

BIBLE STUDY

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“A WICKED LIFE FOR A WONDERFUL PURPOSE”

Exodus 9:1-16

Exodus 9:1 "Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

Exodus 9:2 "For if thou refuse to let [them]go, and wilt hold them still,"

Again, God demanded the Egyptian king, Let [his] people go, so that they may worship. God told Moses that He will “send” him to Pharaoh, “that I Myself have sent you” (3:10-12). This is the fifth of eight times that Moses demands of Pharaoh “Let my people go” and he obstinately refuses each time (5:1; 7:16; 8:16; 8:17; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3; and 10:4). Pharaoh viewed himself as a god and expressed disdain for Yahweh from the very beginning in 5:2. One must remember that God deserves the right to judge sin and the sinner whenever He desires. The sinner is subject to the wrath of God at any point in his life. God has the right to judge sin in any way He so desires the first time one commits sin. It is really the mercy of God that allows the sinner to continue to live. Pharaoh sinned knowingly, willfully, and continually (9:34). Paul reasoned that God hardened the Pharaoh’s heart in a free and sovereign manner, but not in a capricious or arbitrary way.

Romans 9:14-18

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

The Pharaoh would therefore be compelled to bear full responsibility for that willful and sinful choice (10:7). This hardening of men’s hearts is one way God judges men who resist His will. Thus, He also accomplished His purposes for the people of Israel as noted in Joshua.

Joshua 11:20 “For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.”

Exodus 9:3 "Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which [is] in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: [there shall be] a very grievous murrain."

This was the fifth plague. The Pharaoh’s refusal would bring about a severe plague on the Egyptian livestock in the field. Egypt’s religion was rebuked and ridiculed, because it included the worship of various animals as well as animal-headed deities. God made a “distinction” between the Egyptians and the Israelites: the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. All these various animals would have affected transportation, agriculture, and worship. To this point, there had been no destruction of property or bodily suffering because of Pharaoh’s obstinacy. But all that leniency was about to change. The death of the livestock would have been a severe blow to the Egyptian economy.

Exodus 9:4 "And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all [that is] the children's of Israel."

Exodus 9:5 "And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land."

We see here, again, that God was making a difference between the Egyptians and the children of Israel. Nothing would be hurt in Goshen, where the Hebrews lived. Pharaoh, a few verses back, set the first time, on the morrow. Moses set the next time, on the morrow. Here, God sets the time, tomorrow. God is just, in all His dealings with man. He gives time to repent. Man must respond by repenting; when he doesn't, trouble comes.

Exodus 9:6 "And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one."

Exodus 9:7 "And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go."

These plagues were getting worse and worse. God had specifically spared His own during this plague. Just as Noah was saved in the flood, these cattle of the Hebrews had been saved during the plague. Nevertheless, when Pharaoh saw that none of the Israelite livestock was harmed, he remained unmoved. The thing that amazes me the most in all of this is the patience of the Lord. In the last four plagues, we have seen the problems coming to the people, themselves, and to Pharaoh's house. These pests and the water turning to blood had not really destroyed the wealth of Egypt but had rather been an aggravation. This murrain was an epidemic disease among the animals, that would kill a great portion of them. Notice here, again, each plague got a little worse; and again here, we see the plague affects one of their false gods, the cow. This would deeply hurt the economy of this land, as well. It would hurt their transportation in the horses, asses, and camels. We can see, this was a grievous plague. Just as God gives us chance after chance, He gave Pharaoh plenty of chances to repent, and do what was right. There is a day of reckoning, and God will not always wait. This is all too similar to what is going on in our world today. The sins are getting worse and worse. The people's hearts are getting harder and harder. Few are heeding the warnings of God. There is a day of wrath coming, which is punishment, for not repenting. Just as Pharaoh was headed to a terrible punishment; so are the people who are living away from God, who are not heeding any of the signs that are all around us. Pharaoh couldn't believe that the Israelite cattle were spared, so he sent to be sure. When he found it was true, he still didn't listen, and would not let the people go. Look all around us today at the problems (plagues): Aids, bad water, ozone layer leaving causing skin cancer, etc. I could go on and on. We had better not be like Pharaoh. There is very little time left. Repent, before the wrath of God falls.

Exodus 9:8 "And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh."

Exodus 9:9 "And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt."

Next God directed Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of furnace soot and toss it in the air before Pharaoh. It would become dust over the land and would cause festering boils on both man and beast. These ashes were made with fire. This "ashes" and "dust", probably, just show that God can take things common to our everyday lives and turn them into plagues. This "sprinkling toward heaven" just shows that this plague was not one created by man but sent from God in heaven as punishment. These boils seemed to be of a terrible nature. The description, here, was of sores that were runny and incurable, accompanied with great pain. This was so widespread, that all of Egypt was affected by it, except the Hebrews. This could be similar to radiation sores.

Exodus 9:10 "And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast."

Exodus 9:11 "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians."

This sixth plague could be a warning of the impending danger of death in the final tenth plague. In the verse above, we see this terrible plague brought, just as God said it would be. Here, we see sudden judgement fell on these false prophets (magicians). These boils were hurting so badly, that they could not stay in the presence of Pharaoh, Moses, and Aaron. The sixth plague came with no warning, and even the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils. The boils are referred to again in Deuteronomy 28:35. They were very painful and seriously affected the knees, legs, and soles of the feet, which may explain why they could not stand before Moses. In 8:18 the "magicians" could not "bring forth lice"; now they cannot even stand in Moses' presence. These wonders, as we said before, were in the presence of Pharaoh, so that he could not deny they came from God. With this sixth plague, painful physical suffering visited the Egyptians. Even Pharaoh's magicians could not stand before Moses because they were covered with boils. Yet Pharaoh was defiant, unmoved by the misery of his own subjects.

Exodus 9:12 "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses."

The Lord removed all restraint and gave the king over to his own destructive habits. God finally "supersized" the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. One other place in the Bible, where we see similar happenings, and the people not repenting, is in the Book of Revelation, when the wrath of God falls. This is the first time there was a direct statement that God, himself, had hardened Pharaoh's heart. It seemed God was very angry with Pharaoh and these followers of false gods, the Egyptians (world). This like, all the other plagues, attacked false worship in Egypt. The Egyptians had practiced human sacrifices in the high places and had grabbed foreigners for their sacrifices. Hebrews had, sometimes, been their victims. They would take the ashes of these people and throw them in the wind. The furnace could be symbolic of the slavery of the Hebrews. At any rate, this was a terrible plague. The Pharaoh seemed to not be afflicted by the boils. He was a cruel king, who did not have sympathy for his people, and he did not let the Hebrews go. So far, Pharaoh had gotten off with no personal pain to his body, but he had better prepare for the worst.

Exodus 9:13 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

Exodus 9:14 "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that [there is] none like me in all the earth."

Before unleashing his seventh curse against Pharaoh and his people, God warned him once more to release the Israelites. The message of God never changes. God never changes, either. Here, we see that God was not going to play around with Pharaoh, any longer. This was not for a later time. God would bring these plagues right now in rapid succession. We have no way of knowing the intervals between the other plagues, but we do know that these last plagues were to happen in a short period of time. These plagues would break Pharaoh down. He would not be able to stand against the power of Almighty God. Pharaoh would have to humble himself and admit that God was far superior to all of Egypt's gods. Not only would Pharaoh admit that Egypt's gods were nothing to compare to Jehovah God, but Pharaoh would insist on the Israelites leaving Egypt. If not, he would send all [his] plagues against Egypt, so that the nation would know that there is no one like [the Lord] on the whole earth. Don't miss that with each plague, God was giving Pharaoh an opportunity to humble himself and repent even while he was demonstrating his sovereign power over his creation. But though he extended grace, God would increase the pressure until Pharaoh finally confessed that the Lord was God, and that he (Pharaoh) was not.

Exodus 9:15 "For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth."

Here, we see that God could have destroyed Pharaoh and his people, at any moment He wanted to. God had been more than patient, but He was going to show Pharaoh, and all of these Egyptians, and all the people around Egypt, that God, with a mighty hand, would bring His people out of Egypt. God would show all of that part of the world, that He was the true God, and that all the world was subject to Him. Through his intermediaries God said to Pharaoh, by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and you would have been obliterated. Notice what he does here. It's as if Egypt's king is a petulant child who has talked back to his father one too many times, earning this response: "Do you understand whom you're talking to, young man?" Except, in the biblical case, the situation is incredibly magnified. Parents have limited authority over their children. God has complete, righteous authority over all his creatures. Pharaoh thought he could oppose God and prevent him from accomplishing his will. In reality, the king's life hung by a thread. He existed only by God's mercy.

Exodus 9:16 "And in very deed for this [cause] have I raised thee up, for to shew [in] thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

God, here, told Pharaoh (through Moses and Aaron) that He was the one who made him Pharaoh. God was going to use this very evil world leader to show His supreme power. The world surrounding Egypt would know this in a few days, but the whole world would know of God's power shown to Pharaoh because of it being written in the Bible. So, truly, the whole world does know of God's greatness. I have let you live for this purpose, God continued, to show you my power and to make my name known on the whole earth. Christians often quote the gracious promise of ***Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."*** But there's a flipside to that reality: All things can work together for the bad of those who hate God and who resist his purposes. Make no mistake: God is the sovereign King of the universe, and he will accomplish his kingdom purposes. He has given each person the freedom to cooperate with him or to oppose him. Would Pharaoh submit to God, or would he be run over by God's sovereignty tires? God will be glorified through us or in spite of us. If you cooperate with the sovereignty of God, it does not mean you won't experience hardship and suffering. Rather, it means you can be assured that the good, bad, and ugly of your life will be put into God's blender, ultimately bringing you to the place where he wants you to be. If, by contrast, you rebel against the all-powerful God, understand that you have not escaped his sovereignty. God will still do exactly what he wants. You, however, will be on the wrong side of his sovereignty and will remove yourself from the covering of his blessing. Hail was the seventh plague. It was the first one in the last cycle. Verse 15 is best translated "For by now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you." But He had not, for verse 16 says, and in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up and two reasons are then given: (1) for to shew in thee my power and (2) that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. Paul quoted the verse almost verbatim as an outstanding illustration of God's sovereignty (Rom. 9:17). The resulting declaration of God's name "throughout all the earth" is incorporated into the Song of Moses in 15:14–16 and is graphically illustrated in Joshua 2:9–11.

QUESTIONS

1. How many times did Moses demand of Pharaoh "Let my people go"?
2. Why did Pharaoh not comply?
3. What difference would be shown between Egypt and these Hebrews?
4. Where did the Hebrews live?
5. What was the ultimate end of the cattle?
6. Where did Pharaoh check to see, if their cattle were killed?
7. What was Moses to do with the ashes?
8. Who was to be present, when they did this?
9. What plague would this bring?
10. What false teaching did this plague attack?

11. Who had the boils?
12. These plagues attacked what?
13. The furnace could be symbolic of what?
14. Why did God keep giving Moses the same message to give Pharaoh?
15. Whose heart would all of the plagues fall on?
16. What would these last plagues do to Pharaoh?
17. Would Pharaoh let them go?
18. How would God bring His people out?
19. Why did God make Pharaoh ruler of Egypt?
20. God was going to use this evil ruler to do what?