

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 11:1-10, 12:29-36
“The Humbling Hand of God, Part #9: Death”

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Exodus 11:1-10, 12:29-36

Verse 1-3

Now YHWH had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold. (YHWH made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.)

- God told Moses that one final plague would fall on Pharaoh and Egypt from the humbling hand of God. This one would be so severe that Pharaoh’s mind would be totally changed and he would let the Hebrews go without any conditions. However, without this last plague, Pharaoh’s heart was hard to YHWH’s request. It is important to remember we have seen the unfolding of God’s plan in all that happened to Egypt. He could have done the last curse first and so ended the entire drama with a single blow. God’s plan was to show Pharaoh, Egypt, Israel, and all people through every subsequent generation his absolute power and the consequence of refusing to acknowledge him as EL SHADDAI. God knew how Pharaoh would react at each step of the plan’s unfolding. He was never surprised. He used each rejection as an opportunity to show his power and to convince increasing numbers of people that he was God Almighty.
- It is also important to note that GOD’S PLAN WORKED! Many Egyptians, including many of Pharaoh’s own advisors, have gotten the point. They highly regard God’s people and the leaders God has appointed, Moses and Aaron. They even desire to honor the people of God with gifts because they seek the favor of YHWH.
- The phrase found in verse one, *“He will drive you out completely”* can be correctly translated, *“He will send you away as a bride,”*

meaning that God will send Israel from Egypt as a bride loaded down with her wedding presents. As we shall see, this is exactly what happened.

Verse 4-8

So Moses said, "This is what YHWH says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt -- worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that YHWH makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, 'Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave." Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

- See 10:27-29. There, Pharaoh ordered Moses to leave his presence and never to return under penalty of death, which Moses agreed to do. But before his departure, Moses spoke these words to Pharaoh as his last warning.
- Moses warned Pharaoh of the last and most terrible of the plagues, the death of the firstborn. Near midnight that very evening, YHWH would pass through the land of Egypt. In passing through he would take the life of every firstborn male child in Egypt including that of Egypt's cattle, too. Death would fall on every household in Egypt. But among the Israelites there would be no disturbance, not even a dog would bark to disturb their sleep.
- YHWH predicts that after the falling of this curse all of Egypt will beg Israel to leave.
- Having delivered the warning, in anger with Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to heed his warning, Moses left the palace.

Verse 9-10

YHWH had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you -- so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but YHWH hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

- Moses is told by God that despite the severity of the curse, Pharaoh will not listen to the warning. This is for two reasons: First, so that

God's full power may be displayed to the world. Second, because God has closed Pharaoh's mind/heart so that he cannot hear the truth. Remember that this scene began in chapter 10 where Pharaoh had opened his mind and decided to let the Israelites go (see verse 24). However, after that, he tried to conditionalize his permission and then closed his own mind again to God's will. Now, even in the face of such horrible circumstances, the death of his own son, YHWH has taken away Pharaoh's ability to choose. After many opportunities to freely decide, Pharaoh is now powerless to decide correctly because God has closed his mind and hardened his heart.

Verse 12:29-30

At midnight YHWH struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

- It happened just as Moses had said! Sin regards no boundaries. Often the sinful behavior of one person negatively affects the lives of innocent others.

Verse 31-32

During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship YHWH as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me."

- This time Pharaoh is broken in his heart. His words to Moses, who he swore never to see again, are emphatic. "UP, LEAVE, GO, TAKE," are words of command which indicate the intensity of his desire for Moses and Israel to depart. There are no conditions this time. Israel is to leave Egypt by command of Pharaoh.
- At the end, having felt the full force of God's humbling hand, Pharaoh asked Moses to forgive him and to bless him. He no longer wants to stumble under God's heavy humbling hand.

Verse 33

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in

kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. YHWH had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

- Possibly because they feared that Pharaoh might again change his mind and certainly because they recognized the great power of YHWH, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave Egypt in haste. They did so taking with them gifts from their Egyptian neighbors.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Humbling Hand of God! Part # 9: Death*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)