

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 11 - Speaker Notes

In the previous chapter of Exodus, Moses had been summoned into the presence of Pharaoh after three days of total darkness. Although Pharaoh demanded that Moses leave his presence at the end of the previous chapter, as we begin this chapter we see that Moses is still in the presence of Pharaoh. We learned from Chapter 10, that *Yahweh* had informed Moses that His purpose for all the plagues was to deal harshly with Egypt and make a mockery of them so that the Israelites would know Him as *Yahweh*, the self-existing, almighty, creator God. With the conclusion of this final plague, *Yahweh* will have accomplished that purpose.

In order to fully understand the current chapter, though, we will have to have an understanding of the concept of the “firstborn.” The entire Jewish notion of firstbornness actually originates from this Exodus story. The firstborn child has a special place in the heart of the father, just as Israel, as God’s firstborn, has a special place in the heart of God the Father. Later, when the Law was given, *Yahweh* informed the Israelites that every firstborn male belongs to Him and that the Jewish people must redeem, or buy-back, the firstborn. Among other things, the firstborn is entitled to a double portion of the inheritance from his father. Firstbornness even applies to the animals. Every firstborn animal was to be sacrificed to *Yahweh*. However, the firstborn donkey, which was critical to the peoples’ livelihood, was to be redeemed by offering a lamb in its place.

Back in chapter 4 of Exodus, where *Yahweh* first commissioned Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, we read:

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’” (Exodus 4:21-23)

If you recall, Jacob (later named Israel) was not the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah, his brother Esau was. Jacob and Esau were twins, but Esau came out first, so he was the true firstborn son of Isaac. However, in the 25th chapter of Genesis, we learn that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for some lentil stew. Thus, Jacob became the legal firstborn of Isaac. In the passage from chapter 4 which we just quoted, God declares that Israel is **His** firstborn son.

This explains why God considers Israel so special to Him. They are His people and they are His firstborn. Those of us who are saved in the church age, are called sons of God as well. For instance, in [Galatians 3:26](#) Paul could have said that we are children of God (*teknoi*). Instead, he said that we are all “sons” of God (*huioi*), meaning that we are those who will inherit from the father.

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ([Galatians 3:26](#))

Christians are sons of God, that is, we are a legal part of His family and we have all the rights of inheritance. But we are not the firstborn. The Israelites are the firstborn sons of God and will inherit a double portion from the Father.

Now let’s see what happened in this final encounter between Moses and Pharaoh.

Exodus 11:1

The LORD said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.

There are some Biblical scholars who translate the opening phrase here as “The LORD had said ...” This implies that God delivered this message to Moses at some point in the past and the first three verses of this chapter are a parenthesis explaining what the LORD had said to Moses prior to this meeting with Pharaoh.

Other equally qualified Biblical scholars believe that the translation we have here, “The LORD said ...” is more accurate. If this is the case, then *Yahweh* spoke to Moses when Pharaoh told him to leave. In either case, verse four is a continuation of what was said at the end of chapter ten.

What is very clear is that *Yahweh* told Moses that Pharaoh will, “drive you away completely.” The expression, “drive you away” is from the Hebrew word *garash*, meaning “to throw out or to drive out.” The implication here is that Pharaoh will not simply allow the Israelites to go for the originally stated purpose of a three-day journey to worship God, he will force them to leave Egypt altogether.

You may recall back in chapter 6, *Yahweh* told Moses a very similar thing:

But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.” (Exodus 6:1)

But, did the Egyptians actually drive the Israelites out of Egypt? If you read chapter 14 of Exodus, you will see that Pharaoh sent his army after the Israelites to bring them back. However, *Yahweh* had other plans and when the army pursued them to Pi-hahiroth, *Yahweh* stood between the Egyptian army and the Israelites. Then, when Moses parted the Red Sea, the Israelites crossed over. As soon as they crossed over, God removed himself from blocking the Egyptian army and they pursued the Israelites once again. But, when the Egyptian army was part way through the parted waters, *Yahweh* brought the waters back over them and drowned the entire Egyptian army. So, yes, just as God had predicted, Pharaoh drove the Israelites out of Egypt. Even though it was not Pharaoh’s intent to drive the Israelites out of Egypt, that is precisely what he did, just as *Yahweh* had predicted.

Exodus 11:2, 3

Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.” And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

If your early Christian upbringing was based on the King James Version of the Bible, as mine was, then you learned that the Israelites were to “borrow” silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbors. I always felt like that was wrong for God to tell the children of Israel to lie to their Egyptian neighbors, since they knew they were not coming back. However, the word “borrow” is translated from the Hebrew word *sha'al*, meaning “to ask” or “to insist.” We will see in chapter 12, that the Egyptians willingly gave of their silver and gold to the Israelites:

The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:35, 36)

Exodus 11:4-6

So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

We are now back to the conversation that Moses and Pharaoh had at the end of chapter ten. Having told Pharaoh that he will indeed never see Pharaoh’s face again, Moses delivers one final message from *Yahweh*. Moses makes it very clear that *Yahweh* is the one who will strike down all the firstborn in Egypt. In the next chapter *Yahweh* will reiterate that He is the one executing this judgment against Egypt:

For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. (Exodus 12:12)

The expression, “who sits on his throne” here is a reference to Pharaoh, not to his son. The purpose of this statement is to show that the firstborn of all in Egypt includes the greatest (Pharaoh) to the least (the slave girl). The Hebrew here literally reads “the slave girl who is behind the two mill stones.” The grinding of the family grain was a job performed by a female slave. This job was considered the lowest of positions in the household. The family mill consisted of two stones, one above the other, with a handle on the upper one. The slave would sit behind the stones and crank the upper one to grind the grain. And -- Moses informed Pharaoh that *Yahweh* will not stop here. He will execute His judgment against the animals as well as the people. At this point, there are few animals left as a result of the fifth and seventh plagues.

God’s message to Pharaoh was that none of the Egyptians would be spared, from the highest to the lowest in society, every firstborn would be killed. Not a single household in all Egypt would be spared the mourning of the loss of the first born. Some households will suffer the loss of more than one if the father and/or mother was also the firstborn of their parents.

Exodus 11:7

But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’

As Moses was informing Pharaoh about the death of all the firstborn in Egypt, he made a curious statement about Israel. He said, “But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel” This is a proverbial expression indicating a total lack of harm to the children of Israel. Some have interpreted this to mean that dogs (which were plentiful in Egypt) would not bark while the Israelites march out of Egypt. If this is true, it would certainly be one further sign that God holds them in great esteem and it would have caused the Egyptians to recognize the power of *Yahweh*.

God’s message to Pharaoh was that the children of Israel are His firstborn, His special people. They will receive divine protection while none of the Egyptian families will be spared. The fact

that this message was delivered before the plague was inflicted probably gave rise to Egyptians calling on their own gods to protect them, which of course they were not able to do.

Exodus 11:8

And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

Many people in Egypt were aware of the ongoing conflict between their Pharaoh and the leader of the Israelites, Moses. After all, they had lived through the plagues that were brought upon them because of Pharaoh’s refusal to listen to Moses. They had seen the God of Moses systematically defeat all of their gods and they had developed a great reverence for Moses. As a result, Moses tells Pharaoh that the Egyptian people will, in fact, plead with Moses to take the Israelites and “get out of town” before all of Egypt is wiped out.

The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.” (Exodus 12:33)

The text then tells us, “And he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.” Moses’ anger was apparently directed at Pharaoh because of his unwillingness to submit to Almighty God. This anger of Moses showed itself once before:

One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (Exodus 2:11, 12)

And, even after a life of obedience to God, we shall see that it is Moses’ anger which causes him to miss the joy of entering the promised land:

“Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” (Numbers 20:8-12)

In spite of his natural tendency to react with anger, Moses had the reputation of being a very humble person:

Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth. (Numbers 12:3)

Exodus 11:9

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

We have to admire Moses for both his faith and his courage. He was standing before arguably the most powerful man in the world at that time, giving him an ultimatum, knowing that he was going to reject it. God informed Moses that when he delivered this message, Pharaoh would not listen to him. God's purpose in all this was to receive glory and praise Himself for the wonders that He was about to perform.

Exodus 11:10

Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened (strengthened) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

As we have seen before, *Yahweh* actually strengthened Pharaoh's heart and gave him more courage to stand up against Moses and his God in spite of all the previous demonstrations of the power of *Yahweh*. At this point, it is easy to see that Pharaoh had blinded himself to reality, because even reality was against him now.

So What?

In this chapter we have been witness to the righteous anger of Moses. His anger wasn't always righteous, but we can learn a thing or two from his experiences. What makes you angry? Do you get angry when someone steals from you or does damage to something that you hold dear? Do you get angry when someone prevents you from accomplishing what you are attempting to do? Do you get angry when someone is unjustly critical of you or what you have done? These are examples of selfish anger. That is, anger which results from loss of personal possession, or pride. That's exactly the type of anger that Moses displayed when he killed the Egyptian for beating the Israelite and when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. This type of anger does not glorify God.

In the current chapter of Exodus, however, we see Moses' anger coming as a result of Pharaoh not respecting and submitting to the demands of *Yahweh*. This is not selfish anger, rather it is righteous anger. This is the type of anger that David talked about in the fourth chapter of Psalms:

Be angry, and do not sin ... (Psalms 4:4a)

And the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, quoted David as he was teaching the Ephesians how to handle anger:

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26, 27)

This righteous anger arises from God not receiving the glory and praise which He justly deserves.

Yahweh showed his anger at the serpent in the Garden of Eden:

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. (Genesis 3:14)

Christ showed anger at the money changers who desecrated the holiness of the temple:

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their

tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.” (John 2:14-16)

Frequently, God's anger is expressed as wrath, which is the outward expression of the anger within. The Hebrew word *qetseph* is translated “wrath” and appears more than twenty-five times in the Old Testament. In most of these occurrences, it is *Yahweh's* wrath against the Israelites for their infidelity against Him.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *orgē* is translated “wrath.” It is used in reference to God's wrath against mankind more than ten times in the book of Revelation alone.

Lest we think that God is only a God of love who is all forgiving, let us recognize that He hates evil and He is jealous with respect to worshipping of anyone or anything else. Yes, He is a God of love but He is also a God of wrath! He deserves all praise and all glory and expects every knee to bow before Him (which they will anyway one day in the future). But, God will also pour out His wrath and will judge sin and sinners! And, He also will show mercy on whomever He desires through the blood of Christ and faith in His sacrifice.

As Christians, we need to be angry when God is not given the respect and praise He is due. And, we should all fear the anger of a righteous God!