

no fly zone

exodus 8.20-32

The fourth plague this morning, starting in Exodus 8 verse 20.

The waters of Egypt turning to blood, the frogs and the lice had all impacted God's people alongside the Egyptians, but now starting with this fourth plague, the Israelites would be miraculously protected, as a testimony to Pharaoh.

Let's look at our text and see what we see.

Exodus 8.20-32 - And the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be." ' " And the Lord did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."

And Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us."

So 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. Intercede for me."

Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord."

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained. But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

In this section of the Book there is obviously a repeated pattern of God warning Pharaoh, God sending the plague, Moses going to get Pharaoh's response and God removing the plague.

So this morning, I want to highlight a few things about this specific round of the fight, mostly in the first half of the text where we see what it meant to be part of the No Fly Zone in Goshen.

Start back at verse 20 again, it says:

Exodus 8.20a - The Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water.”

The New Living Translation reads, “Get up early and stand in Pharaoh’s way.”

God demands that we live our Christian lives out loud. And He demands that we preach the word and make disciples. Now, there is a passive evangelism that happens as the people around us notice how God is working in our lives. But we’re always to be actively going and interacting with people who need the Gospel. God told Moses to go get in Pharaoh’s way. He told Jonah to get himself right in the middle of Nineveh. He told Philip to go up to the Ethiopian’s chariot.

It’s not acceptable for us to live silently. People will know we are Christians by our love and by the way God impacts our lives, but Paul says that people can’t know the way to God unless they hear about it through our actual preaching.

God wants each of us to get in someone’s way today, even if we don’t have the special gift of evangelism. Remember, Moses was confident he couldn’t even string a sentence together. The Lord said, “Ok, fine. But get up early and go talk to Pharaoh.” It’s meant to be done graciously but aggressively.

Verse 20 continues:

Exodus 8.20b - “Then say to him, ‘This says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.””

God wanted to free the Israelites, but not just for freedom’s sake. Wealth and comfort and freedom weren’t the Lord’s highest goals for His people. He wanted to free them *so they could serve Him*. A key component to our relationship with God is that we serve Him and worship Him and work for His Kingdom. The Lord is showing here that His desire is to be our Master. He said to Pharaoh, “I’m taking you out of the picture. *I’m* going to be the Lord of these people. They’re going to belong to Me and serve Me.”

In the back half of this text, Pharaoh responds to the plague and effectively he says, “Ok, do your ritual, do your ceremony, but do it here and stay close to us, because at the end of the day, I want you to still belong to me and serve Egypt.” But that’s incompatible with the Lord’s wishes.

The purpose of life is to *belong* to God and *serve* Him, where He is the Master, He is the Owner, He is the Father, He is the controller and we are the vessels and the servants who do the Master’s will.

Now, we still get offered Pharaoh’s deal. His compromise was for the Hebrews to give God a ritual, attend the ceremony, but then return to live and serve in Egypt. And that’s what we’re offered today as well. The choice is about who owns our lives and our futures.

J Vernon McGee talked about the struggle for ownership in this passage. He said:

“(Pharaoh) said, ‘All right, you may sacrifice, but stay in the land.’ This is the same kind of compromise that many Christians make. It is always satanic. This compromise says we can be Christians, but not narrow ones. Be a broad-minded Christian and don’t change your life. If your life doesn’t change, you are not a Christian.

The contemporary church has made many compromises and for the most part is still in the land of Egypt. You cannot tell the difference today between the average Christian and the average man of the world.

We are in a race today with two horses. One horse is black and one is white. If you decide to ride them and put one foot on one horse and one foot on the other, you will soon make a strange discovery. These horses will run in opposite directions.

*You **must** make up your mind which horse you want to ride.”*

Pharaoh said he was letting the Hebrews go, but he wanted to retain control of their lives. You’ve been ‘let go’ in life to serve God. If you’re a Christian and you’re *not* serving God, the question is what are you doing with your time and your resources and your energy? All of those things should be used to serve God because we belong to Him and He wants more than just a few rituals from us. He wants to have real, complete ownership of our lives and He doesn’t want to share us with anyone else.

Exodus 8.21-23 - “If you will not let My people go, behold I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be.” ’ ”

First point from these verses - the blessing of God’s protection was first and foremost meant to be a testimony. It was a great blessing. It brought a lot of comfort to the Hebrews, but it was meant to serve an evangelistic purpose.

We’re not all commanded to be ascetic, giving up everything and living in poverty. It’s good to enjoy God’s blessings. But we can always enjoy God’s blessings in a way that serve His purposes. We can enjoy comfort and affluence in ways that preach and further the Kingdom.

As we read the Bible we find that the Christian life takes a lot of endurance and a lot of focus. Even when things are good, God wants to be teaching and using and working. That shouldn’t discourage us. It should excite us that the Lord can use any day, any circumstance, any phase of life to accomplish His plans in and through us. But let it also remind us that there’s never a time when we shouldn’t be serving or preaching the Lord. The time for rest is coming. And it’s going to be a really great, really long rest. Right now we’re on the clock. And some of the greatest mistakes in the Bible are made when God’s people lose focus during times of blessing.

Second thing to think about from these verses is there in verse 23, where God says, “I will make a *difference* between My people and your people.”

God wants the world to know that He is the Lord by the impact He makes in your life. He wants to show a difference between you and the guy next to you who doesn't know Jesus. There has to be a difference in the way we live and the power in our lives.

And when the Lord says something like that, so outright, it's an opportunity for each and every one of us to look into our hearts and our minds and ask, "Lord, do I really live life according to Your different plan? I'm a citizen of Heaven, if a citizen of Kings County looked at me, am I free of corruption? Would they be able to tell that I belong to the one true God by the way I live and the way I sacrifice and the way my life is supernaturally directed and empowered?" We need to ask those questions.

If the answer is no to those questions, then, using today's text as an analogy, we might not be living in Goshen. We might have relocated out of God's protection and into the corruption of the world.

Verse 24 says that the land was corrupted by the flies. It's the same word used when God said in Genesis 6 that the earth was corrupt and all flesh had corrupted their way. It's the same word He'll use in Exodus 32 when He says to Moses, "Get down the mountain, for your people have corrupted themselves."

Spiritually, the world is swarming with corruption. We've got to stay in the No Fly Zone. From there we can enjoy God's blessings, we can serve Him and we can preach both out of difficulty and out of comfort. And that will make a noticeable difference to the people of this world. And as they're noticing us, we need to get in their way and share Christ with them so they can be saved from the judgment that is coming.