

Introduction

By the end of the eighth plague, Egypt was devastated (10:7). All of their gods had been shown to fail before the God of Israel. Not even Pharaoh's demon-empowered magicians could duplicate some of the miraculous events that Moses called down at God's command. Yet still Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go. His sin had carried him to utter irrationality. His actions were self-destructive, but he persisted in hardening his heart!

We examined how Pharaoh's heart was hardened (passively) and how he was given *more freedom*, a longer rope to hang himself so to speak. We saw that man is not a totally free creature as some would have us to believe. The Scriptures make that clear.

Observations from Chapters 11 to 13

1. The First-born, ch. 11
 - a. The first-born have the place of prominence in the inheritance in the Bible.
 - b. But here, because of their prominence, God selects them as the direct recipients of his punishment.
 - c. Makes me think about another "first-born," only this one the first-born of creation, who suffered and died for the sins of others.
 - d. Perhaps Egypt was reaping what they sowed back in Exodus 1:16, 22 with the (attempted) mass killing of Jewish infants.
 - e. The plague was obviously miraculous as it singled out the first-born. It was not a virus or bacteria or something. It was a direct judgment of God (12:12). It was also miraculous because the LORD made an obvious distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians.
2. The Establishment of Passover, 12:1-13, 21-24
 - a. This was an occasion so special that it re-worked the calendar for Israel. This event would mark the first of the new year for them.
 - b. The spotless lamb was to be put aside on day 10 of the month, and killed on day 14. The blood was to be applied to the doorposts and lintel as a sign to the LORD to pass over that house in His judgment.
 - c. As much of the roasted meat eaten as possible, with the rest being burned in the morning.
 - d. They were to be ready to flee at any moment while they ate the Passover meal. As it turned out, they did not wait until daybreak to get moving (12:30).
 - e. John 1:29 reminds us that Christ is our Passover lamb (see also 1 Cor. 5:7).
3. The Remembrance of Passover, 12:14-20, 25-28, 42
 - a. The importance of removing leaven.
 - b. The command to do no work on the first and seventh days.
 - c. The feast of unleavened bread was intended to remind the people of their exodus from Egypt (12:17).
 - d. The Passover meal was intended to remind the people of their deliverance from the destroying angel when the LORD destroyed the first-born in the nation of Egypt.

4. The Death of the First-born, 12:29-36
 - a. Every home has a firstborn if they have a child. And if they did not have any children, then perhaps the father or mother was the first-born of their parents' family, or they had an aunt or uncle. First-born grandfathers, fathers, and sons in the same family all died. Think of how this would look in your own family.
 - b. The Egyptians sent the Israelites away in haste and gave them material gifts to help them on their way!
5. The Exodus, 12:37-51
 - a. There were about 600,000 men (or adults) on foot, besides children. This could mean anywhere from 1.5 million to 3 million people!
 - b. Besides these were the mixed multitude—some other Semitic peoples, some God-fearing Egyptians, and most likely some criminals.
 - c. The abruptness of the exodus was the reason for the unleavened bread—the bread did not have time to rise!
 - d. Finally after 430 years they were able to leave the land.
6. The Setting Apart of the First-born, 13:1-16
 - a. Because the LORD spared the first-born of the Israelites (including the animals), He set in place a perpetual ordinance that the first-born of animals must be sacrificed or have a sacrifice given in place of them, and that the first-born children must be "bought back" from the Lord.
 - b. There was no child sacrifice in Israel; this is the closest Israel gets—they redeem the children instead of sacrificing them. There is a clear difference made between people and animals here.
 - c. When the children asked about this practice, the door would be open for them to testify to the kids about what the LORD had done. And what child does not ask "why?" about a thousand times?
7. The Pillars of Cloud and Fire, 13:17-22
 - a. Note 13:17 how gracious God is to lead the people around a longer way so that they will not be tempted above that which they are able (1 Cor. 10:13). He had already thought of that many months before Kadesh-Barnea at which the people did what God feared anyway—they were about to see battle and they did not trust the LORD.
 - b. Joseph's bones were carried up with the children of Israel, as they had been sworn to do.

Conclusion

In 13:14 the LORD says that when the children ask about why you do this Passover and feast of unleavened bread, there is not only an opportunity to tell them about the works of God, but also the requirement to do so. May we do the same with our children!