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Teaching Notes

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The Plague of Locusts and Darkness

Exodus 10

Exodus 10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them 2 that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD."

- Recurring theme: the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to perform all the signs He had in mind against the Egyptians
- Each major God among the panoply of deities must be brought to judgment
- Here in this chapter, the sun god Ra, their highest god, is brought to his knees
- NOTE: God has Moses and Aaron go and proclaim a command and warning to Pharaoh even though He has already told them that God will harden Pharaoh's heart so the message will not be effective!! This is a key in refuting people with a human free-will focus who say God would never tell anyone to proclaim a message and then work inside that person's heart so the message is ineffective. He does precisely that here! This is a small cog in a great machine, a small aspect of God's overall sovereign plan... and He wants the preaching done AND he wants the preachers to know ahead of time it will fail
- God also has future generations in mind... His fame will spread from shore to shore and from generation to generation
- NOTE: Parental instruction a major theme of Israel's life:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:20-25 *In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" 21 tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders-- great and terrible-- upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23 But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. 24 The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. 25 And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."*

Psalms 145:4-7 *One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. 6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. 7 They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.*

Psalms 78:1-7 *A maskil of Asaph. O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old-- 3 what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. 5 He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, 6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. 7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.*

- In these ten plagues of Pharaoh, God was establishing a heritage in Israel for generations to come... stories that would be passed down from parent to child until the end of the world

II. Moses and Aaron Warn Pharaoh Again (vs. 3-7)

3 *So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 4 If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. 5 They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields. 6 They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians-- something neither your fathers nor your forefathers have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.'" Then*

Moses turned and left Pharaoh. 7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?"

- Again, note the grace of God... He doesn't need to give any warnings at all! He doesn't need to give Pharaoh another chance, yet He does
- God also continues to uphold Pharaoh's right to rule... working in Pharaoh until Pharaoh is persuaded
- Even his counselors recognized the cumulative effect of these plague... terrible devastation Egypt has endured... especially as a result of the hail
- Issue is Pharaoh's pride: How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? God is bringing Pharaoh to His knees to acknowledge God's total supremacy
- God works differently in different tyrants:

Daniel 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

2 Chronicles 33:9-13 But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. 10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. 11 So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. 12 In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

Acts 12:21-23 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. 22 They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." 23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

- The threatened plague this time: locusts... a devastating threat!!

On Locusts:

As Desert Locusts increase in number and become more crowded, they change their behavior from that of acting as an individual (solitarious) insect to that as acting as part of a group

(gregarious). The appearance of the locust also changes: solitary adults are brown whereas gregarious adults are pink (immature) and yellow (mature). Up until 1921, it was thought that the Desert Locust was actually two different species of locusts.

Locust swarms can vary from less than one square mile to several hundred square miles. There can be at least 40 million and sometimes as many as 80 million locust adults in each square mile of swarm.

They are able to fly with the wind, and can travel as much as 100 miles in a single day... they have been known to cross the Red Sea, a distance of almost 200 miles, obviously without touching down

A Desert Locust adult can consume roughly its own weight in fresh food per day, that is about two grams every day. A very small part of an average swarm (or about one ton of locusts) eats the same amount of food in one day as about 10 elephants or 25 camels or 2,500 people.

During this century, Desert Locust plagues occurred in 1926-1934, 1940-1948, 1949-1963, 1967-1969 and 1986-1989.

- Locust swarms strip every green thing from the earth, leaving nothing but a desert in their wake
- Moses and Aaron say that this plague will be unlike any plague they have experienced since the beginning of history

8 Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "Go, worship the LORD your God," he said. "But just who will be going?" 9 Moses answered, "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD."

10 Pharaoh said, "The LORD be with you-- if I let you go, along with your women and children! Clearly you are bent on evil. 11 No! Have only the men go; and worship the LORD, since that's what you have been asking for." Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh's presence.

- As we mentioned before, this is one of Pharaoh's attempted compromises... trying to work around complete obedience to the Lord's command
- Anything but bending the neck!!!
- In the end, Pharaoh's pride leads him to abuse the messengers... Moses and Aaron were driven from his presence... just as Paul and Silas were beaten for preaching the gospel

12 And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over Egypt so that locusts will swarm over the land and devour everything growing in the fields, everything left by the hail." 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; 14 they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. 15 They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail-- everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.

- It is terrifying how much damage can be done by a swarm of locusts... and this wasn't just any swarm, but the worst swarm in the history of Egypt
- Another book of the Bible describes a locust plague... the book of Joel:

Joel 1:4, 6-11 What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten.... A nation has invaded my land, powerful and without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness. 7 It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white. 8 Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the husband of her youth. 9 Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD. 10 The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. 11 Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

- In the future, demonic locusts will devour the whole earth and cause immense suffering:

Revelation 9:3-11 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. 6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. 7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. 8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing

into battle. 10 They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. 11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

- Unlike the locusts during the Exodus, these will not harm the growing things, but only will torment people unredeemed!!

III. Pharaoh “Repents” (vs. 16-20)

16 Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. 17 Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me."

18 Moses then left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. 19 And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. 20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

- Pharaoh wastes little time, and has faith enough to turn to Moses and Aaron, fully believing in the power of their prayer to the God of the Hebrews
- This seems like a conversion on the surface!!! Confession of sin, coupled with faith in the Lord... repentance and begging for forgiveness
- However the Lord hardens Pharaoh’s heart!! He has two more plagues to go, and the Lord won’t let Pharaoh off so easily
- God answers Moses’ prayer, removing the locusts with a very strong west wind... God rules the winds, the waves, the animals, the insects, and everything in His Kingdom with absolute power
- The stage is set for the second to last plague... a small picture of hell

IV. The Plague of Darkness (vs. 21-23)

21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-- darkness that can be felt." 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. 23 No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

- Notice that there is no warning at all this time... just like before the third and the sixth plagues

- God doesn't owe this man anything... not more time to repent, not one more warning, not mercy or gentleness in any way... He could rightly have left all the other plagues and simply brought more plagues on top of them
- This plague is a direct attack on the Egyptians' highest deity... Ra, the god of the sun. After this attack, only one last deity will be left to attack—Pharaoh himself, worshipped as a god by Egyptians

In Egyptian religious beliefs, the forces of nature were identified as supernatural beings who controlled many different things. In other words, the forces of nature became identified with many different gods who represented the many things the Egyptians had to deal with in their everyday lives.

The ancient Egyptians interpreted every occurrence of everyday life with a god. Those forces that were important in their lives included the annual cycle of the Nile River's flood, the enormous size and unchanging dryness of the surrounding desert; and the daily cycle of the sun's appearance in the east, gradual movement across the sky, and eventual disappearance in the west. They also included birth and death and many other everyday occurrences. The ancient Egyptians developed a world in which these and other events and conditions were important to the actions of many gods and goddesses

The King of the Egyptian deities was Ra... the god of the sun.

In Egyptian mythology, the supreme sun-god, father of all creation in the form of Atum (also called Ra-Tem or Ra-Atem). Ra, like Horus, encompassed numerous attributes and was often merged with other gods to form composite gods like Amen-Ra (or Amun-Re). Pharaohs claimed their legitimacy to the throne as descendents of Ra. The center of his worship was the city of Heliopolis, which was located just east of the modern city of Cairo.

Ra was usually portrayed as a hawk, or as a human male with the head of a hawk. In his hawk form, Ra was associated with the god Horus. His characteristic headdress was a solar disk encircled by a uraeus, or serpent. In human form, he holds the ankh, the symbol of life, in his right hand, and the scepter, the symbol of power, in his left. Occasionally Ra was represented as a lion or cat. As the personification of the declining sun, the god was shown as an old man leaning on his staff. In hieroglyphic texts, his name was signified by an eye, or a circle with a point in the center.

Ra and Creation

Ra as Atum was the creator of the universe, and all gods who participated in creation were ultimately believed to be aspects of Ra. When Ra's sun disk rose out of the watery primordial chaos of Nu, time itself began.

At creation, Ra made the twins Shu, air, and Tefnut, moisture, from either his semen or his spit. The twins in turn gave birth to the sky-goddess Nut and the earth-god Geb. From the union of Nut and Geb came Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys. Together these nine deities were called the Heliopolitan ennead (group of nine).

Ra and the Sun

Ra began his journey anew each morning, and as the beetle-headed god Khepera he traveled across the sky in a celestial boat. Ma'at, the goddess of truth and law, who governed the regularity of all celestial, earthly, and

underworld movement, set the course of the boat at the time of creation. The morning boat was called Matet (also called Mantchet or Manjet), whose name meant "becoming strong." At noon, Ra achieved the height of his powers. As the sun began to wane he became Tem, and at dusk he appeared as an old man. In his descent, the god rode in the evening boat, Semktet (or Mesektet), whose name meant "becoming weak." He continued his journey through the underworld, Duat, to spread light, air, and nourishment to the souls who resided there. Abtu and Ant, two fish, swam in front of the boat to guide it along its murky path. In Duat, Ra joined forces with other gods against the underworld's denizens of evil, who were determined to obstruct the path of his boat and thereby prevent the sun from rising again the next morning.

Ra's chief adversary was the evil Set, who took the form of a giant serpent called Apep (or Apophis) and engaged the sun-god in battle just before dawn. Two other demons, Sebau and Nak, aided Apep. Priests in Ra's temple at Thebes recited ritual verses that described this battle of good against evil in the belief that this aided Ra in his conquest of darkness. Ra cast a spell on Apep, bound and dismembered the demon, then burned him, as the sun disperses the mists of night.

- The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God of Creation...

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

- It was He who made the sun and created it to shine so long ago

Genesis 1:16 God made two great lights-- the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.

- He has power to bring light and power to take it away
- This is precisely what He did to Egypt for three days... took away all light by filling Egypt with a darkness so thick it could be felt!!

21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-- darkness that can be felt." 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. 23 No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

- This must have been agony and been absolutely terrifying to the Egyptians... like a form of living death
- Imagine the children screaming for their mothers and the mothers weeping and calling, but unable to see them at all
- Not only light but fellowship was taken away... there could be no relationship during those three days

vs. 23 No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days.

- Also immense pain as people undoubtedly stumbled and fell and hurt themselves

- All commerce ended, all transportation ended
- All life came to a halt
- BUT in Israel, there was light by the sovereign choice of God
- Spiritual significance of darkness as a spiritual state:

Involvement in the occult leads to intense spiritual darkness

Isaiah 8:19-22 *When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. 21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.*

Living sinful lives is walking in darkness

1 John 1:5-6 *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

1 John 2:8-11 *Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. 9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

- Spiritual significance of this act of judgment:

John 9:39-41 *Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.*

- A picture of the future judgment in Revelation

Revelation 16:10-11 *The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed*

the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

- Even more important is that this is a prefigurement of final damnation:

Matthew 8:12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Three times in Matthew's gospel, outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth represents hell... a place completely absent of the blessing presence of God... God is light, hell is total darkness

No input, no color, no beauty, no relationship:

vs. 23 No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days.

A place of absolute horror and pain...

This plague was a horrible display of the total absence of God, and a great judgment on their own "light", the false religious system symbolized by the sun-god, Ra

Isaiah 50:10-11 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. 11 But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

Making your own torches = idolatrous false religion

If you walk by your own light, you shall end up lying down in torment, in utter darkness

V. Pharaoh Angrily Relents... Ready for the Final Judgment (vs. 24-28)

24 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, "Go, worship the LORD. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind." 25 But Moses said, "You must allow us to have sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to the LORD our God. 26 Our livestock too must go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to use some of them in worshiping the LORD our God, and until we get there we will not know what we are to use to worship the LORD." 27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. 28 Pharaoh said to Moses, "Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die." 29 "Just as you say," Moses replied, "I will never appear before you again."