

The Tenth Plague: The Death of the Firstborn

Exodus 11

Exodus 11 – *“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether.’² Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.”³ And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.*

⁴ Then Moses said, ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt;’⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals.’⁶ Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again.’⁷ But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the Lord does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.’⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

⁹ But the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.’¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

Background Notes

In Exodus 10:28 Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself, and see my face no more. For in the day you see my face you shall die.” Then in the last verse of the chapter, Moses said to Pharaoh, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.” But now in chapter 11 we find Moses talking to Pharaoh once again! Did Pharaoh change his mind, or did Moses change his mind? Neither! The beginning of chapter 11 is a continuation of the parting words between Pharaoh and Moses. Moses departs from Pharaoh’s presence In Exodus 11:8, after this final confrontation with Pharaoh.

Exodus 11:1-3 is a parenthesis that gives us the record of the Lord’s prior conversation with Moses about the last plague. The record of Moses’ final confrontation with Pharaoh picks up again in verse 4, and then in verse 8 Moses leaves Pharaoh’s court in anger. In Exodus 10:29, when Moses said that he would never see Pharaoh’s face again, his point was, “This is it, Pharaoh! This is your last chance to let God’s people go. There will be no more negotiating. The time of God’s patience is over! There will be no more removal of plagues. The next time you call for me it will be to tell me to leave with my people. We’ll be leaving and we won’t be coming back. In fact, on that day all of these servants of yours will beg us to leave.” And then at this point Moses left Pharaoh in great anger (v8).

One more background note: In verse 2 the King James Version reads, “Speak now in the hearing of the people and let every man borrow from his neighbor, and every woman from her neighbor articles of silver and articles of gold.” The Hebrew word that’s used here for “borrow” is better translated “ask.” There’s no idea here of the Hebrews lying to the Egyptians, and pretending that they’re “borrowing” the Egyptians’ gold and silver just for a little while. No, the word is better translated “ask,” and God had the Egyptians respond and give. Certainly the Egyptians owed the Hebrews much more than this for all their years of slave labor!

In verse 3 we see that Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people. The Egyptians didn’t look on Moses as some kind of “country bumpkin preacher”! Remember, Moses had been a prince in Egypt. Moses had been highly educated, and he was very familiar with the culture of Egypt. Now, with the miracles, Moses’ power over the priests and sorcerers and gods of Egypt was obvious. God used the power and prestige He had given to Moses to win favor with the people, and they willingly gave “going-away gifts” to the Hebrew people!

Doctrinal Points

1. God does not show favoritism when it comes to His judgment of the unbeliever.

The tenth and final plague of God’s judgment on Egypt was the death of the firstborn of every family. Notice that no favoritism was shown in God’s judgment on the pagan Egyptians. It made no difference whether they were rich or poor, slave or free, of the royal family or a commoner; they all came under this judgment of death.

The teaching here is obvious. The Lord does not show favoritism when it comes to His judgment of the unbeliever. It was true of God’s judgment on the pagan Egyptians, and it is true of God’s judgment of the unbeliever today. Romans 3:22-23, that well-known Scripture, says, “*for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

Some people today think that they can win favor with God because of their social status, or their superior education, or even their wealth. No – I’m so sorry! When it comes to the judgment of God upon sinners, no special leniency is shown to the socially elite, or the highly educated, or the wealthy. If anything, God’s judgment is even greater upon those unbelievers because of all their opportunities to come to know the truth and repent.

There is only one way of salvation for **all** unbelievers, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. John 3:36 says, “*He that believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he that does not believe in the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.*” Notice that all unbelievers are already under the sentence of wrath of God that is directed against sin, and the only way for an unbeliever to escape that wrath is to “believe in the Son” -- the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no distinction of persons in that verse. God does not show favoritism when it comes to His judgment of the unbeliever.

2. God does show favoritism when it comes to His care of the believer.

What a difference after the final plague! There was a great wailing for the Egyptians— and a great peace for the Hebrews. All was at peace -- not even a dog was barking. Why the difference? The children of Israel were God's people. They were His family. The Lord was taking care of His people.

In verses 2-3 we see that the Lord also took care of His people by providing for their material needs, and even giving them *favor* in the sight of the Egyptians. The Lord was taking care of His people!

It's still true today -- the Lord takes care of His own people. God does show favoritism when it comes to the care of the believer! In Exodus 12 we'll see that the reason the angel of death passed over the children of Israel was not because they were nicer people than the Egyptians, or because they were only poor slaves, but because they believed God and applied the blood of the Passover lambs to their homes. As believers who obeyed His Word, God cared for them and provided for them. He does the same for believers today.

1 Peter 5:7 says, "*He cares for you.*" Deuteronomy 33:12 says, "*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him who shelters him all the day long. And he shall dwell between His shoulders.*" Can you think of a greater place of care for the believer than between the shoulders of the Almighty God? Psalm 91:4 says, "*He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.*" And Matthew 6:33 says, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added to you.*" What does "all these things" mean? It means that the Lord will meet all your basic needs. The Lord protects, provides and cares for His people, and God does show favoritism when it comes to His care of the believer.

Practical Application

Let's follow God's example of showing favoritism.

In Galatians 6:10 we read, "*Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*" As Christians, we have a responsibility to do what we can to help needy people around us -- but this verse says that we are to show favoritism to our fellow believers who are in need! The verse says we should "*do good to all,*" but ***especially*** "*to those who are of the household of faith.*" Just as God showed favoritism when it came to caring for the needs of His people, as opposed to the Egyptians, so we should make the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ a top priority when we are meeting needs. How are we doing?

This doesn't mean that we should ignore the needs of unbelievers in our communities, but as we see fellow believers who have needs, both in our fellowship and around the world, we should be moved to put them higher on our care list. Let's follow God's example of showing favoritism.