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**C0614 – April 5, 2006 – Exodus 11 & 12 – The Tenth Plague**

After the three cycles of three plagues Egypt lay in ruins but that is not the end of the plagues. Let's pick up the story with the stiff statement of Pharaoh in 10:28 and Moses retort in 10:29.

**Exodus 10:28-29** Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" <sup>29</sup> Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"

It seems from Moses words that they will never see one another again. Yet later it appears that they do see one another. For example, the confrontation in 11:4-8 which resulted in Moses storming out from Pharaoh in hot anger. Second, Moses and Aaron meet with Pharaoh after the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in 12:31. How can these confrontations be explained in light of the fact that Moses said he would never see Pharaoh again? Well, first, the confrontation in 11:4-8 probably took place during the same discussion and not a later one (cf 11:9-10). Second, the confrontation of Moses and Aaron after the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in 12:31 can be explained by the fact that what Moses meant was that he would not come to Pharaoh as he had before; before he had come with a gracious opportunity to let the people go. Only after grace was extended and rejected did God judge. What Moses means is that he would never come this way to Pharaoh again. When Moses came this last time he only came to hear that Pharaoh had permitted them to leave, and really it is a command to get out of town.

So, the events of 11:1-10 occur on the same visitation as that recorded at the end of chapter 10.

**A. YHWH's Pre-Departure Instructions (11:1-3)**

**Exodus 11:1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.**

**<sup>2</sup> "Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."**

**<sup>3</sup> The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses *himself* was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, *both* in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.**

**Now the LORD said to Moses.** These instructions were possibly given to Moses sometime before this confrontation or during the confrontation. The revelation **"One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here.** Up until this point Moses did not know how many judgments would have to come on Pharaoh and Egypt before he let them go. But now he knows the final number is ten. After this judgment the judicial hardening of Pharaoh's heart will have served its purpose of multiplying God's signs and wonders so that YHWH's name would be proclaimed through all the earth (9:13). The final **plague** will be so great that **When he lets them go, he will surely drive them out from Egypt completely.** It will not be mere permission but a command to rise up in the middle of the night and get out of town (Exod 12:30, 31, 33).

Before they leave, YHWH gives the instructions in verse 2. **"Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."** This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Gen 15:14 when God said "they will come out with many possessions" and also in Exod 3:22. Now, notice what the **articles** are made of; they are **of silver and gold.** Why do you think these two elements are mentioned? Why not iron and tin or aluminum and leather? What is happening here is tremendously significant for how God thinks about money and the economy and consequently how we ought to think (Ps 36:9b "In Thy light we see light). John Witherspoon<sup>1</sup> wrote a tremendous "Essay on Money" where he argues that money should possess five qualities

1. value – intrinsic worth in itself
2. rarity – this increases its value and affords that small increments are able to purchase many goods and is thus able to meet requirement three
3. portability – able to be carried about easily and concealed on one's person and able to be passed from hand to hand
4. divisibility – it must be able to be divided into different denominations for ease of transactions

5. durable – it must be able to pass from hand to hand without wearing out or breaking and if stored must not decay

Witherspoon argues that these five qualities are met only in gold and silver.<sup>ii</sup> Historically, other things have been used as money (e.g. cows, shells, lead, tin, leather, et. al.) but they were all short-lived. Across history in every culture gold and silver have always served as a means of commerce and trade.<sup>iii</sup> He goes on to argue that while paper money is a sign for money it is absurd to claim it is “legal tender”. For something to be “legal tender” you must be able to exchange it for gold or silver. Paper money has no real value (e.g. \$1, \$5, \$100, \$1,000 bills are simply printed numbers on a piece of paper). Real value lies in the gold or silver standard that is behind the paper money. I think Witherspoon’s theory is basically correct and so, what this boils down to is the fact that gold and silver are the backbone of a nation’s economy. I don’t have time to get into the American economy, the lack of a gold standard, fractional banking, the Federal Reserve, inflation, paper money and computer banking today but I don’t think it is a far stretch in the least to say it is doomed to failure.<sup>iv</sup>

What I do want to emphasize here is what God is doing. God is taking the economic backbone of Egypt; the economic under-girdings of a society and giving it to Israel. Because of this economic collapse Egypt would never regain her former glory. And this is what God does to those who curse Israel. God is warning in effect, “If you want to harden yourselves against Me, if you want to have other gods before Me, if you want to curse My people Israel by holding them in bondage, I will destroy your agriculture, your economy, your gods, and your military so that you can never recover. I’ll take what you have and give it to someone else.” This is why it is so important to bless Israel even while they are in unbelief (Gen 12:3). You know, a lot of people, evangelical Christians, argue that we should not bless Israel now because they are a nation of unbelieving atheists. It’s because of this that there is no unified Christian position on the Israeli-Palestinian debate. First, there are those who want to support Israel and second, there are those who want to be even-handed and support Israel and Palestine. Third, there are even those who want to support only Palestine because they think of the Jews as the Christ-killers. Now, I just want you to think about this for a minute. Can you imagine being even-handed in the Israel-Egypt debate or being against Israel? How about being even-handed in the Israel-World debate that takes place in the Tribulation? I’m going to go with historical precedence here and say that the nation of Israel is God’s elect. They are the apple of God’s eye. If you touch them, if you turn against them, if you curse them, if you withdraw support from them it’s going to be bad news for your nation. He may take your economy and give it to someone else. He may destroy your army by another army. God

said, I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse (Gen 12:3). That principle is the same yesterday, today and forever and it is a stiff warning right there in the word of God and people keep violating it and if there day hasn't come it is coming. You better love Israel and you better stand up for Israel because God loves them and God stands up for them.

Now, some commentators think, at first blush, that such a plundering of Egypt by Israel is morally wrong. But these people aren't reading the text. First, they are to **ask** not steal. Verse 3 also says **The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians**. The Israelites did nothing except obey the LORD. It was the Lord who made them favorable to the Egyptians and so if we say this is morally wrong we're saying God was morally wrong, we're saying God is a sinner. Besides, these people did not love Israel; they loved what they could get out of Israel! They used Israel as slave labor for 400 years and I suggest that Israel is finally getting a long-overdue paycheck. This is their just compensation being received because of the justice of God. God always makes provision for His people. This was necessary for two reasons. First, for a nation to get off the ground it's got to have some money and so here God gives them gold and silver which are the only two elements worthy to provide an economic backbone. Second, the word "plunder" in Exod 3:22 and 12:36 is *natsal* which can mean "to be delivered from" "to rescue from" "to save from". So, the Israelites would be rescued from the Egyptians by taking their silver and gold. How is this a rescuing from Egypt. Well, you can imagine that after Israel's exodus Egypt would be her greatest threat but without money she wouldn't be much threat at all. So, the plundering is a deliverance.

Verse 3; let's talk about this favor a bit. **The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians**. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord before the flood (Gen 6:8). Mary found favor with God in being the receptacle of the Son of God (Luke 1:30). And here **The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians** so that they willingly handed over their **articles of silver and articles of gold**. This is obviously not thievery.

**Furthermore, the man Moses *himself* was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.** Through the 10 plagues Moses will become highly esteemed and respected both in Egypt and Israel. I really like this verse. It demonstrates something marvelous that is also true of our Savior. Humility precedes greatness. This principle is in the NT. Jesus Christ is the first example,

**Philippians 2:8-9** He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

**1 Peter 5:5-7** You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. <sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Moses had humbled himself and it was only when he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God that God exalted him. Moses demonstrated humility by casting his anxieties upon God (Exod 5:22-23) and giving up on delivering Israel by his own devices (chapter 5). If you learn nothing from the plague cycles learn this principle; humility precedes greatness. You must not be puffed up with pride.

**Proverbs 16:18** Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Casting your cares upon Him is an example of humble dependence. Jesus cast His cares upon the Father in the hour of trial saying, “if it be possible this cup pass from Me, yet not My will, but yours be done”. Casting your cares upon Him is a frank admission that you are insufficient and that God is all-sufficient. Casting your cares upon Him is an admission that God alone has the solution. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [interesting parallel to the Exodus]. When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God His mighty hand causes wonders and God is able to exalt our position. This all reminds me of the remark by D.L. Moody when he “said that Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh's court thinking he was somebody; forty years in the desert learning he was nobody; and forty years showing what God can do with somebody who found out he was nobody.”<sup>v</sup> Be humble toward one another and under God for God gives grace to the humble. Humility precedes greatness. No one can truly become great in the eyes of God and man before he has become humble. This reminds me of a tremendous dialogue between Jesus and His disciples in

**Matthew 18:1-4** "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" <sup>2</sup> And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, <sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom

of heaven. <sup>4</sup> "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The teaching is simple; conversion is necessary to enter the kingdom, humility is necessary to be great in the kingdom. If you want to become great become humble! Focus on the humility and let God take care of the greatness.

## **B. YHWH's Final Warning to Pharaoh (11:4-10)**

<sup>4</sup> Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt,

<sup>5</sup> and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

<sup>6</sup> 'Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been *before* and such as shall never be again.

<sup>7</sup> 'But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not *even* bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'

<sup>8</sup> "All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

<sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

Here's the warning, it is decided that YHWH will do this (**Thus says YHWH**). The hour of grace has expired the time for final judgment has arrived and with it the salvation of Israel. A new theme has arrived, the third great principle in the plagues.

**Principle:** Judgment always issues forth salvation (either spiritual or physical). E.g. flood, exodus, tribulation.

The judgment is death of **all the firstborn in the land of Egypt**. YHWH has been in the midst of His people Israel now he is **going out into the midst of Egypt**. Not to protect them as He did Israel but to destroy them.

In verse 5 **all...shall die...from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones.** From the upper to the lower class, **all the firstborn of the cattle as well;** those that did not die from the pestilence because not in the field and those who were taken inside during the hail. Of those **all the firstborn** will die. So, the tenth plague is the plague of death. It will cause fear, great anguish, and emotional instability as described in verse 6. **there shall be a great cry in the land of Egypt.** So, this plague will affect all families who have children.

But verse 7, there will be perfect discrimination. **But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not, literally, sharpen his tongue...that Egypt may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.** YHWH perfectly discriminates between His elect nation of Israel and the non-elect nation of Egypt in accordance with His promises in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3, et. al.). Pharaoh's own **servants will come down to Moses and bow themselves before him.** This is a slap in the face to Pharaoh who was considered a god. But YHWH said Moses would be "as God to Pharaoh" and here his own **servants will** recognize Moses as God and not Pharaoh. And they will beg of him **Go out, you and all the people who follow you and after that** Moses says, **I will go out. And Moses went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.** So, all this happened after the 9<sup>th</sup> plague during a single confrontation.

Verses 9-10 are simply a summary and close of the plague section. Moses and Aaron will no longer be sent to Pharaoh for diplomatic negotiations. They are sent to the sons of Israel to prepare them for the exodus. The last plague will happen not by the hand or staff of Aaron nor by the hand or staff of Aaron but by the hand of the angel of the Lord at midnight.

Let's skip down to 12:29-36 for the tenth plague.

### **C. The Tenth Plague: Death of Firstborn (12:29-36)**

**Exodus 12:29** Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.  
<sup>30</sup> **Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.**

**<sup>31</sup> Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said.**

**<sup>32</sup> "Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."**

**<sup>33</sup> The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead."**

**<sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before it was leavened, *with* their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.**

**<sup>35</sup> Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing;**

**<sup>36</sup> and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.**

Unlike the other plagues, this one was so severe that it had a unique effect. The others did not result in Pharaoh letting the people go, this one resulted in Pharaoh commanding them to leave and in the middle of the night. The Egyptians also urged them to go **out of the land in haste** for fear that they would **all be** killed. The plague happened just as YHWH had said. The only new information is that **there was no home where there was not someone dead**. So, **there was a great cry in Egypt**. Pharaoh said, If I see you again I will kill you but actually it was Pharaoh's son who was killed. This judgment has seemed by many to be overly harsh but that misses the greater context and God's relationship to Israel. We may have forgotten that Israel was God's firstborn son...

**Exodus 4:22-23** "Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My *firstborn*.<sup>23</sup> "So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your *firstborn*.'""

Thus, this judgment was prophesied and was Pharaoh and the Egyptians due for not letting YHWH's firstborn son go and serve Him. So, the relationship between YHWH and Israel is one of Father-son. Because of this and the refusal to let them go the principle of *lex talionis* is implemented, since you take My son I take your son.

The final new information is found in verses 33-34 **The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead."**

**<sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before it was leavened, *with* their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.** We will talk about this more next week in relation to the Passover.



## CONCLUSION

With the completion of the tenth plague we have now seen three great principles; 1) grace before judgment, 2) perfect discrimination, and 3) judgment/salvation. The tenth plague is unique in that it connects with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is a permanent ordinance for the Jewish people. It serves to introduce the theme of salvation and the way of salvation which we will focus on next week. Here is some of what we learned this evening.

1. Doctrine of Money and Economy: Across history in every culture gold and silver have always served as a means of commerce and trade. Gold and silver are the backbone of a nation's economy.
2. God always makes provision for His people. God provided a standard of value in gold and silver to sustain Israel's economy. Many of us wish we had these physical provisions but God has provided us with every spiritual provision. Spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.
3. I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse (Gen 12:3). That principle is the same yesterday, today and forever and it is a stiff warning right there in the word of God and people keep violating it and if there day hasn't come it is coming. You better love Israel and you better stand up for Israel because God loves them and God stands up for them whether they are in unbelief or not.
4. Humility precedes greatness. No one can truly become great in the eyes of God and man before he has become humble.
5. Judgment always issues forth salvation (either spiritual or physical).

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.sonnet.com/usr/kidogo/witherspoon.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Later the gold, silver and bronze that were taken from Egypt will be used to build the tabernacle, a structure that was put up and taken down every time the nation moved. As such, the materials had to be durable and portable, two of the five qualities of money. The tabernacle as the location of God's dwelling was composed of valuable and rare materials, two of the other qualities of money. Lastly, to build the various rings and parts of the tabernacle the gold, silver, and bronze had to be divisible and they were. So, all five qualities of money are met even in the construction of the tabernacle.

<sup>iii</sup> Arguably, platinum meets all five qualities that Witherspoon theorized.

<sup>iv</sup> Witherspoon said, "...what is commonly called paper money, that is, bills bearing that the person holding them is entitled to receive a certain sum specified in them, is not, properly speaking, money at all. It is barely a sign without being a pledge of standard of value, and therefore is effectually defective as a medium of universal commerce.

...to arm such bills with the authority of the state, and make them a legal tender in all payments, is an absurdity so great that is not easy to speak with propriety upon it. Perhaps it would give offence if I should say, it is an absurdity reserved for American legislatures; no such thing having ever been attempted in the old countries.

It has been found, by the experience of ages, that money must have a standard of value, and if any prince or state debase the metal below the standard, it is utterly impossible to make it succeed. How then can it be possible to make that succeed which has no value at all? In all such instances there may be great injuries done to particular persons by wiping off debt; but to give such money general currency is wholly impossible."

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