

Open Heart, Open Bible

Exodus and John's Gospel

Linking Theme: Redemption

Passage for weekly readings (week 16):

Exodus ch.'s 7 – 12

The making of Moses

Moses is still painfully aware of his inadequacies as the Lord insists that he will be His mouthpiece, but the statement in 7 v.1 is of great significance – “**I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet.**” Pharaoh will see and experience God through Moses. The main way in which people experience God today is through other believers. He worked through people then as He works through people now. The people through whom God works are usually painfully aware of their inadequacies!

I find myself wondering as I read the passage just why all the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians were necessary, why the Lord didn't go straight for the slaying of the firstborn. He had promised to redeem Israel with “**mighty acts of judgment**”, so each plague was precisely in the plan and purpose of the Lord. Each outbreak demonstrated His omnipotence in some way, and each represented an increase in severity, as far as the Egyptians were concerned. The first two plagues could be counterfeited by the Egyptian magicians, but the others could not (7 v.22, 8 v.7, 8 v.18). The first four plagues produced discomfort, but the succeeding ones devastated the economy of the nation, producing disease and death. Interesting also that it is not until the sixth of the outbreaks that we read that “**the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**”. Until then, Pharaoh himself had been doing the hardening! (see 9v.12). David Pawson makes an important point in his commentary on Exodus that every one of the plagues was directed specifically against one of the many false gods worshipped by the Egyptians. He lists them as:

- Khuum: the guardian of the Nile
- Hapi: the spirit of the Nile
- Osiris: the Nile was believed to be the bloodstream of Osiris
- Heqt: a frog-like god of resurrection
- Hathor: a mother goddess who was a cow
- Apis: a bull of the god Ptah, a symbol of fertility
- Minevis: also a bull, the sacred bull of Heliopolis
- Imhotep: the god of medicine
- Nut: the sky goddess
- Seth: the protector of crops
- Re, Aten, Atum and Horus: all sun gods

Pharaoh himself was said to be divine. (Ref. “Unlocking the Bible” p. 111)

In each of these plagues, the living God was therefore demonstrating His reality as opposed to the folly of the Egyptians' idolatrous system of religion. V.'s 15&16 of ch.9 are key – both Moses and Pharaoh have been raised up by God to spearhead the conflict of these days. A Christian leader will have an anti-Christian opponent. The positive God-ordained side of the plagues is that:

- a) the whole earth might know of the power of His name (9 v.16), and
- b) Israel as His chosen nation might fear and worship Him, down the generations (10 v.2).

After the infestation of locusts, Pharaoh again repents, as he had done earlier (see 9 v.27), but, poor man, the Lord hardens his heart again! (10 v.20). God can not only command millions of locusts, He can also harden an individuals' heart! The penultimate plague of darkness emphasises the complete breakdown of relationships between Moses and Pharaoh – but one more meeting does in fact take place.

Ch.11 describes that meeting, in which Moses tells the Egyptian ruler that all of his firstborn will die, man or beast – **“then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel”** (v.7). In Pharaoh, we see a man who has become completely detached from the people he leads because of stubborn pride. Only the loss of his firstborn son would break this, for that pride was rooted in the continuation of his royal dynasty.

Exodus 12 is one of the most important chapters in the whole of the Pentateuch. It describes the release of the people of God after 430 years of bondage, and determines the arrangement of their calendar year (v.2). The Passover meal will be eaten on the fourteenth day of the first month (v.6), remembering the blood that was smeared on the doorframes of their houses. V.13 says:

“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”. V.23 says much the same thing.

After the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins, “because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt” (v.17). Yeast came to be a Biblical symbol of wickedness (1 Corinthians 5 vs.6-8), and the essence of this Feast is the separation of God's people from the worldly contamination of Egypt. There was also a very practical application in Israel's circumstances in that bread without yeast required no fermentation in the baking process and could therefore be prepared much more quickly, enabling a quick getaway! (v.'s 33,34&39). The ongoing celebration of these Festivals (Passover and Unleavened Bread) is to keep Israel's deliverance very much at the forefront of the national memory, as one generation succeeds another.

The “vigil” that the Lord kept on the night of the Passover (12 v.42) is a clear foreshadowing of the vigil kept by our Lord in Gethsemane (Matthew 26 v.36). In the first instance, Israel was being redeemed; in the second, the Lamb of God was being offered up for us, and we were being redeemed (26v.45). The Passover celebration was only for the people of Israel. Any “aliens” who shared in it must have fulfilled the requirement of circumcision. The observation of the Feast is compulsory, and legal compliance is absolute. The Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel!

Food for thought / discussion / prayer

1) In the sequence of plagues which devastated Egypt, the Lord was demonstrating to her people the folly of her idolatrous religious systems, and the powerlessness of her many gods. He (the Lord) wanted, and insisted upon, complete separation between the two nations because of this. That’s why Paul gets very strong when writing to New Covenant believers that such separation is still vitally necessary (see Ephesians 4 v.17, and following verses), and why John concludes his first letter by telling his “children” to keep themselves from idols. Think of a few idols which distract our spiritual vision, and let’s pull them down, fully enthroning the Lord Jesus Christ.

2) Following on from 1) above, if we do dethrone those things which have distracted us from our worship of Jesus, it can create a vacuum which must be filled rapidly. God intends that His Holy Spirit fills that vacuum and brings true restoration (Luke 11 v.13), not some other less wholesome spirit (Luke 11 v.’s 24 – 26). Let’s ask for a new infilling of God’s Spirit, so that we can worship Him in freedom!

3) I said in last week’s notes that redemption means “to recover by expenditure of effort or by a stipulated payment”. What, from ch.12, was the payment Israel had to make for her redemption to become effective? What payment has God himself made for our redemption to be effective now? (1 Peter 1 vs.18,19 and Rev.1 v.5).

Next week’s passage: Exodus 13 – 19