

# The Battle of the Gods part 3

3.29.2020

Message 12

Week 2 of Corona

Exodus: 8:16-9:12

## **THE THIRD PLAGUE: GNATS**

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron: Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land, and it will become gnats throughout the land of Egypt."

<sup>17</sup>And they did this. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and when he struck the dust of the land, gnats were on people and animals. All the dust of the land became gnats throughout the land of Egypt. <sup>18</sup>The magicians tried to produce gnats using their occult practices, but they could not. The gnats remained on people and animals.

<sup>19</sup>"This is the finger of God," the magicians said to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

## **THE FOURTH PLAGUE: SWARMS OF FLIES**

<sup>20</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh when you see him going out to the water. Tell him: This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. <sup>21</sup>But if you will not let my people go, then I will send swarms of flies against you, your officials, your people, and your houses. The Egyptians' houses will swarm with flies, and so will the land where they live. <sup>22</sup>But on that day I will give special treatment to the land of Goshen, where my people are living; no flies will be there. This way you will know that I, the LORD, am in the land. <sup>23</sup>I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will take place tomorrow."

<sup>24</sup>And the LORD did this. Thick swarms of flies went into Pharaoh's palace and his officials' houses. Throughout Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarms of flies. <sup>25</sup>Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go sacrifice to your God within the country."

<sup>26</sup> But Moses said, "It would not be right to do that, because what we will sacrifice to the LORD our God is detestable to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what the Egyptians detest in front of them, won't they stone us? <sup>27</sup> We must go a distance of three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he instructs us."

<sup>28</sup> Pharaoh responded, "I will let you go and sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but don't go very far. Make an appeal for me."

<sup>29</sup> "As soon as I leave you," Moses said, "I will appeal to the LORD, and tomorrow the swarms of flies will depart from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. But Pharaoh must not act deceptively again by refusing to let the people go and sacrifice to the LORD." <sup>30</sup> Then Moses left Pharaoh's presence and appealed to the LORD. <sup>31</sup> The LORD did as Moses had said: He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people; not one was left. <sup>32</sup> But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also and did not let the people go.

Exodus 9:1–12 (CSB)

#### THE FIFTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF LIVESTOCK

**9** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him: This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. <sup>2</sup> But if you refuse to let them go and keep holding them, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD's hand will bring a severe plague against your livestock in the field—the horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that the Israelites own will die." <sup>5</sup> And the LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." <sup>6</sup> The LORD did this the next day. All the Egyptian livestock died, but none among the Israelite livestock died. <sup>7</sup> Pharaoh sent messengers who saw that not a single one of the Israelite livestock was dead. But Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he did not let the people go.

#### THE SIXTH PLAGUE: BOILS

<sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of furnace soot, and Moses is to throw it toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. <sup>9</sup> It will become fine dust over the entire land of Egypt. It will become festering boils on people and animals throughout the land of Egypt." <sup>10</sup> So they took furnace

soot and stood before Pharaoh. Moses threw it toward heaven, and it became festering boils on people and animals. <sup>11</sup>The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians. <sup>12</sup>But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had told Moses.

## Introduction:

A. Today's passage records 4 of the plagues that God brought upon Egypt.

1. Today, I've chosen not to address each plague individually or in great detail.
2. Instead, I want to show you a big picture perspective of what God is doing in these signs or plagues.
3. It is very easy for us to focus too much on the details and miss the overall message that God intends for us.

B. Again, I think it is incredible that God, many months ago, led us to the book of Exodus.

1. Recently we have experienced a big hail storm.
2. We are doing service online because of the threat of a virus that continues to sweep through the United States and the World.
3. These are unique and crazy days we are living in.
4. Although they do not compare to the ferocity of the Exodus story, our current situation does make these stories feel a little more real (don't they).

C. Today, I want to focus our attention upon 3 Significant changes that happen in these verses:

1. The magicians of Egypt can no longer copy the miracles.
2. Moses enters into the role God had for him originally as the prophet: Moses becomes greater, Aaron less.

3. The Lord distinguishes between Israel and the land of Goshen and Egypt.

Here is what I would like for you to do to stay engaged with this message:

When I say something that speaks particularly to you, would you make a note in the comments?

Maybe share online some of your favorite quotes from the sermon or share on your timeline how God is speaking to you. Make sure you tag me and the church so I can read your responses later.

### 3 Changes that happen:

1. First Change: The magicians of Egypt can no longer match God's miracles.

A. The previous miracles, the magicians were able to copy.

1. Why they wanted to turn more water into blood, I don't know.
2. Why they wanted to make more frogs doesn't make sense either.
3. But starting at the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague, the Gnats, is a plague that the false religions of Egypt could not duplicate.

B. The word for gnats only occurs here and could be sand fleas or mosquitoes.

1. But no matter what they are, the plague still serves as a painful and annoying expression of God's wrath.
2. I imagine most of us have been "ate" up with mosquitos or been attacked by a swarm of gnats or other bugs.
3. But this particular plague, and the flies that followed, would have disrupted life by biting, buzzing, and annoying the daylight out of the people.

C. But the significance here is that, for the first time, Egyptians recognize that God was involved.

1. Think about this: As long as we can duplicate the situation, we don't have to recognize God.
  - a. If money can fix the problem, we don't need miracles.
  - b. If we can duplicate the sign, we don't have to give glory to God.
2. But God will not be mocked or duplicated.
  - a. So God starts sending plagues that could not be copied or mocked by Pharaoh's Egyptian magicians.
  - b. **Though our world may try, the real power of God cannot be duplicated.**

D. Is it possible that you are looking for power in all the wrong places?

1. As a country, we won't turn to God as long as we can print money.
2. We won't repent as long as we can fix our own problems, create our own destinies, and heal our own wounds.
3. But eventually, every person, every community, and every nation must realize that God's power is not like our power.
4. There are things that only God can do.
5. There are miracles only God can perform.
6. There are situations only God can solve.
7. Our responsibility is to learn this lesson early and often.
8. Don't wait to bow your knee to Jesus in some future display of God's wrath.
9. Instead, trust God out of a grateful heart and not a hardness of heart like Pharaoh did.

**First Change: The magicians of Egypt can no longer match God's miracles.**

## 2. Second Moses finally embraces the role God had for him.

A. Moses had made all kinds of excuses to not do and not be who God called Him to.

1. Moses did not want to represent God before Pharaoh.
2. So, as a concession, God permitted Aaron to do speak and act for Moses.
3. Just because God permits something, it doesn't mean it was God's will.
4. It was never God's perfect will for Aaron to represent God to Pharaoh.
  - a. Aaron was to be the priest.
  - b. Moses was to be the prophet.

B. Finally, through this section, Aaron becomes less and Moses steps into his role.

1. Moses becomes the one speaking to Pharaoh.
2. Moses calls forth the signs.
3. Moses stands before Pharaoh as God's prophet.
4. Moses embraces his calling.

C. Sometimes, it takes us a while to learn to walk in the shoes God made for us.

1. It can be frustrating to discover what God has created us for.
2. It can be discouraging learning to be the man or woman God has created you to be.
3. But then there comes a day when you are doing something you didn't think possible.
  - a. Or you are leading in a way you previously couldn't have before.

b. Next thing you know, the training wheels are off and you are rolling in God's plan for your life.

c. And you look back and realize that the "Aaron" you needed before, the thing you thought you couldn't do without, was far behind you and its just you and God.

d. And that is an awesome place to be.

D. For some of you, it is time to start trusting and doing what God has called you to do.

1. Some of us are called to be Aarons.

2. Some of us are called to be Moses.

3. When you try to fulfill someone else's calling, you will fail every-time.

a. Later on, when Moses goes up the mountain, Aaron learns this well.

b. They ask Aaron to lead while Moses is away and Aaron does a terrible job.

c. Because Aaron was never meant to lead Israel.

**4. Some of you watching today are trying to be someone God has never asked you to be, and that is why you are failing.**

a. As a church and as a community, we need you to be the person God has called and created you to be.

b. Don't try to be someone else.

c. If that is hard for you to do, as it is for me, ask the Holy Spirit to help and empower you.

d. The Holy Spirit doesn't empower you to be someone else, He empowers you to be who God called you to be.

1. Think about it:

2. Peter didn't become John.

3. John didn't become Paul.
4. Be you, filled with the Holy Spirit.
5. You PLUS the Holy Spirit is better than you being someone else.

### 3. The Lord distinguishes between Israel and the land of Goshen and Egypt.

A. We have to be very careful applying this section to our present situation.

1. Earlier there were people prophesying and declaring that the Corona Virus would not touch Christians.
  - a. And misapplying verses like Exodus 8:23 is how we get false prophecies and declarations like this.
  - b. When we do not read our Bibles intelligently, we get stupid applications.
2. Right now, some of the godliest people I know are being personally impacted by the Corona Virus.
  - a. And blaming it on a lack of faith only hurts people.
  - b. So what is it that this passage teaching?
3. Before you can understand the teaching, you have to understand the passage.

B. Beginning with the Fourth Plague, and through the rest, God brings judgment upon only the Egyptians while completely protecting the Israelites.

1. "The purpose is to show by this setting-apart that the plague is no mere accident, but instead God's judgment upon Egypt".<sup>1</sup>
2. In Egypt, swarms of bugs happen.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 101.

- a. Hail happens.
- b. Livestock dying.
- c. But when it happens only to the Egyptians, everyone realizes that it is God's judgment not a natural disaster.

3. I know many people are beginning to be scared by what is going around us.

- a. A virus around the world.
- b. A crazy hailstorm yesterday.
- c. Even locusts are devastating Eastern Africa.
- d. Some are afraid that we are living out Revelation.
- e. But, I believe that although we are living in the Last Days, we are not experiencing God's wrath for a couple of reasons:

1. First, when God's wrath is poured out there will be no confusion as to the origin.

2. Second, when God's wrath is poured out there will again be a separation between God's people and the world because Paul said we are not appointed for God's wrath.

C. Interesting Detail: In the plague of the flies, Moses declares that "tomorrow" I will make a distinction and the flies will come upon Egypt but not Israel's home.

1. Can you imagine waiting for God's judgment to strike?

- a. I think we can.
- b. Here in Licking, we are surrounded by counties being greatly impacted by the Corona Virus.
- c. There is an uncertainty about tomorrow because we don't know what is going to happen.

d. In a small sense, we can understand what it must have felt like to be in Egypt the day before the 4<sup>th</sup> plague.

2. Yet, God declares "Tomorrow" these signs will take place.

a. Revelation speaks of a day to come when God pours out His wrath in ways that Exodus foreshadows.

b. In that day, no amount of preparation will be sufficient.

c. Knowing that the wrath of God is coming will drive people to fear and extremes.

d. Church, can I say that I believe that we should capture the urgency and anticipation of Jesus' soon return.

1. We should be motivated to tell people about Jesus.

2. We should be compelled to proclaim God's love and His power to our world.

3. Jesus will return again, someday, and we need to take that return seriously.

3. The separation of Israel from Egypt presents with a hard truth.

a. A hard truth of Scripture is that God doesn't always remove His people from days of adversity. Sometimes, He leads them through it.

b. While God drew a distinction between His people and Egypt, Israel could still see what God was doing.

c. God never promised to remove you from all difficulties and problems. He did promise that He would never leave or forsake you in the middle of those problems.

4. The book of Hebrews, which takes the form of a written sermon, encourages believers like you and I to endure whatever comes our way:

Hebrews 11:32–12:2 (CSB)

<sup>32</sup>And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, <sup>33</sup>who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight. <sup>35</sup>Women received their dead, raised to life again. Other people were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup>Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. <sup>38</sup>The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup>All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup>since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

#### THE CALL TO ENDURANCE

**12** Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, <sup>2</sup>keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- a. Because Jesus did not avoid the cross but instead endured the cross, we can endure anything this sinful world throws at us.
- b. With Jesus, defeats are turned into victories.
- c. With Jesus, the helpless endure and attain a better resurrection.
- d. With Jesus, obstacles and pain become temporal and temporary.

e. With Jesus, we truly can do all things because He strengthens us.

### Application:

A. First thing I ask of you: This week, would you be mindful of how God is changing and using you?

1. Maybe post on Facebook a few ways God is changing and using you during this disruption? (Tag me so I can celebrate with you).
2. Be aware of those areas that you sense God's calling but you are still fearful of.
3. Be open to God using you in those areas and trust God for the results.

B. Second, speak life this week instead of death.

1. Speak truth and not lies.
2. Share God's Word and not your opinion.
3. Be intentional about the thoughts you entertain.

C. Ask God for ways to display His glory this week.

1. The purpose of the plagues was to display God's glory in Egypt.
2. God has placed you where you are at so His glory can be displayed through you.
3. Don't waste this opportunity give God glory to a world that is in desperate need of Jesus.

Prayer:

God, help us display your glory in the middle of our troubled world.