

## 1 Invasion of the Stink Bugs!

- Are We Doomed?

## 2 Invasive Species

- Asian tiger mosquitoes. Chinese mitten crabs. Asian emerald ash borers. Northern snakeheads. Mexican fruit flies. Asian reticulated pythons.
- All these creatures have come from overseas and invaded the United States, causing extensive damage to our landscape, vegetation and wildlife.

## 3 Invasive Species

## 4 Asian Bighead Carp

## 5 Asian Bighead Carp

## 6 Invasive Species

- Invasive species are dangerous because they have no natural enemies in our country, no native predators to control their growth.
- These species stink. Especially the latest arrival, the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.
- According to The Washington Post (August 8, 2011), these bugs took a \$37 million bite out of the Mid-Atlantic's apple crop in 2010.
- They also love peaches, grapes and other fruit, and have the nasty habit of crawling into houses, seeking warmth in cracks, and sometimes climbing into the beds of sleeping humans.

## 7 Invasive Species

- Even worse, they're on the move.
- They have migrated from eastern Pennsylvania to 32 other states (including Kentucky), and have been spotted as far south as North Carolina.
- The creatures love to be warm, and their population might explode in the sunny Southeast.
- Douglas Luster of the U.S. Department of Agriculture says, "If they get to Florida, it could be like the atomic bomb going off."

## 8 Invasive Species

- Farmers are trying to control the pest with insecticides, and researchers are looking at the possibility of introducing a non-stinging parasitic wasp to go after stink bug eggs.
- The danger is that this parasitic wasp, used so effectively to control stink bugs in Asia, could become an invasive species itself.

## 9 People of Israel

- In the book of Numbers, the people of Israel were on the move, heading toward the promised land.
- As they passed around the land of Edom, the people became impatient, and they spoke against God and Moses, saying, . . .
- “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” (Numbers 21:5 NIV)

## 10 The People of Israel

- It is the people who raised a stink and say, "Oh, oh, oh, it would have been better for us to die in Egypt than here in this desert without food and water."
- So God said, "Okay, I'll put you out of your misery, you faithless, gutless, whining, complaining excuse of a people."
- Suddenly, they were invaded by a species of poisonous serpents.
- The creatures bit them, and many of Israelites died.
- Unlike a pest that might ruin a farmer's crops, God sent these snakes and the people were the casualty.
- Now the people said, “Ut oh! What have we done.”

## 11 The Cure

- The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. (Numbers 21:7 NIV)
- The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” (Numbers 21:8 NIV)

## 12 The Cure

- The serpent on the pole was not only a test for the people’s faith, but also illustrates for us as well the ministry of Christ.
- Jesus said to Nicodemus, Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. (John 3:14 NIV)
- As the serpent represented the curse for the people’s sin (complaining, impatience, and unthankfulness), so Christ took on the sins of the world so that sinners who look to him can be healed from their sentence of death.

## 13 Spiritual Pests

- But what is the true invasive species in this story?
- Not the poisonous serpents, but instead the impatience, complaints and anger of the people of Israel.

- These are the pests that infested the Israelites with disastrous consequences, and continue to afflict us today.

## 14 Impatience

- Author Jerry Bridges considers impatience to be a "respectable sin" -- that is, a sin that we tend to tolerate in ourselves.
- But impatience is a sign of a bigger problem, namely "our own attitude of insisting that others around us conform to our expectations."
- The people of Israel demanded that Moses and God conform to their expectations of a quick and comfortable trip to the promised land, along with good food and abundant water.
- But wait . . . aren't people of faith supposed to conform to God's expectations, not the other way around?
- Impatience can shift our focus away from God and toward ourselves, so that we begin to believe that the world owes us a life of safety, comfort and convenience.
- In other words, impatience is a real pest that can eat us up, just like stink bug on a peach.

## 15 Complaints

- If someone asked you to name the number one sin in the world, what would you say? Pride, lust, envy?
- John Roberts, a pastor in Sterling, Colorado, considers a top sin to be complaining.
- "One of the problems with the sin of complaining is that it's so universal that many among us aren't even aware that it's a sin," he writes.
- "Everybody complains about stuff all the time. We are so surrounded by complaining that we hardly notice it, unless, of course, the complaints are directed against us."
- But God is not oblivious to complaints. God is so serious about it that he tells the church . . . Do everything without complaining or arguing (Philippians 2:14, NIV).
- Pastor Roberts is convinced that complaining is an expression of our pride -- a sign that we think we know better than God.

## 16 Anger

- Finally, the most damaging of invasive species: Anger.
- We see this deadly pest in American politics today, with insults being hurled across the partisan divide and people spewing venom on talk radio.

- The people of Israel should have honored God and respected Moses, but instead they railed against their divine and human leaders and accused them of leading them to their doom, saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" (Numbers 21:5)
- The people shot angry venom at Moses and God, but received the venom of the serpents instead.

## 17 Healing Follows Repentance

- After suffering serious casualties from the snake attack, the people turned from their dangerous behavior, and confess their sins to Moses, admitting that they had sinned by speaking against Moses and God.
- They asked for Moses to pray for them, and he did.
- Impatience, complaints, anger -- these sins are as real for us today as they were for the people of Israel. "Sin is a very real and present danger."

## 18 Wilderness

### 19 Look to Jesus

- So when you are in the wilderness heading to the promised land and trials come and due to weak faith you stumble and bring more problems on yourself, what should you do?
- Seek God and ask for His forgiveness in Jesus Christ for our impatience, unbelief, and willful stubbornness.
- Then take Jesus at His word and put your trust in Him and be thankful.
- And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7 NIV)
- Then by having peace that transcends all understanding you won't be so susceptible to fretting when the road in the Wilderness gets bumpy.

## 20 Conclusion

- Impatience, complaints, and anger will always be a temptation for us, if we aren't vigilant in swatting away those thoughts the enemy puts in our mind—suggesting that God is not faithful.
- God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19 NIV)
- Just because we have to wait is not a sign that God has abandoned us and that we must now solve our problems ourselves.
- The Bible says that God's faithfulness is great and new every morning.

- Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34 NIV)