

# His Way or Nothing

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Date: 25 August 2019

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now as we come to this 10th chapter, which Lord willing, as we've said, will be the last section that we look at in this portion of Exodus. Lord willing, we'll return to the next section in due course in the future, if we're spared.

But for now, we look at this chapter 10 together. And as we open the verses here, the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I might show these my signs before him.

We don't know how long has elapsed between the end of chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. In the original, of course, there wouldn't be chapters and verses. It would just be continuous narrative.

But we don't know how long elapses between one verse and the next. It is reasonable to suppose that it was not immediate that the Lord said to Moses, Right, okay, very next day, straight into Pharaoh, until I let my people go, He would have given him time to take his decision, to potentially issue the orders to let them go.

He would have given him time and space for repentance. Because this is what the Lord does in the New Testament and in the Old. We read in Revelation in chapter 2, in verses 20 and 21, When the Lord sends his message to the church in Thyatira, he says, Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my sons, to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

[ 1 : 3 3 ] And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Now it is inconceivable that the Lord would be inconsistent in his treatment of one sinner over against another.

If there is space to repent for one, there will be space and opportunity for another. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that in each occasion between the plagues, the Lord gives space and opportunity for Pharaoh to turn and repent.

And of course, he doesn't do it. And so one plague follows another, like wave upon wave, breaking upon the shore. But at the end of the day, those who will not humble themselves, and this is what Moses and Aaron come in and say, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?

Those who will not humble themselves, God will humble. And that is true both of Pharaoh and it is true of sinners in general. None of us is exempt. If we will not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, as Peter tells us, then God will humble us at the last.

Every knee shall bow to the name of Jesus Christ at the end, either willingly in time or unwillingly in eternity. But every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[ 2 : 5 6 ] Those who will not humble themselves, God will humble. Now, as we see in verse 2, the plagues of Egypt are intended to be a wonder and an astonishment.

It's not just, oh, an accident of nature that happens to be occurring time after time. And imagine such a series of coincidences. Fancy that. Nor is it either simply a series of natural catastrophes that Moses just happens to plug into.

No, no, of course, that secular historians and those who deny the veracity and inspiration of God's word, they say, oh, yeah, well, if you look, around that time there was a great big volcanic explosion away over in Crete or some other part of Greece or whatever.

And that filled the air with all the volcanic ash. And then, of course, it drifted across the Mediterranean. And that's what made the sky all dark and blackened it out and so on.

And they point to the fact that in the sounds, you know, the plagues are in a slightly different order. And darkness comes earlier. And that could be then what if that cloud then came down and went

down into the sources of the Nile.

[ 4 : 10 ] That would wash down so much of the clay in the river. That would turn it red and make the river look red like it was blood. And because of the higher density of all these kind of chemicals in it, all the fish would die.

And so that's what made it look like blood. And because they couldn't have it, all the frogs came out of it. And because all the frogs came out of the river, you see, then, of course, they couldn't survive another, so they all died. And then because there was no frogs to eat, the flies and the lice.

That's why there's so many flies and lice and so on. How they get the hail and fire and the locusts and so on and the rest of it. I don't know. But, you know, they'll come up with one pathetic excuse after another.

This is not coincidences of nature. This is the divine hand of God. It is intended to be a wonder and an astonishment.

A fearful testimony in the true sense of fearful in the sense of, you know, causing one to become filled with fear to the deliberative power of God.

[ 5 : 09 ] Targeted and specific. Fearful in his judgments. Wonderful in his deliverances. It is divinely intended that this frightening and just now, yes, if wonderful deliverances would be such that Egypt would struggle to forget.

And the Israelites were exhorted forever afterwards to bring to remembrance. Ironically, probably, this was seared into the soul of the Egyptians.

They probably, for all that their spring doctors and official histories, would blank it out and pretend that never happened. And the people would probably remember for generations. The Israelites, by contrast, how quickly they forgot.

How quickly they just let it slip out of their memories. But they are enjoined to always remember.

Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh and said, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, and so on.

Let my people go, that they may serve me. Now this is the final issuing of this demand. Or we might say, in the mercy of God, this is the invitation to do the right thing.

[ 6 : 37 ] Pharaoh, in his heart of hearts, knows he cannot hold on to the Hebrews forever. But as long as he resists, he still has this mythology of his own power.

He is invited to do the right thing. But that right thing would involve humbling himself. And letting go. The idea, the myth, that he is in control of everything in Egypt.

Now of course, when a sinner is invited to come to Christ, they are invited to let go of the myth of their own control over their lives.

And it is a myth. None of us is really in charge of our lives. You know, how many of the things in your life do you actually have decisive control over? As I mentioned in the past.

No, we don't have control over where we're born, who we're related to, where we grew up, and so on. Even the house we live in, we might have inherited it, or we might have bought it. But we can only buy what's within our price range.

[ 7 : 34 ] We're limited to what jobs we can do, how much money we can earn, where we work, and so on. The limitations upon our own individual choices are vast in number.

The actual opportunities for us to exercise such control or power in our lives as we think we have are actually minuscule. They are very, very few.

We have, if you like, the decision-making power of prisoners who are inside a vast prison and can decide what they spend their few pence on at the prison shop, decide whether they want porridge or cereal from the prison kitchen in the morning, can decide whether or not they'll go round and round the exercise yard this way or round and round that way.

They can decide how long they'll spend in their bunk, perhaps. But they don't have any choices about freedom. They are prisoners. And likewise, whatever little choices we may think we have, it's not the real choice of freedom.

That we have only in Christ. We are invited, nevertheless, to let go of such little controls as maintain the myth of our self-independence and our own supposed power.

[ 8 : 46 ] Let go and let God take control of your life. This is what every sinner is invited to do in the Gospel. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and I shall be saved.

But that means Him taking control of your life. And you have to surrender control to Him. And that is just too much for a heart that is persistently hardened until the Lord changes it.

Pharaoh is invited to do the right thing. Even in terms of an ultimatum from one ruler to another. This is at the same time a demand to release what might have property in inverted commas. That rightly belongs to someone else. Now you could make a case for saying, of course, at this stage in history, the Egyptians belonged to Pharaoh. You remember back in the days of Genesis when there was the famine there and Joseph did those clever bits of business to get the Egyptians to hand over their cash and their flocks and herds and their land. And finally they had nothing except their own bodies. So he bought them, as it were, for Pharaoh. Genesis 47, verse 33. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh.

[10:00] No, here is seed for you and ye shall sow the land. So you could say the Egyptians belonged to Pharaoh in that sense. But the Israelites, indeed all of those who are the Lord's people in every age, he claims for himself, not only by virtue of their creation and bringing into the world, but by purchase also.

So the Lord has not only wrought them, but bought them. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 we read at verse 23, Ye are bought with a price.

Be not ye the servants of men. And again in chapter 6, verse 20, For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The price by which the Lord's people are purchased is the highest price that was ever paid for anything in heaven and in earth. The death of God the Son upon the cross.

The giving of himself is that ultimate price for sin. You're bought with a price. Just as the Israelites said, Every redeemed soul from the beginning of time who is the Lord's has been bought with that same price.

[11:09] They belong to the Lord. Now as mentioned in previous weeks, this is the seventh and final time that this demand or invitation is issued.

And as we've mentioned before, if you want to check back through them, the previous six of chapter 5, verse 1, chapter 7, verse 16, chapter 8, verse 1, chapter 8, verse 29, chapter 9, verse 1, chapter 9, verse 13, And now here at chapter 10, verse 3, this is the seventh and the final time this demand is made.

The last time Pharaoh is asked, let my people go. Because although there are at least three, possibly four, depending how you count, further interviews between Moses and Pharaoh, each of them is about Pharaoh initiating those extra encounters between Moses and himself, pleading for relief from the plagues, promising to let the people go, and then reneging on his work.

But never again does Moses, or the Lord through Moses, seek out Pharaoh to ask, let thy people go out.

Say that again. Never again after this occasion does the Lord through Moses, or Moses himself, seek out Pharaoh, saying, let my people go.

[12:36] This is the last time it happens. Although Pharaoh, three or four times more, seeks to bring Moses back and say, okay, okay, take away the plagues and I'll do whatever you say, I'll let the people go, but wait a minute, under what conditions will you go?

And then reneges on his promise. He initiates the contact. He wants to plead for relief, but God never again comes looking for Pharaoh. My spirit shall not always strive with man.

There will come a time when the Lord comes seeking your soul no more. There will come a time when the Lord makes the invitation no more. When you will long for the day to when it's said, repent and believe the gospel, and it won't be issued to you anymore.

We may go seeking the Lord, perhaps fruitfully or perhaps goodlessly, but the day will come when the invitation is not issued anymore.

But here it is for the final time. Let my people go. But this is the last time. And thereafter, the time has passed. So we see in verses 4 to 7, this is the threat of the plague of locusts.

[13:41] Now, many of the plagues would have been such as the Egyptians had never seen before. But locusts, whilst they were mercifully rare in their plagues, would have been by no means unknown.

The Egyptians knew exactly what locusts did. They knew exactly how devastating such a plague could be. And as we read, of course, this plague, when it came, was just unlike anything they had seen before in its intensity and in its volume.

But they knew how devastating locusts could be. And in the wake of all that they had suffered already, this is probably the major motivation behind what we read at verse 7, How long shall this man be a snare unto us?

Let the men go that they may serve the Lord their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? They are pleading with Pharaoh themselves.

But as we see in verses 8 to 11, that Pharaoh still tries and he brings Moses back. Remember, this is the first time he brings him back again. He still tries to couch the release of the Hebrews in terms of a concession of which he will set the limitations.

[14:52] He tries to pretend that what his advisors had said at verse 7, let the men go, as though that is what the Hebrews had asked for or the Lord had asked for, that only the men should go. They never said any such thing.

If you look back through all the occasions when Moses and Aaron asked him, let my people go, it's all the people they asked for. It's not just the men or just the children or just the women or just the flocks or herds or the so-and-so will stay behind.

It's all of them. That they may go into the world on a three-day journey and that they may offer a sacrifice to the Lord. But he tries to twist it and say, oh well, he wanted the men just to go or how many people are going to go.

But such limited service, if it had been, oh well, only the men will go or only some of us will go, would never be acceptable to the God of Israel.

Not only because, you know, what kind of feast is it if everybody's not invited? What kind of feast is it for the nation if some of them don't get to go? It's not exactly a party or a celebration or a feast or a sacrifice to the Lord if some people are shut out.

[15:54] No, it's going to be everybody who's going to be brought with it. But also, if it were only a portion of them, that would be a bit like a partial, a limited service of the Lord.

Such limited service would never be acceptable to the Lord, either under the Old Testament or the New. Moses said, verse 9, we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go, for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.

Those that serve the Lord must serve him with all that they have. If you give your life to Christ, you can't say, well, I'll give my life to Christ, obviously, on the Lord's Day, yeah, I mean, yeah, I'd like to retain a bit of autonomy in my life, I'd like to be able to dictate what I'll do about this and what decisions I'll take about that.

I'd like to be my own man and my own woman, you know, and I'll give God his due, you know, his wee pigeonhole, his wee portion, yeah, fair enough, I'll give him that. Friends, I have tried that in the days of my youth, tried to give God his portion and think I was doing right and keep nice big portion for me, it doesn't work.

Let me stay to the trouble. Half-hearted service of the Lord, partial service of the Lord is no service at all. He will not accept half-hearted or partial service.

[17:18] Those that serve the Lord must serve him with all that they have. You give yourself to Christ, you give yourself heart and mind and body and soul, you give everything of your resources, of your bank account, of your life, it is all at his disposal.

If you are as yet unmarried, then it means that any future relationships are under Christ. That you will not be unequally yoked with those who do not have Christ as their first priority.

Whatever your situation, Christ comes first in all things, in all decisions, in all aspects of your life, private, personal, public, business, everything is dictated by your relationship to Christ.

The political decisions you make, the way that you vote, the priorities that you have, will all be dictated by what you prioritise because you belong to Christ. It is every aspect of your lives.

Those that serve the Lord must serve him with all that they have. We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds where we go, for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.

[18:30] But then we have these slightly confusing verses at verses 10 and 11. Let the Lord be with you, so be with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones.

Look to it, for evil is before you, not so, now go ye there are men. Now, this is quite difficult to interpret because obviously it's written in a different language. It's written in ancient Hebrew and although you can compare different versions of the Bible and although you can sort of unlock the set of words, it is difficult to know exactly what is intended here because Pharaoh appears to be

saying one thing and then in mid-flow to change his mind.

But what is more likely is what he is saying here, let the Lord be so with you as I will let you go.

Now, remember that Pharaoh does not acknowledge the Lord.

He doesn't acknowledge him as a true God and he, some take of that he is saying, the Lord will indeed be with you. If I would let you go under these conditions, if I'm going to let you go with your little ones, not a chance, you'll never come back again.

Look to it, for mischief or evil is before you and that is taken by some to mean, I know you're up to no good, I know you've got evil plan, no way am I going to let you go with your little ones.

[ 19 : 51 ] The Lord would indeed be with you if I was going to let you go and all your little ones, but it's not going to happen, not so. Go now, ye that are men and serve the Lord for that ye they desire and they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Now, of course, it's possible to interpret it slightly differently. The other way, he could say, you know, the Lord be so with you as I will let you go. If the Lord really was with you, ha, then sure enough I would let you go, but no way am I going to do it.

For evil is before you. I am on the verge of coming down on you like a ton of bricks, he might be saying. I am about to unleash my fury on you. Evil is before you, so don't try it on.

Just you that are men, you go. So, whichever way we turn it around, it's less likely that Pharaoh is sort of thinking out loud, saying, okay, yeah, fair enough, yeah, the Lord be with you and I'll let you go.

No, no, no, I've changed my mind. But rather, it's the way that it is presented to us, it's quite difficult to get the gist of it. But that I would suggest to you is what he is saying here.

[ 20 : 56 ] It's almost like sarcasm in terms of, well, if the Lord was with you, then of course I would be letting you go, no problem, but it's not going to happen. Not so. Those that are men, you can go.

For that you did desire, evil is before you. Either, I know you're up to no good, I know you've got evil plans, or else, do as I say, or else, I'm going to unleash evil on you.

Whichever way we do it, Pharaoh is giving as little as he possibly can. He is seeking to make a concession, it's been wrung out of him, but his attempt to take terms to God is, we think, oh, how terrible Pharaoh was.

That's fairly typical of man in his self-centered fondness. You know, he thinks he does well because he gives in more than he wanted to.

When we are struggling with God or under conviction, we'll try and give a wee bit and try and keep as much as we can. We'll try and say, okay, well, fair enough, I'll give you this much, but this, you know, fair enough, you've made your point, but you know, it's only reasonable that I get something to you, so you've got to meet me halfway.

[ 22 : 06 ] And that's what Pharaoh is doing. He's expecting God to meet him halfway as one God to another, still claiming that he himself is a God, still claiming that he is the equal of the God of the Hebrews.

And if he's giving a concession, then Jehovah ought to give a concession as well. He ought to be willing to negotiate, but it doesn't happen like that. Sinners cannot negotiate negotiate with God. Pharaoh thinks he does well because he gives more than he wants to do and he expects God to meet him halfway or to give in a bit too. But although God in his mercy has in fact met sinners, not just halfway, God in his mercy has met sinners the whole way.

He has come all the way from heaven's glory to this fallen earth. He has given his whole life. He has become human like us.

When he could have stayed up there divine spirit from all eternity and just left us to rot, he came himself and took upon himself our condition and conceived and born from the womb of the virgin with all the limitations of humanity and yet without sin.

[ 23 : 16 ] Tempted in every way like as we are and yet without sin. He lived that perfect life and every day there would have been every single day there would have been temptations to give in and to sin and to break faith with his father and his commandments and his teaching but right the way through all the way through to the cross and through his dying breath he never once faltered and he offered up that perfect life so that it would be the complete payment the complete satisfaction for every sinner who would believe in him.

God has met us halfway. God has come down and met us the whole way. He has done everything for sinners. All that we are required to do is put our faith and trust in him.

We can't do anything else for ourselves. He has met us the whole way. He has done everything in these matters. He has given nevertheless a command from which there is no turning aside and we either accept or reject his right to rule over us acknowledging that he has done everything. We either believe and accept it or we reject it. I say well I like some of that but not all of it. I want to be sharing that but I don't want to give myself completely to it. No it's either acceptance or rejection. There is no halfway. It's like you know if you decide well you push this button or you don't. If you're trying to get money out of the auto bank or whatever and he gives you a list of options he says press the relevant button and well no I'll press that one if you don't press the one it'll time out on you and it'll reject your card you know spit it back out again if you don't act if you don't push the button if you don't commit to Christ the opportunity passes.

[ 25 : 11 ] It's not a case of well I haven't done the bad thing I haven't rejected it I haven't completely committed to it you can't have half a commitment you can't have half a deliverance half a deliverance is no deliverance half an answer is no answer supposing you were proposing to somebody and said will you marry me and then they were to say well I'll think about it I'm not saying no I'm not saying yes and then you're six months later you're still waiting for an answer what is that is that a yes or a no at the end of the day it's definitely not a yes so one way or another a failure to commit to Christ a failure to accept to submit to what he has done is effectively a rejection we cannot say well I'm halfway I'm thinking about it I'm halfway there half a deliverance is no deliverance half a fidelity is no fidelity if a spouse were to say to their other half oh well I'm faithful to you half the week you know three and a half days in a week I'm absolutely complete but the other three and a half days I like to be with other people what kind of faithfulness is that halfway is no way with

God you know when Solomon was giving his judgment of great wisdom and the two women who each claimed this baby was their own and he said right take a sword cut the baby in half and give one half to each other and his true mother fell down at his feet and said no no don't harm the baby just give it to her just give it to her and only the true mother would have cared that way for her child and you can read about that in Kings and so on because what the Lord does is he points out the fact half a baby is no baby it's no live baby at all you don't have your child if you only have half of it you don't have a commitment to Christ if it's only half a commitment you don't have a deliverance if it's only half deliverance half a salvation half a hope half heartedness with God is death it is not salvation think in terms of the New Testament think of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 where they stole a portion of the land and they brought some of the money and the sin wasn't that they only brought some of the money they could have said well look we've got debts whatever we have to pay but here's everything else we need this much for our own needs but we're giving the rest to the Lord but they didn't say that they pretended that in keeping part of it they were in fact giving it all to the Lord they lied to

God that was their sin that half heartedness half commitment to the Lord is death that's exactly what happened to them they both dropped down dead when they were confronted by Peter you can't have half heartedness with God you can't have a negotiated settlement with God it's his way or no way so we see then because Pharaoh would not would not accept and would not concede these requirements of God the Lord said unto Moses stretch out thy hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts they may come up upon the land of Egypt and eat every herb of the land even all that the hail have left and so for all that day and all that night there's this wind you can imagine to howling through Egypt we think of them just gently coming in like a cloud no but the wind would be going all day and all night this east wind coming from the Sinai peninsula coming from the Red Sea and eventually in the morning bringing this black cloud of locusts blackening out the sun and then they descend on the landscape and they covered everything so much so that you couldn't see the earth that's what it says there they covered the face of the earth so that the land was darkened you couldn't see the ground they did eat every herb of the field all the fruit of the trees were left there remained not any green thing through all the land of

Egypt you couldn't see the ground to walk on they were in people's houses they covered the face of the earth the land was covered and they were very grievous before them there was no such locusts as they neither after them shall be such Egypt had never seen the land they'd seen locusts before it had minor isolated place but this covered the whole land and we'd have to take it that it covered the land of Goshia as well and that the Israelites too were afflicted by this particular plague but anything they had going in the fields they weren't going to need it eventually because they were going

anyway so but it destroyed the land of Egypt completely the land was darkened because of them that's what it says at verse 15 and everything was completely destroyed by it and it filled their houses and it went up over all the land of Egypt rested in the coast of Egypt very grievous were they and there was no escape from that they ate everything of course locusts have no interest in human flesh they're not trying to eat people they are they're not carnivores they're only interested in vegetable matter but because there are billions of them even though they've only got tiny little mouths they just devastate everything now of course the Egyptian god Seth was the god of storms and disorder and this black storm that came from the sky he could not save them all the sacrifices that our false god couldn't deliver them the darkness of the land by the locusts was a precursor of the actual plague of darkness the locusts ate everything as we said they had no interest in human flesh so people's lives were not at risk other than being driven mad by it but they were going to starve so there was nothing left to eat there was no crops left in the field there was no leaves left on the trees never mind any fruit on the trees there was nothing green nothing that would grow that they could possibly eat at all they were going to be starving after this and as we say this destruction would also have afflicted the israelites we're not told that it stayed out of any part of egypt or roshan but it's not as yet immediate death it's destruction but not immediate death though it be a death to all the land and though it be starvation to the people that's why verse 17 pharaoh says you know entreat the lord your god that he may take away from me this death only it was a precursor of death for them and we see then at verse 16 that you know he says i have sinned against the lord your god and against you he calls for them in haste perhaps now he is losing support even amongst his own advisors but we see as soon as they're gone from verse 20 onwards here's the tragedy of it again we see pharaoh is effectively here locked locked as it were into the downward vortex of the most damning sin of all now i think what's the most damning sin of all is it sin against the holy ghost or is it adultery is it death what's the most damning sin of all the most damning sin of all is the sin of unbelief if you persist in that sin there is no means of help for you every other sin that men and women commit they can put their trust in christ and he will forgive them his blood can atone for any sin that you've committed for anything that you have done but the sin of unbelief rejects christ altogether it throws away your only hope of forgiveness your only salvation it rejects the sin of unbelief is the most damning of all and pharaoh is locked into this downward vortex from which he neither wants

nor is able to break free he is now spiritually incapable of submitting to the lord whilst any right for vigour remains in his heart for that heart is as hard as rock against the lord and so he is locked into this sin we see now that the lord then says to mooses stretch out thy hand toward heaven that there may be darkness over the land of egypt now the egyptian god ra who's one of the most famous in egypt and was the one arguably the most worshipped throughout all the land of egypt even more so than pharaoh himself perhaps is the egyptian god of the sun the sun god ra and obviously the sun rises every day and the sun is what gives them their crops and brings on the warmth of the ground and gives such blessing and such fertility to egypt and so on and the domain of this most venerated idol the very sun itself is now blotted out by the power of jehovah the god of the heavens who can stop the sun from rising well the sun no doubt still rose as the earth spun round but it was blocked out by such a darkness as the lord sent upon egypt even such a darkness verse 21 which may be felt and there is no relief from it at all now where we read it the last part of verse 21 even such darkness which may be felt that implies a density to this darkness it's not just an absence of light it's almost like a thickness closing rounder not simply like a fog and a mist but blackness with it and the needless thing i can probably describe it with this many years ago when the family and i were visiting my sister-in-law in america it was minnesota which is one of the northern states so it wasn't even for the deep south but it was summer and air conditioning which i used to think it was a frivolity and you know and who needs air conditioning something my goodness in america in the summer you need it because you go out from what one is a especially cool feeling house but you didn't realize how cool the house was until you stepped outside the door and then it wasn't just oh my goodness that sun's hot but rather it was stepping out like into a blanket of thickness that closed around you the heat was so thick the heat was so intense that as soon as you stepped out the door it was like somebody enfolded you in thick thick blankets of heat and you sort of felt you had to kind of wade through the heat it was like thick difficult to walk through it was so intense in the heat and the atmosphere now if you translate that instead of heat into darkness such a darkness that you have to wade through it so thick it's so heavy there is so little kind of breathing space in it that i think we should understand that because it says you know the

[ 36 : 22 ] Israelites the children of Israel had light in their dwellings well surely the Egyptians can light a candle or a lamp or something like that that would imply that they couldn't if the Israelites alone are able to have light in their dwellings like a match they can you know light a candle or maybe a lamp or whatever they put light in their dwellings why don't the Egyptians have light in their dwellings why don't they light a match or a lamp or a candle presumably because the intensity the thickness of the darkness which may be felt was such that they couldn't even sustain the flame of a candle or a lamp so deep and intense was the darkness the Lord made an exception for his people Israel but for the Egyptians the darkness was so deep they couldn't even strike a match they couldn't even light a flint or a candle there I would suggest to you that this which may initially seem to be you know the plague of darkness you think okay you'll reveal one of the gentlest plagues surely that's just because we are so accustomed to light even if you have a power cup in the middle of winter and you go outside you see everything's black no street lights no house lamps nothing you realize how black it is in winter we've got a power cup but you can still look up and there's stars in the sky and there might be a moon so it's not complete blackness this is complete blackness this is total blackness they couldn't even see each other in front of them they couldn't move out of their places this is what it says there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days they saw not one another neither rose any from his place for three days it would make social movement impossible you couldn't see your hand in front of your face you couldn't accustom your eyes to the darkness you couldn't light a candle or a match or anything you couldn't do anything in fact the darkness is a veritable premonition of hell and I could suggest that to you which will not be multitudes in riding misery where we'll see one another equally suffering and be able to comfort each other a bit maybe much less will it be as some have stupidly suggested one big loud lascivious party free at last from the constraints of decency or the presence of the

Lord where we can just party away and sit our little hearts out low the new testament describes hell yes as a place of flame and torments but ultimately a place of desolate hopeless isolation st. Matthew's account of the gospel speaks about outer darkness and here we have in verse 21 even darkness which may be felt such darkness as extinguishes all light it makes movement or contact all but impossible it brings an inevitable claustrophobic terror and does not lift day or night indeed it is always always worse than night because there's no stars no moon no nothing such I would suggest to you is what hell is like such darkness as to render one completely and utterly alone terror stricken a veritable living death and so we find here that with the darkness having lasted three days you just imagine the relief of the Egyptians when the darkness finally lifts then we see from verse 24 pharaoh called the lord only let your flocks and your herds be stayed a final attempt to keep the

Israelites bound and chained to Pharaoh he despises the Israelites but he likes the effect of their being there he likes the work that they do he likes the fact that they can work for him and build his treasures cities and there's plenty of people who despise Christians and Christianity but they like the fact that where Christianity perhaps makes some impact they like the fact oh it's so peaceful oh people don't lock their doors oh and the nurses in the hospital is so nice and isn't it good that where there's a high density of Christians involved in nursing or caring professions or the health service or the teaching profession or in the community that leavens the whole atmosphere of a community it makes its quiet silent impact across all sections of society even those that reject the Lord reap the benefits just like as we saw there with the plague before of hail and fire in Goshen amongst Israelites even Egyptians that lived amongst them would have reaped the benefits so it's lots of people will quite like the effects of having Christians amongst them although they despise the Christians themselves and perhaps everything they believe in Pharaoh despises the Hebrews but he likes having them there but nevertheless he tries to keep them for himself one last time this is part of the difficulty again when we try to do it in our terms they despise the root and you're robbed eventually of the fruit you know there'll come the day as Amos tells us when there'll be a famine not of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord and eventually when our nation or our country turns its back on the Lord eventually even the fruit of that blessing will be withdrawn now of course when he's driven out from Pharaoh's presence he says you'll see my face no more and I'll die and I'll say bye you've spoken well I'll see your face again no more when they finally do have their final encounter in chapter 12 after the plague upon the firstborn well that takes place at night and also we don't know if it's by proxy that

[ 42 : 32 ] Pharaoh speaks to Moses but at the end of the day as far as Pharaoh is concerned for him this is the end of the line this is the last encounter with Moses this is the last opportunity for Moses and the Israelites this parting now at the end of chapter 10 is the precursor to a sacred deliverance the Passover which would speak of Christ more eloquently than anything else in the entire Old Testament it is the end for Pharaoh his greatest suffering however is yet to unfold just because all the plagues of Egypt have been bad enough doesn't mean there is worse to come and just because people without Christ might in fact have suffered quite a lot in this world it doesn't mean the worst isn't yet to come because it is without Christ without deliverance without the Lord everything that has happened in this world will be as nothing compared to the suffering that is ahead whereas for those who have put their trust in the Lord this parting at last from Pharaoh and Moses is the beginning of a new dawn it is about to be life it is about to be freedom it is about to be the ultimate birth of a nation the dawn of a new age above all it is a new beginning for Israel and for them with all that they have endured the best is yet to come let us pray