

April 16th, 2023
Pinecrest Baptist Church
a.m.

Sermon Series: Delivered; Rescued from Bondage
Sermon #13 Title: The Night the Lights Went Out in Egypt
Sermon #13 Text: (Exodus 10:21-29)

Intro: Welcome to the 9th plague! Having studied through the first 8 we have come to the final plague, before the final plague. It is only fitting that one of the darkest chapters in Egyptian history is upon them, that the Lord God manifests that darkness in this judgment.

- Before the day will dawn on Israel, the Night will fall on Egypt, and God will show us all Isaiah 45:7 some 500 years before the prophet would write it. We will see in Exodus, what God said in Isaiah, when He declared – “I from the light, and create darkness.”
- God has worked miracle after miracle, judgment after judgment, showing His power over all Creation, and His authority over all men up to this point, and He is not going to stop now.

As we learn about that darkness, we learn 3 things about the God of Promised Judgments.

3 things to Learn about the God of Promised Judgment:

I. The Lord may Move Suddenly and Without Notice

– “And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven...”

A. God's Immediate Move – “And the Lord said unto Moses...”

**Note – This is the third time we have walked this road in these plagues, but it is surely the last. Like the 3rd plague and the 6th plague, this one is brought without announcement or explanation.*

- The primary point we are making here is to EMPHASIZE the fact, that God very often moves “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” – Not that there hasn’t been enough signs, and enough Words, and enough instruction for Pharaoh, but every time **one** period of judgment ended, Pharaoh needed to know that **JUDGMENT** had not ended.

- There has been a growing intensity in these judgments.
- There has been a regular pattern to these judgments. 2 with a warning, and 1 without – 2 with a warning, and 1 without; and for the third time we have 2 with a warning, and this one without.
- The Lord’s message has not changed.
- In general, the Lord’s methods have not changed.
- in the specifics, only the miracles He has chosen to use have been different each time.
- But we note, the men that the Lord is working on and in, have not changed.
- Moses has not failed to be obedient with every Word given him.
- Pharaoh, has yet to yield in obedience to every Word given him.

With all of that being said, the Lord is nearing His final work of destruction and deliverance, and He moves in all things, on His time, and this ninth time will be a sudden surprise to Pharaoh, and all of Egypt.

B. God's Preeminent Mark – “Stretch out thine hands toward the heavens...”

1.) This is not the Mark assuring us THAT it happened – This is the Mark Assuring us HOW and WHY it happened.

*Note – This is perhaps one of the single most important points that must be underscored. Furthermore, this point here, I believe, is imminently more important for me and for you, than it was for Pharaoh and the Egyptians at this point. What point is that? – It is this – that these plagues were completely on demand! They were under the complete command and control of God and His man!

- Here is the issue for us today. – Archaeologists, Scientists, Secular Historians – are all now in agreement, that all of these things came upon Egypt in History – but the one thing that they all leave out is the reality of them being under voice controlled by Moses.

- God emphasizes in His Word – (Not for those living through it, they could see it – BUT for us reading about it) – Not just that these things happened – but that they happened instantaneously, miraculously, on the very words Moses spoke, and the actions Moses took!

April 19th, 2019 – an article published in Time Magazine authored by Olivia Waxman – compiled the three latest scientific theories about the plagues of Egypt.

- 1.) Volcanic Eruption – ignited this horrible chain of events.
- 2.) A Red Algae Bloom in the Nile River triggered these sequential plagues.

3.) Climate Change/ Global Warming, even then were to blame for these plagues.

In June of 1990, American University Professor, Ziony Zevit, wrote an article published in Bible Review Magazine entitled 3 ways to look at the 10 plagues.

- They are compiled this way:

1. - The most sophisticated attempt to relate the Egyptian plagues to natural phenomena does so in terms of Egypt's ecosystem. According to this interpretation, the first six plagues can even be explained in their sequential order:

2. - A second sequence of plagues, according to this explanation, is related to atmospheric and climatic conditions in Egypt. Hailstorms, the seventh plague, came out of nowhere. Although not common, hailstorms do occur rarely in Upper Egypt and occasionally in Lower Egypt during late spring and early fall. In this reconstruction, the hailstorm was followed by the eighth plague, locusts, a more common occurrence. The ninth plague, darkness, was a Libyan dust storm.

3. - The final plague, the death of the first-born, although not strictly commensurate with the other plagues, can be explained in ecological terms. It may be a reflection of the infant mortality rate in ancient Egypt.

*Note -Now here is the point – Everyone has an explanation as to How they happened, or Why they happened. Which means no one denies they happened!

- But ANY explanation . . . except the Biblical one, will do. (according to the scholars)

Let me tell you how they happened – “Moses stretched out his rod toward the Nile.” – “Moses smote the ground with his rod, and it became lice.” – “Moses told Pharaoh, this time tomorrow, locusts will come.” – “Moses stretched for his rod toward heaven, and fiery hail came.” – “Moses would stretch out his hand toward the heavens.” – and every light in Egypt, indoors and out – would go dark!

- If not done by the very Mark of God's Control, these plagues aren't judgments, they are happenstances.

I. The Lord may Move Suddenly and Without Notice.

II. *The Lord will Move Specifically and With Purpose*
– “that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt...”

*Note – We note now that before the Lord takes the lives of the First born; He is going to take the Light away from Egypt.

*Note – It is important to see here the fact that Pharaoh had ignored all that he had seen before. He was a front-row eye witness to the reality of God, who repeatedly, openly, defiantly and with total knowledge stiffened his jaws in the face of God. – So if you are going to ignore what you see . . . there is no reason to see...

Notice the things to notice about this darkness:

A. The Strength of the Darkness

*Note – There are two different descriptions given to this darkness:

- 1.) “which may be felt.”
 - a.) literally – “to feel” or “grope for.”
- 2.) “thick darkness”
 - a.) thick - “gloomy – or concealing”
 - b.) darkness – “darkness or blackness” – absence of light.

*Note- It is not merely a darkness that removes all sight; but it touches all feeling...

What does it mean – “which may be felt”?

- Some have the idea that it is like the darkness in a deep cavern. – That when light particles are at absolute zero, that your senses become hyper, and it is as though you are wearing the blackness that is surrounding you. – and that may very well be!

- Some also have the idea, that it is a darkness that reaches into the nerves, and heart, the kind that would incite a panic.

The Lord had previously warned Pharaoh that the days of putting these things out of his mind were over. In 9:14, He told Pharaoh that from that point on He would send all of His plagues – “upon thine heart.” – your days of acting like they don't affect you, are over!

- It may be here that this same kind of darkness is the kind that is going to make a grown man cry!

- When you get to the book of Revelation, and the Lord brings divine Darkness again upon the kingdoms of men, the Bible says: Revelation 16:10 – ***“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,”***

- That will be a painful darkness!

- Note the effect in verse 23 – “They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days:...”

*Note – When I was young we had chicken houses. The big kind. Or at least big for those days. We raised broiler chickens by the thousands. Chickens have bird brains, if you can call them brains – but they have excellent eye-sight. Their vision is far superior to ours. Until. You turn out the lights. We can pick up peripheral ambiance and light – they cannot. Do you know how they used to catch them. – Just turn out the lights, and in complete fear – they sit down and don’t move.

- this darkness was felt, either on all the senses of the body, or the nerves of the heart, or the fear of the mind, or all three – but it had a Paralyzing effect on all of Egypt.

- But lets note one more thing about the strength of it.

3.) “all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

(that means the Egyptians did not!)

In normal every day creation – Light dispels darkness! – You don’t “turn on the dark” – You “turn off the light.” – We all know that.

Scientists have studied, verified, and determined, that the average sized candle when lit, can be seen 1.6 miles away by the average human eye without any aid.

(Just a small candle flame can stand out in an ocean of darkness. – The Whole Night Sky cannot extinguish a light. – But this darkness did. – This was not a Passive darkness; this was Substantive Darkness.)

“The Lord wouldn’t even let the Egyptians light their own fire!”

- In their homes – their candles were concealed by the dark; - the flames in their oil lamps; were concealed by the dark.

- remember that whole idea of “thick” darkness. – One of the definitions of that word for “thick” means to “hide or conceal.”

- it was a darkness that concealed even a flame!

- He turned 3 days into 6 straight nights...

- That’s the strength of it.

B. The Statement of the Darkness – “there are no gods in Egypt... only ONE God in heaven.”

As we have said from the beginning, each one of the judgments that God poured out on Egypt was His demonstration that He alone is God.

Stephen Quirke – In his 2001 book, *“The Cult of Ra; Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt*, wrote; “we need to understand the place of the sun in Egyptian civilization before we can begin

to know anything about ancient Egypt.” The Egyptians served Horus (the god of the sunrise), Aten (the god of the round, midday sun), and Atum (the god of the sunset). But the supreme deity in their national pantheon was Amon-Re, who said, “I am the great god who came into being of himself, He who created his names ... he who has no opponent among the gods.” The Egyptians believed that this solar deity was their creator. “Unique God,” they would sing in their great Hymn to the Sun-disk, “there is none besides him. / You mould the earth to your wish, you and you alone—/ All people, herds and flocks, / All on earth that walk on legs, / All on high that fly with their wings.”⁴ Every morning the rising of the sun in the east reaffirmed the life-giving power of Amon-Re. Sunset represented death and the underworld, but the rise of Amon-Re offered the hope of resurrection. For the Egyptians, it was a matter of faith that the eternally rising sun could never be destroyed.”

*Note – There would be no excuse for Egypt, or any of the surrounding nations to continue to look to the imaginary gods and figments of their imagination. There is NO Light – outside of the God of the Bible!

C. The Spirit of the Darkness –

*note – There is one more thing about this darkness that merits attention. When we bring in the rest of the Bible we learn that there is a “manifest presence” in this darkness – and it is not who you think it is.

1.) 1st Kings 8:12 – “Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.”

2.) Exodus 20:21 – “And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.”

3.) Psalm 18:11 – “He made darkness his secret place; His pavilion round about him; Were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.”

4.) Psalm 97:2 – “Clouds and darkness are round about him: Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

There are two kinds of darkness. One is the evil darkness of sin that HIDES the truth. One is the Holy Darkness of God that IS the Truth.

- Evil Darkness hides light that God is shining.

- Holy Darkness is God NOT shining His Light.

1st John 1:5 – “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

- Just because there is no Darkness in God, doesn’t mean that God can’t veil Himself from man with a divine cloak of darkness.

- There is no darkness in God – But that doesn’t mean He emanates His light unconditionally for all to see.

- David said, “In thy light, we see light.” – When He removes His Light – physically, metaphorically, and or spiritually, no man can see Light!

Now here's the point – God Himself was in the Spirit of that Darkness, judging among the Egyptians – Not even letting them light their own fires; or ignite their own candles.

- I. The Lord may Move Suddenly and Without Notice.
- II. The Lord will Move Specifically and With Purpose

III. The Lord will Move Steadfastly and Without Compromise – vs 24-26

It is apparent that at the end of the three days, Pharaoh called for Moses; because he could not move during the darkness.

A. The Impact on Pharaoh – (vs 24) – “And Pharaoh called unto Moses and said, Go ye, serve the LORD;...”

- 1.) In all the previous plagues, When they relented Pharaoh broke his word.

(When he was under duress he said go, and when the plague would let up, he changed his mind.)

- This time the plague has let up, and Pharaoh has had enough!

*Note – What scared him in the dark moved him in the light.

- Whatever happened on the inside of him was enough to move him to act...

- But it wasn't enough to move him to act correctly...

(Never get the idea that any agreement with God is good and should be enough.... – Nope. Total agreement with God.

B. The Impasse in Pharaoh – “Only let your flocks and herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.”

*Note – Pharaoh had an excruciating problem. – He had enough – but he had to win. – His pain on one side and his pride on the other.

- He would have both His way AND a victory over God –

- Those two things together are mutually exclusive.

- This is the Fourth Compromise offered by Pharaoh

1.) “go sacrifice in the land” - plague of flies

2.) “go, but not far” - plague of flies

3.) “go, but leave your families here” – plague of locusts.

4.) “go and take your families – but leave your wealth here.” – now the plague of darkness

*Note – If this does not teach you anything else it ought to teach you this – no man gets “credit” for making a “deal with God.”

- Wouldn't it have been a kindness to Pharaoh to respect his wishes? – God could have given a little, when Pharaoh gave a little – couldn't He?

There are two fundamental facts that need to be driven deep in the heart of every man and woman that comes from this moment in history.

#1 - You MUST get the truth – that God has NO REGARD for man's customs, culture, standing, opinion, desire, or social rights...

(We are living in a world of “religious people” that somehow have the idea that God has to respect their wishes to some degree – there is no greater lie from hell, than to think God has to respect men.)

#2 – No Man “get saved by degrees” – You are turned to Him in heart, or you are NOT”

(After you are saved, you grow by degrees – but you are not born again by degrees)

C. The Imposing On Pharaoh – vs 27 – Pharaoh's compromise offer revealed the true condition of Pharaoh's heart – he was still in rebellion to God.

1.) So God hardened his heart!

a.) Same song – same chorus!

At each turn of Pharaoh's heart, the Lord responded to his response by strengthening the resistance Pharaoh already had. Further proof, that God will respond to you as you respond to Him.

- He doesn't harden everyone's heart, because it is not His plan to demonstrate His judging power to the whole world on everyone.

- But He does stay consistent with His promise – to respond to you as you respond to Him.

Preacher, I thought you said, no one gets saved by degree – they do not – but they get convicted by it.

- Ask Saul – “it was hard for him to kick against the ox-goad.”

- Ask James who said, “Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you.”

Conclusion: - The Lord May Move Suddenly and without Notice. – The Lord Will Move Specifically and With Purpose – and The Lord will move Steadfastly and without Compromise.

- In all of that, let's notice Moses.

- With each of Pharaoh's offers – He said No.

- He would not deal with the devil.

- He would not take less than God's fulness.

- He would not keep one foot in Egypt – AND try to follow the Lord.

There is Light in the Path of God

There is Darkness in the Staff of God – As He did with Job, and with the Israelites in Isaiah, and with those Egyptians that would leave with Israel

There is Darkness in the Wrath of God as He will pour out on the World someday.

- And it all depends on which side of the Lord you are on.