

**THE DARK NIGHT OF JUDGMENT
EXODUS 11**

- NEED:** **READINESS FOR THE COMING JUDGMENT OF GOD.**
- PROPOSITION:** **THE LAST PLAGUE ON EGYPT IS A FORETASTE OF THE
FINAL JUDGMENT.**
- OBJECTIVE:** **TO LEAD PERSONS TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE
FINAL JUDGMENT BY REPENTING OF THEIR SINS.**

INTRODUCTION:

It was appropriate that God's final act of judgment on Egypt came at night. It was the climax of long months of negotiations between Moses and the Pharaoh. It was the culmination of the judgment of God upon the nation. God had already struck the nation in nine significant ways, but now it is the final hour.

Just as God gave instruction to Moses it happened at the midnight hour. The holy God of heaven and earth passed through the land of Egypt in judgment. When His passing through was finished there was a dead child in every family in the land. The firstborn in every family had died. Not only had the first born child died, but the first born of all of their domesticated animals had died as well. There was the sounds of mourning all across the land of Egypt. God had visited Egypt in judgment.

That final stroke against the proud Egyptians is but a foretaste of that final act of judgment of which God will consummate all of human history. As we study what happened that night, we can begin to see in broad outline what the final judgment will be

like. Since the whole of the human race stands under the threat of such judgment it is important that we become familiar with what God has said will happen in that judgment. Would you with your Bible open before you look with me at that dark night of judgment long ago as we anticipate another dark night of judgment yet ahead.

I. THE DARK NIGHT OF JUDGMENT IS AN APPOINTMENT WITH HOLY GOD.

"So Moses said 'This is what the Lord says: about midnight I will go throughout Egypt.'" What is recorded in these chapters is nothing less than a visitation by holy God on a sinful and rebellious people.

1. God sets the time of the judgment.

You notice in the text that I read that God said through Moses, "About midnight I will go throughout Egypt." God did not in this statement indicate to Pharaoh the exact day, but he did tell him the time. From the time Pharaoh heard the word from Moses until the judgment actually fell involved evidently several days. It gave the people of Israel time to prepare for God's visitation. If the Pharaoh had any confidence in the word of Moses, he must have gone to bed at night wondering, "Will this be the night?" He knew that it was to take place at midnight, but he did not know the day. God in His own sovereign authority had set the time and the place for the divine visitation. This reminds us of the sermon that the missionary, Paul, preached to the learned scholars of Athens. He said to them, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance (by this He means that He overlooked their worship of idols), but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For he

has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). So, just as God had established a day for the judgment to take place in Egypt, and the time of day it would happen, so God has established a day when the whole of the human family will come before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil. He has also appointed a person who will be judge on that day - even Jesus whom he raised from the dead that has exalted to His own right hand.

2. God personally administers the judgment.

This set the last of the plagues apart from the other nine. The other nine there was some natural instrument that God used in imposing the judgment. In this case there is no natural means. God said, "About midnight I will go throughout Egypt, every firstborn son of Egypt will die, the first bornson of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the first born son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill and all of the firstborn of the cattle as well."

Now it may be God actually used an angel in inflicting death upon the firstborn in every family. It was administered by the Lord God Himself. It is not some representative of God that you meet in the midnight of judgment, but it is God himself. It is the God who made you and the God whose word you have refused to heed that you meet in the night of judgment. Pharaoh found himself confronted by the God of Abraham that he had so recklessly ignored over the past months. God administers the judgment.

In that moving description of the final judgment that John includes in Revelation, the appearance of the enthroned God on his great white throne is so awesome that even the heavens and the earth flee from before Him. This is the God that you will meet in the dark night of judgment.

II. THE DARK NIGHT OF JUDGMENT MARKS THE END OF THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD.

It is significant that the worst and final stroke from God himself comes at the end of the process of judgment. It is an indication that the long suffering of God has run its course His patience has run out!

1. God gives repeated warnings.

This chapter opens with this word from the Lord to Moses. "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt." This is a reminder to us that He had already brought nine plagues. They began with the turning of the water of the Nile into blood. But now, the final act of judgment on the part of God will bring death to the firstborn in every family. God has been patient and has with great long suffering given Pharaoh and Egypt opportunity after opportunity to repent.

If this is true of the Pharaoh, is it not also true with us. Has not God spoken again and again?

2. Man refuses God's warning.

This passage includes that repeated record of the Pharaoh's response to the Word of God.

When Pharaoh drove Moses out of his presence the last time the record indicates that Moses became "hot with anger." Moses could see the folly and the senselessness of what the Pharaoh was doing. The Pharaoh has repeatedly on nine separate occasions refused to give heed to the warning and appeal from God.

God prepared Moses for this moment by saying to him, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you - so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." And then it happened just as God had said it would. The Pharaoh hardened his heart. While the text says that God hardened his heart, we have already studied together how the act of God is the natural consequence of Pharaoh hardening his own heart.

Every person who is bent upon living in rebellion against God needs to be mindful that there is a limit to the patience of God. There is a limit on the time God gives us to repent. There will come a time when it is too late to repent. This is what had happened in Egypt it is now too late to repent! The long suffering of God has been expended.

III. THE DARK NIGHT OF JUDGMENT INVOLVES EVERY PERSON.

The universality of the judgment upon the land of Egypt is most impressive. We have already noted the words but let us hear them again, "Every firstborn son in Egypt will die from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all of the first born of the cattle as well."

1. Death comes to every family.

When God says, "every firstborn son," He means just exactly that. After God had passed through the land there wasn't a firstborn son remaining in the whole of the land of Egypt. The palace of the Pharaoh is not exempted. Some archeologists believe that they have found the tomb in which Pharaoh's firstborn son was buried. They found a tomb from that period of history in which a child was buried and the tomb was not quite finished. There is every indication that the child was buried hurriedly and unexpectedly. But it happened not only in the house of Pharaoh, it happened even in the home of the humblest slave in the Egyptian economy. Every firstborn son died.

Some have question whether or not this is what actually happened. In their desire to protect God from such a brutal blow upon the Egyptians, they tried to find some natural cause that brought about the death of a lot of children across the land of Egypt. It is better to let the record stand. It is better to understand that every firstborn son in the land died as a result of divine judgment from God. God is punishing the sin of the Egyptian Pharaoh and his people. The whole of the land of Egypt has benefited from the enslavement of the Egyptian people. The whole economy has been artificially stimulated by so much slave labor. The whole of the land of Egypt have refused to hear the voice of the God of Abraham. The judgment falls on everyone.

This should be a sobering reminder to us that "It is appointed unto man to die and after that judgment." Every living soul on this planet has an appointment with God in judgment.

2. Every person is accountable to holy God.

This is the underlying truth that we are to see in this text. It is worth remembering that the Egyptians did not acknowledge the God of Abraham as being the one and only God. They had their own set of deities before which they bowed and to whom they rendered their worship. But the revelation of God's word is that every Egyptian was accountable to God for the actions that he took or didn't take. God is the creator of heaven and earth and the holy God of all men. Regardless of the man's religious preferences or social standing, every soul is accountable for what they do with their lives. It is this truth that underlies the revelation that is found concerning the dark night of judgment. Whether you regard yourself accountable to God or not God has declared that you are accountable to Him.

IV. THE DARK NIGHT OF JUDGMENT PRODUCES PROFOUND SORROW.

You cannot miss the references in the text to the sorrow that that night brought to the land of Egypt.

1. There is no sorrow like it.

Listen to the inspired description of it, "There will be loud wailing through Egypt - worse than there has ever been or ever will be again." Can you imagine it? Ordinarily when a tragic death occurs in a family, uninvolved neighbors will rally around to become a support system for them. Nothing like that happened on this dark night. Since there was not a family in the land that had not suffered a tragic death, there was no one available to offer comfort to anyone. There had never been anything like it before, nor as there been

anything like it since. The judgment of God brings an unspeakable sorrow to the human situation.

There are many references in the New Testament to the weeping and gnashing of teeth that will accompany the final night of judgment. In the darkness of that judgment there will be soul rending screams that wails as men find themselves under the judgment of holy God.

2. There will be the sorrow of knowing that it could have been avoided.

I think this may be the reason for the intensity of the sorrow. As the proud Pharaoh looked upon the cold face of his dead son, he knew in his heart it did not have to be so! As he picked up the stiffening body of his son and pressed him to his bosom he must have cried out, "Oh, my son! My son! Why didn't listen to Moses? Why did I persist in saying no to his appeals? Why didn't I believe him when he said that the firstborn would die? It is all my fault! It is my fault! I am to blame! I did it!" He was indeed to blame.

At any point over those long weeks he could have avoided this final night of judgment, but he didn't.

That's the way it will be on that final night of judgment. On that night every person standing in the presence of God will be gripped with awareness that they did it to themselves. They will not blame God. They will not blame their families. They will not blame the church. They will say, "It is my fault. I should have known. I should have

done something about it. I procrastinated and waited too long. It is my fault. I am to blame!"

This sobering passage about the dark night of judgment ought to be warning enough to cause every one of us to search our hearts. Have I repented of my sins? Have I listened to God when He spoke? Have I done what God asked me to do? Am I ready to stand before God? Or will I be one of those upon whom the judgment falls?

The only way to avoid that dark night of judgment is to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and turn your back upon sin. Not an Israelite died that night. There wasn't even a howl of a hound dog in the part of Egypt where Israel lived that night. No mother cried over a first born son who had died. The people of Israel had heard the Word of God, obeyed the Word of God, so God made a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Are you ready for the dark night of judgment?