

Exodus 9:18-10:29

Introduction (9:13-17)

1. As Dustin shared last week, these five verses signal an intensification in the remaining four signs and wonders God will execute upon Egypt
2. Not only will the four remaining plagues be more severe and nothing like Egypt has ever seen or imagined, it will also be the first time human fatalities are involved
3. These verses list three reasons for God intensifying the plagues:
 - a. They would reveal that there was no one like Yahweh in all the Earth (READ 9:14):
 - 1) This is likely a reference to there being no other God's like Yahweh in all the Earth—each of the signs and wonders were aimed at humiliating different gods within the Egyptian pantheon
 - 2) However, the pharaohs also considered themselves gods (or sons of the gods) so this also served as a rebuke of Pharaoh
 - b. They would continue to show Yahweh's power and proclaim His name through all the earth (READ 9:15-16)
 - c. Despite the previous signs and wonders, Pharaoh still exalted himself against Yahweh and His people and refused to let them go (READ 9:17)
4. Today we are going to see these reasons reflected in three more miraculous plagues: hail, locusts, and darkness

A. The hail (9:18-35)

1. This event revealed Yahweh's power because He did something none of the other Egyptian gods could do (READ 9:18-26):
 - a. There were at least four primary weather gods worshipped in Egypt:
 - 1) Horus and Nut were the primary sky god and goddess
 - 2) Shu was the god of air and wind
 - 3) Set was the primary storm god
 - b. By sending a hailstorm the likes of which the Egyptians had never experienced in their history, Yahweh humiliated these gods and showed that He alone was all-powerful and controlled the weather:
 - 1) The hail was accompanied by thunder and fire flashing all over Egypt and it was something they had never experienced since becoming a nation (9:18)
 - 2) The hail struck man, beast, and every plant and tree of the field (9:22)—we find out later this affected their flax and barley because it was harvest time for those, but not the wheat and spelt because those were grown and harvested later

- 3) This occurred throughout Egypt with the exception of one place; there was no hail in Goshen where Israel lived (9:25-26)
2. There was some hope, however, because God offered a warning first and even told the Egyptians to bring their servants and their livestock into their homes for safety (RE-READ 9:19-21):
 - a. Some did as He said and their servants and livestock were spared
 - b. However, some did not “**consider in his heart the word of Yahweh**” and their servants and livestock paid with their lives
 - c. NOTE: this warning by God tells us something about His character
 3. Despite the utter destruction, Pharaoh still exalted himself and refused to let Yahweh’s people go (READ 9:27-35):
 - a. Initially, he appeared to finally come to his senses:
 - 1) He seemed to confess his sin (RE-READ 9:27)
 - 2) He seemed to agree to let Israel go (RE-READ 9:28)
 - b. Moses knew it wasn’t genuine and that Pharaoh didn’t fear Yahweh, but he called on Yahweh to stop the hail anyway and it ceased (9:30)
 - c. But, as soon as it stopped, Pharaoh went right on sinning (READ 9:34-35):
 - 1) There are two different Hebrew words that are translated “**hardened**” here:
 - a) The first is used in v. 34 and it refers to something being made heavy:
 - a more literal reading is “**he added to sin and made his heart heavy**” (a reference to the heart being weighed down by sin to be judged in the afterlife)
 - The hiphil stem is causative—Pharaoh CAUSED his sin to become heavy with sin
 - b) The second word is in v. 35 and it refers to making strengthening or making something firm:
 - When it’s used of Pharaoh it refers to stiffening his resolve to continue defying Yahweh
 - The NET translates this as “**So Pharaoh’s heart remained hard**” indicating an ongoing firmness in his resolve to defy Yahweh
 - 2) This gives us an idea of what was going on in Pharaoh’s heart—he was not only causing his heart to become heavy with sin but continuing to stiffen his resolve in defying Yahweh

B. The locusts (10:1-20)

1. We've already seen at the start of our lesson today three reasons why God was performing these great signs and wonders before Pharaoh and all of Egypt, but before He initiated the next plague He gave Moses another reason (READ 10:1-2):
 - a. The signs and wonders would serve as an example to Israel of how Yahweh dealt **"severely with the Egyptians"** for their sin and defiance, and so that Israel would know that He was Yahweh
 - b. He had **"hardened"** the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians for this purpose:
 - 1) The word here is heavy, thus **"made their hearts heavy [with sin]"**
 - 2) This does not mean Yahweh caused them to sin, but rather sovereignly used their sin to accomplish His purpose
 - 3) We'll get into this later but this is something referred to as JUDICIAL HARDENING

2. Before Yahweh initiated the next plague, he warned Pharaoh again and gave him yet another opportunity to let Israel go (READ 10:3-6):
 - a. Back in 9:7 Yahweh rebuked Pharaoh for exalting himself against His people; here He rebuked him for his refusal to humble himself
 - b. Once again, Yahweh gave him a day to think about it and repent before bringing another devastating plague:
 - 1) This time it would be locusts so numerous that they would **"cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land"** (10:5a)
 - 2) They would eat everything that was left over from the hail (10:5b)
 - 3) There would be so many that there would be no escape—they would fill their houses and the houses of their servants throughout all the land of Egypt
 - 4) It would be something unlike anything their fathers and grandfathers had seen in Egypt's history
 - c. This was apparently enough to freak out Pharaoh's servants because they begged him to offer Moses a compromise (READ 10:7):
 - 1) They referred to Moses as a **"snare"** (Hebrew bait or lure used to trap animals)
 - 2) They demanded that Pharaoh **"let the men go"**:
 - a) Some translations (NIV, NET) use the word people here but that's not what they said
 - b) Throughout Exodus narrative Yahweh continued to demand that Pharaoh let His **"people"** go (Hebrew am)—that's a reference to ALL of Israel, men, women, and children
 - c) However, here the servants call on Pharaoh to only let the **"men"** (Hebrew ish) go to worship Yahweh—it was a compromise much like Pharaoh's attempt after the plague of flies when he tried to negotiate with Moses
 - 3) They recognized the destruction that Egypt had suffered: **"Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?"**

- d. Unfortunately, Pharaoh listened to the voice of his servants rather than Yahweh (READ 10:8-11):
 - 1) Yahweh demanded that He let ALL of His people go
 - 2) Pharaoh tried to negotiate and only allow the men to go
 - 3) Rightly, Moses rejected the offer because partial obedience is not obedience, for Pharaoh or for Israel
 - 4) Predictably, Pharaoh accused Moses of “evil” and drove him and Aaron out from his presence

3. As a result of Pharaoh’s continued defiance, Yahweh brought the plague of locusts just as he said He would (READ 10:12-15):
 - a. This plague appears to have been aimed at humiliating the numerous agricultural gods of Egypt:
 - 1) Senehem: he was the Locust God; he was depicted either as a man with the head of a locust or just a locust, and was responsible for protecting crops from swarms of insects
 - 2) Min: he was one of the most important agricultural gods and responsible for protecting the crops and ensuring a bountiful harvest; during harvest each year, the Egyptians celebrated a festival to him called the Festival of the Departure of Min
 - 3) Renenulet: Goddess of the Harvest, also called Lady of the Fertile Fields and Lady of the Granaries; she was responsible for the ripening and protection of grain
 - 4) Shu: God of the Air and Wind; thought to have control over the wind
 - b. This plague humiliated these Egyptian gods:
 - 1) Yahweh showed that He, not Shu, controlled the wind by using a strong east wind all night long to bring the locusts into Egypt, and then a strong west wind to drive them out of Egypt after the plague
 - 2) He humiliated Senehem, Min and Renenulet, by destroying all the crops they were supposed to protect
 - 3) These gods were completely useless:
 - a) There had never been so many locusts in Egypt
 - b) They covered the surface of the whole land, so much so that it was darkened
 - c) They ate everything that was left after the hail—nothing green was left anywhere in all of Egypt

4. Just like we saw after the hail, Pharaoh initially appeared to relent but ultimately refused to let Israel go (READ 10:16-20):
 - a. Pharaoh’s response this time was similar to his response after the hail:
 - 1) After the hail he seemingly admitted his sin and asked Moses to entreat Yahweh to stop the plague (9:27-28)

- 2) His response here was very similar—seemingly admitting his sin and calling on Moses to entreat Yahweh to put an end to the locusts
- b. Yahweh responded to Pharaoh’s seeming admission of sin by doing two things:
- 1) He drove the locusts out of Egypt into the sea with a “**very strong west wind**”
 - 2) He “**hardened Pharaoh’s heart**”:
 - a) The word used here is the one that means to strengthen or make firm
 - b) In other words, Yahweh gave Pharaoh the strength or resolve to continue defying him
 - c) This is what He told Moses He would do back in 4:21 and 7:3 before the plagues started, and something He did in 9:12 after the boils
 - d) Again, this does not make Him responsible for Pharaoh’s sins; it’s a consequence of Pharaoh’s sin and something referred to as JUDICIAL HARDENING (more later)

C. The darkness (10:21-29)

1. The first thing we notice here is that this time Yahweh didn’t give Pharaoh a warning
2. Instead, He commanded Moses to stretch out his hand toward the sky and complete and total darkness covered the land (READ 10:21-23):
 - a. V. 21 referred to it as a darkness which could be felt
 - b. V. 22 says it was a “thick darkness in all the land of Egypt”
 - c. V. 23 says the darkness was so complete that the Egyptians couldn’t even see each and could not rise from their place (likely their homes)
 - d. But, Israel had light where they lived

Experiencing total darkness underground at Rock City on Lookout Mountain in Georgia

3. Like all the other plagues, this one targeted specific Egyptian gods:
 - a. Ra: The Sun God; he was considered the creator of the world and thought to sail across the sky each day providing light
 - b. Horus: The Sky God; he was depicted as hawk with one eye as the sun and the other eye as the moon
 - c. Thoth: The Moon God
 - d. Nut: The Sky Goddess; the Egyptians believe she gave birth to the sun each morning
 - e. By blacking out the sun for THREE DAYS Yahweh humiliated these Egyptian gods rendering them pathetic, weak, and useless
4. Pharaoh’s response was predictable (READ 10:26-29):

- a. Once again, instead of responding with humility and obedience, he attempted yet another compromise—he was willing to let Israel go, even the children, as long as they left their flocks behind
- b. Moses rejected his offer because the flocks were necessary in order to make their sacrifices and offerings to Yahweh
- c. So, Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart again (e.g. strengthened it, made it firm in order to continue defying Him)
- d. Pharaoh became so enraged that he kicked Moses out of his courts, forbid him from returning, and threatened his life if he came back
- e. Moses responded by agreeing and saying he would not see Pharaoh’s face again:
 - 1) This is a bit challenging because Moses doesn’t leave right at this moment—God informs him of the final plague at this point and has him deliver it to Pharaoh before he leaves in 11:8
 - 2) However, it’s also challenging because Moses did see Pharaoh again after the 10th plague when Pharaoh summoned him in 12:31-32 and finally told him to leave Egypt with all of Israel
 - 3) By saying he would not see Pharaoh’s face again, Moses was likely referring to the fact that this would be the last time he would stand before Pharaoh giving him a chance to do what Yahweh commanded before Yahweh would fulfill what He promised in the beginning—He was going to kill Pharaoh’s son

D. Takeaways

1. Repentance motivated purely by relief isn’t genuine repentance:
 - a. After the hail and locusts, Pharaoh cried out “I’ve sinned”, seemed to concede, and begged Moses to entreat Yahweh to end the plagues
 - b. It looked like repentance, but it wasn’t genuine and was motivated purely by his desire for relief from God’s judgment
 - c. I once heard Biblical repentance referred to as doing a 180 in how we think and live
 - d. This is because Biblical repentance involves a change in the way we think of sin (e.g. seeing it as God sees it) and as a result turning from that sin
 - e. This is the kind of repentance God desires and expects of us
2. Partial obedience isn’t obedience:
 - a. After all three of the signs and wonders—the hail, locusts, and darkness—Pharaoh tried to bargain with Moses, and therefore Yahweh
 - b. Yahweh expected and demanded complete obedience, but Pharaoh was only willing to partially obey, and obey only on his terms
 - c. But, we can’t bargain with God; we can’t negotiate obedience and convince Him to settle for less than He expects
 - d. Partial obedience is still disobedience
3. Willfully continuing in sin leads to judgment:

- a. For the unbeliever, this is referred to as judicial hardening (Romans 1; 1 Ephesians 4:19; Timothy 4:1-2)
- b. For the believer, it leads to chastisement...or even worse:
 - 1) Some of the Corinthians were abusing the Lord's supper and refusing to behave properly, and as a result some were sick and others died
 - 2) God took the lives of Annanias and Sapphira for their sin
 - 3) Paul mentioned delivering one of the gravely sexually immoral Corinthians over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his soul would be saved in the day of the Lord