

March 5th, 2023
Pinecrest Baptist Church
a.m.

Sermon Series: Delivered: Rescued from Bondage
Sermon #8 Title: *Lice, Flies, and Compromise*
Sermon #8 Text: (Exodus 8:16-32)

In a very general way, and very principled way, the manner in which God deals with Pharaoh, is the same manner in which He deals with us, and it will do us well to learn the lessons of God dealing with an uncooperative man.

As that great theologian Yogi Berra said – “It ain’t over, until it’s over!” and among all the things that Pharaoh should have learned about the God of the Hebrews, it should have been that nothing is over until He says so.

- If Pharaoh didn’t figure it out after the plague of bloody water; and he didn’t figure it out after the plague of abundant frogs, surely by now, he will figure that the Agenda of God Almighty, does not stop because a man decides he doesn’t have to participate.

- Let’s look quickly back to 7:23, at the end of the plague of blood, the Bible says of Pharaoh

- “And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart on this also.”

- There will be multitudes of people today who leave the Lord’s house and do just what Pharaoh did.

- They will go into their house, and act like the Bible was never written, God never spoke, and they have just decided not to participate.

*Note – Pharaoh is about to see what all men need to. –

God’s Agenda doesn’t cease because you want to ignore it.

Friend, don’t ever get the idea that you’ll just opt out of God’s jurisdiction – furthermore, never get the idea that God will pretend not to see you.

Now that being said, let’s continue to learn these things about the God that is.... Not the God you may imagine Him to be, but the God that is.

I. God Has an Unavoidable Agenda – vs 16-19

*Note – Before the ink was dry in verse 15, the Lord started back in again at verse 16. – The timing of God is both relentless and fixed. He moved immediately right into plague #3. – Notice what he did, and how he did it.

A. He Acted Without Notice – “And the Lord said unto Moses, say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.”

1.) There was no warning this time. The plague is unannounced.

*Note – R. Kent Hughes pointed out in his book on this subject that the first 9 plagues fit a particular pattern:

Plagues 1, 4, 7, - early in the morning

Plagues 2, 5, 8, - in Pharaoh’s palace

Plagues 3, 6, 9, - without warning or confrontation

Pointed out by R. Kent Hughes.

*Note – Much like the judgments that fall on the earth in the book of Revelation, there is the pattern of 6 judgments (parenthetical statement) – then number 7. That pattern happens three times.

God chose to be very methodical about carrying out this agenda – And one aspect of that methodology is to “eliminate the warning” every three plagues.

2.) Know this about God. – He can Warn, He Does Warn, but He does not Have to Warn.

- He has no obligation to forewarn us about anything! – But He has. He has in Word, He has in Deed, and we have seen His handiwork throughout all history; as for forewarning anyone in this generation . . . there really is nothing left for Him to say.

Proverbs 29:1 – *“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”*

*Note – Some of the most frightening promises in all of God’s Word is His promise NOT to hear someone who He has reached out to on multiple occasions.

- Proverbs 1:24-26 – “Because I have called, and ye refused;

I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

²⁵ But ye have set at nought all my counsel,
And would none of my reproof:

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;

*Note – Know this and we’ll move on. You being quiet, doesn’t make God go away! You too can be like Pharaoh,

turn and go into your house, and not set your heart to any of this – and God still won’t go away!

- His Agenda happens, “Without Warning.”

*Note – Now ready or not, here comes plague number 3. The Lord Acted Without Notice; and now He will Function Above Nature. – The Plague itself.

B. He Functioned Above Nature – “and it became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.”

1.) This is a “creative” plague. – In other words, it is something only the Creator can do.

*Note – There is something imperative to notice. - Sometimes you’ll find someone that says, “Lice came upon Egypt like dust in the desert!”

- The only problem is that it is not the “lice that became like dust, it is “dust that became lice.”

Here is yet another miracle that goes far beyond the powers, dynamics, and scientific laws of nature.

- The phrase in the Hebrew language just intensifies what is translated in the English.

The words that Moses wrote literally means the dust “came to exist as” lice.

*Note – He states this three times. – vs 16 – “that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt” – vs 17 – “it became lice in man and in beast” – vs 17 – “all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.”

*Note – Lice. Some translations you may be reading calls it a “gnat.” – Don’t argue with anyone over it, - this is the same word that is attributed to Jesus when He said the Pharisees would “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

- The literal definition here is that it is a “small insect.” (*Some dictionaries throw in, that it is a small annoying insect.*)

- the Torah uses the translation “Vermin”

- That being said, this is the intent of the nature of the plague. – To attack the comfort of the people. To unnerve the people, causing them irritating distress.

(Someone wrote a book years ago, entitled, “*What’s Buggin’ O’l Pharaoh.*”)

- Now note this. – The Lord has turned Water into Wine, and Water into Blood. – He also Turned Dirt into Man, and Dirt into Bugs.

*Note – Never too high on yourself...remember – God turned dirt into man; and once we leave this body, He turns it back into dirt.

- “Dust” has a prominent place all throughout the Bible... It is something God uses and references quite often.

*Note – “God can use Dirt for Life, God can use Dirt for Death, and God can use Dirt for Misery, and Dust for Measurement. (Abraham’s seed will be as the dust of the earth) and God will use Dirt as a Witness at the judgment.

- Remember Jesus told the Disciples to Shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against those who rejected the message they proclaimed.

*Note – Now moving forward, this too, like all the other plagues, this plague was aimed at one of the Egyptian gods.

- The Egyptians had the pagan god – “Geb” – who was the “god of the earth” as in “god of the ground, or soil.”

- Now – They worshipped the Nile, God turned it into blood.
- They worshipped Frogs – He made them sick of them.
- They worshipped the “ground” – He turned it into bugs...

- At every judgement and plague, the Lord systematically mocked and destroyed their false superstitions homemade gods, and man-made theology.

(Now know this about God -

Every false philosophy, false psychology, false idolatry, false imagination, false spirituality and false religion, God will destroy in the ultimate Judgment!

*Note – In Revelation 22:15, when the Lord speaks of those who will be banished from heaven for ever, speaking of those outside the gates of the New Jerusalem – He states – “*For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*”

- Here in Egypt, He is humiliating, mocking, and destroying their very ideas before their eyes.

*Note – While these are not the words of scripture, the attitude should be, “***Stop making things up, close your mouth, bow your head, and just say Yes Lord!***”

*Note – Not only did God Act without Notice, and Function Above Nature – He Performed Beyond Denial

C. He Performed Beyond Denial – (vs 18) - “*And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man and beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God...*”

1.) Now I have never understood the philosophy of Pharaoh's magicians, thinking that if they could do it also, then that would nullify Moses' God. – They were attempting nothing more than to say – “we can do that too.”

*Note – Know this – Satan can do a lot of the same things God can do – but it doesn't make him God. Satan has all the powers that God has given him – but that doesn't diminish God in the least.

- Proving they can do something doesn't mean a thing! – and in fact proving you can do something will often just prove you're on the wrong side of the fence.

(When I was in high school, I came home one day from working at the grocery store, and my little brother was standing on the front porch with his brand new b.b. gun. He was bragging about just how good a shot he was. I looked at him and pointed at the brand- new night light that my dad had just hung outside the house, and said, “Hhnn – You couldn't hit that light if it was sitting right here. – He raised that gun, shot that beautiful new light right out and looked at me like Barney Fife.... I said, - hhn –guess you can.”)

Proving you can do something doesn't mean you are something...

*Note – Now they tried and failed... - but note the revelation they had...

- This is by the finger of (a real) God! – Elohim! – In the original language here there is no definite article -

meaning “the God” – but a “God,” and it seems to be a revelation to them the magicians.

- This is done by the Finger of A (real) God!

- And they quit!

- they gave up, and never attempted again to do what Moses and Aaron did.

*Note – For the first time, these men got a clear revelation of the fact of, and power of, the God of the Hebrews, and they never again sought to stay in this battle.

*Note – Notice what happened next – “Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and He hearkened not unto them;” – Pharaoh rejected the message from his own men that the God of the Hebrews is Real, with a capital R.

*Note - #1 – God has an Unavoidable Agenda - #2 – God Takes an Unchanging Stand.

II. God takes an Unchanging Stand – vs 20-24

*Note – The amount of time that passes between verse 19 and verse 20 is not specified. Nor are we told about how the plague of lice came to an end.

- What we are told is that even though Pharaoh did not yield, God did not change.

A. The Determination of His Will – vs 20 “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.*”

*Note – Like a one string banjo, the Lord will play His song until He is finished playing, not until Pharaoh is finished listening.

*Note – I think you know this, or hope you do... God moves, speaks, and works, until He is finished, not until you decide to stop listening.

- This is a refrain that Pharaoh, no doubt, heard in his nightmares. – “Let my people go!”

- Notice the Determination of His Will – Now Notice again the Design of His Way

B. The Design of His Way – (vs 21) “swarms of flies” –

*Note – Now there are some things to note about this 4th plague:

1.) This time, there is no use of Aaron’s rod. It was purely a decree by the Word of God.

*Note – Lest a superstitious people equate the rod of Aaron, with some sort of “Magic Wand”, they need to know that the power was not in the dead wood of a Shepherd’s staff.

2.) This time it is clearly delineated that the children of Israel would not be bothered by this plague at all.

*Note -Not only would this miracle call the swarm into the land, it would control who was hit and who was not!

- There is perhaps no clearer display of the Creator, controlling creation before the eyes of men, than this one.

3.) This time it appears that this plague will inflict physical pain.

a.) verse 24 – “And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh...”

*Note – Now take note that the term “of flies” is added by the translators... “of flies” is just the best way the translators had to describe the “swarms of flying insects.”

- Now notice here that there is added this phrase – “grievous swarms”

- grievous, here means “painful” or “suffering”.

- in short it leaves us with the idea that this things had “stingers” or were “biters” and they were effective.

4.) There is one more added insult to injury – look at the end of verse 24 – “the land of Egypt was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies”

a.) Among the meanings of the word Corrupted in the Hebrew, it means to be “rendered useless” or “marred through polluting.” – “Making something of no value through pollution.”

*Note – One of the hallmarks of the Egyptian religions was “cleanliness.” They prided themselves in hygiene, cleansing, bathing, and physical purity. – The phrase, “cleanliness is next to godliness,” though not started by the Egyptians was an attitude or spirit of their people.

- The Plague, or swarm of flies polluted every part of their land.

5.) One more for good measure – The fly, like many other things was worshipped. Honored.

- The fly amulet was a military reward for military successes.
- Fly amulets were worn to protect you from falling prey to a swarm of flies.

- The fly symbolism for the military meant that they saw the fly is persistent, ferocious though small, powerful in numbers.

-Listen to what one Egyptologist wrote – *“Amulets were small objects made of various materials and often strung on jewelry that were thought to magically imbue the owner, living or dead, with certain attributes or protections. So-called ‘homopoeic amulets’ were magical objects that relied on the image of a creature (or their parts) to protect or empower the wearer.”* – *“Small fly amulets have been found in Egypt made from gold, silver, bone, lapis lazuli, faience, carnelian, and amethyst. Wearing a fly amulet was probably believed to protect the wearer from insect bites or ward off pesky flying creatures through apotropaic magic.”*

- The Lord God said, “Let’s see how well they work!”

When God designs His way to work, it is with unimaginable precision, and undeniable specificity.

*Note – The Determination of His Will, the Design of His Way

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C. The Desire of His Work – (vs 22) – Why? “to the end that thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.”

- The God of Heaven works in the Midst of the Earth! – He is not some distant, far off, unreachable, and disconnected deity.

“The Egyptians believed that Pharaoh had the power to maintain cosmic order, which they called ma’at. Ma’at was universal equilibrium, the “cosmic force of harmony, order, stability, and security.” – J.A. Wilson “The Burden of Egypt”

In the grandest of schemes, creation dominion is reversed. Rather than man having dominion over the creatures, the

nature of this plague and others like it, the creatures have dominion over man.

- God has dominion over dominion...

III. God uses Unbeatable Wisdom – vs 25-32

*Note – No man has ever outsmarted, or outwaited God.

A. To Exceed Human Pride – vs 25 “Go ye, sacrifice to your God...” – Pharaoh stood as much as he could, as long as he could. Like the frogs, he was caught between his Pain and his Pride. – God can cause Pain that far outstrips the limits of human pride.

Why would He do that? – Cause PRIDE is Far worse than Pain. Pride is what made the devil the devil. Pride is the reason that there is a hell in the first place.

- Anytime God brings suffering against the pride of man, He isn’t being mean; He’s being merciful! – He is working to bring you to the place that you’ll stop acting like you are god of your life. – There is no greater prison, and there is no greater poison.

B. To Expose Evil Tactics – Compromises
Pharaoh’s Compromise

- Go sacrifice in the land

(Moses – our sacrifices will offend your people)

(Moses – we will go three days journey)

- I will let you go, just don’t go far...

(Moses - Don’t deal with us deceitfully)

*Note – Now listen, the Devil will offer you deals you cannot afford to take. – If there is anything at the Lord is doing here, He is exposing the tactics of the enemy. – There is no

substitute of for obedience, and the Lord will not honor compromise.

C. To Ensnare Hardened Rebels – “and He removed the swarms of flies...”

*Note – Now notice this. As long as the pressure was on, Pharaoh was compliant. – Here is the wisdom of God. Rather than say, “I will stop the flies” when Israel is gone from the land, the Lord said – “okay!” – Knowing what Pharaoh would do.

- He removed the flies, letting Pharaoh dig in deeper. There were other gods to judge! – There were people in Egypt that He knew would yield at plague 8, but not necessarily on plague 4. - For as long as this back and forth with Pharaoh went, Pharaoh got deeper and deeper into his defiance.... And others got closer and closer to repentance.

Conclusion: - Now I want to read to you again what the Bible says of Pharaoh in 7:23.

- Having seen the power of God – the Word of God – the Work of God – the Reality of God, that every sense and syllable of the things that Moses was saying, and doing was true...

- “Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.”

- and the plague still came
- and the judgment still fell
- and all the things that God ever said were going to happen, happened!