



## Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 8:20 - 9:12

Topic

The magicians of Egypt can no longer stand in Moses' presence when excruciating boils break-out on both man and beast

Title

*"Bad Boils, Bad Boils...  
Whatcha Gonna Do When They Come On You?"*

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The signs read, "No ICE."

On our recent trip to Southern California we noticed as we entered Los Angeles along I-5 that people had hung hand-written signs on the overpasses. "No ICE."

My first thought was that it was about ice - **as in ice cubes.** Maybe it was a new way to save the environment by rationing water, or by not using refrigerant and electricity to produce and to store ice.

You guys are up on current events, so you know that ICE is the Immigration & Customs Enforcement agency. The signs are a protest against the deportation of illegal immigrants.

California recently became a Sanctuary State. The bill passed by our legislators and signed into law by our governor limits cooperation between local officials and ICE.

North Carolina is not a Sanctuary State, nor does it claim any Sanctuary Cities. Nevertheless, as of late December, four people were enjoying sanctuary from deportation by taking refuge in North Carolina churches. One pastor here illegally from El Salvador has been living in a Durham church for the last six months.

Houses of worship have a long history of being places of refuge for those wanted by the authorities. It's no longer true that if you get to a church you can simply call "base" and be free from arrest. But in some cases, the authorities will respect it.

ICE has said it generally avoids arrests at "sensitive locations," including places of worship. Their policy doesn't rule out enforcement there in certain circumstances, such as instances relating to national security, terrorism, or public safety.

I'm guessing that seeking sanctuary in a church in China is a bad idea. Authorities in northern China's coal country demolished a well-known Christian mega-church.

The People's Armed Police forces used excavators and dynamite to destroy the Golden Lampstand Church in the city of Linfen in Shanxi province.

ChinaAid, a U.S.-based Christian advocacy group, said local authorities planted explosives in an underground worship hall to demolish the building, which was built with nearly \$3 million in contributions from local worshippers in one of China's poorest regions. The church has over 50,000 members.

Today in the Book of Exodus we continue with the series of ten signs (commonly called "ten plagues") that God brought against Egypt. Beginning with the fourth sign, flies, God makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. God says,

Exo 8:21 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*.

Exo 8:22 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.

Exo 8:23 I will make a difference between My people and your people.

This distinction between the Hebrews and the Egyptians continued for the remaining signs: The Egyptians would be affected, but not the Hebrews.

**You might say that Goshen was a kind of 'sanctuary state' in the midst of Egypt.**

There was nothing special about Goshen; it was the fact the Hebrews were there that made it a refuge and sanctuary.

In our dispensation, the church is spiritual geography that is distinct from everything surrounding it. It is, or should be, a refuge and sanctuary.

As we work our way through these next three signs, I want to take a look at refuge and sanctuary. I'll organize my comments on signs four, five, and six around two points: #1 As A Nonbeliever You Ought To Seek Sanctuary From The World, and #2 As A Believer, You Have Your Sanctuary In The Lord.

#1 As A Nonbeliever,  
You Ought To Seek Sanctuary From The World

Every group has a vocabulary that is used by its insiders. I'm interested in coffee; it's my hobby. I like making it more than I like drinking it - and I love drinking it. I have maybe 40-50 different coffee makers. And some grinders... And a coupla small home roasters.

Coffee has a vocabulary for its insiders. Chemex, V-60, Aeropress, and vacuum brewer are part of the modern language of coffee.

Did you know we are in the "third wave" of coffee? Third wave coffee aspires to the highest form of culinary appreciation of coffee, so that one may appreciate subtleties of flavor, varietal, and growing region - similar to other complex consumable plant-derived products such as wine, tea, and chocolate. It also includes revivals of alternative methods of coffee preparation, such as vacuum coffee and pour-over brewing devices such as the Chemex and Hario V60.

**Christians have a vocabulary.** I ran across this in an article on what is labeled Christianese:

Think about the word “conversion.” It is filled with meaning for you, from all the Bible studies, books, and talks you have absorbed. If you had never encountered the Christian faith, though, what imagery would “conversion” trigger in your mind? I usually hear it used to describe a building project that makes the attic habitable (a “loft conversion”), as a term for comparing the relative value of money from different countries (a “currency conversion”), or as a way of changing the format of a document on a computer (“file conversion in progress”).

There’s a word we use all the time that, while it makes perfect sense to us, might confuse a nonbeliever. It is the word “world.” We talk about the things of the world, or walking in the world, or returning to the world. We cleverly advise, “Be in the world but not of the world.”

Telling someone you are “not of this world” makes sense to us, but it might get you a 72hr hold from the authorities.

To complicate it even more, we use cities or countries named in the Bible to represent the world:

- I remember one gal telling someone she had gotten her college degree from a school in Babylon. Did she mean in Iraq? Or Babylon, New York? No; she meant it was a secular school.
- During a wedding ceremony, the pastor mentioned that the bride had recently returned from spending time in Egypt. He didn’t mean she had been on an archaeological dig at the

pyramids. He meant she had been away from the Lord for a time - in the world.

What is the world? For our purposes, **the world is the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, His Word, and His people.**

Egypt is a good type, or illustration, of the world and all that it offers in opposition to God. For example, a little later in Exodus, after the Hebrews are free from slavery in Egypt, they nevertheless long for what it offered:

Exo 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

In another place they exclaim, "We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted" (Numbers 11:5). They wanted to draw-back from the *spiritual* to the *material*.

As believers, we are no longer merely "living in a material world." We are spiritual, and ought to approach life as if we are seated in heavenly places.

Hopefully all this background helps you to understand what we mean when we say that the nonbeliever ought to seek sanctuary from this world.

Exo 8:20 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.

Exo 8:21 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*.

In other words, it would be like life on a dairy. (*Sorry; I had to!*).

Literally, it says God sent *a swarm* upon Egypt; "flies" is in italics, meaning the translators added it to help make better sense of the sentence. It does not specify what the swarm is. It may have been a variety of gross insects - not just flies. Psalm 78:45 says these swarms "devoured them," telling us that there were biting insects in the swarm.

Exo 8:22 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.

Exo 8:23 I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be." ' "

We made a big deal about why the Hebrews suffered alongside the Egyptians during the first three signs. When the water was blood, and frogs and gnats multiplied, it happened in Goshen, too.

We suffer alongside folks, just as Jesus suffered alongside folks, in order to identify with them, and have compassion on them.

God made a distinction in order to show Pharaoh something more about His power, and He was far superior to all of Egypt's gods.

Exo 8:24 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*.

Do you remember the *X-Files* episode where the aliens came as cockroaches? And one crawled across the screen? *Yuck*.

Exo 8:25 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."

"In the land" was Pharaoh negotiating a compromise. There is no negotiating with God on essentials.

Do you agree? If you do, you might be in the minority - even among Christians who profess to follow God's Word.

Every year, the Oxford Dictionary announces their 'Word of the Year.' In 2016 it was post-truth - an adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.'

In other words, your feelings have greater impact than the facts, or the truth.



Christians have been applying post-truth in their marriages for years. They divorce without biblical grounds, based mostly on how they feel. The objective Word of God gives way to their subjective feelings. Always submit your feelings to your faith and obey God.

Exo 8:26 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?"

There are many theories on what, exactly, the Egyptians would find abominable. No one knows for sure, but it's clear that Pharaoh understood what Moses meant.

Exo 8:27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He will command us."

Exo 8:28 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."

Three days was too far for Pharaoh. Again, he sought to negotiate. It reminds me of post-truthers once you expose them to the black & white Word of God. They still want to negotiate their own terms.

Exo 8:29 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."

Moses didn't agree to Pharaoh's terms. He did agree to pray for Pharaoh. Praying for our enemies - not easy, but necessary.

Exo 8:30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD.

Exo 8:31 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.

Those who try to see these events as having natural environmental causes cannot answer the fact that God ended them abruptly when called upon. There is no reason, except embarrassment, to shy away from the miraculous.

By 'embarrassment' I mean we don't want to sound supernatural, for fear that folks will think us ignorant. **Of course God does the supernatural.**

Exo 8:32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

He was on the ropes, but Pharaoh rope-a-doped by acting like he'd relent. Knock-out punch is coming; mean time, God was giving space to repent.

The next sign is a nightmare for PETA.

Exo 9:1 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.

Exo 9:2 For if you refuse to let *them* go, and still hold them,

Exo 9:3 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.

Exo 9:4 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." ' "

Exo 9:5 Then the LORD appointed a set time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."

Exo 9:6 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.

Exo 9:7 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.

Christian and nonChristian commentators try to explain this by pointing back to the swarm of insects, as if the pestilence was caused by them. But if these plagues can be explained naturally, **they are not signs.**

Each series of three of the first nine signs ends with a plague that comes upon Egypt unannounced.

Exo 9:8 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.

Exo 9:9 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."

Exo 9:10 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.

The Hebrew word for “boil” means *to belch forth; an inflammatory pustule*. Put those together: Inflamed pustules were belching.

I’d like to read you something I ran across in an archaeological journal.

Evidence for the plague of boils which God brought upon Egypt may have come to light. In 2009, Ed Kaspar, wrote an article in which he proposed that the Exodus Pharaoh was Thutmose II. This is based upon recent CAT scans of the pharaoh's mummy as well as quotes from the original archaeologists that examined the mummy back in 1886 and 1912. The examinations and CAT scans revealed that Thutmose II had scarring on his flesh which may have come from a skin disease consistent with that of boils. Other mummies of individuals who were alive at the same time as Thutmose II were also found to have this same scarring. Those mummies included his wife Queen Hatshepsut, her wet nurse Sitre-In, and her stepson Thutmose III.

File that under the category of “maybe.” We’re not sure which Pharaoh was the one Moses confronted. Alfred Edersheim proposes in his *Old Testament Bible History* that Thutmose II is best qualified to be the pharaoh of Exodus based on the fact that he had a brief, prosperous reign and then a sudden collapse with no son to succeed him. But other scholars say it was a Ramses.

Exo 9:11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.

Inflamed pustules were belching on “all the Egyptians,” *but not the Israelites*.

The magicians, identified in the New Testament (at least two of them) as Jannes and Jambres, had replicated the first two signs. After they could not replicate the third, we lost track of them. Now we see they continued by Pharaoh's side, no doubt advising him.

They would no longer be able to stand before Moses - meaning Pharaoh might become more susceptible to God's pressure. Don't underestimate the power of evil influence. Eliminate it whenever possible.

Exo 9:12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

God foreknew Pharaoh's response, but He did not determine it. He does not ask someone to do something He predetermines they cannot do. If anything, God was working on Pharaoh's hard heart to soften it.

If you were an Egyptian, following this narrative, you'd realize there was a place of refuge from what was happening in the world. It was Goshen - but not because of its physical geography. No, it was a place of refuge, a sanctuary, because that was where God's people dwelt.

We know that at least some Egyptians would accompany the Hebrews out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Some found sanctuary among God's people.

If you are not a believer, it isn't the physical catastrophes that are occurring with increasing frequency that you need sanctuary from. After all, Christians suffer alongside you in them.

**It is the spiritual catastrophes you need to fear.** One author said it like this:

No creature so much needs the shelter and defense of a safe hiding-place as man. His sources of danger are more than can be numbered, **and with an infected nature he travels an infested road.** Beset with foes, he is in constant need of shelter, and often cries out for deliverance.

- You have “an infected nature.” Really, it’s much worse than infected. You were born spiritually dead, complete with a sin nature. You therefore face eternal death, separation from God for eternity, if you remain in your sins.
- You travel “an infested road.” The world really is in the power of its god - Satan. It is designed to hold you its spiritual captive.

You may think you are doing alright, enjoying life; maybe even doing good works. But your time here is probationary - to determine where you will live for eternity. If you aren’t considering your own mortality and immortality, then you’ve been lulled into a false sense of security that will prove devastating upon your death.

You cannot qualify for Heaven by your good works. Salvation can only be received as a gift when you have faith in Jesus Christ.

#2 As A Believer,  
You Have Your Sanctuary In The Lord

We all know that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the Christian at the moment you are saved. Our individual bodies become His temple - His sanctuary.

We are further described, as we gather together, as the temple (the sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit. Not this room, but our being present in it, make it sanctuary.

But I have more in mind the idea of sanctuary that Jeremiah wrote about:

Jer 17:12 A glorious high throne from the beginning Is the place of our sanctuary.

The first phrase should read, “a throne of glory.” From the very beginning, God’s throne of glory has been our sanctuary, where we find refuge. When Adam and Eve sinned, God came immediately, and explained He would provide them refuge and sanctuary.

There’s a difference, by the way, between refuge and sanctuary. A refuge can provide temporary help, whereas sanctuary permanently provides for your greatest needs.

People find refuge in the philosophies and psychologies and religions of the world; all of them fall short, because they cannot transform you. Sanctuary can only be found in the salvation provided all who believe in Jesus.

Sanctuary is another way of saying He saved us, and is saving us, and will save us. But it’s a way that communicates that His refuge as sanctuary is unassailable.

Let me give you an example of this kind of sanctuary. Quite some time ago, when we were first confronted with HIV and AIDS, I saw an interview with a terminal patient. I’ll never forget what he said.

He said, "I'd rather have AIDS and know Jesus, than not have AIDS and not know Jesus."

Jesus was his sanctuary as he suffered and died. If you've been a believer for any length of time, you've encountered that same testimony among terminally ill believers. Jesus is their sanctuary; they are unassailable, even and especially while dying.

On a less severe level, we all need refuge that is a sanctuary, and we should experience it in Jesus, and among His gathered saints.

If you're a Christian, this world is not your home. Your citizenship is elsewhere; it's in Heaven. You are looking forward to the city whose builder and maker is God.

No citizenship... Far away from your true country... Living in a foreign kingdom. In one place in the New Testament Christians are called "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "Stranger" translates to *foreigners*, and "pilgrims" can mean *resident aliens*.

**It sounds like you're an immigrant on this earth.**

Find your refuge and sanctuary in Jesus, and among His people, as you await His coming for us. Reject post-truth living, and the subtle but sinister lure of finding satisfaction *anywhere* else, or in *anyone* else.