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At Midnight the LORD Struck Down all the Firstborn in Egypt

12: 29-36

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn of Egypt DIG: From Pharaoh's response, how did the tenth plague differ in its impact from all the others? What was the result of all his efforts to resist against God?

REFLECT: If God kept his promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:14), will He keep His promise to you? Is your heart soft toward, or hardened against God? Have you been resisting His will in your life, or are you fully devoted to Him? What has been the result of your actions?

This is the last judgment and the last plague to come upon the land of **Egypt**. **God** had prepared **His** people for it. The land of Goshen had escaped the last three plagues but could not escape this one unless there was blood on the doorposts. Any **Egyptian** could have followed the example of **the Israelites** by putting blood on his doorpost as a statement of belief in **the God of Isra'el**, and the destroyer would have spared the firstborn in his house also. It is going to surprise many people someday when they discover that **Christ** is not going to ask you where you worship. If you have trusted **Christ** as your **Savior, the Holy Spirit** has baptized you into **His** body, and you are **His** child (**John 1:12**).²¹⁷



At midnight God fulfilled what **He** had promised (**11:5**) and **He** had no respect for social

or civil status. Up until now **ADONAI** had not touched human life, but that night **He struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon.** Those who try to explain the ten plagues of **Egypt** as natural phenomenon cannot explain this one away. **All the firstborn of Egypt were dead.** If both the father and the son were **firstborn**, then there were two deaths in that house. It is difficult to imagine the impact that those deaths had on **the Egyptian** culture. Not only the deaths, but also what it implied. **God Almighty** was against them all. The plague included **the firstborn of all the livestock as well (12:29).** From what we know about the significance of the Apis bull and the god Hathor (9:1-7), this would have a major impact on the religious cults of **Egypt**.

Because **Amenhotep II** was not **the firstborn** of Thutmose III's five sons, **he** did not die that night. But **his own firstborn son** could not escape the plague and was found **dead**. Therefore, **his second son, Thutmose IV**, eventually became his successor. After **his father, Amenhotep II died, Thutmose IV** spent the rest of **his** life trying to legitimize **his** position as **Pharaoh** because **he** was not the eldest **son**, nor the natural heir to the throne. **He** even invented a story called *the Dream Stella*. **He** said **the Egyptian** god Harem-akht appeared to **him** one night in a dream and promised that if **he** would uncover the Sphinx that was buried in the sand, **he** would become **Pharaoh**. That **he** did, by uncovering and restoring the Sphinx, and in so doing, **he** claimed that the gods of **Egypt** had given **him** the right to rule. During the remainder of **his** reign, **Isra'el** was in her wilderness wanderings.

Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead (12:30). The death of **Pharaoh's son** was not a silent painless one. It was one that brought about the awakening of **Pharaoh** and **his** servants, for all over **Egypt** the wailing and the tears could be heard. While **Amenhotep II** may have found escape from the previous plagues, or perhaps even rationalized them, **he** could not escape this one. Its effects and implications were perfectly clear. That **son** whom **he** had cherished, **the one** born of the gods, now lay in **his** bed lifeless and limp.²¹⁸ The final plague was primarily directed against **Pharaoh** as a god of **Egypt** and against the royal succession.²¹⁹ **The God of the Israelites** was much more powerful than **he** had ever imagined. In that moment of spiritual clarity, **his** attitude changed from arrogance to desperation.

The King of Egypt was humbled. **He** was forced to summon to the palace the very men **he** had earlier banished from **his sight (10:28)**. During the night **Pharaoh** summoned **Moses and Aaron** from Goshen and demanded that **they** leave, saying: **Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites!** For the first time he calls **the Hebrews** by the name **Israelites**,

acknowledging **their** status as **a people**. **Go, worship ADONAI as you have requested (12:31)**. Although **he** still probably held out hope that **they** would eventually come back, **he** said: **Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go (12:32a)**. Until then **Pharaoh** was reluctant to give in to **Moses'** demands but this plague had taken the life of **his own son**. **God** did not begin by taking the lives of **the firstborn**; **He** began the contest by changing **Aaron's staff into a snake**. If **Pharaoh** had believed **God** then, **the children of Isra'el** could have left **Egypt** and **he** would have spared **his own people** the ten plagues. The accountability and the consequences lay on **his** shoulders alone.

However, there was more humiliation to come. **And he also** said: **Bless me, or pray for me (12:32b)**. Previously, **Pharaoh** had questioned the existence and power of **ADONAI (5:2)**, but now **he** asked for **His** blessing. This was quite amazing, seeing that **he** thought **himself** to be a god (**to see link click [Bc](#) - Pharaoh as god and upholder of Ma'at**)! Was this request honorable? Was it a sign of true remorse? Or was it sarcasm? We don't know. But, the one thing that we do know is that there was no real repentance on **his** part. **He** wanted the blessing without the accountability, the shame, or the consequences. **He** simply wanted the plagues to be gone. We know this is the case because once the immediate shock following the final plague was over, **the Egyptian king** went after **the Israelites** in order to destroy **them**.²²⁰

The fear and frustration of **the common people** were clearly evident. Min and Isis, the god and goddess of reproduction, were nowhere to be found. **ADONAI** had brought judgment on **their gods (Numbers 33:5)**. As a result, **the Egyptians** urged **the Jews** to hurry and leave the country. They said: **For otherwise we will die (12:33)**. This verse literally reads: *the Egyptians pressed hard and made strongly upon the people*. There is a touch of irony here. The verb is the same one that was used of **God** hardening, or *making heavy*, Pharaoh's heart (7:13 and 22, 8:15). So, before the Egyptian hearts were hardened and would not let **the Israelites go (9:34)**, but now **they** were equally hardened to make them leave! **The Egyptians** didn't know where the judgment of **ADONAI** would end. **He** had taken **their** firstborn. What would **He** do next? **They** were afraid that **they** would *all* die.

Before leaving **Egypt**, **the Israelites** performed two other tasks. First, **the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing (12:34)**. **They** left in great haste. It is to remember this event that the unleavened bread has become a part of the Passover ceremony ever since. **Deuteronomy 16:3** says in regard to the instructions for the Passover: **Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste - so that**

all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt.

Secondly, **the Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold like jewelry, ornaments and the like, and for clothing (12:35). The silver and gold was used later for the golden calf (32:2-4) and the Tabernacle (35:22-24). ADONAI had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for. This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram (Genesis 15:14). Therefore, the Egyptians were saved (Hebrew: *natsal*) from physical death (12:36). How so? It was by means of a **Guilt Offering** (see the commentary on [Leviticus Am - The Guilt Offering: Evidence of Repentance](#)). Later, the Philistines would do the same thing (see the commentary on [the Life of King Sha'ul Bj - The Ark Leaving Philistia](#)). The Israelites marched out of Egypt through the front door, with dignity, not like dogs crawling out through the back fence, but like **God's people**. This was another humiliation for Egypt.**²²¹

It is important to realize that the Passover was a historical event, that it was set and fixed in time and space. It was not merely an idea or a belief that found its reality in future celebrations, but it really did happen. The same can be said for the significance of the Seder, or Passover meal, today. That celebration truly represents the historical occurrence of the death and resurrection of **Christ**. Paul underscores the gravity and weight of the historicity of those events when he said: **But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith (First Corinthians 15:12-14).** The very essence of biblical faith is the fact that the bible records actual historical events.²²²