

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 29, 2020

God's Powerful Arms of Love

by Dan Trygg

“Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ¹⁴ Otherwise I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶ But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. ¹⁷ Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.”’”

Exodus 9:13-17

“And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.’ ¹⁰ Then He continued by saying to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹ and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.’”

Luke 21:9-11

“And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come.’ ⁸ And... behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

Revelation 6:7-8

In a week and a half, Jews all around the world will be gathering around their tables for a seder meal, the remembrance of God's deliverance of His people by a mighty hand from the arm of Pharaoh. There were ten plagues that God visited upon the Egyptians, before Pharaoh agreed to let the Hebrew people leave. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. Every firstborn male of animal and human in the entire land of Egypt was struck dead in the night by an angel of God. God instructed the Jews to kill a lamb, and put its blood on the doorposts and lintels of the house, so that the destroying angel would see the blood and pass over that house, leaving the firstborn inside in safety. **God commanded the Jews to commemorate this event by a Passover meal throughout their generations. Through these ten plagues, God humiliated the Egyptian gods, made a name for Himself, and birthed the nation of Israel.**

After six of the ten plagues, God warned Pharaoh that if he did not let the Hebrews go, He would send all His plagues on the Egyptians, for the express purpose that they would know that there is no one like Him in all the earth. Ominously, however, **God stated that if He wanted to, He could send a pestilence that could destroy Pharaoh and all his people.** But God continued to let Pharaoh remain, so that He could reveal to the Egyptian people the greatness of His power, and to proclaim His name throughout the world. ...and His name *does* continue to be proclaimed around the world, as we remember these events, some 3,500 years later.

It is also after this plague that we have a reference that can help us understand somewhat the time frame of the plagues. The seventh plague was a ruinous hail, the worst hailstorm in Egyptian history, a storm that would kill even animals and people who were out in the field. **In Exodus 9:31, it mentions that the flax and barley were ruined, because the barley was developing ears, and the flax was in bud. This happens in northern Egypt in early to mid-February.** It is not hard to imagine that the first six plagues would have occurred in the weeks before, possibly at intervals of a week or two. **That would push the starting point of the plagues back to the beginning of January or December.**

Interestingly, our current “plague”, if you will, ...the coronavirus we are attempting to slow down by our “social distancing” and quarantine measures..., kind of parallels that same time line. By all accounts it began in December, and has spread throughout the world since then. **Look at the impact of just one pestilence, one sickness, spreading through our land. Of course, in terms of real, direct, physical cases, this sickness is still very small, ...removed from most of us.** The talk and preventative measures are much more disruptive for most of us than encountering the actual virus itself. **By contrast, the Exodus plagues were very direct, personal and inescapable. Everyone was affected by them.** When the water turned to blood and stank, everyone saw it and had to deal with the stench, and dig in the ground for water filtered by the sand. When the frogs came up on the land, everyone, from the least to the greatest had to deal with them. They were everywhere, and got into everything. When they died, everyone had to remove them from their houses and from among their things. They made piles of their dead carcasses, and the entire land stank. When the gnats came, they swarmed in everyone's faces, got in their noses and hair. They bit and caused sores and welts. Then the swarms of other, larger insects came. (No one knows for sure what they were, ...possibly flies or maybe scarab beetles.) They swarmed into everyone's houses and devastated the land. The one exception was that, **from this point on, from the fifth plague, the plagues did not affect the people of Israel living in the land of**

Goshen. God made a distinction between His people and Pharaoh's people. Then a pestilence came upon the Egyptian livestock. It affected horses, donkeys, camels, cows, goats and sheep. They all suddenly became sick and died. Again, not a life would be untouched by a plague like that. It would take time and much work to dispose of all the dead animals. Next, it was boils that broke out on the skin of all the Egyptians. All the people from young and old, rich and poor, among the Egyptians were covered with boils, but the Hebrews were not. Then the devastating hail of the seventh plague fell. It killed any person or animal that was out in the field, and destroyed the maturing crops. Again, it would take a great deal of time and effort to dispose of the dead, and to clean up the mess. No hail fell in Goshen, where the Hebrews were located, however. Then, locusts came swarming into the land and consumed whatever vegetation was left. They came into their houses, and were so thick that the Egyptians could not even see the ground. They ate every green plant that remained, and stripped all the trees bare. Next came a darkness that was so thick it could be felt. People could not even see one another. They just stayed in their dwellings for the three days it persisted. Meanwhile, the sun was shining in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. **And then, ...then came the plague of the firstborn, and there was not a household in Egypt that was not touched by this final plague.**

The plagues of the Exodus were thorough, extensive, cumulative and relentless. They were personally irritating, aggravating and devastating. Scholars think that these plagues basically came about a week or two apart. They would just start to recover from one, and another plague would be in their face. **And yet, these plagues were incredibly merciful! God clearly said He could easily take all their lives, ...but He did not.** Instead, they learned some important lessons, and they lived to tell the story. And they *did* tell the story, ...because the Canaanites knew of it when Israel showed up on their doorsteps a generation later.

It is important to see the difference, because what we have experienced is *nothing like* what the Egyptians experienced. Our suffering and hardship is largely self-inflicted, not a direct result of the virus itself. That statement is *not* to second-guess the counsel of the doctors and officials who are trying to minimize the damage and disaster that might result. We have seen that this virus *is* a killer. And it *is* highly contagious. And they say it will be relentless, at least until a vaccine could be developed. They expect that close to half of us, maybe more, will eventually get it.

Some people have been thinking that this is a "sign of the end". I don't think so. **In Luke 21, Jesus plainly told us that there would be wars, earthquakes, plagues and famines throughout the age. This is just one of many that have and/or will occur.** I just read an article that pointed out that there have been roughly three influenza pandemics in each of the past three centuries. So, in virtually everybody's lifetime, we can expect that we might experience one or two. In spite of the contagiousness of this particular one, it has not proven to be as extensive a killer as the flu epidemic of 1918, which killed 100 million people, or the bubonic plague, which killed 75-200 million people in the 14th century, or smallpox which devastated the indigenous population in the Americas. But, as they keep telling us, "It's early in the game."

God has told us that there will be devastating, world-scale destruction that will come through war, famine and pestilence. In Revelation 6, when in the vision Jesus gave to John, the Lamb opens the scroll, which had been sealed by God, each seal reveals more of its contents. As each seal is opened, events are set in motion. With the second seal, peace is taken from the earth, and people war with each other. With the third seal, intense famine occurs, so that the price of a quart of wheat would be an entire day's wage. **With the fourth seal, Death and Hades will go out into the earth, and kill one fourth of the earth with war, famine and pestilence. One fourth of the earth's population, ...now that is an example of an end-time plague! We haven't seen anything like that.**

In Luke 21, Jesus said, "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." ¹⁰ Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹ and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven" (vss. 9-11). **He clearly said, "Do not be terrified."** The word means "frightened, startled, or alarmed." **We are not to fly into a panic,** ...like we are seeing other people do. God knows. God has told us ahead of time. God has told us *not to be alarmed*. In the parallel passage, Matthew uses a word meaning "troubled in mind" (24:6). He says, "**Don't be troubled in mind,** for those things must take place, but *the end is not yet.*"

Our God is an awesome, powerful God. He made a name for Himself through powerful acts, miraculous signs, and a strong arm. He compelled the most powerful human ruler of the ancient world to bend to His will. **He exposed the false gods of Egypt and established Himself as the only true God, a covenant-keeping God.** He redeemed His people to become a people dedicated for Him. Although they failed Him, He remains faithful. **Through Jesus, He broke the powers of darkness and showed us the extent of His love.** Even Death could not hold Him. **We are bonded to Him by love, and can be assured that His powerful arm will be there to provide and carry us through whatever we must face. His love, grown-up inside us, will cast out every fear.**