



Why does God make us uncomfortable?

Text: Exodus 7:14-10:29

Bottom Line: There is only one God

STUDY

*** Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. ***

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



Text

Read the scripture below. Use this copy to make observations, ask questions, and ask how God might be challenging you to move in response to his word.

The First Plague: Water Turned to Blood

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. 16 And you shall say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. 17 Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. 18



The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.””” 19 And the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.””

20 Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. 21 And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. 22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. 23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart.



24 And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. 25 Seven full days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.

The Second Plague: Frogs

8 [a] Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. 3 The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people,[b] and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants.”’” 5 [c] And the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!’” 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of



Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, “Plead with the Lord to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.” 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, “Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.” 10 And he said, “Tomorrow.” Moses said, “Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. 11 The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile.” 12 So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh.[d] 13 And the Lord did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. 14 And



they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

The Third Plague: Gnats

16 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.’” 17 And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.



The Fourth Plague: Flies

20 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.

21 Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. 22 But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.[e] 23 Thus I will put a division[f] between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.””” 24 And the Lord did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies.



25 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” 26 But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? 27 We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he tells us.” 28 So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me.” 29 Then Moses said, “Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.” 30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. 31 And the Lord did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his



people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

The Fifth Plague: Egyptian Livestock Die

9 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, 3 behold, the hand of the Lord will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. 4 But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.”’” 5 And the Lord set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.” 6 And the next day the Lord did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. 7 And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the



livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

The Sixth Plague: Boils

8 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.” 10 So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast. 11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians. 12 But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had spoken to Moses.



The Seventh Plague: Hail

13 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself 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 yourself,[g] and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. 16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. 18 Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. 19 Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die



when the hail falls on them.””” 20 Then whoever feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, 21 but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

22 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” 23 Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. 24 There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.



27 Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. 28 Plead with the Lord, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” 29 Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so 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 (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. 32 But the wheat and the emmer[h] were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.) 33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the Lord, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth. 34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 So the heart of Pharaoh



was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

The Eighth Plague: Locusts

10 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, **2** and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.”

3 So Moses and Aaron went in 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 country, **5** and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to



you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, 6 and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.”

Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

7 Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, “How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God.

Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?” 8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, “Go, serve the Lord your God. But which ones are to go?” 9 Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and

daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the Lord.” 10 But he said to them, “The Lord be with you, if ever I let

you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in

mind.[i] 11 No! Go, the men among you, and serve the Lord, for that is



what you are asking.” And 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, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left.” 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night.

When it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. 14 The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. 15 They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt. 16 Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. 17 Now



therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the Lord your God only to remove this death from me.” 18 So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the Lord. 19 And the Lord turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. 20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness

21 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. 23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. 24 Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, “Go, serve the Lord;



your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.” 25 But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. 26 Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the Lord our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there.” 27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.” 29 Moses said, “As you say! I will not see your face again.”



Lesson - Why does God make His people uncomfortable?

Point No. 1 God calls us to be dislodged from our comfort zone

6 And the next day the Lord did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. 7 And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. Exodus 9:6-7

It is a miracle that God can plague the land with dead livestock and not one of His people's livestock be harmed. However, I would imagine that this still had an effect on His people. As the Israelites remain unscathed throughout all of the plagues, the Egyptians likely did not take this well. It is a really uncomfortable thing sometimes to prosper as those around you watch enviously.

God is working in ways here that are working towards dislodging His people. God is sending all of these plagues in order that Pharaoh would let



His people go. So, in order for Pharaoh to bow down and fear the one true God, God must make things very uncomfortable for all of those involved.

The truth is - sometimes the most uncomfortable circumstances are leading to the freedom God has for us. God is moving towards the Israelites being set free from captivity but in order to do so they must first be uncomfortable. God is calling you out of your comfort zone as well.

There are 3.2 billion people in the world who have never heard the name Jesus. God is calling us to reach the ends of the earth; “be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)” It’s time we get out of our comfort zones and start boldly proclaiming Jesus in order that others may find the freedom from the captivity of sin that we have found.

Discuss:

- Why do you think God’s method is to make us uncomfortable sometimes?



- Can you remember a time when something was really uncomfortable but God used it for good?
- What is God calling you to do that is out of your comfort zone?

Point No. 2 God's way is always better than the alternative

As we have read the past few weeks, Moses wanted to do anything else besides what God was calling Him to do. Moses did not want to approach Pharaoh and speak on God's behalf. However, Moses with the help of Aaron does approach Pharaoh and is used greatly in the eventual freedom of the Israelites. This is so much better than if Moses had denied God's call.

Someone who did run from the call was Jonah. Jonah was called to the land of Nineveh but he ran. Jonah 1 says “**3** But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” The scripture does not say Jonah rose to flee from God's call but rather he is fleeing from God's presence. When we run from God's call, we also run from His presence. Jonah ends



up in a storm and then the belly of a whale for 3 days and 3 nights. In the process, Jonah brings along all those around him on the ship into a bad situation as well. When we run from God, no one wins. This is the same way with Pharaoh. He refused to listen to God so all of the Egyptians were negatively affected.

God is calling you. His calling discredits the alternative every single time. God's best is always better than the world's best.

Discuss:

- Why is it so hard for us to believe God's way is best?
- What is God calling you to right now?

Leader Guide

Summary

The plagues consist of the Nile river turned to blood, Frogs, Gnats, Flies, Dead livestock, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness, Death of the Firstborns threatened. God has sent these plagues to Egypt. A land led by a leader



named Pharaoh who has no interest in the true God. He does not know God. The scripture says his heart is hardened towards God.

These Israelites had been enslaved for about 400 years at this point. Many had begun to lose faith that God was still present. Many believed He existed but they doubted He would ever interfere with their bondage. The Egyptians who held them captive worshiped a wide variety of nature-gods and attributed to their powers the natural phenomena they saw in the world around them. There was a god of the sun, of the river, of childbirth, of crops, etc.

So, because of the hardened heart of Pharaoh. God is sending plagues to accomplish His purpose by breaking down all of these little gods and to show that He is the one true God.



Commentary

Tyndale Old Testament Commentary

[9:8–12](#). The sixth blow. [8](#). The *ashes from the kiln* would be black and fine. Perhaps ‘soot’ would be the best English rendering, for it is described as very fine ‘dust’ blowing in the wind. Soot flying in the wind may be a symbol of the rapid spread of the disease, or else the skin of the sufferer may have been covered with black spots, when the eruption broke out. This time, the sorcerers were completely discomfited; there is robust humour in the description of their affliction (see verse [11](#)).

[9](#). *Boils breaking out in sores*. The first word is better translated ‘inflamed areas’, a term common in the medical sections of the law of Moses ([Lev. 13:18](#)). This then breaks out in various ‘heads’ or ‘open sores’. The older commentators think of ‘Nile scab’, still common at the time of the rising of the Nile, a persistent skin irritation. Another possible meaning is areas of infected ‘prickly-heat’, an eruptive skin rash common to all tropical countries.

[12](#). *YHWH hardened the heart of Pharaoh*. [Davies](#) points out that, while it has already been said that God will harden pharaoh’s heart ([Exod. 4:21](#)), this is the first occasion on which this form of words is used after an actual plague. Previously, the position has always been put from the other side: pharaoh has hardened his own heart. The moral would be that God hardens those who harden themselves.

[9:13–35](#). The seventh blow. This plague, perhaps as the seventh, is prefaced by a theological introduction, beginning with the familiar idea that pharaoh must acknowledge God’s power. *Let my people go, that they may serve me* gives both the grounds for redemption (in the relationship between YHWH and Israel) and the ultimate goal (for ‘serve’, while it may refer immediately to the pilgrimage festival at Sinai, and its accompanying sacrifices, undoubtedly signifies much more).

[14](#). The secondary goal is again given, as being that pharaoh should realize the uniqueness of YHWH. Now, however, a new theological point is stated. Pharaoh has been treated mercifully so far: his life has been prolonged so that YHWH’s name and power should be exalted (verse [16](#); cf. [Rom. 9:17](#)). This brings, as corollary, the further thought that all the plagues came in mercy,



rather than judgment; for each one was an opportunity for pharaoh to repent. Instead, he hardened his heart, making his final judgment both certain and inexcusable.

16. *Let you live*: ‘maintained you alive’ is the sense of the Hebrew verb, rather than ‘raised you up’ in the sense of ‘created you’. The point in the context is God’s patience and forbearance. Paul stresses this note too in [Romans 9:16–18](#). Otherwise, God would have wiped them all out with the plagues (verse 15). It is interesting that Paul seems to quote this verse, in Romans, from the [lxx](#), not from our [mt](#): see [Hyatt](#).

17. *Exalting yourself*. This unusual form is found only here. ‘Being obstructionist’ would seem a better translation in view of the derivation of the word, which also gives meanings like ‘pile up a siege-mound’.

18. *Very heavy hail*. Sudden storms like this are not unusual in Western Asia and can be very destructive, but this was of devastating magnitude. Stones ranging in size from marbles to golf-balls have been seen. On 18 November 1969, there was a hailstorm of this nature in Sydney NSW. The writer personally measured some hailstones that were 1¼ inches in diameter; cars were dented, and some windscreens broken by the stones. *Such as never has been*. There are recorded instances of such destructive storms later ([Josh. 10:11](#)), but the violence of this particular storm was unique even in an area prone to hail (the Nile valley, in between deserts, acting as an air funnel).

19. *Get your cattle ... into safe shelter*. This is the first instance in which it was possible for pharaoh and his men to avoid the actual blow by faith and obedience to God. As always, when any ‘gospel’ is preached, some availed themselves of the opportunity and some did not. Cattle are usually out of doors in Egypt from January to April; after that, they are kept indoors, for protection from the heat ([Driver](#)).

23. *Thunder and hail*. The hail appears to have been accompanied at the same time by a violent thunderstorm, not unusual in sultry weather, marked by the electrical discharges popularly called ‘fire balls’ (verse 24; cf. [Ezek. 1:4](#)). As on Sinai, thunder and lighting are signs of God’s presence ([Exod. 19:16](#)). [Hyatt](#) maintains that hailstorms are much rarer in Egypt than Palestine: if so, this heightens the miracle.



25. *Everything*. This must again be taken in a poetical rather than a mathematical sense. Nevertheless the extent of the disaster is seen from [Exodus 10:7](#), where the Egyptians themselves beg pharaoh to release the Israelites before any more plagues follow. The economy of the country has been ruined.

26. *Only in Goshen ... there was no hail*. If the thunderstorm was moving up the funnel of the narrow Nile valley, with hot desert and hills on either side, it is understandable that an area to the east escaped damage, where the air currents would be completely different. If so, Israel rightly saw in this, not a geographical peculiarity, but the very hand of God delivering his people.

27. *I have sinned*. For the third time, pharaoh promises amends. The terminology is that of the lawcourt: YHWH is the innocent party, and pharaoh and his people are the guilty parties. Our understanding of the meaning of the biblical term ‘justification’ derives largely from this Old Testament background: God as it were ‘put us in the right’, guilty though we are.

28. *Thunder*: the Hebrew reads literally voices of ‘God’, which, by a common Semitic idiom, may only mean ‘mighty thunderings’. But from Sinai to the Gospels ([Exod. 19:19](#); [John 12:29](#)) ‘thunder’ is seen as a symbol of God’s voice. So particularly here, the phrase ought to be given its full sense: God is speaking in judgment.

30. *I know*: an example of the ‘theological realism’ of the Bible. Moses does not believe that pharaoh will keep his word, yet he grants the request so that pharaoh may be without excuse (cf. [Rom. 1:20](#)). For another example of such realism, see Joshua’s blunt reply to the protestations of the Israelite tribes ([Josh. 24:19](#)).

31. *The flax and the barley were ruined*: a vivid detail, typical of oral tradition, explaining why the disaster was not complete until the locust hordes devoured the wheat and the spelt later. Such details guarantee, by their artlessness, the integrity of the tradition-stream in which they occur. In this case, the details have added importance as, if accepted, they date the hail to January, at latest, when barley ripens and flax blossoms. Wheat ripens a month or two later (see [Driver](#)). Flax was of great importance in Egypt, for linen making; but right down to Roman times, wheat was the main export crop (cf. the ‘Asiatics’ of [Genesis 42](#), who came down to Egypt to buy grain, as often reported in Egyptian records).



[10:1–20](#). The eighth blow. Once again, there is a theological framework and background to this plague.

2. *Tell ... your son*: cf. [Exodus 12:26, 27](#) for this insistence on ‘theology as recital’. Faith is kindled by recounting the great ‘triumphs of God’ ([Judg. 5:10, 11](#)), in this case his *signs*, and by telling how he *made sport of Egypt*. This last concept, as usual, represents not an emotion but the effect produced. It is an anthropomorphism, an expression of divine activity in human terms, like God’s laughter in the Psalms ([Ps. 2:4](#)), and must not be unfairly pressed as a theological point.

4. *Locusts* are still one of the most dreaded pests of areas bordering the desert, despite every effort of international locust control. In November 1969, huge swarms began to cross the mountains from the area of Gilgandra, in inland NSW, towards the rich Hunter Valley, covering the very ground where they landed. In Western Asia, the position has always been serious: witness the prophets from [Amos \(7:1–3\)](#) to [Joel \(1:1–7\)](#), where the dreaded locust has become an eschatological figure of doom and a picture of God’s judgment.

8. *Who are to go?* In answer to the pleas of his people, pharaoh makes another very half-hearted offer: adult males may go, but no-one else. This Moses refuses, demanding complete liberation of people and stock alike. As a result, the brothers are driven helter-skelter from the enraged pharaoh’s court (verse [11](#)). Now the doom must come: pharaoh’s action has made it certain. No doubt, from pharaoh’s viewpoint, it was a reasonable suggestion to make. From the practical point of view, he had wives, children and flocks as hostages for Israel’s return. From the religious viewpoint, only adult males took a full part in any ancient worship: even later in Israel, it was only the men who must appear before YHWH three times a year ([Exod. 23:17](#)). It was a man’s world, but there were good reasons for it. The men, thus gathered, were the fighting force of the nation (cf. the biblical references to the ‘armies of Israel’ and ‘YHWH of armies’). They were also the heads of the families: they therefore fitly represented the whole nation at worship before God.

13. *An east wind*. This makes clear how God the Creator uses his natural world, and ordinary locusts are the divine scourge. They are brought by an east wind from the Arabian steppes, and ultimately blown into the sea by a west wind (verse [19](#)). The crossing of the Red Sea is another example of God’s use of wind and wave ([Exod. 14](#)), with which compare the testimony borne to Christ in [Matthew 8:27](#). Perhaps this is the origin of the later thought that ‘winds’ are ‘God’s



messengers'. It is helped forward by the fact that the Hebrew *rûah*, 'wind, breath', can also mean 'spirit', whether God's Holy Spirit or the spirit of men.

16. *I have sinned.* Once again comes the easy confession of sin, and the shallow repentance that springs only from a desire to avert the consequences ([Heb. 12:17](#)). In all this pharaoh is not a monster of depravity; he is, like Esau, a recognizable picture of ourselves as 'natural man', and thus a warning to us.

10:21–29. The ninth blow. 21. *A darkness to be felt:* presumably brought by the wind called today *ḥamsîn* (literally 'the fifty', like the English sailor's 'roaring forties'). It is so called because it blows intermittently for fifty days in spring, and often brings sandstorms from the desert. Near Jericho at this period, at the height of the storm, the visibility drops to almost nil, and the air seems thick and solid with sand. This is probably the meaning of the Hebrew *yāmeš*, translated 'to be felt' in [rsv](#), very appropriate if describing the oppressive palpable blackness and heat of a sandstorm.

22. *Thick darkness.* The darkness is described in the strongest possible way by the combination of the two words, each meaning in itself 'darkness'.

23. The period of *three days* may be symbolic, or it may be another vivid folk memory, preserved in tradition. Presumably Israel had 'light' because the sandstorm did not cover this area. Sandstorms are apt to be 'streaky' in their coverage in any case, even in the area affected. If Goshen was well to the side of the delta and Nile valley, the likelihood would be greater.

24. *Your flocks and your herds.* Whether these are held as hostages for the Israelite return, or whether pharaoh is now resigned to the loss of his slaves and merely wants to salvage their stock (and understandably so, if there has been heavy mortality among his own), we are not told. Moses of course refuses; he sees through the plan. Pharaoh's angry reaction is instant and final.

25. *Sacrifices.* This does not necessarily mean (with [Davies](#)) that pharaoh himself must also give a sacrifice gift, a sort of trespass-offering to YHWH. It means that he must allow Israel the means to sacrifice to YHWH by allowing them to take all their flocks and herds; otherwise it is a hollow permission. Whether either Moses or pharaoh took this elaborate Eastern bargaining seriously is quite another question.



29. *I will not see your face again:* but what of [Exodus 12:31](#)? If we are sticklers we can say that, after the death of the first-born, pharaoh merely sent a message to Moses and Aaron without a personal interview. But it would be unfair to hold either Moses or pharaoh to words spoken in the heat of anger. Moses is but accepting the fact that pharaoh's impatience, expressed by his words here, has made the final judgment inevitable; there will be no more of this sort of interview or parleying.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Verses 8–12

Observe here, concerning the plague of boils and blains,

I. When they were not wrought upon by the death of their cattle, God sent a plague that seized their own bodies, and touched them to the quick. If less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater. Let us therefore humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and go forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, that his anger may be turned away from us.

II. The signal by which this plague was summoned was the sprinkling of warm ashes from the *furnace, towards heaven* (v. 8, 10), which was to signify the heating of the air with such an infection as should produce in the bodies of the Egyptians sore boils, which would be both noisome and painful. Immediately upon the scattering of the ashes, a scalding dew came down out of the air, which blistered wherever it fell. Note, Sometimes God shows men their sin in their punishment; they had oppressed Israel in the furnaces, and now the ashes of the furnace are made as much a terror to them as ever their task-masters had been to the Israelites.

III. The plague itself was very grievous—a common eruption would be so, especially to the nice and delicate, but these eruptions were inflammations, like Job's. This is afterwards called the *botch of Egypt* ([Deu. 28:27](#)), as if it were some new disease, never heard of before, and known ever after by that name, Note, Sores in the body are to be looked upon as the punishments of sin, and to be hearkened to as calls to repentance.



IV. The magicians themselves were struck with these boils, v. [11](#). 1. Thus they were punished, (1.) For helping to harden Pharaoh's heart, as Elymas for seeking to *pervert the right ways of the Lord*; God will severely reckon with those that strengthen the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. (2.) For pretending to imitate the former plagues, and making themselves and Pharaoh sport with them. Those that would produce lice shall, against their wills, produce boils. Note, It is ill jesting with God's judgments, and more dangerous than playing with fire. *Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong*. 2. Thus they were shamed in the presence of their admirers. How weak were their enchantments, which could not so much as secure themselves! The devil can give no protection to those that are in confederacy with him. 3. Thus they were driven from the field. Their power was restrained before (ch. [8:18](#)), but they continued to confront Moses, and confirm Pharaoh in his unbelief, till now, at length, they were forced to retreat, and could not stand before Moses, to which the apostle refers ([2 Tim. 3:9](#)) when he says that their *folly was made manifest unto all men*.

V. Pharaoh continued obstinate, for now *the Lord hardened* his heart, v. [12](#). Before, he had hardened his own heart, and resisted the grace of God; and now God justly gave him up to his own heart's lusts, to a reprobate mind, and strong delusions, permitting Satan to blind and harden him, and ordering every thing, henceforward, so as to make him more and more obstinate. Note, Wilful hardness is commonly punished with judicial hardness. If men shut their eyes against the light, it is just with God to close their eyes. Let us dread this as the sorest judgment a man can be under on this side hell.

Verses [13–21](#)

Here is, I. A general declaration of the wrath of God against Pharaoh for his obstinacy. Though God has hardened his heart (v. [12](#)), yet Moses must repeat his applications to him; God suspends his grace and yet demands obedience, to punish him for requiring bricks of the children of Israel when he denied them straw. God would likewise show forth a pattern of long-suffering, and how he waits to be gracious to a *rebellious and gainsaying people*. Six times the demand had been made in vain, yet Moses must make it the seventh time: *Let my people go*, v. [13](#). A most dreadful message Moses is here ordered to deliver to him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear. 1. He must tell him that he is marked for ruin, that he now stands as the butt at which God would shoot all the arrows of his wrath, v. [14](#), [15](#). "Now I will send *all my plagues*."



Now that no place is found for repentance in Pharaoh, nothing can prevent his utter destruction, for that only would have prevented it. Now that God begins to *harden his heart*, his case is desperate. “I will send my plagues *upon thy heart*, not only temporal plagues upon thy body, but spiritual plagues upon thy soul.” Note, God can send plagues upon thy soul.” Note, God can send plagues upon the heart, either by making it senseless or by making it hopeless—and these are the worst plagues. Pharaoh must now expect no respite, no cessation of arms, but to be followed with plague upon plague, till he is utterly consumed. Note, When God judges he will overcome; none ever hardened his heart against him and prospered. 2. He must tell him that he is to remain in history a standing monument of the justice and power of God’s wrath (v. 16): “*For this cause have I raised thee up to the throne at this time, and made thee to stand the shock of the plagues hitherto, to show in thee my power.*” Providence ordered it so that Moses should have a man of such a fierce and stubborn spirit as he was to deal with; and every thing was so managed in this transaction as to make it a most signal and memorable instance of the power God has to humble and bring down the proudest of his enemies. Every thing concurred to signalize this, that God’s name (that is, his incontestable sovereignty, his irresistible power, and his inflexible justice) might be declared throughout all the earth, not only to all places, but through all ages while the earth remains. Note, God sometimes raises up very bad men to honour and power, spares them long, and suffers them to grow insufferably insolent, that he may be so much the more glorified in their destruction at last. See how the neighbouring nations, at that time, improved the ruin of Pharaoh to the glory of God. Jethro said upon it, *Now know I that the Lord is greater than all gods*, 18:11. The apostle illustrates the doctrine of God’s sovereignty with this instance, [Rom. 9:17](#). To justify God in these resolutions, Moses is directed to ask him (v. 17), *As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people?* Pharaoh was a great king; God’s people were poor shepherds at the best, and now poor slaves; and yet Pharaoh shall be ruined if he exalt himself against them, for it is considered as exalting himself against God. This was not the first time that God reproveth kings for their sakes, and let them know that he would not suffer his people to be trampled upon and insulted, no, not by the most powerful of them.

II. A particular prediction of the plague of hail (v. 18), and a gracious advice to Pharaoh and his people to send for their servants and cattle out of the field, that they might be sheltered from the hail, v. 19. Note, When God’s justice threatens ruin his mercy, at the same time, shows us a way of escape from it, so unwilling is he that any should perish. See here what care God took, not only to distinguish between Egyptians and Israelites, but between some Egyptians and others.



If Pharaoh will not yield, and so prevent the judgment itself, yet an opportunity is given to those that have any dread of God and his word to save themselves from sharing in the judgment. Note, Those that will take warning may take shelter; and those that will not may thank themselves if they fall by the overflowing scourge, and the hail which will *sweep away the refuge of lies*, [Isa. 28:17](#). See the different effect of this warning. 1. *Some believed the things that were spoken*, and they feared, and housed their servants and cattle (v. [20](#)), like Noah ([Heb. 11:7](#)), and it was their wisdom. Even among the servants of Pharaoh there were some that trembled at God's word; and shall not the sons of Israel dread it? But, 2. Others believed not: though, whatever plague Moses had hitherto foretold, the event exactly answered to the prediction; and though, if they had had any reason to question this, it would have been no great damage to them to have kept their cattle in the house for one day, and so, supposing it a doubtful case, to have chosen the surer side; yet they were so foolhardy as in defiance to the truth of Moses, and the power of God (of both which they had already had experience enough, to their cost), to leave their cattle in the field, Pharaoh himself, it is probable, giving them an example of the presumption, v. [21](#). Note, Obstinate infidelity, which is deaf to the fairest warnings and the wisest counsels, leaves the blood of those that perish upon their own heads.

Verses [22–35](#)

The threatened plague of hail is here summoned by the powerful hand and rod of Moses (v. [22](#), [23](#)), and it obeys the summons, or rather the divine command; for *fire and hail fulfil God's word*, [Ps. 148:8](#). And here we are told,

I. What desolations it made upon the earth. The thunder, and fire from heaven (or lightning), made it both the more dreadful and the more destroying, v. [23](#), [24](#). Note, God makes the clouds, not only his store-houses whence he drops fatness on his people, but his magazines whence, when he pleases, he can draw out a most formidable train of artillery, with which to destroy his enemies. He himself speaks of the *treasures of hail which he hath reserved against the day of battle and war*, [Job 38:22](#), [23](#). Woeful havoc this hail made in the land of Egypt. It killed both men and cattle, and battered down, not only the herbs, but the trees, v. [25](#). The corn that was above ground was destroyed, and that only preserved which as yet had not come up, v. [31](#), [32](#). Note, God has many ways of *taking away the corn in the season thereof* ([Hos. 2:9](#)), either by a secret blasting, or a noisy hail. In this plague the *hot thunderbolts*, as well as the hail, are said to



destroy *their flocks*, [Ps. 78:47, 48](#); and see [Ps. 105:32, 33](#). Perhaps David alludes to this when, describing God's glorious appearances for the discomfiture of his enemies, he speaks of the hailstones and coals of fire he threw among them, [Ps. 18:12, 13](#). And there is a plan reference to it on the pouring out of the seventh vial, [Rev. 16:21](#). Notice is here taken (v. [26](#)) of the land of Goshen's being preserved from receiving any damage by this plague. God has the directing of the pregnant clouds, and causes it to rain or hail on one city and not on another, either in mercy or in judgment.

II. What a consternation it put Pharaoh in. See what effect it had upon him, 1. He humbled himself to Moses in the language of a penitent, v. [27, 28](#). No man could have spoken better. He owns himself on the wrong side in his contest with the God of the Hebrews: "*I have sinned in standing it out so long.*" He owns the equity of God's proceedings against him: *The Lord is righteous*, and must be justified when he speaks, though he speak in thunder and lightning. He condemns himself and his land: "*I and my people are wicked*, and deserve what is brought upon us." He begs the prayers of Moses: "*Entreat the Lord for me, that this direful plague may be removed.*" And, *lastly*, he promises to yield up his prisoners: *I will let you go*. What could one desire more? And yet his heart was hardened all this while. Note, The terror of the rod often extorts penitent acknowledgments from those who have no penitent affections; under the surprise and smart of affliction, they start up, and say that which is pertinent enough, not because they are deeply affected, but because they know that they should be and that *it is meet to be said*. 2. Moses, hereupon, becomes an intercessor for him with God. Though he had all the reason in the world to think that he would immediately repent of his repentance, and told him so (v. [30](#)), yet he promises to be this friend in the court of heaven. Note, Even those whom we have little hopes of, yet we should continue to pray for, and to admonish, [1 Sa. 12:23](#). Observe, (1.) The place Moses chose for his intercession. He went *out of the city* (v. [33](#)), not only for privacy in his communion with God, but to show that he durst venture abroad into the field, notwithstanding the hail and lightning which kept Pharaoh and his servants withindoors, knowing that every hail-stone had its direction from his God, who meant him no hurt. Note, Peace with God makes men thunderproof, for thunder is the voice of their Father. (2.) The gesture: He *spread abroad his hands unto the Lord*—an outward expression of earnest desire and humble expectation. Those that come to God for mercy must stand ready to receive it. (3.) The end Moses aimed at in interceding for him: *That thou mayest know*, and be convinced, *that the earth is the Lord's* (v. [29](#)), that is, that God has a sovereign dominion over all the creatures, that they all are ruled by him, and therefore that thou



oughtest to be so. See what various methods God uses to bring men to their proper senses. Judgments are sent, judgments removed, and all for the same end, to make men know that he Lord reigns. (4.) The success of it. [1.] He prevailed with God, v. [33](#). But, [2.] He could not prevail with Pharaoh: *He sinned yet more, and hardened his heart*, v. [34](#), [35](#). The prayer of Moses opened and shut heaven, like Elias's ([Jam. 5:17, 18](#)), and such is the power of God's two witnesses ([Rev. 11:6](#)); yet neither Moses nor Elias, nor those two witnesses, could subdue the hard hearts of men. Pharaoh was frightened into a compliance by the judgment, but, when it was over, his convictions vanished, and his fair promises were forgotten. Note, Little credit is to be given to confessions upon the rack. Note also, Those that are not bettered by judgments and mercies are commonly made worse.

Chapter [10](#)

The eighth and ninth of the plagues of Egypt, that of locusts and that of darkness, are recorded in this chapter. I. Concerning the plague of locusts, 1. God instructs Moses in the meaning of these amazing dispensations of his providence (v. [1, 2](#)). 2. He threatens the locusts (v. [3–6](#)). 3. Pharaoh, at the persuasion of his servants, is willing to treat again with Moses (v. [7–9](#)), but they cannot agree (v. [10, 11](#)). 4. The locusts come (v. [12–15](#)). 5. Pharaoh cries Peccavi—I have offended (v. [16, 17](#)), whereupon Moses prays for the removal of the plague, and it is done; but Pharaoh's heart is still hardened (v. [18–20](#)). II. Concerning the plague of darkness, 1. It is inflicted (v. [21–23](#)). 2. Pharaoh again treats with Moses about a surrender, but the treaty breaks off in a heat (v. [26](#), etc.).

Verses [1–11](#)

Here, I. Moses is instructed. We may well suppose that he, for his part, was much astonished both at Pharaoh's obstinacy and at God's severity, and could not but be compassionately concerned for the desolations of Egypt, and at a loss to conceive what this contest would come to at last. Now here God tells him what he designed, not only Israel's release, but the magnifying of his own name: *That thou mayest tell in thy writings, which shall continue to the world's end, what I have wrought in Egypt*, v. [1, 2](#). The ten plagues of Egypt must be inflicted, that they may be recorded for the generations to come as undeniable proofs, 1. Of God's overruling power in



the kingdom of nature, his dominion over all the creatures, and his authority to use them either as servants to his justice or sufferers by it, according to the counsel of his will. 2. Of God's victorious power over the kingdom of Satan, to restrain the malice and chastise the insolence of his and his church's enemies. These plagues are standing monuments of the greatness of God, the happiness of the church, and the sinfulness of sin, and standing monitors to the children of men in all ages not to *provoke the Lord to jealousy* nor to *strive with their Maker*. The benefit of these instructions to the world sufficiently balances the expense.

II. Pharaoh is reproved (v. 3): *Thus saith the Lord God of the poor, despised, persecuted, Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?* Note, It is justly expected from the greatest of men that they humble themselves before the great God, and it is at their peril if they refuse to do it. This has more than once been God's quarrel with princes. Belshazzar did not humble his heart, [Dan. 5:22](#). Zedekiah humbled not himself before Jeremiah, [2 Chr. 36:12](#). Those that will not humble themselves God will humble. Pharaoh had sometimes pretended to humble himself, but no account was made of it, because he was neither sincere nor constant in it.

III. The plague of locusts is threatened, v. 4–6. The hail had broken down the fruits of the earth, but these locusts should come and devour them: and not only so, but they should fill their houses, whereas the former inroads of these insects had been confined to their lands. This should be much worse than all the calamities of that king which had ever been known. Moses, when he had delivered his message, not expecting any better answer than he had formerly, *turned himself and went out from Pharaoh*, v. 6. Thus Christ appointed his disciples to depart from those who would not receive them, and to *shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them*; and ruin is not far off from those who are thus justly abandoned by the Lord's messengers, [1 Sa. 15:27](#), etc.

IV. Pharaoh's attendants, his ministers of state, or privy-counsellors, interpose, to persuade him to come to some terms with Moses, v. 7. They, as in duty bound, represent to him the deplorable condition of the kingdom (*Egypt is destroyed*), and advise him by all means to release his prisoners (*Let the men go*); for Moses, they found, would be a snare to them till it was done, and it were better to consent at first than to be compelled at last. The Israelites had become a burdensome stone to the Egyptians, and now, at length, the princes of Egypt were willing to be rid of them, [Zec. 12:3](#). Note, It is a thing to be regretted (and prevented, if possible) that a whole



nation should be ruined for the pride and obstinacy of its princes, *Salus populi suprema lex—To consult the welfare of the people is the first of laws.*

V. A new treaty is, hereupon, set on foot between Pharaoh and Moses, in which Pharaoh consents for the Israelites to go into the wilderness to do sacrifice; but the matter in dispute was who should go, v. 8. 1. Moses insists that they should take their whole families, and all their effects, along with them, v. 9. note, Those that serve God must serve him with all they have. Moses pleads, “We must hold a feast, therefore we must have our families to feast with, and our flocks and herds to feast upon, to the honour of God.” 2. Pharaoh will by no means grant this: he will allow the men to go, pretending that this was all they desired, though this matter was never yet mentioned in any of the former treaties; but, for the *little ones*, he resolves to keep them as hostages, to oblige them to return, v. 10, 11. In a great passion he curses them, and threatens that, if they offer to remove their little ones, they will do it at their peril. Note, Satan does all he can to hinder those that serve God themselves from bringing their children in to serve him. He is a sworn enemy to early piety, knowing how destructive it is to the interests of his kingdom; whatever would hinder us from engaging our children to the utmost in God’s service, we have reason to suspect the hand of Satan in it. 3. The treaty, hereupon, breaks off abruptly; those that before went out from Pharaoh’s presence (v. 6) were now driven out. Those will quickly hear their doom that cannot bear to hear their duty. See 2 Chr. 25:16. *Quos Deus destruet eos dementat—Whom God intends to destroy he delivers up to infatuation.* Never was man so infatuated to his own ruin as Pharaoh was.

Verses 12–20

Here is, I. The invasion of the land by the locusts—*God’s great army*, Joel 2:11. God bids *Moses stretch out his hand* (v. 12), to beckon them, as it were (for they came at a call), and he *stretched forth his rod*, v. 13. Compare ch. 9:22, 23. Moses ascribes it to the stretching out, not of his own hand, but the *rod of God*, the instituted sign of God’s presence with him. The locusts obey the summons, and fly upon the wings of the wind, the east wind, and *caterpillars without number*, as we are told, Ps. 105:34, 35. A formidable army of horse and foot might more easily have been resisted than this host of insects. Who then is able to stand before the great God?

II. The desolations they made in it (v. 15): They *covered the face of the earth*, and *ate up the fruit* of it. The earth God has *given to the children of men*; yet, when God pleases, he can disturb



their possession and send locusts and caterpillars to force them out. Herbs grow *for the service of man*; yet, when God pleases, those contemptible insects shall not only be fellow-commoners with him, but shall plunder him, and eat the bread out of his mouth. Let our labour be, not for the habitation and meat which thus lie exposed, but for those which *endure to eternal life*, which cannot be thus invaded, nor thus corrupted.

III. Pharaoh's admission, hereupon, v. [16](#), [17](#). He had driven Moses and Aaron from him (v. [11](#)), telling them (it is likely) he would have no more to do with them. But now he calls for them again in all haste, and makes court to them with as much respect as before he had dismissed them with disdain. Note, The day will come when those who set at nought their counsellors, and despise all their reproofs, will be glad to make an interest in them and engage them to intercede on their behalf. The foolish virgins court the wise to *give them of their oil*; and see [Ps. 141:6](#). 1. Pharaoh confesses his fault: *I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you*. He now sees his own folly in the slights and affronts he had put on God and his ambassadors, and *seems* at least, to repent of it. When God convinces men of sin, and humbles them for it, their contempt of God's ministers, and the word of the Lord in their mouths, will certainly come into the account, and lie heavily upon their consciences. Some think that when Pharaoh said, "The LORD *your* God," he did in effect say, "The LORD shall not be *my* God." Many treat with God as a potent enemy, whom they are willing not to be at war with, but care not for treating with him as their rightful prince, to whom they are willing to submit with loyal affection. True penitents lament sin as committed against God, even their own God, to whom they stand obliged. 2. He begs pardon, not of God, as penitents ought, but of Moses, which was more excusable in him, because, by a special commission, Moses was made a *god to Pharaoh*, and *whosoever sins he remitted* they were forgiven; when he prays, *Forgive this once*, he, in effect, promises not to offend in like manner any more, yet seems loth to express that promise, nor does he say any thing particularly of letting the people go. Note, Counterfeit repentance commonly cheats men with general promises and is loth to covenant against particular sins. 3. He entreats Moses and Aaron to pray for him. There are those who, in distress, implore the help of other persons' prayers, but have no mind to pray for themselves, showing thereby that they have no true love to God, nor any delight in communion with him. Pharaoh desires their prayers *that this death* only might be taken away, not *this sin*: he deprecates the plague of locusts, not the plague of a hard heart, which yet was much the more dangerous.



IV. The removal of the judgment, upon the prayer of Moses, v. [18](#), [19](#). This was, 1. As great an instance of the power of God as the judgment itself. An east wind brought the locusts, and now a west wind carried them off. Note, Whatever point of the compass the wind is in, it is fulfilling God's word, and turns about by his counsel. The *wind bloweth where it listeth*, as it respects any control of ours; not so as it respects the control of God: he *directeth it under the whole heaven*. 2. It was as great a proof of the authority of Moses, and as firm a ratification of his commission and his interest in that God who both *makes peace* and *creates evil*, [Isa. 45:7](#). Nay, hereby he not only commanded the respect, but recommended himself to the good affections of the Egyptians, inasmuch as, while the judgment came in obedience to his summons, the removal of it was in answer to his prayers. He never desired the woeful day, though he threatened it. His commission indeed ran against Egypt, but his intercession was for it, which was a good reason why they should love him, though they feared him. 3. It was also as strong an argument for their repentance as the judgment itself; for by this it appeared that God is ready to forgive, and swift to show mercy. If he turn away a particular judgment, as he did often from Pharaoh, or defer it, as in Ahab's case, upon the profession of repentance and the outward tokens of humiliation, what will he do if we be sincere, and how welcome will true penitents be to him! O that this goodness of God might lead us to repentance!

V. Pharaoh's return to his impious resolution again not to let the people go (v. [20](#)), through the righteous hand of God upon him, hardening his heart, and confirming him in his obstinacy. Note, Those that have often baffled their convictions, and stood it out against them, forfeit the benefit of them, and are justly given up to those lusts of their own hearts which (how strong soever their convictions) prove too strong for them.

Verses [21–29](#)

Here is, I. The plague of darkness brought upon Egypt, and a most dreadful plague it was, and therefore is put first of the ten in [Ps. 105:28](#), though it was one of the last; and in the destruction of the spiritual Egypt it is produced by the fifth vial, which is poured out upon the *seat of the beast*, [Rev. 16:10](#). *His kingdom was full of darkness*. Observe particularly concerning this plague, 1. That it was a total darkness. We have reason to think, not only that the lights of heaven were clouded, but that all their fires and candles were put out by the damps or clammy vapours which were the cause of this darkness; for it is said (v. [23](#)), They *saw not one another*. It



is threatened to the wicked ([Job 18:5, 6](#)) that the *spark of his fire shall not shine* (even the sparks of his own kindling, as they are called, [Isa. 50:11](#)), and that the *light shall be dark in his tabernacle*. Hell is utter darkness. The light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee, [Rev. 18:23](#). 2. That it was darkness which *might be felt* (v. 21), felt in its *causes* by their fingers' ends (so thick were the fogs), felt in its *effects*, some think, by their eyes, which were pricked with pain, and made the more sore by their rubbing them. Great pain is spoken of as the effect of that darkness, [Rev. 16:10](#), which alludes to this. 3. No doubt it astonished and terrified them. The cloud of locusts, which had *darkened the land* (v. 15), was nothing to this. The tradition of the Jews is that in this darkness they were terrified by the apparitions of evil spirits, or rather by dreadful sounds and murmurs which they made, or (which is no less frightful) by the horrors of their own consciences; and this is the plague which some think is intended (for, otherwise, it is not mentioned at all there) [Ps. 78:49](#), *He poured upon them the fierceness of his anger, by sending evil angels among them*; for to those to whom the devil has been a deceiver he will, at length, be a terror. 4. It continued three days, *six nights* (says bishop Hall) *in one*; so long they were imprisoned by those chains of darkness, and the most lightsome palaces were perfect dungeons. No *man rose from his place*, v. 23. They were all confined to their houses; and such a terror seized them that few of them had the courage to go from the chair to the bed, or from the bed to the chair. Thus were they *silent in darkness*, [1 Sa. 2:9](#). Now Pharaoh had time to consider, if he would have improved it. Spiritual darkness is spiritual bondage; while Satan blinds men's eyes that they see not, he binds them hands and feet that they work not for God, nor move towards heaven. They *sit in darkness*. 5. It was a righteous thing with God thus to punish them. Pharaoh and his people had rebelled against the light of God's word, which Moses spoke to them; justly therefore are they punished with darkness, for they loved it and chose it rather. The blindness of their minds brings upon them this darkness of the air. Never was mind so blinded as Pharaoh's, never was air so darkened as Egypt's. The Egyptians by their cruelty would have extinguished the lamp of Israel, and quenched their coal; justly therefore does God put out their lights. Compare it with the punishment of the Sodomites, [Gen. 19:11](#). Let us dread the consequences of sin; if three days' darkness was so dreadful, what will everlasting darkness be? 6. The children of Israel, at the same time, had *light in their dwellings* (v. 23), not only in the land of Goshen, where most of them dwelt, but in the habitations of those who were dispersed among the Egyptians: for that some of them were thus dispersed appears from the distinction afterwards appointed to be put on their door-posts, [ch. 12:7](#). This is an instance, (1.) Of the power of God above the ordinary power of nature. We must not think that we share in common



mercies as a matter of course, and therefore that we owe no thanks to God for them; he could distinguish, and withhold that from us which he grants to other. He does indeed ordinarily make his sun to shine on the just and unjust; but he could make a difference, and we must own ourselves indebted to his mercy that he does not. (2.) Of the particular favour he bears to his people: they *walk in the light* when others *wander endlessly in thick darkness*; wherever there is an Israelite indeed, though in this dark world, there is light, there is a *child of light*, one for whom *light is sown*, and whom the *day-spring from on high visits*. When God made this difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians, who would not have preferred the poorest cottage of an Israelite to the finest palace of an Egyptian? There is still a real difference, though not so discernible a one, between the house of the wicked, which is under a curse, and the habitation of the just, which is blessed, [Prov. 3:33](#). We should believe in that difference, and govern ourselves accordingly. Upon [Ps. 105:28](#), *He sent darkness and made it dark, and they rebelled not against his word*, some ground a conjecture that, during these three days of darkness, the Israelites were circumcised, in order to their celebrating the passover which was now approaching, and that the command which authorized this was the word against which they rebelled not; for their circumcision, when they entered Canaan, is spoken of as a second general circumcision, [Jos. 5:2](#). During these three days of darkness to the Egyptians, if God had so pleased, the Israelites, by the light which they had, might have made their escape, and without asking leave of Pharaoh; but God would bring them out *with a high hand*, and not by stealth, nor in haste, [Isa. 52:12](#).

II. Here is the impression made upon Pharaoh by this plague, much like that of the foregoing plagues. 1. It awakened him so far that he renewed the treaty with Moses and Aaron, and now, at length, consented that they should take their little ones with them, only he would have their cattle left in pawn, v. [24](#). It is common for sinners thus to bargain with God Almighty. Some sins they will leave, but not all; they will leave their sins for a time, but they will not bid them a final farewell; they will allow him some share in their hearts, but the world and the flesh must share with him: thus they mock God, but they deceive themselves. Moses resolves not to abate in his terms: *Our cattle shall go with us*, v. [26](#). Note, The terms of reconciliation are so fixed that though men dispute them ever so long they cannot possibly alter them, nor bring them lower. We must come up to the demands of God's will, for we cannot expect he should condescend to the provisos of our lusts. God's messengers must always be bound up by that rule ([Jer. 15:19](#)), *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*. Moses gives a very good reason why they



must take their cattle with them; they must go to do sacrifice, and therefore they must take wherewithal. What numbers and kinds of sacrifices would be required they did not yet know, and therefore they must take all they had. Note, With ourselves, and our children, we must devote all our worldly possessions to the service of God, because we know not what use God will make of what we have, nor in what way we may be called upon to honour God with it. 2. Yet it exasperated him so far that, when he might not make his own terms, he broke off the conference abruptly, and took up a resolution to treat no more. Wrath now came upon him to the utmost, and he became outrageous beyond all bounds, v. 28. Moses is dismissed in anger, forbidden the court upon pain of death, forbidden so much as to meet Pharaoh any more, as he had been used to do, by the river's side: *In that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die*. Prodigious madness! Had he not found that Moses could plague him without seeing his face? Or had he forgotten how often he had sent for Moses as his physician to heal him and ease him of his plagues? and must he now be bidden to come near him no more? Impotent malice! To threaten him with death who was armed with such a power, and at whose mercy he had so often laid himself. What will not hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandments bring men to? Moses takes him at his word (v. 29): *I will see thy face no more*, that is, "after this time;" for this conference did not break off till ch. 11:8, when Moses went out *in a great anger*, and told Pharaoh how soon he would change his mind, and his proud spirit would come down, which was fulfilled (ch. 12:31), when Pharaoh became a humble suppliant to Moses to depart. So that, after this interview, Moses came no more, till he was sent for. Note, When men drive God's word from them he justly permits their delusions, and answers them according to the multitude of their idols. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, he presently left them.