

Exodus 11:1-10

Introduction

1. The Bible doesn't tell us how long the first nine plagues lasted—estimates are somewhere between three months and a year
2. Even on the shorter end (3 months), it must have been somewhat discouraging to Israel—Yahweh kept pouring out plague after plague, and with each new plague there must have been renewed hope, only to see that hope dashed as Pharaoh continued to resist and refuse to let them go
3. As readers we have the advantage because we know the end of the story and where this is all going, but for Israel, and maybe even Moses and Aaron, there must have been times of discouragement, frustration, and maybe even doubt that Yahweh would truly deliver them
4. In our passage today we're going to see how God's sovereignty ensured three things:
 - a. It ensured deliverance for Israel
 - b. It ensured judgment for Egypt and favor for Israel
 - c. And it ensured that God's purpose would be accomplished according to His plan
5. Hopefully, we'll also see how this same sovereignty ensures us of our own deliverance from sin and death, God's favor upon us, and how God's purpose for us will work out exactly according to His plan

A. Yahweh's sovereignty ensured deliverance for Israel (READ 11:1-3)

1. There's no record of Yahweh telling Moses exactly how many signs and wonders He would execute upon Pharaoh and Egypt:
 - a. What the Bible does record is that from the beginning, Yahweh told Moses that Pharaoh would only let His people go "**except under compulsion**" (3:19) and only after He would stretch out His hand and "**strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it**" (3:20)
 - b. Up to this point, Yahweh had demonstrated His absolute sovereignty and power over nature and all the so-called gods of Egypt through nine sets of miraculous signs and wonders:
 - 1) It began by turning all the water of the Nile to blood
 - 2) This was followed by plagues of frogs, gnats, flies, the death of livestock, boils, hail, locusts and a darkness that was so thick it could be felt and they couldn't see their fingers in front of their faces
 - 3) Through each of these, Pharaoh remained hard-hearted and defiant refusing to let Israel go—but, that was all about to end
2. Yahweh announced to Moses that He would bring one more plague against Pharaoh and it would finally result in Israel's deliverance:

- a. These verses appear to be parenthetical:
 - 1) After the plague of darkness, Pharaoh demanded that Moses leave and never return to which Moses agreed (READ 10:28)
 - 2) However, it doesn't say Moses left at that time, but rather it appears he didn't leave until delivering Yahweh's final message to Pharaoh (in 11:4-8)
 - 3) The conversation between Yahweh and Moses in 11:1-3 appears to have happened earlier, maybe during the plague of darkness, rather than at this exact moment
 - 4) This is why the NIV translates 11:1 as "**Now the LORD had said to Moses**"—this is known as the pluperfect tense which describes an action that was completed in the past

- b. What Yahweh told Moses was that He had one last plague to execute against Pharaoh and Egypt:
 - 1) This last plague was what Yahweh revealed to Moses in the beginning: the death of the firstborns in all of Egypt
 - 2) It was this demonstration of Yahweh's sovereignty that would finally break the will of Pharaoh, force him to let Israel go, and ensure their deliverance:
 - a) But Pharaoh wouldn't just reluctantly allow Israel to leave; he would **"surely drive [them] out from here completely"** (11:1)
 - b) We see this happen in 12:31-32 (READ)

3. To prepare for their departure, Yahweh instructed Moses to have Israel collect gold and silver from among the Egyptians (11:2-3):
 - a. This was in line with what Yahweh told Moses in the very beginning back in 3:21-22 (READ)
 - b. We see here that Yahweh did exactly what He said he would do: "**Yahweh gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians**":
 - 1) This is an obvious reference to the Egyptians giving the Hebrews the gold and silver they asked for
 - 2) This is repeated in 12:36 but with some added details: "**Yahweh gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians**"

- c. Yahweh also made Moses "**very great in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people**":
 - 1) This means that Moses was not only known throughout Egypt but likely respected with a healthy sense of fear
 - 2) We got a glimpse of this in 10:7 when Pharaoh's officials referred to Moses as a snare and begged Pharaoh to let the people go because Egypt had been destroyed
 - 3) Psalm 105:38 says that Egypt was "**glad**" when Israel departed because the "**dread of them had fallen upon them**"

- 4) Later in v. 8 Moses says that the Pharaoh's servants would come "**bow down**" to him and beg him to leave
4. Takeaway: just as God's sovereignty ensured Israel's deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, His sovereignty ensures our deliverance from sin and death:
 - a. God's sovereignty gives us hope and confidence in our deliverance from sin and death through Jesus
 - b. He didn't just promise us deliverance:
 - 1) He planned it (Ephesians 1:4): "**just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.**"
 - 2) He initiated it (Romans 5:8): "...**while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...**"
 - 3) He works it out (Romans 8:29-30): "**For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.**"
 - 4) He keeps it (1 Peter 1:5): we are "**kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed...**"
 - 5) And He will complete it (Philippians 1:6): "**He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...**"

B. Yahweh's sovereignty ensured judgment upon Egypt and favor upon Israel (READ 11:4-8)

1. What do I mean by this?
 - a. Throughout the OT, Yahweh referred to Israel as His own possession among all the nations of the Earth and upon whom He would bestow His favor
 - b. They were a holy nation—set apart for Him; They would be His people and He would be their God
 - c. We see this reflected in Exodus 6:6-8 when He told Israel that He would bring them out from Egypt and "**take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who brought out your from under the hard labors of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land which I swore to give Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob and I will give it to you for a possession; I am Yahweh.**"
 - d. What we see in this last plague, was a sovereign display of Yahweh's favor upon Israel
2. This final plague would be the severest of all:
 - a. About midnight, He would go out into the midst of Egypt and every firstborn in Egypt would die:

- 1) This would apply to not only **“the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on the throne [but] even to the firstborn of the servant-girl who is behind the millstones; and all the firstborn of the cattle”** (11:5)
 - 2) There would be **“a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again”** (11:6)
 - 3) We learn later in 12:30 that after the plague **“there was no home where there was not someone dead”**
 - 4) QUESTION: was it only the firstborn males (adults and children) who died or was it firstborns in general (regardless of whether the firstborn was a male or a female)?
 - a) This is debated because the Biblical text surrounding the 10th plague doesn’t specifically say “firstborn son”
 - b) However, in almost all cases “firstborn” in the Bible is a reference to firstborn sons (there are only six instances in the OT where it clearly refers to females and this is where the female form is used)
 - c) Plus, one of the ways Yahweh commanded Israel to remember this event was by dedicating all the firstborn males of humans and animals to him
 - d) Yahweh’s warning to Pharaoh before the plagues started that He would ultimately kill his firstborn son also suggests only males were involved
- b. The only ones who would be spared of this were the Israelites:
- 1) Among Israel, not even a dog would bark against man or beast (11:7)—lit. **“not a dog will sharpen his tongue”**; probably an idiom meaning there would be no threat to Yahweh’s people or even their livestock, not even so much as a dog barking or growling at them
 - 2) Only the firstborn of the Egyptians and their cattle would die so that Pharaoh would know that Yahweh **“makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel”**:
 - a) We’ve seen this distinction throughout the plagues, but Yahweh stated it specifically only twice before—in the plague of flies and death of livestock (READ 8:22 & 9:4)
 - b) We can probably assume that Pharaoh and his officials came up with all kinds of reasons or excuses why the previous plagues affected them but not the Israelites, but this time there would be no mistaking that Yahweh had made a distinction between Egypt and Israel
 - c) This distinction was a clear demonstration of Yahweh’s favor towards Israel
- c. V. 8 describes the result of this final plague (READ)
3. Most critics of the Bible point to this event as an immoral, wicked, and unjust act by God, in part because it involved “innocent” Egyptians and even children
 - a. This begs the question why Yahweh took the lives of the firstborns:
 - 1) Pharaoh had refused to let Yahweh have His firstborn, so He refused to let Pharaoh and Egypt have their firstborn (READ 4:22-23)

- 2) It was a judgment against all the gods of Egypt (READ Exodus 12:12):
 - a) Osiris was considered the goddess of life
 - b) Isis was thought to be the goddess of motherhood and protector of children
 - c) The Pharaoh himself was considered divine, and his sons were considered to be sons of the gods themselves
 - d) Yet, none of these were able to prevent what happened

- b. Does this make Yahweh immoral or unjust?
 - 1) The Bible reveals that all of God’s judgments are just and his ways always fair, even when we might struggle to understand them
 - 2) While the NT focuses primarily on individual accountability, the OT often focused on corporate accountability when it came to the actions of nations, and this included children
 - 3) The Bible portrays the 10 plagues as judgment not just against Pharaoh, but against Egypt for their idolatry and hundreds of years of brutality against and slavery of God’s people, including infanticide at times
 - 4) We have here a perfect example of what is described in Romans 1:18-23 (READ)
 - 5) We also have to remember that Yahweh provided multiple opportunities in the previous nine plagues for Pharaoh and Egypt to repent and avoid His judgment—He was long suffering and merciful

4. Takeaway: just as God’s sovereignty ensured His favor upon Israel, it also ensures His favor upon us:
 - a. God’s favor upon Israel was something of His own will and choosing, not because they were worthy of it (Deuteronomy 7:7-8): **“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers...”**
 - b. The same is true of us; we receive God’s mercy and grace not because we deserve it but because He chose us “before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him”
 - c. He saved us by grace (that’s the word for favor) through faith not by our own works
 - d. Fortunately for us, God showers us with His favor because of His own sovereign choice and not our worthiness

C. Yahweh’s sovereignty ensured His purpose was accomplished according to His plan (READ 11:9-10)

1. Like vs. 1-3, these two verses are parenthetical, and this is reflected in the NIV which begins the verse, **“The LORD had said to Moses...”** (pluperfect sense)
2. V. 9 reflects what Yahweh said to Moses back in 7:3-4 (READ):

- a. On at least 10 occasions the Bible refers to Yahweh hardening Pharaoh's heart (e.g. giving him the resolve to resist and defy Yahweh)
 - b. In at least four of these, Yahweh said He would use the hardness of Pharaoh's heart for a very specific purpose: in order to multiply His signs and wonders in Egypt
3. V. 10 reflects what has occurred throughout the previous nine plagues (READ)
 - a. Moses and Aaron did just as Yahweh had commanded and performed all His miraculous wonders before Pharaoh
 - b. And, just as Yahweh said He would do, He hardened Pharaoh's heart (e.g. gave him the resolve) so that he would not let Israel leave Egypt
4. What all this reveals is that because Yahweh is sovereign, everything has been proceeding exactly as He had planned
5. Takeaway: just as God's sovereignty ensured that the events surrounding the Exodus went exactly according to His plan, His sovereignty ensures us that His purpose for us and this world will go exactly according to His plan:
 - a. It's hard to look around and see what's happening in our world today and not get a bit discouraged
 - b. Jesus said the Kingdom of God is at hand and promised to come back and setup His kingdom here on earth
 - c. But, it's been 2000 years, things seem to be going from bad to worse, and it looks like Satan and the world are winning
 - d. However, God is still sovereign and His purpose is still being and will be accomplished according to His plan
 - e. We know the end of the story because it's written out for us in His Word