

Destructive Plagues Exodus 8:20-9:12

October 2, 2024

Context

1. The fourth, fifth, and sixth of ten plagues of divine judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt
2. Miraculous signs and wonders
3. The plagues are growing in intensity

Question: What are the most significant differences between these three plagues and the previous three?

The plague of flies (8:20-32)

20 “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Rise up early in the morning and **present yourself to Pharaoh**, as he goes out to the water...’”

- **NIV** “confront Pharaoh”

21 “swarms of flies”

1. Lit. “swarms”
2. The Septuagint, which was translated in Egypt prior to the time of Christ, used the Greek word for dog flies, which bit and sucked blood from their victims, transmitted diseases, and contributed to the prevalence of eye disease and blindness in Egypt¹

22 “the land of Goshen, where my people dwell”

1. **Gen. 45:9-10** “Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have.’”
2. Where the majority of Israelites lived
3. The eastern delta region. It was about 50 miles NE of modern Cairo. It was a valley 5 or 6 miles wide and 30 miles long that ended in Lake Timsah, which is now part of the Suez Canal.²

The Lord would spare the Israelites from the plague, further showing the miraculous nature of the plagues

¹ John Mackay, *Exodus*, 164. Walter Kaiser, “Exodus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:355.

² Kaiser, 356.

“that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.”

1. **NASB** “that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land”
NIV “that I, the LORD, am in this land”
2. That Pharaoh would look past the flies and think about the One who controlled events in this way
3. The sparing of Goshen made it all the clearer that these plagues were not natural events, nor were they controlled by the Egyptian gods

verse 23

While divine judgment was falling on Egypt, Israel was being publicly set aside as recipients of divine deliverance.

Question: Can you think of any previous times in Scripture when God’s people were spared from judgment?

“Tomorrow this sign shall happen.”

1. No one would be able to say that Moses was able to foretell the plague because it had already started
2. This gave Pharaoh plenty of opportunity to submit to God and avoid the plague

Another divine blow will fall on Pharaoh and Egypt to impress on Pharaoh with whom he is dealing, and how inescapable judgment is if he persists in his refusal to let the Israelites go.³

Psa. 78:42-45a “They did not remember his power
or the day when he redeemed them from the foe,
when he performed his signs in Egypt
and his marvels in the fields of Zoan.
He turned their rivers to blood,
so that they could not drink of their streams.
He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them,”

verse 25

It was clear to Pharaoh that his only hope for release from this plague was in the God of Moses and Aaron. His gods could not help.

³ Mackay, 163-64.

Pharaoh tries to resolve the situation by granting less than has been demanded

1. 5:1-3

2. Pharaoh will only allow them to sacrifice within the land of Egypt, where they will be under his jurisdiction and supervision
3. Pharaoh is still refusing to acknowledge the Lord's superiority and sovereignty

26 "...the offerings we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God are an abomination to the Egyptians..."

1. Suggests the Israelites have not been offering sacrifices to the Lord
2. The abomination may possibly relate to the use of sheep in sacrifice
 - **Gen. 46:34** "you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

27 We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us."

1. What is required from Pharaoh is total obedience to the Lord
2. God does not compromise

29 "tomorrow"

1. As Pharaoh had asked previously
2. **8:9-10** "Moses said to Pharaoh, 'Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.' And he said, 'Tomorrow.' Moses said, 'Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.'"
3. Again showing the miraculous nature of the plague

verse 29b

1. **NASB** "do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully again"
2. **8:8** "Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, 'Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.'"
- 15** "But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."

The plague on the livestock (9:1-7)

verses 1-4

Livestock was very precious to the Egyptians as witnessed in both their paintings and literature.⁴

1. They used horses primarily in warfare⁵
2. They used donkeys and camels for transporting people and loads⁶
3. They used herds of cattle for milk⁷
4. Their livestock was one of their main sources of wealth⁸

Some of their livestock, such as bulls, were held to be sacred.⁹

3 “the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock”

- Pestilence (disease) brought on by divine judgment that would kill livestock

Divine judgment does not just affect human beings. God gave man dominion over the animals (Gen 1:28). Consequently, when man rebels against God, God’s judgment impacts those creatures under man’s dominion.

The fact that the Egyptian livestock would be struck but not the Israelite livestock, would further expose the impotence of the Egyptian gods to whom the animals were sacred.¹⁰

3 “upon your livestock that are in **the field”**

1. A general term for open ground which was not subject to cultivation but might be used for grazing¹¹
2. This plague will not fall upon livestock in barns
3. This warning gives the Egyptians opportunity to bring their livestock into a place of shelter before the plague falls

6 “...All the livestock of the Egyptians died...”

- All their livestock in the field

verse 7

Neither the greater intensity of this plague, nor the Lord’s protection of the Israelite livestock, is sufficient to change Pharaoh’s heart.

⁴ John Davis, *Moses and the gods of Egypt*, 119.

⁵ Mackay, 170.

⁶ Mackay, 170. Davis, 121.

⁷ Davis, 121.

⁸ Mackay, 170.

⁹ Mackay, 169.

¹⁰ Mackay, 171.

¹¹ Mackay, 170.

The plague of boils (9:8-12)

verse 8

Kilns were used for melting metal, preparing lime, and making some bricks. (Other bricks were dried in the sun.)¹²

verse 9

Boils normally were caused by infection, and were a painful but not deadly skin condition.

If these boils were like those caused by skin anthrax, they were black, burning abscesses¹³

These boils would be painful enough to cause many Egyptians to seek relief from some of their gods

verses 10-11

Exposed the impotence of the magicians and their gods before the power of the true God.

verse 12

4:21 “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.’”

A sovereign, judicial act of God against a wicked, disobedient man who had ignored God’s repeated warnings and had repeatedly gone back on his word

Similar examples of divine hardening and ordaining of evil

- Deuteronomy 2:30
- Joshua 11:18-20
- 2 Samuel 17:14
- 1 Kings 12:13-15

The Lord’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was not unjust or arbitrary

1. It is the right of an infinitely holy God to deal with evil men in any way He so desires
2. What all sinners really deserve is death (Rom 6:23)
3. Any good that God brings to the sinner is pure mercy and grace

God had purposed to glorify Himself through judgment upon Egypt and redemption of Israel

¹² Davis, 123. Kaiser, 359.

¹³ Mackay, 174.