

CHAPTER 10

The eighth and ninth of the plagues of Egypt, that of locusts and that of darkness, are recorded in this chapter.

I. Concerning the plague of locusts,

1. God instructs Moses in the meaning of these amazing dispensations of his providence (v. 1, 2).
2. He threatens the locusts (v. 3-6).
3. Pharaoh, at the persuasion of his servants, is willing to treat again with Moses (v. 7-9), but they cannot agree (v. 10, 11).
4. The locusts come (v. 12-15).
5. Pharaoh cries Peccavi — I have offended (v. 16, 17), whereupon Moses prays for the removal of the plague, and it is done; but Pharaoh's heart is still hardened (v. 18-20).

II. Concerning the plague of darkness,

1. It is inflicted (v. 21-23).
2. Pharaoh again treats with Moses about a surrender, but the treaty breaks off in a heat (v. 26, etc.).

EXODUS 10:1-11

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Here,

I. Moses is instructed. We may well suppose that he, for his part, was much astonished both at Pharaoh's obstinacy and at God's severity, and could not but be compassionately concerned for the desolations of Egypt, and at a loss to conceive what this contest would come to at last. Now here God tells him what he designed, not only Israel's release, but the magnifying of his own name: *That thou mayest tell* in thy writings, which shall continue to the world's end, *what I have wrought in Egypt*, v. 1, 2. The ten plagues of Egypt must be inflicted, that they may be recorded for the generations to come as undeniable proofs,

1. Of God's overruling power in the kingdom of nature, his dominion over all the creatures, and his authority to use them either as servants to his justice or sufferers by it, according to the counsel of his will.

2. Of God's victorious power over the kingdom of Satan, to restrain the malice and chastise the insolence of his and his church's enemies. These plagues are standing monuments of the greatness of God, the happiness of the church, and the sinfulness of sin, and standing monitors to the children of men in all ages not to *provoke the Lord to jealousy* nor to *strive with their Maker*. The benefit of these instructions to the world sufficiently balances the expense.

II. Pharaoh is reproved (v. 3): *Thus saith the Lord God of the poor, despised, persecuted, Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?* Note, It is justly expected from the greatest of men that they humble themselves before the great God, and it is at their peril if they refuse to do it. This has more than once been God's quarrel with princes. Belshazzar did not humble his heart, ^{<2162>}Daniel 5:22. Zedekiah humbled not himself before Jeremiah, ^{<4482>}2 Chronicles 36:12. Those that will not humble themselves God will humble. Pharaoh had sometimes pretended to humble himself, but no account was made of it, because he was neither sincere nor constant in it.

III. The plague of locusts is threatened, v. 4-6. The hail had broken down the fruits of the earth, but these locusts should come and devour them: and not only so, but they should fill their houses, whereas the former inroads of these insects had been confined to their lands. This should be much worse than all the calamities of that king which had ever been known. Moses, when he had delivered his message, not expecting any better answer than he had formerly, *turned himself and went out from Pharaoh*, v. 6. Thus Christ appointed his disciples to depart from those who would not receive them, and to *shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them*; and ruin is not far off from those who are thus justly abandoned by the Lord's messengers, ^{<1957>}1 Samuel 15:27, etc.

IV. Pharaoh's attendants, his ministers of state, or privy-counsellors, interpose, to persuade him to come to some terms with Moses, v. 7. They, as in duty bound, represent to him the deplorable condition of the kingdom (*Egypt is destroyed*), and advise him by all means to release his prisoners (*Let the men go*); for Moses, they found, would be a snare to them till it

was done, and it were better to consent at first than to be compelled at last. The Israelites had become a burdensome stone to the Egyptians, and now, at length, the princes of Egypt were willing to be rid of them, ^{<310>}Zechariah 12:3. Note, It is a thing to be regretted (and prevented, if possible) that a whole nation should be ruined for the pride and obstinacy of its princes, *Salus populi suprema lex — To consult the welfare of the people is the first of laws.*

V. A new treaty is, hereupon, set on foot between Pharaoh and Moses, in which Pharaoh consents for the Israelites to go into the wilderness to do sacrifice; but the matter in dispute was who should go, v. 8.

1. Moses insists that they should take their whole families, and all their effects, along with them, v. 9. note, Those that serve God must serve him with all they have. Moses pleads, “We must hold a feast, therefore we must have our families to feast with, and our flocks and herds to feast upon, to the honour of God.”

2. Pharaoh will by no means grant this: he will allow the men to go, pretending that this was all they desired, though this matter was never yet mentioned in any of the former treaties; but, for the *little ones*, he resolves to keep them as hostages, to oblige them to return, v. 10, 11. In a great passion he curses them, and threatens that, if they offer to remove their little ones, they will do it at their peril. Note, Satan does all he can to hinder those that serve God themselves from bringing their children in to serve him. He is a sworn enemy to early piety, knowing how destructive it is to the interests of his kingdom; whatever would hinder us from engaging our children to the utmost in God's service, we have reason to suspect the hand of Satan in it.

3. The treaty, hereupon, breaks off abruptly; those that before went out from Pharaoh's presence (v. 6) were now driven out. Those will quickly hear their doom that cannot bear to hear their duty. See ^{<426>}2 Chronicles 25:16. *Quos Deus destruet eos demetat — Whom God intends to destroy he delivers up to infatuation.* Never was man so infatuated to his own ruin as Pharaoh was.

EXODUS 10:12-20

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Here is,

I. The invasion of the land by the locusts — *God's great army*, ^{<201>}Joel 2:11. God bids *Moses stretch out his hand* (v. 12), to beckon them, as it wee (for they came at a call), and he *stretched forth his rod*, v. 13. Compare ^{<102>}Exodus 9:22 23. Moses ascribes it to the stretching out, not of his own hand, but the *rod of God*, the instituted sign of God's presence with him. The locusts obey the summons, and fly upon the wings of the wind, the east wind, and *caterpillars without number*, as we are told, ^{<153>}Psalms 105:34, 35. A formidable army of horse and foot might more easily have been resisted than this host of insects. Who then is able to stand before the great God?

II. The desolations they made in it (v. 15): They *covered the face of the earth*, and *ate up the fruit* of it. The earth God has *given to the children of men*; yet, when God pleases, he can disturb their possession and send locusts and caterpillars to force them out. Herbs grow *for the service of man*; yet, when God pleases, those contemptible insects shall not only be fellow-commoners with him, but shall plunder him, and eat the bread out of his mouth. Let our labour be, not for the habitation and meat which thus lie exposed, but for those which *endure to eternal life*, which cannot be thus invaded, nor thus corrupted.

III. Pharaoh's admission, hereupon, v. 16, 17. He had driven Moses and Aaron from him (v. 11), telling them (it is likely) he would have no more to do with them. But now he calls for them again in all haste, and makes court to them with as much respect as before he had dismissed them with disdain. Note, The day will come when those who set at nought their counsellors, and despise all their reproofs, will be glad to make an interest in them and engage them to intercede on their behalf. The foolish virgins court the wise to *give them of their oil*; and see ^{<116>}Psalms 141:6.

1. Pharaoh confesses his fault: *I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you*. He now sees his own folly in the slights and affronts he had put on God and his ambassadors, and *seems* at least, to repent of it. When God convinces men of sin, and humbles them for it, their contempt

of God's ministers, and the word of the Lord in their mouths, will certainly come into the account, and lie heavily upon their consciences. Some think that when Pharaoh said, "The LORD *your* God," he did in effect say, "The LORD shall not be *my* God." Many treat with God as a potent enemy, whom they are willing not to be at war with, but care not for treating with him as their rightful prince, to whom they are willing to submit with loyal affection. True penitents lament sin as committed against God, even their own God, to whom they stand obliged.

2. He begs pardon, not of God, as penitents ought, but of Moses, which was more excusable in him, because, by a special commission, Moses was made a *god to Pharaoh*, and *whosoever sins he remitted they were forgiven*; when he prays, *Forgive this once*, he, in effect, promises not to offend in like manner any more, yet seems loth to express that promise, nor does he say any thing particularly of letting the people go. Note, Counterfeit repentance commonly cheats men with general promises and is loth to covenant against particular sins.

3. He entreats Moses and Aaron to pray for him. There are those who, in distress, implore the help of other persons' prayers, but have no mind to pray for themselves, showing thereby that they have no true love to God, nor any delight in communion with him. Pharaoh desires their prayers *that this death* only might be taken away, not *this sin*: he deprecates the plague of locusts, not the plague of a hard heart, which yet was much the more dangerous.

IV. The removal of the judgment, upon the prayer of Moses, v. 18, 19. This was,

1. As great an instance of the power of God as the judgment itself. An east wind brought the locusts, and now a west wind carried them off. Note, Whatever point of the compass the wind is in, it is fulfilling God's word, and turns about by his counsel. The *wind bloweth where it listeth*, as it respects any control of ours; not so as it respects the control of God: he *directeth it under the whole heaven*.

2. It was as great a proof of the authority of Moses, and as firm a ratification of his commission and his interest in that God who both *makes peace* and *creates evil*, ²⁸⁸¹ Isaiah 45:7. Nay, hereby he not only commanded the respect, but recommended himself to the good affections of the Egyptians, inasmuch as, while the judgment came in obedience to

his summons, the removal of it was in answer to his prayers. He never desired the woeful day, though he threatened it. His commission indeed ran against Egypt, but his intercession was for it, which was a good reason why they should love him, though they feared him.

3. It was also as strong an argument for their repentance as the judgment itself; for by this it appeared that God is ready to forgive, and swift to show mercy. If he turn away a particular judgment, as he did often from Pharaoh, or defer it, as in Ahab's case, upon the profession of repentance and the outward tokens of humiliation, what will he do if we be sincere, and how welcome will true penitents be to him! O that this goodness of God might lead us to repentance!

V. Pharaoh's return to his impious resolution again not to let the people go (v. 20), through the righteous hand of God upon him, hardening his heart, and confirming him in his obstinacy. Note, Those that have often baffled their convictions, and stood it out against them, forfeit the benefit of them, and are justly given up to those lusts of their own hearts which (how strong soever their convictions) prove too strong for them.

~~<012>~~ EXODUS 10:21-29

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Here is,

I. The plague of darkness brought upon Egypt, and a most dreadful plague it was, and therefore is put first of the ten in ~~<045>~~ Psalm 105:28, though it was one of the last; and in the destruction of the spiritual Egypt it is produced by the fifth vial, which is poured out upon the *seat of the beast*, ~~<660>~~ Revelation 16:10. *His kingdom was full of darkness.* Observe particularly concerning this plague,

1. That it was a total darkness. We have reason to think, not only that the lights of heaven were clouded, but that all their fires and candles were put out by the damps or clammy vapours which were the cause of this darkness; for it is said (v. 23), *They saw not one another.* It is threatened to the wicked (~~<1805>~~ Job 18:5, 6) that the *spark of his fire shall not shine* (even *the sparks of his own kindling*, as they are called, ~~<2811>~~ Isaiah 50:11),

and that the *light shall be dark in his tabernacle*. Hell is *utter darkness*. The light of a *candle shall shine no more at all in thee*, ^{<6823>}Revelation 18:23.

2. That it was darkness which *might be felt* (v. 21), felt in its *causes* by their fingers' ends (so thick were the fogs), felt in its *effects*, some think, by their eyes, which were pricked with pain, and made the more sore by their rubbing them. Great pain is spoken of as the effect of that darkness, ^{<6810>}Revelation 16:10, which alludes to this.

3. No doubt it astonished and terrified them. The cloud of locusts, which had *darkened the land* (v. 15), was nothing to this. The tradition of the Jews is that in this darkness they were terrified by the apparitions of evil spirits, or rather by dreadful sounds and murmurs which they made, or (which is no less frightful) by the horrors of their own consciences; and this is the plague which some think is intended (for, otherwise, it is not mentioned at all there) ^{<4989>}Psalm 78:49, *He poured upon them the fierceness of his anger, by sending evil angels among them*; for to those to whom the devil has been a deceiver he will, at length, be a terror.

4. It continued three days, *six nights* (says bishop Hall) *in one*; so long they were imprisoned by those chains of darkness, and the most lightsome palaces were perfect dungeons. No *man rose from his place*, v. 23. They were all confined to their houses; and such a terror seized them that few of them had the courage to go from the chair to the bed, or from the bed to the chair. Thus were they *silent in darkness*, ^{<0929>}1 Samuel 2:9. Now Pharaoh had time to consider, if he would have improved it. Spiritual darkness is spiritual bondage; while Satan blinds men's eyes that they see not, he binds them hands and feet that they work not for God, nor move towards heaven. They *sit in darkness*.

5. It was a righteous thing with God thus to punish them. Pharaoh and his people had rebelled against the light of God's word, which Moses spoke to them; justly therefore are they punished with darkness, for they loved it and chose it rather. The blindness of their minds brings upon them this darkness of the air. Never was mind so blinded as Pharaoh's, never was air so darkened as Egypt's. The Egyptians by their cruelty would have extinguished the lamp of Israel, and quenched their coal; justly therefore does God put out their lights. Compare it with the punishment of the Sodomites, ^{<0911>}Genesis 19:11. Let us dread the consequences of sin; if three days' darkness was so dreadful, what will everlasting darkness be?

6. The children of Israel, at the same time, had *light in their dwellings* (v. 23), not only in the land of Goshen, where most of them dwelt, but in the habitations of those who were dispersed among the Egyptians: for that some of them were thus dispersed appears from the distinction afterwards appointed to be put on their door-posts, ^{<1217>}Exodus 12:7. This is an instance,

(1.) Of the power of God above the ordinary power of nature. We must not think that we share in common mercies as a matter of course, and therefore that we owe no thanks to God for them; he could distinguish, and withhold that from us which he grants to other. He does indeed ordinarily make his sun to shine on the just and unjust; but he could make a difference, and we must own ourselves indebted to his mercy that he does not.

(2.) Of the particular favour he bears to his people: they *walk in the light* when others *wander endlessly in thick darkness*; wherever there is an Israelite indeed, though in this dark world, there is light, there is a *child of light*, one for whom *light is sown*, and whom the *day-spring from on high visits*. When God made this difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians, who would not have preferred the poorest cottage of an Israelite to the finest palace of an Egyptian? There is still a real difference, though not so discernible a one, between the house of the wicked, which is under a curse, and the habitation of the just, which is blessed, ^{<1013>}Proverbs 3:33. We should believe in that difference, and govern ourselves accordingly. Upon ^{<1953>}Psalm 105:28, *He sent darkness and made it dark, and they rebelled not against his word*, some ground a conjecture that, during these three days of darkness, the Israelites were circumcised, in order to their celebrating the passover which was now approaching, and that the command which authorized this was the word against which they rebelled not; for their circumcision, when they entered Canaan, is spoken of as a second general circumcision, ^{<1112>}Joshua 5:2. During these three days of darkness to the Egyptians, if God had so pleased, the Israelites, by the light which they had, might have made their escape, and without asking leave of Pharaoh; but God would bring them out *with a high hand*, and not by stealth, nor in haste, ^{<2121>}Isaiah 52:12.

II. Here is the impression made upon Pharaoh by this plague, much like that of the foregoing plagues.

1. It awakened him so far that he renewed the treaty with Moses and Aaron, and now, at length, consented that they should take their little ones with them, only he would have their cattle left in pawn, v. 24. It is common for sinners thus to bargain with God Almighty. Some sins they will leave, but not all; they will leave their sins for a time, but they will not bid them a final farewell; they will allow him some share in their hearts, but the world and the flesh must share with him: thus they mock God, but they deceive themselves. Moses resolves not to abate in his terms: *Our cattle shall go with us*, v. 26. Note, The terms of reconciliation are so fixed that though men dispute them ever so long they cannot possibly alter them, nor bring them lower. We must come up to the demands of God's will, for we cannot expect he should condescend to the provisos of our lusts. God's messengers must always be bound up by that rule (~~2459~~ Jeremiah 15:19), *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*. Moses gives a very good reason why they must take their cattle with them; they must go to do sacrifice, and therefore they must take wherewithal. What numbers and kinds of sacrifices would be required they did not yet know, and therefore they must take all they had. Note, With ourselves, and our children, we must devote all our worldly possessions to the service of God, because we know not what use God will make of what we have, nor in what way we may be called upon to honour God with it.

2. Yet it exasperated him so far that, when he might not make his own terms, he broke off the conference abruptly, and took up a resolution to treat no more. Wrath now came upon him to the utmost, and he became outrageous beyond all bounds, v. 28. Moses is dismissed in anger, forbidden the court upon pain of death, forbidden so much as to meet Pharaoh any more, as he had been used to do, by the river's side: *In that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die*. Prodigious madness! Had he not found that Moses could plague him without seeing his face? Or had he forgotten how often he had sent for Moses as his physician to heal him and ease him of his plagues? and must he now be bidden to come near him no more? Impotent malice! To threaten him with death who was armed with such a power, and at whose mercy he had so often laid himself. What will not hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandments bring men to? Moses takes him at his word (v. 29): *I will see thy face no more*, that is, "after this time;" for this conference did not break off till ~~2418~~ Exodus 11:8, when Moses went out *in a great anger*, and told Pharaoh how soon he would change his mind, and his proud spirit would come

down, which was fulfilled (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 12:31), when Pharaoh became a humble supplicant to Moses to depart. So that, after this interview, Moses came no more, till he was sent for. Note, When men drive God's word from them he justly permits their delusions, and answers them according to the multitude of their idols. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, he presently left them.