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**C0612 – March 22, 2006 – Ex 8:2-9:12 – The Second Cycle Of Plagues**

Last week YHWH unleashed the first cycle of plagues upon Egypt. Moses went to Pharaoh on the banks of the Nile and warned him. After refusing to let them go He judged Osiris, the god of the Nile, Pharaoh and all Egypt by turning this river of blessing into blood and stench. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not let them go. Then Moses went to Pharaoh at his royal palace and warned him. After refusing to let them go YHWH judged Heqet, the frog goddess of fertility. Innumerable amounts of frogs spread over the land even in their beds and kitchen stoves. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and he would not let them go. Finally, without warning, YHWH struck the dust of the earth and the god of the desert, Set, turning it into small gnats or mosquitoes that annoy both man and beast. There is a pattern here. There's grace before judgment. Moses and Aaron warn Pharaoh, that's grace. God is giving Pharaoh an opportunity to repent and let the people go. But when he refuses then God judges. It's always this pattern. God gave 120 years of grace before the flood but then there was judgment. God gives the entire church age as a period of grace before the tribulation but then He will judge. So, this principle of grace before judgment is inherent in how God works.

Tonight, the second cycle of plagues (4, 5, and 6) continues the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. God said, "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you" (Gen 12:3). Because Pharaoh refuses to let God's people go He curses Pharaoh and Egypt through the plagues so that he will let them go. Through them YHWH's would make His power known and His name would be proclaimed through all the earth (Exod 9:16).

**A. THE SECOND CYCLE OF PLAGUES**

**1. Flies (8:20-32)**

**Exodus 8:20** Now the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

**21** "For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of insects on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of insects, and also the ground on which they *dwell*.

**22** "But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.

**23** "I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.'""

**24** Then the LORD did so. And there came great swarms of insects into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of insects in all the land of Egypt.

**25** Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land."

**26** But Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not then stone us?"

**27** "We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us."

**28** Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Make supplication for me."

**29** Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you, and I shall make supplication to the LORD that the swarms of insects may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully again in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

**30** So Moses went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD.

**31** The LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of insects from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people; not one remained.

**32** But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

The fourth plague begins the second cycle of plagues as signaled by the fact that YHWH commands **Moses** to go to Pharaoh **in the morning** on the banks of the Nile River. This same regiment is followed with the first plague in each cycle (1, 4, 7).

1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle	Warning
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1. Blood	4. Flies	7. Hail	In the morning by the Nile
2. Frogs	5. Pestilence	8. Locusts	In the royal palace
3. Gnats	6. Boils	9. Darkness	None

While Pharaoh is taking his relaxing morning walk **Moses** will come with a command in the name of YHWH. When he meets him he is not to bow to him or do reverence to him but simply to stand before him and say **Thus says YHWH**. This introductory formula was the common way for introducing a god. It signaled that what followed carried authority. This would challenge Pharaoh who was, in the eyes of the Egyptians, a god.

The authoritative message; **“Let My people go, that they may serve me”**. Moses speaks as God to Pharaoh (cf Exod 4:16). The nation of Israel is God’s people by covenant. God entered into covenant with them by an act of His own will. This did not guarantee that all Israelites were justified. Justification was by faith alone in the OT just as it is in the NT (cf Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1-9). Justification has always and will always be by grace through faith. But God entered into a covenant relationship with the whole nation. The purpose of the election of the nation of Israel is noted here, **that they may serve Him**. They were to serve YHWH not in Egypt but in the wilderness.

The warning is given in verse 21, **if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of insects on you and on your servants, etc...** These **insects** were worse than the gnats/mosquitoes.

“When enraged, they fasten themselves upon the human body, especially upon the edges of the eyelids. . . . [they] not only tortured, 'devoured' (Ps. 68:45) the men, and disfigured them by the swellings produced by their sting, but also killed the plants in which they deposited their eggs . . . .”

“The blood-sucking gadfly or dogfly was something to be abhorred and may in part have been responsible for the great deal of blind men in the land. . . .”

So, this is an extremely distressing plague. Verse 22 is very very very important. Unlike the previous three judgments this one will come only upon Egypt. The Israelites in Goshen will not be affected. Here’s our second big principle. Grace before judgment is the first and perfect discrimination is the second. God discriminates between His elect

nation of Israel and the non-elect nation of Egypt. This is to teach Pharaoh and His people a lesson about YHWH.

Here's the lesson, after the third plague the Egyptian magicians said "**This is the finger of elohim**" (8:19) meaning "Moses and Aaron are getting a little help from *a god* but this is not *the God* of Israel." To correct this notion, YHWH says, "**I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living...in order that you may know that I, YHWH, am in the midst of the land.**" As a result, there will be no doubt that the plagues come forth from YHWH and that this YHWH is the God of Israel. Thus, YHWH is saying, "I will teach you who I am through this perfect discrimination between My people and yours". Several things are taught about God in this verse which we are to learn. The first lesson we learned was that "no one is like Him" (Exod 8:10). The second lesson we are learning is that YHWH is in the midst of the land. This lesson has many facets.

*First*, YHWH's perfect discrimination reveals that He is omnipresent; **I am in the midst of the land**. YHWH is completely present at every point in space and time. He is not spread out like ooze over the universe. He is not present in one place while absent in another. He is wholly here and wholly there, indeed He is wholly everywhere simultaneously. *Second*, YHWH's perfect discrimination reveals that He is immanent. What does this attribute mean? It means He is active within history. If He is **in the midst of the land** controlling where these flies are present and where they are absent then it demonstrates that He is active within His creation. This attribute is a little difficult to understand because we are saying that God is active within creation (immanence) but at the same time we want to maintain that He is distinct from His creation (transcendence). Both are true, there is no conflict between them. Let me try to explain in one sentence. God is not a part of His creation but He does take part in His creation. Let's say it another way. God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) so that it cannot be a part of Him. However, once created God takes an active role in His universe. *Third*, YHWH's perfect discrimination reveals that He has complete control over nature. He can make flies swarm in all Egypt and be completely absent in the immediately adjacent region of Goshen. He is in complete control of space and what is in it. He also controls the time when the flies will be present or absent in these spaces as the next verse shows. So, God is sovereign over all nature including space and time. *Fourth*, through His perfect discrimination we learn that God distinguishes between His elect people and all others.

**Principle:** Since God is omnipresent you are never alone. Nor can you can never escape God. The Psalmist said, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold,

You are there” (Ps 139:7-8). Again, the Psalmist said, “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). When everyone has abandoned you God has not. He is always there to help you. He is in your midst.

**Principle:** Since God is immanent, boundlessly active in history then you can call upon Him through prayer and He will answer. “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13). If you need help He is there.

**Principle:** If you are a believer in Christ here tonight then you are God’s elect. He makes a perfect discrimination between you and everyone else in the world. We observe this perfect discrimination in the realm of discipline. God only disciplines His children. “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons: (Heb 12:7-8). He will also exercise His perfect discrimination at the pre-trib Rapture where only His body will be removed from the earth and all others will be left behind. No others will accidentally be caught up in the wake of the departure.

So, we don’t only need to know the attributes of God but we need to know how to put them to work in our lives.

Verse 23 **“I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.”** The exact time of **this sign** is given so that there can be no mistake Who made the division. It will happen **tomorrow**. In the Hebrew text this word **division** (*peduth*) is the word for “deliverance”. So, this is a “deliverance” for the people of Israel.

Verse 24 **Then YHWH did so**. He did so because He is faithful to His promises. What the Lord says He will do He does. In the first three plagues the staff of either Moses or Aaron was used. Here no staff is used. This is to prove that the plagues are a result of YHWH and not anything Moses or Aaron are doing. The results of this hideous plague are billions and billions of flies swarming Egypt, inside and outside the homes even of the royal palace. Tiny biting flies that annoy the eyes and lay eggs in the vegetation that kill it so that **the land was laid waste**.

In verse 25 Pharaoh compromised and **called for Moses and Aaron** giving them permission to **sacrifice to their God within the land**. Notice, Pharaoh says **your God** implying that he doesn’t think he is required to obey the commands of this God. But Moses does not accept his terms for two reasons. First, it would be **an abomination to the Egyptians** and this would result in a riot. They would be sacrificing animals that were considered gods (bull – Apis and cow - Hathor) by the Egyptians and they would

not use extensive cleansing rituals as the Egyptians. This would disgust the Egyptians and they would stone them. Second, in verse 27 Moses says we can't do this because we must do as YHWH commanded us. That is, they **must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD**. Moses is very careful to follow YHWH's commandments exactly as revealed.

**Principle:** We must always be careful to follow YHWH's commandments and not our own interpretive twist that somehow justifies our actions. Only when we follow YHWH's commandments exactly as revealed are we walking by faith and only when we walk by faith will we enjoy YHWH's deliverance.

As a result, Pharaoh concedes, probably because this would **be an abomination to the Egyptians** and so He says **I will let you go...only you shall not go very far away**. And then asks for prayer so that the **swarms of insects may depart from Egypt**. This is an admission of the power of YHWH.

Verse 30, **So, Moses...made supplication to YHWH** and verse 31, **YHWH did as Moses asked**. Not even **one fly remained**. This demonstrates that YHWH answers prayer. But again, **Pharaoh hardened his heart and he did not let the people go**.

**Principle:** If you want something you have to pray for it. Now, the most common thing I find people praying for temporal and material things. And I'm not saying not too. However, I rarely see people praying for spiritual needs. What about prayer requests for peoples salvation? What about prayer requests for spiritual wisdom, spiritual insight, spiritual growth, understanding of God's word, fruit bearing, discovery of spiritual gift(s), missions, et. al.). Why don't we pray for these things? The only thing I can come up with is that people don't want these things. The bottom line is that if you don't pray for these things you won't receive them. It's as simple as that. I'm convinced that our prayers are far too focused on the temporal and physical world and not on eternal and spiritual things.

The new thing with this plague is the perfect discrimination and the lack of a staff being used. The next two plagues also demonstrate perfect discrimination and neither use a staff. This is to distance Moses and Aaron from the plagues, demonstrating that YHWH, the God of Israel, is causing them and that this YHWH makes a distinction between His elect nation and Egypt.

## 2. Pestilence (9:1-7)

Exodus 9:1 **Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**

**<sup>2</sup> "For if you refuse to let *them* go and continue to hold them,**

**<sup>3</sup> behold, the hand of the LORD will come *with* a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.**

**<sup>4</sup> "But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.'"**

**<sup>5</sup> The LORD set a definite time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."**

**<sup>6</sup> So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died.**

**<sup>7</sup> Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.**

The last plague affected the people of Egypt and the land of Egypt. This plague will affect Egypt's domestic animals causing an agricultural disaster with extensive economic impact. It is the fifth plague in the second cycle. As such it is announced in Pharaoh's palace. Moses is to march right into Pharaoh's home where he dwells as a god and deliver this warning (grace before judgment). If Pharaoh **refuses to let them go** then verse 3 says **the hand of the Lord**. It is not merely the finger of *a god* but it is the **hand of YHWH**. He is responsible for the plague in its entirety. The plague is **a very severe pestilence**. Some commentators think this pestilence may have been the infectious disease *anthrax*. It will come upon their **livestock in the field...the horses...the donkeys...the camels...the herds, and...the flocks**. If such a plague came on all of America's domestic animals **in the field** there would be agricultural disaster beyond imagination.<sup>i</sup> We just had thousands and thousands of cattle lost in the fires in the Texas panhandle and ranchers have gone belly up because of it. If that were to happen nationwide imagine the agricultural and economic impact (Canada). That's what we have here in Egypt.

The only difference is noted in verse 4. **the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel**. Again, this is YHWH's perfect discrimination. *First*, He is omnipresent, wholly here, wholly there, wholly everywhere. *Second*, He is immanent, active in creation, causing this agricultural disaster. You refuse to let My people go, fine,

I will destroy your agricultural and economy. *Third*, He is in complete control of nature. He makes a disease spread to all the livestock of Egypt but not to even one of the livestock of Israel. This shows that He is in control of a space and what is in it. Livestock in one space will be infected by this disease and in Israel's region of Goshen they will not be infected by this disease. He even designates the **definite time** in verse 5 saying **Tomorrow YHWH will do this thing in the land**. He is in control of time and space. *Fourth*, He distinguishes between His elect people and all others showering His blessing upon Israel and His cursing upon their Egyptian persecutors. You've got to understand these attributes so you can use them in your own life on a practical level.

As a result of this warning it is apparent that Pharaoh did not let the people go and thus **YHWH did this thing the very next day**, striking **all the livestock of Egypt** so that they **died. but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died**. Perfect, perfect discrimination.

**Principle:** God is in control of nature, there are no such things as "laws of nature". God has never broken the "laws of nature". "Laws of nature" is a secular term that claims that all phenomena can be explained in terms of natural causes without bringing God into the equation. As such, naturalism is Anti-Christian and Anti-God. It denies that there is a personal God behind the universe who is sustaining nature. "...in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). This means He is the glue that is holding the universe together. He doesn't break laws of nature because laws of nature don't exist. What He does is govern nature differently at different times in order to accomplish His purposes. Normally God governs nature in the same way so that we can make predictions, that is, do scientific investigation. The biblical YHWH is the fundamental presupposition for doing science. There must be stability of categories, stability in nature in order to do scientific experiments and expect to get the same results (repeatability). And He is the one who provides that. The plague sequence is showing that God is the Lord of nature and while He normally governs nature in a predictable pattern He is completely free to govern it in a different way.

In this striking of the livestock of Egypt we see one additional aspect in verse 7. **Pharaoh sent** someone to check Goshen and they found that **there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead**. But this did not cause him to change his mind and let the people go. Instead, **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go**.

### 3. Boils (9:8-12)



**<sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh.**

**<sup>9</sup> "It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt."**

**<sup>10</sup> So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.**

**<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> And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.**

This is the sixth plague, third in the second cycle. Pharaoh is not warned at all. **Moses and Aaron** go to the **kiln**, probably the same place they baked their bricks, took **handfuls of black soot** from the **kiln**, go to Pharaoh and then **Moses** is to **throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh**. It will disperse like **fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt**. The fourth plague affected man and plants, the second beasts, the third both **man and beast**. The intensity is increasing with each passing plague. There is no explicit statement that perfect discrimination was used in this plague but two things show that God did perfectly discriminate. First, it says that **boils** will break out **with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt**, not Goshen. Second, in verse 11 **the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils** showing that Moses did not have **boils**. So, I believe the text is indicating that only Egyptian men and Egyptian beasts got **boils** that broke out in **sores** and that none broke out on the sons of Israel or their beasts. YHWH used perfect discrimination in all three plagues. It is apparent that the Egyptian magicians were totally defeated in this plague.

And here in verse 12 we have the first time that **YHWH hardens Pharaoh's heart**. YHWH already knew the condition of Pharaoh's heart and that he would not let them go except by compulsion (Exod 3:19). YHWH had told **Moses** that Pharaoh would **not listen to them** and here we see the truthfulness of YHWH's prediction. YHWH also promised to harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod 4:21; 7:3) and here He does so we see His faithfulness to His word.

Remember, the word **hardened** here is *chazak* which means "to strengthen" that which is already there. YHWH had shown grace before judgment by warning Pharaoh. Pharaoh's continual rejection of God's warning hardened his heart. The word of God does not return void. As a result YHWH was fully justified in strengthening that hardness, making

it grow firmer in opposition to His demands. YHWH will have to do even greater judgments so that Pharaoh would let the people go. This will make His power known and His name will be proclaimed through all the earth. Eugene Merrill said, and this is a very important quote,

“The lesson here is that when one ignores the prompting of the Lord time and time again (see 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7), the Lord will confirm that resistance and make belief impossible.”

I want to camp here for a minute. I want to warn you and anyone listening by CD against hardening your heart. This is a warning for believers and unbelievers. I'm showing you God's grace before His day of judgment. Let's start with unbelievers. The Bible teaches that not everyone can believe. For example,

**John 12:39** For this reason they could not believe

The key question is “why?” Why can't some people believe? *First*, a person must be drawn in order to believe (John 6:44). *Second*, Jesus said, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself (John 12:32). *Third*, a person can resist this drawing (e.g. Pharaoh, the Sanhedrin and the high priest...Acts 7:51). This means they hear the word over and over and they say no, no, no, no. *Fourth*, if a person continually resists (says no) God's general revelation in creation or His special revelation in Scripture they destroy their ability to believe. This is called hardening the heart. It happens whenever a person hears the word of God but does not exercise positive volition. Over time, if you continually harden your heart to God's word then your heart will become so calloused to the things of God that you can't believe. *Fifth*, if you reach this hardened condition then God is totally justified to judicially blind you and use you to demonstrate His own power and proclaim His own name.

An example of a group of people who did this was the nation of Israel. They heard the words and saw the works of Jesus Christ Himself, God incarnate. And the majority of the nation said no, no, no. They had the zenith of special revelation and they rejected. As a result the nation was hardened to the things of God. And what did God do to this nation. Jesus pronounced judgment on that generation (Matt 23:36) and the nation of Israel was partially hardened. That partial hardness remains to this day (Rom 11:25).

So, what I'm trying to warn you against is ignoring the promptings of the Lord. If you are out there and you hear what God wants you to do and you know what God wants you to

do and you are resisting (a form of rebellion) then you are destroying your ability to believe. You've got to act on the word with positive volition. If you are not saved then you are hindering your ability to believe the gospel. If you are saved then you are destroying your ability to walk by faith and you're in danger of divine discipline. You have to learn to not only hear the word but do the word. This is the message of the Book of James (Js 1:22). Respond by positive volition.

## CONCLUSION

We've seen the principle of grace before judgment. God warned Pharaoh in advance of the judgment. But to this we have added perfect discrimination. God discriminates between His elect nation of Israel and the non-elect nation of Egypt. Both of these principles are taught time and again in the Bible. Noah preached grace 120 years before the judgment of the Flood. At the Flood we saw perfect discrimination. Only those on the Ark built to God's specifications survived. In the future this principle will be active again. Before the tribulation there is grace, grace, grace, warnings, even in the tribulation leading up the final judgments. There is also perfect discrimination revealed with the 144,000. They will be unharmed by God's Trumpet judgments. So, the principles of grace before judgment and perfect discrimination<sup>ii</sup> are timeless principles. We will adding several major principles to these in the following weeks such as judgment/salvation and one way of salvation.

**Principle:** Since God is omnipresent you are never alone.

**Principle:** Since God is immanent, boundlessly active in history then you can call upon Him through prayer and He will answer.

**Principle:** If you are a believer in Christ here tonight then you are God's elect. He makes a perfect discrimination between you and everyone else in the world.

**Principle:** We must always be careful to follow YHWH's commandments and not our own interpretive twist that somehow justifies our actions.

**Principle:** God is in control of nature, there are no such things as "laws of nature". God has never broken the "laws of nature". God is the one who upholds all things.

**Principle:** A man hardens his own heart to the word of God. If he does this long enough he will reach the point of no return. At this point God is fully justified in hardening the man further and using him to demonstrate His power and to proclaim His name throughout the earth.

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<sup>i</sup> Apparently this plague only killed the domestic livestock "in the fields". Those in the barns were not killed as 9:19-21 shows there were still domestic livestock in Egypt after this plague.

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ii “As the Egyptian magicians saw nothing more than the finger of God in the miracle which they could not imitate, that is to say, the work of some deity, possibly one of the gods of the Egyptians, and not the hand of Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, who had demanded the release of Israel, a distinction was made in the plagues which followed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and the former were exempted from the plagues: a fact which was sufficient to prove to anyone that they came from the God of Israel. To make this the more obvious, the fourth and fifth plagues were merely announced by Moses to the king. They were not brought on through the mediation of either himself or Aaron, but were sent by Jehovah at the appointed time; no doubt for the simple purpose of precluding the king and his wise men from the excuse which unbelief might still suggest, viz. that they were produced by the powerful incantations of Moses and Aaron.”

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