

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

3.4: THE PLAGUES ON EGYPT

1. WATER TURNED TO BLOOD

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” Exodus 7:19-21.

“Again Moses and Aaron entered the lordly halls of the king of Egypt. There, surrounded by lofty columns and glittering adornments, by the rich paintings and sculptured images of heathen gods, before the monarch of the most powerful kingdom then in existence, stood the two representatives of the enslaved race, to repeat the command from God for Israel's release.

“The king demanded a miracle, in evidence of their divine commission. Moses and Aaron had been directed how to act in case such a demand should be made, and Aaron now took the rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh and it became a serpent. The monarch sent for his “wise men and the sorcerers,” who “cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.” Then the king, more determined than before, declared his magicians equal in power with Moses and Aaron; he denounced the servants of the Lord as impostors, and felt himself secure in resisting their demands. Yet while he despised their message, he was restrained by divine power from doing them harm.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 263.

“Moses and Aaron were directed to visit the riverside next morning, where the king was accustomed to repair. The overflowing of the Nile being the source of food and wealth for all Egypt, the river was worshiped as a god, and the monarch came thither daily to pay his devotions. Here the two brothers again repeated the message to him, and then they stretched out the rod and smote upon the water. The sacred stream ran blood, the fish died, and the river became offensive to the smell. The water in the houses, the supply preserved in cisterns, was likewise changed to blood. But “the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments,” and “Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.” For seven days the plague continued, but without effect.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 265.

2. FROGS

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants. And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come

up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.” Exodus 8:1-6.

“Again the rod was stretched out over the waters, and frogs came up from the river, and spread over the land. They overran the houses, took possession of the bedchambers, and even the ovens and kneading troughs. The frog was regarded as sacred by the Egyptians, and they would not destroy it; but the slimy pests had now become intolerable. They swarmed even in the palace of the Pharaohs, and the king was impatient to have them removed.

“The magicians had appeared to produce frogs, but they could not remove them. Upon seeing this, Pharaoh was somewhat humbled. He sent for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.” After reminding the king of his former boasting, they requested him to appoint a time when they should pray for the removal of the plague. He set the next day, secretly hoping that in the interval the frogs might disappear of themselves, and thus save him from the bitter humiliation of submitting to the God of Israel. The plague, however, continued till the time specified, when throughout all Egypt the frogs died, but their putrid bodies, which remained, polluted the atmosphere.

“The Lord could have caused them to return to dust in a moment; but He did not do this, lest, after their removal, the king and his people should pronounce it the result of sorcery or enchantment, like the work of the magicians. The frogs died, and were then gathered together in heaps. Here the king and all Egypt had evidence which their vain philosophy could not gainsay, that this work was not accomplished by magic but was a judgment from the God of heaven.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 265, 266.

3. LICE

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.” Exodus 8:16, 17.

“At the command of God, Aaron stretched out his hand, and the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh called upon the magicians to do the same, but they could not. The work of God was thus shown to be superior to that of Satan. The magicians themselves acknowledged, “This is the finger of God.” But the king was still unmoved.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 266.

“How was it in the case of Pharaoh? The statement in Holy Writ is that God hardened his heart; and, at every repetition of light in the manifestation of God's power, the statement is repeated. Every time he refused to submit to God's will, his heart became harder and less impressible by the Spirit of God. He sowed the seed of obstinacy, and God left it to vegetate. He might have prevented it by a miracle, but that was not His plan.

“This case is placed on record for our benefit. Just what took place in Pharaoh's heart, will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved.” Testimonies 5, 119, 120.

“We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. Oh, what a harvest of sinful indulgences is preparing for the sickle!

“When secret prayer and reading of the Scriptures are neglected today, tomorrow they can be omitted with less remonstrance of conscience. There will be a long list of omissions, all for a single grain sown in the soil of the heart. On the other hand, every ray of light cherished, will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self, will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life.” Testimonies 5, 120.

4. FLIES

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be. And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.” Exodus 8:20-24.

“Appeal and warning were ineffectual, and another judgment was inflicted. The time of its occurrence was foretold, that it might not be said to have come by chance. Flies filled the houses and swarmed upon the ground, so that “the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.” These flies were large and venomous; and their bite was extremely painful to man and beast. As had been foretold, this visitation did not extend to the land of Goshen.

“Pharaoh now offered the Israelites permission to sacrifice in Egypt; but they refused to accept such conditions. “It is not meet,” said Moses; lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?” The animals which the Hebrews would be required to sacrifice were among those regarded as sacred by the Egyptians; and such was the reverence in which these creatures were held, that to slay one, even accidentally, was a crime punishable with death. It would be impossible for the Hebrews to worship in Egypt without giving offense to their masters.

“Moses again proposed to go three days' journey into the wilderness. The monarch consented, and begged the servants of God to entreat that the plague might be removed. They promised to do this, but warned him against dealing deceitfully with them. The plague was stayed, but the king's heart had become hardened by persistent rebellion, and he still refused to yield.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 266, 267.

“As the Lord put a division between Israel and the Egyptians after the first three plagues had fallen upon the land of the Pharaohs, so in the time of trouble He says, “Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past. For, behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” “The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her

assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for above all the glory shall be a covering." Story of the Seer of Patmos, 277.

5. MURRAIN

"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. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, 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. 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. And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land. 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. 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." Exodus 9:1-7.

"A more terrible stroke followed, murrain upon all the Egyptian cattle that were in the field. Both the sacred animals and the beasts of burden - cows and oxen and sheep, horses and camels and asses were destroyed. It had been distinctly stated that the Hebrews were to be exempt; and Pharaoh, on sending messengers to the home of the Israelites, proved the truth of this declaration of Moses. "Of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one." Still the king was obstinate." Patriarchs and Prophets, 267.

"God had declared concerning Pharaoh, "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." There was no exercise of supernatural power to harden the heart of the king. God gave to Pharaoh the most striking evidence of divine power; but the monarch stubbornly refused to heed the light. Every display of infinite power, rejected by him, rendered him the more determined in his rebellion. The seeds of rebellion that he sowed when he rejected the first miracle, produced their harvest. As he continued to venture on in his own course, going from one degree of stubbornness to another, his heart became more and more hardened, until he was called to look upon the cold, dead faces of the first-born.

"God speaks to men through His servants, giving cautions and warnings, and rebuking sin. He gives to each an opportunity to correct his errors before they become fixed in the character; but if one refuses to be corrected, divine power does not interpose to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit. A further rejection of light places him where a far stronger influence will be ineffectual to make an abiding impression.

"He who has once yielded to temptation, will yield more readily the second time. Every repetition of the sin lessens his power of resistance, blinds his eyes, and stifles conviction. Every seed of indulgence sown will bear fruit." Patriarchs and Prophets, 268.

6. BOILS

"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. 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. 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. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians." Exodus 9:8-11.

“Moses was next directed to take ashes of the furnace, and “sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.” This act was deeply significant. Four hundred years before, God had shown to Abraham the future oppression of His people, under the figure of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. He had declared that He would visit judgments upon their oppressors, and would bring forth the captives with great substance. In Egypt, Israel had long languished in the furnace of affliction. This act of Moses was an assurance to them that God was mindful of His covenant, and that the time for their deliverance had come.

“As the ashes were sprinkled toward heaven, the fine particles spread over all the land of Egypt, and wherever they settled, produced boils, “breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.” The priests and magicians had hitherto encouraged Pharaoh in his stubbornness, but now a judgment had come that reached even them. Smitten with a loathsome and painful disease, their vaunted power only making them contemptible, they were no longer able to contend against the God of Israel. The whole nation was made to see the folly of trusting in the magicians, when they were not able to protect even their own persons.

“Still the heart of Pharaoh grew harder. And now the Lord sent a message to him, declaring, “I will at this time send all My plagues upon your heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.... And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power.” Not that God had given him an existence for this purpose; but His providence had overruled events to place him upon the throne at the very time appointed for Israel's deliverance. Though this haughty tyrant had by his crimes forfeited the mercy of God, yet his life had been preserved that through his stubbornness the Lord might manifest His wonders in the land of Egypt.

“The disposing of events is of God's providence. He could have placed upon the throne a more merciful king, who would not have dared withstand the mighty manifestations of divine power. But in that case the Lord's purposes would not have been accomplished. His people were permitted to experience the grinding cruelty of the Egyptians, that they might not be deceived concerning the debasing influence of idolatry.

“In His dealing with Pharaoh, the Lord manifested His hatred of idolatry, and His determination to punish cruelty and oppression.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 267, 268.

7. HAIL

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” Exodus 9:22-26.

“A plague of hail was next threatened upon Pharaoh, with the warning, “Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.” Rain or hail was unusual in Egypt, and such a storm as was foretold had never been witnessed. The report spread rapidly, and all who believed the word of the Lord gathered in their cattle, while those who despised the warning left them in the field. Thus in the midst of judgment the mercy of God was displayed, the people were tested, and it was shown how many had been led to fear God by the

manifestation of His power. The storm came as predicted, thunder and hail, and fire mingled with it, "very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." Ruin and desolation marked the path of the destroying angel. The land of Goshen alone was spared. It was demonstrated to the Egyptians that the earth is under the control of the living God, that the elements obey His voice, and that the only safety is in obedience to Him.

"Moses knew that the contest was not ended. Pharaoh's confessions and promises were not the effect of any radical change in his mind or heart, but were wrung from him by terror and anguish. Moses promised, however, to grant his request; for he would give him no occasion for further stubbornness. The prophet went forth, unheeding the fury of the tempest, and Pharaoh and all his host were witnesses to the power of Jehovah to preserve His messenger. Having passed without the city, Moses "spread abroad his hands unto the Lord; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth." But no sooner had the king recovered from his fears, than his heart returned to its perversity.

"Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs before him. And that thou may tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know how that I am Jehovah." The Lord was manifesting His power, to confirm the faith of Israel in Him as the only true and living God." Patriarchs and Prophets, 269, 270.

A True Story: It had been a foggy afternoon. I was off the Atlantic Coast in my fishing boat. I always went out alone, and had been busy working my nets. As evening came on, I noticed that another fishing boat was anchored nearby. I saw that he was also working alone. Although I did not know who he was, I waved and noted that he did not respond. He looked drunk. I went below deck, exhausted from the day's work and fell asleep in my clothes. I was too tired to take them off.

It must have been 11 or 12 o'clock when I heard the yelling. Up on deck, I ran to the railing and saw him in the water. Too drunk to know better, he had fallen overboard. The cold water had started him shouting. Quickly I stripped down and dove overboard. It was obvious he would be gone in another minute. How I ever got him on board his fishing boat, I'll never know. I carried him below deck, got dry clothes on him, and put him into his bunk. I made him some food, and stayed until he was warm and sleeping soundly.

Utterly wearied from it all, I did not want to disturb him; so, instead of starting the engine I dove back into the cold Atlantic and swam to my own boat. I almost didn't make it. Exhausted, I fell into my bunk, but with the happy knowledge that I had saved his life. Twice I had come close to drowning that night, –but a man had been saved from drowning. A man I didn't know.

Next morning broke clear and sunny. I awoke about eight, and went up on deck. My new friend was leaning on the rail. 'Hi' I called out cheerily. How are you doing this morning?' With a growl, he told me to shut my mouth.

'But I'm your best friend!' I cried. 'I saved your life last night!' At this, he called me a liar and threw every curse word at me that he knew. I went below deck and put my face in my hands and wept. It was then for the first time in my life--that I really understood the love of God in trying to save men. For I had seen a little of what it cost Him, and what they had given Him in return. And I realized that in that love is our only hope. That incident took place nearly a hundred years ago, but it points us to a deep truth that has changed lives—and can bring a deep happiness to yours.