

# Exodus 11: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] Exodus chapter 11 So Moses said, Dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, Get out, you and all the people who follow you. And after that I will go out.

And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. Then the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

The short chapter of Exodus 11 is an interlude between the nine plagues of the first three cycles of plagues, and then the great judgment of the final plague. At this point the three cycles have been completed, and we're in that period of waiting for the final hammer blow to fall, the decisive plague to end them all.

This is about April time. The plagues began in August, so there's been a few months of just one blow after another upon the nation of Egypt. The word for plague used in verse 1 here isn't found elsewhere in the plague narrative, but it's used in reference to leprosy in Leviticus 13.

[ 2 : 18 ] This might suggest that what's in view is some sort of disease. Very often we're trying to think of some purely supernatural explanation for these things, and fail to see God's demonstration of his power over all things in his creation.

The time for warning and repentance has now passed, and we're moving towards the closing of the curtain. Moses is instructed to address the people of Israel rather than Pharaoh at this point.

Although he does speak to Pharaoh, Pharaoh no longer seems to be a key player.

The focus in this section is upon relations between Israelites and Egyptians. The Egyptians and the Egyptian officials honour and fear Moses over Pharaoh, and indeed Moses says that it will be the Egyptian officials that ask them to leave the land, because they are the ones that see the severity of the situation.

The Egyptians are favourably inclined towards the Israelites, so the Israelites can ask for gold and silver jewellery, and they're given it. This was foretold in Exodus 3, 21-22.

And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and when you go, you shall not go empty. But each woman shall ask of her neighbour, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewellery, and for clothing.

[ 3 : 28 ] You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters, so you shall plunder the Egyptians. We see this again in Genesis chapter 15 verse 14, where God says to Abraham that they'll go out of the land of their captivity with great treasures.

You can also think of that theme of plundering in the book of Genesis. As Abraham leaves Egypt with many great gifts that he's been given, and Jacob leaves the house of Laban with great riches that he's gained during his time there.

The way that the plague is described is in terms of a cry and silence. And it's also described in the context of themes of mastery, that Moses will be treated as the one who's greater than Pharaoh, that people will bow to him.

There seems to be an inversion of themes of slavery here, that Pharaoh has his house of slaves, but now the slaves are being taken from him too.

They're bowing to Moses, they're recognising his authority, and the authority of Moses' God, over the stubborn Pharaoh that rules over them. You can also think in this context of the cry of Israel that went up to the Lord, and now it will be the cry of the Egyptians that rises up, and the Israelites will be silent.

[ 4 : 45 ] We might also think of the gold and silver in terms of sale for slavery. Joseph was sold into Egypt, and now they leave Egypt with treasures.

There seems to be some sort of reversal of the means by which they came down there. They were sent down there for the sale of money, and now they leave with great sums of money.

Moses goes to Pharaoh with the message about the destruction of the firstborn, and we might ask why. God does not seem to have sent him, and at their last encounter, Pharaoh had threatened him if he returned.

Moses is furious when he leaves Pharaoh as well. Why? The people of Egypt respect Moses, and they honour him. And I think they also recognise that Moses is, to some extent, still one of them.

Moses is someone who was raised as an Egyptian, someone who was raised by an Egyptian that saw the suffering of the Israelites and took it seriously. And if his Egyptian adoptive mother cared about his cries when he was a child, Moses cares about the cries of the infants of the Egyptians.

[ 5 : 51 ] He sees the pointlessness of the tragedy that Pharaoh is bringing upon his people by his stubbornness. It's needless, but yet the tragedy will be so great.

Pharaoh stands alone at this point, and the people honour Moses, but Pharaoh is going to bring them into destruction. The chapter concludes by summing up the entire plague narrative to that point.

Moses and Aaron showed all these signs, but Pharaoh was ultimately unresponsive. And God strengthened Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh used his strength of heart to resist God all the more.

A question to consider. When we look at the plagues, we can often think in terms of the dichotomy between natural and supernatural. How might we better understand the way that God is evidencing his power within these great events of judgment?

How might it change the way that we think about the categories of natural and supernatural and give us a fuller understanding of God's relationship with his creation?

[ 6 : 50 ] How many