



6. Plague! (part 1) Exodus 7-11

We now come to one of the more dramatic parts of the Book of exodus – the plagues. I don't know if you watch the soaps. They all involve people living in certain places who get into all sorts of bother – Coronation Street, Eastenders, Emmerdale. The stories can get more fantastic by the week can't they. I've lived in a neighbourhood like Albert Square in Walford. It's really dead by comparison. It can be vibrant to walk down Tottenham High Road. It's all activity and colour. But all the aggro in EastEnders isn't there. It isn't that the writers aren't exposing us to real issues. All those sort of things really happen – but not often and not all in the same place. Most districts of London are quiet by comparison. So we say “EastEnders – entertainment but not really real”

When lots of unpleasant things do happen, then people sit up and take notice. More people are killed on the roads every day than have died due to knife crime on the streets of London in the last three months. But it's unusual – it's an “epidemic” and people sit up and take notice. Now it's EastEnders

The plagues made the Egyptians to sit up and take notice. Apart from plague 10 – death of the first born, Egypt had experienced all these plagues in some form before. And had survived. But 10 in one year – now that was disaster!

Why did God do this?

1. To punish them

Tell Aaron everything I command you, and he will tell the king to let the Israelites leave his country. 3 But I will make the king stubborn, and he will not listen to you, no matter how many terrifying things I do in Egypt. Then I will bring severe punishment on Egypt and lead the tribes of my people out of the land.

4 5 The Egyptians will then know that I am the LORD, when I raise my hand against them and bring the Israelites out of their country."

6 Moses and Aaron did what the LORD commanded.

Many people think that God was rough on the Egyptians. Their whole economy was temporarily destroyed and awful things happened? Wasn't that a bit OTT? That would have been true if God was unjust. But actually, they already had the opportunity to repent the first time Moses and Aaron walked in.

2. To repay them

What the Egyptians had done was wrong in any civilised society – even by Egyptian standards. The Egyptians were going to be punished for what they did to the point where they would be desperate to get rid of Israel.

3. To demonstrate the power of God to Israel

Like Pharaoh, the Israelites had never known the power of God demonstrated. Now they were going to see the power of God manifest in destroying all the power of Egyptian gods. It would take all 10 plagues to show that Yahweh, their God had power over Egypt and Egyptian gods in all departments.

We need to realise in spiritual warfare that people are so often entrenched in what they think that it takes something quite major to shift them. We know that when people come to Christ. They are so lost in the darkness that satan has placed them in, it takes a jolt to shift them. People are always most open to the gospel when their world has been taken from them. In fact they are so open, that we must take care not to take advantage of them and abuse them. Many people have come to Christ

as a result of bereavement, not because Christians took advantage of them, but that they were shown love and care by Christians who brought to them the presence of Christ.

Another time is when people move house. Got new neighbours. Befriend them. Its a time in their life when they are taking stock. New housing estates are very productive evangelism opportunities.

The list can go on – change of jobs, new addition to the family, a wedding, a marriage break up, personal problems, ill-health. We are not here to take advantage of people, but at these key times in life, people are open to new things and where we can bring the power of God into situations, we should because it would be negligent on us as believers if we didn't.

Interestingly, we can as Christians be just as stuck in our rut and our ways as anyone else. Baptists and change don't mix. Yet we are just as closed to the voice of God when we are in our comfort zones and have no desire to change. We'll even spiritualise it to justify it to ourselves.

Pharaoh did all that. Why should he embrace another god. He was one and had plenty of other Egyptian gods to deal with. So what about Yahweh. So when Moses and Aaron come into him this second time and does the thing with the staff and the snake, then Pharaoh isn't convinced because his guys can do that trick too. OK so Aaron's snake swallows theirs up. Perhaps Pharaoh thought that they needed more practice. He wasn't convinced. He was in his comfort zone. He didn't need to move. Silly man. He needed so much more to move him.

How stuck in a rut are we? Are we open to the call of God? Or are we comfortable? Maybe we have our sphere of service. We don't need to take on something new do we? What new things can I or do I need to learn?

One characteristics of maturity of a Christian I believe is that the more I know, the less I realise I know when it comes to the things of God. He has so much He wants to teach us. But we need to open our minds to His word and open our eyes to His ways. We're never too young to learn, and nobody's too lowly to learn about God from. And what I have learned as I have got older is that you are never too young to learn even the most profound things about God. There's really no limit to the depth and breadth of God. But we know that don't we? But preparing to enter into it and leaving our comfort zones is quite another thing.

Let me remind you of this verse again: *7 At the time when they spoke to the king, Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three.*

I believe God wants us to learn new things about Him and ourselves in the coming months and years. We need to be open to His voice and prepared to leave our comfort zones and to change our hearts and minds when He calls us to. Don't wait for plagues before you move!

Let's pray!

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