

# **Exodus 11 – The Plague on the Firstborn**

## **Charlie Boyle – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

### **Moses – highly regarded, highly favoured yet hot with anger**

#### **Context**

Here is the final catastrophe that will bring about total capitulation. In a week that has seen dramatic events unfold in both our national politics and the global world. In a week that saw world stock markets tumbling again, the FTSE going down again over 12%, 33% since the outbreak began in earnest, travel bans and big give away budgets and government intervention in the markets.

Will this lead us to finally believing we are not in control but God is? Now in most cultures, firstborn sons are considered special yet at this time and Egypt they were considered sacred. I will never forget the first time my first son lay on my chest, and someone said to me, do you understand now how much God loves you. In the same way that we love our children, God loves us, unconditionally, even if we don't always behave the way He would like. We need to remember that going back to the beginning of Moses, when I preached my first sermon on it some weeks ago Pharaoh tried to kill all the Jewish male babies and his officers had brutally mistreated the Jewish slaves. So in slaying the firstborn, the Lord was simply paying Pharaoh back with his own currency. It is the ultimate in revenge. It is payback time.

I don't know how you are viewing world events but you could be forgiven for thinking that at this time of continued national and global calamity about coronavirus that we are in the end times? The times when there will be mass destabilisation, a foretaste of God's reign, and the return of Jesus. Remember as I said last week this year alone we have had terrible fires in Australia, flooding, locusts swarming and now a worldwide pandemic.

One way of looking at our current circumstances is to think, as indeed I have mentioned in the past, when it comes to things like climate change and the prophetic voice of Greta Thunberg.

Have we listened? Have we changed our ways at all?

Have we changed our behaviour?

Well the arrival of coronavirus certainly has, shaken us and brought about a massive disruption in our daily lives, travel arrangements and may well finally wake us up to the reality of what is going on in the world.

The number of aeroplanes flying around Heathrow and the world has finally dropped dramatically, you only have to look in the skies or on a Planefinder app.

Today I want to look at three aspects characteristics of our prophet Moses, highlighted from our passage today.

Firstly he was highly regarded, and that there is a change of heart in the Egyptians, secondly he and the Israelites were highly favoured and finally he lost his patience, he got cross, he was hot-tempered.

## 1. Highly regarded

<sup>3</sup>(The LORD made the Egyptians favourably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)

Compensation is a fundamental law of life. God isn't unjust in permitting this law to operate in the world.

As people examine insurance policies, whether it be about recent floods, changes to travel plans, we all look to be repaid when things go wrong. In the book of Exodus we see that our God is a just God.

Pharaoh drowned Jewish babies, attempting to stop the overrunning of the Israelites in Egypt. Remember Moses was left as a baby in the Nile. So we will read later that God drowned Pharaoh's army when it went through the Red sea, chasing after the newly released Israelites as they flee Egypt. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap as it says in Galatians 6.

But here we have a moment of divine justice. The people of Egypt's hearts are changed, as the Lord made them favourably disposed towards the Israelites. Moses is asked to go and tell the people of Israel for the Egyptians to bless them with silver and gold. You may not know but these actions go back to a promise made to Abraham back in Genesis 15 v.14, that his people would leave the land of servitude with great possessions. This is an act of God, which caused the Egyptians to pity their slaves and recognise they had been ill-treated. Moses again is used as the instrument, being highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and the people, it is through him and his example that the Egyptians decide to give back the money to the Israelites, their underpaid slaves.

So Moses is highly regarded, secondly he and his people are

## 2. Highly favoured

<sup>5</sup>Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

Notice there is no distinction between the rich and poor, the son of the King or the slave

<sup>6</sup>There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. <sup>7</sup>But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

Once again we see that people of Israel are favoured, they are the chosen race, benefiting from the Lord's divine favour.

I don't know about you but certainly this brings up issues of suffering. If our God is God of love, why does he allow suffering?

It is of course a big issue that we don't have time to go into today.

But it raises in each one of us the question of why God allows suffering. All I can say from experience is that suffering is used by God to draw us to Christ.

Remember God whispers in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. We are not alone in our pain, when we suffer, he suffers with us.

As Rev'd David Watson the famous Christian author and evangelist, wrote shortly before his death:

*There is no doubt that millions of Christians all down the centuries have become more Christ-like through suffering. In fact those who have experienced more of the love of God than anyone I have ever met have also endured more suffering.*

*When you crush lavender, you will find it is full of fragrance, when you squeeze an orange, you extract its sweet juice.*

*In the same way it is often through pains and hurts that we develop the fragrance and sweetness of Jesus in our lives.*

Yet he seems to favour some people over others. Here is our passage today that is clear again that he favoured Moses and the people of Israel.

But for me one of the key things to remember particularly in the light of current events is does God reign in your life today?

So Moses we see that he is **highly regarded** and Moses and his people were **highly favoured** but also he was **hot tempered**, as the Bible puts it hot with anger, he lost it! He was impatient.

### 3. Hot with anger

After Moses says to Pharaoh

<sup>8</sup>All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, 'Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave." " Then Moses, **hot with anger**, left Pharaoh.

Clearly he got frustrated with Pharaoh's behaviour. Pharaoh has not changed his behaviour in any way, in spite of the plagues and petitions from Moses and the power shown by the God of the Israelites.

We all get angry sometimes but as it says in Proverbs only a fool allows anger to move in and take up residence.

*One day an eagle swooped down and picked up a weasel. As the big bird flew away, its wings suddenly went limp and it dropped down to the ground like a brick. With one tiny blow the small weasel struck the eagle heart and killed it. Bitterness and anger will do the same to you!*

Throughout the Exodus story, there are two ways of understanding events, not unlike the situation we find ourselves in today. There are two wills being worked out in the story – God's and Pharaoh's. Pharaoh is stiffening his resolves not to let go of his Israelites labour force. At the same time GOD is stiffening the resolve of Pharaoh, encouraging him not to let go. Yet in a wonderfully short sentence we see Moses' frustration. **Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.** We are not told the details of what led to his frustration but after nine plagues and Pharaoh not listening and not being moved by God's power, it is perhaps understandable that Moses got a bit

cross. It may be that Moses, like us, was frustrated with the lack of progress he had achieved. He thought he had failed, perhaps he thought God had failed and he had not been able to bring about the release of God's people, the slaves were still slaves.

I don't know if when hearing about this final plague that brings disaster and devastation you think of any links with the New Testament but for me it reminds me of the parable Jesus told in the Matthew 21 in the parable of the talents in sending His son. The tenants had seized his servants, they beat one, killed another and last of all he sent his son...they will respect my son he said. But of course in their anger they killed him too.

#### So what does that mean for us today?

Is anger ever justified? Anger can lead to death and is often the main emotion behind murder. But sometimes anger can actually be a useful emotion, it can produce in us energy that we wouldn't otherwise have.

If the anger that we have as a result of the meeting leads us to do something positive, then I guess that's not a bad thing.

So for example I don't know if you have been angry about the deforestation of the Amazonian rainforest but if that anger leads you to give money to a Charity that plants trees like for example the Woodland Trust then something positive has come out of it...or if you are upset about the loneliness in the area, especially for older people, which will be more pronounced in the next few months but it leads to you reaching out to neighbours in needs then that is a positive thing... Christ has no hands and feet but ours...

But if we have it in our hearts all the time we need to let it go and release the situation or person to God.

Blind rage will sour our outlook. It will break your back, not to mention your spirit. The mountain before you is steep enough without carrying that load. Drop it!

You will never be called upon to give more grace than God has already given you.

If you want to set yourself free today ...pray Father, along with me...Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.

As it says in 1 Peter 2 v.20

If you suffer doing good, and you are patient then God is pleased.... Amen.