

PASS ME NOT, O LORD!

(Scripture Exodus 11:1-10)

Happy New Year, everyone! What a great start we had! We started off with a great wedding celebration. May we continue this year with that same joy of Spirit!

I would like to start with Passover subject in detail this year, and then connect it with the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Before we talk about Passover, I would like to address couple of valid questions that were raised last month. They are not easy ones. I may have to bring quite a few verses to give a clear answer. So bear with me.

The first question is:

I. Plagues happening only for the Egyptians or for the Israelites also? There are 2 or 3 plagues seem to be happening for both. Let us go through carefully one by one to see if they both are affected by the plagues at the same time. Before we can begin this study, we must pay close attention to Exodus 10:1 and 2

Exodus 10:1, 2.

*1Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them,
2and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."*

The signs were meant for Egyptians only, and how God made a mockery of the Egyptians, and the miracles were among them only. God wanted them to tell these stories to children, and their grandchildren!

Nile turning into blood. I would say Yes!!

God commanded to affect the Egyptians' water resources only. It was a laser surgical attack on Egyptians water resources! Israelites lived in Goshen area, east of Nile region.

Exodus 7:19

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"

Exodus 7:24.

24 So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile.

25 Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

If Israelites had gone 7 days like this, Moses would have heard earful!

Frogs? Did it affect Egyptians only? I would say, Yes. Frogs went into Egyptians houses only.

Exodus 8:11

11“The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.

Gnats plague is the only plague that is not clear. But, the next plague (swarms of flies) clearly suggests that there was a clear separation. The previous plague, the frog plague also suggests that. So why can't it be for the gnats?

Swarms of Flies. Yes.

Exodus 8:22.

22“But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.

23“I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.””

Cattle. Yes.

Exodus 9:4

4“But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.””

Boil - Yes.

Exodus 9:10, 11

10So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.

11The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.

Hail - Yes

*Exodus 9:26. 26*Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail.

Locusts. Yes. Before this plague started, this is what the Lord said!

Exodus 10:1, 2.

1Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them,

2and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.”

Then the locust plague started.

Darkness. Yes.

Exodus 10:23

23They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Passover. Yes

Exodus 11:6, 7

6Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again.

7But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

There will be a distinction between God's people and the wicked. While the wicked are being punished, the righteous will be safe in the arms of Jesus.

This is a very good exercise for all of us and it is very relevant for us to understand end time theology. God can easily preserve His people, and punish the wicked at the same time simultaneously. Jesus will return one last time, not two more times as the pre tribulation suggests. There is no need to come especially for the righteous, and take them somewhere secretly for 3 1/2 years or 7 years, (depending upon your mid tribulation or post tribulation theology) and in the meantime make the wicked go through the great tribulation, and then the saints to return with Christ? This is not Scriptural, but great American folk tale that started out in 18th century.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is returning just one last time. He can easily gather us around and catch us in the air, and hold us on His right palm, which can be called rapture, and beat the wicked with His left hand and bring all kinds of tribulations. It is going to be a horrible day for the wicked. That is why it is called the "Day of the Lord!" This tribulation can be one day, or it can be 3 1/2 years, or it can be 7 years or even more. For God, one day equals one thousand years, or one thousand years may look like one day.

God can easily separate the goats and the sheep and deal with them separately at the same time. These ten plagues are nothing but a shadow of things to come in the form of great tribulation. Beware of the false theology that says that Jesus will come two more times. Even prominent TV preachers have fallen for it. This is a modern day fiction, promoted to avoid the great tribulation. But God can protect His people, while He punishes the wicked at the same time. These ten plagues are living testimonies of God separating the wicked and the righteous.

Now let me address the second question. This one is much harder than the first one!

II. God hardening the heart of Pharaoh.

If God hardens Pharaoh's heart, then what about Pharaoh's free will? Why should he be punished for his hardened heart? How is it that sometimes, Pharaoh hardens the heart Himself, and other times, the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart? This seems to be purely writer's opinion?

Paul tried to give some answer in Romans 9 but it does not explain completely. He said, who are you to question God's sovereignty are! He is the potter and we are his clay, and He can do as He pleases! So we must just shut up! Don't question God's doing in our life! That is a valid answer, but not a good answer.

We could intellectually argue and try to bring some answer. Instead, let us try to see this hardening in other Scriptural passages! We will see soon the Israelites also hardening their hearts in the Wilderness! This hardening process seems to happen to people who have seen so many miracles in their life, and yet, they are not convinced that God is able!

Psalms 95:7 -10.

7For He is our God,

And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice,

8Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,

*As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
9“When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work.
10“For forty years I loathed that génération,
And said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways.*

Here we can see that people of Israel saw so many miracles. Yet they did not believe God, trust Him, and follow Him! When we reject God’s Word, His ways, and we refuse to follow, our heart becomes hardened again.

Let us hear Jesus also using it in the same context. Even the disciples’ hearts were hardened at times.

Mark 6:51, 52.

51Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. Lack of understanding of who God is brings this hardness.

Also, when Jesus said, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, the disciples thought that Jesus was talking about bread that they forgot to bring! He scolded them that their heart was hardened. Having eyes, seeing not. Having ears, hear Him not! When we become dull of hearing or understanding the Word of God, our heart starts becoming hardened!

When we do not heed to the Word of God, our heart hardens! When the seed falls on the pathway (casual attention), God allows the devil to snatch that Word out of us. In other words, God hardens our heart by allowing the devil to snatch any good Word from the Lord.

God hardens by allowing our heart dull of hearing. God hardens our heart by not quickening our heart through the Holy Spirit.

John 12:37-40.

37But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. 38This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?”

39For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

40“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.”

Hebrews 3:12-15.

12Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

13But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

15while it is said,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”

Not believing in God's miracles, rejecting God's Word leads to hardening process. Pharaoh could have believed through the first miracle. But he equated his magicians with God's prophets, and rejected them as mere humans. God could have quickened Pharaoh's heart but He chose not to, and therefore Pharaoh's heart remained hardened! In other words, God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

It could very well be the writer's opinion also in this context. Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun, but there was. (Virgin birth, God becoming flesh! New covenant). That was Solomon's conclusion. Moses wrote about bill of divorce out of hardness of Israelites heart. Not God wrote it. Is it Paul or God said, women must keep silent in the assembly? Is it Paul or God said, it is better not to get married? We must be extremely cautious about building theological blocks over controversial passages.

Now let us look at the Passover little bit and stop.

III. Beginning of Passover!

Exodus 11:1-3.

1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.

2 "Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."

3 The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

God promised one more terrible plague. It would be so horrible, the Egyptians beg them to get out, and they will virtually chase them out! At that time if the Israelites ask gold or silver from their neighbor they will get it. Now the Skaves, Israelites found favor in the sight of Egyptians! Moses was also greatly esteemed in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and the Egyptians! If God be for us, who can be against us?

In Exodus 11:4-8 we are told about Lord's Passover! All these nine plagues were detrimental to their life, but they could save their life. But the tenth one brought the stench of death! From the first born cattle to Pharaoh's first born! We will come across them next week!

Exodus 11:4-8.

4 Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, 5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

6 'Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again.

7 'But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.' 8 "All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go 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.

Exodus 11:9, 10.

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

10 *Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.*