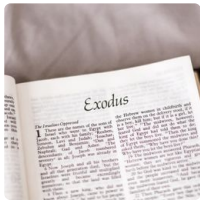


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Exodus 7:8 - 8:32



Exodus - Steve Gregg

In Exodus 7:8 - 8:32, the plagues inflicted on Egypt were examples of God's power and judgement over the gods of Egypt. The plagues, which lasted for about 10 months, were not necessarily miracles in the true sense of the word, but rather acts of providence where God manipulated the laws of nature. The belief in pre-tribulation rapture, a popular view among evangelicals, was invented in 1830 and there is no mention of such a rapture in the Book of Revelation or other Bible passages.

Transcript

At the end of the last session, I was talking about the expression that God would harden Pharaoh's heart, which you find in Exodus 7 and verse 3, though that's not the first time we encountered it, that's just the point at which I took the time to say something about it. And I mentioned there are three words in the Hebrew. I didn't actually have them with me at the time, but I have them now if you're interested in knowing what they are.

There's about 20 times that the Book of Exodus says that either Pharaoh hardened his heart or God hardened Pharaoh's heart or simply that his heart was hardened. And there are three different words that are used, kind of mixed up together. They're kind of mixed in such a way that they're used almost interchangeably in the narrative.

Although some of them are used more often when it speaks of God hardening Pharaoh's heart and some are used more often when it talks about Pharaoh hardening his heart, but still it's not a clean break there. I mean, they're all used in all the ways, but the most frequently used word of them is tzadzak, which you would probably in English characters spell C-H-A-Z-A-Q, C-H-A-Z-A-Q, tzadzak. And that word means to strengthen or to fortify or to harden, as I was saying.

That word is used more often than the others combined. It is used 12 times. Of the 20 times, it's used 12.

Then the next most frequent is kabad, which you would spell K-A-B-A-D, K-A-B-A-D, kabad. That word means to make heavy or insensitive or thick. So we might say to callous, like to have a callous on the heart.

It makes it insensitive or thick. That word is used 6 of the times, 6 of the 20 times. And then the one that is used only 2 times is kasha, which would be spelled Q-A-S-H-A-H, that's Q-A-S-H-A-H, kasha.

And that word means to make dense or stubborn or cruel. That's only used 2 of the times. But you can see the most common term that is used is simply to strengthen.

God strengthened Pharaoh's heart and his heart was strengthened in his resolve not to obey God, not to let the people go. And this strengthening of Pharaoh was supernatural because any sane man would let them go after the first plague or two or at least after three. I mean, his magicians were sane enough.

They were insane enough to resist Moses initially. But after about four plagues or so, I forget how many, even the magicians said, hey, this is from the finger of God. Let these people go.

I mean, they were not supernaturally hardened like Pharaoh was. So, I mean, they could see what any sane man could see. You're going to destroy Egypt if you keep up this policy.

But that's exactly what God had in mind was to destroy Egypt by Pharaoh keeping up that policy. And so, whereas probably in his saner moments, Pharaoh would have given in earlier. But since God didn't want him to give in until the whole cycle of judgments had run their course, God strengthens him in his resistance.

Now, we're picking up the story of Exodus chapter seven and verse eight. Then Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, when Pharaoh speaks to you saying, show a miracle for yourselves, then you shall say to Aaron, take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh and let it become a serpent. So, Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh and they did so just as Yahweh commanded and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent.

Now, we've already encountered this sign. It was done at the burning bush. God gave this as the first sign that Moses could show to Pharaoh.

And so we see it repeated here. But Pharaoh also called the wise men and sorcerers. So the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments for every man threw down his rod and they became serpents.

But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods and Pharaoh's heart grew hard and he did not heed them as Yahweh had said. Now, I mentioned that there is a trick that can be done to make it appear as if you're turning a rod into a snake. If you have a certain kind of snake that will freeze, will seem to be paralyzed when pinched behind the head.

You can obviously disguise a rigid snake's body for a piece of wood if you color it

properly. And then when you put the snake on the ground and release the pinched neck, it begins to squirm. And so, lo and behold, you have turned a rod into a serpent, but not really.

It's just a trick. That may be what the magicians did. The Bible doesn't actually say what the source of power was that the magicians had.

We find that they were able to duplicate several of the early miracles, but not all of them. And no doubt the limitations were due to the fact either that they knew tricks that would seem to counterfeit the early miracles, but they didn't know enough tricks to counterfeit all of them or else if we are to understand that their powers were of a demonic origin and actually supernatural, we find that they soon reach the limits of the demonic power. That demonic power is not like God's power.

It may be impressive to us because we aren't supernatural. We can't do supernatural things. And so if a demon can do a supernatural thing, we're impressed by how much power it has.

But it has its severe limits. It can go so far. God has no limits to how far he can go.

But the demons do. And so we can either say that these sorcerers were simply conjurers and involved in sleight of hand magic or else they were demonically empowered. But in either case, their enchantments or their duplication of what was going on was limited and it was not limited, as was Moses.

In fact, this statement that Moses rod or Moses serpent ate up all of their serpents is no doubt there to tell us that although they could duplicate in some measure the appearance of the miracle, yet their serpents were inferior to the serpent that came here. Actually, the serpent at that was produced from the rod at the burning bush. I think the Hebrew word there is just the ordinary word for a serpent, where the word here for a serpent of Moses serpent is a different word that speaks of something considerably more monstrous, maybe a very large snake, maybe some kind of a some kind of a monster reptile.

But it's not entirely clear what it refers to, but whatever it was, it ate up the serpents of the magicians and they were not able to. To do anything about it, obviously, the power of God is shown to be superior to the power of whatever whatever power was working through these guys, these magicians of Pharaoh apparently had names. Of course, they would have names, but their names are not given in the text.

But in Jewish legends, their names were given as Janice and Jambres and Paul mentions them in Second Timothy three, eight in Second Timothy, chapter three, the beginning of that chapter starts this way, but know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come and will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,

disobedient to parents. I'm thankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers without self-control, brutal, despisers of good traders, headstrong, haughty lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness, but denying its power and from such people turn away. for of this sort are those who creep into households and make captive gullible women loaded down with sins led away with my various lusts always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth now as Janice and Jambres resisted Moses so do these also resist the truth men of corrupt mind disapproved concerning the faith but they will progress no further for their folly will be manifest to all as theirs also was theirs meaning Janice and Jambres now whether Paul is affirming that Janice and Jambres really were the names of these magicians or whether he's just going with the Jewish tradition on it he is referring to those magicians who resisted Moses and he said that they you know they did stand against Moses they did duplicate some of the things that Moses did but it says these false teachers who resist the truth will proceed no further than Janice and Jambres did they proceed a certain distance but they reached the end of their power to resist Moses and it says their folly will be manifest to all as theirs was in the last days the teachers who are deceivers their folly will be manifested just as the folly of the Egyptian magician was manifested and it was because they like that they reached the end of their abilities and then the time came when the plague and a later plague came the plague of boils that the magicians couldn't even come and stand before Pharaoh because they were covered with boils themselves they were not immune to the plague that Moses brought on Egypt so they end up looking pretty pretty impotent they end up looking pretty silly but at first they seem to be able to pull off a duplication of what Moses did but of course even then their trick was inferior to what Moses did because his serpent eats theirs but it was enough it was close enough of a duplication that Pharaoh was unimpressed with Moses and his heart was hardened so Yahweh said in chapter 7 verse 14 to Moses Pharaoh's heart is hard he refuses to let the people go go to Pharaoh in the morning when he goes out to the water and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand and you shall say to him Yahweh Elohim of the Hebrews has sent me to you saying let my people go that they may serve me in the wilderness but indeed until now you would not hear thus says Yahweh by this you shall know that I am Yahweh behold I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand and they shall be turned into blood and the fish that are in the river shall die the river shall stink and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river then Yahweh spoke to Moses say to Aaron take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt over their streams over their rivers over their ponds and over all the pools of water that they may become blood and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt both in the vessels of wood and vessels of stone and Moses and Aaron did so just as Yahweh commanded so he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants and all the waters that were in the river turned into blood the fish that were in the river died the river stank and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river so there was blood

throughout all the land of Egypt then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments and Pharaoh's heart grew hard now that's what they need is more more water turned to blood so the pharaoh's servants managed to do that the magicians found a little water that hadn't yet turned to blood and turned it into blood too very handy and pharaoh turned and went into his house neither was his heart moved by this so all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink because they could not drink the water of the river and seven days passed after the lord had struck the river now a number of things here there are nine plagues that run their course in what many scholars think was possibly as much as 10 months time the reason for this is because of the assumption about the time of year that some of these plagues occurred and these assumptions are based somewhat on naturalistic assumptions which may or may not be applicable but yeah most most scholars believe that the nine plagues ran their course in about 10 months or years time it's not important how long it took but I've just given you that information because that's what that's what scholars often say these nine plagues that preceded the death of the firstborn which was the tenth plague they fall into three groups of three which follows a cyclic pattern for example if you look at the plagues as three groups of three so that plague number one through three is a group like number four through six is a group like number seven through nine as a group in each of these groups there are similarities in between the first of the group for example the first plague the fourth plague and the seventh play they are the first of the three groups of three in each of those cases Moses went to pharaoh in the morning and specifically says that God told him to go meet pharaoh in the morning and give him the order to let the people go and if he doesn't there's going to be such and such a plague occur and then it happens when you look at the second in each of these theories the second plague and the fifth plague and the eighth plague that in those cases he does give an announcement in advance of the plague but it doesn't mention him getting up in the morning to do it in in the first of each of these cycles he always gets up in the morning to confront pharaoh and the second he announces there'll be a plague but it doesn't specify that it was early in the morning and in the third plague of each of these theories that be plague number three plague number six and plague number nine there is no pre-announcement God just brings the plague without warning on pharaoh and so this cycle repeats three times get up in the morning tell pharaoh and then the next plague you just tell him you don't tell him in the morning and then the third one you don't tell him at all and then the cycle repeats two other times why this is I don't know it may be that it's conveying the idea that in the early stages God is willing to give you early warning but if you show yourself obstinate he doesn't give you early warning he may still give you a warning but not very early warning and if you still remain obstinate he doesn't give you any warning at all that is at least how each of these cycles ran now I might as well say at this point what all the all the nine plagues were because that's something that we're going to be considering as a group as well as individually the first plague was this one that we read about turning the water into blood the second was a plague of frogs which came up out of the river and just covered the ground and in the houses and and

everything after they were gone a plague of life followed or some would say gnats the fourth plague was a plague of flies and these were apparently the dog fly the egyptian dog fly which bites on the edge of the eyelid and and it leaves very painful bites and they were swarming throughout egypt and then the uh the fifth plague was a disease that came upon the livestock and just destroyed virtually all the livestock of egypt the sixth plague was the boils that broke out on human beings the seventh plague was hail that came and largely destroyed the crops and then the eighth plague was locusts that came and destroyed more crops so apparently there was some period of time between the eighth or the seventh and the eighth plagues because the hail destroyed uh the barley i think it was that was coming up early and then uh later in the growing season the locust came and ate whatever was growing after that and the ninth plague was darkness over the face of the land for a few days and so those were the things that preceded the death of the firstborn now i've mentioned a number of times that god said that he was doing these things to exercise judgment against the gods of egypt if you look at exodus 12 and verse 12 this is when god is announcing the tenth plague he says for i will pass through the land of egypt on that night and will strike all the firstborn in the land of egypt both man and beast and he says and against all the gods of egypt i will execute judgment for i am yahweh now the death of the firstborn was simply the last of ten plagues by which god executed judgment on the gods of egypt the pharaoh was a god in egypt his firstborn son the next pharaoh was also a god in egypt but there were other gods affected by these other plagues the river Nile was an important god to the egyptians the the river Nile was one of their chief gods they viewed it along with Ra the sun god as one of the primary sources of their survival in life they worshiped the river and so also there was a frog god there was a god of the flies Ra the sun god was smitten by the days of darkness the ninth plague you know it smoked the sun as it were obscured the sun blotted out its light there were uh uh there were the livestock being affected uh aphids the the god represented by a bull and there was another god represented as a cow in the egyptian pantheon the destruction of cows the bringing of a plague of frogs of flies the river turned to blood the sun turning to darkness these and in each in their own way were sort of god's way of showing his power over the gods of egypt and bringing judgment upon them if anything making those things which the egyptians had worshipped into something they would loathe now we find a little later on in exodus that blood was an abomination to the egyptians and so turning the river Nile which was one of their gods into blood was to take that which was the chief object of their worship and turning in something that they would find disgusting and loathsome now i might just add this that there's been uh many many commentators bring up that there could be with some of these plagues sort of a natural progression from natural causes there was around this time it is known a significant volcanic eruption in the mediterranean which uh filled the sky with ash and uh agitated the sea bottom and stirred up mud and things like that and and because of this known volcanic eruption and its effect on the ecosystem it is said that some of these things could have been a result of that for example the river turning to blood they say could simply be from the red mud

coming uh flowing down the river because of this earthquake caused by this volcanic eruption and so it's not so much that the river turned to blood as it took on the appearance of being blood red the frogs the next plague they say would be a result of the river becoming uninhabitable the frogs that were in the river would simply come out and be on land and get in everyone's way then the frogs would die and as their corpses were rotting flies and gnats and so forth would proliferate in their corpses and so on uh this could result in a plague of some disease carried by these flies that would come on the livestock and boils on human bodies and so forth now of course this doesn't work so well when it comes to the hail although it could because it's possible that even the hail would be the precipitation would be affected by a volcanic ash in the sky uh darkness could be part of that too uh i don't know about the locusts i don't know how they would fit into this picture but the point is many scholars have tried to say that these plagues really did happen but they actually had a natural cause and it is possible it would not be it would not be uh sacrilegious to suggest that each of these things came about through natural means what would be supernatural is that god would be able to tell moises in advance this day the river is going to turn red this day the sun's going to go dark this day the hail is going to come and moises then would be in the position to pronounce that and to say this is what god's doing and certainly what is done through natural disasters can easily be said to be act an act of god it could be said that god is judging egypt through these means and so i'm not opposed in principle to seeing this as uh you know the result of certain natural causes on the other hand there are some things about it that make it seem to me that perhaps it's not natural causes like i mean it may be one thing to say well when the river turns to blood of course all the frogs are going to come out but we have all the frogs dying on a certain day when when moises proclaims they'll die and the flies all disappear on a certain day because of i mean the disappearance of these plagues at moises command seems to be not so explainable by natural causes although some flies might have a lifespan of only one day but uh you know a lot of these things making it stop making the locusts go away by a command these things would not be the kind of things that would necessarily be the result of natural causes although they might be but this first plague might even give us reasons to doubt that we've got natural causes here because it's not just the river that turns to blood but even it says in verse 19 there was there should be blood throughout all the land of egypt both in vessels of wood and vessels of stone it would appear that the water even that was already collected from the river and was being stored in the vessels was also turned to blood which makes it seem like it was a supernatural thing on the other hand there was some water that wasn't turned to blood because the magicians found a bit and turned it into blood and the people apparently dug around the river's edge to find what fresh water they could although we don't really say that they found fresh water there it says in verse 24 that people dug all around the river for water to drink because they couldn't drink the water of the river we don't we don't read whether they found fresh water that was potable in this digging but that's what they were digging in order to look for there are some things left unanswered it would be as i said possible that through

a series of natural disasters perhaps all of them related to one natural disaster just different effects happening in wave after wave after a volcanic eruption nearby that you know that these things could have come and god could have just given mooses forewarning about it and that would you know that would in a sense satisfy most of the things that are said maybe all the things are said but there are some things here that make it seem like it's supernatural i really don't have i'm not committed to or attached to either view necessarily it is obviously plagues that god was bringing on egypt whether through natural causes or not so the river Nile turns into blood also the lakes apparently and other bodies of water the pools of water the ponds the lakes it says in verse 19 they all become blood as well which again makes it sound like it's not just sludge being carried down the river it's these freestanding bodies of water all over egypt experience it as well and apparently it happened as pharaoh watched because pharaoh and his servants were there and mooses or aaron put the rod down into the river and the river turned red so i mean it could have just been perfect timing and that the red was coming down the river anyway uh but it kind of kind of looks i mean certainly the story is not told in such a way as to encourage us to look for natural explanation it's told in such ways to indicate that this is miraculous signs that god is doing as when he turns a rod into a serpent or whatever um i might just add here that in these three cycles of the nine plagues i mentioned there's something else that we've noticed about the rod in the first three plagues that is in the first cycle of three it always says that aaron uses the rod to bring out the plague in the second cycle of plagues the flies the death of livestock in the boils there's no mention of the use of the rod at all and in the last cycle the third cycle mooses is using the rod so it may be that at the beginning because mooses was again somewhat intimidated and god accommodated him by letting aaron kind of stand in for him as the agents that aaron would use the rod and aaron would speak and to the pharaoh and so forth it's possible that by the time you get to the last of the plagues mooses confidence in god has increased the point where he's able to kind of take over from aaron that that position because we do see mooses using the rod in the last three of the plagues so we've got the first plague let's go to chapter eight and the lord spoke to mooses go to pharaoh and say to him thus says yahweh let my people go that they may serve me he hasn't changed his instructions you know just because you disobey god's instructions they don't go away jonah found that out remember god said to jonah go to ninova that great city and prophesy against it so jonah caught a ship the other direction and then he got in a storm and he got thrown overboard then he got swallowed by a big fish and then he got vomited on land and after all that he comes out on land and god says go to ninova that great city and prophesy against it same word as before nothing changed just you know that all that gastric juices of the whale probably turned jonah yellow and his hair fell out but other than that nothing had changed uh because god's word doesn't change and you can resist it for a while for a long time if you want to you can run the other direction but when you stop running and god gets hold of you again you find the instructions haven't changed you you just you've just delayed the inevitable and that's what's happening to pharaoh pharaoh's being disobedient but god's word is

the same it just keeps coming back the same word i i would make application if i was a preacher to christians who are willingly disobeying things that god has told them to do and they're hoping that if they wait long enough the instructions will go away you know if they ignore god long enough maybe god would change the plan uh change the command change the responsibilities but yeah pharaoh did not find it to be so nor jonah nor probably us either but god says to him in verse two but if you refuse to let them go behold i will smite all your territory with frogs so the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly which shall go up and come into your house into your bed chamber that'd be lovely on your bed into your houses of your servants on your people to be climbing on the people i mean their bed into your ovens if you like to eat frog then that might be convenient but you probably get old and into your kneading bowls you can actually need these frogs into your bread you can have frog bread you know they have all kinds of things they put in bread these days you can have frog bread you need your your dough and there's frogs there well might as well incorporate them and the frogs should come up on you on your people and on all your servants then yahweh spoke to mooses say to aaron stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams over the rivers over the ponds and cause frogs to come up on the land of egypt so aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of egypt and the frogs came up and covered the land of egypt and the magicians did so with their enchantments and brought up some more frogs because there just weren't enough on the land of egypt now here's the thing if if we're to understand this is natural that these frogs left the river because the river became bloody red then it would seem like they would come out simultaneously with the when the river became uninhabitable you'd think they'd immediately come out you wouldn't think it'd be like another day mooses would come and say okay the frogs are going to come now the frogs if the river was uninhabitable for the frogs they would probably have all died off like the fish did in the river on the other hand if this wasn't simply an invasion of the existing frogs that were in the river then we have to assume that god created a whole bunch of frogs which isn't very likely to tell you the truth because i mean god stopped creating animals as far as we know in the first week of creation we don't know he ever created anything from nothing again after that there may be some period of time lapse between the first and second plague as i say many scholars think the whole series took maybe 10 months or so we are not told how long the river remained blood and we're not even told that uh you know pharaoh came to mooses and turn it back into water it just apparently was bloody for a while as a sign and then it turned back into regular water it seems likely to me that a whole generation of frogs and fish has probably died in the river after all frogs come from polywogs and polywogs are like fish they have gills they breathe underwater and they wouldn't be able to escape that all those polywogs you'd think would have died when the fish died because they live in the same environment have the same susceptibilities but uh you know after the river had gone back to normal whatever frogs had been on land may have gone back to the water bread had more eggs and god may have simply increased the fecundity of the frogs so that for this plague there were just you know a huge crop of new polywogs and so god was

getting ready for this plague and it would only take i think it's only a few weeks for a polywag to become a frog so there doesn't have to be very much time but there would have to be some you'd think between the river being bloody and the river being able to produce a whole new batch of frogs that would at least seem so to me but the egyptians at this point are still able to duplicate what's going on then pharaoh called to moses and aaron said entreat yahweh that he may take away the frogs from me and from my people and i will let the people go that they may sacrifice to yahweh but sounds like he's giving him easy this is just the second plague and this is even after he sees that his magicians can make frogs i think his magicians would have served better purpose if they'd shown that they could get rid of frogs because they already had enough i suppose the fact that moses clearly was associated with this invasion of the frogs the fact that his magicians could make more frogs did not particularly impress them of their practical value as servants of pharaoh and and they apparently couldn't make the frogs go away so he caves in seemingly but he does this several times and then he gets he revises his attitude and so he says okay get rid of the frogs and i'll let you go so moses said to pharaoh accept the honor of saying when i shall intercede for you for your servants and for your people to destroy the frogs from you and your houses that they may remain in the river only now again the river must not still be blood or the frogs would not be able to go back and live in the river at this time so he said tomorrow now that's an interesting thing if i were a pharaoh i said how about tonight how about right now uh do you want to spend another night sleeping for frogs in his bed apparently he said how about tomorrow perhaps he was simply trying to convey the idea that he's not a desperate man you know well tomorrow will be fine when in fact he was desperate that's why he came to moses that's what he that's why he was saying he was going to comply but perhaps he didn't want to seem too desperate seem too weak and so he said well take them away tomorrow that'll be good yeah tomorrow's good so uh he said tomorrow and and moses said let it be according to your word that you may know that there is no one like yahweh our god and the frogs shall depart from you from your houses from your servants and from your people they shall remain in the river only now see the disappearance of the frogs was just as miraculous as their appearance or at least just as providential let us say sometimes things happen we would say they're miraculous because they're acts of god but they're really really we should say providential because a miracle is something that absolutely by definition defies nature the great abundance of frogs does not necessarily defy nature since they probably came into existence through natural reproduction but their fecundity and their great numbers would be the providence of god god would be the one who's manipulating nature not going against its laws but manipulating it to bring about a large number of frogs but then also to have the frogs simply die was also an act of god and moses ability to bring the frogs as it seemed at will and to get rid of them at will was the proof he said that you'll know that there's no one like yahweh our god verse 11 and the frogs shall depart from you and we already read that verse 12 then moses and aaron went out from pharaoh and moses cried out to yahweh concerning the frogs which he had brought against pharaoh so yahweh did according to the word of moses

and the frogs died out of the houses out of the courtyards and out of the field they gathered them together in heaps and the land stank of course because the frogs died and were baking out in the sun and when pharaoh saw that there was relief he hardened his heart and did not heed them as yahweh had said so it looked like we're coming to a prompt end to this cycle when he said okay i'll let you people go the frogs it's more than i can take it's enough you can go but then when the disaster alleviated then he went back to his old position very typical of human nature of course not just pharaoh and here we read that he hardened his heart we don't read that god hardened his heart he just decided hey why am i gonna let all these slaves this labor force go when in fact there's no more frogs i mean maybe in his own mind he was willing to say i think it was just a coincidence i'm not going to cave into this these demands but people do that all the time people say god you know i'm in trouble if you deliver me i'll serve you forever non-christians say this all the time when they're in trouble they bargain with god and they make promises to god but very few of them carry through on the promises when god actually comes through when they do get out of the trouble they soon forget it they uh write it off as a coincidence that probably would have happened anyway um and and so this is what pharaoh did and so we come to the third plague in verse 16 so the lord said to moses say to aaron stretch out your rod and strike the dust of the land now here there's no warning given in advance to pharaoh he was warned the first two times but not this time it's just going to happen stretch out your rod strike the dust of the land so that it may become lice throughout all the land of egypt um life apparently the word here in the hebrew is better translated nat life of course live in your hair in your scalp and so forth but gnats fly around and you know they go up your nostrils when you're breathing and they you know and they bite you and stuff and they're just they're just loathsome creatures they don't do any serious harm to you they're just just awful to be in a swarm of bugs where they're you know they go up your nose and they get in your mouth when you talk and when you eat i mean this just uh it's just a loathsome thing these first plagues by the way the first three were merely loathsome they weren't physically painful like some of the later plagues they were just disgusting and so god starts out playing on people's disgust rather than hurting them but as they remain obstinate then he gets he plays harder ball and begins to hurt them and take their property and so forth so here come the gnats and they did so and aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth and it became gnats or lice on man and beast all the dust of the land became life or gnats throughout all the land of egypt now this is a hyperbole that doesn't mean there was no more dust anymore in egypt it was all transformed into bugs nor i i don't think are we necessarily supposed to assume that god actually did transform actual dust into actual living organisms again god can do that he can do great things than that john the baptist said that god could from these stones make children of abraham he could certainly take from dust particles and make gnats with them but i don't know that that's really what god is doing here these gnats probably were breeding in the dirt and so they all as they hatched and they came out they would arise from the earth like like from the dust now the egyptians had a god

named seth who is the god of the earth and so they worship the earth but now the earth is producing this this horrible annoyance to them and therefore again god's making the earth disgusting to the egyptians just as he made the nils another of their gods disgusting he's judging the gods of egypt now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice but they could not fortunately so there were lice or gnats on man and beast then the magician said to pharaoh this is the finger of god but pharaoh's heart grew hard and he did not heed them just as Yahweh had said so unlike the frogs these gnats did not really get to pharaoh he didn't cave in this time like he had with the frogs and in this case even his magicians were saying okay we can't do this this is really god it's time to recognize this is a real miracle from god but pharaoh's not listening to them now because he's already hardened his heart previously and you know the more you harden your heart the harder it is to get it unhardened just like calluses you know the more if you learn to play guitar when you start your fingertips hurt because your fingertips are not accustomed to pressing down on wires you know which is what guitar strings are and and therefore after you've played the first day or two your fingertips hurt if you keep it up however and ignore the pain the skin on the end of your fingers gets obviously thick and we form what we call calluses and then they become insensitive uh you're still doing you're still subjecting them to the same uh irritation but they don't feel it anymore because the skin has gotten thick and one of the words in the hebrew language is to make thick kabad uh that's one of the words for hardening the heart is to kabad to make it thick to make it insensitive it's like to build calluses on it and calluses are formed when there is continual irritation that is ignored or you don't cease the cause of the irritation and then you know the the skin forms a natural defense against that irritation so that you get calloused against it and the more you are subjected to that irritation and not and not reacting properly to it that is the seeking relief from it the the thicker the callus grows and the more insensitive the skin becomes and to get a calloused heart is the same way god is commanding pharaoh to do a certain thing and when you when god gives you a command you have to react one way or another you either have to obey which means that the pressure is off because you obey him or you disobey which means the pressure continues and you have to build up a defense against the irritation on the conscience the conscience has to get calloused and that's what was happening here pharaoh had already hardened his heart earlier and now we find his heart is too hard to change already he's already insensitive and irrational because he's not even as rational as his magicians are here now verse 20 and the lord said to moses and this begins the second cycle rise early in the morning and stand before pharaoh as he comes out to the water then say to him thus says the lord let my people go that they may serve me or else if you will not let my people go behold i will send swarms of flies on you in the hebrew just says swarms but flies are implied and your servants and your people and into your houses the house of the egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies and also the ground on which they stand so they'll be walking on flies as they walk around plus they'll i mean there's so many flies they can't all be in the air at the same time some have to be on the ground so others can fill the air and so

wherever you go you're walking on crunching on flies and then they're surrounding you they are your environment and these are no doubt the biting flies that were so common in egypt are probably a dog fly and in that day i will set apart the land of goshen in which my people dwell that no swarms shall be there in order that you and the midst of the land i will make a difference between my people and your people tomorrow this sign shall be now here's the first time that we read that the israelites were spared the effects of the plague it's possible that they were spared the earlier plagues as well simply by being off in the land of goshen it may be that the water up there was not turned to blood and the land was not overrun with frogs we don't we don't know we're not told but at this point on we are told that the israelites are spared the effects of these plagues it may be that they had to go through the earlier plagues which were merely loathsome and not really painful or or hurtful but now when god begins to play rough and bring out his uh his more painful weapons he separates israel into a separate category so i'm not going to do this to them now i'm sure you've read the book of revelation and you know that in the book of revelation the plagues in the book of revelation are very much in many cases like the plagues in egypt this is intentional in the book of revelation the plagues in revelation are an echo of the plagues in egypt in revelation you'll find water turning to blood you'll find boils breaking out on people you'll find the death of livestock you'll find the sky turning to darkness you find a plague of locusts you find hail you'll find additional plagues in revelation besides those here but there's a very clear overlap a very significant overlap in the kinds of plagues that revelation describes and the kind that god sent in egypt now it is my belief that that is intentional because i believe the plagues in revelation are communicating that what god is doing in revelation is judging as it were another egypt as god had judged egypt here he's judging what is called babylon mystery babylon the mother of harlots is the one being judged there but you see babylon also captivated god's people babylon was the other nation besides egypt where the children of israel had spent time as slaves and from which god delivered them the babylonian captivity was sort of like another egyptian captivity now in revelation of course it's not talking about the deliverance of the children of israel from literal babylon because that had taken place 500 years before christ they got into captivity in 586 bc and they came out in 539 bc and so although revelation talks about babylon falling and gives judgments upon it that resemble the judgment upon egypt these images of egypt and babylon are taken up in the new testament as symbols of something else symbols of something else that's coming under god's judgment which bears in principle a parallel to egypt and to babylon now interestingly in revelation chapter 11 verse eight it talks about how the two witnesses when they are killed their bodies lie for three and a half days in the streets of the great city and it says this in revelation 11 8 the great city which is spiritually called egypt and sodom where also our lord was crucified it says well what city was that then jesus was crucified in jerusalem and in revelation 11 8 it says that city where our lord is spiritually called egypt and therefore it would appear that the judgment is on jerusalem jerusalem which has rejected christ has become another egypt jerusalem that persecuted the church it was the sanhedrin that sent saul charles was out to persecute

the church it was the sanhedrin that stoned stephen in a mob action it was the sanhedrin that encouraged herod to kill james and to arrest peter it was the it was the leadership of jerusalem that was the great persecutor of the early christians and in revelation the new israel is the christians and the new egypt or the new babylon is the old israel that old israel that god had delivered from egypt and from babylon in the old testament now has become the persecutor of the new israel the church and therefore many believe and i am among them that the plagues in revelation represent the judgments that came on jerusalem which jesus predicted jesus said it would happen in that generation and it did in ad 70 jerusalem was destroyed and it came under a horrible judgment which ended up burning down the temple slaughtering hundreds of thousands of jews and carrying the rest of them into captivity throughout the world where most of them remain to this day that judgment came in ad 70 and i believe revelation was predicting that now i know most people think revelation is about the end of the world but that's hard to justify when you see what revelation itself says because it says in revelation 1 1 that god sent these things to show things that must shortly come to pass it says in revelation 1 1 in revelation 1 3 it says these are the things which the time is at hand in revelation 119 in the greek it says you are to write john the things you've seen the things which are and the things which are about to take place in other words revelation says that these things are about to happen the time of that hand they must shortly take place and john's writing to a group of churches in the first century and so although there are many different views of revelation one view and the one i feel is probably the one best justified by the material in the book itself is that revelation is an apocalyptic vision of god judging jerusalem which has by this time become a new egypt a new babylon and as this new egypt its judgment is described symbolically in terms reminiscent of the judgment of egypt in moses day the book of exodus plays very significantly into the book of revelation as providing the images which are echoed in the book of revelation it's one of the primary books exodus is one of the primary books that is echoed in the book of revelation there are many old testament books that are but anyway the point i'm making is that the plagues that come are like you know in revelation are like the ones in egypt now of course the majority view about revelation today is different than the majority view used to be in former centuries we have a popular view today called dispensationism which holds that revelation is talking about the end of the world and on that view the plagues in revelation are thought to be plagues that will come about in a future seven-year tribulation and based on the fact that god would not pour out his wrath on his people because paul says in first thessalonians 5 that we are not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation in the day of jesus christ some say well then before this tribulation comes and before these plagues of revelation come on the earth god has to remove the church and therefore we have the teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture which is very widely held today it's never held by anyone before the year 1830 by the way the doctrine was invented in 1830 but by john nelson darby but prior to that it was never believed by any christians ever in history but it has in our day become the most popular view among evangelicals who are apparently historically provincial and don't have any

concerns about what the church always believed before 1830 and so we have this conviction among many that there's going to be a pre-tribulation rapture and one of the ways it's argued is the plagues of tribulation are the wrath of god and god's not appointed us to wrath so he has to rapture the church first well there's no mention of a rapture of the church in the book of revelation or frank or a pre-trib rapture anywhere else in the bible but the point is the argument does not hold if the plagues of a future tribulation are indeed like the plagues of egypt is it necessary that god must take the church out of the world to avoid them of course not he didn't take israel out of egypt before he sent his plagues on egypt but he spared them he protected israel from the plagues because they were not his target god wasn't using a shotgun he's a sniper he knew how to hit his target and miss somebody else in the same region it says in psalm 91 a thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you only with your eyes shall you behold and behold the reward of the wicked it's possible for god to strike down one and not strike down another person in the very same vicinity jesus even said that two men will be working in the field and one will be taken in the other left two people be sleeping in the same bed and one will be taken in the other left and in that context he's making it clear the taken is judged at the coming of christ i know people use that of the rapture too but they're not looking at the context because in the context they're in matthew 24 jesus said it'll be like the days of noah the people ate drank they were given a marriage until the flood came and took them all away so shall it also be in when this one man comes one will be taken and the other left one will be taken there left the flood came and took who away the bad guys taking them all away is a reference to judgment and god killing them in his judgment when jesus comes back two people will be near each other one will be taken that is judged like those were taken in the flood and the other one will be left so the point is that god is able to keep the church right here in the world even if he's causing all hell to break loose in his judgments on the world he can make a distinction between the church and then and the non-christians he doesn't have to remove us from the world in fact you know there's a some a prayer that jesus prayed that is relevant to this in john 17 the most famous prayer of christ that he prayed usually called the high priestly prayer jesus is praying for his disciples in john 17 and verse 15 he says i do not pray that you should take them he means his disciples out of the world but that you should keep them from the evil one many christians have their chief hope is that god will take them out of the world and jesus i don't pray for you to take them out of the world but do keep them from the wicked one it's possible for him to keep his people in the world and still protect them and we see this modeled first of all in the story of the exodus how in these plagues he did not take israel out of egypt before sending the plagues he took them out after the plague but while they were in egypt during the time of his plague in egypt they were protected they were not the recipients of his judgments and so it may be in any judgment in the future that god can spare his people in the midst of his judgment activity on the wicked so chapter 8 verse 23 i will make a difference between my people and your people tomorrow this sign shall be and yahweh did so six swarms of flies came into the house of

pharaoh into his servants houses and into all the land of egypt and the land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies then pharaoh called for mooses and aaron and said go sacrifice to your god in the land that is don't go out of the land of egypt but go ahead and sacrifice here in the land i'm not letting you go but if this is the way your god is going to judge me for not letting you worship him then worship him but do it here right here in egypt and mooses said it's not right to do so for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the egyptians to yahweh our god if we sacrifice the abomination of the egyptians before their eyes will they not stone us now what he means is we'll be offering blood sacrifices when we offer to our we offer blood egyptians didn't do that to them blood was an abomination uh it would uh the egyptians would think we're doing something sacrilegious and therefore we can't do it in the midst of egypt we will go three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to yahweh our god as he will command us now this three days into the wilderness we talked about before he's not saying we're going to go away for three days and come back he's saying the distance we want you to give us leave to go is three days journey out of here that would give them a head start sufficiently that if they don't want to come back they don't have to they can escape that would put them beyond the borders of egypt and well into safer territory and so he's saying give us three days without any interference to go that distance into the wilderness now he's not saying they'll come back uh and pharaoh certainly would realize that once he lets them go three days during the wilderness getting them back would be very difficult if not impossible they'd have a great head start against any pursuing enemies and they could possibly get to midian before the egyptians could catch up with them so he's not here promising that we're going to just have a three-day camp meeting and come back to egypt and resume our slave duties that's not what he's suggesting and pharaoh said i will let you go that you may sacrifice to the lord your god in the wilderness only you shall not go very far away intercede for me now pharaoh here has made two compromises one he said sacrifice in the land that was not permitted mooses didn't agree to that so he said well don't go very far away now mooses doesn't say he's not agreeing to that but they're not going to agree to that either in chapter 10 we will find pharaoh makes two more compromise offers before he finally gives in to them when we get to those i'll talk about all these cases of the compromises because they do have spiritual parallels and we want to see those spiritual parallels in the book however right now we're going to just note that they are there and then when we see the other two in chapter 10 we'll come back and look at these and those together then mooses said indeed i am going out from you and i will entreat yahweh that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from pharaoh and from his servants and from his people but let pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in the not letting the people go to sacrifice to the yahweh so mooses went out from pharaoh and entreated yahweh and yahweh did according to the word of mooses he removed the swarms of flies from pharaoh from his servants and from his people not one remained not one fly remained in the house but pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also neither would he let the people go so this begins to look like a broken record every after every plague we're going to read pharaoh hardened his heart

and did not let the people go but eventually god stops hardening pharaoh's heart and and made him uh surrender when he took his firstborn we have several plagues yet to to read about though before that happens but that'll have to happen another time because uh we've run out of time for today