

Reading Schedule for March 13-19, 2017

You are probably familiar with the ten plagues that God used to convince Pharaoh to let his people go. But each and every time Pharaoh hardened his heart. God knew this would happen and he already put in place the plague of the firstborn. How would God save the Israelites from this plague? By the end of the week we will read about the Passover. This is one of the main reasons why I wanted you to read Exodus. On Wednesday night, April 12, we are going to reenact the Passover and help our church family understand the significance of it, and how closely it ties us to Jesus the Deliverer. You won't want to miss it.

March 13 – Exodus 6:28-7:24: “Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.” (v. 12 & 13) We will read this phrase several times in the next few days, “Pharaoh’s heart became hard.” The miracles we are about to read are very fascinating. But we know that Satan can imitate some of the wonderful things that God does because he masquerades as an angel of light. Pharaoh focused on the miracle rather than the message, and so when his magicians could do the same things he discounted God’s power and God’s plan. You probably know people who harden their heart to God. Even miracles will not necessarily draw them to the message of Jesus Christ. Without receptive hearts, people will remain stuck in their sin and selfishness. You will see this in Pharaoh’s life. How do you respond to this first chapter highlighting the plagues that strike Egypt?

March 14 – Exodus 8:1-32: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.’” (v.1) Another phrase that will be repeated several times is, “Let my people go.” A plague of frogs does not seem like such a big deal, but most of the Egyptians lived in small mud-brick houses with one or two rooms. A few people were rich and their houses were several stories high. If the frogs got into the royal bedrooms, which were three stories high, they had covered the land completely. It is amazing that this one plague did not soften Pharaoh’s heart, but two others would be added to God’s judgment on Egypt. Nonetheless, Pharaoh’s response would still be the same. Is there anything that stands out to you as you read the plagues of frogs, gnats and flies? Why?

March 15 – Exodus 9:1-35: “Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. ‘This time I have sinned,’ he said to them. ‘The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.’” (v.27) This seems like the breakthrough that the Hebrews have been waiting for. Pharaoh is going to pretend to let the people go. But his actions reveal that his repentance was not real. We studied repentance, and learned that worldly repentance is just being sorry, but godly repentance leads to a change in behavior. God does not accept worldly sorrow as genuine repentance. He knows our hearts and he knew that Pharaoh was only trying to alleviate the pain but not change his intentions. I think this is a relevant theme for us, even as we studied repentance a few weeks ago. We have to repent in order to change. Don’t be like Pharaoh. What stands out to you in this chapter highlighting three more plagues?

March 16 – Exodus 10:1-29: “So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.” (v. 22) It is not surprising to me that the last plague before the sacrifice of the firstborn is total darkness. The Egyptians had to realize how powerless they were in the presence of the true God. As you can read in the Life Application Bible, one of their gods was Hapi, god of the Nile River. But he

could not prevent the waters from turning into blood. Hathor, the crafty cow-goddess, was helpless as Egyptian livestock died in droves. Amon-Re, the sun-god and chief of the Egyptian gods could not stop an eerie darkness from covering the land for three full days. God was showing himself to be the all-powerful God that he is, affirming the faith of the Hebrews and confirming the false, pagan religion of the Egyptians, who had many powerless gods. Isn’t that interesting? All the while Pharaoh hardens his heart leading up to the decisive moment of God’s powerful deliverance of his people. How do you respond to this reading today?

March 17 – Exodus 11:1-10: “But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” (v.7) The word “distinction” is a significant one. God knew the Hebrews would become his chosen people. God would teach them the laws, principles and values that would make them a distinct people. It is God’s purpose that we would have such a distinction. If our character and our values are similar to the world around us, then there is no distinction. But God put this church to be the special community that honors his Son and lives in the power of the Spirit. Hebrews and Egyptians lived in the same land, but God was making them distinct and he still wants to do that today. How do you respond to this important concept of being a distinct person in our world today?

March 18 – Exodus 12:1-30: “Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.” (v.3) This begins the chapter highlighting the importance of the sacrifice of a lamb. I am sure you remember John the Baptist’s proclamation, “Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” I think of Jesus when I think of the lamb as a sacrifice, which would be a substitute for the person who would have died in the plague. The lamb would be innocent, so the shed blood would be from an innocent lamb. The Hebrew people would clearly understand that they have been spared from death because of an innocent life that had been sacrificed in their place. This is such a powerful forerunner to God’s plan through his Son Jesus Christ. What part of this chapter stirs your heart the most? Let me remind you again that on April 12 we are going to have a Seder meal and we will reenact the Passover, knowing that Jesus is our Passover lamb. I know you won’t want to miss it.

March 19 – Exodus 12:31-50: “The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.” (v.37) After 430 years, the population of the Israelites had grown to almost 2 million. No doubt, there were also some Egyptians who went with them because they had been convinced through God’s mighty works that he was the true God. It was hard to imagine moving that many people across the desert back to the Promised Land. It is an amazing event that has a certain historical record. What impresses you about the Exodus? How are you responding to God through the readings this week?

Prayers: Please pray for our Food Bank this Saturday (the 18th), which is such an important opportunity for us to reach our community with the love of Christ.