

All Age Service – The Plagues

Talk Part 1: The One true God

Reading – Exodus 8v16-19

Good morning everyone and welcome to EBC, the Egyptian Broadcasting Corporation, my name's Matt Gurtler and I'm coming to you live from the land of Egypt, you can see I'm standing in front of the pyramids here, it's a beautifully warm summer's day, but to say the least, it's not been a pleasant time for the people of Egypt.

You see, there are these people called the Israelites who are working for Pharaoh, that is the leader of Egypt as his slaves, and everything was going fine, until the people started growing, increasing in number until they demanded to be let go, out into the land, to serve their God. Obviously, Pharaoh wasn't really a fan of that idea, so he didn't want to let them go. If Pharaoh's slaves go and serve their God, it means that God is more important than Pharaoh, and Pharaoh likes being the most important person. But then a man named Moses came up and warned Pharaoh that he's not just standing against people but against God. Pharaoh is trying to say he is more powerful than the God of the Israelites. And so the God of the Israelites is going to show how powerful He is by making some terrible things happen in Egypt.

This is the headline that I'm bringing to you today. I want to introduce you to the one true God. The events that have happened in Egypt show us the one true God.

So these terrible events have been happening here over the last few days. A couple of days ago I went down to the river Nile to get myself a drink, and, well, here it is, here's the water from the Nile – it has been turned to blood! It's horrible, it stinks, and I definitely do not want to drink that! I'm just going to ask the studio audience here, does anybody want to drink that? No, it's disgusting isn't it.

Well Pharaoh still was angry, and he didn't want to let the people go, so Moses warned of another plague. And this time it was frogs – hundreds of frogs invaded the whole of the land of Egypt. Has anybody there got some frogs, can you throw the frogs at me?

That's what it was like a few days ago when the frogs came. But the question is, what does all this mean? And to help us, I've managed to find one of Pharaoh's chief magicians to come and talk to me about what happened. Jannes, great to see you this morning, how are you doing?

Well, not great to be honest, I'm very thirsty, there's limited drinking water, because the river all turned to blood and I didn't sleep well last night, because, well, my bed was full of frogs. And right now, I'm quite worried, because I've heard that today Moses has said a plague of gnats is coming.

Gnats? Are they like bugs of some sort?

I think so, oh no here they come now, look out!

Wow, so many gnats, so many bugs! But wait, aren't you Pharaoh's magician, are you maybe able to get rid of these gnats?

That's the thing, at first, we thought Moses was tricking us, because everything he did, we could do as well. He turned the river to blood, we could turn the river to blood too. He made frogs appear, we made frogs appear. But then we realised, that we could only do the same as what Moses did, we couldn't reverse it.

That's slightly ironic, so Moses, or rather, Moses's God, brought all these frogs on the land, and you tried to show your power, that you could do what God could do, but all you did was bring more frogs? You made it worse?

Yes, that's right, it wasn't a great idea if I'm honest. But that's all we could do, we couldn't stop the frogs! And with these gnats, all these bugs, well, we've tried, but we can't produce them. So this must be the finger of God!

The finger of God? What do you mean?

Well, Moses is just a man, he can't have done it. And we can't do what he's doing, so there must be some power on his side. It must be God!

Thank you Jannes, do go and sit down, I hope you can get rid of all the frogs from your bed. Hopefully you won't get covered in boils at some point in the next few weeks.

So the magicians admitted that God was involved. But which god? Is it the god of the Egyptians? Well, the Egyptians had many gods, but they were all on the Egyptians' side. It would be strange if those gods would attack the Egyptians. Moses said it would be his God who would bring all the plagues on Egypt. So it looks like this God is more powerful than the Egyptian gods. He is the one true God!

And it looks like these plagues somehow made the Egyptian gods look a bit small. They worshipped the river Nile, and God turned the river to blood. They worshipped a god that took the image of a frog, and God made the frogs turn against them. Who knows, maybe there will be plagues that make the Egyptian bull-God look silly, by making all the animals die, or show that the sun-god is not powerful by making the land dark. Who knows?

What we do know is that the magicians and the gods of Egypt are powerless against the God of Israel. He is the one true God. Moses said to Pharaoh that all this happens "So that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God". And that's true! There is no one like him. He is the one true God. He is the only one who can do this. So whether you're in Israel, Egypt or Huntingdon, we need to be amazed by this God and worship Him alone.

So I think there's one thing we need to ask ourselves – if the Lord is the one true God, will we worship Him?

What about when I'm tempted to turn away from God, and think that maybe my way is better than his? Will I live my own way, or will I worship the one true God? What about when I'd really like to get a particular person to like me? Or act in anger or jealousy, even though I know that's not what God wants? Will I do what I think is right, or will I worship the one true God?

This is Matt Gurtler from EBC, signing off.

Part 2: Pharaoh's hard heart

Read Exodus 9:22-35

Good morning, you join me back in Egypt after another few chaotic days here to say the least! We saw a few days ago how the river had turned to blood, and then frogs and gnats had come upon the land and this showed us how there is no one like the Lord – He is the one true God.

And today's headline is "Pharaoh's hard heart" – because Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt still won't let the people go! Since we last spoke we've had a plague of flies come on the land, like gnats. Then all the animals belonging to the Egyptians died, then everyone got a horrible itchy skin disease, boils on their skin.

We have a very special guest with us today, please give a warm welcome to Pharaoh himself! Now Pharaoh, it's good to see you this morning. Can you tell me first of all, why you won't let the people go?

Good morning. The fact is, I am the ruler over the whole of Egypt, and these Israelites are my slaves. If I let them go, they won't come back, and then what does that say about me? It makes me look weak, like I'm not in control. And I can't be having that!

Ok, I understand. Some people are saying you have a hard heart, what does that mean?

It means I have a strong heart, that I'm stubborn, that I will not be persuaded to do what I don't want to do. I think that's right, I won't be challenged by these puny little Israelites. I am PHARAOH!

Ok, thank you Pharaoh, I can see that you think quite highly of yourself. But hasn't Moses promised another plague?

Yes, he has, he said that a hailstorm was going to come. But I don't think it will!

Are you sure? I can see some hailstones, on the horizon, we'd better take cover!

This time I have sinned! The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong! I need to go and talk to Moses!

Wow, what a turnaround! Pharaoh's got a really hard heart, he won't let the people go. He won't admit that the Lord is the one true God. But it looks like he's changed and...

Oh, hang on, I've just heard that Pharaoh hardened his heart again. He went to Moses and was about to let the people go, but then his heart was hard, and he didn't want to. Oh dear.

And now that I look at Pharaoh and his actions, I can see a bit of myself in them too. I see that sometimes, I have a hard heart, and I refuse to listen to God. When God tells me it is wrong to disobey the government, but I would really like to break the covid restrictions, I harden my heart. When God tells me it is wrong to look at what other people have and envy them, feeling jealous, I have a hard heart and refuse to say sorry. When I know that something I do is wrong, and makes God angry, but I really want to do it, I harden my heart, shut out God's voice, and do it anyway.

And I often do what Pharaoh does – I say sorry to God, I admit that I have sinned, but when everything gets better, I go and harden my heart all over again!

We have disobeyed God just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians did. And God was so angry with the Egyptians that he sent the plagues on them, and we deserve to have his judgment come on us too, because we have hard hearts, just the same.

So what we need to do is come to God, and say sorry, and ask for His help to give us clean, soft hearts.

First headline from the news here in Egypt: Worship the one true God

Second headline: Say sorry for our hard hearts.

Part 3: God's great rescue

Read Exodus 12:21-32

Well you join me on quite a sad day in Egypt as we awoke to the sounds of wailing and crying in the streets. I walked down Sphinx avenue this morning and every household was stained with blood – some literally, as for some reason the Israelites were seen wiping blood on the doorposts of their houses, and some figuratively, because overnight every firstborn son in every Egyptian house died. We can see the bodies of them being carried out onto the streets. There he is right there, Karim – aged 12, died in the night. Abdul, aged 6, he died too. Rawad has died as well, and he was only 3! No matter how old they were, the firstborn sons of each Egyptian family died, as God's angel came and struck the Egyptians.

But for the people of Israel, there was some good news, so we're going to talk to Shiphrah, an Israelite. Shiphrah, am I right in saying that your son didn't die in the night?

Yes, that's right. Moses, our leader, came and said that we would be protected if we followed some special instructions.

And what were those instructions?

Well, we had to take a lamb, a perfect lamb, and kill it. And after we'd eaten its meat, we had to dip a branch in the lamb's blood, and paint our doors with its blood.

Wow, that seems really strange. Did you do it?

Did I do it? Of course I did! I trust God and I wanted to save my son! It was a choice between the lamb dying, and my little boy dying, I had to choose the lamb! And it worked, I woke up this morning and my son is still alive! Anyway, I've got to go, because we're escaping from Egypt, Pharaoh is letting us go!

Really? Wow, that's amazing, well thank you for talking to us, hope you have a safe journey out of Egypt! But before you go, from your perspective, can you tell us why you think God sent all these plagues on Egypt?

Yes of course! At first, it might have looked like God was just angry at the Egyptians and the plagues were his judgment, but actually, we kept seeing moments where the people of Israel, God's people, were protected! No flies came on our land, our animals didn't die, the hail didn't fall on us, when it went dark all over Egypt, the only place where there was light was where we lived! Though we deserved God's judgment too, He gave us a way to be protected from the death of the firstborn – His ultimate protection! The lamb died instead of us! And so it's not just God's judgment, it's God's rescue mission!

God's rescue mission, wow, that's really interesting, thank you Shiphrah!

God's rescue mission – wow, I can see that. Because, God's people were in slavery, and he showed the Egyptians that he was the one true God, and he punished them for their hard hearts, but the ultimate aim was to rescue the Israelites.

Imagine what it felt like being in Egypt that night – God had promised a great rescue from Egypt, and you were waiting and waiting for it to come. And then you heard the news of something really scary happening that night, you go and talk to the neighbours – is it true? Is the angel of death coming tonight? What are we going to do? Before, God protected us, there was nothing we had to do, but now there's real danger, our sons might die! Well, it's ok, Moses has told us if we put this blood on the doorposts, our children will be saved. It's like a swap, the lamb will die, instead of them! Well let's do that quick! We don't want to risk it, kill the lamb, the perfect lamb, and use its blood to mark our doorposts, and then our son won't die, God will pass over our house!

Imagine that, what an amazing rescue!

And... Oh hang on, someone's talking into my ear. We've got some breaking news! Apparently, this rescue points forward to another rescue! Because when Jesus came, he was called the lamb of God! At the time when the people traditionally remembered the rescue from Egypt, the death of the lamb, he gave his disciples bread and wine, and said "This is my body and my blood, given for you". Jesus was the new lamb, He died, so that people who trust in him, people who are marked with His blood, can live!

Because for us in 2021 in Huntingdon, we don't need rescuing from Egypt, but we still have hard hearts, and God is still angry with us. But we don't need to kill a lamb for him to protect us, what we need is Jesus! Jesus is the true Passover lamb.

And I want to say something to us at Christ Church Huntingdon, because I'm not really bringing us a news report, this all happened a very long time ago, and it's more than a story!

What does this mean for us? I think what we need to do is to be grateful for God's great rescue! God offers us a rescue from death and from slavery to sin, and what we need is to accept the blood of Jesus as our rescue. Jesus Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. We don't need to paint his blood over the doorposts, but we need to say "Jesus has died for me, I don't need to face God's anger anymore."

Now I don't know about you, but I'm convinced that this is the one true God, and that I, like Pharaoh have sinned against Him by not living life His way and hardening my heart. And I'm so grateful that He has provided a rescue, the new Passover lamb, Jesus. So I'm going to confidently hide under His blood, and know that I have been fully, forgiven.

If you've heard this for the first time I hope you're amazed by it.

If you've heard it hundreds and hundreds of times before, I hope you were able to see it with fresh eyes today. Can I ask that you don't think "Oh this is old news now". This is why we've gone back to Egypt today to see the one true God, our hard hearts, and His great rescue. We can sometimes forget how big God is, how serious our sin is, and how amazing the rescue is. That's why He's given us the story of the plagues (which really did happen, it's not made up!) So that we can see that He is the one true God, who is more powerful than Pharaoh, than the Egyptian magicians and made-up gods. We can see how serious it is to turn away from Him. And we can see what a wonderful rescue He has done, through Jesus. That's what struck me, I can easily forget how amazing God is, how

serious my sin is, and how great His rescue is, but in the plagues, those things are written in huge print! We can't miss them

Worship the one true God. Say sorry for our hard hearts. Thank God for His rescue, through the lamb. Let's pray.