Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God vs. the gods of Egypt
Scripture: Exodus 4-11
Code: 1274

Tonight as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's table, I want to draw your attention to some thoughts from the Word of God that may seem, at the very beginning, a little far away, and yet by the time we're finished, I'll be sure you realize how really close they are.

One of the great emphasis of the Bible is that God is our Savior. Of course, we're all very much aware of this. Jesus Christ is our Savior. But in the Old Testament there is a tremendous emphasis on the fact that God is a saving God. God is one who delivers His people. Who sets them free from bondage. Who redeems them. Who saves them. Who finds them when they're lost.

In Exodus 15:2 it says, "The Lord is my strength and song. He is become my salvation." And tonight we have sung the songs that belong to the Lord, and now we talk about the salvation that belongs to Him as well. The Psalms repeatedly emphasize that God is a Savior. The Psalms tell us salvation belongeth to the Lord. Thou art the God of my salvation. The Lord is my light, and my salvation. From Him cometh my salvation. Oh, God of our salvation. God is my King of old. Working salvation. This then is the great theme of the Psalms.

If you were to look at the prophets, you would find the same recurring theme. Particularly I'm thinking of the 45th chapter of the great prophecy of Isaiah, where repeatedly does Isaiah extol God in the same manner. Pointing out God as a Savior. "Verily thou art a God who hideth thyself. Oh God of Israel, the Savior." Again, in the same chapter, "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

Again, it says, "And there is no God beside me. A just God and a Savior." And then, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." The message of the Psalms is that God is a Savior. The message of the prophets is that God is a Savior. Hosea records these words. "There is no Savior like me." Joel, chapter 2, verse 9, says "Salvation is of the Lord."

Now what I want you to see is that the concept of God as a Savior. We think of it in terms of the Cross, don't we? And Jesus Christ our Savior. We think of the communion service as it focuses on the Cross, as the great and permanent definition of the Savior of the good of God. But that same concept existed in the mind and the heart of God and His people long before the Cross. For God has ever and always been the Savior of His people. And so a recurring theme of the Old Testament is that God is indeed the Savior.

Now we, thinking of God as a Savior, look to the Cross. When an Israelite in the Old Testament thought of God as a Savior, to what did he look? At what point in the history of God's redemptive plan could an Old Testament saint go and see the Savior-hood of God? See God as the redeemer. The deliverer. The Savior.

The answer to that is found in the 105th Psalm. And I'd like to call your attention to it for a moment if I might. The 105th Psalm. Here we find the attention of the Psalmist turn to God as a Savior. And in seeing God as a Savior, he focuses on one specific great monumental, historic act of God in the Old Testament, which ever and always to a Jew was the point that identified God as Savior. If you'll notice, moving down from verse 14, you begin to see that God recites the history of Israel, bit by bit. Focusing on one major event beginning in verse 23.

"Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants. He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. They showed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark, and they rebelled not against His word. He turned their waters into blood and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance in the chambers of their kings. He spoke and there came various sorts of flies and mosquitoes, or gnats, in all their borders. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire on their land. He smote their vines, also, and their fig trees, and broke the trees of their borders. He spoke and the locust came, and caterpillars and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land. The chief of all their strength.

He brought them forth also with silver and gold, and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them fell upon them.

He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night. The people asked and He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of Heaven. He opened the rock and the waters gushed out. They ran in the dry places like a river.

For he remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant, and He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness. And gave them the lands of the nations, and they inherited the labor of the peoples.

That they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. Praise ye, the Lord."

Now beloved, right there in that monumental historic passage, you have a recitation of God's deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. Always, throughout the Old Testament,

that is the focal point of God as a redeemer. Of God as a Savior. Of God as one who delivers His people.

When an Old Testament Jew wanted to speak of God as a Savior, he pointed directly to the redemption of his people from the land of Egypt where they knew bondage for 400 years. That was their ground of hope, if you will, in the saving, delivering power of God. That was the source of their confidence in God as their redeemer. A God who could redeem His people from Egypt, was a redeemer God, and could as well redeem His people from their sins.

Now, God wanted them to know that He was a Savior, and God wanted them to know that He was a redeemer. And God wanted them to be aware that He was a deliverer. And in wanting them to remember, God instituted a certain event that took place every year in the life of Israel. And that event had one major purpose - to make them remember His delivering them from Egypt. That great event is known as the Passover.

And every year, even til this very year, Jews all over the world remember the Passover. When God delivered Israel from bondage. Why? Because still it is their touchstone for the definition of God as a redeeming God. They remember the deliverance from Egypt, because it reminds them of the amazing power of God over a nation that really was the greatest power of its day.

God then is seen as a redeemer in the Old Testament as He delivers Israel from Egypt. He is seen as a Savior in the Passover events in Egypt. And this then became the institution which God wanted Israel to perform. Every year they would keep the Passover. And they would remember God's delivering power in Egypt.

Now with that in mind, turn with me to Exodus chapter 12. And lets go back to this great event, and let the Spirit of God teach us some great lessons from it tonight.

In chapter 12 of Exodus, you have basically the institution of the Passover. The Passover is a feast of commemoration, just as is the Lord's table. In the Lord's table we remember God's saving work at the Cross. In the Passover, the Jews remember God's saving work in Egypt.

And you'll notice in chapter 12 it begins, "The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying this month shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbors next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls, every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb." In other words, you have to have enough lamb to feed everybody.

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. Ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread." Unleavened bread being a sign of haste. You can't wait around til it rises, because they're to move real fast when they leave Egypt.

"And with bitter herbs they shall eat it," because their life in Egypt has been a bitter life, and this is a good reminder of that. "Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire," and I think that speaks of the unmitigated punishment borne by Jesus Christ, the ultimate lamb of God.

Again, a very important symbol assigned to their Passover pointing towards Christ. "And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning, and that which remaineth of it until the morning, you shall burn with fire. And thus shall you eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand, and eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover."

And then he goes on to say, while you're doing that I'll pass through the land and I'll check out the houses and the houses that have the blood, I'll pass by, and the rest of the houses in Egypt I will slay the firstborn. As the Psalms said, the chief of the strength. The major member of every family.

Now God institutes this Passover, and they are to remember that God delivered them, and they are to keep the Passover.

Now let's go back and find out why the Passover was such a dramatic picture of God's saving power. Go back to chapter 6 of Exodus. Unless you really know what happened, you can't understand why it was such a powerful picture of God's saving power. Now keep in mind that Egypt is a very, very strong nation. Egypt is a powerful, educated, wise nation. Egypt has a tremendous hold on that part of the world. Knocking off the entire nation of Egypt is not a small task. The Israelites have been around for 400 years, and even though they've increased in number to the extent where they should have been able to do it, they've never had a leader that could enable them to do it.

But God is about to absolutely destroy the nation of Egypt. He will destroy that nation economically. He will destroy that nation politically. He will destroy that nation socially. He will destroy that nation in a marital and a family way. He will destroy that nation in terms of its reputation in the world, and He will utterly destroy that nation religiously. He, in a series of plagues that come on the nation Egypt literally obliterates the power of Egypt.

In a massive demonstration of divine power that cannot be withstood, not even by the multiple gods that supposedly kept care of this amazing nation of Egypt. And let's see how it all came to pass, that we might see how mighty our God is.

Verse 28 of chapter 6, "And it came to pass on the day when the LORD spoke unto Moses in the land of Egypt, that the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, I am the Lord." And that's the bottom line, folks. There's no other gods. I am the Lord and I'm about to let it be known.

"Speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee. And Moses said before the Lord, behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me? And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."

Don't you worry about your reputation. Don't you worry about where you're coming from as being a part of the Egyptian society. Don't you worry about anything. You just do what I tell you, and you say what I tell you, and I'll take care of every other detail.

"Thou shalt speak all that I command thee, and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

In other words, you tell them to let the people go, but I'm going to harden his heart and by the way, Pharaoh also hardens his own heart, so he's in perfect agreement with it. I'm going to harden his heart, he'll harden his own heart, and in the midst of all of this, I will put on a display of signs and wonders that has never been seen heretofore. And that's exactly what God set about to do. He calls out the men that he wants to be his leader, and it's Moses. And Moses gets ready for his first encounter with Pharaoh.

Now, really what you have here is God against the gods of Egypt. This is God against the gods of Egypt. And God is about to put on an awesome display of saving power.

You know, we have a lot of archeological studies that have been done around Egypt, and I've had the privilege myself of nosing around in some of the archeological digs in the land of Egypt. Egypt was a splendorous nation at this time. There are fragments and artifacts that have been found that testify the incredible power and majesty and might and splendor of this amazing place.

The pyramids alone stand as a monument to human ingenuity. That still to this very day cannot be explained. There is still no - what would you say - solid, verified, agreed upon method that could possibly be known for how they ever were able to build the pyramids.

I can remember standing on a ledge looking at a statute that was so incredibly massive that it staggered your mind. It would stretch halfway across this auditorium I imagine. And these kinds of things were everyplace. All throughout the land of Egypt. Monuments to the great ingenuity artistically, and to the architectural ability of the people of that day. There are shrines all over the place. Everywhere you go.

They honor at shrines and temples, and it tells us that - and this is an important point - nothing in Egypt was secular. There was no such thing as the separation of the church and state. The religion dominated the nation. Nothing at all was secular. Every single thing they did in their entire society from one end to the other involved some kind of worship. Some kind of deities. Some kind of religious involvement. Everything. Everything in Egypt was religious.

And what that means is that everything in Egypt was linked to one of their many, many gods. So that when God Jehovah goes against Egypt, He takes on all the gods of Egypt. It was God against the gods of Egypt. Because the Egyptians were idolatrous in every element of life. Their gods are uncountable. And I believe that the plagues and the deliverance of Israel is the greatest testimony in the Old Testament to the stupidity and the futility of idolatry.

If anybody ever had a sophisticated system of deities, Egypt did. And if anybody ever had a bunch of gods that were useless, Egypt did. The bankruptcy of their religion is never more manifest than it is in these chapters, as God begins to bring His power against them.

Now, the Lord speaks unto Moses in chapter 7, verse 8. Let's pick it up there. "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, when Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, show a miracle for you," in other words, verify that you're from God. Verify that I ought to do what you say by showing a miracle, "Then thou shalt say to Aaron, take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent."

"And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh." This is encounter number one. "And they did as the Lord had commanded." In other words, they said let the people go. Let Israel go. You've had them in captivity. You've abused that. Let them go. He asked for a miracle, and so they threw the rod down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

"Then Pharaoh called the wise men and the sorcerers, and now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." In other words, they threw their sticks down and their sticks turned into snakes, too.

"For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had

said."

Now the question always comes up about how these guys could do this. And some people say it was an illusion. But it's hard for one snake to eat an illusion. So that's not probably the best one.

Some say they were snake charmers, and they just got these snakes to look stiff. That hits you just like it hits me. Right? I mean, training a snake to look stiff is tough.

Others say that actually it was a supernatural satanic miracle. But if I know anything at all about Satan, I know that he doesn't have the power to create, because only God does that, and Satan is not able to turn sticks into snakes.

The best idea is that these guys were magicians who had pulled off a lot of other slight-of-hand operations, and they just pulled one off right here. I've seen magicians turn sticks into a lot of things, and a lot of things into sticks. And it can be done. And it's really an illusion in the mind, isn't it? It's magic as we know magic. Not in the satanic sense, but in the sense of slight-of-hand. I think actually snakes did appear, and they made them look as if they came from their sticks. And believe me, with Pharaoh, they had a willing audience. The last thing Pharaoh wanted to do was have Moses pull off something the rest couldn't do. So he was willing to believe anything.

And it convinced him, and so he hardened his heart and he did not accept what Moses said. Well, that set it up, folks. For God to begin to act. And to display His saving power, and His devastation of the deities and the priests of Egypt who were absolutely helpless to stop anything that was going on.

And I want you to notice this. Every single one of the ten plagues - and we're going to go through them real quick - every single one of the ten plagues was directed at the false gods of Egypt. In fact, almost every one of them, with the exception of maybe one, attacked some specific gods and revealed their utter impotence. And shows the stupidity and the futility of idolatry.

Let's look at the first one. Polluted water. Chapter 7, verse 14. And here we begin this display as God saves His people from the bondage of slavery.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuses to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning. Lo, he goeth out unto the water, and thou shalt stand by the river brink to meet him. And the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand." This rod was a symbol of God's presence, and Moses had it in his hand.

Now Pharaoh would go down to the water in the morning. No doubt this was some kind of a ceremonial religious rite. Because the Nile River was the very lifeblood of the nation Egypt. They worshiped the gods that were associated with the Nile.

And so down Pharaoh would go for his religious exercises in the morning, only to be confronted by Moses. "And thou shalt say unto him, the Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness, and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the Lord, in this thou shalt know that I am the Lord. Behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

And the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall stink, and the Egyptians shall loath to drink of the water of the river.

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, say unto Aaron, take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, upon their ponds, upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded, and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants, and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

And the fish that were in the river died, and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river, and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt."

Now let me set the perspective on this. From the earliest history of Egypt to present hour, the very lifeblood of Egypt, the heartbeat of Egypt is the river Nile. I dare say hardly any country in the world is more dependent upon a major river than the nation of Egypt. It is strategic to Egyptian agriculture for one thing. Up until very recent years when they have developed new channels and courses for the Nile to take to irrigate, the Egyptians depended upon the floodwaters of the Nile to irrigate their country.

During late June and July and August the Nile River rises above its banks, completely inundates the land, spreading way inland, and turns the desert into a place where things will grow, leaving pools of water everywhere in a very natural irrigation annually that occurs because the floodwaters rise so high.

The river, they say, is the lowest in May and it is the highest in August, and were it not for the inundation of the Nile River, Egypt would be as bleak a place as the Sahara desert. They were absolutely dependent on the Nile.

And because they were so dependent on the Nile, they believed that the god of the Nile was a major god. And they worshiped the god of the Nile. They even wrote hymns associated with the Nile. They

had hymns of fertility, and hymns of blessing, and hymns of happiness. One of them goes, "hail to thee oh Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive. He that waters the meadows which recreated in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water. That is his dew coming down from heaven." In other words, they literally extol the Nile as a deity. The Nile provided transportation, irrigation, pasture, hunting grounds, fish, everything.

So to begin with, God takes on the Nile. God takes on the god of the river. Pharaoh's down at the river and everything turns to blood. You say literal blood? The Bible says blood. It appeared to be blood. It must have looked like blood, tasted like blood, and felt like blood. Maybe you want to compare Joel 2:31 which talks about the future time at the second coming when the moon is turned to blood. Maybe it was only the appearance of blood. I don't really know whether it was an appearance of blood as Joel used it, or whether it was actually the constituency of blood. I don't know. But whatever it was, it was a miraculous event.

People have said well, you see, certain times of the year there's a certain silt that floats down the Nile and it looks red. Listen, just to be sure that you didn't think that, God turned the river to blood, He turned all the tributaries to blood, he turned every pond to blood, He turned every pool to blood, and He turned every bit of standing water in a keg, and every bit of standing water in a piece of pottery to blood. Don't tell me that silt just floated down and got into all those pots and kegs. This is God.

The Nile was sacred. The great God by the name of Khnum was the guardian of the Nile. There was a god called Hapy who was the spirit of the Nile. They called him the dynamic essence of the Nile. And then there was the greatest of Egyptian gods, one of the greatest, called Osiris, and Osiris was known as the god of the underworld. He ruled the deities. And Osiris, it is said, had for his bloodstream the Nile River. And how appropriate that the Lord turned it to blood as if Osiris was bleeding to death.

Fish died. The place stunk something fierce. You can imagine that they kind of stopped singing hymns to the Nile, can't you? You know, one of the hymns to the Nile said, "Oh Nile, bringer of food, rich in provision, creator of all good, Lord of majesty, sweet fragrance." No sweet fragrance anymore. You can imagine the horror as not only their river, but their gods were being destroyed.

Crocodiles were forced to leave the Nile. They must have inundated the land. You can imagine what that did. And by the way, Hapy was the god of the crocodiles, and if you ever see an image of Hapy drawn, he is drawn as a crocodile. And if you go to Egypt, you'll find out that they mummified crocodiles. They worshiped them as deities. The crocodiles were literally thrown out of their habitation.

There's a god Neith, who is a warlike god, and sometimes a goddess actually, who had a special task. Neith had the job of taking care of the lates, which were the largest fish in the Nile, and all of them died.

There was another god, Hathor. Hathor had charge of the rest of the fish, and they all died. You see, God is literally devastating their idolatry. He's wiping out their deities.

They counterfeited it, you notice in verse 22, "The magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments. Pharaoh's heart was hardened." Now what did they do with their enchantments? I don't think they turned anything to blood because there was nothing left. They probably bought in some kind of a pot that Pharaoh assumed was filled with water, and went zap, and when he opened it up and saw blood, he thought they did it. He was a willing victim. I don't know how they falsified it, but they did.

His proud heart was hardened, and he wouldn't do what Moses asked him. The Egyptians, in verse 24, were digging all over the place to find water because they couldn't drink the water in the river. Seven days were fulfilled after the Lord smitten the river.

Now, the Lord isn't done. If you don't listen at this point, here it comes again. Chapter 8, frogs. Now, frogs are nice little cute things when you've got one or two of them. But in this kind of situation, they wouldn't be real popular.

"The Lord spoke to Moses, said go to Pharaoh and say unto him, thus sayeth the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me, and if you refuse to let them go, I'll smite all the borders with frogs.

And the river will bring forth frogs abundantly which shall go up and come into thine house and into thy bedchamber and upon thy bed." Can you imagine that? Crawling into bed and a bunch of frogs in there? You know, we laugh about that because they're not in our bed, but we wouldn't be laughing if they were there.

"And into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading troughs." Can you imagine making bread and when your bread is being kneaded, it's constantly being kneaded with a bunch of frogs in it?

"And the LORD spoke unto Moses, said unto Aaron, stretch forth your hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt."

People say oh, well, Egypt always has frogs after the river overruns. Yeah, but not frogs like these frogs. Not frogs like these. The frogs used to be in Egypt was sweet music to the farmer, you know?

Because when the river would overflow its boundaries and cover the countryside, it would leave its pond everywhere. And the ponds would then be occupied by the frogs, and at the evening time when the farmer would hear the croaking of the frogs, he would know that nature had run its course and he had water for his crops. And so it was sweet music to hear the frogs. In fact, they actually deified the frogs. And they had a goddess by the name of Heqt, and Heqt was a frog goddess! She was the wife of Khnum. And the symbol of fertility and resurrection, and Heqt was one of the eight prime evil gods. One of the key gods. Four of their prime evil gods had frog heads. So frogs were big deals. Sacred animal.

Did you know that you could - the death penalty was exacted for killing a frog intentionally or unintentionally if you got caught. Sounds like India today with the sacred cows, doesn't it? If you stepped on a frog inadvertently and killed him, you violated the gods.

Well listen, before this deal was over, people were squashing frogs all over the place. Which must have been a very big guilt trip for somebody who was really into that.

Normally the frogs - you know, they were a religious thing. It was a great deal when you had frogs, but not this time. Frogs, frogs, and more frogs. Crawling through the beds. Thick on the floor.

Harry Rimmer says, "Like a blanket of filth, the slimy wet monstrosities cover the land until men sickened at the continued squashing crunch of the ghastly pavement they were forced to walk upon. If a man's feet slipped on a greasy mass of their crushed bodies, he fell into an indescribably offensive mass of putrid uncleanness and when he sought water to cleanse himself, the water was so solid with frogs, he couldn't get in to get clean." You get the picture? One writer says small green - I'm not even going to go on.

Frogs! Why frogs?! Because frogs represented the deities, and it was God against the gods of Egypt. And God was devastating their religion. God was wiping out the stupidity of their idolatry.

And then it goes on to say - and I can't help but get a kick out of this - and the magicians at this point move into the situation and they also were able to do this. They were able to produce frogs. And you can imagine that if they were at the least unpopular before this, the fact that they would come along and produce more frogs would sort of be the end of all.

Well, this went on for a while and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and so the Lord said alright, I'm going to come again and in chapter 8, verse 16, this time it's going to be gnats. Mosquitoes. Indicated as lice, but the Hebrew word means gnats or mosquitoes. In fact, a small species, hardly visible - and God actually creates these out of the dust. Smite the dust of the land, that it may become gnats. Mosquitoes. And He did it, and they were everywhere. On man and beast. All over the place. All the dust of the land became lice.

Can you imagine that? The first layer of dirt just rose and took off. All over the place. These little gnats flying everywhere. And by the way, at this point the magicians, verse 18, "did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they couldn't." They could throw a few frogs around and fool somebody. They could throw a few snakes around and fool somebody. They could mess with a little water and fool somebody. But they couldn't control mosquitoes. And they were out now, and it was all God on display.

In fact, it says in 19, I love this, "Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, this is the finger of God." This is beyond us! We're out! He's called our bluff. We're finished.

And then came the flies, because Pharaoh hardened his heart. And they came. Swarms of flies, in verse 21, "on the servants and the people," and by the way, these gnats and these mosquitoes certainly were some kind of contributors to the disease of the land. And to the terrible, incredible pain and irritation of constant mosquito bites at an absolutely incomprehensible level.

Then came the flies. Flies everywhere. In the houses, on the people. Swarms of flies all over the place. All over the ground. All over everywhere.

Now the gnats and the mosquitoes, we really don't know what the religion element is connected to it, and we don't know about any god of the gnats or god of the mosquitoes. There are two approaches to that. One is that they had certain gods of the earth, certain deities connected to the soil and the ground where they grew their crops. In fact, they had many such deities. And when God turned them all into mosquitoes, it may have been an act against those deities. Some scholars feel that the priests had to wash themselves many times a day. In fact, the priests in some parts of their religion shaved their bodies entirely so there wasn't a hair on their body anyplace, including their head, and they bathed themselves again, and again, and again, and again, and they wore this pure white linen, because that's the way they stayed pure.

Well, that would be an utter impossibility in a situation where they were literally crawling with cloaks of gnats and mosquitoes. So it may be that it was an attack on the gods of the soil. It may be that it was an attack on the priests who believed their cleanliness was some kind of religious virtue.

But the flies, we don't have any problem with. We know the flies were attached to certain gods. There was a god known as Uwashit. And this particular god was connected with the flies. In fact, again and again this god was believed to manifest himself as a fly. I can't imagine, but that's what they believed. And so again, verse 24, says, "The Lord did so and there came a grievous swarm of flies." Grievous is a word of great intensity. It's a word of great oppression. It's a word of great severity. And the word says that it literally corrupted the land. And the better translation is it ruined the land. It literally ruined everything. To have flies so thick that there was little space between them.

And Pharaoh still hardened his heart. God wasn't done.

Chapter 9, God came with the death of animals. And the Lord said to Moses, go to Pharaoh and tell him let my people go, and if you don't let them go, verse 3, "the hand of the Lord is on the cattle which is in the field, and the horses, and the asses and the camels and the oxen, and the sheep, and there will be a grievous plague. But the Lord will separate the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel." And that's a great indication people that higher criticism is dead wrong. This isn't some natural phenomenon, because natural phenomena doesn't distinguish between who owns the cows. This is God.

And so He says your animals are going to die! Now the previous plagues brought about irritation and pain. This is the loss of personal property. This would literally devastate the food supply, and devastate the economics of the land. This would wipe them out! And this was an infectious, fatal disease. And by the way, they had the same thing that they have in India today. They believe the cows were sacred. They even believed the horses were sacred, and other animals as well.

When I was in Memphis - in Egypt, not in Tennessee - Memphis in Egypt, they took us on a horse. We rode way out in the desert out there to a sacred burial ground. We entered into this tremendous burial ground, an area where they used to worship cows and bulls. In fact, the God Efface is represented as a bull, and also the god Ptah. And they took us out there to this incredible massive, huge temple that's preserved in some parts almost perfectly. With drawings on the walls. It's an incredible sight. They dug it out of the sand of the desert. In fact, they dug it up in 1856.

It has within it 64 of the most massive sarcophagus you ever saw in your life. Way too big for men. In these great huge things they buried the sacred bulls. They worshiped these great huge bulls. Each one of the sarcophagus is 12x9x6, and weighs 60 tons. And they buried the bulls in these.

By the way, the goddess Hathor appears as the goddess of love in the form of a cow. Menivus, another god, comes as a sacred bull. And so again, God is just blasting at their idolatry. What can these gods do? He is destroying their gods one at a time, or multiples at a time.

And still Pharaoh doesn't listen. And so God brings another plague, in chapter 9, verse 8. This time it's ashes, and dust, and boils. Verse 8 of chapter 9, "And the Lord said to Moses, take to yourself a handful of ashes, and sprinkle it towards the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. It'll become dust in the land of Egypt, and there shall be boil breaking forth with ulcers upon man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt." And he did it, and everybody got it. People had oozing sores. By the way, they had a god known as Sekhmet, and this particular god had the responsibility to prevent diseases. Well, he was losing popularity fast.

They had another god by the name of Sunu, and Sunu was a god who had a special kind of a priesthood, and they wore amulets around their arms and legs to ward off diseases. But all of this was useless. Everybody had oozing boils. A leprous kind of running sores all over their bodies.

They believed in the god Sarapas, who was the god of healing, and he was useless. You may have heard of their famous god, Imhotep, the Egyptian god who was suppose to be the god of medicine, but he couldn't do anything either. Listen, Jehovah God was unstoppable. This was the total devastation of Egyptian society.

And they still didn't listen, so God brought another plague in chapter 9, verse 13. This time it was hail and fire, and you'll notice that he talks about this all the way down through verse 35. This is a rather lengthy section. I don't want to read all of it, but verse 18, He'll "cause it to rain a very grievous hail." First of all, some hail came and people literally died. Verse 19 says, "they shall die" from the hail. These hailstones literally crushed them.

And then in verse 23, "the Lord sendeth thunder and hail and fire ran along the ground." And that's pretty amazing when you can have rain and fire at the same time. And God was literally burning up the land, consuming the whole thing. Devastation beyond belief.

They had a god known as Mut. And Mut was the sky goddess, and they believed that Mut was the great benefactor who gave them goodness from the sky. Because frankly, in Egypt, the climate's the same all year round. But all of a sudden everything went haywire. What happened to the god that was coming from the sky to bless them? And then there were two gods - Seth and Isis, who's often connected with Osiris, and these two gods were responsible for their crops, but it didn't do any good. With the hail and the fire, their entire crops were destroyed.

And still they didn't hearken, and still Pharaoh didn't listen, so God brought another plague. Chapter 10, the plague of locusts. And if the rest were bad, this was worse. Locusts are incredible little critters that still, even today, devastate. In parts of America, do you know now we have locust plagues that have devastated areas of our own country?

And these locusts, He says, are going to be everywhere. They, verse 5, "will cover the face of the earth, and one cannot be able to see the ground." Can you imagine that? They will cover the face of the earth. You won't even see the ground. Thick, like grass. "And they'll eat the residue of that which is escaped." That means if there's anything left after the hail and the fire, they'll tear it up and eat it. "And they'll fill your houses, and the houses of your servants."

I watched the other night on one of the television news programs a guy with a broom beating the locusts on the walls of his house up in the north central part of the United States, where the plague is going on right now. They were under the wives' feet in the kitchens, crunching them all over the

place. They were in the food, and these guys were just cursing and swearing and smashing locusts with brooms against the walls of their houses. This kind of a thing would be worse than that. There couldn't even be a vision of the ground, they were that thick.

And by the way, locusts are amazing creatures. A locust is capable of eating its own weight every day. One square mile of locusts will contain between 100 million and 200 million locusts. And by the way, swarms are as wide as 400 square miles. They're able to flap their wings nonstop for 17 hours. They're able to fly at a cruising speed of 10-12 miles an hour for 20 hours at a time. Incredible little things. And they will literally devastate an entire nation. And they came in and whatever was left, they wiped it out. Absolutely obliterated it. And all the gods of the crops and all the gods of the land were useless. Seth and Isis who were suppose to protect the crops couldn't do anymore with the locusts than they had done with the hail and the fire.

By the way, you might also be interested to know that the Egyptians believed in a locust god. And we find artifacts of locusts that they literally worshiped. And here they were crushing their own deities under their feet.

They didn't respond and so came the darkness. Chapter 10, verse 21, "God brought a darkness on the land like no darkness had ever known." You say what's the significance of this? If you think about Egyptians and you think about who they worshipped, what did the Egyptians worship more than anything else? The sun. Rah, or Reh - either way. The sun god. The sun god couldn't help them. They used to say hail to thee beautiful Rah of every day, who rises at dawn without ceasing. Hail to thee. No more. Darkness covered the land.

They had another god in the city of Thievesby the name of Amunre, who was the sun god. They have another god named Atum, who was the god of the setting sun, but all the deities of the sun were absolutely impotent.

So at the height of Egypt's power, in amazing 18th dynasty of Egypt, God Jehovah devastated one entire nation in an incredible display of supernatural miracles like the world had never seen. All to let his people go.

Finally, there was the death of the firstborn. We're not going to take the time to read it. Just to remind you that chapter 11 and chapter 12 describes for us - now, listen to me - it describes for us how God came through that land and He said I'm going to take the life of every firstborn child, and every firstborn of the animals. They're going to die in one night. When the Angel of Death passes. And He took Pharaoh's own son. And then and only then did Pharaoh finally say, get out. And then he changed his mind and tried to chase them, and God drowned the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

Listen, when God says I'm going to let my people go, He's going to let His people go. If a Jew ever questioned the saving, redeeming, delivering power of God, all he had to do was go back to this tremendous event. That was the touchstone of God's redemptive power. And God wanted them to never forget it, and so God gave them the Passover. And said let it be a memorial, that I am a God mighty to save.

And so they kept Passover year after year after year after year. Until one night there came a very special Passover. Like no other Passover had ever been. This Passover was special. Jesus was gathered in an upper room, and He was gathered there with His disciples to eat the Passover. That's why He was there. It was the night before He would go to the Cross, and it was time to celebrate the Passover. To remember God's saving power, and to remember it in terms of the deliverance from Egypt.

But in the middle of that Passover, Jesus did an amazing thing. An amazing thing. Just as they were ready to look backwards to Egypt as the great evidence of God's saving power, Jesus transformed the Passover into something brand new. You want to know how he did it? This is how the Passover went.

The presiding person pronounced a blessing called the Kadush. That blessing was over the first cup of wine which was red, and then the wine was drunk. And then passed to the others to drink. It was followed by a dipping of the unleavened bread into what was known as the Harishef, bitter herbs. The unleavened bread, the bitter herbs. Bitter herbs were kind of a fruit sauce. That is the sop that Jesus dipped with Judas.

Then came an explanation of the meaning of Passover. And then came the food for the meal, the sacrificial lamb, and it was to be eaten because God passed over the lamb, where the lamb's blood was sprinkled, and saved the firstborn. And then they sang the Hallell. Psalms 113 and 114, the first part of it.

And then the leader of the Passover picked up the second cup of wine, and then after that, he picked up the unleavened bread and he blessed God, and he ate the unleavened bread, and then he picked up a third cup of wine, and at that moment something amazing happened. Jesus, who was the leader of this Passover, when he got to the unleavened bread, said "This is my," what? Body. Which is given for you. And when He came to the cup, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." This do as oft as you do it in remembrance of Egypt? No. What? Of me. And Jesus literally transformed the Passover into the Lord's table.

Now, beloved, when we look to see God as a Savior, where do we look? To Egypt? To where? To Calvary. To the Cross.

Listen, if you think it was a mighty display of God's saving power in Egypt, look again at the Cross. There He didn't deliver people from a nation. He delivered people from sin. An infinitely greater miracle. And so Jesus turned the Passover into the communion.

Beloved, when we come to the Lord's table now, we come to remember the power of our redeemer God as displayed in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. While your heads are bowed, let me just speak for a moment to you. The table of the Lord is just that - the Lord's table. He turned the Passover into the communion. He said from now on, the bread is representative of my body, the cup is representative of my blood. I am the living illustration of God's redeeming power. And so we come tonight to remember that Jesus is our Savior, and oh, I pray with all my heart that there's not one person here tonight who cannot say Jesus is my Savior. He saved me from my sins. If you can't say that right now in your heart, will you pray and invite Jesus Christ to come into your life and take it over? Cleanse your sins and be your Savior.

Listen, if you're already a Christian, you can't come to the Lord's table with sin in your life. You just can't do that. You can't celebrate His death for you, you can't celebrate His sin-bearing for you while you're harboring sin and indulging in it.

As elders of Grace Church, we're so burdened about the sins of our people. Maybe there are things in your life that only you know about, and God. Don't mock His table. Paul says in Corinthians that if you come to the table of the Lord, and you come with a heart that isn't right, without examining your heart, without knowing it's pure, and you've confessed your sins, then you're going to eat unworthily and bring chastening on yourself. Don't do that. Don't mar the purity and the holiness of the body of Christ by the stain of sin. Confess it right now. Set your heart right.

I'm going to ask the men if they'll pass the bread among us. Tonight I want to us to use this time just to pray, because church discipline isn't an end in itself. We hope it's a means to an end. The Bible says, "Put them out that they may learn not to blaspheme." We want these people to learn, to come back to a place of right standing before God. You might examine your own heart as well. God has done a mighty thing for you.

You want to know something? It shocks me to realize that God delivered that people Israel from Egypt doing these incredible things. These marvelous miracles. And no sooner were they delivered than they complained and griped. Accused God. Became selfish, self-centered and sinful. And the entire nation that was delivered died in the wilderness never knowing the fullness of blessing.

But I shouldn't be surprised because there are so many people who come to the Cross and they accept what Jesus does there, and then they seem to forget it, and live just the way they want to live.

Don't do that. Remember the Cross. Remember it, and what Christ has done for you. Ask Him to purify your heart.

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