

## **Exod 03-05-11b**

Okay, we're ready now to resume our study. And we've painted sort of a background here. My goal in trying to review some of those principles is to remind us that there is a point to this study.

It's one thing to say, wow, those poor Egyptians, look at the way God hammered them, and look at the mighty deliverance for the children of Israel. But the thing that strikes me is we are the people of Israel when it comes to the picture that God is painting of salvation and everything that He wants to do. He has promised them a land of their own.

There is no one that appreciates having their own possessions like a slave who has had none. And there is no one who appreciates freedom like someone who has been enslaved, someone who has been in bondage. Before Christ saved us, we were in bondage and we had no possessions.

We had no future. We were without God and without hope in the world, as Paul says. We have been given all of these by way of potential.

We have freedom. Christ says the truth, the truth of God's Word will make you free. Free from what? Free from everything that prevents us from fulfilling God's purpose, from having a great life.

What do you think God's purpose is for our life? Does God want us to sort of have a dismal, monk-like, drag-your-feet-in-the-dirt sort of a life? He wouldn't be a very great God. I can go chip something out of a piece of spare lumber out here and set it up on the mantel and worship it and I could have a dismal life, right? One of the ways that God manifests His power is by giving us an extraordinarily happy, fruitful life. That's one of the benefits.

And one of the saddest things in modern civilization is that religion and Christianity has been characterized as, oh, that's the dull life. That's the life of no fun. That's the life of drudge and misery and wearing a hair shirt.

Even those of our believers get into reform theology where, well, it's all kind of been figured out ahead of time and I guess God didn't predestine me to great things and it sure would have been nice if He had loved me more and eternity passed and this sort of thing. But stop and think about it. Anybody can mess up.

Anybody can follow the second law of thermodynamics. I don't believe I'll try to say that more than once. What is the second law? Everything goes from a greater to a lesser state of organization.

Or Paul Simon wrote a song, Everything put together falls apart. This is the natural course. How come new cars don't stay new? Just saw a brand spanking new Buick this weekend.

Beautiful machine. But six or seven years from now, driving over country roads and things, it's not going to look like it does now. Everything put together falls apart.

You look at your physical frame here and if you're past the age of about 21, it is on a long downhill slide. It may get a little steeper here and a little flatter there, but everything put together falls apart. I cannot believe the decrepitude that can creep into a human body.

It's a part of the fallen, corrupt universe. Paul says the whole creation, over in Romans chapter 8, he says the whole creation groans. This is one of the signs of getting old is you grunt when you sit down, you grunt when you get up.

Every time you sit down, you just watch old people. And now I know why. Because you just have an accumulation of injuries and the gradual disintegration of whatever you're trying to hold up falls and whatever you're trying to build up shrinks and everything just kind of goes into the old handbasket.

So, God can reverse, in effect, this seemingly immutable law of the universe. God can take creatures that are like the grass that grows up in the morning and in the afternoon, withers and fades away, like the flower that looks so great when it opens in the morning and it's withered up and gone. He can take us and turn us from temporary to permanent.

He can take us from corrupt and fruitless to perfected and complete and mature and fruitful. That's something God can do. So, if you boil that down to things that concern us most, like our own personal happiness, stop and think.

If God is going to distinguish Himself from the options of this world, from the ashes in the mouth, wax fruit that you get different places, it looks great until you bite into it, what's He going to do? Along with accomplishing His goals and His plans and His purposes of reflecting His glory and manifesting His name and exhibiting His character to His creation, both angelic and human, God is going to demonstrate that He can take a human life and fill it full and overflowing with happiness, with fulfillment, with contentment, with blessing that's not just confined to this age but goes into the next. God would not be a very great God if He did not and could not do that. Nothing in this world... You look at rich people and their Richard Corey poems.

Have you ever read the Richard Corey poem? Paul Simon took that one and turned it into a song. They say that Richard Corey owns one half of this whole town. He's got political connections and spreads his wealth around.

Born into society. Banker's only child. His wealth, success, and all these other things.

Power, grace, and style. Then the guy sings the chorus. He says, I work in his factory and I curse the life I'm living and I curse my poverty and I wish that I could be Richard Corey.

Because Richard Corey's got all this great stuff. But then after you go through a couple more

verses of the song talking about all the rest of the great stuff Richard Corey has, he comes down and says, Richard Corey went home last night and put a bullet through his head. And you hear this all the time.

Wealth does not satisfy. They had these extreme makeovers. Have you seen the Extreme Makeover show? Boy, that is extreme.

Some of them. And some of the people they need that help and it's probably a great thing for them. But I will say this about that.

That is something that does not last. Have you ever seen somebody that had cosmetic surgery 20 years ago? They don't look like they did 20 years ago anymore. And sometimes they don't age gracefully anymore because the normal processes that give you sort of a beauty in your age have been tampered with and you sag in the wrong places and your smile looks funny and you kind of are drawn and it's kind of strange.

You say, wow, something is going on there. It doesn't look quite right. But everybody wants to have a nice appearance.

We try to put on clothes that are pleasing and we maintain hygiene and we comb our hair and ladies use cosmetics and things. And that's great. We're supposed to.

We're supposed to kind of help each other out in terms of being able to look at one another without pain and without wincing and that. But we can't base our happiness on it, can we? Because the flower fades and beauty or handsomeness or whatever else, it doesn't last. You can't build your life on it.

You can enjoy it while it's there and when it goes, just kiss it goodbye and say, well, that was fun while it lasted. But we don't build on it. That's not a rock.

It's transient. It's temporary. It's here and then it's gone.

Well, the idea here is God has preserved this story and is telling us about these plagues and telling us about the deliverance of Israel for our benefit. And He says, look, there is a law at work that tends to corrupt and downgrade, but the God of the universe, God in heaven, the God of our salvation has a life that has an upward trend where we improve and we get better and we become more and more eternal and we partake more and more of eternal things and we are more and more prepared for this endless life in the future in spite of the corruption and the fallen state of the world and people and places and things. That's a great God that can reach down into the city dump of this life and take us, this little blade of grass, and turn us into something eternal and immortal and something that reflects His glory.

That's what God wants to do. And in the process, we are richly blessed. It's one of the best-kept secrets, it would seem, in human society because you don't turn your TV on and find out much about it, even on the Christian television stations.

It's all about how can you get prosperity in this life? How can God pop out of the genie's bottle and solve your problems and just do things in time? And we see very little about eternity. So that's the purpose of this. And there is a flip side to that coin.

Yes, God has great and mighty things that He wants to do for us that we can hardly comprehend. But if we spurn the grace of God as His children, if we do what the Israelites did, carve out our own idols, pursue our own goals, it's not just, well, you missed out on something great. Bad times are a-coming, as they say in the South.

It is not just the option to either sit in a nice sort of neutral place or be richly blessed. We only have two choices. You can be richly blessed or we can be hammered and disciplined until we turn around and learn how to be richly blessed.

It's as though God has to hit us over the head to give us the life that we've always wanted anyway because we're just dense. We're corrupt and fallen and a lot of times we are apathetic. Well, God is putting these plagues... And here's the question.

When you get ready to title this lesson, this is what we're going to look at in this short time. We have heard before and we've reviewed at the beginning of this study the whole idea of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. God told Moses He was going to do it on Mount Sinai, right? I find this to be kind of a scary thing.

God comes down and hardens certain people's hearts. He didn't say it will become hard. It's like the clay baking in the sun.

It's inactive. He says, I will come down. I will harden His heart so that He won't let the people go.

My question is why? What is the purpose of God hardening Pharaoh's heart? Why does He do that? We say, well, that His glory might be manifested and so on. But in this section we're going to look at this morning, God explicitly states exactly why He hardens Pharaoh's heart. And it has to do with you and me, oddly enough.

So we want to move through these plagues and we're going to reach the point where we answer the question, why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Let's pick up in the beginning of chapter 9 with the fifth plague, the moraine or the disease of the livestock, the pestilence that wipes them out. And we noted that there is a different word used here when it says your cattle of the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the oxen and the sheep, these are the commercial animals. These are the backbone of the economy, if you will.

It's not every dog, every cat, every pigeon, every bird and this sort of thing. These are the livestock. Because we know later on, supposedly all the Egyptian livestock gets wiped out and then we have a following plague and it says that the beasts, if you don't get them out of the way, the hail is going to kill them.

You say, well, if the fifth plague here, the first one in chapter 9 got all the animals, then who is going to be killed by the hail? Well, these are only the livestock animals and they are specified in verse 3. Cattle, horses, donkeys, camels, oxen, sheep. And this has been compared to anthrax. We've had that recent anthrax scare over the last few years, especially shortly after September 11th and people got it in the mail.

And anthrax is deadly and people have tried to explain the plagues in a natural way and said that the Nile flooded and that's why it was red and that overflowed the places where the frogs lived and there was bacteria in it that killed the fish. The frogs got disgusted and moved inland. Then the frogs died and then came the flies and the swarming insects as a result of the frogs.

And the frogs were infected with anthrax and the flies bit the frogs and anthrax can be carried the way a mosquito carries West Nile virus. And so, then the flies bit the people and bit the livestock and so you have this death and destruction and this is a naturalistic explanation. The only problem is the time of year, which we've already calculated out here, is in the fall.

And this is not the time of the flood of the Nile. And when the Nile does flood, typically this is an excess of rain water and so on that very quickly washes things away. It is not the stagnant, fish-killing type of situation.

It doesn't match. It's a way for people to try to remove the miraculous from the Word of God. But we saw that.

Then we saw the sixth plague in verse 8, the boils. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace. What kind of furnace do you think this was? What are they using furnaces for? Well, you can cook.

But a furnace, this type of furnace, is used for baking bricks. Got to bake the bricks. So, the ashes of the furnace, this is a reminder, back to the Egyptians, of the hard bondage.

There is a reason for these pestilences. You've been abusing the people. You've got to let the people go.

You're not letting the people go. You want to keep them here. You want to keep them making bricks.

You want to keep them running the furnace. I'm going to take the ashes of the furnace. God could have taken anything.

He could have had Moses spit in the wind and the same thing would have happened. But it's symbolic. Ashes from the furnace.

These are the furnaces of oppression. We have another Bible story that's real famous about a furnace, don't we? Same type of thing. You've got people who've been enslaved.

People who've been taken in a bondage and hauled off to Babylon. And you have the very

famous Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Everybody's heard of them, right? Sometimes known by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Threw them in the fire. They didn't burn. Make the fire seven times hotter.

Still didn't burn. Guys who tried to go in and stoke were killed just by the radiant heat. And they're standing in there.

And Nebuchadnezzar looks in and he says, I see a fourth man. And he looks like the Son of God. And there was a fourth man in the fire.

So the furnace... God allowed the Israelites to go into oppression and go into bondage. But there is a time for everything under the sun. God's purpose in letting the Israelites fall victim to this is over.

And it's time for it to cease. And if the Egyptians don't recognize that, then here's what happens. So he says, take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from the furnace and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.

Notice, in the sight of Pharaoh. Pharaoh needs to see these ashes being scattered. This tells him... And do we have the warning? Does he say, let the people go? Or... There is no warning on this one, is there? There is no warning.

It comes unexpectedly. It will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt. So if the princess of Egypt had a little pet cat, the cat's going to break out in these ugly boils.

Now, if you want to know more about these boils that broke out, think about the progress of the plagues. We started out afflicting the water. Then we had the frogs.

That's inconvenient and slimy. And then they died everywhere. And that made a very... It started out being environment and places from which your life comes.

Water, the stench of the frogs, and of course the frogs were holy to Hecate or somebody and so they couldn't kill those. The toad-headed goddess. And so they had to shovel those up and get them out of the way.

And it's saying, God started out with mild unpleasantness and inconvenience. They had to dig in order to get water. You could still get water, but you had to dig.

Inconvenient. It's a pain in the rear. You've got the stench in the air and the dead frogs everywhere.

A little bit more inconvenient. And then you had the swarms coming on everything. And this is getting a little bit more uncomfortable.

They're little biting, stinging things. And then you have the flies and these perhaps scarab beetles or some other flying insect that are all over the... And so now you've had the soil, you've had the water, and now the air is a source of pestilence. So all the different environmental factors are putting increasing pressure on.

Then you get to the fourth plague there of the... We talked about the flies. That was number four. Then the fifth is the livestock disease where all the cattle die.

Now we're getting a little more serious. This is the economic life of Egypt destroyed. Then the sixth plague here is boils.

And this one, just like the third, comes with no warning and it's the most severe of the three. And he says now... Remember when Satan afflicted Job? First he did his environment. Then he took away his stuff.

Then he killed his children. Then he said, well, let me touch Job himself. And he broke his skin out in boils.

If you want to know what this... You think, has anybody seen a boil, ever had a boil? I don't think I've ever had a really bad boil, but I've seen one, more than one, and they're nasty. But this is worse than just like a big infected pore or something or an ingrown hair that swells up. Take a look over in Deuteronomy.

Turn over to the fifth book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy chapter 28. We have a fuller description of this affliction over in Deuteronomy 28. Deuteronomy 28.

This is a section, and I want to start at verse 15. It's kind of like what we looked at in the first session out of chapter 32. It shall come to pass... Well, look at verse 14.

Everything preceding verses 1-14 are all of the blessings that come to those who heed God's Word. Blessed you will be in the city, blessed in the country, blessed is the food of your body, the produce of your ground, the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle, the offspring of your flock. Don't these sound like some of the same things that have been cursed in Egypt? That was verse 4. Verse 5 says you'll be your basket and your kneading bowl.

This is your crops and the flour and stuff you get from that. Verse 6, you'll be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. This is warfare.

Coming in and going out is a term that means to go out in warfare. Verse 7, the Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face. They shall come out against you one way and they will flee before you seven ways.

Now, this is a great thing, right? They come as a unified force and then they scatter seven ways. They are completely messed up. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all which you set your hand.

He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You will be able to store up for the future and you will have something that is always there. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself just as He has sworn to you if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in all His ways.

Notice there is a big if there in verse 9. We like all the first eight verses, but it is conditional. It is a conditional promise. The Lord will establish you just as He has sworn if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways.

Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord and they shall be afraid of you. They will respect you. Everybody wants respect.

Aretha Franklin wants respect. Rodney Dangerfield wants respect. Everybody wants respect.

We don't want to be disrespected. The Lord will grant you plenty of goods, the fruit of your body, the increase of your livestock, the produce of your ground, and the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to you. He will open His good treasure to heavens, give rain to your land in the seasons, bless all the work of your hand.

You will lend to many nations you will not borrow. The Lord will make you the head and not the tail. You will be above only and not beneath.

If you heed the commandments, notice verse 13, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. It requires a little bit of diligence. You have to think.

We have to pay attention. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day to the right or to the left to go after other gods to serve them. Now, isn't it reasonable that anybody in their right mind would love to have a life like is described in those first 14 verses? That is nothing but great.

But look at verse 15. It shall come to pass if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today. Now, think about this.

Let's say that you are a mountain climber. And you're going to rappel down this gigantic 50-story-high cliff. Well, you need some equipment.

So you go down to the mountain climbing store and you get your rope and you get your carabiners and your picos things, all your different little clips and stuff. I don't know that much about mountain climbing. They have little funny cleats that you strap onto your toes and they have these different things for rappelling.

So you get all that stuff. And you've got it all hanging. You know how they do.

They have it hanging on their chest here. And they start down. They tie the rope to something

and they start going down.

They put little deals into the cracks of the rock to secure their rope as they either go up or down. Well, suppose the guy that makes the little things that you secure in the rock just kind of got distracted one day and he didn't make a very good one. And it's faulty.

You've got 12 of them hanging on your chest here. You're getting higher and higher and you're up here in the windy realms of this high cliff. And you reach down for the number 12 little clamp thing that goes into the crack in the rock.

But that's the one where the guy was just kind of not thinking too clearly. He didn't make a very good one. And you stick it in there and you hang all your weight on it and it flies apart and you plummet to your death.

It doesn't matter that the first 11 were good. If the 12th one is bad, the whole purpose of the equipment is defeated. I've mentioned before if you have this chandelier thing here or ceiling fan hangs on a pipe.

But in the other one we've got one that hangs on a chain. What do you think about the palaces in England? Going to Buckingham Palace they've got these multiple hundred thousand dollar crystal chandeliers and they hang from the great high ceiling of the palace on a chain. Well, let's say the chain's got 300 links.

It doesn't matter that 299 of the links are perfect. If one of them is bad your multiple hundred thousand dollar chandelier is going to come crashing down to the deck. That's why it says here to observe carefully all His commandments.

This is an all or nothing kind of a thing. We have to dedicate ourselves to it 100%. We can't say well 9 times out of 10 I'll do the right thing.

The majority of the time I'll just kind of tip the scale. God doesn't say if you do right the majority of the time. If you're good outweighs your bad a little bit.

He says be careful to observe all the commandments and the statutes so that these curses do not come upon you and overtake you. He says if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God all these curses will come upon you. Look at verse 16.

Cursed you will be in the city. Cursed you will be in the country. Cursed will be your basket.

Cursed will be your kneading bowl. Cursed will be the fruit of your body. Cursed will be the produce of your land.

Cursed is the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed you will be when you come in and cursed you will be when you go out. The Lord will send on you cursing, confusion, rebuke in all that you set your hand to do until you are destroyed and until you perish suddenly.

It says quickly but it means suddenly. Because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken me God says the Lord will make the plague cling to you until he has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, with mildew.

I mean, how bad does this have to get before we decide maybe we ought to be careful to observe what we learn from the word of God. It's not... He doesn't say and then for the rest of you there's this great middle ground where there is neither cursing or blessing but just a large open plain where you just dwell and you're just average and you're in the middle of the crowd. There is no middle.

There is the height and there is the pit. And there's nothing in between. There's no clinging to the cliff halfway up or halfway down.

Your heavens which are over your head will be bronze. The earth which is under you shall be iron. This is a desert environment isn't it? The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust.

From the heaven it will come down on you until you are destroyed. What did Moses just throw up in the air? Dust. What's raining down on the Egyptians? It's not beneficial rain.

You get the idea that these little fine particles of dust just disperse through the air and everything it touches turns to boils. The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them.

You will become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. They will just want to pick a fight with you. They will look at you and not like the way you look and pick a fight.

Now, pay attention here. Your carcasses will be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. And no one shall frighten them away.

Remember when David faced Goliath? What did Goliath say? Come here to me, little boy, and I will feed your flesh to the fowl of the air and to the beasts of the field. What did David say in response? You come to me with a sword and a shield. I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts.

And I'm going to hand you to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. This was a classic statement that meant total, utter defeat and humiliation. But now look at verse 27 because this is our point.

The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt. This must have been one of the most egregious of the plagues. He will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch from which you cannot be healed.

Now, I don't know about you, but I think this would be something to avoid, something that would motivate me to not fall into the category of those who get the boil, the tumor, the scab, the itch that does not heal. A perpetual, ongoing affliction of severe proportions and extreme discomfort is what is in view, is it not? The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. You'll do dumb things that don't make sense, that don't conform to logic.

You will be blind. You will not see if you're blind, what do you do? You bump into things and hurt yourself. You know, you stagger around.

If you're blind, you can't see where to go. You can't see what to do. Confusion of heart.

Nothing will make any sense. Can't figure it out. You will grope at noonday like a blind man gropes in darkness.

You will not prosper in your ways. You will only be oppressed and plundered continually and no one shall deliver you. Well, this seems like a cruel, vindictive God, but He's not.

Who is He talking to? He's talking to His people and His children whom He has saved, whom He has delivered, whom He has offered that first 14 verses of great life and they spit in His face and said, yeah, we're not interested. I don't need that. Your offer doesn't interest me.

Well, if I was God, I probably would not stop with scabs and boils. I would probably just have the scorched earth, turn the sand to glass type of response and the people would vanish. Why does God use afflictions rather than destruction on His people? Turn you at my reproof.

Why should you die, O house of Israel? Grace before judgment. These afflictions are grace, believe it or not, because when they come, what happens every time Pharaoh gets a plague? Warning. Turn.

Let the people go. Here's a chance to stop this tide of affliction and destruction. The thing about Pharaoh is he's an unbeliever.

And his circumstances are dictated by God. God will harden His heart. God will execute His judgment on the nation of Egypt.

Unlike Israel, at any given point they can stop and turn. It never says in the Word of God that God hardened Israel's heart, does it? It never says God hardened Moses' heart or God hardened David or any of the other great heroes of the Old Testament. We can turn at any point.

What's the difference between Pharaoh and any believer? God uses these to turn us and we can turn. Pharaoh is not a member of that family. He does not enjoy that relationship with God.

And this is not salvation for him. This is a policy decision. This is a political decision.

A national conduct decision for him. And God says, I will freeze you in place until I discipline

your nation. Okay, back to Exodus 9. So that's what this boil affliction is all about.

Scabs, itch, running sores. These are what they call septic sores. Do you know what septic means? It means infected.

Running, infected, oozing sores. This is why the stores sell anti-septics. Septic is inflamed, infected.

Anti-septic fights inflammation and infection. Specifically infection. Caused boils that would break out in sores.

So they took ashes from the furnace. They stood before Pharaoh. Moses scattered them toward heaven.

They caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils. The boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.

But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not heed them just as the Lord had spoken to Moses. Now where are we in the cycles? We had plague 1, 2, 3. Then we had 4, 5, and 6. This is the end of the second cycle of three plagues, right? So now we go into number 7. Number 7 is going to be the first of the third and final triad of plagues. And notice the differences here.

The Lord said to Moses, Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh. That is the same thing that he said for plague number 4 in verse 20 of chapter 8. Same thing that he said before he turned the Nile to blood. First thing in the morning.

Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh. Say to him, Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go that they may serve me. It's not like it's a hard question.

He knows the issue. At this time, I will send all my plagues to your very heart and on your servants and on your people so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. Now, if I had stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth.

He said, You haven't even seen pestilence with all these dead frogs and boils and swarms and all the rest of it. You don't even know the meaning of the word pestilence. If I had sent you, it would have exterminated you if I had sent you pestilence.

But indeed, for this purpose I have raised you up that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. As yet, you exalt yourself against my people. And isn't this the problem that we face? We exalt ourselves.

We're smarter. We've got a better plan. We see the first 14 verses there, but we think we've got a better plan.

You exalt yourself against my people and that you will not let them go. Verse 18, Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down such as not been in Egypt since its founding until now. Therefore, now notice, here is a choice point.

There's been no choice other than let the people go in the preceding six plagues. In plague number seven, he says, Send now, gather your livestock, gather all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home and they shall die. So you can ameliorate the effects of this plague if you will obey.

If you'll do this small thing, you can survive, you can preserve some of your stuff from the plague. You can't bring in the plants. You know, we have bad weather, cold weather, or freeze, have to haul all the plants in from outside.

You can't do that when you've got a great huge acreage of planted fields. But you can bring in your servants and you can bring in what remains of your beasts and these new cattle and things you just bought from the Israelites over in Goshen. Look at verse 20, He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to houses.

People said, you know, I've seen this happen six times now. I'm no dummy. I'm no fool.

I'm going to pay attention to this warning. But, he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field. Now, how dumb do you have to be to see six plagues fulfilled to the letter on the day and revoked to the letter on the day that Moses speaks and he comes a seventh time and says, this is about to happen.

If you know what's good for you, get your stuff out of the field. And you say, no, I don't think so. But we do this.

There is a madness. There is a blindness that besets us. The deeper we go into sin and the deeper we go into evil, we cannot even make good common sense, even if you didn't know what the source was.

What's the harm? Hey, why don't you all come in for a day or two here and let's just see if it hails. They don't even do that. Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward heaven that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man, on beast, on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven. The Lord sent thunder and hail, fire darted to the ground. The Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.

There was hail and fire mingled with it. How many times does it say hail here? This is a lot of hail. And it says, so very heavily there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

This was in history the biggest hail storm that has ever hit. The hail struck the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, man and beast. The hail struck every herb of the field, broke every tree of the field.

Only in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron and said to them, I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous.

My people and I are wicked. He's talking a great fight here, isn't he? Entreat the Lord that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail. It is enough.

I will let you go. You shall stay no longer. Moses said to him, As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord.

The thunder will cease. There will be no more hail that you may know the earth is the Lord's. As for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God.

Now the flax and the barley were struck. The barley was in the head and the flax was in the bud. This is early February in terms of seasons.

The wheat and the spelt were not struck. They were late crops. Moses went out of the city, spread out his hands.

Thunder and hail ceased. Rain was not poured on the earth. When Pharaoh heard that the rain, hail and thunder had ceased, he thinned yet more and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.

So the heart of Pharaoh was hard. Neither would he let the children of Israel go as the Lord had spoken by Moses. Now that is the end of the seventh plague.

And it says twice here that Pharaoh's heart was hard. He hardened his heart. His heart was hard.

It also told us twice at the very beginning of the plague. If you go back to chapter 1, you have a notice, not chapter 1, plague number 1, back in chapter 7. It tells us two times that Pharaoh's heart is hard. In verse 13 and again in verse 14.

Here we have a doubling of that again after seven plagues. Seven is God's number of complete fulfillment, right? Then the eighth plague comes. Go to Pharaoh.

I've hardened his heart, the heart of his servants. I may show these signs of mine before him. Now, what was the question we asked at the beginning of this lesson? Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Look at these two verses.

I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants so that I may show these signs of mine before him and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt and my signs which I have done among them in order that... and

this is the ultimate point... in order that you may know that I am the Lord. Pharaoh is an object lesson for God's people. The plagues of Egypt are an object lesson for us.

God says, I am doing these signs before Pharaoh so that you will know and so that your son will know and so that your son's son will know that I am the Lord. We are supposed to pay attention to these plagues and these signs to remember them, to encourage ourselves. We looked at that Deuteronomy chapter 28 and those 14 verses of blessing and then you've got that whole rest of the chapter talking about what happens if we disregard.

This is the lesson of the plagues. God held Pharaoh to a destructive course of action so that you and I could learn and pass on to others who God is and what God's plan entails. That's a lot of trouble for God to go through so that you and I would have this impressed on our hearts.

What do you think God is going to conclude if we look at this, we see this set of occurrences unlike anything in history and then we just go away and forget about it? Have you ever seen when someone works really hard on a meal or a cake or something like that and then people just ignore it and disregard it? You know, someone works really, really hard. There have been novels and plays and books and movies written about the kind of thing where someone knocks himself out and they're completely ignored and then they get very angry because, you know, here I've done all of this and you completely disregard it all. You disrespect the person who did it.

Well, God will not take this lightly. God says I will honor those who honor me and those who dishonor me I will lightly esteem and we've seen all of the description of what that entails. So, as we move through this final set of three plagues which we'll finish next time and then we'll do our summary of all of the plagues keep in mind that it's not just a story.

It's not just an Aesop's fable. God literally moved heaven and earth. God destroyed a kingdom so that you and I would have this object lesson before us and would be reminded and motivated to seize and lay hold of those first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28.

God has great things in store for us but do not think that there is a great average somewhere where we can just kind of blend in it is either feast or it is famine. It is either glory or it is shame. There is no middle ground.

There is no place to hide in the great unwashed average. God doesn't have a third description in any of these passages where he speaks blessings and cursings. You go to the scene at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim right before the Israelites go into the land.

There are blessings spoken on one mountain. There are cursings spoken on another. There is not a third mountain.

He says, well, you'll have mediocre crops and kind of an average fruitfulness and it's just not there. There is no so-so. So, if we do not choose glory we are choosing shame.

If we do not choose growth we are choosing destruction.