

The Battle of the Gods: part 1

3.15.2020

Message 10

Exodus Series

How should the Church respond to the virus?

A. First, treat it seriously because the world is.

1. If the world sees us dismissing their fears, we lose the opportunity to minister to them from compassion and authority.
2. Jesus, who was without sin, ministers to us from a place of empathy and compassion.
3. We should carry this same attitude towards those around us.
4. If this situation proves to be overblown, we will be thankful for God's protection and our wise management of resources.
5. If this situation ends up causing great pain and destruction, we don't want to the world saying we didn't take their pain and destruction seriously.
6. Remember, **the fear is real even if the threat is imagined.**

B. Second, prepare yourself for an incredible opportunity.

1. Not since 9/11 has one thing captured the full attention of the American people.
2. I'm praying that this will become one of our greatest hours, as people in darkness seek out light.
3. Now is the time to prepare yourself spiritually through prayer, faith, and worship.

C. Third, put on the hope of Jesus Christ.

1. It is said that a person can live 3 minutes without air, 3 hours without shelter, 3 days without water and 3 weeks without food.
2. But we can't live 3 seconds without hope.
3. Draw deeply from the wells of hope we have in Jesus.
4. We will minister in this time from the position of hope we have in Jesus.

D. Fourth, now is the time to shine not hide.

1. We will use wisdom.
2. We will obey the direction of our leaders, for this is what the Bible tells us to do.
3. But now is the time to be the Church, so let us walk in the power and the authority of Jesus.

Exodus 6:28–7:25 (CSB)

²⁸On the day the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹he said to him, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I am telling you."

³⁰But Moses replied in the LORD's presence, "Since I am such a poor speaker, how will Pharaoh listen to me?"

7 The LORD answered Moses, "*See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet.* ²You must say whatever I command you; then Aaron your brother must declare it to Pharaoh so that he will let the Israelites go from his land. ³But I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put my hand into Egypt and bring the military divisions of my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them."

⁶So Moses and Aaron did this; they did just as the LORD commanded them.

⁷Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

⁸The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹“When Pharaoh tells you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.’ ” ¹⁰So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent. ¹¹But then Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers—the magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same thing by their occult practices. ¹²Each one threw down his staff, and it became a serpent. But Aaron’s staff swallowed their staffs. ¹³However, Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

THE FIRST PLAGUE: WATER TURNED TO BLOOD

¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hard: He refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. ¹⁶Tell him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness, but so far you have not listened. ¹⁷This is what the LORD says: Here is how you will know that I am the LORD. Watch. I am about to strike the water in the Nile with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. ¹⁸The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it.”

¹⁹So the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over their rivers, canals, ponds, and all their water reservoirs—and they will become blood. There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers.”

²⁰Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded; in the sight of Pharaoh and his officials, he raised the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile was turned to blood. ²¹The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad the Egyptians could not drink water from it. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt.

²²But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their occult practices. So Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ²³Pharaoh turned around, went into his palace, and didn’t take even this to heart. ²⁴All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink

because they could not drink the water from the river. ²⁵Seven days passed after the LORD struck the Nile.

Introduction:

A. We now enter to the most famous part of Exodus.

1. Over the next few chapters, an epic battle will rage.
2. 10 plagues will be unleashed upon Egypt and Pharaoh.
3. God will make His power known in a way that is unmistakable.

B. As we view the first 9 plagues, I won't be going into incredible detail.

1. What I want you to see is God's power, His sovereignty, and His faithfulness.
2. Just like the Israelites did in Egypt, God's people today need to see God in his power, sovereignty, and His faithfulness again.
 - a. We need a renewed picture of God!
 - b. The world is losing its mind because the Virus has become bigger than the Healer.

3. Our world is living in fear.

- a. The Church is living in fear as well.
- b. Yet, the God who brought Pharaoh to his knees while protecting God's own people is the same God we call upon today.

C. The purpose of the Exodus story in Israel's history was to remind them of what God had done in the past.

1. Today we are going to be reminded of God's power so we can trust Him even more.
2. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6)

3. Some of us came in today not pleasing God.
4. I want you to leave pleasing Him.

1. Who is the real God?

A. The battleground for the plagues is the question, "who is God?"

1. This is not a battle between Israel and Egypt.
2. This is not even a battle between Moses and Pharaoh.
3. This is the battle between YHWH and Pharaoh.
4. When the plagues are finished, the world will know that YHWH is the true God.

B. **God didn't need to use the plagues to deliver Israel.**

1. God could have, in a word, delivered Israel without issue.ⁱ

2. But God had a purpose behind the plagues.

3. *Exodus lists 4 main reasons for the plaguesⁱⁱ:*

a. God killed Pharaoh's firstborn because Pharaoh wouldn't release God's firstborn, Israel.

b. The plagues showed Moses and the people of God God's power to do what He promised.

c. The Egyptians would know that YHWH was God.

d. God wanted to demonstrate his uniqueness.

C. Pharaoh believed he was God.

1. The Egyptians believed Pharaoh was God.

2. So God used the plagues to demonstrate who the real God.

a. Notice that although Egypt had persecuted God's people, God wanted the Egyptians to know that He was God. 7:5

b. Even in the midst of the terrible, God was revealing himself to the world.

c. When we experience and go through bad things, wouldn't it be great for the world around us to see God in us?

d. Wouldn't it be incredible if every time we face difficulty, we look for opportunities for redemption around us?

3. What would happen if, in the upcoming days, the Church looked for opportunities to share Jesus with our world?

a. What if we anticipated Jesus' soon and imminent return with the same diligence as the Corona virus?

b. The threat of being sick with Corona is only a possibility, but Jesus' return is a guarantee.

c. Let us prepare for the most important things.

Let's take a look at a few details from today's text.

2. The showdown begins with Moses and Aaron in Pharaoh's court.

A. Exodus makes a point to tell us that Moses is 80 years old and Aaron is 83.

1. These are not two young pups.

2. God is using men of mature age to confront Pharaoh.

3. That God is using older men to challenge the young and virile Pharaoh demonstrates that God can use anyone and everyone to accomplish His purpose.

B. The first sign Moses and Aaron demonstrated was not a plague but a demonstration featuring the Staff of God.

1. Just as God had told Moses in Exodus 4, Moses was to throw down the staff before Pharaoh and, it would turn into a serpent (snake).

2. *I learned this week that the Hebrew word used in Exodus 7:9 is not a word for snake but a young crocodile or large lizard.ⁱⁱⁱ*

- a. This difference doesn't matter a whole lot.
- b. Egypt had snakes and crocodiles.
- c. But I kind of get excited about the idea of God using a young crocodile to demonstrate His power and authority.
- d. It is very likely that snakes were involved but the Hebrew is vague.

C. As soon as Aaron threw down the staff and the serpent appeared, Pharaoh's wisemen and sorcerers did the same thing.

1. Somehow, the wisemen of Egypt could copy or counterfeit this particular sign.

- a. We don't know how because it isn't necessary to know how.
- b. What is demonstrated is that the battle between the One true God and the false god of Egypt has escalated.

2. The Jews had a tradition that named the two sorcerers of Egypt as Jannes and Jambres.

- a. The Apostle Paul quoted this tradition in 2 Timothy 3:8-9
- b. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth. They are men who are corrupt in mind and worthless in regard to the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be clear to all, as was the foolishness of Jannes and Jambres.

3. The Apostle Paul was warning Timothy about false or counterfeit teachers.

- a. In the church Timothy pastored, false teachers were sowing corruption and foolishness among God's people.

b. They were presenting a Gospel and a power that was not of God's.

c. This is how the Apostle Paul understood what was happening in Exodus 7.

D. If Pharaoh was God's "nemesis" or opposite in Egypt, then Jannes and Jambres were opposite Aaron.

1. Notice I didn't say Moses.

2. When Moses stood before Pharaoh, Moses represented God to Pharaoh.

a. Through Moses, God spoke.

b. Through Moses, God acted.

c. Moses represented God to Pharaoh.

3. The importance here is this: Pharaoh was trying to demonstrate that he WAS the God of Egypt.

a. It's a classic case of "whatever you can do, I can do better".

b. Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to submit to God.

c. **When we refuse to submit to God, we lose.**

1. This true for us personally and nationally.

2. The opposite of submission is rebellion and rebellion leads us away from God.

E. Pharaoh's unwillingness to submit led to his defeat.

1. As Jannes and Jambres counterfeit the miracle, something crazy happens.

2. It says "Aaron's staff swallowed" the other staffs.

3. As a Cajun would say, "God's gator ate Pharaoh's gator".

3. God unleashes the first plague.

A. The battle of the staffs happened in front of Pharaoh and his officials.

1. It didn't affect the people of Egypt.
2. But the first plague would affect everyone.
3. The word for "plague" means a "blow" or a "strike".^{iv}
4. The first blow was against the Nile and all the water of Egypt.

B. The Nile river is absolutely essential to the land of Egypt.

1. Egypt depends upon the flowing and flooding of the Nile in order to produce crops in the midst of the desert.
2. And the Egyptians, being polytheistic, had several gods associated with the Nile.

a. The most important was Hep or Hapi.

b. Hapi was portrayed as a man with women's breasts and protruding belly. The full breasts and stomach indicate fertility and his ability to nourish the land through the Nile's annual floods...Hapi was recognized as one of the greatest Egyptian gods and he was declared not only the maker of the universe, but the creator of everything from which it and all things sprang.^v

3. The significance of this plague was to strike down the idea that the god of the Nile was the maker of the universe and source of life.

C. God humiliates Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt by turning the Nile into blood.

1. Because of this plague, the fish died, the river rotted, and no one could drink for around 7 days.
2. Every day for a week, the people of Egypt arose and were confronted by the God of Israel.

3. As they looked upon the once beautiful river, all they could see was blood.
 - a. All they could smell was the smell of death.
 - b. Their mouths and bodies began to suffer from the lack of water.
4. Yet, Pharaoh didn't take this to heart.
5. He still acted in defiance and rebellion against the God who has the power to turn the Nile into blood.

4. The plagues remind us that whatever we put before God will be humiliated.

A. All of us are prone to idolatry.

1. We may not have a god of the Nile or the Sun, but we have plenty of false gods.
2. Gods of comfort, security, pleasure, and self-reliance.
3. We walk around in pride, the same sin that caused Satan to fall from heaven and Pharaoh to be defeated.
4. **Whatever you elevate above God will be humiliated.**
 - a. If comfort is what is most important to you, God will challenge your comfort.
 - b. If your kids are more important than God, there will be disruption in your family.
 - c. If financial security is more important than God, stock-markets will crash and budgets will be busted.
5. **God permits no other god to stand before Him.**

B. There is coming a day when all gods will be submitted before Him.

1. There is coming a day when God will again unleash His wrath upon those who submitted themselves to false gods instead of the God of the Universe.

2. *In the book of Revelation, we see great and terrible plagues unleashed, plagues that echo those of Exodus.*

a. Plagues of darkness, death, famine, and destruction.

b. Water will be turned to blood and locusts will descend.

3. Just as God humiliated Pharaoh, Jannes, and Jambres, in that future day God will humiliate and condemn The Anti-Christ, the beast, and the false prophet, and everything that set themselves up as god.

4. What God has done in the past He will do again.

a. So let the Church hear the echoes of Exodus ringing in their ears.

b. Let us look upon the landscape and see the hand of God.

c. Let us read from God's Word and see that God is not idle and He is not mocked.

d. As the world listens, and hears of wars, rumors of wars, pestilences, and plagues, we hear the sound of Jesus' soon return.

e. We hear the sounds of deliverance being prepared and readied.

C. Today, America is concerned about the power of a virus but we are oblivious to God's power to save and heal.

1. As we look back to the plagues of Egypt, Revelation causes us to look to the future.

2. Picture with me the fear people will have, knowing that only God can stop the destruction.

a. When God brings judgment, there are no immunizations, there are no vaccines, or any relent in the plague.

b. There is coming a day when God's wrath will be poured out upon sinful humanity.

c. A day of no more grace, no more love, and no more mercy.

d. A day that is infinitely more terrible than even the plagues of Egypt.

3. As the historic pastor Jonathan Edwards once preached, "It is a terrible thing for sinners to fall into the hands of an angry God."

5. Our passages in Exodus remind us of God's power to save and God's power to destroy.

A. I'm afraid that is something that we are missing today in the Church.

1. Even in the messages that I have preached, this week I have become aware of how utterly different this series of messages will be.

2. **The American Church doesn't spend much time reflecting upon the wrath of God.**

a. If I can say this: What we are dealing with in America is not, yet, the wrath of God.

b. What God has predicated and declared for the future in Revelation is far more terrible than anything that has ever visited humanity.

3. *Just as the Egyptians had no doubt about God being the author of their plagues, in the days of God's wrath the world will have no doubt that God is the cause.*

B. Yet, the same God who brings plagues and judgment brings deliverance for those who love Him.

1. Many of us are struggling with fear or its cousin anxiety.

a. Fear is a natural response.

b. Faith is a supernatural response.

c. What God wants for all of us is for faith to override our fear.

d. That can't happen if we don't fully trust Jesus.

2. Moments of crises shine a light upon our heart.

a. Time and again, Exodus talks about Pharaoh's heart.

1. The decisions of Pharaoh were the result of the condition of his heart.

2. We will do what our heart has settled.

b. Perhaps over the past few days you have found yourself fearful and anxious.

1. If so, let me just say that Jesus loves you.

2. God was patient and loving toward Moses as Moses waffled from fear to faith.

3. God will be loving toward you as well, for He loves you just as much as He loved Moses.

d. Yet, **This crisis is revealing the hearts of people.**

e. And, **I'm afraid, that what it is revealing is that the Church is just as sinful, faithless, and scared as the world.**

C. What I ask for us all to do today is to invest time in God's presence.

1. Whatever your need is today: more faith, protection, divine healing, wisdom, in just a moment I want to invite you to join me around the front so we may pray together.

2. God has always poured out double portions of grace and anointing in times of crises.

3. The greater the pain, the greater the power.

4. I believe we all need greater power today.

ⁱ Schnittjer, Gary. Torah Story. Pg. 225.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ The signs before pharaoh. Of the three signs given to Moses, while all may have been performed before Israel, only one (the rod becoming a snake) is here mentioned as performed before pharaoh. A second (water turned into blood) becomes a plague (Exod. 7:20). Possibly the third sign has some relation to Exodus 9:10, the skin plague. As predicted, the sign has no effect on pharaoh, the more so as his own 'scientists' are able to reproduce it. They are able to produce 'blood' and 'frogs' later, but not apparently any further plagues.

9. Serpent: not the word of Exodus 4:3, but tamnîn, which might be, as suggested above, a young crocodile; possibly a large lizard or water-monitor. The Hebrews did not always make fine distinctions in natural history.

R. Alan Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 95.

^{iv} Ibid

^v <http://www.egyptianmyths.net/hapi.htm>