

Little Chompers  
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Exodus 10:1-20

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There are many stories about clouds of locusts. Laura Ingalls Wilder talks in one of her books about a cloud of locusts that swept through and destroyed everything. Stories about the Great Depression also speak of locusts coming in and destroying crops. The prophet Joel speaks of an army as if it were locusts, since an army tends to devour everything in its path. The book of Revelation also tells us that there will be another plague of locusts. Only these locusts are not like any that we have seen. They take the appearance of an army, and they harm those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Locusts are a sign of God's judgment. As we know, locusts are hungry critters. They tend to weigh about an ounce. But each locust can eat its own weight every day. So, when you have billions of them, maybe even trillions, you can see what devastation they might cause. Some estimates are that locust infestations can have as many as 10,000 per square foot! The Lord uses locusts to judge people by taking away their livelihood. He takes away even food and drink from them. Such small things! And yet, such amazing harm they can cause!

This eighth plague is the middle plague of the last set of three plagues that come before the final plague of the death of the firstborn. This plague ties together the seventh plague and the ninth plague. In other words, this plague looks back to the seventh plague and looks forward to the ninth plague. It looks back to the seventh plague, because the locusts destroy everything that the hail left behind. It looks forward to the plague of darkness in that the whole sky was darkened by the huge cloud of locusts. And it looks forward to the tenth plague because Pharaoh calls the locusts "this death" in verse 17.

God has brought judgment yet again on Egypt's gods, as we have seen in every plague so far. In this plague, there are several targets. First, one of the main gods was Osiris, and he was in charge of the vegetation. Everything that was green was part of what he ruled. Then there is a lesser god named Henkhisuesui, who was the god of the east wind (they had a god for each of the winds from the four points of the compass). Then, of course, there was the goddess Hekt, who was the goddess of fertility. Then the god Senahem was supposed to be in charge of pest control. Min was the patron god of crops. Nepri was the god of grains, and Anubis was the god of the fields. None of these gods were sufficient to hold back the tide of locusts, or protect the interests of the Egyptians.

In this plague, we see several distinctive elements that we have not seen before. Firstly, we see a pedagogical reason for these plagues. Pedagogy refers to teaching children. In verse 2, we see this very clearly. The teaching of the Lord has to continue on from one generation to the next. The Lord tells Moses that even grandchildren need to be told by the grandparents what the Lord has done, so that the grandchildren may know who is the Lord. The pedagogical purpose that the Lord reveals to Moses is one reason why ALL the Israelites have to leave. As one commentator puts it, if there is not a next generation to go with the elders, then there is no generation to which the elders can tell of the wonderful acts of God. This pedagogical idea is repeated often throughout the Bible. We can see the consequences of not passing on to our children the praiseworthy deeds of God, recorded in Scripture. The book of Judges furnishes an excellent example. The generation of Joshua was more or less faithful to the Lord. They had seen the Lord fight their battles for them. They had not done everything right, but they did trust in the Lord, and they did trust their leader Joshua. The very next generation was the first generation of the book of Judges. And they did what was right in their own eyes. It only takes one gap in the generations. It only takes one set of parents that doesn't want to "push" things on to their children. Of course, parents cannot be responsible for wandering

children in the ultimate sense. But they are responsible for telling the next generation the things of the Lord. It is like the watchman in the book of Ezekiel. He was responsible for warning the city. If the city failed to respond, that was the city's fault. But if the watchman failed to warn the city, then the blood of the city was on his hands. The same is true of parents. Tell your children about the way of salvation, about Jesus Christ. Read the Bible with your children. Pray with your children. Discuss the sermon with your children. Use the Shorter Catechism to teach them a good summary of what Scripture says. But you must, must, must teach your children. But if you have been faithful in doing this, you must not be depressed if your children do not "turn out right." No one rides to heaven on their parent's coattails. Another way of putting it is: God doesn't have any grandchildren.

The second element of this plague that is new is the response of the courtiers to what Moses and Aaron say. In verse 7, we see Pharaoh's servants pleading with Pharaoh to do something to get out of the plague. And this marks the very first time that Pharaoh has ever responded to the mere announcement of a plague. The NKJV has the servants saying "let the people go." This is a good, literal translation. Probably his servants were thinking that this suggestion would appease Moses and get him off their backs without actually letting *all* the people go. If Pharaoh didn't already have the idea, this advice from his servants surely gave him the idea of allowing only certain members of the Israelites to go. And so Pharaoh tries to preempt the plague by offering a partial obedience to God. This is the first time that Pharaoh actually tries to avoid a plague. He is starting to get a little gun-shy. This indicates that Pharaoh is actually starting to believe that the Word of God means what it says. He will never trust the Lord. But he is starting to acknowledge that the Lord does what He says He will do. But Pharaoh only offers a partial obedience, which, as we know, is really no obedience at all. This partial obedience is partial because of Pharaoh's pride. We know from verse 3 that this is the real stumbling block on Pharaoh's way. Pharaoh refuses to humble himself before God almighty. And it is this same pride which is the obstacle to full obedience. Notice that when Pharaoh asks Moses who is to go, and when Moses replies that all will go, Pharaoh responds with offended pride. His comment in verse 10 is quite sarcastic. It is as if he is saying that the Lord will have to be with Israel in order for Israel ever to be let go. He still doesn't get it, does he? The Lord IS with Israel and against Pharaoh. Ironically, he speaks the truth here. The Lord is with Israel, and that is precisely why Pharaoh will have to let Israel go. And then he deliberately misinterprets God's Word by saying that merely letting the men go is what Moses is asking. But there can be no compromise when it comes to God's law. The law demands perfect obedience, not partial obedience. There are many people in this life who think otherwise. They think that because God is a loving and merciful God, that therefore He will wink at their sin. After all, everyone sins, don't they? Why should that be a problem? Ah, but God is only forgiving to those who trust in Him! There is only justice for those who remain outside of Christ. People love to talk about God's love and mercy, and usually conveniently forget to talk about God's holiness and justice. But there are many, many passages of Scripture that have to be thrown out the window if we are to say that God's love is more foundational than His justice. Neither love nor justice is more foundational to God. God is both, and we can see that principle supremely in the cross of Christ, where justice and mercy kiss each other. God is both just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus Christ.

A further great principle is found in verse 9. Moses says that all the people must go, young and old, to worship the Lord, and have what is a pilgrimage feast in honor and praise of God. What Moses is saying is that all ages must worship God. You are never too young or too old to worship God. In fact, it is necessary that you should worship God, because that is what you were made to do. So, young folks, pay attention in worship, and remember that you are not here to be entertained by a silly man in a black gown throwing his arms around. You are here to render service and worship to

God. You are serving God. Part of it is singing to God hymns that honor and glorify Him, not necessarily songs which make you feel a certain way. You are here to pray to Him. You are here to listen to God's Word, which is also part of worship. You are here to give your tithes to God. Worship is for everyone.

Pharaoh's response comes by way of sarcasm to this suggestion. In verse 10, Pharaoh says, "The Lord had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! This could be interpreted two ways. One is that Pharaoh is so set on keeping them, that only an act of God will force him to let them go. This sounds rather ironic, doesn't it? That's precisely what happens! The other interpretation is that the likelihood of him letting them go is the same likelihood that God is really with them. Again, ironic, isn't it? God is really with the Israelites, and that is precisely why Pharaoh will eventually have to let them go. By this time, Pharaoh is so ticked off at Moses and Aaron that he actively drives them away from his presence. And while he does that, he gives them a taste of what happens when a person misinterprets the Word of the Lord. Verse 11 is a deliberate misreading of the Word of the Lord. Moses did not ask for just the men to go. He asked for all the people to go. In this way, Pharaoh is trying to prevent the plague from happening by offering a partial obedience. He is willing to let the men go, because he knows that by keeping the families hostage, the men will have to come back, and he will not lose his work-force.

Well, the locusts come and destroy everything that was left after the hail. One commentator notes that because the wind blew for a whole day and a whole night (thus indicating that the locusts came from far away) that therefore the Egyptians would know that God was sovereign not just over Egypt, but of the entire world, bringing in these little chompers from far, far away. The destruction they brought was total and final. The text says that there remained not one green thing in all the land of Egypt. This brings Pharaoh to a state of panic. He doesn't necessarily know that every green thing had perished. But he wanted to do something to save part of the vegetation, if there was any left. Hence his haste in bringing back Moses and Aaron, whom he had just dismissed with singular rudeness. His statement here parallels closely what he said after the plague of the hail. There is a difference in that he admits to sinning against Moses. However, he does not admit to sinning against the people of God. He does this in order to avoid sin's consequences, as we saw last week.

But we know that Pharaoh's heart is still hard. The emphasis here is on the fact that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But Pharaoh still knew death when he saw it, and the locusts were death to his people, for there would be no more food. But as soon as death was out of sight, he turned his opinion again. As Phil Ryken says, "The problem with Pharaoh was that he kept repenting of his repentance!" As a result, we know that his repentance was never genuine. Notice also that even in the freeing from judgment, another one of Egypt's gods was defeated. For they believed in a god of the west wind as well, named Huzayui. God controlled the west wind, not this god. This should have been enough. There was enough evidence even for Pharaoh. The trouble is that there are people just like this today. Many atheists say that if they are wrong, they will walk up to God and say to Him, "not enough evidence." Not according to Scripture! Scripture says that the glory of God has been clearly revealed so that everyone is without excuse. The skies proclaim God's handiwork. The human person is made in the image of God. But people's hearts are hard. Only God can soften them. Only God can blow the wind of the Holy Spirit into the heart of a person and change that heart from hardness to softness. Has He done that for you?