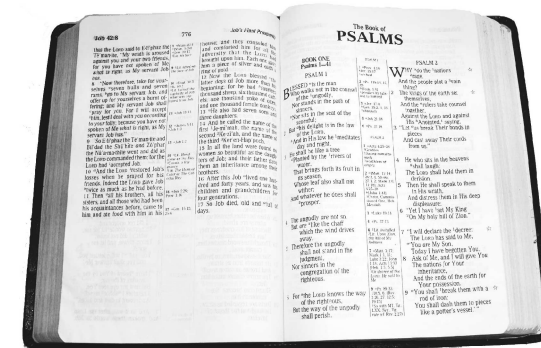


# PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



April 2014

Bible readings from Exodus chapters 1 to 18

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## EXODUS

*Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*

Moses spent long days judging the people, seeking to resolve their problems and their disputes. Jethro was able to see what his son-in-law failed to see – that if he continued doing this, he would break down under the burden of it all. He told Moses, *‘Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself’* (18). The priest of Midian was a man of spiritual wisdom and discernment and Moses took his advice to share the workload. He would judge the difficult cases, while most of the problems could be resolved by those appointed to assist him (19–23). Moses, for all his greatness, was not too proud to learn, and he heeded Jethro’s advice (24–26). We must always be ready and willing to listen to advice and to take correction if we are to grow in the Christian life and be useful in serving the Lord.

Many churches struggle for lack of workers. There are Christians who are sound in the faith and with abilities that they should be using for God, but they are too preoccupied with material things. They could serve, help and encourage those who are wearing themselves out in the work of the Lord. Those who serve the Lord may have to be prepared to persevere and to face disappointment and heartache in his work, but there is much joy and satisfaction in working for the King of kings. There is also an eternal reward.

What kind of men does God need in his service? Jethro had the right answer: *‘Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness’* (21). **The men God requires to lead his church as elders and to serve as deacons must have more than natural leadership or administrative abilities.** They must be God-fearing men who love the truth of his word and hate covetousness (cp. Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1–13). Pray that God will raise up such men in the church today.

‘The book of Exodus is the book of redemption. The Greek name ‘Exodus’ (lit. ‘going out’) here describes how God brought the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. By redemption we understand that the Redeemer not only delivers his people out of bondage but also brings them into a special relationship with himself, making them his own purchased possession, his “peculiar treasure” (19:5).’ – NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY, 1958, page 106).

The Old Testament Scriptures testify of Christ (John 5:39; cp. Luke 24:27). In the book of Exodus Christ is foreshadowed as our passover Lamb (12:5, 21–27; cp. 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19). The blood of the covenant (24:8) foreshadows the blood of the Lord Jesus in the new covenant (cp. Matthew 26:28). The worship and sacrifices of the tabernacle were *a shadow of the good things to come* (Hebrews 10:1).

The Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, from the time of Jacob’s emigration (Genesis ch. 46) until they left after the first Passover (12:40). Moses lived for 120 years (Deuteronomy 34:7). The first 40 years of his life were spent as a prince in Egypt; the second 40 as a fugitive in the land of Midian. He was 80 years of age when he led the people of Israel out of Egypt (7:7; cp. Acts 7:23, 30, 36). The birth of Moses was therefore some 350 years after Jacob, his sons and their families had moved to Egypt.

**Outline of Exodus**

The Exodus — The Power of God (chapters 1 to 18)

- |    |                                       |               |
|----|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| a. | Israel’s Bondage in Egypt             | 1:1–22        |
| b. | Birth and Preparation of Moses        | 2:1 to 4:31   |
| c. | Pharaoh’s Hardening and the Plagues   | 5:1 to 11:10  |
| d. | The Passover and the Exodus of Israel | 12:1 to 15:27 |
| e. | The Journey to Mount Sinai            | 16:1 to 18:27 |

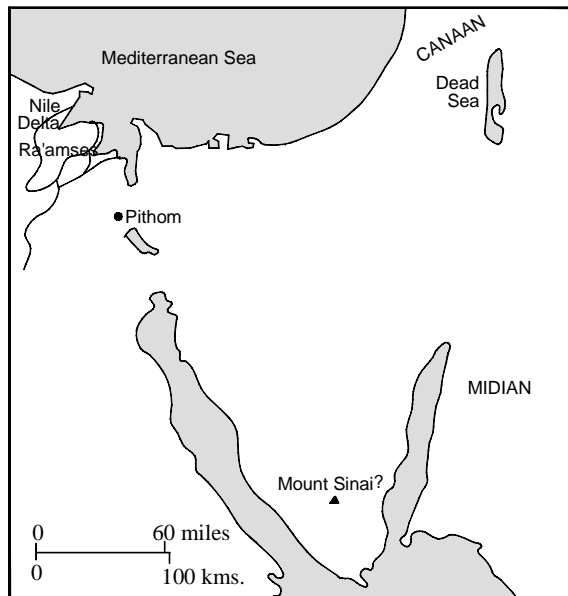
The Law — The Precepts of God (chapters 19 to 24)

- a. Arrival of Israel at Sinai 19:1–19
- b. God meets Moses on Summit of Sinai 19:20–25
- c. The Ten Commandments 20:1–17
- d. Various Laws 20:18 to 23:33
- e. The Covenant ratified 24:1–8
- f. Moses again ascends Sinai 24:9–18

The Tabernacle — The Presence of God (chapters 25 to 40)

- a. Design of Tabernacle and its Furniture 25:1 to 27:21
- b. The Garments and Service of the Priests 28:1 to 30:38
- c. The Craftsmen for building the Tabernacle 31:1–11
- d. The Sabbath 31:12–18
- e. Israel’s Idolatry and Moses’ Intercession 32:1 to 33:23
- f. The Renewal of the Covenant 34:1–35
- g. The Construction of the Tabernacle 35:1 to 40:33
- h. The Glory of the Lord fills the Tabernacle 40:34–38

**Sketch-map of Goshen, Midian and Sinai**



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Exodus 18:1–12

*Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods*

We read in the book of Proverbs (25:25), *As cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country*. When Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, heard of the great exploits that God had done for his people, he came to *the mountain of God* (Mount Sinai – referred to as ‘Horeb’ in chapter 3:1), bringing with him Moses’ wife and two sons (1–6). It is apparent from these verses that they were not with him in the land of Egypt during the plagues or at the time of the Passover. Moses told Jethro of the mighty works of God in bringing judgment upon the Egyptians. He also described the hardship that the Israelites had suffered in their wilderness journey and told *how the LORD had delivered them* (8).

The priest of Midian did not belong to the covenant people of God, but he recognised the surpassing greatness of the Lord (Jehovah). He rejoiced in the Lord’s goodness to Israel and said, ‘*Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods*’ (11). The proud gods of the Egyptians had been humbled (Pharaoh was also revered as a god by his people). Jethro then offered sacrifices to the Lord (12).

**Had the people of Israel spent more time in proclaiming the mighty acts of God which they had seen, they would have been a more contented people.** If we spent more time speaking to each other (and to non-Christians) about the Lord, we would be an encouragement to others; we would also know greater blessing in our lives.

Our country has sunk into much superstition and religious confusion. The people need to know the message of the gospel and *that the LORD is greater than all the gods*. God has called us *out of darkness into his marvellous light* to proclaim his praises (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord says, *Whoever offers praise glorifies me* (Psalm 50:23). When did you last proclaim the praises of God? *Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name* (Hebrews 13:15).

*Is the LORD among us or not?*

The sorry pattern of complaining continued when there was a shortage of water in the wilderness. The people asked, ‘*Is the LORD among us or not?*’ (7). They had already experienced abundant evidence of God’s goodness to them but God granted another miracle (1–7). Moses struck the rock and water gushed out before their eyes. The rock at Horeb speaks of Christ, smitten and wounded for us. Let us not tempt him by lusting after evil or by complaining (1 Corinthians 10:6–12). Moses called the name of the site of the rock *Massah* and *Meribah* which mean ‘test’ and ‘quarrel’. The Israelites were never to forget their foolish and sinful behaviour at Massah and Meribah.

One problem was solved at Rephidim, but it was soon followed by another. The Amalekites attacked Israel where they were weak and vulnerable (8; cp. Deuteronomy 25:17–19). Moses told Joshua to assemble some men to fight the attackers and he led the Israelites to a great victory (9–13). Behind that victory was the work of Moses in holding up the rod of God in his hands, his weary arms being supported by Aaron and Hur. Though we are not explicitly told, it is almost certain that Moses was praying. Uplifted hands indicated prayer (Psalm 28:2; 1 Timothy 2:8). Joshua needed the prayers of Moses, who needed the fellowship of Aaron and Hur in his spiritual warfare. **If spiritual battles are to be won and our churches are to grow and be strengthened, we must be faithful in prayer, both in private and at the prayer meeting.** We will not then ask, ‘*Is the LORD among us or not?*’ but we will be rejoicing in the sure knowledge that he is.

*While Moses stood with arms spread wide,  
Success was found on Israel’s side,  
But when through weariness they failed,  
That moment Amalek prevailed.*

*Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;  
Prayer makes the Christian’s armour bright;  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

(William Cowper)

*But the midwives feared God*

The population of the Hebrews who went to Egypt during the famine greatly increased in the years following the death of Joseph. They prospered and the Egyptians began to feel threatened by their presence (7–10; cp. Genesis 46:8–27). The new king over Egypt was possibly the first of a new dynasty of Pharaohs. He may have vaguely heard of Joseph but he felt no sense of gratitude to the Hebrews for saving his nation from famine some centuries earlier (see introduction to Exodus). Pharaoh was determined to halt the population explosion among the Israelites so he enslaved them and forced them to toil on his building projects (9–11).

The Egyptians made the lives of the Israelites *bitter with hard bondage* (14) but the more they afflicted them the more the Israelites increased in number (12). Pharaoh then ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill every male child at birth (16). By doing this, he knew that the Hebrew race would die out as the remaining women would be absorbed by marriage into Egyptian families. *But the midwives feared God* (17). That ‘but’ changed everything, and the tyrant’s cruel plans were frustrated. The Lord honoured those brave women who feared him more than the king of Egypt (20–21). They had saved families and God rewarded them with families of their own.

**The answer to the fear of man is to have a healthy fear of God** (Psalm 34:9; Proverbs 29:25). Such godly fear produces boldness and an obedience to God’s word that is undaunted by the threats of men (cp. Acts 5:28–29). We must have that same fear of God if we are to know blessing and usefulness in our Christian lives (Hebrews 12:28–29).

Pharaoh was determined to destroy the Hebrews and he ordered his own people to massacre the male babies born to the Israelite women (22). Let us remember that the promised Saviour was to come through the Hebrews and Satan was determined to destroy them. The devil was behind the persecution of the Israelites, but he cannot thwart the purposes of almighty God.

*So she had compassion on him*

The Hebrews were suffering fierce persecution but God was preparing a deliverer to bring the Israelites out of their slavery. The parents of Moses were both Levites (1); their names are given in chapter 6:18–20. Amram was a grandson of Levi and he married his aunt Jochebed who was a daughter of Levi. The Lord later set apart the tribe of Levi for the work and service of the tabernacle; the priests were taken from the Kohathite branch of the tribe to which Moses and his brother Aaron belonged.

Moses' parents, like the midwives, were fearless in the face of the command of wicked Pharaoh that all male Hebrew babies should be thrown into the river to drown (1:22); God richly rewarded their faith (cp. Hebrews 11:23). When they could no longer hide their baby at home, his mother hid him inside an ark of bulrushes among the reeds by the bank of the River Nile (3). Pharaoh's daughter found the baby in the river where babies were being drowned and *she had compassion on him* (6); she too defied her father's command.

God arranged events so that the tyrant's daughter paid Moses' mother to nurse her own son (9). Moses was later brought to the palace as a son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was given the finest education in Egypt and prepared for leadership – all at Pharaoh's expense. Our sovereign God laughs at the puny efforts of the wicked in their opposition to him (Psalm 2:4).

There is a daring element in God's sovereignty. The Lord, having preserved Moses from death, kept him from all the evil influences of the court of Pharaoh when he was taken there (10). We must not overlook the influence of a godly mother upon Moses in his early years. What a challenge and an encouragement this is to Christian parents. **We must never underestimate the influence of a godly home as we seek to train our children in a hostile, godless world.** *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it* (Proverbs 22:6).

*According to each one's need*

The Lord was very gracious in providing his murmuring people with food. He sent the bread (*manna*) in the morning and quails in the evening to provide meat for his people (12–15). He gave specific directions through Moses for the gathering of the manna. They were to gather *according to each one's need* (16). God said that he would not send manna on the Sabbath and he directed that they should gather double the amount of manna needed on the day before.

God gave us the Sabbath at creation (Genesis 2:2–3) and it was to be observed (this was before the Ten Commandments were given). The Lord was showing an ignorant people the importance of the Sabbath in a practical way. The extra manna gathered for the Sabbath did not rot (23–25). Some gathered according to their greed and this angered Moses but they found that by the next day the manna had rotted (20). Others, as perverse as ever, went out to gather manna on the Sabbath, but they found nothing (27).

The miraculous way in which God provided the manna and also withheld it on the Sabbath was intended to make the people know that he is faithful (12). He provided for them *according to each one's need* and that provision continued for forty years until they reached the borders of the promised land (16). It is that kind of dependence on God which strengthens our faith and draws us close to the Lord. Jesus taught us to pray, '*Give us this day our daily bread*' (Matthew 6:11). **Our Heavenly Father wants us to depend upon him with childlike trust** (Matthew 6:25–34). He will never fail us; *my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19).

*Though troubles assail and dangers affright,  
Though friends should all fail and foes all unite,  
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,  
The Scripture assures us, The Lord will provide.*

(John Newton)

*The LORD hears your murmurings*

The complaints of the people at Marah (15:24) were followed by a history of discontent against Moses and against God. The people now complain that they will die of hunger in the wilderness and that it would have been better to die at the hand of the Lord in Egypt (3). This was a terrible thing to say. That very hand of God had destroyed the Egyptians and had brought deliverance to Israel (15:6). Notice the times that the words *murmured* and *murmurings* are found in this chapter (verses 2,7,8,9 and 12). This murmuring was evil in the sight of the Lord (Numbers 14:27) and would have been very hurtful to Moses (2–3). A lesser man would have gone back to the peace and solitude of Midian in his old age, rather than put up with such ungrateful moaners.

God graciously promised that he would rain bread from heaven each morning, except on the Sabbath. They were to gather up sufficient bread for each day, but on the sixth day gather up enough for the Sabbath day also. The faithless Israelites would then know that it was the Lord who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Moreover, they would *see the glory of the LORD* the next morning (4–7). This prophecy was fulfilled when *the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud* (10). Moses also told the people that the Lord would send them meat each evening (8).

Moses warned the people that their murmuring was not against Aaron and himself but against the Lord (8). He warned, '*The LORD hears your murmurings*' (8,12; cp.1 Corinthians 10:10). When we complain, we forget that the Lord is listening to our grumbling. We also forget the priceless blessings that God has so freely bestowed upon us – forgiveness and cleansing from sin, freedom from the dominion of Satan, peace with God and knowing him as our heavenly Father, the privilege of prayer, the presence of God with us, and eternal life. **When we complain, the Christian life becomes drudgery rather than a delight. Away with the moaning! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits** (Psalm 103:2).

*God heard ... God remembered*

Moses was forty years old (Acts 7:23) when *he went out to his brethren* (11). He had been brought up as a prince, but he renounced his status and all his comforts, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin* (Hebrews 11:24–26). He made himself aware of the wretched condition of his own people and was not indifferent to the cruel actions of an Egyptian whom he saw beating a Hebrew. He killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand to cover up what he had done (11–12).

The following day he intervened in a fight between two Hebrew men. The man who was in the wrong challenged Moses, '*Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?*' Moses realised that though he had hidden the body of the Egyptian in the sand the previous day, his secret was out. His worst fears were realised when Pharaoh heard of the incident and sought to kill him (13–14). He fled to the land of Midian where his protection of the daughters of Reuel from bullying shepherds led to his marriage to one of those daughters (15–17).

God is not hasty in the training and preparation of his servants. Moses' training was to continue for a further forty years in the obscurity of Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:1–2). Reuel (Jethro) was a religious man who confessed his faith in the God of Israel. He was also a wise man (18:10–24).

The bitter suffering of the Israelites continued year after year, but God had not forgotten his people or his promises. *So God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant* (24). Though not obvious to human eyes, God was working all the time, overruling the wickedness of Pharaoh and preparing a deliverer (Moses) to bring his people out of their bondage. We often become discouraged when evil seems to prevail and the cause of Christ languishes. **Let us persevere and look to the Lord who is working out his sovereign purposes. He does hear us and he remembers his covenant commitment to us.**

*Holy ground*

Moses had been in the royal court of Egypt but was now a shepherd, working for his father-in-law (1). This was a lowly occupation which Egyptians despised (Genesis 46:34). He was leading his flock at Mount Horeb (also called Mount Sinai) when *the Angel of the LORD* appeared to him. ‘*The Angel of the LORD*’ is more than an angel – he is God! He is identified with God in today’s reading (2,4). Many Bible commentators believe that ‘*the Angel of the LORD*’ describes the Lord Jesus when he appeared to men before he came to earth at Bethlehem.

Moses was attracted by the strange phenomenon of a burning bush which was not consumed by the fire. The Bible describes God as *a consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29). Fire is a symbol of his blazing purity and of his glorious holiness. God told Moses that he was standing on *holy ground* (5). In such a place he was overwhelmed with awe and fear (5–6).

**A sense of the majesty and awesomeness of God is often missing from our worship.** A. W. Tozer describes worship as ‘a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love’ (WORSHIP – THE MISSING JEWEL OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH). What do you know about true worship? When someone has a true experience of God, they are never the same again. Samson’s parents were awestruck in the presence of God (Judges 13:20–21); Isaiah was woebegone as he felt his own wretchedness and sin (Isaiah 6:5); the apostle John fell at his feet as dead (Revelation 1:17). **Let us always worship God with joyful reverence and godly fear.**

*Lo, God is here! Let us adore,  
And own how holy is this place!  
Let all within us feel his power,  
And silent bow before his face;  
Who know his power, his grace who prove,  
Serve him with awe, with reverence love.*

(Gerhard Tersteegen, translated by John Wesley)

*I am the LORD who heals you*

The Israelites discovered that the pilgrim life was not easy and they soon became discouraged. They forgot their song after travelling three days through the wilderness without finding any fresh supplies of water. They then arrived at Marah where there was water, but they found that it was too bitter to drink (23–24).

The people did not trust in the Lord who had done such wonderful things before their eyes. They grumbled against Moses who did what every believer should do in a crisis. He cried out to the Lord who showed him a tree and the waters became sweet after he cast the tree into them (25). God promised his people that if they obeyed him, he would not bring upon them the plagues which he brought upon the Egyptians. He said, ‘*I am the LORD who heals you*’ (26).

We may have bitter trials or experiences which will be our ‘Marah’. A grievous trial arising from bereavement, sorrow, persecution, disappointment, misunderstanding, loneliness or some baffling circumstance may be our ‘Marah’. There is a tree where we find healing. Our blessed Saviour died on that tree at Calvary to heal the sinful and broken heart. **He makes the bitter sweet for his people. Hallelujah!**

*Bitter, indeed, the waters are  
Which in this desert flow;  
Though to the eye they promise fair,  
They taste of sin and woe.*

*But there’s a wonder-working wood,  
I’ve heard believers say,  
Can make these bitter waters good,  
And take the curse away.*

*The cross on which the Saviour died,  
And conquered for his saints;  
This is the tree by faith applied,  
Which sweetens all complaints.*

(John Newton)



*I will sing to the LORD*

The song of Moses is the first song recorded in the Bible. John Currid describes the song as ‘a symphony of adoration’ (STUDY COMMENTARY ON EXODUS, volume 1, page 309 – Evangelical Press). Israel had seen the mighty hand of God at work in their deliverance and in the destruction of the Egyptians.

Moses and the Israelites sang:

- Of the victory of God over his enemies (1–12). One puff of God’s wind destroyed the Egyptians. Who is this God who fights for us? He is here described as a mighty warrior. *The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name* (3). God is invincible in his majesty and power.
- Of God’s mercy, redemption and guidance (13).
- Of a confidence that the dread of God would seize those nations seeking to obstruct their pilgrimage to the promised land (14–16).
- Of God’s purpose to bring them into the promised land (17).
- Of the everlasting sovereignty of God (18).

This great song of adoration and worship came from Moses, who had complained to the Lord that he was not an eloquent man. (4:10). He could not remain silent following this marvellous deliverance of God and he exclaimed, ‘*I will sing to the LORD*’ (1). When God works in the lives of his people, the silent lips burst into praise. God’s victory over the Egyptians foreshadows his final victory over Satan, for the song of Moses and of the Lamb are linked (Revelation 15:1–4).

Do you have much greater pleasure in singing to the Lord than in the songs of this world? Do you love the psalms and hymns that we sing? Do you know them and use them in your devotions? **When did you last sing to the LORD with all your heart?** Meditate on the words of Moses in this song and worship God with gladness. *Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* (11).

*I AM WHO I AM*

The Lord assured Moses that he had seen the oppression of his people and that he had heard their cry. He promised that he would deliver them from the Egyptians and bring them into a good fertile land, rich in pasture. Though God told him that he was to lead the people out of Egypt, Moses felt very much his own inadequacy. He responded by asking, ‘*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*’ (7–11). His attitude displayed a lack of confidence in God who then promised, ‘*I will certainly be with you,*’ and said that when Moses had brought the people out of Egypt, he would *serve God on this mountain* (12). **The Lord did not give Moses a crash course to improve his self-esteem. What he needed to have was a higher esteem of God.**

Do you feel inadequate to serve God? You are quite correct. You are inadequate. You cannot do anything without his grace and strength to help you (cp. John 15:5). You must learn to depend on him at all times, and learn more of our great God and of his faithfulness. This was the lesson that Moses had to learn. When he asked God his name (13), he was requesting that God would reveal to him something of his character. God said to Moses, ‘*I AM WHO I AM*’ (14). Dale Ralph Davis writes with reference to verses 12 and 14: ‘God does not here stress his being or existence so much as his presence and “Yahweh” captures and summarises that thought – **he is the God who will be present to be all that his people need him to be**’ (THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE MUCK OF LIFE – PSALMS 1–12, page 8).

The Lord told Moses what to tell the people and to assure them that he would bring them out of Egypt. They would face many problems because Pharaoh would refuse to let them go, but would eventually yield to their demands after God had struck Egypt with his wonders (15–21). The Lord promised Moses more than he would have dared expect (21–22; cp. 12:35–36). **For those who will trust and obey him, the Lord still does great and wondrous things for his own glory in the church (cp. Ephesians 3:20–21).**

*Please send by the hand of whomever else you may send*

Moses, despite his privileged upbringing, was painfully aware of the greatness of the task to which God was calling him (3:11). He was unbelieving and reluctant, wanting God to send someone else (13). Look at his excuses:

- *‘But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, “The LORD has not appeared to you”’* (1). God had already told him that the people would heed his voice (3:18). Moses dared to contradict God, such is the evil of an unbelieving heart. The Lord equipped him with the ability to perform certain miracles, so that the people would believe him (2–9).
- *‘I am not eloquent ... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’* (10). God promised Moses that he would take care of this problem (11–12), but he still asked God to send someone else. *‘O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else you may send’* (13 – *‘O my Lord, please send someone else’*; English Standard Version). Is it any wonder that the Lord was angry with him (14)? (Is God speaking to your heart, challenging you to some avenue of service, at home within the church here, somewhere else in Britain, or abroad? Are there obvious needs in your church which you know you could meet if only you would spare the time? Dare you leave all the work in the church to ‘the faithful few’? If you really love the Lord, your love will be seen in willing, joyful and sacrificial service for him. **Do not make excuses or suggest that God send someone else.** He wants you and whom he calls he equips.

*Saviour! Thy dying love  
Thou gavest me;  
Nor should I aught withhold,  
My Lord from thee;  
In love my soul would bow,  
My heart fulfil its vow,  
Some offering bring thee now,  
Something for thee.*

(Sylvanus O. Phelps)

*The LORD fights for them*

God is the protector of his people. The Angel of God who had been leading the Israelites, moved behind them to come between them and the pursuing Egyptians. The pillar of cloud from which God led the Hebrews also moved behind them. The cloud brought darkness upon the Egyptians, but gave light to the Israelites (19–20). The Egyptians believed Pharaoh to be the incarnation of the sun-god Ra. The so-called god-man was unable to give light to his army.

When Moses stretched out his hand over the sea as God had commanded him, the Lord sent a strong east wind (21–22; cp. verse 16). The wind which God sent made a pathway through the water and dried out the sea bed enough for the Israelites to cross by foot. When the Egyptians followed in hot pursuit, the Lord troubled them (24). Their chariots became bogged down on the soft bed of the sea and they said, *‘Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them’* (25). They learned too late that God fights for his people and they were destroyed as God brought the waters of the sea crashing down upon them (26–28). *Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and his servant Moses* (31).

**Are you feeling discouraged? Remember God’s promises, rejoice in the Lord and take heart!** *If God is for us, who can be against us? — In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us* (Romans 8:31,37).

*Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,  
Who makes your cause his own;  
The hope that’s built upon his word  
Can ne’er be overthrown.*

*Though many foes beset your road  
And feeble is your arm,  
Your life is hid with Christ in God  
Beyond the reach of harm.*

(John Newton)

*Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD*

The Israelites were making good their escape from Egypt when the Lord told Moses to give the order to turn and to encamp with their backs to the sea (1–2). This would leave them very vulnerable to the pursuing Egyptians, but the Lord was drawing Pharaoh and his army into a trap, as we shall be seeing later in this chapter.

Hardened hearts are not receptive to the warnings which God graciously gives to them and Pharaoh led his army in hot pursuit of the Israelites (3,8–9). Humanly speaking the Hebrews were in an impossible situation. Ahead of them the Red Sea, behind them the Egyptian army, to the one side rocky crags, to the other, Egyptian fortresses. They were well and truly hemmed in. They panicked and cried out in bitter complaint against the Lord and against Moses (10–12). How soon they had forgotten the great displays of God's almighty power! When faith gives way to fear, we turn our eyes away from the Lord; we then look at our troubles and problems as if God doesn't care for us, or as if he does not exist.

One man was calm in the crisis – Moses. He encouraged the people, *'Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will accomplish for you today ... For the LORD will fight for you and you shall hold your peace'* (13–14). The Lord instructed Moses to tell the Israelites to advance toward the sea and then he should lift up his rod over the sea and divide it. The children of Israel would walk on dry ground through the parted waters but disaster would overtake the Egyptians who would know that he is *the LORD* when he had destroyed their mighty army (15–18). **The Red Sea, which they saw as the great obstacle to any hope of escape, was God's instrument to destroy the pursuing Egyptians.** Do you have problems or troubles that threaten to overwhelm you? Is your faith in God failing? *'Stand still* (that is, 'Stand firm, don't panic') *and see the salvation of the LORD.'*

*Then they bowed their heads and worshipped*

The call of God did not mean that Moses could disregard his family responsibilities. Moses asked Jethro to let him return to Egypt to see how his people were faring and it was given (18). The Hebrew expression translated *'are still alive'* is used with reference to their welfare. When God calls us, he also prepares the way for us. The Lord assured Moses that his enemies in Egypt were dead but warned him that he would harden Pharaoh's heart. Moses returned *with the rod of God in his hand* (19–20). The king of Egypt would not let the people go despite the wonders that he would see Moses perform with the rod (20–21). Moses was to give Pharaoh a stern warning. Israel was God's *son*, his *firstborn*. If Pharaoh refused to release Israel, then God would kill Pharaoh's son, his first-born (22–23).

What are we to make of verse 24? John Currid argues convincingly from the Hebrew that it was Moses' first-born son Gershom whom the Lord sought to kill (COMMENTARY ON EXODUS, Volume 1, page 117). Moses had sinned by failing to circumcise Gershom. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and his people (Genesis 17:7–14). Moses may have neglected the Lord's command because of his wife's opposition. God took drastic action to bring him to obedience, only sparing Gershom after he had been circumcised by Zipporah (25–26).

The Lord sent Aaron into the wilderness to meet his brother. They gathered together the leaders of their people and did the signs described in verses 3 to 9 in their sight (27–30). Moses' fears (1) were unfounded. **We too may be fearful about the future and burdened by anxious thoughts.** If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness we will not worry about the future which we know is under his wise and loving control (Matthew 6:33–34). *The people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel ... then they bowed their heads and worshipped* (31).

*Why is it that you have sent me?*

The trial of strength between Moses and Pharaoh was more than a battle between two men. It was a conflict between God and Satan, between light and darkness. As Moses acted in obedience to God, the dark powers of Satan and the forces of hell were ranged against him. Pharaoh dismissed the request of Moses and Aaron with arrogant defiance, ‘*Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD*’ (2). The proud tyrant was soon to discover the greatness of our sovereign God. He was soon to find that there is nothing false about God’s word (9; cp. 7:5).

**The pathway of obedience to God is rarely smooth.** Satan sees to that. Pharaoh accused the Israelites of laziness and made impossible demands upon them. He was obviously determined to teach Moses and Aaron a lesson. He summoned his taskmasters and the Hebrew officers (or foremen) the very same day. He commanded that they were not only to produce the same quota of bricks, but also to gather the straw which was necessary to bind together the mud used in their manufacture. When the quotas were not met, the officers were beaten. They went to Pharaoh to beg an easing of the burden, but he refused to change his conditions and dismissed them. They left the palace and turned on Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the trouble that had befallen them (6–19). Moses now had his own people against him as well as Pharaoh (19–21). He did the right thing, the thing the foremen had failed to do – he went to God in prayer (22–23). Do you first pray to the Lord when you are in trouble, before you complain to others?

Many a servant of God has asked, ‘*Why is it that you have sent me?*’ (22). **Satan knew the answer and was doing all in his power to keep Moses from pursuing the path of obedience to God.** Moses’ faith was to be sorely tried in his leadership of God’s people. We must never be surprised at seeming setbacks as we seek to serve God. He will bring us through and we will be all the stronger in faith and in our knowledge of him (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:12–14).

*The LORD went before them*

Joseph had a solemn oath placed upon the people of Israel before he died. They were to take his bones to be buried in Canaan. Moses remembered this oath and those bones were taken to the promised land as directed (19; cp. Genesis 50:24–25; cp. Joshua 24:32).

The Lord graciously provided a pillar of cloud and of fire for the Israelites. It was a token of:

- God’s leading (21). The most direct way to the promised land was through the land of the Philistines. The Lord knew all about the weaknesses of the Israelites. The Philistines were a fierce, warring nation, and God did not want his people so discouraged that they would want to return to Egypt (17). He could, of course, have given a miraculous victory over the Philistines, but he chose not to do so. He is sovereign and wise in all his ways. The Lord guided the Hebrews to go south-east towards the Red Sea (18).
- God’s presence with them day and night. *The LORD went before them* (21). They were protected by his presence, the cloud sheltering them by day (Psalm 105:39) and coming between them and their enemies (14:19–20). **It is a tremendous source of comfort and encouragement to know that God is with us** (cp. 33:14; Joshua 1:5,9; Hebrews 13:5–6). *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me* (Psalm 23:4). We have no cloud today, but God graciously leads us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). The Lord goes ahead of us; we have no need to fear.

*Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine  
Nor ever murmur nor repine;  
Content, whatever lot I see,  
Since ’tis my God that leadeth me.*

*He leadeth me! he leadeth me!  
By his own hand he leadeth me;  
His faithful follower I would be,  
For by his hand he leadeth me.*

(Joseph H. Gilmore)

*Because of what the LORD did for me*

The Lord spoke to Moses, commanding him that the first-born of man and animal must be set apart to him (*'sanctify'*; 1–2). Further instruction concerning the first-born is given in verses 11 to 16.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be kept by the Israelites each year (3–9) and the practice of sacrificing a lamb to redeem the first-born was also to continue (13–15). The first-born had escaped divine judgment because a lamb had died in his place. God said of the first-born, *'It is mine'* (2). Christian, *you are not your own, for you were bought at a price* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18–19) and we are to live for him (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

The importance of instructing our children is again emphasised: *'And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, "This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt"'* (8,14; cp. Deuteronomy 4:9–10; 6:6–7). All parents have a God-given responsibility to instruct their children. The instruction of Timothy as a child bore much fruit (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Both parents must be involved in teaching their children about the Lord (cp. Proverbs 1:8). Timothy was instructed by his mother and grandmother, but it appears that his father was not a Christian (cp. Acts 16:1). \*

**Our children are daily under the strident and persuasive influence of a godless world. Our example and instruction should convince them of the wisdom of following Christ.** The instruction of a biblical ministry will confirm the teaching of Christian parents. We have an obligation before God to be in a church where God's word is loved, honoured, taught and obeyed. How foolish to belong to a church where vital truths are denied and where confusion abounds! Our children will suffer much spiritual harm if we neglect our responsibilities.

\* See notes for 2 April on Exodus 2:1–10.

*Now you shall see what I will do*

This chapter contains a genealogy of the Levites (verses 14–27) but we will restrict our comments to the narrative in the other verses. God graciously reassured his discouraged servant with precious promises, reminding Moses of his covenant commitment to Israel (3–5). He said, *'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh'* (1). The one making these promises was the Lord. God repeated to Moses, *'I am the LORD'* (2,6,7,8). The wicked Pharaoh was daring to fight the Lord. God reinforced his promise to Moses seven times with the words *'I will'* (6–8). **There is no hint of possible failure in the promises of God. They are certain and reliable.** *'I am the LORD ... I will ... I will.'* Never forget that even the most hopeless circumstances make no difference whatever to the promises of God. God promised Moses that he would take the Israelites to himself for a people and that he would be their God (7). Matthew Henry comments, *'More than this we need not ask, we cannot have, to make us happy.'*

The people of Israel, broken in spirit and weary from toil, would not listen to Moses (9). The Lord told him to go to Pharaoh with the same message as before, but Moses was still full of apprehension and doubt. If the enslaved Israelites would not listen to him why should the Egyptian king? (11–13,28–30). There was to be no change in the method or the message because of setbacks. There is a vital lesson for us here because we live in times when many crave quick results in God's work. We must not abandon the preaching of God's word or the unremitting toil of faithful service because we lack success. **We need grace from God to persevere. We will then see what he will be pleased to do.**

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

*I will harden Pharaoh's heart*

Moses was not convinced that Pharaoh would listen to him (6:30). The Lord then told him that he had made him 'as God' to Pharaoh, with Aaron as his prophet, doing the speaking to Pharaoh (7:1–2). There was a contest to be fought with Moses representing God and Pharaoh representing Satan. The Egyptian king would refuse to heed Moses but in God's time he would have to release the Israelites. The Egyptians would have to acknowledge the Lord (3–5). Moses and Aaron were old men, but age did not keep them from obedience to God (6–7).

What are we to make of the statement, 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart'? (3). The book of Exodus demonstrates the truth of God's absolute sovereignty again and again, and this can be seen in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (3; cp. 4:21; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8). God sovereignly controls kings (Deuteronomy 2:30; Proverbs 21:1) and nations (Joshua 11:19–20; Psalm 105:25). Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? The answer is found in Exodus 9:16 and Romans 9:17–18. God did so for his own glory, to make known his power and his name (i.e. his character) in overthrowing the tyrant. It is important to notice that Pharaoh was not an unwilling puppet in the hands of God. Though God hardened his heart, we also read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34–35). The Lord is very patient with stubborn sinners (Romans 9:22), but they still refuse to repent (cp. Revelation 16:9,11).

Remember, we are all answerable to God, but he is answerable to no one. The truth of God's sovereignty brings great comfort to the believer (Psalm 97:10). **When we meditate on the unsearchable judgments of our all-wise and sovereign God, let us not speculate on why he acts in certain ways, but bow in humble worship and adoration (Romans 11:33–36).**

*The Lord is King! who then shall dare  
Resist his will, distrust his care,  
Or murmur at his wise decrees,  
Or doubt his royal promises?*

(Josiah Conder)

*The children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses*

The judgment of God upon the Egyptians was so great that there was a death in every household (29–30). Pharaoh had refused to pay attention to the warning of the Passover judgment (11:4–8). Many people in our day scoff at the thought of the wrath and judgment of God. Such scoffers are not being modern in their unbelief. There have been scoffers in every age. God delays judgment because he is merciful (cp. 2 Peter 3:1–9). Pharaoh had despised *the goodness, forbearance and longsuffering* of God (cp. Romans 2:4), and the consequences for him and his people were terrible. The distraught Egyptians had had enough and wanted the Israelites to leave their land immediately, even though it was not yet daybreak (31–33).

**God keeps his promises as well as his threats.** He gave the Hebrews favour in the eyes of the Egyptians exactly as he had promised (35–36; cp. 3:21–22; see notes for 17 April). They left Egypt with great wealth. Justice was done, for the Egyptians had oppressed and exploited them for many years. The Lord also kept his promise to bring his people out of Egypt 'with great judgments' (6:6; 7:4). God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), but his promises are for those who obey him. *Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses* (35). Are you obeying God's word? Are you depending upon his promises?

*A mixed multitude* who were not Hebrews had been so convinced by the greatness and power of God that they joined the Israelites in leaving Egypt (38). Gentiles were not prevented from following God according to his law in Old Testament times (48). The Jews often forgot this (eg. the prophet Jonah who did not want to preach in Nineveh, a great Gentile city). We make the same mistake if we limit the power of the gospel in our attitudes. Our good news is for *a mixed multitude*, for all classes and races of men and women. Do we really have a desire to win sinners to Christ? Do we really give them a warm welcome to our church services?

*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*

The first Passover feast was to be for the Israelites, the *beginning of months* (2) when God brought them out of bondage (13:3). A lamb without blemish was killed for each household, and its blood sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of the house (7). The lamb was to be roasted in fire and then eaten in haste with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The people were to be prepared for a quick departure from Egypt (8–12). The sprinkled blood was to protect Israel's first-born against the judgment of the Lord. God said, '*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*' (13). The Feast of the Passover was to be observed every year (14) and it continues to be an important day in the Jewish calendar.

God told the Israelites to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread from the fourteenth to the twenty-first day of the month. They were forbidden to have any leaven (yeast) in their homes or to eat anything leavened during this seven days (15–20).

At a Passover feast about 2000 years ago the Lord Jesus was crucified at Calvary. We read in the New Testament that Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19). **Just as a lamb was a substitute for the first-born of each Hebrew household, so the Lord Jesus died as a substitute for sinners** (Isaiah 53:4–6; 1 Peter 3:18).

Our sin provokes the righteous anger of God (Romans 1:18) but God has given his beloved Son to shed his blood on the cross as a propitiation for sin (Romans 3:25). (A 'propitiation' is a sacrifice which turns aside wrath, appeasing the offended party). When we come to faith in Christ, God the Father sees the blood shed for us and his wrath is turned away from us. Even more wonderful – we are accepted into his family and enjoy his smile upon us instead of his frown. God says, '*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*' Is it any wonder that we rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ with great joy and gratitude?

*They also did in like manner with their enchantments*

The power of Satan lies behind all false religion (cp. Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17). The Egyptians worshipped a number of gods and their religion was not lacking in miracles. When Aaron cast down his rod in the presence of Pharaoh, it became a serpent. The sorcerers and magicians were able to imitate the miracle. *They also did in like manner with their enchantments* (11). The overwhelming power of Jehovah was seen when Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods (12). They were also able to imitate the next two miracles that God worked through Moses and Aaron. They turned water into blood (20–22) and brought on a plague of frogs (8:6–7).

**We must always remember however that Satan is limited in what he is able to do.** The Egyptian magicians were confronted by a far greater power. They were unable to turn their serpents back into rods, or blood back into water, or to get rid of the frogs. They were unable to imitate any of the remaining plagues or to reverse them. They acknowledged, '*This is the finger of God*' (8:19).

Satan still deceives millions with *signs and lying wonders* (2 Thessalonians 2:9; cp. Acts 8:9–11) through false religion. We have seen an explosion of occult activities in Britain in recent years. Spiritist mediums and astrologers have become television celebrities and most newspapers have horoscopes. Psychic fairs are common and new age occult shops are found in almost every town throughout the land.

**We must never forget that like Moses, we too are engaged in spiritual warfare (cp. 2 Corinthians 10:3–5).** We must not neglect our communion with God and our times of prayer and Bible reading. We need to be strong in the Lord and to put on the Christian armour (Ephesians 6:10–18). The gospel has a far greater power than that of Satan. Let us pray much for the advance of God's kingdom and seek to make our good news known to needy sinners.

*There is no one like the LORD our God*

The Lord told Moses to go to Pharaoh repeating his demand to let his people go that they might serve him (1; cp. 7:16). He was to warn the king that if he refused this demand, God would send a plague of frogs throughout Egypt (1–4).

The Egyptian gods were connected with the forces of nature. They had a Nile god and they also believed that frogs were a symbol of divine power which represented fertility. One of the important Egyptian goddesses was Hekhet, who was pictured as a human female with a frog's head. She was supposed to control the multiplication of the frogs in Egypt but was rendered powerless when the Lord brought the plague of frogs upon the land. The plagues were a judgment upon the gods of Egypt (cp. 12:12). The River Nile became so polluted in the first plague that the Egyptians loathed its water (7:18). The frogs invaded every part of the Egyptians' homes, getting into their food and into their beds (2–4).

Pharaoh was driven to send for Moses and Aaron to ask them to pray that God would remove the frogs. He also promised that he would *let the people go, that they might sacrifice to the LORD* (8). Moses wanted the king to know that the removal of the frogs would be no coincidence, but an answer to prayer. He gave Pharaoh the option of saying just when the frogs should be removed (9). Pharaoh had defiantly said, *'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?'* (5:2). He was now finding out *that there is no one like the LORD our God* (10). The frogs died following Moses' prayer *and the land stank* because of the rotting heaps of frogs' corpses. Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, however (12–15).

*There is no one like the LORD our God. Think about the great power, the unsearchable wisdom and the majestic holiness of God. Worship him with adoration and with joy and encourage yourself in the face of trials and difficulties. Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!* (Psalm 144:15).

*The LORD gave the people favour*

The first three verses of Exodus 11 appear to come in time after verses 4 to 8 where we find Moses still speaking to Pharaoh. John Currid takes the view that God spoke to Moses during his audience with Pharaoh, writing that the Hebrew appears to indicate that this was the case (COMMENTARY, volume 1, page 231). Moses warned Pharaoh of the last plague before leaving him *in great anger* (8). There is a righteous anger that burns for the glory of God (cp. Mark 3:5). We must always be very careful that our anger does not come from sinful attitudes, arising from pride or from feelings of resentment (Ephesians 4:26,31). Righteous anger comes from a tender, anguished heart that loves the Lord and desires his glory.

The promise given to Moses at the burning bush (3:21–22) was about to be fulfilled, as *the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians* (11:2–3; 12:35–36). **God's sovereignty is truly wonderful!** He so worked in the hearts of the Egyptians that they freely gave their gold and silver to the Israelites. Pharaoh's daughter had paid for Moses' princely upbringing (2:9), and now the Egyptians were to sponsor the Israelites' journey into freedom. Moreover, Moses, the leader of a despised and cruelly treated people, became very great in the land and was respected by Pharaoh's servants and subjects (11:3). How marvellous is our great God in all his ways (Romans 11:33–35)!

The sovereign Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart against the Israelites but made the Egyptian population favourably disposed towards them. Is there someone who bears a resentful attitude toward you? Commit your way to the Lord and pray for them (Matthew 5:44). God often brings blessing out of trials and he works all things together for good.

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*

(William Cowper)



*I will never see your face again*

John Currid writes, ‘We need constantly to keep in mind the truth that the exodus event is not merely a confrontation between Israel and Egypt. There is much more to it than that. We are witnessing a contest and conflict between the God of Israel and the gods of Egypt. The gods of Egypt include Pharaoh himself (as the incarnation of Ra and Horus). ... The plagues are Yahweh’s means of bringing Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt to their knees. ... The Lord, however, has the ultimate goal of bringing glory and honour to himself through the plagues’ (STUDY COMMENTARY ON EXODUS, Volume 1, page 213).

Moses and Aaron had asked Pharaoh to let the Israelites go three days’ journey into the desert to sacrifice to God (5:1–3). The king had refused this request until after the fourth plague. He then suggested that they should remain in Egypt to sacrifice, a compromise which Moses turned down. Pharaoh again said that they could go, but not very far away (8:25–28); he again back on his promises (8:32; 9:28,35). When Moses warned him of the plague of locusts and his own servants asked him to be more flexible regarding the demands of Moses (4–7), Pharaoh suggested another compromise – that only the men of Israel go on the three-day journey to sacrifice. He then drove Moses and Aaron from his presence (8–11). The plague of locusts followed (12–20).

After the ninth plague (of darkness) Pharaoh gave permission for the Israelites to go, but on condition that they left behind all their livestock (24). Moses refused this compromise and demanded that Pharaoh should also provide the sacrifices and burnt offerings (25). The Egyptian king, angry and irritated, warned Moses that he never wanted to see his face again (28–29). Moses retorted, ‘*I will never see your face again*’ (29). **The Egyptian king had despised many God-given opportunities to repent, and this, his last chance, was also wasted.** If your heart is not right with God, let Pharaoh be a warning to you. God’s Spirit will not always strive with us (Genesis 6:3). Now is the time to repent and to seek the Lord (Isaiah 55:6–7).

*The LORD did according to the word of Moses*

God brought the third plague on Egypt without giving any warning to Pharaoh. The Lord instructed Moses to tell Aaron to *strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt* (16). The magicians knew that they were beaten when they failed to produce lice with their enchantments. They acknowledged ‘*the finger of God*’ in the plagues, but Pharaoh would not admit defeat (17–19). He would have needed his early morning dip in the Nile to give him some relief from the lice (20).

The Lord again instructed Moses to go to Pharaoh repeating his demand to let his people go, that they may serve him (20; cp. verse 1). If he refused this demand, God would send swarms of flies throughout Egypt, but Goshen, where the Israelites dwelled, would be spared. The Lord’s message for Pharaoh was that he would do all these things ‘*that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land*’ (21–22).

When God plagued Egypt with flies, Pharaoh promised to allow the Israelites to go to sacrifice to God as Moses had demanded (20–28). He went back on his promises after Moses prayed for the removal of the flies (31–32). He wanted to be rid of the plagues which were causing so much physical discomfort, but he was not willing to see the plague of his own sinful rebellion removed, and he hardened his heart (32).

Moses, who had been so reluctant to lead Israel and to confront Pharaoh, had greatly grown in his confidence in God (10, 29). It is as we obey the Lord, that we will prove him, and see our faith strengthened. Moses and Aaron had done *just as the LORD commanded them* (7:6,10,20). God blesses and honours those who obey his will. It is significant that *the LORD did according to the word of Moses* (13,31). **Obedience to God may be costly, but it is the only way to real joy in the Christian life.** Surely, if we love the Lord Jesus, who died to save us, we will gladly obey him (John 14:15).

*The LORD will make a difference*

If Pharaoh had entertained any lingering doubts about the supremacy of Jehovah (*'the LORD God'*) over his gods, they were quickly dispelled with the next three plagues. Moses told him, *'The LORD will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt'* (4). God sent a plague upon the livestock of the Egyptians which killed many of the animals. The expression, *'all the livestock of Egypt'* means 'all types of livestock' not every single animal. Some livestock was left at the time of the seventh plague (verse 19). Pharaoh sent to Goshen (where the Hebrews lived) and found that their livestock had been protected from the plague which had devastated the Egyptian livestock (7). Goshen had also been free of the previous plague (8:22).

The Lord then instructed Moses to take ashes from a furnace and to scatter it upwards in the presence of Pharaoh. The oppressed Hebrews toiled to bake bricks in such a furnace. The ashes resulting from their suffering would now be used to make their oppressors suffer through a plague of boils. **There is a grim humour in the judgment of God as he vindicates his people.** Pharaoh saw the humiliation of his magicians, when they were so affected by boils that they were unable to stand before Moses (11). The Egyptian king was able to see and experience the difference that the Lord had made between the Egyptians and Moses, who was unaffected by the plague. He still hardened his heart however, and refused to listen to the Lord's word. When men are hardened in their sin, they will refuse to repent even when confronted by miracles. We know, however, that God is able to humble the hardest sinner and bring him to repentance.

When the day of death or judgment comes, God will also *make a difference* between those whose sins have been forgiven through Christ and those who have rejected the gospel (Matthew 25:31–46). If you are not a Christian, I plead with you to make your peace with God by turning from your sinful ways. Ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you and to save you. There will be no second chance after death.

*I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God*

God is very patient with sinners (cp. 2 Peter 3:9). Pharaoh had many opportunities to obey God but he continued to harden his heart. The Lord now sent Moses early in the morning with the message, *'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let my people go, that they may serve me, for at this time I will send all my plagues to your very heart, that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth"'* (13–14). Notice that God would send the plagues to the very heart that was hardening itself against him. Pharaoh had defiantly said, *'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?'* (5:2). He was finding out that God is sovereign over all things and wonderful in all his power (14; cp. 8:10). God's message to him was, *'I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name (character) may be declared in all the earth'* (16).

Moses warned Pharaoh that the next plague of very heavy hail would be more severe than anything ever seen in Egypt. He told the king the precise time of the plague – *'tomorrow about this time'*. God would destroy what was left of the Egyptian livestock unless the animals were taken indoors for protection. The word of God spoken through Moses was now inspiring fear among some of the Egyptians and those of them who believed God's word spoken by Moses took the appropriate action and thus their animals were spared (18–20). The foolish ones disregarded God's word and suffered the consequences (21–25). There was no hail in Goshen, where the Hebrews lived (26).

Pharaoh seemed to repent when he acknowledged his sin and the righteousness of God (27), but he grew more defiant in his sin (34). Moses was not deceived by his fine sounding words and he declared, *'I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God'* (30). **It is not enough to profess Christ with our mouths. Our lives must match our lips (cp. Matthew 15:7–9).**