The Plagues

Lesson 4, 3rd Quarter July 19-26, 2025

Sabbath Afternoon, July 19

Memory Text:

"And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses." KJV — Exodus 9:35

"Again the divine message came to Moses, "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land." In discouragement he replied, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?" He was told to take Aaron with him and go before Pharaoh, and again was commanded "that he send the children of Israel out of his land." PP 260.3

"He was informed that the monarch would not yield until God should visit judgments upon Egypt and bring out Israel by the signal manifestation of His power. Before the infliction of each plague, Moses was to describe its nature and effects, that the king might see himself from it the cities. Every punishment rejected would be followed by one more severe, until his proud heart would be humbled, and he would acknowledge the Maker of heaven and earth as the true and living God. The Lord would give the Egyptians an opportunity to see how vain was the wisdom of their mighty men, how feeble the power of their gods, when opposed to the commands of Jehovah. He would punish the people of Egypt for their idolatry and silence their boasting of the blessings received from their secondary deities. God would glorify His own name, that other nations might hear of His power and tremble at His mighty acts, and that His people might be led to turn from their idolatry and render Him pure worship." PP 263.1

Sunday, July 20

God vs. gods

Read Exodus 7:8-15. What lessons are here in this first confrontation between the God of the Hebrews and the gods of Egypt?

"The king demanded a miracle, in evidence of their divine commission. Moses and Aaron had been directed how to act in case such a demand should be made, and Aaron now took the rod and cast it before Pharaoh and his princes, and it became a serpent. The monarch sent for his "wise men and the sorcerers," who "cast down every man his rod and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Then the king was determined than before, declared his magicians equal in power with Moses and Aaron, he denounced the servants of the Lord as impostors, and felt himself secure in his position as a god. Instead of being impressed by the miracle, he was hardened by divine agencies from doing them harm. PP 262.2

"It was the hand of God, working in human influence or power possessed by Moses and Aaron, that wrought the miracles which they showed before Pharaoh. Those signs and wonders were designed to convince the king and people that the God of the Hebrews was the true God, and that the God of Israel was the living God. The magicians also showed signs and wonders; for they wrought not by their own skill alone, but by the power of their god, Satan, who assisted them in counteracting the work of Jehovah. PP 262.4

"The magicians did not really cause their rods to become serpents; but by magic, aided by the great deceiver, they were able to produce this appearance. It was beyond the power of Satan to change the rods to living serpents. The prince of evil, though possessing all the wisdom and might of an angel fallen, has not power to create, or to give life; this is the prerogative of God alone. But all that was in Satan's power to do, he did; he produced a counterfeit. To human sight the rods were changed to serpents. Such they were believed to be by Pharaoh and his court. There was nothing in their appearance to distinguish them from the serpent produced by Moses. Though the Lord permitted the wicked one to swallow up the spurious rods, yet even this was regarded by Pharaoh, not as a work of God's power, but as the result of a kind of magic superior to that of his servants." PP 264.2

Monday, July 21

Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

Read Exodus 7:3, 13, 14, 22. How do we understand these texts?

"God had declared concerning Pharaoh, "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." Exodus 4:21. There was no exercise of supernatural power to harden the heart of the king. God gave to Pharaoh the evidence of His power, and the king of Egypt had the opportunity and disposition to heed the light, Every display of infinite power rejected by him, rendered him the more determined in his rebellion. The words of God were fulfilled in the sense that when he rejected the first miracle, he hardened their harvest. As he continued to venture on in his own course, giving from one degree of transgression to another, the Lord withdrew Himself more and more hardened, until he was called to look upon the cold, dead faces of the first-born. PP 268.1

"God speaks in men through his servants, giving cautions and warnings, and rebuking sin. He gives to each an opportunity to correct his errors before they become fixed in the character, but if one persists in the course pursued, God does not interpose to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit. The repeated rejection of light places him where a far stronger influence will be ineffectual to make an abiding impression." PP 268.2

"And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." Exodus 4:21. "God does not let the people go." That is, the display of almighty power before Pharaoh, being rejected by him, the more hardened Pharaoh, and the more the Lord interposed to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit. The repeated rejection of light places him where a far stronger influence will be ineffectual to make an abiding impression." PP 268.2

"Pharaoh desired to justify his stubbornness in resisting the divine command, and hence he was seeking some excuse for disobeying the miracles that God had wrought through Moses. Satan gave him the suggestion that Moses and Aaron had the same power through the magicians, that God had given to them. Satan knew that God had given to Moses and Aaron the power to work miracles, and he hoped that they would not claim respect as coming from a superior being. Thus Satan's counterfeit accomplished its purpose of emboldening the Egyptians in their rebellion and causing Pharaoh to harden his heart against conviction. Satan hoped such as the magicians could and were into his house, neither did he let his heart to this also." For seven days the plague continued, but without benefit. PP 265.1

"Again the rod was stretched out over the waters, and frogs came up from the river and spread over the land. They overran the houses, took possession of the bed chambers, and even the ovens and kneading troughs. The frog was regarded as sacred by the Egyptians, and they would not destroy it; but the slimy pests had now become intolerable. They swarmed even in the palace of the monarch, and the king was impatient to have them removed. The magicians had appeared to produce frogs, but they could not remove them. Upon seeing this, Pharaoh was somewhat humbled, and he sent for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." After removing the frogs, the Lord, in mercy, gathered them together in heaps. Here the king and all Egypt had evidence which their vain philosophy could not gainsay, that this work was not accomplished by magic, but was a judgment from the God of heaven. PP 266.1

"When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart." At the command of God, Aaron stretched out his hand, and the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh called upon the magicians to do the same, but they could not. The work of God was thus shown to be superior to that of Satan. The magicians themselves acknowledged, "This is the finger of God." But the king was still unmoved." PP 266.2

Tuesday, July 22

The First Three Plagues

Read Exodus 7:14-8:19. What happened in these plagues?

"Moses and Aaron were directed to visit the miracle next morning, where the king was accustomed to repair. The miraculous rod was the appointed source of blood and death for all Egypt, the river was worshiped as a god, and the monarch came thither daily to pay his devotions. Here Moses and Aaron repeated the message to him, and then they stretched out the rod and smote upon the water. The sacred stream ran blood, the fish died, and the river became offensive to the Egyptians. The king was left to see that his gods could not deliver him from the power of Jehovah. But The magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments," and Pharaoh's heart was turned into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also." For seven days the plague continued, but without benefit. PP 265.1

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"The Lord could have caused them to return to dust in a moment; but He did not do this lest after their removal the king and his people should pronounce it the result of sorcery or enchantment, like the work of the magicians. The frogs died, and were then gathered together in heaps. Here the king and all Egypt had evidence which their vain philosophy could not gainsay, that this work was not accomplished by magic, but was a judgment from the God of heaven. PP 266.1

"Moses was next directed to take ashes of the furnace, and "sprinkle it toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh." This act was deeply significant. Four hundred years before, God had shown to Abraham the bondage and suffering of his posterity in Egypt. The furnace was the symbol of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. He had declared that he would visit judgments upon their oppressors, and would bring forth the captives with great substance. In Egypt, Israel had long languished in the furnace of affliction. This act of Moses was an assurance to them that God was mindful of His covenant, and that the time for their deliverance had come. PP 267.2

"As the ashes were sprinkled toward heaven, the fine particles spread over all the land of Egypt, and wherever they settled, produced boils "breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast." The priests and magicians had hitherto encouraged Pharaoh in his stubbornness, but now a judgment had come that reached even them. Smitten with a loathsome and painful disease, their assumed power and pretending them contemptible, they were no longer able to contend against the God of Israel. The whole nation was made to see the folly of trusting in the magicians, when they were not able to protect even their own persons." PP 267.3

Wednesday, July 23

Flies, Livestock, and Boils

Read Exodus 8:20-9:12. What does this account teach about however great may be the manifestations of God's power and glory, humanity still has freedom to reject Him?

"Appeal and warning were ineffectual, and another judgment was inflicted. The time of its commencement was fixed, that the king might see that God was in the midst of Israel. The houses and swarmed upon the ground, so that "the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies." These flies were large and venomous, and their bite was extremely painful to man and beast. As had been foretold, this visitation did not extend to the land of Goshen. PP 266.3

"Pharaoh now offered the Israelites permission to sacrifice in Egypt, but they refused to accept such conditions. "It is not meet," said Moses, "to shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" The animals which the Hebrews would be required to offer were considered by the Egyptians as the representatives of their gods, and were treated as such; which these creatures were held, that to slay one, even accidentally, was a crime punishable with death. It would be sacrilege for the Hebrews to worship in Egypt without giving offense to their masters. Moses again proposed to go three days' journey into the wilderness. The monarch persisted in refusing, and Moses and Aaron were warned that the plague of flies would remove. They promised to do this, but warned him against dealing deceitfully with them. The plague was stayed, but the king's heart had become hardened by persistent rebellion, and he still refused to yield. PP 267.1

"A more terrible stroke followed—murrain upon all the Egyptian cattle that were in the field. Both the sacred animals and the beasts of burden—nine and oxen and sheep, horses and camels and asses—were destroyed. It had been distinctly stated that the Hebrews were to be exempt; and Pharaoh, to prove the truth of the prophecy, selected from the herds of his own and his nobles' and Abraham the Israelites, and the children of Israel died not one." Still the king was obstinate. PP 267.1

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Thursday, July 24

Hail, Locusts, and Darkness

Read Exodus 9:13-10:29. How successful are these plagues in getting Pharaoh to change his mind?

"A plague of hail was next threatened upon Pharaoh, with the warning, "Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die." Rain or hail was unusual in Egypt, and such a storm as was foretold had never been witnessed. The report spread rapidly, and all who believed the word of the Lord gathered in their cattle, while those who despised the warning left them in the field. Thus in the midst of judgment the mercy of God was displayed; the people were tested, and it was shown how many had been led to fear God by the manifestation of His power. PP 268.2

"The storm came as predicted—thunder and hail, and fire mingled with it, "very grievous, such as there was not like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." Ruin and desolation marked the path of the destroying angel. The land of Goshen alone was spared. It was demonstrated to the Egyptians that the God of the Hebrews was a God of power. The Israelites in their dwellings were safe, and the only safety is in obedience to Him. PP 269.3

"All Egypt trembled to the stroke of the avenging of divine judgment. Pharaoh hastily sent for the two brothers, and cried out, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord, that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." The answer was, "As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not fear the Lord God." PP 269.1

"Moses now stretched forth his rod over the land, and an east wind blew, and brought locusts. "Very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such." They hidden the face of the earth, and darkened the land, and devoured all the herbs, remaining Pharaoh sent for the prophets in haste, and said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore, forgive, I pray, me only this only once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only." They did so, and a strong west wind carried away the locusts toward the Red Sea. Still the king persisted in his stubborn resolution." PP 271.5

"Suddenly a darkness settled upon the land, so thick and black that it seemed a "darkness which may be felt." Not only were the people deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive, and they could not breathe. "They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." The sun and moon were objects of worship to the Egyptians; in this mysterious darkness the people and their gods alike were smitten by the power that had undertaken the cause of the bondmen. (See Appendix, note 2.) Yet fearful as it was, this judgment is an evidence of God's compassion and His unwillingness to destroy. He would give the people time for reflection and repentance before bringing upon them the last and most terrible of the plagues." PP 272.1

Friday, July 25

Further Thought

"Fear at last wrung from Pharaoh a further concession. At the end of the third day of darkness he summoned Moses, and consented to the departure of the people, provided the flocks and herds were permitted to remain. "There shall not an hoof be left behind," replied the resolute Hebrew. "We know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither." The king's anger burst forth beyond control. "Get thee from me," he cried, "take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die." PP 272.2

"The answer was, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see the face again no more." PP 272.3

"The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people. Moses was regarded with awe by the Egyptians. The king dared not harm him, for the people looked upon him as alone possessing power to remove the plagues. They desired that the Israelites might be permitted to leave Egypt. It was the king and the priests that opposed to the last the demands of Moses." PP 272.4