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C0613 – March 29, 2006 – Exodus 10 & 11 – The Third Cycle Of Plagues

Now we are thoroughly into the plague cycles. Textually these plagues are judgments divided into three cycles (plagues 1-3, 4-6, 7-9) which culminates with a tenth devastating judgment.

1st Cycle	2nd Cycle	3rd Cycle	Warning
1. Blood	4. Flies	7. Hail	In the morning by the Nile
2. Frogs	5. Pestilence	8. Locusts	In the royal palace
3. Gnats	6. Boils	9. Darkness	None

One great lesson and several great principles govern the plague sequence. The one great lesson the Egyptians were to learn is that the God of Israel is YHWH. Since one's name reveals one's character they were to learn that God is eternal and immanent and thus the Egyptian gods were no match for the God of Israel. Thus, they should submit to His demands and let the people go.

The first great principle is revealed before the 1st cycle of plagues began. This principle is grace before judgment (7:9-13), a common theme of the Old and New Testament. God gave Pharaoh grace by extending the opportunity to let the people go without any judgment coming upon Egypt's land, beasts or people. However, Pharaoh rejected God's grace (7:13). Thus, the 1st cycle of plagues began (7:14ff) and God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh. Once again, God extended grace to Pharaoh. This time coupled with a stiff warning, let My people go or I will turn the Nile to blood. And so we observe how God offers grace before judgment in the first two plagues of each cycle (7:16; 8:1; 8:20-21; 9:1-3) but that Pharaoh rejects grace and responds to the judgments by further hardening of his heart (3:19; 7:22-23; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32). After the sixth plague Pharaoh had

hardened himself to the point of no return and God judicially hardened Pharaoh's heart (9:12).

Let's back up and compare the first and second cycle of plagues. The 1st cycle of plagues came upon Egypt as well as the Hebrew slaves (e.g. 8:2). In other words, God showed grace before judgment but not perfect discrimination. The instrument was primarily Aaron's staff though Moses staff was used in the first plague (7:17 (Moses staff); 7:19 (Aaron's staff); 8:5, 17). The lesson the Egyptians were supposed to learn is that "there is no one like YHWH" (8:10). He is absolutely unique. No other god or goddess compares with Him. But they did not learn this lesson because the Egyptian magicians thought that Moses and Aaron were getting the help of *a god* (Heb. *elohim*) but not the God of Israel, YHWH.

In the second cycle of plagues YHWH sought to correct this notion by perfectly discriminating between Egypt and Israel. So, in addition to grace before judgment we have God's perfect discrimination. God perfectly discriminates between His elect nation of Israel and the non-elect nation of Egypt. To distance Moses and Aaron from the plagues no staff is used in these judgments. This will demonstrate that it is not the "finger of a god" but the "hand of YHWH" who is judging. The lesson the Egyptians were supposed to learn is that "YHWH is in the midst of the land" (8:22). That is, YHWH is omnipresent, immanent, in complete control of nature, and that He distinguishes between His elect nation and the non-elect nation of Egypt. Thus, this cycle continues the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised His elect nation, "I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:3). Since Pharaoh and the Egyptians enslaved God's people and would not let them go God cursed Egypt with plague judgments.

So, through the first two cycles of plagues we have observed two great principles. First, *grace before judgment*. God always gives grace before judgment. He never judges without giving someone the opportunity to respond by positive volition. If the person responds by negative volition then there is judgment (e.g. the Flood, the future Tribulation). Second, *perfect discrimination*. God perfectly discriminates between His elect and all others. If you are a believer here tonight then you are God's elect and as such God perfectly discriminates between you and all others (e.g. discipline, pre-trib Rapture, et. al.).

C. THE THIRD CYCLE OF PLAGUES (9:13-10:29)

Tonight we enter the third cycle of plagues and with it the judgments increase in intensity. You're probably wondering, "how could Pharaoh not let the people go?" Egypt is falling apart! "How can he be so fickle in promising to let them go but then changing his mind?" It is difficult for some of us to imagine the hardness of Pharaoh's heart but it is a reality far too common among men. His heart is so calloused it is unresponsive to God's revelation. His heart has built up scar tissue. His heart has become blind. His mind darkened. After six predicted judgments have been fulfilled he is unable to believe that they are from YHWH, the God of Israel. He is thoroughly deceived and that by an act of his own negative volition. When a person does this God just gives them over to their depraved mind (Rom 1). Tonight we see how God justly uses those in such a hardened condition.

1. Hail (9:13-35)

Exod 9:13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

14 "For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.

15 "For *if by* now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth.

16 "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

17 "Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.

18 "Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been *seen* in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

19 "Now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.'""

20 The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses;

21 but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

22 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt."

23 Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.

²⁴ So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

²⁵ The hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field.

²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones.

²⁸ "Make supplication to the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."

²⁹ Moses said to him, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the LORD'S.

³⁰ "But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God."

³¹ (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud.

³² But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they *ripen* late.)

³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the LORD; and the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth.

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

³⁵ Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Verse 13 gives the formula that introduces a new cycle of plagues; Go to Pharaoh in the morning on the banks of the Nile and **say to Him, 'Thus says YHWH'** (the customary formula that introduced a god). But this is not just *a god*, this is **YHWH...the God of the Hebrews**. The authoritative command "**Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**" Israel is YHWH's people by covenant. God entered into a contract with Abraham, and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. As such, they are His elect nation. One of the purposes of Her election is given here, **that they may serve YHWH**.

Verse 14 says **For this time**, that is, this cycle of **plagues YHWH will send all His plagues** on them. The purpose of this cycle; to teach the Egyptians **that there is no one like YHWH in all the earth**. He is absolutely unique. He is without comparison. He is

not like one of the Egyptian gods who supposedly governed a specific realm (e.g. the sky, the rivers, the dust, the wind, etc...). YHWH is sovereign over every realm.ⁱ

In verse 15 YHWH claims that He could have **put forth His hand and struck** Pharaoh and his **people with pestilence**, as He did the livestock in the field in the 5th plague. YHWH's power could have killed all the people of Egypt, but verse 16 gives the reason why He did not.

for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. Two reasons YHWH allowed them to remain. First, to show the Egyptians YHWH's power. If He killed them they would not see His power. Second, **to proclaim His name through all the earth.** Continued judgments will insure that His **name** would be proclaimed **through all the earth.** It's interesting that this was clearly accomplished. For example,

Joshua 2:8-11 ⁸ Now before they lay down, she [Rahab] came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the LORD [YHWH] has given you [Israel] the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰ "For we have heard how the LORD [YHWH] dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ "When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD [YHWH] your God [elohim], He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Still Pharaoh exalted himself **against** YHWH's **people by not letting them go.** Therefore, **"Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now."** Hail is "a phenomenon that occurs in Egypt only at rare intervals".ⁱⁱ An unprecedented hailstorm will take place in approximately 24 hours. This would give Pharaoh time to announce the coming plague and the servants and livestock to be brought in from the **field.** If they don't bring them in they **will die** because the hail will pound them to death. The **livestock** here are those who did not die from pestilence during the 5th plague because they were not in the fields at that time (cf 9:3). Verses 20-21 reveal two responses to this divine revelation.

²⁰ **The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses;**

21 but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

So, some of Pharaoh's servants responded with positive volition and others with negative volition (further hardening their hearts). A negative response to **the word of the Lord** will result in further agricultural and economic disaster in Egypt, particularly for those who responded by negative volition. Egypt will be torn to shreds by this plague.

Apparently Pharaoh did not let the people go and as a result, after the 24 hour's expired **the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt."** This act by Moses will signify the beginning of the **hail**. And Moses did so and it happened just as YHWH had said. The results are found in verse 25. **The hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field.** The judgment comes on both man and nature.ⁱⁱⁱ Man because of his negative response to the word of God, nature because it was originally placed under man. When man fell under sin nature fell under sin. All sin falls under the judgment of God. The results are devastating. Plants such as barley and flax from which linen clothing and bread were made were totally destroyed. **Every tree of the field was shattered.** This meant the fruit from the trees was destroyed and the shade provided by the trees was no longer. The entire economy was built on agriculture and here the entire agricultural enterprise of Egypt was ruined, "yet one region remained tranquil and secure"^{iv}. **Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail.** God continues to perfectly discriminate between His elect nation of Israel and the non-elect nation of Egypt. Not one hailstone entered **the land of Goshen**. God is in perfect control over nature controlling what is present or absent in a given space and the exact time when that space is filled or absent of hail.

Pharaoh's response is found in verse 27 **Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones."** The sense of these words is not that of the Hebrew concept of sin but of the Egyptian concept of aberration. What Pharaoh had done caused disharmony in Egypt. As such, he desires that harmony be restored. Therefore, "**Make supplication to the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.**" Notice the promise, **I will let you go. Moses said to him, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may**

know that the earth is the LORD'S." Moses supplication at this precise time will teach Pharaoh that **the earth is YHWH's**. He is sovereign over all the earth not just a particular region. He is not like one of the gods of Egypt. He is the only true God (Exod 20:3-4). The earth is His and all it contains. In verse 30 Moses says **"But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God."** But hopefully when the plague is removed they will **fear YHWH**. Verses 31-32 show that the **flax and barley were ruined** because they were in season, which was January but that the **wheat and spelt were not ruined** and what damage was done could be repaired by the time of their harvest. **So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh**, and did just as he told Pharaoh he would do and yet **when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants**. The sense is that 'he continued to sin' in the same way he had sinned before. Both his **heart** and **his servants** hearts were hardened or heavy with resentment toward Moses and Aaron. Notice that it is a sin to harden your heart. Throughout the OT and NT the command is do not harden your hearts (1 Sam. 6:6; Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). In verse 35, since his circumstances got better **he did not let the sons of Israel go**. He reneged on his promise. This is such a common response. We promise God or others we'll do something if they meet our conditions but when the time comes we break our promise. Pharaoh is not faithful to his promises as God is faithful to His.

2. Locusts (10:1-20)

Exod 10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them,

²and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

³Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

⁴'For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory.

⁵'They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped-- what is left to you from the hail-- and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field.

⁶'Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, *something* which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers

have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

⁷ Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?"

⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?"

⁹ Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."

¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind.

¹¹ "Not so! Go now, the men *among you*, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire." So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, *even* all that the hail has left."

¹³ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

¹⁴ The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; *they were* very numerous. There had never been so *many* locusts, nor would there be so *many* again.

¹⁵ For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

¹⁷ "Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me."

¹⁸ He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD.

¹⁹ So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt.

²⁰ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

In verse 1 Moses is to go directly into Pharaoh's royal palace where he dwells as a god. This time, YHWH's hardening of Pharaoh's heart and his servants heart is mentioned

right up front. And the purpose of this visitation is clear. God is going to use Pharaoh and his servants so He can do more signs and use them as a teaching device for the future generations of Israelites. God is fully justified in using those hardened against him for His own purposes

In verse 2 this teaching is not for the Egyptians but for the Israelites. **that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.**" Generation after generation, fathers should recount this story of how God makes a mockery out of those who harden themselves against Him (Dt 6:7). As such, Israel should learn that they should never harden their hearts against God. This story is a warning, yet Israel often missed the lesson and hardened themselves against God and underwent divine discipline (Ps 95:8).

Principle: Father's and grandfathers must teach their children the truths about God. The home is the first school and has precedence over governmental involvement in education. We have really dropped the ball on this one. We just let everyone else educate our children. Public education. And we wonder why they run off and go wild and where did they get these ideas and I'm telling you it's because fathers don't teach their children and grandfathers don't teach their grandchildren. Fathers and grandfathers can't tell their children what God has done because they don't know what God has done. We're a biblically illiterate people. It's no wonder our children come home and rebel. They reason this way "Dad, you don't know anything. If you did why send me off to school to learn from others? It's my teachers at school who really know. If you knew something you'd teach it to me." But we don't and we leave the impression that we don't know anything. And many of us don't. And we don't know what they're being taught and we don't read their textbooks and we don't know what our children are taught in Sunday school either. And fathers are responsible to know all this and they continue to drop the ball and it's too bad because some of our fathers and grandfathers did such a terrible job. We don't know what a father or grandfather is supposed to do because we never saw it modeled for us. The typical American dad is the tough guy who doesn't bother with his children or their activities. He doesn't have enough time. He's passive, watches a lot of television, drinks a lot of beer, doesn't show emotion because we know that's not manly, and he certainly doesn't teach the word of God to his children because Bible study is for the women. All this is just a big farce and the men are basically idiots in reality. They're not men at all, they're lazy, good for nothing idiots. The men better get in shape. Looking at the situation I can understand why the women want to stand up and do everything, the men

aren't doing anything! Fathers are supposed to be teaching their children (Prov 1:8, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1; 6:20 (mothers teach sons too); 7:1).

Look here in the text of verse 2. God is doing these **mighty acts** even making a mockery of the hardened up Egyptians and we fathers are supposed to come along and tell our sons and grandsons about the marvelous works of God and how He stomps those who harden themselves and through this they're going to learn who YHWH is. Stop leaving it up to everybody else! It's your responsibility fathers. It's your responsibilities grandfathers and you better get on the ball and get some Bible study and start building a biblical worldview so you can train your children. Notice these fathers and grandfathers are to recount history. Teach your children history and what God has done in history. This is vital because I can guarantee that in the public school system your child is not going to get this. They're going to hate history because history is presented as a pile of disconnected impersonal meaningless dates that we have to memorize for the quiz on Friday and that we can forget by Monday. They are not going to learn about the personal YHWH of history. So, the Hebrew fathers and grandfathers were involved for centuries recounting what YHWH had done in Egypt and the Passover is going to be the penultimate teaching device of YHWH's marvelous works in Egypt.

Verse 3 **Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. How long Pharaoh? Pharaoh must humble himself before YHWH. If he continues to refuse then I [Moses was as God to Pharaoh] will bring locusts into your territory. 'They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. ⁵ They will also eat the rest of what has escaped-- what is left to you from the hail-- and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field. ⁶ 'Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, *something* which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.** This is terrible. The land will be blacked out. In the next plague the sky will be blacked out. Every green thing will be eaten by the locusts. This is total agricultural and economic collapse. Egypt basically dropped out of history because of this destruction which befell her. She was the superpower but she became as nothing among the world's nations. She never regained her former glory.

Verse 7 **Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that**

Egypt is destroyed?" Moses says, **How long will you refuse to humble yourself?** They say **How long will this man be a snare to us?** Moses is really getting on their nerves. And so, the servants say make a compromise. **Let the men go** but not anyone else. They want some surety of their return because they suspect they will never return if they all leave. Now, it's not only Moses and Aaron but Pharaoh's own **servants** begging him to release them, saying, **Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?** Look around you Pharaoh, our livestock are dead, our plants and trees have no vegetation on them. Your empire is **destroyed**. There's nothing left.

So, in verse 8, Pharaoh calls them back to his presence, at least to delay the plague and says **"Go, serve the LORD your God!** but he asks **Who are the ones that are going?"** ⁹ **Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."** So, it is not the men only but everyone and everything. The **feast to YHWH** requires all of Israel not just the men. Notice the certainty in **Moses** voice, **We shall go**, now or later, **we must hold a feast**, either now or later. **Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go!** In other words, "may the help of your God be as far from you as I am far from giving you permission to go forth with your little ones". Pharaoh suspects **evil is in his mind**, that they will never return unless some surety is left behind. But Pharaoh rejects this. What we have here is diplomatic negotiations between YHWH and Pharaoh; a battle of God and one who claims to be a god. So, Pharaoh is not through refusing and he is not ready to humble himself. His anger at how the diplomatic negotiations are going results in his expulsion of Moses and Aaron from his presence. Later he will drive the entire nation out of Egypt.

As a result, since Pharaoh rejected grace there is nothing left to do but judge and so Moses uses his staff (12-13) and this terrible plague of locusts comes upon the land of Egypt and so the land was black and every green thing was eaten and every bit of fruit destroyed. This is not hyperbole. It is assumed that not one locust came upon the land of Goshen.

Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷ "Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me." Pharaoh still doesn't respect YHWH as his God but only as Moses God. ¹⁸ **He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. ¹⁹ So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the**

territory of Egypt. The final demise of the locusts is in the Red Sea which turns out to be the same place Pharaoh and his army meet their final demise. Again, YHWH **hardened Pharaoh's heart.** Since Pharaoh is in the state of judicial blindness YHWH has every right to use him to accomplish His purposes and make His name known. Pharaoh's heart condition led him to refuse to **let the sons of Israel go.**

3. Darkness (10:21-29)

Exod 10:21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt."

22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.

23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.

24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you."

25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice *them* to the LORD our God.

26 "Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD."

27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go.

28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!"

29 Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"

There's really nothing left to do but turn out the lights in Egypt. The place is so dark spiritually that this physical darkness only manifests their spiritual condition. So, without warning Moses points toward the sky and darkness comes.

This is not the dark of night; this is **a darkness which may be felt.** It is a darkness that a lamp or candle cannot penetrate. It is described as **thick darkness** and it remained on Egypt for **three days.** It is not a darkening of the sun because this is only a local judgment and one which did not touch Israel's dwellings (perfect discrimination). Most commonly this is explained as a sandstorm. The sand comes from the wilderness and fills the air so densely that one can almost feel it. Vision is impossible. Thus verse 23 says **They did not see one another nor did anyone rise from his place for three days.** All movement halted on account of the danger of walking in the darkness. This must have

been very scary not knowing how long the plague would last. Of course, as with all the plagues, this judged an Egyptian deity, the most prominent, Re, the sun-god, who was incarnated in the person of Pharaoh himself. Hymns were written to this god.

“Hail to thee, beautiful Re of every day, who rises at dawn without ceasing, Khepri wearying (himself) with labor! Thy rays are in (one's) face, without one knowing it. Fine gold is not like the radiance of thee. Thou who has constructed thyself, thou didst fashion thy body, a shaper who was (himself) not shaped; unique in his nature, passing eternity, the distant one, under whose guidance are millions of ways, just as thy radiance is like the radiance of heaven and thy color glistens more than its surface” (Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 367-368).

After the three days **Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you."**

Diplomatic negotiations resume with another compromise from Pharaoh that gets closer to the desired response. But this is not acceptable because **Moses says, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice *them* to the LORD our God.** It will do no good to simply go into the wilderness without sacrifices.

"Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind [a Hebrew idiom, not even a foot, all our livestock shall go], for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD." YHWH does not bargain with human kings. Moses says, we can't accept your offer because we await further instruction from YHWH when we get there so we must take everything. **But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go.** Again, another hardening so that YHWH can increase His signs, make a mockery of Egypt and proclaim His name through all the earth. **Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!"** It is a sad day when a person says farewell to God and refuses to listen to Him or his servants anymore. This is often the case with men. They do not want to hear about God at all and will go to great lengths to silence those who speak of Him (e.g. removal of 10 commandments, removal of prayer from schools, removal of “In God We Trust” from currency, removal of the “Pledge of Allegiance”, et. al.). This only reveals the callousness of their hearts. **Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"** It is an even sadder day when God no longer sends His servants to speak to the wicked (George Bush, *Notes on Exodus*, 1:30). Chapter 11:8 says Moses seems to suggest that Pharaoh and Moses did see one another again. Two explanations are possible. First, Moses could be saying in 10:29 that

of his own volition he would not stand before Pharaoh for it would be Pharaoh who would come before Moses and beg him and the people to leave (Cassuto). Second, it could be that 11:8 happened during this same visitation (Constable)

CONCLUSION

There are several things we can learn from this final plague cycle. “Pharaoh offered Moses three compromises, which the world still offers Christians. First, he suggested that the Israelites stay in Egypt (8:25). He said, in effect, You can be who you are, but live as a part of your larger culture; do not be distinctive. Second, he permitted them to leave Egypt but not to go far from it (8:28). He allowed them to separate from their culture but not drastically. Third, he gave permission for the males to leave, but their children had to remain in Egypt (10:8-11). Even godly parents are sometimes inclined to desire prosperity and worldly position for their children.”^v

ⁱ This does not mean that God exercises His sovereignty over all creation in the same way at all times.

ⁱⁱ U. Cassuto, 117.

ⁱⁱⁱ There are many parallels between the ten plagues of Exodus and the twenty-one tribulation judgments of Revelation. The Exodus plagues are a mini or localized Tribulation. You might meditate on this chart and observe how God judges both man and nature.

EXODUS PLAGUE	EFFECT	REVELATION PLAGUE
1 st	Blood	2 nd Trump, 2 nd Bowl, 3 rd Bowl
5 th	Pestilence	4 th Seal
6 th	Boils/Sores	1 st Bowl
7 th	Hail	1 st Trump, 7 th Bowl
9	Darkness	6 th Seal, 4 th Trump, 5 th Bowl
10	Death	4 th Seal, 6 th Trump, 7 th Bowl
Red Sea	Water Dries Up	6 th Bowl Euphrates River

^{iv} U. Cassuto, 120.

^v Tom Constable, www.soniclight.com.

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