

DAY BY DAY

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

5.10: PLAGUES AND FREEDOM

1. LOCUSTS

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.” Exodus 10:12-15.

“Moses warned the monarch that if he still remained obstinate, a plague of locusts would be sent, which would cover the face of the earth, and eat up every green thing that remained. They would fill the houses, even the palace itself; such a scourge, he said, as “neither thy fathers, nor thy father's fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day.”

“The counselors of Pharaoh stood aghast. The nation had sustained great loss in the death of their cattle. Many of the people had been killed by the hail. The forests were broken down, and the crops destroyed. They were fast losing all that had been gained by the labor of the Hebrews. The whole land was threatened with starvation. Princes and courtiers pressed about the king, and angrily demanded, “How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go that they may serve the Lord their God: know thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?”

“Moses and Aaron were again summoned, and the monarch said to them, “Go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go?” The answer was, “We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.”

“The king was filled with rage. “Let the Lord be so with you,” he cried, “as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now you that are men, and serve the Lord; for that you did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.” . . .

“Moses now stretched forth his rod over the land, and an east wind blew, and brought locusts. “Very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.” They filled the sky till the land was darkened, and devoured every green thing remaining.

“Pharaoh sent for the prophets in haste, and said, “I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only.” They did so, and a strong west wind carried away the locusts toward the Red Sea. Still the king persisted in his stubborn resolution.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 270, 271.

2. DARKNESS

“And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” Exodus 10:21-23.

“The people of Egypt were ready to despair. The scourges that had already fallen upon them seemed almost beyond endurance, and they were filled with fear for the future. The nation had worshiped Pharaoh as a representative of their god; but many were now convinced that he was opposing himself to One who made all the powers of nature the ministers of His will. The Hebrew slaves, so miraculously favored, were becoming confident of deliverance. Their taskmasters dared not oppress them as heretofore. Throughout Egypt there was a secret fear that the enslaved race would rise and avenge their wrongs. Everywhere men were asking with bated breath, What will come next?

“Suddenly a darkness settled upon the land, so thick and black that it seemed a “darkness which might be felt.” Not only were the people deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive, so that breathing was difficult. “They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. The sun and moon were objects of worship to the Egyptians; in this mysterious darkness the people and their gods alike were smitten by the power that had undertaken the cause of the bondmen. Yet fearful as it was, this judgment is an evidence of God's compassion and His unwillingness to destroy. He would give the people time for reflection and repentance before bringing upon them the last and most terrible of the plagues.

“Fear at last wrung from Pharaoh a further concession. At the end of the third day of darkness he summoned Moses, and consented to the departure of the people, provided the flocks and herds were permitted to remain. “There shall not a hoof be left behind,” replied the resolute Hebrew. “We know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither.” The king's anger burst forth beyond control. “Get thee from me,” he cried, “take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shall die.” Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 271, 272.

3. DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN

“And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.” Exodus 12:29-33.

“Moses had been forbidden, on pain of death, to appear again in Pharaoh's presence; but a last message from God was to be delivered to the rebellious monarch, and again Moses came before him, with the terrible announcement: “Thus says the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill, and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that you may know how that the Lord does put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

And all these thy servants shall come down unto Me, and how down themselves unto Me, saying, Get Thee out, and all the people that follow Thee; and after that I will go out." Exodus 11:4-8. Patriarchs and Prophets, 273, 274.

"At midnight "there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead." All the first-born in the land, "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle," had been smitten by the destroyer. Throughout the vast realm of Egypt the pride of every household had been laid low. The shrieks and wails of the mourners filled the air. King and courtiers, with blanched faces and trembling limbs, stood aghast at the overmastering horror.

Pharaoh remembered how he had once exclaimed, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." Now, his heaven-daring pride humbled in the dust, he "called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." The royal counselors also and the people entreated the Israelites to depart "out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men." Patriarchs and Prophets, 279, 280.

4. THE PASSOVER

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." Exodus 12:21-23.

"Here was a work required of the children of Israel, which they must perform on their part, to prove them and to show their faith by their works in the great deliverance God had been bringing about for them. In order to escape the great judgment of God which he was to bring upon the Egyptians, the token of blood must be seen upon their houses. And they were required to separate themselves and their children from the Egyptians, and gather them into their own houses, for if any of the Israelites were found in the houses of the Egyptians, they would fall by the hand of the destroying angel. They were also directed to keep the feast of the passover for an ordinance, that when their children should inquire what such service meant, they should relate to them their wonderful preservation in Egypt. That when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast, he passed over their houses, and not one of the Hebrews was slain that had the token of blood upon their door-posts. And the people bowed their heads and worshiped, grateful for this remarkable memorial given to preserve to their children the remembrance of God's care for his people." 3 Spiritual Gifts 223.

"The passover pointed backward to the deliverance of the children of Israel, and was also typical, pointing forward to Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for the redemption of fallen man. The blood sprinkled upon the door-posts pre-figured the atoning blood of Christ, and also the continual dependence of sinful man upon the merits of that blood for safety from the power of Satan, and for final redemption. Christ ate the passover supper with his disciples just before his crucifixion, and the same night instituted the ordinance of the Lord's supper, to be observed in commemoration of his death. The passover had been observed to commemorate the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. It had been both commemorative and typical. The type had reached the antitype when Christ, the Lamb of God without

blemish, died upon the cross. He left an ordinance to commemorate the events of his crucifixion." 3 Spiritual Gifts, 225.

[After the foot-washing] "Jesus then took his place again at the table, whereon were placed bread and unfermented wine, which arrangements had been made according to Christ's directions. He appeared very sorrowful. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise, also, the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Verily, I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

"Here our Saviour instituted the Lord's supper, to be often celebrated, to keep fresh in the memory of his followers the solemn scenes of his betrayal and crucifixion for the sins of the world. He would have his followers realize their continual dependence upon his blood for salvation. The broken bread was a symbol of Christ's broken body, given for the salvation of the world. The wine was a symbol of his blood, shed for the cleansing of the sins of all those who should come unto him for pardon, and receive him as their Saviour." 3 Spiritual Gifts, 227.

5. LEAVING EGYPT

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." Exodus 12:40-42.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Genesis 15:13, 14.

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest, peradventure, the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

"The Lord knew that the Philistines would oppose their passing through their land. They would say of them, They have stolen away from their masters in Egypt, and would have made war with them. Thus God, by bringing them by the way of the sea, revealed himself a compassionate God, as well as a God of judgment. The Lord informed Moses that Pharaoh would pursue them, and he directed him just where to encamp before the sea. He told Moses that he would be honored before Pharaoh and all his host. After the Hebrews had been gone from Egypt some days, the Egyptians told Pharaoh that they had fled and would never return to serve him again. And they mourned because they had permitted them to leave Egypt. It was a very great loss for them to be deprived of their services, and they regretted that they had consented to let them go. Notwithstanding all they had suffered with the judgments of God, they were so hardened by their continual rebellion that they decided to pursue the children of Israel and

bring them back by force into Egypt. The king took a very large army, and six hundred chariots, and pursued after them and overtook them while encamped by the sea.” 3 Spiritual Gifts, 230-231.

6. CAMPED BY THE RED SEA

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.” Exodus 14:1-4.

“We are told that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. The repeated refusals of the king to hear the word of the Lord, called forth more direct, more urgent and forcible messages. At each rejection of light, the Lord manifested a more marked display of his power; but the king's obstinacy increased with every new evidence of the power and majesty of the God of heaven, until the last arrow of mercy was exhausted from the divine quiver. Then the man was utterly hardened by his own persistent resistance. Pharaoh sowed obstinacy, and he reaped a harvest of the same in his character. The Lord could do nothing more to convince him, for he was barricaded in obstinacy and prejudice, where the Holy Spirit could not find access to his heart. Pharaoh was given up to his own unbelief and hardness of heart. Infidelity produced infidelity. When Pharaoh hardened his heart on the first exhibition of God's power, he made himself more capable of a second rejection of God's power. Pride and stubbornness held him in bondage, and hindered him from acknowledging the warnings of God. It was contrary to the nature of Pharaoh to change after once having given expression to his purpose not to believe.

“What Pharaoh has done, will be done again and again by men until the close of probation. God destroys no man; but when a man stifles conviction, when he turns from evidence, he is sowing unbelief, and will reap as he has sown. As it was with Pharaoh, so it will be with him; when clearer light shines upon the truth, he will meet it with increased resistance, and the work of hardening the heart will go on with each rejection of the increasing light of heaven. In simplicity and truth we would speak to the impenitent in regard to the way in which men destroy their own souls.

“You are not to say that God is to blame, that he has made a decree against you. No, he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and to the haven of eternal bliss. No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. God follows men with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests upon the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power; and thus he will pass from one stage of indifference to another, until, at last, the light will fail to impress him, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God.” Review and Herald, February 17, 1891

7. THE VICTORY AT THE RED SEA

“And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for

the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Exodus 14:10-14

"The Egyptian host was triumphing through that night that the children of Israel were again in their power. They thought there was no possibility of their escape, for before them stretched the Red Sea, and their large armies were close behind them. In the morning, as they came up to the sea, lo, there was a dry path, the waters were divided, and stood like a wall upon either side, and the children of Israel were half way through the sea, walking on dry land.

"They waited a while to decide what course they had better pursue. They were disappointed and enraged, that, as the Hebrews were almost in their power, and they were sure of them, an unexpected way was opened for them in the sea. They decided to follow them. "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels, that they drove them heavily, so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

"The Egyptians dared to venture in the path God had prepared for his people, and angels of God went through their host and removed their chariot-wheels. They were plagued. Their progress was very slow, and they began to be troubled. They remembered the judgments the God of the Hebrews had brought upon them in Egypt, to compel them to let Israel go, and they thought that God might deliver them all into the hands of the Israelites. They decided that God was fighting for the Israelites, and they were terribly afraid, and were turning about to flee from them, when "the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. There remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." 3 Spiritual Gifts 234-235.