

## For GC Discussion

- What do you think it felt like to be in Moses position during these few chapters? How can we learn from his responses and prepare ourselves to do the same?
- How can we guard our hearts from being like Pharaoh?
- How does this passage shape our view of who God is, and how should this affect our lives day-to-day?

**Next Week:** we study the final and most significant plague, leading to the Israelites being released from Egypt.

### *Notes and Questions*



## Week 4: The Plagues Begin

### Exodus Chapters 7:14-10:29

#### **This Weeks Summary**

Our passage this week shows a battle of wills between Pharaoh and God's representatives Moses and Aaron. God displays His power for the Egyptians to witness, but still Pharaoh is not moved to let God's people go.

#### **For Study:**

These portions of Scripture that we are studying at the moment are all about the display of God's sovereignty, power, majesty and greatness above anyone and anything else. The verses below all point to something of this - use them to meditate some more on the glory of our God.

Isaiah 46:1-11

Psalms 115:1-18

Psalms 135:1-21

Isaiah 40:9-26

Psalms 104:1-35

Job 37:1-24

Psalms 95:1-11

1 Chronicles 16:8-36

Jeremiah 32:17-22

**For Worship:** Listen to *'Only Our God'* by Casey Darnell. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.

This week we saw the beginning of the great contest between Pharaoh and the God of the Hebrews. Even through nearly 4 chapters, and 9 plagues, Pharaoh's resolve still hasn't broken, but God has displayed His absolute power over so much of what the Egyptians might be tempted to revere. Here are a few things we can pick out of the chapters:

### **Pharaoh's Hard Heart**

This is a big talking point throughout the episode of the 10 plagues. There seems to be roughly an equal spread of times when the hardness of Pharaoh's heart was down to his own decision to stay unmoved in the face of Moses' appeals, but nearer the end of our section the text tells us that it is God who hardens Pharaoh's heart for him. Without doubt, there is ample opportunity where Pharaoh could have responded to God but chooses not to, then there is a point where God takes over, even stating to Pharaoh that it was 'for this purpose' that he was raised up, that God would show His power to a watching world. It's a classic example of the tension that the Bible gives to us between the responsibility and accountability that God places on us as human beings, and yet His absolute sovereignty to do whatever He wishes in any situation - both sides appear to work together through this story.

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul takes this up as an example for those who would complain about God's treatment of Pharaoh. How can Pharaoh be held accountable for a choice which God made him make? Where the text of Exodus gives us the indication that Pharaoh was more than accountable for his earlier decisions, Paul wants to emphasise the fact that we serve a God who can do whatever He wants to whomever He wants. We should be so grateful that we also serve a God who shows abundant mercy in Christ, and be so careful before we become presumptuous over how God should act in certain situations, and certainly before we start to question and complain at His judgments. The Bible is clear that our God is just and fair, and that should be enough for us. The Bible is also very clear on our own responsibility in the light of these truths. We don't worry about whether God is interfering in our responses, and making us do things we don't want to do, rather we should do whatever we can to respond to the exhortation 'do not harden your hearts' (Heb 3:7) when we hear the call of God on our own lives.

### **Convenient Responsiveness**

Another thing that Pharaoh is a great example of here is of those times when we can be highly responsive to God when it suits us the most.

A number of times Pharaoh begins to respond to God's message through Moses when the pain of the plagues became too much for him to bear. He appears willing to be obedient when he sees the benefit he can get from it, but as soon as Moses prayers are answered and the plagues are lifted he's right back to his old stubborn self.

Although none of us would necessarily be that callous, we still need to be careful that we don't only pursue relationship with God at the times when we really need things, but rather pursue Him in the good times as well as the bad. We shouldn't just see obedience to the Word of God as the road to receiving all the good things He can give, but rather that to know God, and to walk with Him is the essence of abundant life.

### **God's Care for His People**

There's a simple but powerful part of this story that just goes to show off the miraculous nature of these plagues, but also shows the love and care that God has for His own people. The Hebrews were living in a part of Egypt called Goshen, and from plague 4 onwards, the text tells us outright that this part of Egypt was not touched, where the rest of Egypt was very much affected. Though we as God's people do get caught up in the consequences of the fact that we live in a sinful world, and can sometimes suffer as much as the Godless around us, it is still great to know that we have a God who is able to protect us from anything that would harm us - when He decides, there is nothing and no-one on earth that can touch us.

### **An attack on the God's of Egypt**

When commentators talk about the 10 plagues they will often bring out the fact that every single one of the plagues was an attack on something which the Egyptians considered as a god. The text doesn't make too big a deal about it and concentrates more on Pharaoh, who was actually himself considered a god by his people. However it fits with the overall theme of this part of the book that the plagues might just be a declaration of superiority over any and every other so called god by the God of the Hebrews.

While we don't have so many 'gods' around claiming to be more powerful than ours, it's still good to know that we have a God who is greater than anything we might fear, or anything that might seek to control us. The fact that we serve the 'almighty' should give us great comfort, courage, and confidence in a world that can often be so insecure.