

February 24

Scriptures: Read Exodus 7 & 8

Key Verse: “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” (Exodus 7:5)

Overview

The Lord continued speaking with Moses in answering his complaints. The important thing is that the Lord told him the results of His miraculous signs and wonders in great judgments upon Egypt (because of their cruel slavery to the children of Israel and for killing the baby boys). Pharaoh’s heart would continue to be hardened, but in the end the Egyptians would know that the Lord is God and He would bring out His host of people. With this encouragement, new boldness, and with the authority of God, Moses, at the age of 80 and Aaron at 83, went before Pharaoh in obedience to the Lord’s command. Following the Lord’s instructions to Moses, Aaron, when asked for a sign, threw down his rod which became a serpent. It is amazing that Pharaoh’s magicians did the same, and they also could copy the first two plagues which were most likely “lying wonders” empowered by Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9). However, the supremacy of God and the limitation of their power was seen when Aaron’s serpent swallowed up theirs and in the fact that they were helpless to undo the plagues which God had brought upon the land. Whatever God does, Satan cannot undo.

Pharaoh still strengthened his will (hardened his heart) against God and was unyielding to let the people go. There are three different Hebrew words used to describe the condition of Pharaoh’s heart: “to make strong” (7:13, 22; 8:19); “to make heavy, slow to move” (7:14; 8:15, 32); and “to harden” (7:13). The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by God was done because Pharaoh had already, on his own, hardened his heart against God. God’s purpose was to make Pharaoh repent, but when someone sets himself against God, even His mercies result in further hardening. Because of Pharaoh’s proud, rebellious heart, God brought ten plagues on Egypt within a relatively short period of time, and the final one resulted in the Exodus (meaning “going out”) of Israel. The plagues became progressively more severe and were directed against the gods of Egypt (12:12) to show that the God of the Hebrews is the One true God. The Nile was worshipped as a god and the frog was regarded as holy – a symbol of fertility and bounty. The plagues also served to show the Hebrews there were to be no other gods before Him.

After Moses warned Pharaoh, he had Aaron stretch out his rod and literally all the water of the Nile, and even water in jars, turned to actual blood. God was merciful, so this first plague lasted for only seven days. The second plague (frogs) was supernatural because they were tremendously increased. By asking Moses to intercede and make the frogs leave, Pharaoh confessed the existence and power of their God, but his heart remained hardened towards Him. God did according to Moses’ request and, at a set time, the frogs miraculously died. But Pharaoh was not an honorable person and again he refused to let them go. The third plague, lice (better translated as a stinging gnat), came without warning and Pharaoh’s magicians could not copy it. They confessed it was an act of God and may have intended their comment as a warning that Pharaoh should let the Hebrews go. Still Pharaoh strengthened his will against God.

In the fourth plague, God made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptians, who prides themselves on cleanliness, felt their land had been “corrupted” or ruined because of the flies. These were probably a biting kind of fly that may cause diseases. Pharaoh told them they could go and sacrifice but they were to remain in his land. This compromise was not acceptable. God demands total obedience. Moses wisely said that if they sacrificed “the abomination” (8:26), the Egyptians might kill them, for they considered some animals to be holy, such as the calf, and slaughtering them was forbidden. Then Pharaoh said they could go to the wilderness but not very far. Halfway obedience is not obedience at all. This is like the sly tricks of Satan, who tries to keep those following God still close to the bad influences of the world. To truly enjoy the redemption of the Lord, the redeemed people must be separate from the evil of the world (2 Cor. 6:17).

Prayer

Mighty God, soften our hearts so that we may be sensitive, knowing and doing Your will always.