

God's Demand, Pharaoh's Refusal

Key Verse:
“For He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.”

Psalms 72:12

Extra: Imagine you were a Jew living in Egypt at this time. What would life be like?

Level 5 lesson 13

Read: Exodus 5 and Psalm 77

In our previous month's lesson, God appeared to Moses and sent him to deliver His people from slavery under Pharaoh. Pharaoh of course, was King over Egypt, the mightiest nation on earth at that time. Pharaoh was worshipped as a god by his subjects. This king is thought to have been 'Ramses II' and he was a very proud and boastful man. Like some rulers today he even had images of himself set up all around his country.

Yet God promised to protect and empower Moses for the task, through a series of amazing miracles. Moses and his brother Aaron, two very ordinary men without any obvious signs of support or power, soon went before Pharaoh and boldly proclaimed, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, 'Let my people go!'" As we might expect from this hard-hearted, powerful pagan, Pharaoh reacted with cynical anger and arrogance. "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" he queried insolently. "I will not let Israel go!"

Pharaoh then began to abuse the two Israelites standing before him, with words to this effect. "All this talk about 'worship' is because you haven't got enough to do! The trouble with you Jews is you are all lazy, so I'll soon fix that!" He then commanded that from that moment on, the Israelite slaves, in addition to making their quota of bricks each day, must now also collect the straw to make them with as well. "And," Pharaoh made it clear, "they must still make the same number of bricks as before!"

A PAINFUL DISAPPOINTMENT

The task was impossible of course, but when the number of new bricks inevitably fell below the quota demanded, Pharaoh's cruel guards reacted by brutally beating the Hebrew slaves; even the foremen received no mercy! But when they complained to Pharaoh, all they got for their trouble was more abuse. For the Israelites things certainly seemed to be going from bad to worse since Moses and Aaron had approached Pharaoh!

Some Jews, who had previously looked forward to finally enjoying a life of freedom, started to say that it would have been better not to even think about getting free. When the Hebrew slave foremen met Moses and Aaron they were disappointed and complained bitterly to them. They said Moses and Aaron were responsible for the extra hard work and harsh treatment that the Israelites were getting.

Poor Moses! As you can imagine, he felt pretty bad about what had happened and as we read the account in Scripture we can clearly see that Moses felt unhappy and thought that God had let him and his people down terribly. Surely this was not what God had planned, was it? He complained to God, telling Him that things had only got worse; that he, Moses, was a failure, and that God hadn't rescued His people at all. I'm sure we can all identify with Moses at this time, as we have perhaps struggled with disappointment or trouble in our lives. We too, may have been inclined to complain to God and query what He was doing, or not doing!

A STRONG DELIVERER

However, God knew exactly what was happening! He was still in control. All the time Pharaoh was fighting to hold on to his slaves, God was preparing to save them. As we will see in the following studies, God sent plagues on him and his people because he would not listen to God's message, but defied God instead.

This great struggle in Egypt, so long ago, can be used as a picture of another greater struggle that people face today. Hebrews 2:15 teaches us that the Lord Jesus came to set free those who are held as slaves by Satan. Sometimes when a sinner is close to being saved, the struggle seems hardest, but Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus is completely able to save all who come to God through Him.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why would Moses and Aaron be described as bold, rather than foolish, in making their demand?

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2. How would you answer someone who asked you "Who is the Lord?"

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3. Why do you think the Hebrew slave foremen blamed Moses for their trouble?

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4. What should Moses and the foremen have done instead of complaining?

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5. What is the struggle going on today that is pictured by this conflict?

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My Name is Age

God Accepts Pharaoh's Challenge

Key Verse:
"He sent His signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants."

Psalm 135:9

Extra: What do you think about the incredible responsibilities of teachers and leaders?

Level 5 Lesson 14

Read Exodus 6:1-9 & 7:10-24 also Romans 9:14-21

GOD'S REMINDERS TO HIS PEOPLE

In response to Moses' complaints, God reassured him that He had not forgotten His people's painful misery or His precious promises and the binding covenant that He made with their ancestors. He reminded Moses of who He was in verse 2, "I am the LORD" (see Exodus 3:15 also). Whenever we see the name 'LORD' in capitals in Scripture, it refers to 'Yahweh' the sacred Hebrew name for God; and this was a reminder to the Israelites that they were God's chosen people and that He could be totally trusted. In verses 3-5, God again reminded Moses of His past dealings with the founders of the nation of Israel and His promise to give them the land of Canaan. He assured Moses that He knew of His peoples' terrible plight for He said, "I have heard their groaning."

GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE

In verses 6-8, God continued to outline to Moses His wonderful plans for the people of Israel. "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will set you free. I will redeem you (or buy you back) from the slave master nation of Egypt. I will take you as My own people. I will be your God. I will bring you into the land of Canaan as I promised. I will give Canaan to you as a possession." Obediently, Moses reminded the Israelites of these promises, but they were too miserable to even listen. However, neither Pharaoh's arrogant unbelief nor His own peoples' lack of faith could thwart the plans of Almighty God!

PHARAOH SPEAKS FOR HIS PEOPLE

"No, I will not let Israel go!" was Pharaoh's defiant response toward God on behalf of his people: consequently, God's judgments fell on both him and the people. God knew that Pharaoh would challenge Moses and Aaron demanding some sort of miraculous proof. So God sent signs and judgements on the Egyptians when Moses was seeking the Israelites' release from slavery. It was important that the many man-made 'gods' sharing rule with the 'god-king' Pharaoh, were also proved to be false, feeble failures and judged by God.

This had a dual purpose: 1) To show both Israelites and Egyptians that the gods the Egyptians worshipped were not real: there was only one True, Living God.

2) To punish all those who denied the reality of this fact by continuing their idolatrous worship of Satan and his demons, who were ultimately the power behind the Egyptian 'gods.'

Once more, Moses and Aaron spoke to the King. In response to Pharaoh's request for a miracle, Aaron threw down his rod as God instructed him and it immediately became a snake. At this, Pharaoh called his magicians and by their evil powers their sticks become snakes, too. Yes friends, Satan's power is very real and we should never be among those who 'play around' with the occult thinking it is 'harmless.' However, God is 'ALL-POWERFUL' and in demonstration of His superiority God made Aaron's snake swallow all theirs! Sadly, Pharaoh remained stubborn and hard-hearted, just as God said he would.

GOD'S POWER DISPLAYED

Next morning, God ordered Moses and Aaron to again meet with Pharaoh, down by the Nile River. The Egyptians worshipped the river and even the fish that swam in it! Once more, Moses and Aaron faced him with God's demand. "Let My people go, says the Lord, so that they may go and worship Me in the desert!"

Pharaoh ignored Moses' warning of punishment on the whole nation unless he obeyed, so God told Aaron to stretch out his rod and strike the waters. By God's mighty power, the water in the Nile turned to blood and all the fish died. Not only the river but all the streams, ponds and reservoirs were affected. Imagine the smell!!!

EGYPT'S FALSE 'gods' EXPOSED

Despite being treated and worshipped as 'gods' the river and the fish could do nothing about their state! So what effect did this seven day judgement have on Pharaoh? Verse 23 says he ignored it and went into his palace. Imagine events like that taking place before your very eyes and ignoring it! Sadly, many people today reject or ignore God's Word or are indifferent to it, too. I wonder what your reaction is to this account of God's dealings with Pharaoh?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How do you feel if God doesn't seem to do what He promised?	.....
2. What reasons did the Israelites have for trusting God?	.....
3. List at least 4 things that God promised to the people of Israel in Egypt.	.....
4. Pharaoh defied and tested God. Who also tempted God and how? (see Matthew 4:1-10)	.....
5. How does God show His power these days?	.....

Judgement on the Egyptians

Key Verse:
“Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men, by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12

Extra: What was the purpose of these signs and wonders?

Level 5 Lesson 15

Read Exodus 8 & 9 also Psalm 78:44-49

PLAGUES CONTINUE

Following Pharaoh’s stubborn response, God then began a series of eight further plagues against Pharaoh and his countrymen. Frogs lived by the million in the river Nile, and Moses warned Pharaoh that unless he let the Israelites go to worship God in the desert, He would plague Egypt with frogs. Again, Pharaoh contemptuously ignored Moses’ words and that is exactly what happened. Out of the river and into the property of the Egyptians hopped millions of frogs!

Urgently Pharaoh begged Moses to get the frogs away from him and his people, promising that he would let the Israelites go to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Moses kept his word and asked God to take away the plague of frogs. Pharaoh did not keep his word, however, and refused to do as he had promised. So God sent a plague of lice, but again Pharaoh refused to listen to God.

PHARAOH’S COMPROMISE

This resulted in a plague of flies. Can you imagine MILLIONS AND MILLIONS of flies: thick, everywhere - and no fly spray! They swarmed in the air and on the ground. Quickly Pharaoh called for Moses and suggested a compromise: “Go sacrifice to your God here in Egypt” he proposed. “No way!” said Moses, “That would not be right. We must go three day’s journey into the desert just as God commanded us.” Pharaoh agreed, but told them they were not to go too far away. He even had the nerve to ask Moses and Aaron to pray for him!

What a deceitful and wicked liar he was! As soon as the flies were gone he “hardened his heart” and again refused to let the Israelites leave as he’d promised. Perhaps Pharaoh thought he was very clever. He was soon to find out that pretending to be repentant does not pay. His double-dealing brought worse trouble on himself and all the Egyptian people. For the sixth time, Moses and Aaron spoke to the stubborn king and warned that God would bring a plague on their animals (their most valued property) if he refused.

This time Pharaoh had a day to think things over, but it didn’t make any difference; he refused to listen once again! Next day (just as God had said) the Egyptians’ cattle all died, but none of the Israelites’ cattle were harmed. When Pharaoh heard about this, he sent out investigators to check: of course, they found that the reports were totally true.

PHARAOH’S CONTEMPT

Amazingly, Pharaoh continued to stubbornly refuse to obey the Word of the Lord through Moses, even after a terrible plague of boils. Once again, God spoke sternly through Moses to Pharaoh, warning him of the next terrible plague that was on its way. He did this so that those who feared Him might take notice and be prepared for the coming judgement.

We also need to take note of the warning God gives us these days. The state of our world is terrible and the daily news only bears out the violence and wretchedness of people’s lives and actions. Sin, wickedness and open defiance of Almighty God seems to be on the increase everywhere. God has promised that His righteous anger will surely fall on this wicked world. We need to shelter in the place of safety from the storm of approaching judgement. Do you know that for us today that place of shelter is a Person: the Lord Jesus Christ! Take a good look at the Key Verse!

This time, the storm seemed to really shake Pharaoh; he called in desperation for Moses and Aaron and confessed his sin. He begged them to pray that the terrible storm would stop, and faithfully promised to let the people go. But no sooner had the hail and thunder stopped, than Pharaoh and his officials “hardened their hearts” again. Why? It seems as though he never really hated his sin, but only wanted to be free of the punishment. True repentance certainly saves us from sin’s penalty and from sin’s power. Make sure you truly repent of your sin!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why did Pharaoh fool around with God?	.....
2. What is meant by the saying “Pharaoh hardened his heart!”?	.....
3. What evidence do you see of God’s gracious dealings with the Egyptians?	.....
4. Why do we need a place of safety?	.....
5. What is true repentance?	.....

One Plague More!

Key Verse:
“Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!”

Romans 5:9

Extra: In what ways do people harden their hearts against God these days?

Level 5 Lesson 16

Read Exodus 11 & 12:1-13 also Psalm 78:50-52

The battle between God and Pharaoh was nearly finished. While we are not told how much time had elapsed since the first plague, we know that the damage to the land, the people, and the economy of Egypt must have been immense. How foolish of Pharaoh to resist Almighty God! Yet he stubbornly persisted, and “hardened his heart” after each judgement of God upon him. Despite a further plague of locusts which caused incredible devastation, and a three day period of the most terrible darkness, when all Egypt was confined to their houses, Pharaoh still did not relent. It is at this point, that God told Moses He would bring one final judgement after which Pharaoh WOULD let them go. In fact, He would practically drive them out! God was in control of this ‘contest’ all the way through, using an evil man such as Pharaoh to display His superior power and righteousness.

This last plague is of special interest because for the first time, it would affect the Israelites as well as the Egyptians. There would be no escape for anyone, unless they did exactly as God ordered them. In addition, from this time forward there was to be a change in their Jewish calendar; this month would now become the first month in the year. Every year at this time, the Israelites were to celebrate and remember what God was about to do, with a feast called ‘The Passover.’ This was obviously no ordinary event! In fact, it would clearly show the way God offers deliverance for all mankind from the slavery of sin, which is far worse than slavery in Egypt.

Together with the next study, this is a very important part of the Bible and we should all pay close attention to what God wants to teach us from it. Verse 5 reveals that this final, terrible plague was to bring the death of the firstborn child in every family. God was going to pass through the land of Egypt that night and kill all the firstborn as well as bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt. There would be no exceptions; from the highest to the lowest, all families would suffer. God warned them this calamity would fall at midnight on the fourteenth day of the month.

GOD’S PROVISION

However, God graciously gave Moses strict instructions as to how the Israelites could avoid the coming judgement. Each family had to choose an unblemished, male, one year old lamb and keep it separate for four days. Probably that was to make sure it was not sick in any way and was without any faults. On the fourteenth day of the month all the people were to slaughter them in the evening. Then most importantly they had to collect the blood and sprinkle it on the tops and sides of the door frames of their houses using a bunch of hyssop. Once they had done that, they were to go inside and roast the entire carcass over a fire and eat the meat. No-one was to leave the house. All were to eat the lamb, dressed and packed ready to leave, “with their staffs (walking sticks) in their hand.” When the angel of God saw the blood on the doorposts, he would “pass over” that house, just as God promised.

This whole event was a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He died on the cross to deliver all who trust in Him from God’s righteous judgement on sin. The sacrificed lamb was known as the ‘Passover Lamb.’ That is why John the Baptist made his famous cry in John 1:36, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world!” Jesus becomes the ‘Passover Lamb’ to all who trust in Him.

GOD’S PROTECTION

In due course, it happened just as God had promised. At midnight on the fourteenth day of the month, the angel of God went throughout the land of Egypt. Every home sheltering behind the blood-sprinkled door-posts remained safe and untouched. The blood of the ‘Passover’ lamb brought them protection from God’s judgement as promised. But what terrible grief in every home where the warning was ignored! From Pharaoh down to the lowest worker, every Egyptian household woke to find their firstborn child dead.

Friends, don’t ignore the warnings of Scripture, for ‘It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that, the judgement’ (Hebrews 9:27 KJV). The Lord Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment for the sin of the world upon Himself. The Bible assures us that when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we too, are safe and secure in Him. Trust in Him only!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was the final plague on Egypt?	.....
2. How were people to be delivered from this judgement?	.....
3. What connection do you see between the Passover lamb and Jesus Christ?	.....
4. Why was the blood so important? (See Hebrews 9:22)
5. What is necessary for us to do, to escape God’s judgement on sin?

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