

Exodus 8:1-32

Introduction

1. When God first told Moses to go to Pharaoh, He declared that He would harden Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of multiplying His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt:
 - a. As we discussed last week, these signs and wonders were designed for at least three purposes beyond just securing the release of Israel:
 - 1) One purpose was so that Pharaoh, all of Egypt, and even Israel would know that He was the One True and All-powerful God, Yahweh
 - 2) A second purpose of the signs and wonders was to serve as an example of what God could do and would do to Israel's enemies as they entered the land of Canaan
 - 3) A final purpose was to execute judgment upon all the false gods of Egypt
 - b. When God said he would "**multiply**" His signs and wonders, it implied a great number as the word refers to becoming many or numerous
 - c. However, it becomes clear as we progress through these signs and wonders that they not only increase in number but intensity—beginning almost as a nuisance, to infestations, to sickness and disease, and ultimately death
2. As we were studying through the signs and wonders, we decided rather than spending one week on each plague we'd address them in groups:
 - a. One concern with taking them one at a time each week is that they pretty much follow the same pattern which might have become a bit redundant
 - b. A second concern is that some of the passages are very short while others are quite long
 - c. We thought a better approach would be to take the signs in groups and look for themes or threads that run through them
3. So, today we are in chapter 8 and will be covering the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th plagues—frogs, gnats, and fleas—and we'll focus on three things we see in these signs and wonders:
 - a. We will see how God intensified His signs and wonders and His judgment upon Pharaoh
 - b. We will see how Pharaoh continued his willful defiance against God despite these signs and wonders
 - c. We will see how God exercised longsuffering and forbearance even with Pharaoh's defiance
4. BIG IDEA: God intensifies judgment to confront defiance, but exercises restraint to encourage repentance
5. READ Exodus 8:1-32

A. God intensified His signs and wonders and His judgment upon Pharaoh

1. As we will see with each of the signs and wonders, God was judging and humiliating the many gods of Egypt and that's the case with the frogs, gnats, and flies:
 - a. The plague of frogs most likely targeted the goddess Heqet who was thought to be the god of fertility and birth:
 - 1) She was depicted as having either a frog's head with a woman's body or a woman's head with a frog's body
 - 2) There's some irony with the plague of frogs because she was the goddess of fertility and God multiplied the frogs to the point where they were EVERYWHERE like fertility gone amok
 - b. The plague of gnats likely targeted two gods, Geb and Set:
 - 1) Most translations use the word "gnat" here but the Hebrew is unclear; most scholars believe it refers to tiny two-winged insects like flees, gnats, or lice, but others suggest mosquitos
 - 2) Geb was the chief god who controlled the earth (the ground) and he was married to his sister, Nut the goddess of the sky—he was often portrayed reclining on the earth under the arched body of his wife
 - 3) Set was the god of the desert and responsible for storms and chaos
 - 4) When Aaron struck the ground and the dust of the earth became gnats, it would have shown God's power over the land and humiliated Geb and Set
 - c. The plague of flies likely targeted the fly god Uatchit and other insect gods like Lusaaset and Khepri who was depicted with the head of a beetle:
 - 1) The Hebrew just says "swarms" but most believe it refers to flies or flying, biting insects of some kind, especially because Psalm 78:45 says that they "devoured" the Egyptians
 - 2) By filling the land of Egypt with these swarming, biting insects, God was again humiliating the Egyptian gods who were thought to control these insects
2. While turning the Nile into blood was a significant and catastrophic sign, these three signs and wonders took it up a notch:
 - a. In the case of the Nile, all of the water in the Nile and that which had been taken from the Nile and stored turned to blood, but the Egyptians could still get around the plague to some degree by digging wells around the Nile
 - b. That wasn't the case here: the frogs, gnats, and swarms of flies were EVERYWHERE and they could not be avoided:
 - 1) The frogs were everywhere (READ 8:3-4; 14)
 - 2) The gnats were everywhere (READ 8:16-18)
 - 3) The swarms of flies were everywhere (READ 8:21, 24)—as Psalm 78:45 says, they were devouring the Egyptians

B. Pharaoh continued his willful defiance against God despite the increasing severity of the signs and wonders

1. With these three plagues, we see some glimmers of hope regarding the Pharaoh's defiance:
 - a. During the plague of frogs, Pharaoh appeared to have a change of heart:
 - 1) He called for Moses and Aaron and asked them to pray to Yahweh to cause the frogs to depart (READ 8:8a)
 - 2) This is the first time we see him acknowledge Yahweh's existence (SEE 5:2)
 - 3) Even though his magicians were able to produce frogs through their slight of hand, he seemed to recognize that Yahweh was behind the plague of frogs
 - 4) He even agreed to let Israel go and sacrifice to Yahweh (READ 8:8b)
 - 5) But, as soon as God provided relief from the frogs Pharaoh "made his heart heavy" with sin and refused to let Israel go (READ 8:15)
 - b. During the plague of flies, we see something similar and another glimmer of hope:
 - 1) Once again, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, but instead of offering to let them go he tried to negotiate and only let them sacrifice to God within the land of Egypt (READ 8:25)
 - 2) When Moses rejected the offer, Pharaoh agreed to let Israel go but put conditions on their release (READ 8:28)
 - 3) Moses responded by saying he would pray to Yahweh to cause the flies to depart, but he also warned Pharaoh not to deceive him again like he did after the frogs (READ 8:29)
 - 4) But, that's exactly what he did (READ 8:31-32)
2. What we see with Pharaoh is that despite KNOWING full well that God was behind the signs and wonders, he continued to sin against God and stiffen his resolve to defy Him:
 - a. In 8:8 with the frogs and 8:28 with the flies, Pharaoh acknowledge God was behind the plagues
 - b. Moses even let Pharaoh pick the time that God would remove the frogs so that he would know it was Yahweh (READ 8:9-11)
 - c. Even his own magicians, when they could not duplicate the gnats, told him it was God (READ 8:19)
 - d. Yet, even with knowing FULL WELL that Yahweh was behind the signs and wonders he continued to willfully defy Him
3. Takeaway: God's judgement and chastisement is generally incremental because the goal is corrective and restorative:
 - a. What I mean by this is that when someone sins God doesn't usually squash them immediately like a cockroach

- b. Instead, His judgments and chastisement are generally gradual, starting first with a warning and then followed by judgments with a lesser degree of severity and progressing to a higher degree of severity if needed
 - 1) We see that here with Pharaoh as God first warned him then increased the severity of the signs and wonders the longer Pharaoh defied Him (Blood in the Nile to death of the 1st born)
 - 2) We see it in the book of Judges where each time Israel returned to their idolatry God warned them and then increased the length of the oppression by their enemies (8 years, then 18 years, then 27 years)
 - 3) We see this with the end times—Jesus warned what is coming in the Olivet Discourse, but when it starts in Revelation 6 God’s judgments increase in severity with each seal and culminate in His wrath

- c. So the question for us is how do we respond when we sense we are being chastened by the Lord?
 - 1) Proverbs 3:11-12 says, **“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproofs, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”**
 - 2) Do we respond with repentance and obedience, or are we willing to face the risk of God having to increase the severity of His chastisement (SEE 1 Corinthians 11:30-31)

C. God exercised forbearance and long-suffering even with Pharaoh’s defiance
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- 1. Despite Pharaoh’s continued defiance, God was long-suffering and exercised forbearance:
 - a. Long-suffering and forbearance are related but there’s a difference between the two:
 - 1) Long-suffering refers mainly to the emotional capacity to endure difficult people or situations; in other words, it’s the ability to put up with them
 - 2) Forbearance on the other hand refers to restraint with such people or situations; in other words, holding back punishment or judgment

 - b. We see God exercise these traits with Pharaoh through these plagues:
 - 1) Each time Pharaoh agreed to let Israel go, God knew he wouldn’t follow thru on it yet He gave him and all of Egypt relief by ending the individual plagues (READ 8:13, 31)
 - 2) He not only patiently endured Pharaoh’s continued defiance (long-suffering), He exercised restraint (forbearance) by not allowing the plague to continue to and completely crush the Egyptians

- 2. Takeaway: God is long-suffering and forbearing because he doesn’t want anyone to perish but come to repentance:

- a. This was Peter's response to those who doubt that Jesus will come back because for some it will bring joy but others God's wrath (2 Peter 3:9): **"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing any to perish but for all to come to repentance."**
- b. Paul wrote that God's long-suffering and forbearance are an act of kindness to drive us to repentance, but also that there is a limit to these things (READ Romans 2:2-8)
- c. God's first desire when it comes to His judgment or chastisement is not punishment or penalty, but correction and restoration
- d. So, the question for us is, do we thinking lightly of God's long-suffering and forbearance and continue in sin or do we recognize His kindness, repent, and allow it to correct and restore us?

Conclusion

- 1. In the introduction I stated the BIG IDEA for this passage is that God intensifies judgment to confront defiance, but exercises restraint to encourage repentance
- 2. This was true of Pharaoh, and it true when God finds it necessary to chastise us when we think too lightly of His kindness and continue in sin