

The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn

Exodus 11:1-10

Pharaoh himself called an end to his talks with Moses and threatened to kill him should he see the king again. (10:28) Moses clearly understood that the Lord was done with Pharaoh. I paraphrase verse 29: "You're right, Pharaoh. It's all over. You will not see me again, because Yahweh is about to unleash a terrible punishment." All firstborns ("eldest sons") would die in one night. The firstborn in any family represented the future, and all the firstborn males in Egypt represented the nation's future: Yes, babies, but, more significantly, men of all ages to whom the reins of power belonged. God had said, "**Israel is my son, even my firstborn.**" (4:22) If Pharaoh withheld God's firstborn, the Lord would remove Egypt's firstborns.

I. **A Sober Announcement** (1)

- A. This explanation is not given to Pharaoh, but to Moses and the Israelites who will leave.
- B. The phrase, "*one more plague*," clearly means this is the last and most cataclysmic one.
- C. This plague breaks the hardest of hearts and forces Pharaoh to let God's people go.
- D. This plague makes Pharaoh want to be rid of Israel forever, lest they become what was feared.
- E. For the rest of history, the world will hope that God's people will just disappear.

II. **The National Treasury** (2, 3)

- A. God's plan for Israel is to make them a great nation, not just another family or tribe.
- B. Moses' stature as a leader was preparation for nationhood (though he died first).
- C. A nation needs a treasury so it can do business with other nations and to provide necessities.
- D. God not only took the Egyptian firstborns but helped Himself to Egypt's wealth.
- E. The Egyptians were as glad to see the Israelites go as Pharaoh was glad.
- F. When God calls us to a task, he will more than provide for us, if we but trust Him.

III. **Midnight Wailing** (4-7)

- A. Apparently Moses here relates to the people his parting words with Pharaoh, cf 10:29, 11:8.
- B. Judgment will come unexpectedly in the middle of the night and strike every home.
- C. The sound of grievous wailing will sweep over the land, touching even the childless.
- D. In contrast, all will be quiet in Goshen (not even a dog barks). **Sleep in heavenly peace.**
- E. Certainly this reminds us of the Day of Judgment, when the sheep and goats are separated.

IV. **Every Knee Bowing** (8, 9)

- A. The Egyptians' respect for Moses will exceed their respect for Pharaoh. (irony)
- B. The expected "bowing down" will no doubt remind Moses of his days as the Prince of Egypt.
- C. Moses' "hot anger" may have frightened Egyptians, but God's anger is more to be feared.
- D. The picture here is Moses' leading a procession (exodus) past the bowing Egyptians.
- E. The day is approaching when every knee will bow to Christ, not least those of unbelievers.

V. **Summary Statement** (10)

- A. The Lord wanted to show His wonders to the world through idolatrous Egypt.
- B. All have hardness of heart, and no one is saved apart from the grace of God.
- C. God's plan of salvation that involves the Messiah Jesus cannot be prevented.