

LITTLE ONES & WORSHIP

EXODUS 10:1-29

TOBY SUMPTER

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with God's reaffirmation that he has hardened Pharaoh's heart and the hearts of his servants (10:1). The reason he has hardened these hearts is for God to show his signs and so that Moses will be able to tell his son and grandson the "mighty things I have done in Egypt." So that you may know that the God who did this was Yahweh. The plagues and signs reveal the God who did this great judgment as Yahweh. The implication is that no other God could have done this; it has Yahweh all over it. This is because Yahweh is the Lord of Creation and he saves and delivers his people, making a difference between Israel and Egypt. God does wonders so that they can be talked about, and in particular that they can be talked about to our children and grandchildren.

LOCUSTS AND FAITHFUL WORSHIP

Remember we were told after the hail storms that only the flax and barley were struck but that the wheat and spelt would come later since they were late crops (9:31-32). So when God sends locusts there is a "residue of what is left" and whatever has grown up out of the fields (10:5). But the plague will also include the fact that they will fill the houses of Egypt (10:6). At this point, Pharaoh shows the first sign of compromise. While he's sworn falsely previously (second/fourth/seventh plagues: 8:8, 28, 9:28), here he actually seems to be offering a compromise prior to the plague. He knows that the word of Moses is true. Yet Pharaoh's offer shows his evil intentions; he is only willing to have the men go and serve Yahweh (10:11). Remember the initial request from Pharaoh was a three day journey into the wilderness to hold a feast to Yahweh (5:1-3). Does this imply that initially there was no intention to leave Egypt permanently? No (10:9). At the heart of this contest and battle between Yahweh and Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt is not a geographical squabble. It's a matter of a culture and way of life: will Israel serve Pharaoh or Yahweh? Will they worship Pharaoh or Yahweh? For Israel to worship Yahweh completely unhindered is to undermine the rule of Pharaoh. And if only the men go, Pharaoh still has his finger on their lives (i.e. their wives and children). The locusts come up over and "darken" the whole land (10:13-15). Pharaoh calls this affliction "death" (10:17), and when Yahweh takes the plague away, the locusts are blown into the Red Sea (10:19). This all previews what God will bring to Egypt: darkness followed by death in the land, followed by drowning in the Red Sea.

DARKNESS AND FAITHFUL WORSHIP

Following the pattern we have seen, these plagues strike the land and then the heavens. This darkness is "able to be felt" and "thick." The first description may simply refer to the fact the Egyptians had to "grope" around like blind men in order to get around (cf. Dt. 28:29). The second description means "calamity" or "gloom." Remember that these plagues are a "de-creation" of the Egyptian world, an unmaking of their world, and therefore, here at the end of the plagues, it is fitting that we should have arrived at the very beginning: separation of light and darkness (Gen. 1:2-4, cf. Ex. 10:23). This is an indication that Egypt/Pharaoh is at the end; there's nothing left for God to unmake. Also, this fact should not escape us when we see "darkness"

associated with so many of the later prophecies in Scripture (Is. 8:22, 59:9, Jer. 23:12, Joel 2:2, Zeph. 1:15). Darkness goes back to the original primordial darkness at the dawn of creation, but darkness also will ever after point to the last straw before God strikes the first born of Egypt and buries their armies in the Sea. This deep darkness means that God is on the verge of finishing them off. Notice that here too: Pharaoh tries to make a bargain with Yahweh, a compromise. But the issue again is worship unhindered. If Pharaoh can set some small regulation concerning the worship of Israel, he still has a final say, final review (10:24).

CONCLUSIONS & APPLICATIONS:

Our Little Ones: This chapter has the running theme of children and grandchildren (10:2, 9, 24). God has done these wonders in Egypt, and Scripture is full of God's signs that we are commanded to tell to our children and grandchildren so that they know Yahweh. This is why Christian Education is so important. Parents also have responsibility to teach their grandchildren. Secondly, when we gather for worship, it is with "our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters... for we must hold a feast to Yahweh." This is simply a logistical fact that ALL of Israel did worship Yahweh, but it is also an indication of the nature of Yahweh: this is what he wants. Therefore rejoice in this atmosphere of worship because our God does, and do not hinder your children from worshipping: by acting like they don't/can't worship, or by refusing to discipline them so that they can worship.

Complete Obedience: Think about how tempting it would have been for Moses to "take what he could get from Pharaoh." He had the chance to take the men to worship Yahweh, and then even the little ones (10:24). Why didn't he take what he could get? He was committed to complete obedience. Partial obedience is disobedience. This was the sin that Saul who twice slightly altered God's word for his convenience (the sacrifice: I Sam. 13, and sparing of Agag: I Sam. 15). Partial obedience is disobedience: telling part of the truth is lying. We are disciples of Jesus regardless of the consequences.



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