

WBS talk outline

1

I imagine that some of us heard about the plagues, this “power encounter between God and the King of Egypt...pharaoh, and the false gods of Eg in Sunday school... or you might be new to the Bible and this is the first time you’ve read about these plagues.

I went to church only sometimes when I was young...and was vaguely aware of these dramatic scenes, but honestly, had no idea of the significance behind what God was doing. The plagues just made really good pictures to color in SS.

Last week Cheryl reminded us of two ways to look at the Bible,

The **upclose**, the details, the dialogue etc,

The **Big wide angle view** that puts these particulars into a context, that helps us understand more fully what God was intending for us to learn.

So, a bit on the Big picture, before we get to the upclose of these chapters

Background

In Genesis 1 God made the world, beautiful and perfect, and made people living in relationship with Him. In Genesis 3 we get a glimpse of the devastation that was caused by Adam and Eve when they rebelled vs God, as they listened and followed Satan’s suggestion that what God said could not be trusted, that he would show them a better way to find all they longed for in life.

We also get a glimpse of God’s response...a plan set in motion to rescue His people from their sin, and restore all that had been broken.

Children’s storybook Bible (I love because the author shows us how the Bible is really one story, with One Hero

“It’s an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It’s a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne--- everything---to rescue the one he loves.”

And that is the story of the Bible. And our cpts today are a part of this story.

THEN In **Genesis 12-15** God made a covenant/ promises to Abraham to be their God, and that they would be His people, and He would take them into a ‘promised land’...

BUT here they are, stuck in Eg, slaves for 430 long bitter years, with the situation getting worse by the day. Imagine what 430 years of slavery does to the lives and beliefs of a people. They had no Bible to read, to keep their hopes up of this “promised land”. No wonder Israel (6:9) had a broken spirit and had trouble believing that God heard their cries, and would get them out of this impossible mess, their darkest moment of all

But God HAS heard their cries, and He has a plan. He has come to their rescue, not because they ‘deserve’ it, but as an expression of His great mercy and glory, that His might can be made known, and that the deliverance of His people is truly seen as His work alone!

Today: two themes. 2 Big ideas in our passage (among others...)

God reveals who He is

God rescues His people

We will see

Face off of the Lord, and Ph and the false gods of eg.

Who is this Pharaoh? (never hear his name...just title)

- This is not the Pharaoh that learned to trust Joseph, making him a leader of Eg,, saving Israel from the worldwide famine over 400 years ago. That Ph died.
- This Ph, and the Eg have no idea about this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No collective memory. Rather now they had 80 gods they worshiped; gods to help protect and provide for them, and Pharaoh himself was considered divine. Pharaoh is not about to let Israel go---these slaves have become a huge part of the economic backbone of his country. Losing them would have huge consequences. (**Not letting** them go will also have HUGE consequences as we will see.)

False Gods

James Boice says that the dieties in Eg, were clustered about 3 great natural forces of life.

1-2. The Nile river. The Nile River and frogs were a symbol of fertility

3-6. The Land. Hard to pinpoint which gods by name....

7-9. The sky

The plagues were not random, but well designed BY GOD to demonstrate His supreme power and authority, over Ph and the gods of Eg.

Ph lack of power and authority will be unmasked, along with his hard and hardening heart.

The Lord puts His glory on display by defeating/judging these false gods

Summarize the encounter

Read Children's storybook Bible: pp 86-88

So Moses went to Pharaoh.

"Ph," Moses began, "God says—"

God? Said Ph. "never heard of him"

Moses kept going, "God says, let his people go free."

"Why should I?" Ph said. "Don't' want to"

WON'T, So he didn't

So God gave Ph ten warnings, called Plagues

First, God turned the River Nile into blood. No one could drink the water. But still Ph would not let them go.

So God made frogs Come hopping and leaping and jumping. In your bed frogs, in your hair frogs, in your soup frogs, all over everywhere frogs.

Make them go away Ph screamed. Then your people can go. So God took the frogs away. But Ph changed his mind. You can't go! He said.

Then God sent Zillions of gnats. But still Ph said, NO!

So then God sent swarms of flies---flies buzzing in your eyes flies.

And after that, sickness; and horrible boils; and huge hailstones; and a storm of locusts;

The darkness when it should have been day---until it seemed that the whole world, creation and everything, was coming undone, falling back into darkness---emptiness-

But each time Ph said "make it stop and then I'll let them go!. And each time when God made it stop, Ph changed his mind and said, "Actually, NO! you can't go"

God's repeated appeals, (revealing self and rescuing His people)

Declaring Who He is, and what He wants!

Moses says:

The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying let my people go so they can serve me. **I counted 6 times!** Not just release from slavery, but a new, good master.

By this you shall know that I am the Lord...

So that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.

That you may know that I am the Lord throughout the whole earth.

So that you may know that the earth is the Lord's

So that you may know that I am the Lord.

The giant hailstones Plague 7

Remarkable evidence of God's mercy, and His love for the ones He made.

"Tomorrow, I'm sending a serious hailstorm...Get your livestock and your people into **safe shelter**, for all that are left in the field, will die.

Some of Ph servants feared the word of the Lord, and did what God said.

But whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord, left his slaves and his livestock in the field, and they died. Even in the midst of this power standoff, we see the Heart of our God...

Proverbs 30:5 The Lord is a shield for all who take shelter in Him. Jesus is our safe shelter....

Pharoah's hard heart

Ok. What is this about God hardening Pharoah's heart?

One might ask: If God did that, then how can he hold Ph responsible for refusing to do what God asks?

Actually, it's not until the 6th plague that it says that God hardened Ph heart. But the very dynamic of Ph saying yes, and even pleading, begging God to take the difficult circumstances away, and then refusing, over and over, dulled his conscience and dug a deep pattern of resistance and rebellion within him that eventually made him unable to submit to the Lord. He made choices and those choices changed him overtime...our choices change us as well.

Notice:

9:16 The Lord says:

- 9:16 For this purpose I have raised you up (Ph) to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. You are still exalting yourself vs my people and will not let them go.
- God knew Ph heart, and in His sovereign wisdom, used Ph hardness to highlight His power and goodness as He is unfolding His plan to rescue and restore.
- From Scripture we know that God is sovereign over the events of humankind, but that doesn't rule out human responsibility over our decisions. We have agency over our lives, and our decisions matter.
- How does God's sovereignty and our personal decisions work together for His glory and our good?
- Our finite minds see these as distinct things, that can't both be true at the same time. But that's why He is God and we are not.
- We rest believing that God is good, and just, the best one to run the universe.

Thinking about Ph choices---Let's be honest:

Have you ever said Yes to the Lord, then it turned to No?

Maybe when faced with hard consequences, you are willing...but when the pressure is off, you "forget" the intentions/promises you made to do something, or change in some way.

E.g. I have to admit This can be me when confronted with the need to have hard conversations with someone... I love harmony, and left to my own devices, would mostly avoid conflict.

I agree about the need, say I will, but then, fear of 'rocking the boat', or the other's response, I resort to just hoping that things will get better.

Or intending to share the Good news, and then not, because of fear of the other's response to me...or to God.

So maybe we are more like Ph than we'd like to admit and struggle with obedience. Yes--- No

Apart from God's mercy and the help of His Spirit, we, like Pharoah, would continually refuse to listen to God's words to us; words that are intended for our good, and His glory. Words intended to be a shelter...but we decide to stay out in the field, and not limit ourselves by going into the closed in space of "a shelter". We want our "freedom", to come and go as we decide...this freedom is really no freedom at all.

Remember the big picture.

God wants to be known, and rescue us to follow Him

New Testament

We continue to see God's passion to be known.

- John 1. "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, (this is Jesus Christ) has made him Known". If we look at Jesus, we see what God is like in a human body.
- Col.1 He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God. Jesus makes the invisible God seeable/knowable.
- Parables—Have you every considered how much time Jesus Spends describing His father, correcting our image of who God is. How much God wants us to know Him. It's what we were made for.

Why is this important?

Without revelation, we construct our own idea of God what God is like, we develop our own ideas what's good and bad, then we end up serving these false images, and living in slavery to something/someone who does NOT have the power to rescue us from our unsolvable problem of sin that separates us from God. We are (without Jesus), like Is, enslaved to false God's, unable to get free, helpless, hopeless.

Of course we don't worship gods of rivers, sun or frogs, but we find other "more sophisticated things" to put our trust in. Two American cultural sins: safety and comfort. Intelligence and success, being good moms, being respected and having the right friends, Independence and limitless strength.... Money

Eg me...

Uganda, “addicted to people’s opinions...need to understand this Sonship thing”

I’ve discovered that my “addiction” leaves me enslaved to others, working to please them, sometimes feeling successful/failure. If I am motivated by fear disappointing others, I am not free to love them...just manipulate them for my purposes. Thank God for His Spirit!

- Where does your heart go for a sense of well being, of worth and peace?
 - Some of you might feel like Israel...broken in spirit, having faced very difficult circumstances in your life for a long time. You might find it hard to trust or believe that God sees you, or cares, and that He can enter your life bringing comfort and help. This story is for you.
 - Some of you might realize that there are ways you have been arguing with God, bargaining, resisting him. Saying yes, then no. He invites us to repent, to change our direction, and make choices to follow, **with His help.**
 - Where do you need help to transfer misplaced trust in things that ultimately have no power to help you?

God proved to Is, Eg and to us with the plagues, that there is nothing/noone under heaven besides Him that is able to rescue us, and who is worthy to be worshiped and followed And this is not because we deserve it....but because His is a God of compassion and mercy, and love.

Rose Marie Miller

We are like a

“Caterpillar in a ring of fire.”

Colossians 1:13-14

For He (Jesus) has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son that He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He rescues us from sin, so that we may know Him and serve him, in the freedom of being His Child!

Let’s pray

