

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 8:1-15

To understand more about the second plague, the frogs.

Read the Text:

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. 3 The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants."'" 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!"' 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. 8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." 10 And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. 11 The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile." 12 So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. 13 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. 14 And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said." (Exodus 8:1-15, ESV)

Study the Text:

Plague #2: Frogs

Chapter 8 begins with the instructions for Moses and Aaron to perform a second plague over Egypt. Again, the message to "let my people go" is reiterated, and the (correct) assumption that Pharaoh will not relent is also made. Moses and Aaron are to do, yet again, exactly what the LORD instructs them to do. Below is a breakdown of some of the key words and concepts in this passage.

FROGS

Frogs seem like a strange creature to conjure as a "plague" but there are several reasons why the frog is likely chosen. For one, as amphibians, they are "slimy, unsanitary, and unpleasant to the touch."¹ The thought of finding them in your bed or under your feet would have been gross. The frogs would not simply come out of the Nile, but would be in every place imaginable. The kingdom would literally be overrun by the creatures. Of course, frogs are also eventually labeled as "unclean" in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:10), so as this story was passed on from generation to generation, the horror was only magnified to the Torah-observant Jewish audiences.

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 of The New American Commentary, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 206.

SWARM

If Pharaoh refuses to let the Hebrew people go that they may serve the LORD, the LORD says that “the Nile shall swarm with frogs” (Ex. 8:2). There is interesting wordplay here with the word “swarm,” as it harkens back to the increase in the Hebrew people in Egypt in Exodus chapter 1. Exodus 1:7 says, “But the people of Israel were fruitful and *increased greatly*,” or literally, “*swarmed*.” In the same way that the swarm of Hebrew people became a plague on the people of Egypt in Exodus chapter 1, now they will be plagued again by a swarm of frogs.

AN ASSUMPTION

One notable detail that is missing is the response of Pharaoh to Moses. In verse 1, the LORD tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him, “If you refuse to let them go, hold, I will plague all your country with frogs.” Thus, there is a choice laid before Pharaoh. He can either let the people go and be spared of the plague of frogs, or remain stubborn and suffer the consequences. However, between verses 5 and 6, there is no recorded dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh wherein we learn what Pharaoh will choose! Old Testament scholar Desmond Alexander writes, “The omission has a rhetorical function, as if the narrator were saying, ‘I won’t even bother reporting the actual delivery of the message and Pharaoh’s response. You know he didn’t listen.’”² The LORD has already told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh will not listen to anything they have to say because He will harden his heart, so this omission is reasonable (Ex. 4:21).

ANOTHER REPLICA

Again, the Egyptian magicians are able to conjure frogs on their own, and again, we are not told to what extent this “miracle” is valid or fraudulent. It stands to reason, as previously discussed, that because the arcane arts of sorcery and necromancy were condemned, they were likely real. That the magicians could replicate this, however, is not as impressive as it might first seem. Like the blood in the water, they may be able to seemingly match wits, but they are unable to undo the plagues. They leave the land no better, but in fact worse than before they performed their tricks. Nevertheless, Pharaoh is unmoved. We need not think that the miracles of the magicians were why Pharaoh remained relentless in His brutality towards the Hebrew people; he cries “uncle” in the next verse.

“UNCLE!”

This plague was enough to bring Pharaoh to the point of asking for mercy. He calls Moses and Aaron to himself and says, “Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD” (Ex. 8:8). This is the first sign of Pharaoh’s wavering heart, not because he truly desires to be merciful to the people of God, but because he cannot stand the effects of the plague of frogs on his land and his people. Moreover, he is affected by this one. While the blood of the Nile likely didn’t personally impact him too badly (he could have had his servants go and find water outside of Egypt for himself and his house), the emphasis on the second-person singular pronouns in this plague (“you”/“your”) indicates that Pharaoh was included personally in this one. He was tired and defeated and wanted it to end. Moses and Aaron do as Pharaoh asks, and the result is not the supernatural vanishing of frogs, but simply that they die out, leaving the land putrid (Ex. 8:14). This results in Pharaoh agreeing to let the Hebrew people go to “sacrifice to the LORD” (Ex. 8:8).

RESPITE

The cries for mercy lasted only temporarily. Once “Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.” A temporary relief was enough time for Pharaoh to think better of the situation and harden his heart yet again, just as the LORD said.

² T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 177.

A Revelation Connection

The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John, or more commonly *The Book of Revelation*, borrows from a lot of books of the Old Testament to build its end time vision, but perhaps no more from Exodus. Exodus provides the primary Old Testament backdrop from which Revelation builds its theological framework. One example of this is the second plague. In Exodus 8:1-15, God warns Pharaoh through Moses that the land of Egypt will be filled with frogs that will come up from the Nile and into every nook and cranny of every Egyptian home. Similarly, the Revelation describes the sixth angel who pours out his bowl “on the great river Euphrates” which dries up its water (Rev. 16:12). There is then a succession of an unholy Trinity beginning with the dragon, then the beast, and then the false prophet, “three unclean spirits like frogs.” Being that frogs were unclean, they make a fine illustration to the similar unclean nature of demonic spirits. This, coupled with the fact that frogs are mentioned as coming out of a river in Exodus and the mentioning of the Rivers Nile and Euphrates respectively, and in light of the fact that the plagues of Revelation mimic in more than one way the plagues of Exodus, it is clear that John has Exodus in mind in Revelation 16.

What About Now?

One big takeaway from this passage is the fact that repentance that is derived out of temporary relief is usually not real repentance. Pharaoh begs Moses and Aaron to plead with God to take the frogs away, and after experiencing a brief reprieve from the plague, he again hardens his heart. His desire to release them is not for the right reasons, but selfish reasons, and once that selfish reason is eliminated, he is once again determined to keep them as slaves.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 8:1. What did the LORD tell Moses to once again say to Pharaoh?

2. Read Exodus 8:2-4. In the event that Pharaoh says “no,” what would be the consequence? In your own words, describe the second plague.

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 8:5. According to this passage, who actually stretched out the staff to perform the plague?

2. Read Exodus 8:6-7. What did Aaron do? What was the result? How did the magicians respond?

Day Three

3. Read Exodus 8:8-9. What did Pharaoh ask of Moses and Aaron? How did Moses and Aaron respond?

4. Read Exodus 8:10-11. When did Pharaoh ask for them to go to the LORD and plead for the plague to be ended? Where would the frogs only remain?

Day Four

1. Read Exodus 8:12-14. What was the result of Moses' pleading with God? What happened to all the frogs? What condition was the land in after the frogs died out?

2. Read Exodus 8:15. What caused Pharaoh to change his mind and harden his heart?

Discuss the Text!

Week 16 Discussion: Real Repentance

Pharaoh is a great example of how temporary relief rarely leads to actual repentance. It is similar to a drunk person bowing down to the porcelain god (or, *vomiting at a toilet*, for the pure among you), who prays to God: "If you will just keep me from being sick, I won't ever touch another drink again," only to be back on the bottle by that evening after a brief reprieve from the puking. Temporary respite has a way of revealing whether repentance is real or not. Talk as a group about what motivates repentance, and the difference between genuine and temporary repentance.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever been caught in sin? How did you respond? Did it change you for good, or was it only temporary?
2. What's the difference between repentance and regret?
3. Why is repenting for respite not a good idea?
4. Is repentance a once and for all or an every day practice?
5. Can repentance happen in stages? Why or why not?
6. Where in your church can you learn how to repent and confess your sin?

Takeaways:

1. The second plague includes a swarm of frogs from the Nile that make their way into every area of the kingdom of Egypt.
2. Pharaoh asks Moses and Aaron to plead with the LORD to remove the frogs, and He does.
3. Pharaoh's heart is hardened again after the temporary relief from the plague, just as the LORD said.