

state in emergency

exodus 9

Exodus chapter 9 this morning. Three more plagues hit Egypt hard as Pharaoh continues his standoff against the Lord. This set of judgments are more than just inconvenient, they're downright deadly.

As we read the verses, we want to think about how they can speak to us about the way we should serve the Lord and reach out to unbelievers.

So, let's look at our text and see what we see.

Exodus 9.1-7 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them, behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence. And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel." ' ' Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying, "Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land."

So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died. Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

The first 4 plagues were incredible and severe, but their impact wasn't as deadly as this plague on the livestock. The death of the cattle and donkeys and horses and camels and sheep and oxen would have a crippling effect on the economy of Egypt. Production and travel and consumption would come to a grinding halt, and again the land would be covered with countless piles of dead carcasses.

As the Lord was systematically knocking down each of these gods that the Egyptians worshiped, we also see that He was revealing Himself to the people in multiple ways.

When we minister, we should minister with multiple methods. The Bible says that we should be all things to all men, so we should endeavor to get the Gospel out in as many ways as we can, because there is no single method that will connect with everyone.

God here was effectively doing one overarching thing - demonstrating His power through wrath - but He was accomplishing that mission by going to the Egyptians at their rivers and their homes and their fields and their bodies because He is intent on getting the attention of the people of the earth. Our overarching message is simple, but we've got to have many methods of delivery.

As Moses delivered the message, he highlighted the terms of God's judgment. "If you refuse, then death is coming." That's something we have to highlight when we reach out to unbelievers, because it is the most significant thing. End of the day we can't let people walk away without knowing that there is an eternal judgment coming that will end in their damnation unless they surrender to God. It's not always the most palatable thing to hear, but it's absolutely essential. So, Moses very clearly explained what was coming and that there was an appointed time for it. So should we.

Exodus 9.8-12 - So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt." Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered them toward heaven. And they caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians. But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Here God asks Moses to draw attention toward Heaven. He asks him to do that again in verse 22.

When we reach out to people and talk with them or minister to them, we always want to draw attention to heaven and to the Lord. I happened to hear a little bit of a guy sharing his testimony on KWVE the other night and he said, "I'm going to tell you a little bit about me, but I want to talk a *LOT* about my God." And I thought that was great.

As Christians, we're bringing people the message that we've found satisfaction, we've got the answers for life, we know what the secret is. But the focus of our sharing should always be God's power and grace, rather than our success or achievement. The Lord instructed Moses to act and move in a way that would demonstrate to people that Heaven was reaching down to earth, not just that Moses as a man had mystical powers.

Exodus 9.13-19 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me, for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go. Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now. Therefore send now and gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die." ' ' "

The message that Moses delivers highlights God's incredible mercy.

It's interesting that here, we're at the 7th plague, Pharaoh's heart is harder than ever, but *STILL* there is an invitation to repent and receive God's grace and avoid the coming destruction.

God's judgment is coming, but His mercy is new every morning and while there's life, there's hope. I don't necessarily think that every street preacher of doom is crazy, but I do think that many of them fail to properly present God's mercy while presenting His holiness. It's kind of the message Jonah had for Nineveh. He gave them a fire and brimstone message, but clearly God still had mercy for them, and He still does today for the Egyptians all around us.

The Lord said to them outright, "I could've wiped you out completely, but I didn't, and now more judgments are coming, so you need to get your animals and your people out from the fields and into shelter otherwise they're going to die!"

If our ministry, preaching, outreach, our Christianity doesn't highlight the mercy of God, then we're not presenting Him the way He presents Himself in Scripture. Psalm 86.5 says that the Lord is so good and so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for His help.

Exodus 9.20-21 - He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. But he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.

There is a big difference between people who fear the word of the Lord and people who do not. Even among Christians you have people who fear God's word and people who simply recognize or reference God's word. And it does make a difference. The Word of God is a light and a power, it's a sword and a teacher, it is truth and it is needful for living life. It's not just a story about who God is, but it must be applied if we hope to have a difference made in our lives.

Now, if you're like me, these verses cause a question to pop up: If all the livestock were killed in plague number 5, then where did these livestock in plague number 7 come from?

That's a good question.

Here are 5 possible and plausible solutions:

Number 1 - The 5th plague listed many types of livestock, but linguists point out it does not list goats among the threatened animals. The NIV renders the word goats, but most scholars say that the word there is for flocks or sheep. It's possible that the livestock talked about here in the 7th plague were goats, who may have been exempt from the 5th plague.

Number 2 - Some believe that when verse 20 says, "among the servants of Pharaoh" it indicates that plague number 7 was directed against vassal states of Egypt, rather than the Egyptians themselves, who had already lost their livestock in plague number 5.

Number 3 - it's possible that the same caveat that was given in plague number 7 about getting your livestock inside to avoid death could've been given by God back in plague number 5 and that some believing Egyptians had their cattle spared. Back in verse 3 it does say, "the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle *in the field*." So that's a possibility.

Number 4 - Some scholars like Norman Geisler point out that the word 'all' doesn't always mean 'all' in the Bible. Linguistically, after plague 5, there in verse 6 the text could be rendered: "All manner of livestock of the Egyptians died."

Solution number 5 - We don't know how much time passed between plagues 5 and 7. It's possible that Pharaoh either confiscated some of the Hebrew's livestock, which I think is likely, or that a number of weeks had passed and they had imported livestock from surrounding regions.

So, we're not sure what exactly happened, but those are 5 reasonable, plausible solutions to a seeming contradiction and it's important to think through those difficulties in the Scriptures.

Exodus 9.22-26 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.

In light of this week's tragic tornado in Oklahoma, it's sobering to think of the nationwide destruction of this hail. The difference was, no one had to die in this plague. The message was simple: Fear the Lord, avoid the hail.

That's still the deal for people today, including us. Here's an example - God says in His word that we need to reign in our tongues, because the tongue can set fire to your life. Now, if we believe and fear the Lord, we're going to avoid some fire damage. If we don't fear the Lord in that warning, if we conduct ourselves as if there's nothing to worry about, we're going to get burned. The word of the Lord must be feared and applied. In those boundaries there is shelter and safety. Outside there is inescapable danger.

Exodus 9.27-30 - And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. Entreat the Lord, that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." So Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God."

It may have sounded like repentance, but what Pharaoh was really looking for was relief. This wasn't real surrender, because we'll see him change his mind yet again in a couple verses.

It's interesting, Moses says, "I know you're not going to turn your lives over to God." But, he didn't stop doing what God asked him to do. Don't grow weary in doing good. We *will* reap a harvest at the proper time if we don't give up.

I know it can seem like you're not making much headway with specific people you're reaching out to, but hang in there and keep plowing that soil.

Exodus 9.31-32 - Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they are late crops.

Again, notice the mercy which restrained the wrath. Let's never forget how much God goes out of His way to pour out His love and grace on undeserving people.

Exodus 9.33-35 - So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the Lord; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

A man is known by his fruit. Pharaoh had made a confession of sin a few verses ago, but it's clear that there was no actual submission or growth in his heart. As we reach out to people, we're looking for real impact and real change, not just words.

And in ourselves, it's a reminder that we're known by our fruit as well. As the Lord speaks His word to me it should be taking root and causing growth. That's what happens when we fear God's word. Fearing means we believe it *and* apply it, so that it can instruct and bless and protect us the way God wants to in His incredible mercy.