



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 9:13 - 10:29

Topic

As darkness plagues all of Egypt,
Pharaoh dismisses Moses, who tells
the monarch that he will never talk with him again

Title

*"Hello Darkness, My Next Plague;
I'll Never Talk With Pharaoh Again"*

The show is called *Darkness*. It's a Discovery Channel program that follows three people over the course of six days as they try to make their way through a dangerous cave.

There is no light to guide the contestants as they crawl through nearly five miles of tunnels across fifty-five acres, sprinkled with ninety-foot drops nicknamed the Chasm of Death.

The crews filming them have special cameras. They can see the contestants, but the contestants can't see them.

Page 1 of 18

Exodus 9:13-10:29

*"Hello Darkness, My Next Plague;
I'll Never Talk With Pharaoh Again"*

The tagline reads, “In *Darkness*, three strangers push themselves to their absolute limits in complete darkness - enduring days buried underground while navigating prehistoric cave systems, ancient subterranean cities, and centuries-old abandoned mines.”

Maybe you read about the blonde woman who fell down a well. After she was rescued, a reporter asked her if it was dark down there. She replied, “I don’t know. I couldn't see.”

Three more signs plague the Egyptians over about an eight-week period with hailstones, then locusts, then darkness.

Despite their severity, **the Lord reveals Himself as merciful.** Before the hailstorm, the Lord declares, “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” (9:15).

In other words, He could easily have wiped them out. It was merciful of Him to hold back the fullness of His wrath. Then in verse nineteen He says,

Exo 9:19 “Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and 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.”

God mercifully provided a way to be saved from the storm.

There’s a famous verse in the Old Testament that mentions God’s wrath alongside His mercy.

It was uttered by the prophet Habakkuk at a time when God was going to discipline His own people. Habakkuk asked of the Lord, "In wrath remember mercy" (3:2).

More than a prayer, it shows that Habakkuk knew God could, and would, remember mercy. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but wishes that all would come to repentance.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 When You Declare God's Wrath, Remember His Mercy, and #2 When You're Disparaged About God's Wrath, Reiterate His Mercy.

#1 When You Declare God's Wrath, Remember His Mercy

(9:13-35)

The largest recorded hailstone in the U.S. was nearly as big as a volleyball and fell on July 23, 2010, in Vivian, South Dakota. It was eight inches in diameter and weighed almost two pounds.

I doubt that the Egyptian meteorologists were doing much in the way of measuring the hailstorm God brought to bear upon them.

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

Moses must have been an Annual Passholder. He seemed to have unrestricted access to one of the most powerful monarchs on earth.

Exo 9:14 for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is none like Me* in all the earth.

The mention of the effect of what was coming on their “heart” indicates that these last signs would be especially terrifying to the Egyptians. The first six signs were doozies, but these next ones would affect them in psychological ways the previous ones had not.

“That you may know there is none like Me in all the earth” reminds us that these plagues were first and foremost **signs** pointing to the superiority of the God of the Hebrews. We use signs when we want to be very clear about something. Traffic signs, for example, are carefully thought out to eliminate confusion.

God was speaking to Egypt in a language they would understand: Power over the natural world. Within the displays of His power was the understanding that obeying God would cause the plagues to cease.

Exo 9:15 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.

Exo 9:16 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.

God could have destroyed Egypt in any number of ways. He didn't, because He was giving Pharaoh and Egypt opportunity to obey Him. A by-product of their disobedience was the display of His mighty power to all who would hear this story.

Exo 9:17 As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go.

By refusing to let the Hebrews go, Pharaoh would not concede to God's power; he would not yield his own claim to be a god among men; he would not admit that Egypt's gods were inferior.

Exo 9:18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now.

What would seem to the Egyptians to be an apocalyptic hailstorm was coming. It wasn't in the forecast. You couldn't see clouds forming, and there was no report of a storm heading their way. These events were not simply natural occurrences. They were started and stopped by God in a way that made them signs.

Exo 9:19 Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and 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." ' "

You'd think by now the Egyptians would take God at His word. Some did.

Exo 9:20 He who feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses.

Exo 9:21 But he who did not regard the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

Do you get the impression reading this that they predetermined to either believe or disbelieve? No; every Egyptian had his or her eyes opened by the signs in order to make a personal decision. God gave them a clear choice: believe and live, or disbelieve and die. In wrath God was remembering His mercy, and by grace was freeing their wills to believe Him.

Exo 9:22 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, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt."

Exo 9:23 And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.

Exo 9:24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

Exo 9:25 And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field.

It was clear skies until the "rod" went up. This was God - not simply a freak storm.

If you want to put blame on God, account for the fact that He gave ample evacuation notice. No one needed to die.

Exo 9:26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

The Israelites suffered alongside the Egyptians during the first three signs. Beginning with the fourth, they were noticeably set apart. It was another way God was trying to reach the Egyptians, by showing them that He could make a distinction.

Exo 9:27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The LORD *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.

Exo 9:28 Entreat the LORD, that there may be no *more* mighty thundering and hail, for *it is* enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."

He had "sinned ***this*** time?" He'd been sinning all along.

"My people and I are wicked?" While it was true the Egyptians needed saving, it was Pharaoh standing against God. It was a lame confession; but the Lord would honor it.

Exo 9:29 So 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, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth *is* the LORD's.

Exo 9:30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God."

Foreknowledge isn't foreordination. Just because God knew how they would respond doesn't mean He determined their response.

I keep telling you God's foreknowledge doesn't predestine something to happen. Without going too far down a rabbit trail, I want to give you proof, from the Bible. In First Samuel twenty-three, David is on the run from King Saul.

He's holed up in a walled city, Keilah. Saul gets wind of it and heads in that direction.

1Sa 23:9 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

1Sa 23:10 Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake.

1Sa 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."

1Sa 23:12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will deliver *you*."

1Sa 23:13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

Do you see what happened? God foreknew what would happen, but it didn't overcome David's free-will, and he escaped. God foreknows without determining.

Exo 9:31 Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley *was* in the head and the flax *was* in bud.

Exo 9:32 But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they *are* late crops.

This gives us a time stamp. All things considered, it was probably February. Looking ahead, the final sign, the death of the firstborn, would take place in April.

Egypt suffered quite some time - probably eight months - from these plagues, and, of course, their aftermath.

Exo 9:33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth.

Exo 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Exo 9:35 So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

A word about Moses. There was a crazy hailstorm going on. ***He had to walk in it, “out of the city,” before he “spread out his hands to the Lord.”*** The ground all around him must have been getting pelted, and lit-up by lightning strikes. Way to trust God, Moses!

In His wrath God was extending mercy. We've seen in this sign two specific references to God showing mercy:

1. First, by telling Pharaoh that He was holding back His full power, and
2. Second, by giving Egyptians a warning to believe and be spared.

Have you ever heard the expression, “the God of the Old Testament?” It is usually a slam against God for being full of wrath in the Old Testament, to contrast the compassion of Jesus Christ.

Here is what Jesus said about the so-called “God of the Old Testament: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Jesus IS the “God of the Old Testament.” If you keep that in mind, you will see Him reaching-out to save, in wrath remembering mercy.

The Father isn’t throwing tantrums in the Old Testament. He’s working to provide for the plan of human redemption and salvation.

#2 When You’re Disparaged About God’s Wrath, Reiterate His Mercy

(10:1-29)

The most common criticism leveled against God is that He seems to be doing nothing to alleviate human suffering. Nonbelievers accuse Him of willful ignorance; believers sometimes fall away. God *has* a plan to overcome and end evil once-and-for-all. There *is* a time coming when He will wipe away every tear.

What is He waiting for? He is not willing any should perish eternally. He’s waiting for you, if you are not a Christian, to get saved.

This special kind of waiting is called “longsuffering.” God is longsuffering with nonbelievers because eternal separation from Him is so much worse than the worst sufferings we might endure today.

Exo 10:1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him,

Exo 10:2 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, that you may know that I *am* the LORD."

I know it's redundant for most of you, but I need to again briefly explain what it means when it says God "hardened" their hearts. **It means that their hearts were strengthened in their own resolve to rebel despite God's pressure for them to repent.**

I've been using the example of North Korea. The more pressure the nations of the world bring to bear against Kim Jong-un, to relent, the more he is strengthened in his resolve to build nukes. We're not pressuring him to do something he is incapable of doing. Quite the opposite.

Exo 10:3 So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

Exo 10:4 Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory.

Exo 10:5 And they shall cover the face of the earth, so that no one will be able to see the earth; and they shall eat the residue of what is left, which remains to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree which grows up for you out of the field.

Exo 10:6 They shall fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians - which neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that

they were on the earth to this day.' " And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

In 1875, the largest locust swarm in history was recorded over the Midwest - 198,000 square miles. (For a size reference, California covers 163,696 square miles.) The swarm was estimated to contain several trillion locusts and probably weighed several million tons.

Exo 10:7 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 know that Egypt is destroyed?"

It was a big deal to accuse Pharaoh. He was considered a god.

You see in this the hardness of the human heart, and you see the lengths God is willing to go to to reach hearts:

- Their hearts were so hard that it took eight plagues to get them to even begin to think that they should obey God.
- Their hearts were so precious that God was willing to strive with them, asking His own people to suffer in their slavery just a little longer.

Exo 10:8 So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. Who *are* the ones that are going?"

Exo 10:9 And Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."

Exo 10:10 Then he said to them, "The LORD had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you.

Exo 10:11 Not so! Go now, you *who are* men, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desired." And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Pharaoh kept negotiating; but this was *not* a negotiation.

Exo 10:12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land - all that the hail has left."

Exo 10:13 So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind on the land all that day and all *that* night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

Exo 10:14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. *They were* very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them.

Exo 10:15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

You have all the creep-factor of swarming insects, along with the destruction of all the remaining plant food sources in Egypt. This was bleak.

Exo 10:16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

Exo 10:17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only."

Exo 10:18 So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD.

Exo 10:19 And the LORD turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt.

This was a more honest expression of his sin. It still wasn't sincere:

Exo 10:20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

Does it make biblical sense that God was punishing Pharaoh for not doing something that He was preventing him from doing? No; it makes God a monster, if Pharaoh is a puppet whose decisions are predetermined.

The Lord's signs - the pressure - were strengthening Pharaoh's resolve to continue to defy God, just as sanctions against dictators can do today.

In each series of three signs, the third comes upon Egypt with no warning to Pharaoh.

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

Exo 10:22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.

Exo 10:23 They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Sun was out in Goshen; at night, they had their oil lamps, as usual. The sense I get in Egypt is that even if you lit a lamp, it remained pitch black. They literally "felt" a darkness, and no one moved in it for three days straight.

Exo 10:24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you."

Pharaoh, you're so close to doing the right thing. Give it up and believe God.

Exo 10:25 But Moses said, "You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Exo 10:26 Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the LORD our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there."

There had been no giving of the Law of God. Israel had no system of formal worship. Part of their leaving Egypt was to receive all that, at Mount Sinai.

Exo 10:27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

Exo 10:28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!"

Exo 10:29 So Moses said, "You have spoken well. I will never see your face again."

Moses uses the “never” word. We might be tempted to say that God’s longsuffering ended. But God will give Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, one final chance in the tenth sign: The death of the firstborn. God will give clear instructions for how to avoid that plague.

Over and over and over and over and over and over again... God was reaching-out to Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

When people disparage you about God’s wrath, or what they perceive as His reluctance to do anything, the real issue is something deeper. It is a heart issue. Their hearts are strengthened against God.

Drawing from the ninth sign, we remember that the apostle John said,

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Wait a minute. The Egyptians certainly did not “love darkness,” did they? Well, yes, they did, in one sense.

As terrifying as it was, the majority refused to repent and believe God. They endured a terrifying kingdom of darkness rather than turn to God.

Might it have been a foretaste of Hell? In Matthew's Gospel, Hell is described as "darkness" (22:13). Some people claim to have had out-of-body experiences in Hell. The Egyptians had an in-the-body experience - but most of them came out of it still rejecting God.

The world around us is, spiritually speaking, a kingdom of darkness. Rather than turn to God, nonbelievers blame Him, and go on living in darkness. That doesn't mean they are caught-up in sinister things. Darkness is spiritual, so you can be in it but think you're doing great.

If you're not a believer you are like the contestants on the Discovery Channel show, except that you cannot get out by your own efforts.

Here is how you get out of the darkness:

Col 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Once in the light, we read,

1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

We are in His light and we have His light. Hide it under a bushel?
No - I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.