

Text: Exod. 11:1-10, 12:29-36

Title: "Plague ten: the fall of Egypt"

Time: 9/13/20 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Manetho was an Egyptian historian who in the third century BC wrote a history of Egypt. His history includes a paragraph on the Pharaoh Dudimose (Grk: Tutimaos), who reigned roughly 80 years after the birth of Moses and so is understood to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus account according to the new chronology of Egyptologist David Rohl. Manetho records in that paragraph the following historical account about this Pharaoh:

"In his reign, for what cause I know not, God smote us (the Egyptians). And, unexpectedly, from the regions of the east, invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land. By main force they easily seized it without striking a blow" [quoted in David Rohl, *Exodus - Myth or History?*, p. 156]. This historian is describing how the Hyksos occupation of Egypt began.

Reading this account, the agnostic Rohl is struck by its use of the word *God* especially. He notes that the word is the singular *God* and not the plural *gods*, and he concludes that this especially makes Manetho's account "remarkably similar" to the account in Exodus: "So the disaster which befell Egypt during the reign of Dudimose resulted in an invasion of foreigners who were able to conquer Egypt easily, apparently because Egypt was unable to resist militarily."

Manetho describes the fall of a defenseless Egypt to Hyksos invaders who were able to conquer and oppress their nation "without striking a blow." What can account for this history? Rohl correctly understands that that the conditions

described by the text of Scripture match well that extra-biblical historical account and explain its unique features. We have come to the tenth plague, and with this last of the plagues, Egypt falls completely defenseless before its enemies. I want us to focus on four things this morning from our passage about the fall of Egypt.

I. The fall of Egypt is powerfully executed by the LORD (11:1, 9-10).

Translation note: Our understanding of the sequence of events in this chapter must reconcile Moses's declaration in 10:29 ("I will see thy face again no more") with the fact of 11:8 that describes Moses's departure from Pharaoh in great anger. Those who deny the infallibility of the Bible and its inerrancy claim that what we have here are two different authors whose accounts conflict.

The best way to reconcile the verses, however, is simply to translate the first verb of verse 1 as a past perfect tense [Celia Millward, *Handbook for Writing*, 2nd ed., p. 15] rather than as a past tense, so we would translate, "And the Lord had said unto Moses" the content of vv. 1-2, meaning that it was during the three days of darkness in Egypt and light in the homes of Israel that the Lord had said these things to Moses, prior to his being summoned by Pharaoh in 10:24. Understood this way, 11:4-8 is a continuation of the interview that began at the end of chapter 10. Moses is angry when he tells Pharaoh that he would no more see his face and leaves him (10:29, 11:8). These are the same departure.

The same translation help applies to verses 9-10 as well, for "the Lord had said" these things to Moses long before they happened (4:21-23). He had said that Pharaoh would not listen. He had said that because Pharaoh would not listen,

GOD's wonders would be multiplied in Egypt. He had said that Israel was His firstborn, and failure to release Israel would cost Egypt their firstborn. And He had backed up what He said by hardening Pharaoh's heart in judgment after Pharaoh had repeatedly hardened his own heart against the will of the LORD.

Application: The fall of Egypt is executed by the LORD, and it is executed by the LORD because Pharaoh would not listen. There would be one more plague, and when that plague was finished, Pharaoh would not only listen to the request for a three-day worship-journey, he would instead insist that Israel leave Egypt altogether (v. 1). What began as a request for worship would become the complete exodus of Israel from Egypt, and it would be this way because Pharaoh, God's enemy, would not listen to Him.

GOD is never threatened by the sinner's unbelief and refusal to listen. This rejection of truth never eliminates the truth. C.H. McIntosh: "If men will not have the truth when it is put before them, they shall assuredly have a lie. If they will not have Christ, they shall have Satan; if they will not have heaven, they shall have hell" (2.128-129).

Unlike the previous nine plagues, the final judgment of Egypt is executed directly and personally by the LORD. Moses's staff and Aaron's assistance are no longer utilized for this final blow. Even so, God the Father has committed all judgment to His Son. The Lamb of God who died shall be the final judge of all who refuse to trust Him as their Lord and Savior (John 5:22). It is the One who suffered God's judgment for sinners who will be the final judge of them.

II. The fall of Egypt is faithfully proclaimed by Moses (11:2-8).

Illustration: After Pearl Harbor and America's entrance into WW2, the federal government set up ten Japanese internment camps between 1942 and 1945, where Japanese Americans were held simply because they were of Japanese descent. No similar camps were constructed for Americans of German descent, perhaps because there had been no German version of Pearl Harbor. Ken Burns's film on WW2 interviews some of these Americans about their experiences in the camps, and it was clear from those interviews that many of the Americans who were treated this way struggled with mixed emotions of anger as well of genuine love for their nation, the United States of America.

Application: I thought of their emotion as I contemplated what it must have been like for Moses to be the one GOD had chosen to proclaim the message of the fall of Egypt to that nation. Once a princely war hero, Moses had grown up undoubtedly loving many Egyptians as his adopted people. It is Moses who writes of the favor and respect from the Egyptians that the LORD gave the Israelites and himself (v. 3). His anger against Pharaoh undoubtedly was fueled by a certain return of feelings of favor and respect for the Egyptian people, every home of which was about to be touched with the death of a firstborn son, the household heir.

Still, Moses faithfully proclaimed. Notice three details:

1. "Thus saith the LORD" is an important detail (v. 4). We who are sent as witnesses of the Lord into a world of lies must be careful to tell people what the Lord has said in His Word. Moses does not get distracted from the task at hand, which was to tell them what the LORD has said.
2. "The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" is an important detail (v. 7). Many who desire to be witnesses for Christ in our day believe that it is necessary

to erase as much of the difference between Egypt and Israel, or between the world and the local church, as possible, in order to see more people saved. The clarity of the difference between Egypt and Israel was an important part of God's gracious warning to Egypt, however. We see the same must be true in the age of the church through the example of the Jerusalem church, which had seen Ananias and Sapphira fall down dead for lying to the Holy Spirit: "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:13-14).

3. "All the people" is an important detail (v. 8). Moses had "all the people" and "these thy servants" in mind when the emotion of anger against the one damning their firstborn arose in his heart. We must remember that our ministry as witnesses is a ministry to people whom God designed to be a special object of His love. When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion (Matt. 9:36). When Paul saw Athens, his spirit was moved within him when he saw the entire city given to idolatry (Acts 17:16). God can still use a Jonah, but Jonah was rebuked by the Lord for forgetting that Nineveh was filled with people, some of whom did not yet know their right hand from their left, and even some animals: "Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jon. 4:10-11).

III. The fall of Egypt tragically destroys her people (12:29-33).

Illustration: In my study of these verses, I have had to resist the influence of the *Ten Commandments* movie, which made such an enormous impression on me when I was a child. In that movie, some of the Egyptian firstborn are saved because someone runs ahead of the death angel with the Pass-over lamb's blood and hits an Egyptian home with it.

Application: As much as I would love to image such a scenario, it is pretty clear from our account that no Egyptian home went untouched by the death of the firstborn (v. 30). Just as Moses predicted, the occupants of these homes finally take matters into their own hands. They bypass Pharaoh and go straight to Israel, urging them to hasten their departure. They cry out, "We are all dying!" (v. 33).

We have never experienced the pain of God's judgment that fell on Egypt in the middle of that night, but what they understood to be true about themselves is equally true about us, our families, our town, and everyone on this planet. "We are all dying!" C.H. McIntosh: "'It is appointed unto men once to die.' This cannot be avoided. Man may seek to hide his humiliation in various ways, --to cover his retreat through the valley of death in the most heroic manner possible, --to call the last humiliating stage of his career by the most honorable titles he can devise, --to gild the bed of death with a false light, --to adorn the funeral procession and the grave with the appearance of pomp, pageantry, and glory, --to raise above the mouldering ashes a splendid monument, on which are engraven the records of human shame, --all these things he may do; but death is death after all, and he cannot keep it off for a moment, or make it aught else than what it is, namely, 'the wages of sin'" (2.129).

The final fall of Egypt tragically destroys her people, and ours will destroy us too, for death is the wages of our sin.

“But” – the verse goes on – “the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Life instead of death; that is the difference the Lord puts between His people and those who reject Him. On which side of the line will you be? Will you trust Him and receive the free gift of eternal life? Or will you reject Him and His free gift of eternal life? “We are all dying,” and there is only one way out.

IV. The fall of Egypt frees her slaves (12:34-36).

Illustration: In her study of the Middle Kingdom poem, “Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage,” translator Miriam Lichtheim concluded that this work by Ipuwer, which remembers some of the ten plagues of Egypt, was a work of fantasy that could not have been historically true. She says so for the following reason: “The description of the chaos in the Admonitions is inherently contradictory, hence historically impossible. On the one hand the land is said to suffer from total want; on the other the hand, the poor are described as having become rich, of wearing fine clothes, and generally of disposing of all that once belonged to their masters” [quoted by Rohl, 152].

Clearly Madam Lichtheim’s observation is not a reason for rejecting the historicity of Ipuwer’s account, but rather a reason for embracing it as historical verification of the historicity of Moses’s account here in Exodus. Those who had been oppressed and pillaged in Egypt as slaves for centuries now plundered their oppressors. The fall of Egypt frees her slaves. God rescues His people from racist chattel slavery, which is always judged by Him as sin.

Conclusion: From the very start, the ten plagues of Egypt were all about GOD’s love for His firstborn son, and what He desired for him (Exod. 4:21-23). The prophet Hosea

would reflect on this truth, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son” (Hos. 11:1). The apostle Matthew tells us that when the little boy Jesus moved with his parents from Egypt to Galilee after the death of those who sought the child’s life, He was fulfilling the type we have before us. Egypt falls, God’s firstborn comes out of Egypt, and so Jesus Christ is ultimately victorious over those who would destroy Him.

Jesus is the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:16), and those who are saved in Him are the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23), joint heirs with Christ. This world, ruled by the unseen pharaoh of this world, seeks to oppress and enslave the church of God’s firstborn. But soon, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). He shall reign forever and ever, and our pharaoh with his Egypt shall be plundered, just as the Egyptian overlords were centuries ago. This is our hope to continue the work. “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching