**Session 10: Week 6a**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 6:28-7:13**

**17-18 October 2022**

**Purpose in Repetition** – As we read through the text this week about the plagues, we saw patterns in the accounts and also much repetition. This would have been very helpful to the original hearers, who had no written copy of the text to study, as we have today. The repetition would have helped them to remember what God had done and to learn lessons of faith from it.

**Preparation for Coming Difficulties** – At the end of chapter six, Moses was at a low point and his own people were questioning him because they were forced to work under very harsh circumstances. As the genealogy helped us to understand, the problem was not with the person who was in leadership or on God’s calling on his life, but on the expectation that what would happen when he obeyed was that everything would be smooth. Moses and Aaron needed to experience this difficulty as preparation for their upcoming encounters with Pharaoh as the plagues begin to occur.

**The Childbirth Metaphor Continues** – We have seen how God was a midwife, delivering His people. We saw that God provided Shiphrah and Puah as *literal* midwives in the opening scenes of Exodus. And so we now come to nine “labor pains” in the first nine plagues and the final great push of the tenth plague. And just as Shiphrah and Puah went together to meet with Pharaoh, so Moses and Aaron go “two by two” as God’s *spiritual* midwives to confront the latest Pharaoh and deliver Israel into freedom. Nine plagues: labor pains have begun in Mizraim in the “narrow place,” and Israel will eventually enter a broad land that is flowing with milk and honey.

**An Inverse Relationship** – There is a significant connection between the account of the plagues in Exodus and the creation account in Genesis, i.e. there is an inverse relationship between the two. Whereas in Genesis everything went from chaos to order, the plagues in Egypt took everything from order to chaos. This is a de-creation story.

**Why Ten Plagues?** – Why did God send these plagues upon the Egyptians? He had a very definite purpose in mind: “the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord (Ex. 7:5).” **The goal of the plagues is that Egypt would know that Yahweh is Lord.** God could have delivered Israel any way He chose, so why this way? Why these nine plagues, followed by a tenth? Why not just “one and done”? [Note the significance of what happened when Moses’ staff was turned into a snake. Pharaoh’s magicians were able to duplicate what Aaron did—but their staff-snakes were all eaten by Aaron’s. In other words, God showed that *His* authority triumphed over Pharaoh’s. But we also see that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. Moses reiterated that fact in each of the first nine plagues.] To answer that question, we need to understand several things:

* First of all, we need to remember that Pharaoh was worshiped as a god, but not just any god: he was *Ra’s representative*. Ra was the sun-god and the head of the Egyptian pantheon.
* Secondly, we need to know that Egypt was an agrarian society, i.e. their entire economy revolved around agriculture. All the gods in their pantheon had something to do with the crop cycle. So

when God sent the ten plagues, each one of them was a systematic deconstruction, a toppling of the idols of Egypt.

**The First Plague: Turning Water into Blood** – The Egyptians considered the Nile River to be the source of life, and they believed it was the bloodstream of one of their primary deities, Osiris. When Moses confronted Pharaoh at the beginning of the account of the first plague, he met with Pharaoh *at the exact* *spot that should have been his place of death* 80 years earlier. He looked Pharaoh in the eye and said, “Thus says the Lord,” standing on the bank of the Egyptians’ river of life that had been for the children of Israel a river of death. Aaron struck the river and its water turned to blood, which caused the fish to die and the water to stink. The magicians were able to duplicate this event, but in so doing, they just added to everyone’s misery in Egypt. But it fed Pharaoh’s skepticism, he hardened his heart, and he turned away in rejection to go back inside his palace. As far as the Egyptians were concerned, Osiris’ bloodstream was bleeding out all over Egypt. Moses was making a statement that the Nile River ran red with the blood of Hebrew babies. He is saying, “This is *not* a river of life. You have used it as an instrument of death, and now you will see it.” So God demonstrates His authority over the Nile and over the god of the Nile, and He speaks truth about Pharaoh and about Pharaoh’s motives.

**Asking the Right Question** – When we read the creation account in Genesis and this account of the plagues in Exodus, we may be tempted to ask, “But *how* did all this happen?” The text never answers that because God is more concerned with two other very important questions:  *“Who* did this? And *why* did He do it?” In both instances the answer to who did it is Yahweh. And in the case of the plagues, He brought them so that Egypt would know that He is the Lord.

**The Second Plague: Frogs** – This time God causes frogs to come up out of the water all over Egypt. Once again the magicians duplicate the miracle, which merely adds to everyone’s misery again. Frogs were in reference to Hecate, the fertility goddess who protected fetal development. There was a law in Egypt that a person could be put to death for killing a frog…and now there were frogs *everywhere*! You were trying not to step on them. The frogs got into every nook and cranny—which is typical of idolatry in general. Idolatry has a way of starting out cute and manageable, but then spreading into every nook and cranny in our homes and our lives.

**Moses, a Person of His Word** – When Pharaoh asked Moses to plead with Yahweh to remove the frogs, Moses was faithful to do so. He will demonstrate over and over again that he is a man of integrity who keeps his word. This will have a growing impact on those who follow Pharaoh. In this instance, he cries out to the Lord to remove the frogs, and the Lord responds by causing the frogs to die, so that, in effect, Hecate is in stinking heaps all over Egypt. So who is God? Yahweh is God.

*to be continued next week*