

Lord, You have given us Your Word for a light to shine upon our path; grant us so to meditate on that Word, and to follow its teaching, that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. [St. Jerome 340-420 AD]

Exodus 8:20-32

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, "This is what the LORD says: let my people go, so that they may worship me. ²¹ If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them.

²² "But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. ²³ I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow."

²⁴ And the LORD did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

²⁵ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.'

²⁶ But Moses said, 'That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the LORD our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? ²⁷ We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, as he commands us.'

²⁸ Pharaoh said, 'I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.'

²⁹ Moses answered, 'As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only let Pharaoh be sure that he does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.'

³⁰ Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD, ³¹ and the LORD did what Moses asked. The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not a fly remained. ³² But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

Consider themes throughout Exodus contrasted against Matthew's Gospel account; covenant blessings and curses, the divine Name, the need for sacrifice, and the two sons of God (in Exodus – the son who needs salvation, in Matthew – the Son who brings salvation). The plagues show both the power and authority of the God of the Israelites, as well as the lack of those powers with the Egyptian gods.

What about: The time it takes and all the plagues. Couldn't God have just done it all instantly? The purpose of each individual plague. What was happening and why was it happening?

Further reading? Consider reading Matthew's Gospel in parallel to Exodus, see also on YouTube the Bible Project commentary on Exodus.

O good shepherd, seek us out, and bring us home to Your fold again. Deal favourably with us according to Your good pleasure, till we may dwell in Your house all the days of our lives, and praise You forever and ever with them that are there. Amen. [St. Jerome 342-420 AD]