**Session 11: Week 6b**

**Start at 22:00**

***God of Deliverance***

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

**24-25 October 2022**

**Third Plague: Gnats** – Geb is the Egyptian god of the earth. When Yahweh turned the dust into gnats, He was showing that Geb was no god at all. The magicians tried to replicate this miracle, and when they failed, they said in fear, “This is the finger of God.” Note that these men were not parlor trick magicians, they were learned men, members of Pharaoh’s court. This is the first sign of doubt among those who follow Pharaoh.

**Fourth Plague: Flies** – From this plague on, the land of Goshen—where the Israelites lived—is spared from the plagues. God is doing His work of separating the clean from the unclean. This plague is directed at Khepri, the Egyptian god of creation and birth. We also see Pharaoh beginning to bargain with Moses, and yet continuing to harden his heart. He is not moving toward repentance; he just doesn’t like the consequences of disobedience to Yahweh’s demands.

**Fifth Plague: Death of Livestock** – There were at least four gods in the Egyptian pantheon that were represented by a bull, so this plague would have reflected badly on all of them. Saying that all the livestock died is a hyperbolic statement, meant to indicate that the affliction on the Egyptian livestock was very widespread. This was a commonly used literary device of the day.

**Sixth Plague: Boils** – This plague was sent against the goddess Isis, who was the goddess of medicine. This plague also ends the second cycle of three plagues. As the cycles progress, the plagues get more and more intense, as well as more and more personal. The people could perhaps distance themselves from the frogs, flies and gnats, but now the plagues are causing physical harm and pain.

**Seventh Plague: Hail** – The third cycle of plagues begins with a proclamation from Yahweh that He could easily have killed all the Egyptians at any time He chose, but He has given them opportunity after opportunity to acknowledge Him for who He is. He gives them a specific warning that hail will come the following day, and it will be lethal for any person or animal left unsheltered. [A plague of hail was directed against Nut, the sky god.] Some of Pharaoh’s servants have begun to be swayed by the message of Yahweh, and they take steps to protect their slaves and livestock. Others ignored the warning and suffered the loss of their people and their livestock in addition to their two early crops, which the hail completely obliterated.

**Eighth Plague: Locusts** – This plague was a direct slap in the face to Serapia, the god who was supposed to protect them from locusts. This time it is Moses who turns on his heel and leaves after delivering the warning from Yahweh, instead of Pharaoh. The tension between the two men is escalating. Pharaoh’s servants are becoming increasingly fearful, too. They realize that they are facing financial ruin and a famine as a result of all these plagues. They cry out to Pharaoh, “Don’t you yet realize that Egypt is *ruined*?” Yahweh is bringing Egypt and its pantheon of gods and goddesses to its knees.

**Nineth Plague: Darkness** – The last plague in this cycle of three shows Yahweh’s power and authority over the chief god in the entire Egyptian pantheon, Ra the sun god—and his personal representative, Pharaoh. If the cosmos is well-ordered, then Pharaoh is doing his job well. But if the cosmos is sinking into chaos, then Pharaoh is called into question. The darkness sent by Yahweh is described as so intense it could be *felt:* this is a crushing, crushing darkness. It implies that lawlessness and anarchy are not far behind. The Egyptians believed that Ra battled the serpent of darkness every night, and the sun rising in the morning signaled his victory over the serpent. But when the sun failed to rise for three days, they concluded that Ra had been defeated. So there is darkness in the “narrow place”—but light will be coming.

**The De-Creation** – As we mentioned last week, the account of the plagues is a de-creation story. It is the opposite of what we found in the creation account in Genesis. As the creation account progressed, we saw the *ordering* of the waters and the land and the sky, but in Exodus we see the *disordering* of the waters and the sky and the land. The opening statement of the creation account was, “Let there be *light*,” but the ninth plague brought deep *darkness* to the land of Egypt. The creation account begins with the Spirit of God hovering, ready to give *life*. But in the tenth and final plague, the Spirit will once again hover, but this time to bring *death*. This is a chilling illustration of what it means to have your idols toppled.

**Tearing Down Idols** – Time and again the Old Testament scriptures warn the children of God, “Do not fall back into idolatry.” God will disorder anything we have ordered to bring glory to ourselves. Every single time. What He did at Babel He will do with you. What He is doing with Pharaoh, He will do with you—but it will be an act of mercy to you. If it’s money…if it’s relationships…if it’s possessions…if it’s intellect…if it’s appearance…if it's your quiet patterns of addictions—whatever it is that gives you that sense of order that you are still the ruler of your pantheon, God will tear it down.

**Enduring Affliction with Patience** – Recall that the first three plagues had an impact on the children of God as well as on Egypt. Certainly these plagues were a judgment on the Egyptian pantheon, and they implicated Pharaoh as guilty. But we need to understand that these plagues were first and foremost an offer of mercy. They were an opportunity to repent. God’s patience in sending one after another after another, to all levels of Egyptian society, shows that He is willing for them to repent. God’s chosen people endure suffering alongside those who are being brought to repentance. You probably know someone who is in rebellion against God, and there is collateral damage to you because of their destructive behaviors. We can feel so frustrated and want to break relationship or not be around them or reprimand them at every turn, not letting God’s work happen in God’s time. We must learn to be patient in affliction. Why? Because for the believer, affliction cannot take away our salvation. And it just might result in someone else’s. Can we bear with affliction, knowing that our steadfastness might be the means by which that affliction brings someone else to repentance?