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Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **15: God's Power Revealed**

MANY years had the children of Israel been in servitude to the Egyptians. Only a few families went down into Egypt, but they had become a large multitude. And being surrounded with idolatry, many of them had lost the knowledge of the true God and had forgotten His law. And they united with the Egyptians in their worship of the sun, moon, and stars, also of beasts and images, the work of men's hands.

Everything around the children of Israel was calculated to make them forget the living God. Yet there were those among the Hebrews who preserved the knowledge of the true God, the Maker of the heavens and of the earth. They were grieved to see their children daily witnessing, and even engaging in, the abominations of the idolatrous people around them, and bowing down to Egyptian deities, made of wood and stone, and offering sacrifice to these senseless objects. The faithful were grieved, and in their distress they cried unto the Lord for deliverance from the Egyptian yoke, that He would bring them out of Egypt, where they might be rid of idolatry and the corrupting influences which surrounded them.

But many of the Hebrews were content to remain in bondage rather than to go to a new country and meet with the difficulties attending such a journey. Therefore the Lord did not deliver them by the first display of His signs and wonders before Pharaoh. He overruled events to more fully develop the tyrannical spirit of Pharaoh, and that He might manifest His great power to the Egyptians, and also before His people, to make them anxious to leave Egypt and choose the service of God.

Although many of the Israelites had become corrupted by idolatry, yet the faithful stood firm. They had not concealed their faith, but openly acknowledged before the Egyptians that they served the only true and living God. They rehearsed the evidences of God's existence and power from creation down. The Egyptians had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the faith of the Hebrews and their God. They had tried to subvert the faithful worshipers of the true God, and were annoyed because they had not succeeded, either by threats, the promise of rewards, or by cruel treatment.

The last two kings who had occupied the throne of Egypt had been tyrannical and had cruelly entreated the Hebrews. The elders of Israel had endeavored to encourage the sinking faith of the Israelites, by referring to the promise made to Abraham, and the prophetic words of Joseph just before he died, foretelling their deliverance from Egypt. Some would listen and believe. Others looked at their own sad condition, and would not hope.

**Israel Influenced by their Environment**

The Egyptians had learned the expectations of the children of Israel and derided their hopes of deliverance and spoke scornfully of the power of their God. They pointed them to their own situation as a people, as merely a nation of slaves, and tauntingly said to them, If your God is so just and merciful, and possesses power above the Egyptian gods, why does He not make you a free people? Why not manifest His greatness and power, and exalt you?

The Egyptians then called the attention of the Israelites to their own people, who worshiped gods of their own choosing, which the Israelites termed false gods. They exultingly said that their gods had prospered them, and had given them food and raiment and great riches, and that their gods had also given the Israelites into their hands to serve them, and that they had power to oppress them and destroy their lives, so that they should be no people. They derided the idea that the Hebrews would ever be delivered from slavery. {SR 114.1}

Pharaoh boasted that he would like to see their God deliver them from his hands. These words destroyed the hopes of many of the children of Israel. It appeared to them very much as the king and his counselors had said. They knew that they were treated as slaves, and that they must endure just that degree of oppression their taskmasters and rulers might put upon them. Their male children had been hunted and slain. Their own lives were a burden, and they were believing in, and worshiping, the God of heaven. {SR 114.2}

Then they contrasted their condition with that of the Egyptians. They did not believe at all in a living God who had power to save or to destroy. Some of them worshiped idols, images of wood and stone, while others chose to worship the sun, moon, and stars; yet they were prospered and wealthy. And some of the Hebrews thought that if God was above all gods He would not thus leave them as slaves to an idolatrous nation.

The faithful servants of God understood that it was because of their unfaithfulness to God as a people, and their disposition to intermarry with other nations, and thus being led into idolatry, that the Lord suffered them to go into Egypt. And they firmly declared to their brethren that God would soon bring them up from Egypt and break their oppressive yoke.

The time had come when God would answer the prayers of His oppressed people, and would bring them from Egypt with such mighty displays of His power that the Egyptians would be compelled to acknowledge that the God of the Hebrews, whom they had despised, was above all gods. He would now punish them for their idolatry and for their proud boasting of the mercies bestowed upon them by their senseless gods. God would glorify His own name, that other nations might hear of His power and tremble at His mighty acts, and that His people, by witnessing His miraculous works, should fully turn from their idolatry to render to Him pure worship.

In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, God plainly showed His distinguished mercy to His people before all the Egyptians. God saw fit to execute His judgments upon Pharaoh, that he might know by sad experience, since he would not otherwise be convinced, that His power was superior to all others. That His name might be declared throughout all the earth, He would give exemplary and demonstrative proof to all nations of His divine power and justice. It was the design of God that these exhibitions of power should strengthen the faith of His people, and that their posterity should steadfastly worship Him alone who had wrought such merciful wonders in their behalf.

Moses declared to Pharaoh, after he required the people to make brick without straw, that God, whom he pretended not to know, would compel him to yield to His claims and acknowledge His authority as supreme Ruler.

**The Plagues**

The miracle of the rod's becoming a serpent and the river's being turned to blood did not move the hard heart of Pharaoh, only to increase his hatred of the Israelites. The work of the magicians led him to believe that these miracles were performed by magic, but he had abundant evidence that this was not the case when the plague of frogs was removed. God could have caused them to disappear and return to dust in a moment, but He did not do this, lest, after they should be removed, the king and the Egyptians should say that it was the result of magic, like the work of the magicians. They died, and then they gathered them together into heaps. Their bodies they could see before them, and they corrupted the atmosphere. Here the king and all Egypt had evidences which their vain philosophy could not dispose of, that this work was not magic but a judgment from the God of heaven.

The magicians could not produce the lice. The Lord would not suffer them to make it even appear to their own sight, or to that of the Egyptians, that they could produce the plague of the lice. He would remove all excuse of unbelief from Pharaoh. He compelled even the magicians themselves to say, "This is the finger of God."

Next came the plague of the swarms of flies. They were not such flies as harmlessly annoy us in some seasons of the year, but the flies brought upon Egypt were large and venomous. Their sting was very painful upon man and beast. God separated His people from the Egyptians and suffered no flies to appear throughout their coasts.

The Lord then sent the plague of the murrain upon their cattle, and at the same time preserved the cattle of the Hebrews, that not one of them died. Next came the plague of the boil upon man and beast, and the magicians could not protect themselves from it. The Lord then sent upon Egypt the plague of the hail mingled with fire, with lightnings and thunder. The time of each plague was given before it came, that it might not be said to have happened by chance. The Lord demonstrated to the Egyptians that the whole earth was under the command of the God of the Hebrews--that thunder, hail, and storm obey His voice. Pharaoh, the proud king who once inquired, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" humbled himself and said, "I have sinned . . .: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." He begged of Moses to be his intercessor with God, that the terrific thunder and lightning might cease.

The Lord next sent the dreadful plague of the locusts. The king chose to receive the plagues rather than to submit to God. Without remorse he saw his whole kingdom under the miracle of these dreadful judgments. The Lord then sent darkness upon Egypt. The people were not merely deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive, so that breathing was difficult; yet the Hebrews had a pure atmosphere and light in their dwellings.

One more dreadful plague God brought upon Egypt, more severe than any before it. It was the king and the idolatrous priests who opposed to the last the request of Moses. The people desired that the Hebrews should be permitted to leave Egypt. Moses related to Pharaoh and to the people of Egypt, also to the Israelites, the nature and effect of the last plague. On that night, so terrible to the Egyptians and so glorious to the people of God, was the solemn ordinance of the passover instituted.

It was very hard for the Egyptian king and a proud and idolatrous people to yield to the requirements of the God of heaven. Very slow was the king of Egypt to yield. While under most grievous affliction he would yield a little; but when the affliction was removed, he would take back all he had granted. Thus, plague after plague was brought upon Egypt, and he yielded no more than he was compelled to by the dreadful visitations of God's wrath. The king even persisted in his rebellion after Egypt had been ruined.

Moses and Aaron related to Pharaoh the nature and effect of each plague which should follow his refusal to let Israel go. Every time he saw these plagues come exactly as he was told they would come; yet he would not yield. First, he would only grant them permission to sacrifice to God in the land of Egypt; then, after Egypt had suffered by God's wrath, he granted that the men alone should go. After Egypt had been nearly destroyed by the plague of the locusts, then he granted that their children and their wives might go also, but would not let their cattle go. Moses then told the king that the angel of God would slay their first-born.

Every plague had come a little closer and more severe, and this was to be more dreadful than any before it. But the proud king was exceedingly angry, and humbled not himself. And when the Egyptians saw the great preparations being made among the Israelites for that dreadful night, they ridiculed the token of blood upon their doorposts.

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