

Exodus 9 v 1 – 12 Plagues – go to worship, God’s promises and God’s work

Charlie Boyle 8/3/2020

Lord please grant us the stead-fast commitment of Moses, to go and do what he was told, so that we might accomplish the tasks you set for us to glorify your name.

Please grant us the wisdom to understand the messages contained in the powerful movements of natural events. And help each one of us take actions to minimise their harmful effects on the world. May you remember what is from God and forget the rest.

And finally Lord help us to be humble in your presence, recognising your awesome power and that ultimately your will be done.

Guide each one of us to respond to your word through your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

What an appropriate passage this is for each one of us today, at this time of a worldwide panic and plague in the form of **coronavirus**.

I am standing here speaking on this passage, as David Bebo was due to do so but is not very well and thought it best if I spoke in his place. So some of these words are his and some mine. He graciously said that he did not want to spread his germs. He mentioned in 30 years of preaching he has never had to step aside before because of ill health.

A Plague well x2 plagues are covered by our passage today but there are 10 in total, from blood, frogs, hail, locusts, darkness and here we have Livestock and Boils. I don’t know what you think of when you hear the word Plague but we might associate it with the bubonic plague of Black Death of the 14th Century, which killed millions and is obliquely referenced in Shakespeare’s play – Romeo and Juliet. I don’t know if you recall the line from Romeo and Juliet, by **MERCUTIO**, **when ROMEO** tries to break up the fight between **TYBALT** who stabs **MERCUTIO** who then says

I am hurt. A plague o’ both your houses! I am sped....

And of course fights continue every day and there is Battle on right now – as Coronavirus spreads.

As an aside did you know that according to a recent survey in America 38% of citizens would not buy a Corona beer because of concern about Coronavirus....now that might not be true but that’s not good news for the sellers of the Mexican beer brand...!

The fears about the virus have led to political and economic instability, massive stock market falls in the UK of 12%, xenophobia and racism against Chinese people and the spread of misinformation about the virus. Whilst the death toll, at present, is relatively small the news coverage is massive and has sent shock waves around the world.

There is a war and battle going on over the virus but there is also a battle going on in the heavenly realms for the hearts and minds of God’s people, here on earth, as indeed there is in this passage.

Once again Moses is asking Pharaoh to let his people go and demonstrating God’s power with these plagues.

The plagues were designed to reveal the God who sent them but they also teach us some lessons today. In the plague of the blood turning the Nile into something that no longer sustains the economy and welfare of the people, God was showing that he was greater than the God of the Nile. The Egyptians were also dependent on and sustained by the river which they considered to be divine. God also showed in the plague of hail that he was all powerful, as indeed he still is today.

But let us look at the passage in more detail to see how we can apply it to our lives today, you might want to look at the passage in chapter 9 of exodus, on page 66.

In our passage for today there are x3 verses that I think we should ponder at this time.

Firstly – GO to worship

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me."'

Remember the Lord said to Moses ...GO...WHY?

It takes courage to go to confront the ruler of Egypt to tell him something he doesn't want to hear So that they may worship

We are here today, not driven by fear but love, love of the Lord, so we come to worship him, as well as love of each other, sustained by His Spirit and His Word.

I don't know what your deepest or greatest fear is....whether it is fear of losing our mental faculties, our job, family breakdown, loved ones getting ill, our own health getting worse or indeed dying. But by being here today we are certainly demonstrating our belief in our desire to worship God. Remember as it says in 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." As we gather, in just being here, we are witnesses of our faith and the message we proclaim today.

As Paul Simester said the other week, we are to spread the word of God in acts of kindness, humility, service and all our lives are worship but remember it is the Holy Spirit who convicts and converts.

But we have to get the message out.

So in the same way today, as the Lord said to Moses we have to GO.

Thank you for the bravery and solidarity you have shown today in coming together to worship God.

Secondly – our GOD does things, he keeps his promises.

When God promises he will do something he does and we read that is exactly what happens.

²If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, ³the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field—on your horses, donkeys and camels and on your cattle, sheep and goats. ⁴But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.'

The Lord does make a distinction between those that follow him and those that don't. He favours the Israelites because at this time they are the chosen race.

⁵The LORD set a time and said, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land."

⁶And the next day the LORD did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died.

We see that the Lord fulfilled his promise.

God's people the Israelites were spared, their livestock did not experience death.

When God tells you to do something, in my experience I find it is best to do what he says.

The Plagues demonstrate the power of God.

In our world when around us we see:-

- Flooding in our own country
- Terrible fires in Australia only a few months ago

And even a swarm of locusts have recently swarmed into Kenyan by hundreds of millions from Somalia and Ethiopia where such numbers have not been seen in quarter of a century.

Apparently human activity has made an ocean circulation pattern misbehave – triggered by a weird confluence of events that caused the infestation of locusts.

So for those who doubt the power of God to change events in both the time of Moses and today we are reminded of our helplessness in both world economic and weather events.

So we see that when God says Go we should go and he delivered on his promise to demonstrate his power and fulfil his Word to Moses he did certain things and kept his promises but finally we see that God is in control of all things. He hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Thirdly – God's work

¹²But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

It always strikes me as quite odd that he did this. For me this is one of the most puzzling aspects of the story the plagues and at the same time IT IS most interesting and important. It is the moral dilemma that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's hearts and then in consequence of his hard heart visited more plagues on him.

So Exodus tells us things about Pharaoh's heart – firstly that the Lord hardened and also that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and finally his heart became hard. In looking at Pharaoh's heart we must remember that we all have moral choices to make. From the perspective of the Lord as the moral ruler of this world, the point of no return had been reached and the hardness of Pharaoh's heart must now judgementally be imposed on him. Pharaoh had chosen to have a hard heart. At times God imposed that upon him but ultimately it was Pharaoh's responsibility and decision not to let the people go.

So what will that mean for us?

We are reminded that choices are the privilege and the price of being human. Our privilege is that of being responsible human beings, recognising moral values. We are all called to make responsible choices. We are all given the opportunity and obligation to live in the light of foreseeable consequences of our actions. God will guide us by His Holy Spirit if we respond and ask him.

Whether that is about climate change or our own health and hygiene we all have choices to make.

Going back to my original analogy about the battle in Romeo and Juliet between **TYBALT** who stabs **MERCUTIO** that continues today, each day for each one of us. To control ourselves, the way we react to things.

Being Christians means we should have higher moral standards. It is a daily choice, for good or ill, that fashions our characters, and whether in the long or short-term or both – makes us answerable to the judge of all the earth.

We all have a choice to forgive, to wash our hands, to care for the environment, to pray, to turn to him daily.

Last Sunday I must confess that although I was tired I made the right choice I went to encounter and enjoyed contemplative prayer led by Stella as part of the session on contemplative prayer of the prayer course, and we really enjoyed the time of silence and being with the Lord. As an extravert being silent is harder for me but I was blessed with a good night's sleep. God turned up, it was God's work.

So we must try to:-

Turn daily to him

There is a battle on - A spiritual one for our souls

Turn in prayer

Amen.

Pray against the Coronavirus ...

Many people are quite concerned and scared but there is power in the name of Jesus to heal and protect us, so I want to encourage each of us to stand as I pray this prayer, to reach out your hands to both receive the Holy Spirit and pray this prayer of protection over yourself and those whom you love, you might want to lay a hand on your heart and another reaching out to God and His Spirit.

Or put your hand on your neck if you have a sore throat.

In the name of Jesus I break this hold of the Coronavirus on this country, on each and every person gathered here I pray for your protection, through your Holy Spirit, come against the fear of it, in our minds and I break the power of the symptoms,

I pray for supernatural healing over this congregation and all those around the world who are suffering with it, in the wonderful name of Jesus I declare healing and ask for healing over each and every person gathered here today as well as for those who are represented by them and their loved ones. In the same way that you protected the animals that belonged to the Israelites in this story from Exodus, I ask that you grant us favour and protection.

Thank you God for the divine blood of Jesus shed on the cross for our sins and mistakes, protect each one of us now.

In closing I want you if you have a Bible to read with me

Read Psalm 91

Psalm 91

- ¹Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.^[a]
- ²I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."
- ³Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
- ⁴He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- ⁵You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
- ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- ⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

- ⁸You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- ⁹If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
¹⁰no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
- ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
¹²they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- ¹³You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- ¹⁴"Because he ^[b] loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- ¹⁵He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.
- ¹⁶With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.

CHARLIE DID NOT READ OUT PSALM 91 AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SOME OF THE WORDS