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Teaching Notes

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The Plague on the Firstborn

Exodus 11

Exodus 11:1-10 Now the LORD 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. 2 Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold." 3 (The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.) 4 So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. 5 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. 6 There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt-- worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. 7 But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. 8 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. 9 The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you-- so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

I. Plague Announced to Moses, then to Pharaoh (vs. 1)

- Exodus 11 to be read in conjunction with the end of Exodus 10... the end of the plague of darkness
- Note: Verse 8

vs. 8 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.

- Most likely, the plague of darkness still had not been relieved, although clearly Pharaoh could see Moses

- God had already announced the tenth plague to Moses; thus verse 1 and verse 9-10 were spoken by the Lord to Moses before he even went to Pharaoh to respond and end the ninth plague (darkness)

vs. 9-10 *The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you-- so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.*

- So, before Moses even went to end the ninth plague, he was told by God that the tenth plague would be necessary AND successful

vs. 1 *Now the LORD 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.*

- Note: drive you out completely: strong expression... he will have absolutely no desire to restrain you
- Predicted earlier:

Exodus 6:1 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."*

- What's amazing is that later, he desires to pursue them!!! Thus the final destruction of Pharaoh

II. The Command to Plunder the Egyptians (vs. 2)

A. Confusion over KJV Translation

KJV Exodus 11:2 *Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.*

vs. 2 *Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold."*

1. "borrow" implies some kind of deceit on the part of the Israelites
2. However Egyptians certainly would have known that a "borrowing" of jewels by slaves was unheard of and highly irregular... they would never see those jewels again
3. Issue is translation:

B. Predicted Earlier

Genesis 15:12-14 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. 13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Exodus 3:22 Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

C. Worker is Worth His Keep

Exodus 1:14 They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

Exodus 2:11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people.

Matthew 10:10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

What is four centuries of slave labor worth? Some plunder is only just

Also, in effect there has been a battle between the Lord and Pharaoh... booty, spoils, plunder is the reward of the battle!

Very much like Christ's victory at the cross... he wins the victory, we get the spoils

D. Used Later to Build Tabernacle

Exodus 35:21-22 everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.

E. Also Used to Make the Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-4 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." 2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

III. God's Sovereignty Over Hearts and Minds

A. Sovereign over the Neighbors

vs. 3 *(The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)*

1. Totally the opposite of what one would rightly expect!!

Naturally, the Egyptians hated shepherds, which the Jews were

Even more, there is a natural contempt for slaves

2. God controls hearts... has power to make you "favorably disposed"

Genesis 39:4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

Genesis 39:21 the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

Daniel 1:9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel

B. Sovereign over Pharaoh Himself

vs. 9-10 *The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you-- so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.*

Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

IV. The Plague Announced to Pharaoh (vs. 4-6)

4 So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. 5 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. 6 There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt-- worse than there has ever been or ever will be again.

A. Not Mercy: Just Power at that Point

B. Universality of Death

1. Pharaoh mightiest human ruler on earth

2. Largest army... chariots aplenty

Exodus 14:7-9 He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. 9 The Egyptians-- all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops-- pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

Much later, Shishak came with a huge army... just to show the power of Egypt

2 Chronicles 12:1-4 After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. 2 Because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam. 3 With twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen and the innumerable troops of Libyans, Sukkites and Cushites that came with him from Egypt, 4 he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

But Pharaoh's power, and that of his counselors and commanders and nobles... none are able to resist the angel of death

Neither does death spare the lowest Egyptian...

4 So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. 5 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. 6 There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt-- worse than there has ever been or ever will be again.

C. Justice of God

To some this seems unjust, but anything God does is perfectly just, for God LOVES justice

Psalm 9:8 He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.

Psalm 9:16 The LORD is known by his justice; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.

Psalm 11:7 For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.

Psalm 33:5 The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

The cross is God's perfect display of His justice... He would rather have Christ die than allow ANY sin to go unpunished

Romans 3:23-26 "For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

The people we far from guiltless... they had stood by when Pharaoh was carrying out his genocidal order against the Hebrew babies... now it would be their children who would die

Now concerning the death of infants, understand that God does not owe life to anyone. The fact of the matter is that God could prevent infant mortality all over the world, and since He does not, He is directly responsible for killing every infant that ever dies. But God is merciful, and repays sinners according to the works of their hands. So, even though physical death does come to infants, spiritual death is reserved for those who disobey His commands.

Hebrew people later would consent to killing the Jews:

Exodus 14:17 "As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

No one can ever question His justice... everything God does is just...

Revelation 16:4-7 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; 6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." 7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

BUT WE are very unjust to God

God lavishly provides us life, breath, everything else, but we do not love Him, obey Him, thank Him; instead we carry on rebellion against Him

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

D. Goodness and Severity

Romans 11:22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God

V. God Makes a Distinction: Only by Grace

A. Distinction Announced

vs. 7 But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

B. Distinction Described

“... not a dog will bark...”

C. Distinction Guaranteed by Blood of the Passover

Exodus 12:13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Exodus 12:22-23 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

1. Clear indication that the firstborn of Israel ALSO deserved to die
2. Many times again “firstborn belongs to the Lord”

Exodus 13:1-2 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

Exodus 13:15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.'

D. Distinction by Grace Alone

Spiritual state of the Israelites

Leviticus 17:7 They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.

Ezekiel 20:6-10 *On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." 8 "'But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. 9 But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt. 10 Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the desert.*

- 1) Israelites worshiped idols in Egypt
- 2) God warned them to forsake the idols while they were still in Egypt
- 3) Israel did not listen to this rebuke but continued to worship idols in Egypt
- 4) The earlier plagues (in which God does NOT make a distinction between Israel and Egypt... plague of blood, frogs, flies, lice) were perhaps a chastisement for their sins
- 5) The Lord delivered Israel from bondage and brought them out not because of any righteousness of their own, for they were idolatrous and wicked too

Neither did they believe the promises of God:

Exodus 6:6-9 *"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'" 9 Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.*

Deuteronomy 9:4-8 *After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. 5 It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account*

of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 6 Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people. 7 Remember this and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. 8 At Horeb you aroused the LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you.

Romans 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Pink:

They too were idolators, rebellious, unbelieving. The more clearly we perceive the spiritual wretchedness of Israel at this time, the more we shall recognize the absolute sovereignty of that grace that redeemed them. So, too, the more fully we are acquainted with the teaching of Scripture concerning the utter corruption and total depravity of the natural man, the more shall we be made to marvel at the infinite mercy of God toward such worthless creatures, and the more highly shall we value that wondrous love that wrought salvation for us.”

THIS IS HOW WE WERE!!!!

Value the blood shed for you!!