

Life Lesson 24
The Plagues
Text: Exodus 8-10

Introduction

Moses traveled back to Egypt to lead the Israelites away from the cruel taskmasters. He must have been frightened, and we know he felt that he wasn't strong enough to do it. God promised to do it, though, so Moses went.

The Story

Moses showed the elders of Israel the signs God had given him. When they saw the staff turning into a snake and back, and Moses' hand covered in leprosy, they believed him. They were so glad that God said He would set them free!

Then it was time for the hard part – talking to Pharaoh.

“God has given us a message for you,” Moses told the great king. “He said, ‘Let my people go so they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness.’”

“Who is this God?” Pharaoh demanded. “I don't know Him, and I won't let you go. You must not have enough to do to keep you busy. You're lazy. That's why you want to go.”

Pharaoh told the taskmasters to stop giving the Hebrews straw for making the bricks.

“Let them gather the straw themselves,” Pharaoh said. “But they still have to make the same amount of bricks.”

The poor Israelites! Their hard job was made even harder. Were they ever mad at Moses! They only believed God while they could see what He was doing. When God didn't answer right away, or in the way they thought He should, they quit trusting Him.

Sometimes it will seem to you that God isn't answering, that He has forgotten His promise. You can trust God to do what is best for you, even when you don't understand what He is doing. Moses and the Israelites found that out!

God told Moses to go back to Pharaoh again. This time he threw his rod down before Pharaoh and, to the surprise and horror of the king, the rod turned into a snake.

"Call my magicians!" Pharaoh shouted.

"We can do that, too," they said. They threw sticks down on the ground and their sticks appeared to turn into snakes, too. It was just a trick, though. The magicians' sticks looked like snakes, but Moses' snake chased after them and ate up the fake snakes.

The next morning Moses, obeying God's command, met Pharaoh as he went down to the river.

Moses said, "Here's a message from God. He said, 'You won't let the Israelites go to worship in the wilderness, so I'm going to turn all the water in the land into blood.'"

Moses and Aaron held their rods out over the water and, right before Pharaoh's eyes, the water turned to blood. What a horrible curse for them! They had to dig wells to find water to drink because all the water in Egypt was turned to blood. The fish died and there was a terrible smell all through the land. Only in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived was there fresh water.

The magicians could do a trick that made it look like they were turning water into blood, too. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He wouldn't let them go.

The next thing God did was to send a horrible plague of frogs.

Frogs aren't very scary. If someone said, "I'm going to send some frogs after you," you probably would shrug and say, "So what?" The Egyptians even had a frog god they worshipped.

They found out that frogs could be a whole lot of trouble! There were frogs everywhere. You couldn't walk without stepping on a frog. There were frogs in the beds and frogs in the dishes on the table. They even got into the bread dough when the women tried to bake bread. Can you imagine biting into a piece of bread and finding a frog?

The magicians had a frog trick, too, but Pharaoh wasn't too impressed.

"All right," he said. "Take away the frogs and you can go into the wilderness."

God made all the frogs die, and the Egyptians raked them into big piles. Did they ever stink! After they were gone, Pharaoh changed his mind.

Next, God sent a plague of lice. There were itchy bugs everywhere – on animals and on people, too. The magicians tried to do a lice trick, but they couldn't.

"This is the finger of God," the magicians told Pharaoh.

Pharaoh still hardened his heart.

Next, God sent a plague of flies, but Pharaoh still said, "no."

God sent a plague on the cattle of Egypt. All the cattle of the Egyptians died, but not one of the cattle of the Israelites were harmed. They escaped every one of the plagues.

When Pharaoh still refused to let them go, God sent another plague. This was a painful one! Boils came up all over all the people and animals. The magicians couldn't come and stand before Pharaoh because they had boils on their feet.

These plagues were horrible, but there were worse ones to come. God made a terrible hailstorm come up over Egypt. It killed all the crops in the field and all the trees. It was a hailstorm like you have never seen, because there was fire mixed with the hail.

\ Pharaoh said they could go, but as soon as God took the plague away, he changed his mind again. God sent locusts next to eat up everything the hail hadn't killed. Again Pharaoh hardened his heart.

God sent a horrible thick darkness over the land. For three days the sun didn't shine during the day and the moon didn't shine at night. It was dark everywhere, except in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel lived. This was especially terrifying, because the main God of the Egyptians was the sun-god. By the time this plague was over they saw and understood that all their gods were without power to help them.

There was one more plague to come. It was the most horrible and terrifying one of all!

The Life Lesson

God has several lessons for us from this story. For one thing, God had everything under control. It didn't look that way to the Israelites. It seemed to them that Pharaoh kept messing up God's plan and that they were worse off than before Moses came back. God knew that Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go right away. In fact, the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He planned to show His power to the world and the stubborn king was just part of that plan.

Sometimes we put other things before God in our hearts. They become gods to us, like the river god and the frog god were to the Egyptians. God loves us enough to let those gods fail us, so we will trust only Him.

That's what God wants – for us to love Him with all our hearts and to trust Him,
no matter how troublesome and disappointing things look to us sometimes.

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Review Questions

What did Pharaoh do first when Moses asked him to let God's people go to worship God in the wilderness?

He said they should work harder and made them gather the straw for the bricks they made.

What was the first plague God sent on the Egyptians?

He turned the water of the Nile into blood.

What was the second plague?

Frogs

What two plagues involved bugs?

Lice and flies

What happened to the cattle?

They got sick and died. (cattle plague)

What painful plague did God send?

Boils

Why couldn't the magicians try to make boils?

They had boils on their feet and couldn't stand.

What two plagues destroyed the crops?

Hail and Locusts

What was the frightening ninth plague?

Thick darkness

