorcerers made the problem worse by doubling the number of frogs instead of removing the plague.

Pharaoh Seems to Relent for the First Time

Pharaoh had to call back Moses and Aaron to ask them to get rid of the frogs. For the first time Pharaoh used the name of the God of the Hebrews – *Intreat the LORD* (v.8) He asked for the removal of the frogs from him and his people. He promised to let the people go that they might sacrifice unto the LORD. Pharaoh recognized the God of the Hebrews LORD (*Yahweh*) whom he had previously disdained [5:2]. Only the LORD could remove the frogs.

Moses' initial reaction would naturally be jubilant to hear Pharaoh's offer [v. 8]. Moses asked Pharaoh to fix

the time for him to ask the LORD to remove the frogs! Moses' words *glory over me* [v. 9] suggest that he gave Pharaoh the honour of naming the date for the removal of the frogs. Accordingly, Pharaoh responded *Tomorrow* [v.10]. Moses then reminded Pharaoh of his word of promise and declared that Pharaoh might know *that there is none like unto the LORD our God* of the Hebrews [v.10]. Moses reassured Pharaoh that the frogs would remain in the river only. Moses prayed to the LORD that the plague be removed. The LORD answered accordingly by letting the frogs die in the houses, villages and fields. The people piled them together in heaps, and the land stank [v.14]. The goddess Heqt which was regarded by the Egyptians as a goddess of blessing was now a goddess of annoyance. The power of the LORD was demonstrated in that the frogs in the river lived but those that were in the houses and land died.

But when Pharaoh saw that the plague was removed, he hardened his heart. In other words, Pharaoh was not sincere when he promised to let the children of Israel go. He lied in order to get what he wanted. It should not surprise Moses and Aaron because the LORD had predicted it. One cannot

mock the LORD God and get away with it.

The Plague of Lice

We observe that there was no dialogue with Pharaoh and neither was Pharaoh warned about the impending plague [8:16]. The LORD just commanded Moses to say to Aaron to stretch out his rod and smite the dust of the ground and it became lice. Aaron obeyed and all the land of Egypt was afflicted with lice on bodies of men and animals. The Egyptian sorcerers tried to replicate the feat but this time they were unable to do so. However, they made a significant acknowledgment to Pharaoh: *This is the finger of God* [v.19]¹.

How do we understand that this time the Egyptian magicians could not duplicate the feat? The right interpretation is that God in the past had allowed the Egyptian sorcerers to replicate His feats. He had limited them this time. God restrained the demonical powers that they had used for their own purpose of self-exaltation previously. Their failure made it evident that the

¹ This expression is a symbol of divine power. The Law that God gave to Moses was written the "finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). Our Lord Jesus Christ told the Pharisees that He cast out devils with the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20). Compare also Daniel 5:5-*In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.*

God of the Hebrews was the true and living God, who was sovereign and who was LORD. We observe that from now onwards the Egyptian sorcerers were completely helpless and powerless. Pharaoh's heart was hardened [v.19]. He continued with his stubbornness. The LORD had not done with him yet.

Egyptian magicians and priests were noted for the purity of their physical bodies. They shaved their hair from their heads and bodies. They washed frequently and dressed in beautiful linen robes. On account of the plague of lice, the priests could not carry out their priestly function normally and effectively. It humbled their pride and stained their glory. They became objects of dislike and disgust.²

The Plague of Flies

Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he still refused to let the people go to serve their LORD [8:19b]. The LORD told Moses to rise up early in the morning and approach Pharaoh by the river again. Moses was instructed to warn Pharaoh that if he would still reject the request for the children of Israel to leave and to serve the LORD, *swarms of flies* would be sent upon Pharaoh, his servants and his people. This plague of flies would also inflict

the land and upon all the Egyptians. Moreover God would make a distinction this time between the land of Goshen, where the Hebrews lived and the rest of the land. The land of Goshen would be spared from the invasion of the *swarms of flies*. God's purpose was to tell Pharaoh that He was *the LORD in the midst of the earth* [8:22].

Knowing the heart of Pharaoh, the LORD acted. There was a *grievous* [massive] swarm of flies which infested not only the palace of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants but also upon the whole land of Egypt. The land was ruined by these swarms of flies. But the land of Goshen where the children of Israel dwelt was spared. The LORD cared for His people. Note that the phrase *of flies* is in italic. It was put in by the translators of the King James Version in order to make the reading more understandable. In the original Hebrew text it reads only *swarms* [vv. 21, 22, 24]. The word *swarms* can refer to a mixed variety of insects, or different kinds of flies. Some translated the word as gnats and beetles for these insects were symbols of the abounding life of the Egyptians. The Egyptians wore the effigy of these revered symbols.³

² Davis, p. 103.

³ Maxie D. Dunnam, p.117.

Pharaoh Relents

We now see a response from Pharaoh. He called Moses and Aaron and said, *Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land* [8:25]. Moses replied that it was not possible. The Hebrew's slaughtering of sheep, and cattle for sacrifices unto the LORD would be offensive to the Egyptians who worshipped these animals as their gods. They might turn violent towards the Israelites and stone them. Moses reiterated that they should move out of Egypt into the wilderness for three days to sacrifice unto the LORD as He had commanded. Pharaoh then suggested that they might leave Egypt to make sacrifices unto the LORD but that they should not go very far away. Interestingly, Pharaoh also asked Moses to intercede for him probably to rid the land of the swarm of flies [v. 28].

Moses agreed as requested by Pharaoh to rid the land of the swarm of flies. But Moses added by warning him that he should not deal deceitfully with him by not letting the children of Israel leave Egypt to offer sacrifice to the LORD. Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD to remove the plague of flies on Pharaoh and the land. The land was cleansed. But the sad note is that when Pharaoh saw that the plague of flies was removed from him and the

land, he hardened his heart again and would not let the children of Israel leave Egypt. This was breaking his word to the LORD and once again he dealt deceitfully contrary to Moses' warning.

In this chapter two significant developments took place. God made a distinction between His people and the Egyptians. This evidence strongly suggests that the plagues could not be explained away by human reasoning for they were supernaturally performed by God. Nature did not have personal intelligence to distinguish between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, Goshen and the rest of the land. We see that not only Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt were humiliated, but the LORD intently pointed out that He would *put a division* between His people and the people of Egypt (8:23).

The other development is that Pharaoh was weakening, but not much. He offered two concessions. But when the LORD did what Moses asked Him to do to remove the swarms of flies, Pharaoh once again hardened his heart and refused to let the children of Israel go. We can understand why Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let Moses and the people go. Pharaoh was also struggling within himself. Believing that he was a god, it would be humiliating for him to let the children of

Israel go because of the plagues. He would be seen by his priests and people that he was a powerless god compared with the God of Moses. He simply could not allow himself to be humiliated.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It is clear from this chapter that idolatrous worship of the things and animals is futile and useless. Paul had pointed out that the people would rather worship the creature than the Creator. It is clear that the LORD our God is the true and living God, and that there is none else but Him – ***The LORD our God is one LORD*** [Deuteronomy 6:4]. We also learn that when we who are His children obey and act according to His Word, He will answer in accordance with our prayers and cries to Him. How comforting and reassuring to know this truth. Many of us pray but our prayers seem not to be answered. It could be for this reason that our prayers are not answered and our spiritual life weak.

Those who oppose and disobey Him cannot escape the displeasure of His anger. But those who trust and obey Him correspondingly receive from Him His protection and provision. Did not God put a distinction between His people and the Egyptians? As the people of God who have been chosen and bought with the precious blood of

Christ we should live to serve Him. God looks upon His children in mercy and love protecting and providing for those who fear, love and obey Him. We should remember this and know who we really are living in this troubled world.

Satan may through his agents be able to perform similar feats of wonder and amazement. But such acts inspired by him through his agents only further aggravate the already bad situations. They have no power to alleviate such situations. Therefore, Satan's power is limited by God. The devil can only perform if God permits. The Apostle Paul learns this truth well. If God be for us who can be against us? (Romans 8:31). No one, really! God's love towards His people is not determined by *tribulation, or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword* [Romans 8:35]

There is a lesson we can learn not to be like Pharaoh. Pharaoh made promises and did not keep his word. He deceived Moses and Aaron, who were the LORD'S appointed servants. Are we like Pharaoh in this respect? Do we make promises before others and even before God and then we do not keep them? And if we find out later that we are unable to keep the promise, should we not seek forgiveness and ask to be

released from such promises? As a child of God, our integrity must be above the unbelievers. Guard your integrity well. Never compromise as our honesty and sincerity are at stake. If a person does not bear the name of Christ then it does not matter to him whether his integrity is intact or not. Yet sometimes among unbelievers they put a high premium on their integrity, sincerity and honesty. As Christians, we should do far better. AMEN