

Plagues of Egypt

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[0 : 0 0] Before we look at this whole theme I want to read just one or two extra verses Just to put us in the picture a little bit more Exodus chapter 1. It's on page 58 And verse 11 to 14 This is really a kind of precursor to the story of the plagues so they put slaves masters over them to oppress them that is the Israelite people with forced labor and they built Pethom and Rammys as store cities for Pharaoh But the more they would oppress the more they multiplied and spread so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and work them ruthlessly They made their lives bitter with hard labor and brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields and in their hard labor The Egyptians used them ruthlessly and Then verse 22 at the end of this chapter

Because they were afraid of the number of Israelites that were being born and the way the nation was multiplying as it were the people were multiplying So in verse 30 22 the last verse then Pharaoh gave the order to all his people every boy that is born Among the Israelites you must throw into the Nile Let every girl live So and then we came to the last of the plagues the plague that's mentioned the plague of the firstborn very solemn What a theme for a Sunday morning service a all of your visiting and you'll think well I'm never coming back here again. It's not exactly a bright and cheery Sunday morning theme to have on the resurrection morning as we think about and worship the Lord God But I hope that you'll find that all of scripture is for us to look at and to be challenged by the same God and it's a God who's chosen to Bring Jesus Christ into the world at the appointed time he did and he did so with this

Long introduction Where we have the story of our beginnings and the story of his dealing with our people and of redeeming our people But it was all pointing forward to the coming of Jesus And we need to always remember that these stories are not written and did not happen in 21st century Western culture We need to remember that and We need to remember that God will always be a God who's gonna disrupt us a little bit Because he's not a God that we've taken out of our pocket And we've molded him herself and we want him to be nice and cheery and gentle and kind Just according to ourselves and according to what we want Because then we have an idol then we have a God we've made up Then we have a God that we can believe in or not believe in just depending on how we feel but we have this God who we believe is revealed in scripture as a God of truth and We have a harrowing story

But one that speaks about the nature of God and speaks about ourselves and speaks about his grace and His love even in this story But the Bible will take us out of our comfort zone and it will challenges a little bit maybe a big bit about what we think and We need to remember this story of Exodus the story of the Exodus in the light of scripture in the light of where it is in the Bible and in the light of what God has already Said and we remember that God in the very beginning has told us where we've come from who has made us he's made us and that we chose as a people to rebel against him and that ushered in death and And ushered in separation from God and eternal separation and the seriousness of that But within even that story We have God telling us about the hope and the future

That he is preparing for those who will trust in him that we can't make right what's gone wrong But he's going to send someone who will do that the seed of the woman you remember that He speaks about the seed of the woman in the story of Adam and Eve when he speak at this Satan He's in the seed of seed from this woman will come and will redeem the people crush your head He will defeat the power of death and sin in the grave and those who trust in the Savior will know life in a future And so from that moment on we have an outworking of that promise. We have the seed of the woman the family of Eve working towards Jesus and Lots of things happen in between and Satan himself at many times tries to destroy that seed tries to end that line Because he knows what's coming and In many ways, this is one of these stories There's a kind of cosmic battle going on here

if we can speak in such dramatic terms

[5 : 19] There is a there's God and there's evil and And it's always out worked on the theater of the earth with people Made in God's image, but Broken and under the power and under the shadow of death and evil And when there's when when there is evil in the world and that immediately brings it into our own lives Because all of us have problems of sin and rebellion in our hearts And because we live in a world that is so just not black and white is it?

It's not what we would want it to be. It's not clear cut There's all kinds of misery and horrible things going on and That's the outworking of the curse of sin and this passage and this story is very much about The damage that it is done and the pride that causes people to be so absolutely blind to Reality and to God and to his grace see Egypt was a hotbed of False worship there was hundreds of gods in Egypt and Pharaoh was one of them Pharaoh claimed to be divine So there was this whole nation that stood against God and God's purposes and And against the truth of there being only one God and if you remember the whole of the Old Testament is about Recognizing one God not lots of gods not gods of a microphone or gods of a notebook or gods of the floor or a carpet or trees or rivers or mountains or fruits or

Harvest as the Egyptians had all kinds of gods But the Old Testament teaches about one God They wouldn't have been able to sing that first time the Israelites because they didn't understand the idea of a holy holy holy Thrice holy God in the person of the atunity God father son and Holy Spirit that was revealed in the New Testament The Old Testament was intent on reminding everyone that there was just one God Not a multiplicity of false gods But Pharaoh had no time for the living God No time for this idea of one God. It was not really not gonna be good for him. Was it?

He was claiming to be divine. So the idea of you surfer coming along someone else coming along and saying well Actually, you're not God and all your gods are false. There's only one God and he's the God of that oppressed Brutalized people that you are building your economy on Wasn't interested in that particular truth indeed in chapter 5 and Verse 2 Pharaoh says who is the Lord? That I should obey him and let Israel go. There's this defiance of the living God. He says there's absolutely no way I'm comfortable here. I'm rich. I'm enjoying life. I have power I'm not gonna give that up To serve the God of my servants the God of my slaves You had no time for that and these people you need to remember were bitterly enslaved They were bitterly enslaved They were brutally treated They were the economic digits on which the wealth and the prosperity of Egypt Progressed and they were treated abysmally It's so much so in the fear that he had of them he Pharaoh simply Commanded that all the men should be drowned all the baby boys should be drowned and the women can stay alive and we'll make use of

[9 : 12] Them so it does tell us about God And it tells us about ourselves and about our lives Who is God as he's revealed? Well, he is the God who's revealed as the only God And I mentioned that I've talked about that throughout the Bible. God is revealed as the God of truth and the God who is the only God and this it comes into very stark Very stark sort of Parenthesis here, it's very clearly shown here between himself between God and this nation and Pharaoh this huge nation that seemed amazingly powerful and They seemed absolutely strong Now, I haven't got time to go to all the different plagues and everything else But you'll see that certainly in the earlier place where there was almost a duel going on between God and Pharaoh and his magic or his

Sorcerers and those who were powerful in his service and they seem to be able to replicate what God was doing in the plagues Difficult to understand how they could do that But we can presume that in their pretensions of deity There was at least some dark forces at work supporting them satanic and dark forces giving them strong powers undoubtedly But they could only mimic what God was doing. They weren't creative in their own right. They did seem powerful But as the plagues became more serious, they were unable to replicate them They were also unable to bring them to an end It was always the voice of Moses as it were the voice of God who brought them to nothing positive nothing restorative about their powers It was only dark Satan can replicate so much We know that We know that Satan can do that. We know he is powerful and we know that he can also come as an angel of light But there is only one God and throughout this story as you read it on I would encourage you to go home and read it all

It's quite hard reading. You need to be alert, you know Yeah, I don't think you can do it having your lunch You've got it have a clear head and an empty stomach and read it right through and Read what God is doing, but you'll see there is clearly only one God here who is revealing himself as distinctive purpose for his people here It's only one God. I'm gonna say something here that you

don't you wouldn't normally I don't think well, maybe normally, but you wouldn't naturally maybe expect to find here We also have here a God of grace revealed a God of love is revealed in this passage and he's revealed in his dealings in the plagues in His dealings with Pharaoh and also in his dealings with the people God of grace, how can you possibly this is the archetypal? Chapter or chapters that speaks about the wrathful vengeful harsh God of the Old Testament They were all wanted to get rid of and of the nice gentle meek and mild Jesus of the new is it not We need to we need to Be bigger than that and we need to recognize Who God is and read what is in the text even in the plagues we wonder for example What would have been the alternative to God intervening in this situation without the plagues? What would have happened? Well, we don't know but presumably The people's hearts wouldn't have been changed their hearts needed changed both the Egyptians Pharaoh and the Israelites even the Israelites hearts needed to be changed something needed to happen to change their hearts Or there would have been a bloody uprising as This happened often the history When slaves come to the point where they're crying out. There's no help and so there's a war massive destruction or the people would have continued to be crushed or Spiritually the Israelites would not have woken up because by this time When they cry out to God they are crying but they're not really crying to God for deliverance from Egypt or Or to worship him. They're really simply Crying out because they're in great need to they've lost a vision for who they are as God's people so God [13:52] Intervenes and he disrupts the situation in order to redeem them That is a significant point because in your life and in mind if we are to be redeemed and if we are to know Relationship with God he will disrupt us and he will deal with what is separating us and keeping us from himself But I know these plagues are not easy. We're dealing with God sovereignty. We're dealing with our own responsibility and we're dealing with what God wants and The freedoms that he gives and he doesn't treat us like robots and I'm gonna come on to that a little bit more in a week Well, but he is we're dealing with many things that we sit we aren't told also But there is grace Even in the plagues they are graded They start they're not quite so serious. They become more serious because God is giving the people time to Understand him and who he is both the Egyptians and the Israelites their temporary

He stopped them They were warnings, but they were temporary and he stopped them There's time in between each of them so that the people of time think this is this isn't just a this isn't just a An idol this is not a God. We've made up. This isn't living God. This is the real God in chapter 9 and Verse 20 we know some of the people had learned from that were told those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord Hurred to bring their slaves and their livestock inside but those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field So there was there was a change in the hearts of some people they listened and they responded some moved some Some moved their livestock to protect them some didn't so God was at work in grace and he was wanting also to expose the plagues hit at many of The areas of Egyptian life that were focused on their gods and so he was attacking and their false idols who were powerless

He's exposing the truth and the importance of dealing with idolatry Say the Egyptians look your gods can't save you here Going your own way can't save you. You need the living God He's dealing with the pride and the spiritual tiredness of his own people So he's grace even in the plagues. He's wanting to change hearts But also in his dealing with Pharaoh now It's probably one of the the most common questions that people will ask me in dealing with this issue about Pharaoh and about Moses and How can God possibly be a God who gives us our own freedoms?

When we're told in this passage that right from the beginning or different places that God will fear hard and Pharaoh's heart How can someone have responsibility when God is preordained that he's not going to believe anyway?

This heart's going to be hardened. Well, that's I can't answer that question fully. I'm sure God Will in time to all of you who ask in heaven when you have your faith and trust in God and can do that is Pharaoh here just a puppet so that God's glory can be revealed are we just puppets?

[17:08] Can't do anything about anything until God Chooses to do something in us Well, the Bible we must put various truths side by side and always along with his sovereignty and His involvement in life is our responsibility in the to-go hand in hand and clearly we see and we know that God was dealing with Pharaoh as an individual and with his stubborn pride in verse 32 of chapter 8 We're told but this time also Pharaoh Hardened his heart and would not let the people go nothing about God there at all. So there was this thing It was at work Pharaoh was proud. He was a divine being.

He's so he thought he didn't want God to intervene He didn't want his economic power to be destroyed. And so he was really proud. He said I'm not gonna worship your God and He hardened his heart each time the early plagues were unfolded because he didn't want to change and Because he didn't want to change Therefore God was also involved. It's interesting that it's only in the later plagues that it mentions that God also hardened Pharaoh's heart. So there was a work of as if it were God removing his restraining grace From Pharaoh and as a result his heart being hardened further. So yes, God was involved because Pharaoh Consistently refused to listen to the warnings that God was giving But there was grace because God gave him opportunity Just as he did Judas But Judas was not without responsibility the one who my dip this bread is the one who will betray me Subtext Judas. This is an opportunity for you to turn because I love you, but he wouldn't And so for us, you know, it might not be quite so dramatic as it is given here But the principle behind what's happening here is how we deal with pride What we do with pride Because Pharaoh's major sin was pride. I will not have this man. I'm independent. I'm going my own way sinful the danger of sinful Independence and the more that you turn against God and I think Particularly for church people who have heard the gospel who know the truth, but we have maybe said no, I know No, I'm not gonna give my heart to the Lord Jesus. I'm gonna stick with just being in church I'm not gonna go down that road. I'm gonna just stay arms length. I'm not gonna be committed Because I like my independence, why would I have God to be my Lord and my king? I'm afraid of being disturbed, you know, that's We're afraid of being disturbed. I'm afraid of of being a young Christian I'm afraid of what it will mean with my friends. My pride might be hurt here And we're proud and independent against him and against his grace and against the great grace of God Coming to die in the cross for our sins. Maybe you're afraid of being disturbed. You face his power and his holiness But if you remain spiritually proud or can I say agnostic or can I even say religious? And can I say a proud agnostic religious and really nice? Because undoubtedly that is will be the case also Then you're in a perilous place Because God is God He is hugely patient, but please don't presume on that patience as if somehow coming to Christ is like bad medicine He loves you and he wants you to come to himself So we see his grace even in dealing with Pharaoh and with his people The people Throughout the story are not a people ready to be redeemed. You know, they're definitely oppressed absolutely, but when Moses first comes and Speaks to Pharaoh that the people are raging with him They don't they don't really see Moses as a redeeming figure as the great hero of the story

[21 : 50] You know, he's not a superhuman being coming into their their mad with them. They don't like him in Chapter 5 in verse 21. They say look you brought trouble Or or Moses says it's Lord. You brought trouble upon this people ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name He's bought trouble upon this people and you have not rescued your people at all and in the previous verses the Israelite foreman are raging Because the work is so hard and Pharaoh is making it so difficult for them They weren't ready to be redeemed. They'd lost their vision of who it was to be God's people. They wanted ease But they didn't want to move They needed fresh vision. They needed woken up by the Lord and I'm not sure what the commentators think about this But it seems to be that they may well have been included in Some of the early judgments of the plagues. It's only until later plagues that were told God made a distinction between Israel and Egypt

So maybe that in the early place God was really shaking them up. He was reminding them You know what we say to them you think this is a harsh story You think God's harsh in the story remember what God sent to the people he said listen to me You are less than human here in the Egypt You're you're you're worse than animals is degrading what's happening to you It's degrading what is being done to you and the same is true of slavery in any country today The same is true in any place where people are treated less than human because of their birth because of their caste because of their color Because of their creed all of that is degrading and inhuman and God saying look you've been here for 80 years like this 80 years 80 years you've been treated like dirt You've been stood over by this people stood all over by this people wake up You can be free and you can remember who you are and these people can learn about who God is

It's easy for us, you know in our 21st century sophistication to be equally enslaved even as believers To be enslaved to live a life where we have no vision We have no commitment we have no sense of who God is and Well when things go wrong we might cry out to him like they did but not with any sense of who he is and any sense of our value and dignity In Christ and the the precious life that he has for us We just trip on from weekend to weekend and drink to drink from Wage salary

to wage salary and we lose sight and sometimes he will bring into our lives something that will wake us up And say you are worth more than this Your life is worth more than this He wants us to see our value So then and I close with this As we see is grace we also see a god of great glory here In this chapter and I think that's probably the biggest challenge for us today In our world and in our society where nothing is revered Nothing is sacred anymore. Nothing is greatly valued other than ourselves and our life and and There's not much We hold mysterious science claims to have got rid of all misery and so there's nothing much that holds us in awe anymore Beers are god of glory and Romans 11 for the Christians tells us in terms of a doxology For from him and through him and to him are all things to him Be the glory forever. I mean that is the big challenge that I want to leave with us today That in everything the glory will be his That our lives are to be lived for his glory our ordinary plain lives lived for his glory giving him dignity and value and importance and significance as we believe

In who Jesus is and have put our trust in him. We're going to look more tonight At the Passover. I'm not really look to any of these plagues in detail But tonight we'll look at the Passover which of course points forward to the need for a sacrifice for the need for spilt blood for the need for death And a substitute Because of sin and that's really what all of these are pointing towards But here we have a god of glory who has great power great power to set us free Great power today to set us free from the things that are in danger of Paralyzing us Spiritual fears physical fears social fears whatever they may be He's also the reality in his glory of him being a just god He's ten plagues the ten biblically often speaks of completeness It leads to this reality of

[27 : 10] Just sacrifice and death and the need for death Just sacrifice and death and the need for For sin to be atoned for and also to be dealt with That he himself has the right to give life and to take it away Now it is I think it's difficult for us to appreciate but There's there's There's measured justice even in this passage we read in the plague of the firstborn the firstborn It's one from each family. It's measured justice god can take life at any time, but it's measured justice unlike pharaoh Who wants the destruction of every male?

randomly Without it's capricious It's without justice But there's also in his grace the reality of love His determination to save His determination to protect the seed of the woman Because Jesus would come from her by redeeming this people by setting them free so that the Four bearers of Jesus could be born And the reality of mystery isn't there?

I don't for a moment pretend To have the answers to all of these issues in in Exodus, but this reality of mystery To bring out once again not a great one for quotes, but to bring out the famous old cs. Lewis quote Talking about aslan safe. You said anything about safe course. He's not safe But he's good. He's the king I tell you Our god is good But he certainly isn't safe, but maybe we've made him safe And kept him at arm's length so tomorrow Or tonight or today Will we remember that this is god's world not ours that we don't act like pharaoh And say i'm god I make the decisions God has no place in my life for it to be my lord Tomorrow as Christians or today Will we not forget who we are whose we are and whom we serve

Will we be content to go back to become enslaved in sin? Will you allow the living god in his word to disrupt you? your comfort and your choices As the god of love and disrupt your morality And tomorrow will you remember if you're suffering That however mysterious it might be it's it's not meaningless Will you trust him?

Through your suffering through what's difficult to understand Trust him when you don't know the answer trust him when your minister can't give you the answers trust him when Books will not give you the answers trust him when it doesn't feel like he's there How many people say I didn't feel god in the situation?

[30 : 13] And we say Whether we feel him or not know and trust He knows and he is there and tomorrow will you kill?

pride Will you deal with pride will you cry out? Uh about pride and ask god to show you any pride show me any pride that keeps us From loving him and trusting him serving him praying to him praying for others to him And going his way that there are many principles that we can take from Such a difficult passage as this and I hope and pray that god will apply these to our lives Today let's bow our heads briefly and pray lord god We we do stand today and sit before your mystery but also before your amazing intervention in the lives of an ancient people Recognizing they are part of your word and point towards Jesus And speak about principles that still absolutely apply to us of pride and of enslavement and of independence and of justice and of morality

Uh, but above all of grace And I god to in every right simply to you Sweep his hand in judgment over his own people and the egyptians but he chose To reveal himself Yes, injustice and in judgment But also in mercy and in grace And may we know what it means to be redeemed by jesus in our lives today And live accordingly And no blessing of living as it were in a land of plenty spiritually land flowing with milk and honey Amen