

The Fourth-Sixth Plagues: Flies, Murrain, and Boils

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[0 : 00] Last week, we were closing out on the end of chapter 8 and the plague of the flies.

! Remember, the flies came, got a warrant that they would come if he didn't let his people go. And so the flies just permeated everything, the house, the people, the land, everywhere you went, there were multitudes of flies.

And so that became a tremendous plague, even to the point now that it devastated Pharaoh to the point that he asked for Moses and Aaron to come to him.

It tortured people. They stung, disfigured them by the swelling that came from the stings of the flies. The plants in which the flies would lay their eggs died. And so devastating, devastating plague.

Notice more and more severity in each of these plagues that comes along now.

[1 : 23] And so Moses and Aaron were sent for to come to speak to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh was now going to give them permission, you remember, to go worship Jehovah, worship their God, but do that in the land.

And then where we closed out last week was the fact that Moses said we can't do that. We cannot worship God in the land.

And there are various reasons. And that's where we're going to pick up tonight at what the reasons were for that. Why they could not consent to worship God in the land of Egypt.

First reason, because the sacrifice to be for Israel to sacrifice in the land of Egypt would have been an abomination to the Egyptians.

And we'll look at the reason why here in just a moment. And then secondly, that wasn't the place where God told them to worship. Always keep in mind, for the most part, the blessings of God upon Israel was always conditioned upon their being present in their land, in Canaan.

[2 : 44] Now, you know, at this juncture that we're studying now, Israel had not become, quote unquote, a nation. They are the people of God, have not entered the covenant yet.

They're the seed of Jacob. But God always blessed his people while they were in the land. And so Moses said, we cannot worship God here in Egypt in your land.

We've got to go out. Now, the reason why it would have been an abomination unto the Egyptians is simply this. Realize that cattle, the Egyptians, certain cattle were sacred, if you will, to the people of Egypt.

They even deified some of those, regarded them as holy. But it's not the idea of Israel sacrificing animals, calves, goats, whatever.

That wasn't the abomination that would come. The abomination was this, that Israel, in their sacrifices, would not conduct the ritualistic necessities of checking out the animal sacrifices before they're sacrificed.

[4 : 07] Very strict, very rigid, very rigorous rules were followed by the Egyptians as they sacrificed their goats and their calves and whatever else they sacrificed.

Let me read some of that to you. A minute examination of a bull or an ox was first of all done with the ox or the bull in a standing posture.

And then it was done with them lying on their back. And that was to ascertain whether there be a black hair upon it. And whether the hairs upon its tail grow naturally.

And whether its tongue is clean. So, you want to go to Egypt to worship? That's what you've got to do. You've got to take a bull or a goat and make sure that it passes those rigid requirements.

Now, when that was declared that those animals possessed those particular markings, some moistened clay was put upon its horn by the examining priest.

[5 : 27] And then he would put his ring upon that clay, his signet ring, as an identification that that has been inspected and that that is okay.

That bull, that goat can be sacrificed. Now, there were some rigid requirements that Israel had under the Levitical law, but that doesn't come until later.

All right? That they have to check, make sure their sacrificial animals were satisfactory enough to be sacrificed in their worship of the Lord.

So, Israel's not about to do that like the Egyptians required for the Egyptians. And so, in so doing, that then would be very likely looked upon as an insult to their gods and to their religions.

All right? So, that's why Moses said they will despise us. If we were to do that here in the land without those requirements being followed, they would feel that this was a sign outwardly of contempt upon them and their God and their religion, and they would want to stone us.

[6 : 49] They would literally want to put us to death. So, those are the reasons, no doubt, why Moses said we cannot sacrifice here in the land.

Now, look at verses 28 through 32 of chapter 8. And 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.

Okay? You can go out into the wilderness, but don't go very far away. Now, that seems like a reasonable thing. So, he says to Moses, I'm going to let you go into the wilderness in a little ways.

So, go and treat to the Lord for us, to God for us, your God, that the swarm of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people tomorrow.

But let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. All right? Moses, I'll do that.

[7 : 54] I'll entreat for the Lord. But don't do like you've done before and turn your back against what you've promised here. So, Moses went out from Pharaoh, entreated the Lord, and the Lord did according to the word of Moses.

And he removed the swarm of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, from his people. There remained not one. But look at the last phrase.

Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also. Neither would he let the people go. Now, Moses' denial of being able to sacrifice in the land was no doubt reasonable, as Moses would explain to him.

It was no doubt reasonable to Pharaoh under his own religious point of view here. So, he promised to let the people go. But, of course, he backtracked on that and hardened his heart once again and did not let them go.

So, again, as we mentioned last week, that hardening of his heart, Pharaoh's heart, was the effect of his own obstinance against God.

[9 : 10] Self-determined obstinance, if you will. So, God turned out to determine that whatever benefit he was going to get out of this, or he felt he was going to get out of that, was better off for him, he thought, than following whatever the will of Jehovah, of Israel, might produce.

All right? So, God turns that around now and makes his obstinate hearts the means of God showing his own power and strength and his providence to the highest degree possible.

So, that's what God does here. It's just amazing to me, isn't it, how God simply knows, he has a unique way of knowing how to push our buttons. Amen? Amen. He really does to get us to where we need to be.

So, again, it's necessary for us, imperative for us, that we watch to see the involvement of God in our life.

To see what he's doing and whatever he's doing in our life, he's doing to get us where we need to be. Is there anybody here this evening that feels that you're exactly right where God wants you to be perfectly and doing perfectly what he wants you to do?

[10 : 33] If you are, raise your hand. Notice, Yolanda did not raise her hand. I'm humble. I'm humble. So, it's imperative that we watch out for what God is doing in the circumstances of our life so that we can determine what he wants to do through us to accomplish whatever his purposes may be.

Now, chapter 9. We begin with the fifth plague here now. And then the sixth plague will come along as well. Verse 1.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go that they may serve me.

The fifth plague consisted of a severe murrain. All right. Which will be upon the cattle and will put them to death, literally, of all the Egyptians.

The cattle that were in the field, that is. All right. Now, take note again. The Lord said, Go to Pharaoh and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God.

[11 : 43] Remember, Jehovah Elohim. It's the words he uses again here. Jehovah continually pointing out the power of God.

The power of the Godhead, if you will. And we said Elohim speaks of the strong, faithful covenant keeping God. So, recognize it's Jehovah.

Jehovah. It's the eternal, almighty God. The strong, faithful covenant keeper, if you will. Defender of his people, Israel.

That says, Let my people go. That's who's saying that. That's, you know, again, that's, it's important to see the wording here.

It's not just said, God said, let us go. It's Jehovah, Elohim. In all the characteristics that those names speak of.

[12 : 39] He's the one that's saying to you, Pharaoh, let my people go so that they may worship me. Now, again, more and more the strength of that.

Showing more and more the guilt that Pharaoh was accumulating by his continual resistance to the will of God. And not being obedient to what God says.

So, verse 2. Moses says, For if thou refuse to let them go, and will hold them still, or still further, even after Jehovah has declared his will emphatically to you.

If you will hold them still, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon the cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, upon the sheep.

There shall be a very grievous murrain against the cattle in the field. All right? A very severe plague is the idea of against thy cattle.

[13 : 43] The word murrain is a word that means that which sweeps away. All right? It'll sweep it away. It'll smite them, if you will, with a very severe plague.

Murrain here is a very contagious disease among the cattle. The symptoms are these. A hanging down and swelling of the head. Abundance of mucus in the eyes.

Rattling in the throat. Difficulty of breathing. Palpitation of the heart. Staggering. A hot breath. And a shiny tongue. All right? So, those are the symptoms that are going to come upon those cattle.

Now, verse 4. Here's an interesting thing once again. He's done this once before. The Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt.

And there shall nothing die of all that is the children of Israel's. All right? Now, murrain is nothing new.

[14 : 48] It occurs in Egypt. But I think the miraculous picture here is that all the cattle of Egypt that are out in the field are going to come down with this murrain.

Struck with the murrain. But the cattle of the people of Israel are not going to be struck. All right? So, by that separation, Pharaoh's now going to once again be able to discern that this plague is indeed from God.

From Jehovah. You talk about a hard-headed guy. Amen? Now, a definite time again also was fixed notice for the coming of the plague.

In this, that was like in the previous plague as well. Verse 5. The Lord appointed a set time. Isn't it interesting? Remember when the other plague was to be dealt with as far as Pharaoh asking Moses to intercede on his behalf for the plague that Moses had said, You take the glory above me. You set the time when that plague's to be removed. Remember? And he said, Well, tomorrow. Pharaoh chose tomorrow. God did it at that particular time.

[16 : 13] And this time, God picks the time. God, Jehovah, appoints the set time, saying, Tomorrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land.

Verse 6. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow. And all the cattle of Egypt died. Now, that's just the cattle that were outside, not those in the barns or stables.

But of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. Now, interesting. I'd be curious to know whether or not Israel just let all their cattle stay outside.

Amen? Yeah. And none of them died. Now, what takes place then? You know, think about this just a moment.

How many times have we seen God bring devastation and whatever to these national symbols of deity of Egypt?

[17:18] All of those cattle that were outside died. It doesn't matter what they were thought of, what they represented. Even those that they held in holy esteem, if you will, and worshipped, died.

Wouldn't you think, wouldn't you think that that would create within the life and the heart and mind of those Egyptians, that their worship of these cattle and things just is useless?

It's pointless. It's vain. Because now they're dying. Now, verse 7. Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead.

Not a one. Interesting that he checked it out. Amen? Amen? Yeah. You get kind of the idea here that Pharaoh's thinking to himself, yeah, there's got to be something to this.

That the God of the Hebrews is powerful enough to cause this to happen because he goes and sends somebody to check it out. To see if the cattle of the Israelites are still alive.

[18:39] And, of course, they were. Now, didn't say when he sent them to check that out or when he went.

But good possibility when he saw those cattle still alive, perhaps he was desiring to take some of them for himself to replace those that had died.

Now, but he continues to harden his heart. So that brings us to the sixth plague. And it's a very devastating plague. Men and beasts were struck with boils in the form of blisters.

All right? Which really was a common disease in Egypt known as the Nile blisters that would strike the people from time to time.

Now, there's a rash that occurs in the summer, chiefly toward the end of the time of the overflowing of the Nile River.

[19:51] Produces a burning and prickling sensation upon the skin. But notice how this is how this comes about. All right. Interesting thing here. The Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

Now, what furnace is he talking about here? Take ashes out of the furnace. What furnace is he talking about? Remember, remember the harsh servitude that Israel's been in for so long here. Part of that servitude was the making of bricks and things that were used to make these monuments and build the cities and everything as memorials to the pharaohs throughout the generations.

The furnace that we see here, the furnace says, if you will, are those in which those bricks were baked, if you will.

So it's a picture. It's a figure of the oppression of the Egyptians against the Israelites. All right. The people of God.

[21:09] How unique here that God would now take those ashes out of those kilns that were used as part of the oppression of Israel and use that to bring such severe devastation upon the people of Egypt.

And that's what he does here. It's exactly what he does here. Again. In Genesis chapter 12. Always keep in mind Genesis chapter 12.

And God's covenant promise to Abram. I'll bless them that bless you. I'll curse them that curse you. And in thee all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Now, even though Israel is not yet at this point a covenant nation. That's still the promise as the seed of Abraham because they're still the seed of Abram.

All right. I'll bless those that bless you, but I'll also curse those that curse you. What a picture of that that we see here with those furnaces used as objects of harsh labor for Israel now being turned against Israel or against Egypt in this new plague that's about to come along.

[22:34] Now. Now, again, verse eight now. The Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, Take ye the handfuls of ashes of the furnace.

Let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in the land of Egypt. And shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt.

Each particle of those ashes that fly through the air become boils. Upon the king and upon his people.

It said boils with blains. The word blains has a meaning of to swell, to bulge out any inflammatory swelling node or postule in any part of the body.

More especially in the glandular parts. The neck, the armpits, the groin and so forth. All right. So that's what's going to come from the ashes of those smelting furnaces or those kilns rather.

[23 : 59] Now, this particular. Plague, if you will. Well, this disorder was uncommon.

In Egypt. Some of the others had the commonality to it. But this was uncommon. Deuteronomy chapter 28, verse 27 calls it the botch of Egypt. And probably never known in any other country as well, they tell us.

Now, think about this, if you will. The kiln furnace. All right. There's the same relation to this particular plague as does the water of the Nile and the dust of the ground in the preceding plagues. Realize the water of the Nile was what watered the crops, if you will. The dust of the ground represented the idea of the fertile grounds that brought forth tremendous crops for Egypt.

All right. All of those were turned against them. And now, again, the kilns used to make the bricks, to make the buildings and the monuments for all the pharaohs is now used against Pharaoh and his people.

[25 : 24] Now, verses 10 and 12. They took the ashes of the furnace, stood before Pharaoh, and Moses sprinkled it toward heaven, and it became a boil breaking forth with blazes upon man and upon beast.

Now, notice this. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils. For the boils were upon magicians and upon all the Egyptians.

And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them as the Lord had spoken unto Moses. Now, what a picture that you see here.

The first three plagues dealt with natural resources changed by God through Moses and Aaron. But now, God does it differently here.

It's not a natural resource. It's ashes that were used as instruments of harsh servitude for Israel that now turns against them. These were the first plagues, if you will.

[26 : 31] The boils were the first plague that attacked and endangered the lives of men. They died from some of this. All right. We thought the pandemic with COVID-19 when it first swept through was a bad deal, which it was.

But you can only imagine what took place here in Egypt under the plague of the boils. This was a foreshadowing here now.

People are dying from these. This is a foreshadowing of the death that Pharaoh is going to experience himself because of his continued resistance against the Lord.

This time, magicians did not even try to match what Moses and Aaron did. Nor could they remove it from the people as they attempted to before.

Their own flesh were tormented here. Bible says to the point where they could no longer stand before Moses. Again, don't know if they perished as a result of this.

[27 : 43] But nonetheless, whatever the case may be, they're not mentioned anymore. All right. They're finished. They're done with. The magicians are over. They're not a factor here any longer.

Now, they could no longer contend with God's messengers. Now, God's power now completed.

The Hebrews and the Egyptians have got to see that it was neither might, wisdom, or counsel against the Lord that could stand. Nobody could stand against Jehovah.

And they had to naturally submit to the reality of that in all of this that took place. But, again, Pharaoh did not take the plague to heart.

Hardened his own heart once again. And was going to continue to rebel against the Lord. I was reminded in my mind going through all of this of something I read a number of years ago when I was reading through Chuck Swindoll's book, Living Above the Level of Mediocrity.

[29 : 01] He tells a story here of W.A. Criswell. Let me just read it to you because it speaks well of what's going on. He said, A man brought two pups that were top-notch bird dogs, two setters.

He kept them in his large backyard where he trained them. And one morning, an ornery little vicious-looking bulldog came shuffling and snorting down the alley.

He crawled under the fence into the backyard where the setters spent their days. It was easy to see that he meant business. The man's first impulse was to take his setters and lock them in the basement so they wouldn't tear up that little bulldog.

But he decided to just let him go and see what was going to happen here. Maybe that bulldog would learn a lesson he'd never forget. Naturally, they got into a scuffle in the backyard.

Those two setters and that bulldog went round and round and round. There were growls and yips as bulldog's hair flew everywhere. The little critter finally had enough, so he squeezed under the fence and took off.

[30 : 15] All the rest of that day, he whined and licked his sores. Interestingly enough, the next day, about the same time, here came that same ornery little bulldog.

Back under the fence after those setters. Once again, those two bird dogs beat the stuffings out of that little bull... Excuse me. Those two bird dogs beat the stuffings out of that bull-legged animal and would have chewed him up if it hadn't retreated back down the alley.

Would you believe the very next day he was back? Same time, same station, same results. Once again, after the bulldog had had all he could take, he crawled back under the fence and found his way home to lick up his wounds.

Well, the evangelist said I had to leave for a revival meeting and I was gone several weeks. When I came back, I asked my wife what had happened.

She said, honey, you just won't believe what has happened. Every day at the same time, every morning, that little bulldog came back in the yard and fought with our two setters.

[31 : 30] He never missed a day. And I want you to know, it has come to the point that when our setters simply hear that bulldog snorting down the alley and spot him squeezing under the fence, they immediately start whining and run down into our basement.

That little old bulldog struts around our backyard now just like he owns it. And he said, that's persistence and determination. Yeah, it's a good picture of persistence and determination.

And you see that both in Pharaoh and you see it in Moses and Aaron as well. You know, you can almost think about how weary Moses and Aaron could get.

Time after time, God tells them, here's what I want you to do. But Pharaoh's not going to listen. Pharaoh's going to harden his heart. And so it took persistence, sticking by the stuff, to continue doing what God said in the midst of seemingly a lack of results and disheartening, no doubt, of the people of Israel, of the Israelis.

What do you think caused Moses and Aaron to be so persistent? Why did they just keep by the stuff and keep doing what God said in spite of the lack of results?

[33 : 07] Obedience, obey God. Okay, what else? Faith in God. Okay. That's a good point because with our definition of faith being a positive response to something God has said or done or who God is.

What happened every time Moses did what God said? It happened. It happened just like he said it would.

In spite of the fact that Pharaoh continued to harden his heart more and more. God did what he said he would do. Okay.

And it had an effect, no doubt, upon the people of Egypt. So that gave Moses and Aaron, no doubt, courage and boldness.

Boldness. Because they saw what God had done and they responded in obedience to that time and time again.

[34 : 08] And so they had to recognize something else. What else? What else do you think they recognized in that then? They knew from what God had said.

What was the original purpose in God doing all of this? He's going to let him go. He's going to get to the point, bring him to the point where Pharaoh lets Israel go to Canaan.

All right. The place of their inheritance. And Moses knows this because God has told him that. And now as he sees more and more the things that God does and the effect that has on the kingdom, I've got to believe that they saw the effect upon the people of Egypt of all these things that are taking place.

And the fear that now begins to set into their hearts and minds and lives in spite of Pharaoh and his immediate servants. So they know.

God said, this is what's going to happen. It happened. They know that the ultimate result of this is Israel coming out of Egypt by the power of God. And God's going to have proved himself to everyone.

[35 : 20] That he is Jehovah. Yeah. So. We need to be bulldogs. Amen. Persistent.

In what God shows us his design for our life is. And what he wants to accomplish through it. And not give up.

Not get weary. But be like the old bulldog. I might go get ruffled up. Lose a few hairs. But hey, it doesn't hurt.

Amen. Someone told me a long time ago, bald is beautiful. I said, thank you. Yeah. Yeah. Let's pray.

Father, thank you again for your loving kindness tonight. And for the privilege of coming together and looking again into your word. Again, Father, we thank you for the picture you paint for us of your faithfulness.

[36 : 20] Your faithfulness to yourself. Yourself. You'll never work outside of who you are. And that we can know that whatever you say is indeed going to take place.

And so we thank you for that. So Lord, I ask tonight that you give us that same bulldog persistence, if you will. In serving you. And allowing you to work through us in whatever capacity and means you want to do.

And enable us to just trust you and watch you accomplish through it what you want to accomplish. Again, thank you for these precious folks for their love for you and your word. Ask your blessings upon them.

Now in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.