

The Second, Third and Fourth Plagues

Exodus 8

Exodus 8 – *“And the Lord spoke to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ² But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs. ³ So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls. ⁴ And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants.”’” ⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.”’ ⁶ So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.*

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.” ⁹ And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.” ¹⁰ So he said, “Tomorrow.” And he said, “Let it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. ¹¹ And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only.” ¹² Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses cried out to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh. ¹³ So the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields. ¹⁴ They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

¹⁶ So the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.”’ ¹⁷ And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.

²⁰ And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ²¹ Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. ²² And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land. ²³ I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign

shall be.”²⁴ And the Lord did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.²⁵ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

²⁶ And Moses said, “It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us?”²⁷ We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us.”²⁸ So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.”²⁹ Then Moses said, “Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.”

³⁰ So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord.³¹ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained.³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.”

Background Notes

The Egyptians were polytheistic and worshiped many gods. If you go to the Egypt Museum in Cairo today, you can see many images and statues representing the gods of ancient Egypt. All the plagues on Egypt were judgments of God directed against specific gods of Egypt.

The second plague, the plague of frogs, for example, was directed against the frog goddess, who was thought to be the goddess of birth and fertility. The image of the frog goddess had a frog’s head. How repulsive it must have been when innumerable frogs left the Nile River and invaded all the houses of Egypt! How would you like to have frogs in your bed, in your pots and pans, crawling all over your body, and squishing under your feet when you walked? You can imagine how repulsive this was! I don’t think it took the Egyptians too long to be completely disgusted with their frog deity. The fact that the Egyptian magicians were also able to cause frogs to come up from the Nile did not help the problem -- it only made matters worse!

In verses 16-19, we have the third plague, the plague of lice or gnats. The Hebrew word that’s used here could include fleas and even mosquitoes. Have you ever been on a picnic or on a camping trip when it was “buggy,” and you didn’t have any bug spray? It can drive you crazy, right?

In verses 20-24 we have the fourth plague, the plague of flies or swarms of insects. This plague could have included a mixture of all kinds of insects -- including the scarab, the sacred dung beetle of Egypt.

All these gods of Egypt with their images of animals and creeping things reminds us of what Romans 1 says of people who have turned away from the one true God. Romans 1:22-33: “*Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed*

the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

Doctrinal Points

1. God makes a distinction between powers with His judgments.

There was a limit to what the Egyptian sorcerers could do using their demonic powers. They could not duplicate all the plagues with counterfeit miracles. Verse 18 says they tried to bring forth gnats or lice, but they failed. God makes a distinction between powers with His judgments.

There is no doubt that these Egyptian sorcerers had a source of power, but it was not the same Source of power that was available to Moses & Aaron! God drew a distinction between these powers by the failure of the Egyptian magicians to duplicate certain of the plagues with their secret arts. The Egyptian sorcerers knew that there was a difference between the power sources, because they said, “This is the finger of God” (v19). They recognized that this was the work of the one true God, the God of the Hebrews! Only God can bring forth life from the dust of the earth.

Notice that when the Egyptian magicians were able to cause frogs to come up from the Nile, they were not able to take them away (v7). Even here they were limited in their power. With the power of God, Moses and Aaron were able to take the frogs away. They even allowed Pharaoh to name the time for the frogs to disappear, because this would show that this was the power of God.

At this point Pharaoh **said** he was willing to let the children of Israel go, but as soon as the frogs were gone and the heat was off, he hardened his heart once again. Do you know any people who make promises like that? These decisions are sometimes called “foxhole decisions,” named for the tendency to cry out to God for help and safety during the heat of battle, and make promises to God that are never carried out. Some people cry out to God when they are under fire, but as soon as the heat is off, they forget their promises and do their own thing.

As God made a distinction between His power and the demonic power of the Egyptian magicians at the time of the Exodus, so God makes a distinction between His power and the cultic or demonic powers today -- powers that are involved in counterfeit miracles even today. Satan is actively involved with “spiritual movements” and counterfeit “signs and wonders.” There are such things as occult healings, and there are witches who practice so-called “white magic.”

Did you know that today there is a new age “contemplative prayer” or “prayer centering” movement that is even invading mainline denominational churches? At first this spiritual movement looks and sounds good, but before long its roots and links with Eastern meditation and pantheistic “oneness” become obvious. God makes a distinction between powers with His judgments.

2. God makes a distinction between peoples with His judgments.

Notice that in the fourth plague, the plague of flies and great swarms of insects, a distinction is made between those who are God's people and those who are not God's people. God drew the line between the Egyptians and the Hebrews in about half of the plagues.

It's also important to realize that God did not preserve His people from *all* the plagues of judgment on Egypt. The plagues were not directed against Israel, but against Egypt. However, the Israelites did experience the hardships of some of the plagues. The plague of locusts, for example, came upon all the land of Egypt. This certainly would have included the land of Goshen where the children of Israel lived.

I think that lesson is obvious, isn't it? Christians are not always delivered from the hardships of the judgment that the Lord brings on this world, whether it be natural disasters or other forms of judgment. Christians suffer in fires and earthquakes and economic hard times, as do non-Christians.

However, we all know that many times God draws a distinction between those who are His people and those who are not His people. We all know stories about a Christian home or church that was preserved from a fire or earthquake, or stories of God warning some believers about a coming disaster or social upheaval that He allowed, or even used as judgment on this world. Some people would say that this is just a coincidence, but we know what the Bible teaches. God can make a distinction between peoples with His judgments.

Practical Application

Don't incite "needless riots."

If the children of Israel had sacrificed certain animals in the land of Egypt, the Egyptians would have been offended because they considered some animals sacred. This certainly would have caused a riot, as we see in these verses.

When Moses said, "It is not right for us to do so," this was not an excuse. It's a biblical principle. I Corinthians 10:32 says, "*Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God...*"

We are not to practice an "in your face" type of evangelism. We are not to deliberately offend people – we are to be sensitive to what may be very offensive to people. Don't incite needless riots!