

# More Plagues: Hail, Locusts and Darkness (Exodus 9:13-10:29)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Exodus

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## I. Review from Previous Lessons

- a. The Hebrews have been in Egypt for 400 years, now suffering under the cruel oppression of Pharaoh. They have cried out to the Lord for deliverance, and the Lord has sent Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and back to Canaan, the land promised to Abraham's descendants.
- b. Moses and Aaron have been sent to Pharaoh by the Lord, requesting that Pharaoh let the Hebrews go. Pharaoh has a hard heart, refuses to let the people go, and only increases their oppression. Therefore, the Lord uses Moses and Aaron to send a series of plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt.
- c. In the previous lesson we discussed the *third plague through the sixth* plague. The Ten Plagues in order of their appearance are:
  - i. First: Water to Blood
  - ii. Second: Frogs
  - iii. Third: Gnats or Lice (*Covered in the previous lesson*)
  - iv. Fourth: Flies (*In the previous lesson*)
  - v. Fifth: Livestock Disease (*In the previous lesson*)
  - vi. Sixth: Boils and Sores (*In the previous lesson*)
  - vii. Seventh: Hail with Fire (*Covered in the current lesson*)
  - viii. Eighth: Locusts (*In the current lesson*)
  - ix. Ninth: Darkness (*In the current lesson*)
  - x. Tenth and Final: Death of the Firstborn (Passover)

## II. The Seventh Plague: Hail (and Fire)

- a. Read **Exodus 9:13-35**.
- b. Storyline:
  - i. Moses goes before Pharaoh and warns him that because he continues to refuse to let the Hebrews go, the Lord is about to send another plague upon Egypt.

- ii. The following day there will be a *hailstorm* unlike any ever seen before in Egypt. It will kill all people and livestock that are found in the open fields.
  - iii. Moses gives a warning to the Egyptians: bring your people and livestock out of the fields, or they will all die!
    1. Those servants of Pharaoh among the Egyptians *who fear the Lord* bring their servants and livestock into their houses.
    2. However, those who *do not fear the Lord* leave their servants and livestock in their fields.
  - iv. Moses stretches out his hands, holding his staff toward heaven and the Lord sends hail and thunder *mixed with fire*.
    1. However, this hailstorm did not strike the land of Goshen, the area of Egypt where the Israelites were living.
  - v. Pharaoh calls for Moses and promises to let the Hebrews go. Moses raises his hands to the heavens and the storm ceases. However, Pharaoh hardens his heart again and refuses to let Israel go.
- c. Noteworthy things about this particular plague.
- i. Although it says several times during the plagues that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. However, this is a second place where it says that *Pharaoh hardened his (own) heart*, rather than saying (as in several other places in **Exodus**) that *God hardened* his heart. Here it says, "he (Pharaoh) *sinned yet more; he hardened his heart...*" (**Exodus 9:34**; similar to what it said earlier in **Exodus 8:28**).
    1. This is another example showing that *God did not take away Pharaoh's free will*, despite what Calvin and his followers incorrectly claim from **Romans 9:14-18**.
    2. Clearly *Pharaoh is responsible for sinning* according to the text in this account.
    3. For more on this subject, see the lesson from **Exodus 4** entitled *I Will Harden His Heart*, where we discussed **Romans 9**. There we explained how early Christians understood and passages like these, in sharp contrast with modern Calvinists.
  - ii. For the first time, Pharaoh shows remarkable signs of humility toward the Lord. Re-read **Exodus 9:27-28**.

1. Unlike Pharaoh's response after the plague of flies, there is no attempt to bargain with Moses nor to place conditions or limits on the Hebrews in their plans to depart.
  2. This appears to be "unconditional surrender" on the part of Pharaoh.
  3. Pharaoh admits, "I have sinned...the Lord is righteous and my people and I are ungodly (= *wicked*)." **(Exodus 9:27)**
  4. Pharaoh *asks Moses to pray for him*; and to remove the thunder, hail and fire.
- iii. This plague (alone) was accompanied by a warning whereby the Gentiles (Egyptians) impacted *could do something to protect themselves from the destruction to come*.
1. It says that those servants of Pharaoh *who feared the Lord* rushed to pull their servants and livestock indoors.
    - a. Keep in mind that this plague killed people (those Egyptians who remained in the fields).
    - b. Moses did not want any of the Egyptians to die. He warned them all beforehand, and gave them an opportunity to have their people sheltered from the destruction that was about to come.
  2. Apparently, after seeing what the Lord had done the first six plagues, some of Pharaoh's servants believed in and *feared the Lord!*
  3. This is another similarity between Moses and Jesus: *the God-fearing Gentiles heeded their warnings*. For example, with Jesus:
    - a. The Samaritan woman at the well and her Samaritan friends from the same city who believed Jesus, in **John 4**.
    - b. The centurion whose servant Jesus healed, in **Matthew 8**.
    - c. The Syro-Phoenician woman who asked for "the crumbs that fall from the table" in **Mark 7**.
    - d. Cornelius the centurion, described as a *God-fearing man* in **Acts 10**.
- d. About that reference to "fire" mixed in with the hail.

- i. For many years I was in a church where preaching was out of the NIV; so for many years I was most familiar with that translation. There it says there was “*lightning*” (rather than *fire*) that was mixed in with the hail.
  - 1. A few other translations that say “lightning” include:
    - a. the Message (a fairly loose paraphrase-type version); and
    - b. some Catholic translations: Douay-Rheims, Jerusalem Bible and New American Bible.
- ii. I am reading from the Orthodox Study Bible, where the Old Testament is based on the Septuagint (LXX). There, the Greek word is clearly the word for “fire”.
  - 1. Same word used where it says in that the meat of the Passover Lamb is to be *roasted in the fire* (**Exodus 12:9**).
- iii. Also important to note that many translations based on the Masoretic Text also say “*fire*” (not *lightning*) here, including:
  - 1. KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV and RSV.
- iv. Read **Wisdom of Solomon 16:15-19 & 16:22**.
  - 1. Although the flames of fire we interspersed with water (which normally extinguishes fire), the fire somehow and unexpectedly became *even more effective* in burning up the harvest of the land.
  - 2. Also, the hail did not melt even though it was in the midst of fire.
  - 3. This miraculous event revealed that it was the judgment of God, in destroying an unrighteous land.

### III. Eighth Plague: Locusts

- a. Read **Exodus 10:1-20**.
- b. Storyline:
  - i. Moses and Aaron warn Pharaoh that if he still refuses to heed the Lord’s command to let the Hebrews go to worship Him, the Lord will send another terrible plague.
  - ii. The next plague will be a *plague of locusts* that will be unlike anything ever before seen in Egypt.

- iii. After Moses departs, Pharaoh's servants appeal to Pharaoh that he should concede and let the people go.
    - 1. They remark to Pharaoh, "Don't you know that Egypt is destroyed?"
    - 2. Pharaoh calls back Moses and Aaron.
  - iv. Pharaoh tries to bargain with Moses (and the Lord).
    - 1. Pharaoh asks who will be going; Moses replies that all the Hebrews will go (young and old, men and women), and they will take all their livestock with them.
    - 2. Pharaoh says he is willing to let the men go, but not the women. The men would have to leave the rest of their families behind, in Egypt.
      - a. In the LXX it also states that Pharaoh would not let them take their livestock and possessions with them, either.
    - 3. This compromise 'deal' proposed by Pharaoh is unacceptable to Moses and the Lord. Consequently, Pharaoh drives Moses and Aaron out again, rejecting their request.
  - v. Moses stretches out his hands and brings a wind from the south all day and night; the next morning it brings a vast plague of locusts that covers the land.
  - vi. It says that there never was, nor will there ever be again, such a plague of locusts. They eat everything green (crops and trees) left from the previous plague.
  - vii. Pharaoh again admits his sin against God and against Moses. He asks Moses to pray to the Lord to end this plague. Moses complies, the Lord send another wind that carries the locusts into the Red Sea. Not a single locust is left in Egypt.
  - viii. Pharaoh's heart is hardened again; he again refuses to let the people go.
- c. Since I have never encountered these insects personally, I thought I should do some research to get a better appreciation for this plague. Here are a few sobering facts I discovered regarding locusts:
- i. They are from the same insect family as *grasshoppers* (which we are more familiar with), and they look somewhat similar.

- ii. Some may tend to think of locust plagues as something that only happened in the distant past, based on this story from the Bible. However, locusts are very much present today, and remain an ongoing threat in many parts of the world.
  - iii. They have an extraordinary ability to survive in difficult environments. They live in about 60 countries today, including in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.
  - iv. In the 1800's there was at least one devastating locust plague in North America; however they have not been found here since then.
  - v. It appears that locusts survive in a solitary phase, but morph into a different more voracious and aggressive form when population density increases. In their aggressive phase they eat their body weight every day. If a plague of locusts descends on a field in the morning, everything will be gone by the middle of the day.
  - vi. Under the right environmental conditions, they can multiply *400-500x their number* in just six months!
  - vii. They can fly up to 5,000 feet (elevation) in the air; therefore can be blown by upper air stream currents to distant locations. I found one account from the past where locusts were able to travel all the way from Africa to Great Britain.
  - viii. Locust plagues are still very much a problem today. From a press release by *Save the Children* in January of 2020, regarding a current locust plague in East Africa:
    1. "The worst plague of desert locusts in a generation is ravaging crops and other vegetation across the Horn of Africa with Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia battling to contain the escalating crisis. The outbreaks in Ethiopia and Somalia are the worst in 25 years and in Kenya the worst in 75 years.
    2. "Swarms as large as 926.6 square miles—or more than three times the size of New York City—have been seen in northeast Kenya, with the locusts moving southward towards South Sudan and eastward towards Uganda. A swarm of this size, which can contain up to 192 billion locusts, is estimated to eat in one day the same as 90 million people."
  - ix. Note that in **Exodus 10:14** it states, "Previously there were no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them."!
- d. Things to note in this particular plague.

- i. In the LXX in **Exodus 10:2** it says God *mocked* the Egyptians by sending them signs and wonders (the plagues).
  1. This is the same Greek word used in the New Testament where it says that Jesus was *mocked by his enemies* prior to and during his crucifixion. Also, the same word is used when Jesus uses the illustration of a man who starts to build a house but is unable to finish, and is *mocked* by others as a result (**Luke 14:29**).
  2. The idea of God mocking (ridiculing) his enemies may seem uncomfortable or odd to us. In my own mind, I tend to associate *mocking* others with “trash talking” prior to a sporting or other contest. So in my mind I can tend to have a negative association with this term.
- ii. However, the same idea (God mocking His enemies) is found throughout Scripture. A few examples I think of:
  1. In **Proverbs 2:20-35**, it says that Wisdom will mock the wicked (those who rejected the voice of Wisdom when they had the opportunity).
  2. In **Psalms 2:1-4** it says the Lord will mock the rulers of this world who conspire against and reject His Christ.
  3. In **1 Corinthians 15:26** it says that Christ will reign until He has put all things under his feet. The last enemy will be death itself. As a result, death itself is mocked.
    - a. “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ (**Hosea 13:14**) The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (**1 Corinthians 15:54-58**, NKJV)
  4. While God, His Christ and his people may be mocked and rejected for a time, God will mock all His (and our) enemies in the end; including mocking even *death itself*!
- iii. When it says that “There remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt” (**Exodus**

**10:15**), this is quite understandable in view of the devastation that locusts can cause in a short time!

#### IV. Ninth Plague: Darkness

- a. Read **Exodus 10:21-29**.
- b. Storyline:
  - i. This plague: three days of darkness. Everyone in Egypt remained in bed.
  - ii. “No one saw his brother” for the three days.
  - iii. However, there was light in all the dwellings of the Israelites.
  - iv. Pharaoh willing to let the people go, along with their belongings. However, he insists that they not take their livestock.
  - v. Moses insists that they must take all their livestock, since they will be sacrificing to the Lord and do not know which ones they will need to sacrifice.
  - vi. Pharaoh rejects Moses’ request that they leave with all their livestock.
    1. Pharaoh says “You will never again see my face; in the day you see my face you will die.”
    2. Moses agrees with what Pharaoh has said, that they would never again see each other face-to-face.
- c. **Questions:** Why did the people remain in bed for three days? Why not at least light a lamp, *get up* out of bed and move around inside the house?
  - i. There was something extraordinary about this darkness.
    1. This was described as “a darkness that *could be felt*” (**Exodus 10:21**).
    2. No one was able to see his or her brother (**Exodus 10:23**).
    3. It appears that this was a darkness *that even the light of a lamp could not penetrate*.
  - ii. Consider what it says about this plague of darkness in **Wisdom of Solomon**. This was indeed a *very creepy* kind of darkness!
    1. Read **Wisdom of Solomon 17:1-18:4**.

2. The Egyptians, who saw themselves as rulers over Israel, became prisoners in darkness.
3. They heard *terrifying sounds* but could see nothing during this time. No fire (such as from a lamp) could give them light.
4. The Egyptians stayed in bed because they were *terrified*. Even in their sleep their thoughts were assaulted, and they found *no peace*.
5. However, God's people were given light during this plague. Later the Lord would provide them with light again, when He led them out of Egypt guided by the pillar of fire at night.

d. Significance of this plague

- i. God's people in light, versus those of Pharaoh (representing Satan) in darkness.
  1. When sharing the Scriptures with those who are lost, many of us would include a Bible study we called "light and darkness". There we would explain the contrast between being in a *spiritually lost* condition (= in *darkness*) versus being *saved* (= in the *light*).
- ii. This "light vs. darkness" distinction and imagery are carried forward in the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles.
  1. "The people who sat in *darkness* have seen a *great light*, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death *Light has dawned*." (**Matthew 4:16**, NKJV; quoting from **Isaiah 9:1-2**)
  2. "And this is the condemnation, that *the light has come into the world*, and men loved *darkness* rather than *light*, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil *hates the light* and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth *comes to the light*, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (**John 3:19-21**, NKJV)
  3. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am *the light of the world*. He who follows Me shall not walk in *darkness*, but have the *light of life*.'" (**John 8:12**, NKJV)
  4. "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me *should not abide in darkness*." (**John 12:46**, NKJV)

5. Paul recounts what Jesus said when He spoke with him on the road to Damascus: "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them *from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (**Acts 26:17-18**, NKJV)
6. "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has *light with darkness*?" (**2 Corinthians 6:14**, NKJV)
7. "For you were once *darkness*, but now you are *light* in the Lord. Walk as *children of light* (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of *darkness*, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will *give you light*.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (**Ephesians 5:8-16**, NKJV)
8. "You are all *sons of light* and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of *darkness*. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." (**1 Thessalonians 5:5-8**, NKJV)
9. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you *out of darkness into His marvelous light*;" (**1 Peter 2:9**, NKJV)

## V. Another Look at These Three Plagues (Hail, Locusts and Darkness)

- a. Recall what Eusebius said in Proof of the Gospel book 3.
  - i. According to the prophecy of **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**, Jesus would be a prophet "*like Moses*".

- ii. Therefore, the miraculous signs done by Jesus would be *similar to* the signs done by Moses, yet *even greater*.
- b. Recall that the first public miraculous sign performed by Jesus (water-to-wine) was foreshadowed by the first public miracle of Moses (the first plague, water to blood).
- c. The last plague (the Passover) foreshadowed the last sign of Jesus: his own death as the Passover Lamb (which we will cover next lesson)
- d. **Questions:** What do you think the second-to-last miraculous sign of Moses (3 days of darkness) might have foreshadowed in the life of Jesus? What was the last miraculous sign *right before Jesus died* on the cross?
  - i. **Answer:** *Three hours* of darkness.
  - ii. “Now it was about the *sixth hour*, and there was *darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour*. Then *the sun was darkened*, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.” (**Luke 23:44–46**, NKJV)
  - iii. Note that since the day began at sunrise for timekeeping purposes (6 am), *it was dark on the land from approximately noon until 3 pm*. At the end of that period of time, Jesus expired on the cross.
- e. **Follow-up Question:** Why was the *plague of locusts* the third-to-last miraculous sign of the plagues brought by Moses? Could that sign also be foreshadowing *something* in the life of Jesus?
  - i. **Question:** Was there any miraculous sign performed by Jesus that involved *locusts* or *other insects*? (No; at least I can’t think of any!)
  - ii. **Question:** What was the *last miraculous sign* performed by Jesus *before He went to the cross* (before the miracle of the three hours of darkness)?
    1. Read **Mark 11:12-14** and **11:20-21** (similar to **Matthew 21:18-22**).
    2. Why did Jesus *get angry* about a fig tree for not having any fruit, especially considering the fact that it was *not the right season* for producing figs?
    3. Note that this was the only time during his entire ministry when Jesus *curses a plant*. Also note what happened as a result of the curse: *it died and withered up immediately*.

4. In the Ten Plagues, Moses' third-to-last miraculous sign is that he *cursed the plants of Egypt* by bringing in locusts (to kill all the vegetation).
    - a. Jesus performed a *similar yet greater* miracle in cursing a plant and causing it to wither up directly and immediately *with no insects*.
    - b. Note the timing here also: the third-to-last sign before His death (counting His death as the last sign, corresponding to the 10th Plague: sacrifice of the Passover Lamb and death of the firstborn sons).
  5. Perhaps this is why Jesus cursed the unfortunate plant; this was but one more sign to show that He was the promised Prophet who would be "*like Moses*".
- f. **Question:** But what about the *fourth-to-last* plague, the plague of hail? Should we be looking to see if this also foreshadowed a similar yet greater sign that Jesus would perform?
- i. Let's review the parallels discussed thus far between the 10 Plagues of Moses and the miraculous signs of Jesus:
    1. First public miracle: Moses' water-to-blood vs. Jesus' water-to-wine;
    2. Middle miracles: Moses' bringing various diseases (livestock disease, sores/boils) vs. Jesus' healing all kinds of diseases;
    3. Third-to-last miracle: Moses bringing locusts to devour plants vs. Jesus cursing and withering the fig tree
    4. Second-to-last miracle: Moses' three days of darkness vs. Jesus three hours of darkness over all the land
    5. Final miracle: Moses brings death of firstborn sons with Passover sacrifice vs. Jesus, God's Son sacrificed as the ultimate Passover Lamb
  - ii. Again, what about a *hailstorm* (the 7<sup>th</sup> Plague of Moses)? Did Jesus ever bring a *hailstorm*, or speak about *hail* in any way?
    1. One possibility: While Jesus did not bring hail, He did demonstrate *power over the weather* (wind and the waves on Sea of Galilee).
      - a. "And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the

stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that *even the wind and the sea obey Him!*'"  
(**Mark 4:37-41**, NKJV)

2. Another possibility to consider here: *bringing fire* from heaven.
  - a. Jesus said, "I came to *send fire* on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (**Luke 12:49**, NKJV)
  - b. Remember, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Plague Moses brought not only hail on the earth; he brought down *fire as well!*
  - c. In the passage from **Luke 12** just quoted, Jesus went on to speak about the division he would bring, even within families (dividing 3-vs.-2, and parent against child, etc.)
    - i. He then spoke of signs seen in the weather.
  - d. *Jesus came to bring fire on the earth.* Let us never forget that!
    - i. He didn't come here to bring a sugar-coated message.
    - ii. He brought the truth and called people to repent.
  - e. Anyone who wants to be like Jesus and preach the gospel as He did **MUST** bring the fire down to earth as well: the message of truth, repentance and sober warnings of judgment to come!