

Exod 03-04-06a

Let's continue our worship this morning by taking a moment before our Bible study to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our souls. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the privilege of fellowship, the privilege of assembling ourselves and reaping the benefits of the grace that you have bestowed upon us as a group. We thank you for the spiritual gift that you have granted to each one of us and for the blessings that we receive from each.

We thank you for our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and the rescue from not only the lake of fire in the future but from a pointless and directionless life in time. We thank you that we have the meaning and purpose and direction given to our lives that comes from your word. And we ask your blessing on us as we study your word this morning that we can glean from it those truths that will equip us and enable us for the decisions and the challenges and the tasks that lie ahead.

We thank you for our country and for our leadership, for our military services and we pray that you will be with them and guide the leadership. We pray especially for our president that you will be with him as he faces the onslaught of silly people throughout the world and in our own country. We pray that you will continue to steady his hand and comfort his heart and strengthen him for the task at hand.

We pray for all of those who are serving both at home and abroad in the uniformed services. We pray especially for those who are believers on this Sunday morning that for those who are unable to participate in worship that you will refresh their souls and encourage them from that which already resides there through the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. We pray that all of us as believers in the church can be drawn closer together into that unity of the spirit and bond of peace that we are called to so that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified.

We ask it in his name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to the Psalms.

In particular Psalm 145. Psalm 145. If you think about the career of David and the other Psalm writers, this one is a Psalm of David, but all of the early hymn writers in Israel, how much of the word of God did they have? Essentially they had the books of Moses.

Possibly the book of Job. And that's about it. The histories of Israel had not yet been written and disseminated.

The prophets had not yet spoken. Certainly, of course, there was nothing by way of knowledge of what's in the New Testament. And it is amazing to me the revelation that is contained in the Psalms where those who would sit down and write music and lyrics for Israel to worship God could include in it such great and wonderful truth.

Psalms 145 is a classic example of that. It is a Psalm of praise. It is a Psalm of David.

And in the New King James it is subtitled, A Song of God's Majesty and Love. I will extol you, my God, O King, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised. And his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.

I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works. Men shall speak of the might of your awesome acts, and I will declare your greatness. They shall utter the memory of your great goodness and shall sing of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. All your works shall praise you, O Lord, and your saints shall bless you.

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and talk of your power. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord upholds all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The Lord is righteous in all his ways, gracious in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him.

He also will hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless his holy name forever and ever.

Well, I'm going to resist the temptation to preach my whole first lesson on the scripture reading as I am wont to do. But as you can tell, there are so many wonderful statements that are made in this song and in this psalm. And they relate very closely to what we're seeing in the Exodus account.

When he says, I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works. Men shall speak of your awesome acts, and I will declare your greatness. They shall utter the memory of your great goodness and shall sing of your righteousness.

God is about to do the most memorable of acts in delivering Israel. It is going to be his signature act of power. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt is the thing by which God will identify himself most often throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

So here in Psalm 145, when he talks about remembering and recounting and rehearsing to

others these works, this ought to be something that comes readily to our lips. I was talking to my niece on the phone yesterday. She called because there was a conversation that sprung up where someone was saying, well, how can you believe in the virgin birth? And this person was in a real mocking mode and essentially just picked something out of the air to disagree with in the Bible.

There are many things you could choose. If you don't believe in the Immaculate Conception or the virgin birth, then you pretty much are not going to believe in the walls of Jericho or the parting of the Red Sea or any of the other mighty acts of God. And this is just a convenient target to pull by way of a conversation topic and try to beat someone down.

And we have to have discernment. There is a time to speak the truth in love and to respond to someone who is asking questions about the Word of God, asking a reason for the hope that is in us. There's other times when it is only to waste time and breath engaging in a conversation with someone of this ilk.

And it's very frustrating because it's one thing to say that and say, well, if someone baits you and is just trying to get into an argument and pick a fight and mock you for your faith or for what you believe, to just say, well, pass it by. Just say, well, you're entitled to your opinion. I believe what I believe and it will all get sorted out when we stand before God.

And whether you believe it or not, you will be standing before God. And you can disbelieve it all you want. You're still going to be standing there.

You can't stand in front of a speeding Mack truck coming toward you down the highway and say, I don't believe in you, I don't believe in you. It's going to run you over whether you believe in it or not. And leave it at that.

But when something is dear to your heart, when something means a lot to you and you have a passion for it, it's much harder to ignore attacks on it. You think about the person you love the most in this world, and you think about someone defaming them and lying about them and saying horrible things about them, it's pretty hard to say, well, that's your opinion, I'm just going to walk away. You have the desire to defend and to justify, but we have to have some discernment.

And when we declare God and His mighty works, it is not without wisdom. It's not without discernment. It's not without recognizing when there is an audience to appreciate it, whether it's in our family or in our circle of acquaintance or in a casual conversation that may crop up.

More and more people have electronic conversations now. If you are one of those who is brave enough to go up and engage in online chats and message boards and things of this nature, there's a great saying in the Marine Corps that I won't repeat about the fact that everyone has an opinion. But it's true, and people love to get up and air them out in online forums.

But what's the point here in Psalm 145? He says, one generation shall praise your works to

another, and shall declare your mighty acts. This doesn't say argue about your mighty acts or try to prove that they really happened or try to give a natural means by which a supernatural action was brought about. He says, declare them.

He says, this is what God has done. God delivered Israel with a mighty hand. God did take the top off of Mount Carmel.

God did cause an axe head to float. God did all of the miracles that are spoken of in the word of God. And it says in verse 5, I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works.

The thing about meditating on something is it chews up time. Anybody that's ever worked on computers knows that they take up just huge amounts of time. It's just a sinkhole for time.

Other kinds of hobby that you might engage in. You look up at the clock and you realize that three or four hours have gone by. You might be engaged in a construction project or in a repair project.

My head spins at the speed with which my weekends go by because I get up on Saturday morning and I think, well, I've got these seven things I'm going to try to get done. I grab one and start working on it. I look up and it's time for class on Sunday morning.

And I get finished with that and think, well, I'll do something this afternoon. And when I wake up from my nap, why, the weekend is gone. And thus it goes with the evenings as well.

So if you want to fulfill this encouragement in the word of God to meditate, we generally have to make a conscious effort to set aside the time. Otherwise, it's the... Ed Ames sang this song a long, long time ago about having a daughter. I have two daughters and I find it to be true.

He says, turn around and there are two, turn around and there are four, turn around and your little one is walking out the door. Time flies. Everybody understands this principle.

And there is a need for us to meditate on the glorious splendor of God's majesty. There is a need for us to meditate on His wondrous works, to stop and think about them. Just sit down and here's a little pop quiz for you.

Sometime, not now because I'm talking, you're supposed to be listening, but sometime in the near future, sit down and take five minutes or so and just see how many miracles can you name? How many can you remember without looking at your Bible? Just try to start at Genesis and, of course, you've got the creation week and all of that is miraculous. Go forward from there and just see how many mighty works can you enumerate. And when you do so, then ask yourself this question.

What does it mean? Why is it recorded in Scripture? What should I bring away from that particular miracle? God parted the Red Sea, as we will soon see in the children of Israel cross,

but I ask myself the question, so what? That was good for them, but that was then and this is now. What does it mean? Why should I care? Well, we should care and we should know why we care. And so the challenge is not just to enumerate the mighty works, but as you meditate on them to ask yourself, well, why is this important to me? Why did God communicate it to me? Word of God says all these things were written for our instruction.

So, if God did send down lightning and consume Elijah's sacrifice and the altar and the water in the moat around it, why did He do that? Why is that important to me? I should know the answer to that question. And if I don't, then I need to be in Bible class, slowly accumulating the answers to those questions. We are going to see this morning the beginning of the plague cycle in Egypt.

And as we begin, one of the things I was trained in as an artillery instructor is, if you are going to present a class on complementary angle of sight, which is one small mathematical component of ballistic trajectory calculation, well, as soon as you come in and up on the board you have your name, Captain Hall, you have the name of the class, T-A-O-1-4-9, and you have complementary angle of sight, all of the lieutenants come in and they sit down and they look at that and immediately they develop a vacant stare. And for the next hour and a half, all of the complicated permutations of what can happen as a trajectory flexes with elevation of the artillery tube, they just begin, you may even begin to be doing that as I speak. Well, so to catch and hold their interest, you have to inject, you have to create in their minds a sense of need.

Why do I need to know this? So when I would begin my various gunnery classes, I would try, based on my experience as a fire direction officer in a firing battery overseas, to give them an anecdote or a situation in which it was very important to know these things. You might not have ever thought about it, but artillery, which is being employed even as we speak in a combat situation, has certain limitations when it comes to firing over elevated terrain. If you're firing in mountains, you have a mountain between you and your target, there are certain low elevations that are not going to work because your rounds are going to impact on the intermediate crest and not on the target.

How do you solve that problem? Well, you have to, you think about this, imagine yourself in your backyard with your garden hose, and you've either got the little sprayer on the end or you've got your thumb over the end of the hose. That's how I do it, is just with my thumb, right? So you've got the hose, you've got it out there, and you're spraying a stream of water. Well, you're spraying near your feet and you're moving further and further out.

What do you do if you want the water to impact further away? You raise the hose, right? Well, there is a point at which, as you continue to raise the hose, you have reached the maximum range for that water flow and pressure that you're able to achieve with your thumb, and you've gone as far as you can go, right? What happens if you continue to raise the hose? It starts coming back towards you, right? And you're hitting the same target, but with a different trajectory. So there are two trajectories that will achieve the same range, and thus comes the

whole concept and science and art of high-angle fire, and the trajectory is flexible. Well, why do I need to know this? If I have an intermediate crest, I might need to do high-angle fire so that I can get my rounds to impact at a target that low-angle fire will not achieve.

So I explain to them, many of you are going to be deployed to Germany or to Okinawa, and you are going to encounter these situations, and if you don't know how to calculate this, you will not be able to accomplish your mission. You will be relieved. You will be court-martialed.

You will be sent back home in disgrace. Your family will disown you. You will sit on the curb with a can of pencils trying to make a living because you didn't know how to do your job.

So you better pay attention to this class. Well, you know, slight exaggeration, but it makes the point. Same thing here.

I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works. Men will speak of the might of your awesome acts, and I will declare your greatness. The greatness of God is manifest in the works that he has performed.

We are on the brink for the next several chapters in Exodus of studying God's mighty works. Why do we care? God is not going to bring the plague of frogs on your enemy. God is not going to send lice to the people that are pestering you.

God is not going to put days of darkness where you can't see your hand in front of your face. So if that was then and this is now, why do I care about the plagues in Egypt? Well, I'm going to explain it to you. But this scripture reading from Psalm 145 reminds us that the memory of God's great goodness and his righteousness is what is in view.

It is God's goodness and God's righteousness that is going to be brought forward. And God's goodness is an issue for you and for me. And God's righteousness is an issue for you and for me.

The God of the universe, I mean, it goes without saying, it's almost impossible not to talk about God and recognize that he is more powerful than anything else there is. You have one of two choices. God is either for you or he is against you.

There is no middle ground. God is not neutral with regard to any human being. In any given point in time, depending on what you're doing and why you're doing it, God is either for you or he is against you.

Well, it doesn't take a high IQ to figure out that it would be better if God was for you than if he was against you. Because he will surely accomplish his purpose and it will either carry us to glory or it will roll over us and crush us into powder. And those are not my words, those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who falls upon the rock of salvation for deliverance will be delivered. Otherwise, that

rock will fall on him and grind him to powder. That's what the Lord Jesus said about himself.

Not wanting to be in the ground to powder category, we would do well to pay close attention. We're going to see some fascinating things about what God does in Egypt and why he does it. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

He is slow to anger and great in mercy. And we should be the same toward one another. We are to be imitators of God, imitators of Christ.

And God is slow to anger. It doesn't mean that he doesn't get angry. He does.

But he is slow to anger and he is full of compassion. He is slow to anger. He is great in mercy.

He is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works. You skip down to verse 14. The Lord upholds all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down.

This all is not an unrestricted all of everybody that ever fell or anybody that ever got bowed down. These are the ones who are mentioned in verse 11 and 12. Those who speak of the glory of your kingdom and talk of your power to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

These are the ones who are upheld. Verse 15. The eyes of these all look expectantly to you and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Verse 18. The Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth.

Emeth is the Hebrew word for truth. E-M-E-T-H Emeth is truth with an emphasis on doctrine. On what is taught.

On the promises and principles and doctrines of God's word. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him. He will also hear their cry and save them.

The Lord preserves in verse 20 who? All who love him. It reminds us of Romans 8.28. All things work together for good to those who love God. To those who are called according to his purpose as opposed to their own purpose.

The wicked he will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord. Does our mouth speak the praise of the Lord? We've talked about this recently.

Sometimes people ask us questions about why we do what we do. Why we are where we are. Why we implement whatever policies and priorities and values and so on are evident to the outside world.

Do we utter the praise of the Lord? Or do we just say, well, you know, I read it in a good book. Or I saw it on Oprah. Or my friend did it and it worked for them so I'm doing the same thing.

And we sort of hide the fact that we belong to God. Over and over again in the scripture you find the encouragement to when the occasion calls for it. When the audience is appropriate, speak the praise of the Lord.

Don't be bashful. Don't hide your light under a bushel. Well, there's a lot more we could say about Psalm 145.

But as promised, I want to return to Exodus chapter 7 and resume our study there. Exodus chapter 7 verse 1. So the Lord said to Moses, look, I have made you God to Pharaoh. And Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh will not heed you so that I may lay my hand on Egypt and bring my armies and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. These are the mighty works we just read about. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

Now we talked about this last time. But if you were reviewing this paragraph, there are two or three things that stand out and that we have not talked about. One is, I have made you God to Pharaoh.

Now this is kind of a startling thing. How would you like it for God to appear to you in a dream and say, I have made you God to President Bush, or I have made you God to some other local dignitary, to your boss at work. What does it mean, I have made you God? And the verb here is natan.

It's not bara or asa when you think of make or manufacture. This is natan, which is the Hebrew word that means to give. I have given you to Pharaoh as God.

Well, what exactly is he talking about here? Well, if you stop and think for a moment, where else has someone been given to function as God, to appear as God? How about the angel of the Lord? We have the phrase angel of the Lord more than 50 times in the Old Testament. And many times he speaks in the first person as God, doesn't he? And yet he is not God. But he speaks as though he is.

He is given as God to various individuals. You find the first case of this back in Genesis. I find it significant that the first appearance, the first recorded appearance at least, of the angel of the Lord, is not to Abraham, it's not to Isaac or Jacob or Adam and Eve or any of those.

In Genesis chapter 16 and verse 7, it is to Hagar, an Egyptian. The first time the angel of the Lord appears and speaks, recorded in Scripture, Genesis 16, you have the angel of the Lord appearing to Hagar. He finds her by the spring of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur.

And he says, Hagar, where have you come from? Where are you going? She says, I'm fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. The angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly so that they shall not be counted for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are with child and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man, his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him.

And he shall dwell to the east of all his brethren. Like your new King James may say, in the presence of, but I think to the east of is a better translation. So she, Hagar, called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You are the God who sees.

For she says, or El Roy. For she said, have I also here seen him who sees me? Therefore the well was called Bir Lahai Roy. Between Kadesh and Bered.

Now this verb Ra'ai is a primitive root that means to see, and it is very ancient, it goes back. Remember we were talking about the idea that, did the patriarchs know God by his name Yahweh or not? One of the ways we know that they did, do you remember the name of the mountain where Abraham took Isaac up and prepared to sacrifice him and was stopped at the last moment? What was the name of that mountain? God said go to the land of what? Moriah. Moriah is composed of two parts, that name.

The first part is Morah, which is a main. Remember I told you many times that you can take a Hebrew verb and put a main in front of it, put an M in front, and turn it into a noun. So Morah is sight or vision.

It is the noun form of Ra'ai, to see. And Moriah is vision of Yahweh or the sight of Yahweh. And that is the name of the mountain on which that sacrifice was offered.

It is going to be the same place if you go over to Chronicles and find the plague after David numbered the people and the angel stops over Mount Moriah, and that is the site where the threshing floor is of Arana, and it is going to be the eventual site of the temple. It is Mount Moriah. Solomon has a conversation about that, where that term is used over in Chronicles.

So what is the point here? The angel of the Lord speaks in the first person for God, and he does so throughout Scripture. Who appeared in the burning bush? Exodus 3, verse 2. We just saw it a few chapters ago. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.

He looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire. The bush was not consumed. It is the angel of the Lord who appears in the flame.

No man has seen God at any time, and yet you have face-to-face encounters with God throughout the Old Testament. Many other passages we could adduce in support of that idea,

but the point is, what function, what role does the angel of the Lord fulfill? What does he do? Well, he appears and communicates God's will, right? That is one thing. What else does he do? Well, the angel of the Lord is the one that appeared in the road in front of Balaam, over in Numbers, chapter 22, and what was he prepared to do there? He had a sword in his hand, didn't he? And he says, if your donkey had not stopped, I would have killed you.

He executes judgment. You find this over and over again. You find this in Judges.

You find him communicating to Gideon in Judges, chapter 6. He communicates God's word, God's will, God's commissioning of Gideon as a judge in the land. But you also find the angel of the Lord executing judgment. You go to 1 Chronicles, chapter 21, and verse 12.

The angel of the Lord, that episode where David numbered the people, the angel, the destroying angel stops over the mountain, how did that come about? David had a choice of either three years of famine, this is 1 Chronicles 21-12, three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the Lord, the plague in the land with the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel. Now consider what answer I should take back to him who sent me, he says. And this was the word of God delivered through Gad the seer.

And David said to Gad, I'm in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the Lord. His mercies are great.

Do not let me fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel and 70,000 men of Israel fell. And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it.

As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying, it is enough. Now restrain your hand. So the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornon, or Arona, the Jebusite.

So the same angel of the Lord that appeared and provided water and comfort to Hagar in the desert, the same angel that encouraged Gideon and gave him his commission to be a judge in Israel, is the one who goes forth and kills the people of God to the tune of 70,000, 70 battalions of men in Israel. David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. You go on from there.

We've studied that in connection with the study of the Lord Jesus over in Colossians, where the Lord Jesus is the mediator between God and man. He has bridged the gulf between heaven and earth. And it is foreshadowed with the appearance of the angel of the Lord suspended between heaven and earth in this case.

But these are two functions now that we have seen of one who is as God to you. The angel of the Lord, Moses, is going to fulfill this role to Pharaoh. He is going to have his own prophet.

His brother Aaron is going to speak on his behalf. Well, what do we have today? What

communicates to us? You go to Hebrews chapter 1. It reminds us that in the Old Testament, in many different times and many different ways, God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

He is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He has by Himself purged our sins and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

He has become so much better than the angels, because by inheritance He has obtained a more excellent name than they. So all of the messengers, malach is the word for angel in the Old Testament, and it means messenger. What is the name of the last book of the Old Testament? Revelation is the New Testament.

What is the last book of the Old Testament? Malachi. Malachi. You put E on the end of something, it means my.

It is my malach, my messenger. Well, the malach Yahweh is the angel of the Lord. All different kinds of messengers in the Old Testament.

You have prophets, you have actual angels from the heavenly realms. You have the prophet, whose name appears to have been Malachi. But now, God speaks to us through His Son.

We have the record of His Son in the New Testament and foreshadowed in the Old, and we have the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and communicates them to us. So what is the point? We have a ministry. We have an angel of the Lord, if you will.

We have a God to us in the form of God's word and God's spirit. And we are accountable. What did the angel of the Lord do to those who came under judgment? Stretched out the sword.

What did He do to those who were in need and who looked to Him? He brought comfort. It is one or the other. God is either for us or He is against us.

In the situation in Egypt, He is for the Israelites and He is against the Egyptians. And the same angel of the Lord is going to spare and is going to preserve those in Israel, and He is going to destroy and He is going to afflict those in Egypt. So, if we don't get anything else out of what we see in the first part of Exodus chapter 7 this morning, we should remember that every waking moment of the day, we choose which side of the angel of the Lord we are on.

God has communicated to us. God is interested in us. God is watching us.

He is not busy somewhere else. And we have a choice. Are we in line for blessing, for preservation, for encouragement, for sustenance, for grace and mercy and compassion? Or are we in line for discipline and the scourge that every son receives when he is out of the way? What is the Word of God good for? All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

If you think of that as a little mini-chiasm there, it's profitable for doctrine and for instruction. But what's in the middle? What's in the important place? Reproof and correction. And it's the reproof and correction part.

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. Whom a parent loves, they discipline. If you love your child, you discipline that child.

It's a hard thing, but you have to do it. Because if you didn't love them, you'd say, well, grow up like a weed. I don't care.

Grow up with no self-control and no knowledge that bad actions have consequences. I just turn you loose. You just go your own way.

And that's not the function of love. The function of love is to train, to rebuke, to correct and instruct. Reproof and correction are at the heart of that.

And that's what the angel of the Lord does for us. Now, there is a reproof that is not a destruction and is not a plague. And when we are a son of God and when we are looking to Him, we will still receive reproof and rebuke.

But it is not destruction. What the angel of the Lord did in Israel in the time of David, when he finally stopped over the mountain and had slain 70,000, this is not reproof and rebuke, is it? This is destruction. This is the sin unto death.

Well, once again, when he says to Moses, I will make you God to Pharaoh, Pharaoh is now going to have to choose, isn't he? He can either come down on the mercy side or on the judgment side of God. Well, the second thing that is of note here is he says, I will harden Pharaoh's heart. I will harden Pharaoh's heart.

I want to read you something that will summarize our view. We've talked about this before. Adam Clark was a Methodist minister back in the late 1700s.

He died in 1832. But he has summarized this. You can see my ancient fox copy here.

This is actually the 1834 printing of Adam Clark's commentary. It was published just two years after his death. But let me read you Adam Clark's note here on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

He actually has this back in chapter 4 where that phrase first occurs. You remember in 421, the Lord said to Moses, When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all the wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go.

Well, what he says here is, Let it be observed, there is nothing spoken here of the eternal state

of the Egyptian king, nor does anything in the whole of the subsequent account authorize us to believe that God hardened his heart against the influences of his own grace, that he might occasion him so to sin that his justice might consign him to hell. In other words, I'm going to go to Pharaoh, and I'm going to harden him so that he won't listen to anything I say, and then I'm going to punish him severely and send him to the lake of fire for eternity. That would be such an act of flagrant injustice that we could scarcely attribute to the worst of men.

He who leads another into an offense, so that he may have a fairer pretense to punish him for it, or bring him into such circumstances that he cannot avoid committing a capital crime and then hang him for it, is surely the most execrable of mortals. What then should we make of the God of justice and mercy? Should we attribute to him a decree, the date of which is lost in eternity, by which he has determined to cut off from the possibility of salvation millions of millions of unborn souls, and leave them under a necessity of sinning, by actually hardening their hearts against the influences of his own grace and spirit, so that he may, on the pretext of justice, consign them to endless perdition? Did you follow his logic there? It's kind of old language. Did you follow his logic? Is this what God is going to do? He's going to decree an eternity past to harden their hearts against his grace and against his mercy, so that he can consign them to perdition for all eternity, and call that justice.

Whatever may be pretended in behalf of such unqualified opinions, it must be evident to all who are not deeply prejudiced, that neither the justice nor the sovereignty of God can be magnified by such a course. Well, I think that says it as well as it can be said. There is a hardening that takes place here.

But let me tell you something about this word hardening. The word translated hardened here is a verb that means to strengthen, to encourage, to make hardy would be a better translation. Remember in Joshua chapter 1, he says, Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid.

Very same verb. Be strong. It means to be emboldened, to stay the course, to be firm in the direction you have established.

It was written at the end of the Jewish scriptures. When they got to the end of a scroll, they would use this verb and write a little postscript and say, Stay the course. Now that you've read this book and you've understood its message of faith and obedience, stay the course and take this message to heart.

And they would use this very same verb to encourage obedience. So this is not a hardening. It doesn't say harden yourself.

It says be strong. So he is going to strengthen Pharaoh's heart. And you have one verb used in chapter 4. You have another verb used here in Exodus 7 verse 3. And this verb means to stiffen, to strengthen so that something does not bend, doesn't sway.

And in both cases, you have the idea that Pharaoh has already made up his mind and God is

going to prevent him from wavering. He says, You've made your decision. I'm going to hold you to it.

I'm not going to let you waffle and weasel and be inconsistent. I'm going to keep you consistent so that I can accomplish my work. And it is specifically with the decision to let the people go.

It is not the decision for salvation. God didn't harden his heart so that he couldn't get saved. And yet it has been turned and used for that by people who think that there is such a thing as predestination to salvation.

So those are two issues in that first part. Verse 6, Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them, so they did. Moses was 80, Aaron was 83.

Just because you're old doesn't mean you're useless. A little quick application there for the elderly members of the congregation. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll resume in verse 8. And we're going to see the beginning of the end in Egypt. Beginning with these signs and moving forward into the plague cycles. About which we have much to say after the break.