

This Changes Everything - Exodus 9:8-35

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Date: 01 December 2024

[0 : 0 0] Turn to Exodus chapter 9. We've gone through the first half of the plagues. We've gone through five plagues up to the cattle being diseased, and now we're at the midpoint of Egypt's tribulation, the midpoint of the tribulation, and things are going to ramp up. They're going to intensify, and they're also going to become more personal as Egypt approaches this place where they have not responded to God's word, where Pharaoh has not, where Pharaoh's court has not, and where many in Egypt have not responded to God's word and faith. And so we're at this midpoint, and today we'll cover, Lord willing, the boils and the hail, and then next week, Lord willing, the locust in the darkness, and then the firstborn will take a little longer. But we've been doing two a week, and we'll see how well we do today. So if you remember, we said last week that as God begins to bring judgment on flesh. So you see we have in the kind of middle column, the first two plagues were judgment according to the water. There were the frogs, and the water turned into blood. The next two are from the land, lice and flies. And here we see upon flesh. First, the flesh of cattle. And it's almost as if God was judging their creature worship, as we said. They worshiped the creature instead of the creator.

And because they would not respond, it was like, you see what I can do to your idolatry. You see what I can do to your creatures, and now it's like it's going to come upon them. God gave them a space to repent.

And as we said last time, that space for repentance does not last forever. And so today, this changes everything. Everything's about to change as they move now through the midpoint of these judgments. Heraclitus, I'm sure you all know who he is. He was a Greek philosopher.

He said there's nothing permanent except change. Right? Well, okay. Yes, from man's wisdom. But man's wisdom is what? Foolishness with God. Because God says in Malachi 3.6, he says, I am the Lord and I change not. God does not change. Our world changes. We change. There's nothing permanent except change.

Well, there's nothing permanent except the Lord. In the midst of change, God remains the same. So let's jump into verse 8. We're not going to back up into the previous plagues. We're just going to pick up in verse 8, where Pharaoh has hardened his heart once again. He's refused to let Israel go.

[2 : 2 8] And in verse 8, the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, take you handfuls of ashes of the furnace and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. So here we have the six plagues because he then says that those ashes, and they took the ashes of the furnace, and it shall become small dust. It means more like clouds, like billowing clouds in the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains. I haven't had boils. I haven't had boils with blains. It sounds bad. It just means blisters, like very sore oozing sores. It should be boils breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt.

So we put our chart back up, and if you look in the middle column where the Egyptian deity being judged, this is the god Imhotep, and this would be the god of medicine. This would be judgment almost directly against these magicians that has been continuing to stand against Moses again and again.

This would be a judgment against them, and it's against the flesh, and ultimately the message it gives is that all flesh is corrupt, not just the cattle, but this is now upon man and beast as well.

And as we see after the first three plagues, this is also not upon the Hebrews. They are exempt. They are under God's protection. So at the midpoint of Egypt's tribulation, God's judgment is now going to be more direct and more personal. This is the first judgment that is specifically against people.

So, I mean, it was hard work for them to dig wells and get water when Egypt turned to blood. I mean, the Nile turned to blood. It wasn't very fun having frogs everywhere. They had lice. They had flies.

[4 : 19] But this is the first time that God has directed a plague upon man. And so God's judgments are going to be more direct and more personal. Essentially, as Egypt's resistance intensifies, so does God's response to that resistance. And there's also another word in this verse I want you to zero in on.

And that's where the Lord tells Moses, he says, Take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and sprinkle it towards heaven. This is the first time we see that word in God's judgments upon Egypt. We're going to see that a few more times.

It comes in with the boils, with hail, and with darkness. That God is directly, intentionally turning their gaze to heaven to say, hey, this is not natural phenomena, right? I mean, they wouldn't have had cell phones. They wouldn't have had their social media. They wouldn't have TV or anything. I mean, I don't know how they got the news around in Egypt. But all of these things, as they began to happen, they're like, what is going on? This is just some kind of crazy natural phenomena. All of a sudden, there's frogs everywhere. Or maybe they thought, well, maybe we displeased the God that we worshipped for frogs or whatever. But eventually, God brings the whole nation to realize, because he's going to continue to tell us this, he tells Pharaoh that you may know that I am the Lord in all the earth. But eventually, Egypt, all of Egypt will know this is God who's doing this.

And so now he's directly turning their gaze to heaven to know where this is coming from, that judgment is coming from heaven. Our judgment came from heaven as well. All of mankind is under judgment, as we've said. We all owe our allegiance to heaven, right? All judgment comes from there. But because our judgment came from heaven and was put upon the man who came from heaven, now our judgment, we no longer look to heaven for judgment, do we? Psalm 57, verses 2 through 3 says, I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performs all things for me. He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah, or consider that. Consider that now heaven is no longer a source of judgment. Consider that now we look to heaven for salvation.

Because judgment came from heaven, judgment came in the form of Jesus who took our judgment. Now we can look to heaven for salvation. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

[6 : 35] This idea of taking ashes from the fire and throwing it into the air is just kind of interesting and kind of odd. But in that culture, this was the way that the magicians, the Eastern magicians, not just Egyptians, but others, they would pronounce a curse upon a person, a village, a house.

They would gather ashes from a fire, from a common fire, and they would scatter them in the air, and then they would, you know, pronounce their curse. Very dramatic, I'm sure. Very dramatic.

But what God is showing here is that the Egyptians' magic, their god of, Imhotep, their god of medicine, it had no substance. They could throw all the ash in the air they want, but it didn't accomplish anything. God's judgment has substance. And where he tells them to take ashes from the furnace, that is not from just a common fire. That is specifically, the wording is from a brick kiln. And what has Egypt been forcing God's people to labor under for generations now?

He says, Moses, I want you to take the ashes from the brick kiln. I want you to scatter it into the air, and that the oppression of Egypt will come back upon themselves. Deuteronomy 32, 39, the Lord says, see now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me. Just in case you thought there was none of these gods in Egypt or any gods. I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal. Neither is there any that I can deliver out of my hand. Egypt's magic, Egypt's medicine, Egypt's practices, they had no substance. Only the Lord's. In verse 9, as we read it, she'll become small dust in all the land of Egypt, kind of like billowing, and she'll break forth with blains upon man and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt. Man would now be judged along with the gods he worshiped. The Egyptians had combined man with beast in their idolatry. I almost was going to put up a slide of some of the pictures of hieroglyphics of Egypt's gods, but I thought, no way, I'm not giving false gods of Egypt screen time with the Lord. They're just really weird and bizarre. They're like people with jackal heads and crocodile heads and cow heads and frog heads. And like we said before, if you walked into a church and everybody had a mask on, it was either a cow or a frog or a fly, you'd probably leave, right?

It'd be really weird, but these people had become normal for them. And the Egyptians, they'd combined beasts and man in their idolatry, and so God would oblige them in that judgment. God said, if you want to be judged, if you want to be combined with the creature, if you want to focus on worshiping the creature, then I will oblige you. Psalm 135, picking up in verse 15, speaks of those that worship idols, and it says, The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not, no substance. Eyes, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. Neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them. So is everyone that trusts in them.

[9 : 39] And essentially, the Egyptians have said, these are our gods. And God said, if you want to be judged along with your gods, then I will oblige you. In verse 10, Moses took the ashes of the furnace and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven, and it became a boil, breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. You notice every time that God tells Moses, this is what I'm going to do, then we get a scripture telling us that Moses did what God told him to do, and God did what he said he was going to do. He constantly repeats that, because God wants us to know, my word will accomplish what I've sent forth to do. It's not going to change. It's 100% effective. And I also like that Moses has a lot of freedom in his obedience to God. He never deviates from God's revealed word, but God gives him a lot of freedom. You know, I don't know, he didn't, you know, did he take the ashes in there? How did he throw them? You know, I don't know. It doesn't say specifically what time. He just said, hey, take them. And here's what I want you to do. I want you to go before Pharaoh.

I want you to take these and scatter these ashes. God gives Moses a lot of freedom in his obedience. God doesn't require of Moses this very specific, narrow way of worship. You have to bow at this certain time of day, or you have to genuflect, or you have to have this certain... God's like, if your heart is right towards me, just honor my word, and I'll give you direction, and you follow it. But there's a lot of freedom Moses has within this, his obedience to God's word. The magicians now, in verse 11, after Moses scatters this in the air, excuse me, they could not stand before Moses because of the boils. For the boil was upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians, but it was not upon God's people, right? We saw that when God separated out after the third plague, said he'll make, I'll make a division or literally a redemption. And so God's people are under his redemption. But this is upon the Egyptians. The false cannot stand before the true. The counterfeit, the lie, cannot stand before that which is true. The only one standing here is who? Moses, as the Egyptians could no longer stand before him. Proverbs 25, 19 quoted this before, confidence in an unfaithful man in time of troubles, like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint. They can't stand. They put their confidence in something that has no ability to bear its weight. And it's just a very painful thing to do that.

The flesh will always fail and will always fester. Galatians 6, 8, you know, he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life.

Well, Romans 8, 13 kind of goes along with that, where Paul writes, for if you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if you, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.

The end of the flesh, it's always going to fail. Always. No matter how good it may look in the moment, no matter how strong you may feel in the moment, the flesh will fail and the flesh will fester. But God's word and God's work alone remain standing. And so do all those who stand upon his word, right? Moses is the only one standing because he's standing how? He's standing upon God's word, not standing his own strength and ability. And then this magic, these are the magicians. I like that. That God's word has revealed the magic of this world for the false support that it is.

[13 : 04] The world thinks they've got some magic, but God's word has revealed it for the emptiness that it is. Psalm 119, 89, speaking of God's immovable word, says, forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

That word settled means to stand. It stands firm. Psalm 20, verses 7 and 8, some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God. They are brought down and fallen.

They can't stand, but we are risen and stand upright. It is not the magic of this world that gives us standing before God. There's no magic that can give us standing before God, but it is a man, isn't it? First Timothy 2, 5 tells us that there is one man, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. That's how we have standing before God. But these magicians, they couldn't even stand up because of these boils. Now it's interesting, this plague does not have an ending, you know, where Moses prayed and then the frogs went away. He prayed and there's no lice left found in Egypt. This one doesn't have an ending because I think it was just something that ran its course. They essentially were essentially infected with these boils and then it ran its course. And so as we move, when we move into this next plague with the hail, I think they still have boils as it's running its course. The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he hearkened not unto them as the Lord had spoken unto Moses. So here's Pharaoh and all his people covered with these boils.

And yet the Lord hardens his heart. And you said, ha, there it is. Remember, God said he would harden his heart and he did. He arbitrarily hardened Pharaoh's heart. Well, guys, we just went through how many chapters where Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart long before God ever hardens his heart. Pharaoh hardens his heart. God is simply confirming what Pharaoh has already affirmed. God simply is confirming Pharaoh. You've affirmed this over and over in your life. You have affirmed that you will not receive my word. And God's just confirming that. Jesus said the same thing in John chapter three, verse 18. He says, he that believes on me is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already because he's not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. He's not saying I condemn you if you don't believe in me. He says, look at it. I'm just confirming what you've affirmed. Believe in me. You're not condemned. Don't believe in me. You're condemned.

He's just affirming. I mean, he's just confirming what we choose to affirm. But for Pharaoh, this is the point of no return. For Pharaoh, he has stepped across the line. He is at the point of no return.

[15 : 39] When God steps in and says, I've hardened your heart, Pharaoh, because you have chosen over and over to harden your own heart. In Matthew 12, Jesus is speaking of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

And many teachings and topics have been done on this. But I think if we just take what the scripture tells us, we can kind of figure out what it means. Jesus says, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. But the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.

And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But whosoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him. Neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Does that mean you can blaspheme the Holy Spirit if you say a word against the Holy Spirit?

Well, no, because Paul tells us that we can resist the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us we can frustrate God's grace, but we don't lose our salvation. The Holy Spirit is what's been given as a witness in this world to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who reject the Holy Spirit, who reject the word of the Holy Spirit, whether like Jesus said, well, you're already under condemnation because you would not believe.

The only sin that is not forgiven is the sin that rejects the truth of the gospel, right? So for Pharaoh, he has reached a point of no return where his heart has hardened and hardened and hardened and where God said, okay, only thing left for me to do is just to confirm you in this position.

[17 : 06] Because I know that you will never change your heart. You have rejected my word. And the Lord said unto Moses, rise up early in the morning, stand before Pharaoh and say unto him, thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, let my people go that they may serve me. Once again, Moses told, go and face Pharaoh. Moses, prepare yourself for the enemy. How does he tell him to do that? Look at the three things he tells Moses to do. Rise, stand, and say, rise up early in the morning, stand before Pharaoh and say unto him, be ready to face the enemy, Moses. And how does he tell him to do that? To rise. Proverbs 8, 34 and 35 says, blessed is the man that hears me watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For those who find me find life and shall obtain favor of the Lord. Blessed is the man watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

I picture that as like someone standing at the, you know, like there's the door and there's a little sidewalk and there's a picket fence. And you're just standing there waiting at the gate, waiting for Jesus to come out, just waiting. It's like, he should be coming out now, right?

We're there waiting for him. Not like, oh, I got there too late. Arise, be ready, up early, ready to do this. Stand. Ephesians 6, verse 10, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the ruse of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And how then do we stand? We rise, we stand, we put on the armor of God, don't we? We're armored up, we're ready for the enemy. Having therefore your loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. We say, we rise, we stand, and what do we speak?

We speak God's word. Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. It's not just on our behalf, is it? God tells Moses, Moses, I want you to go to Pharaoh.

Moses, I want you to go and rise to stand and to speak. But for what purpose? That my people may go, to let my people go. We stand against the enemy on behalf of God's people. We stand for their deliverance and for their service. Moses now prepared, goes into Pharaoh, because the Lord says, I will, at this time, send all my plagues upon your heart, Pharaoh, and upon your servants, and upon your people, that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. Pharaoh, I'm not doing this because I want to crush you, because I'm angry at you, because I'm a God who just wants to show judgment. Pharaoh, I want you to know, and all the earth to know, there is none like me. Whether you receive me or not, you will know who it is who's doing this. Pharaoh would not send forth God's people, so God is going to send forth plagues upon Pharaoh and his people. And God's going to make Pharaoh to know that he is God, both within and without. Look at the order here that he says this. I'll send my plagues upon your heart, that which is within, upon your servants, those who are close to you, and then even further out, those that are upon your people. God would make Pharaoh to know who it was who was doing this. For now, I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite you and your people with pestilence. You shall be cut off from the earth. And so not just Pharaoh, but the nation at this time had also passed the point of no return. Going forward, God would still give and grant opportunity for individual repentance, but there's no opportunity for national repentance.

[20 : 59] That at this midpoint of Egypt's tribulation, both Pharaoh and Egypt have passed the point of repentance. God said, I will smite you, and you shall be cut off from the earth.

Zechariah chapter 12. God is speaking in prophecy about what he will do to the nations who come against Jerusalem, against his people. And that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. There is a point of no return. As we said, that window of, that doorway of repentance, that window of repentance, it doesn't stay open forever. There is a point where God says, you stepped across the line, and I'm just going to confirm what you've affirmed.

And in very deed, verse 16, for this cause, Pharaoh, have I raised you up to show in you my power, that my name may be declared, or literally inscribed. I think it's interesting. You think of the Egyptians and their hieroglyphics, that my name may be inscribed throughout all the earth. And we read that in Romans 9, where God raised up Pharaoh, where Paul talks about that God uses vessels fitted for wrath, not that God arbitrarily chose them for wrath, but that they did not choose God's selection process of mercy. And so God said, well, by your own choice, you are now a vessel that's fitted for wrath, but I'm not going to just discard you. No, I'm going to still get glory through your life. I'm going to use you to show my power and my glory to those who will receive me, the vessels fitted for mercy.

In other words, for Pharaoh, if Pharaoh thought he was accomplishing anything with his resistance against God, he was completely wrong. His stubborn rebellion was used to merely glorify the Lord in the end. I think Pharaoh thought, hey, man, I'm fighting against God. I'm winning. Because these plagues come, and then I tell Moses to get rid of them, and he does. Oh, right. We lasted through that plague. We survived the frogs. We survived the lice. And yet, little did he realize that his stubborn rebellion was going to merely glorify God in the end. As God tells him again and again, Pharaoh, I will use you that my name may be known in all the earth. When Israel, after 40 years wandering in the wilderness, will go into the promised land, and they go to take Jericho, Rahab will say to the spies that come into Jericho, they'll say, oh, the whole land is afraid because of what you've done, what your God has done. We know how he dried up the Jordan that you could cross. We know how he defeated the Moabites and Og, king of Bashan, on the other side of the river. And we know what he did in Egypt, and how he brought you to this through the sea. God said that my name may be known in all the earth. And look what Pharaoh does in verse 17, just as we said, Pharaoh stubbornly, and yet, exaltest thou thyself against my people?

That thou will not let them go? Pharaoh, are you still thinking that this is about you? You still think you're winning, Pharaoh? Pharaoh has used the long suffering of God as an occasion for pride and self-exaltation. God's long suffering to Pharaoh said, hey, I must be winning. I must be doing okay.

[24 : 08] This must be working. Instead of realizing that God's long suffering was giving him an opportunity to repent. Pharaoh used that as an occasion for pride and self-exaltation.

Psalms 18, verse 27 says, for that will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks. Pharaoh, there's no end for pride except a fall. There is safety and humility because pride will place us opposed to God, his people, and his purposes, as we see with Pharaoh.

Verse 18, Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail. Such has not been seen in Egypt since the foundation thereof, even until now. So there's Pharaoh covered in boils, or maybe getting over his boils. And Moses standing there and saying, Pharaoh, tomorrow God is going to cause it to rain a very heavy hail. And so we get into the seventh plague of hail. The seventh plague is judgment upon the god Nut. It's the goddess of the sky. And here we see the first plague that will come from the air. The next will be the locust. And listen, just like we read, when you worship an idol, you become like an idol. So if you worship the nut god, you're going to get a little nutty, right?

You're just nuts to worship this goddess. But there's a new and notable intensity as God begins to wrap things up. The intensity is very noticeable. And this isn't just hail. This is a very grievous hail. This isn't just a natural disaster. This is something that God has divinely called forth.

But as we said, God will still give opportunity for personal redemption. Though the nation is now under judgment, God will give space for those who choose to respond to his word. In verse 19, he says, send therefore now and gather your cattle and all that you have in the field for upon every man and beast, which shall be found in the field. Yeah, for upon every man and beast, which shall be in the field, I'm sorry, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He says, look it, bring every man, every servant, every laborer, and all your animals into the house so they may be saved. If they stay in the field, they will be crushed. God's word divides.

[26 : 35] So this plague is telling us that God's word will divide between those who seek a house of refuge and those who choose to remain in the field. Those who respond to God's word and those who won't. We know Hebrews tells us that the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of sunder of soul and spirit and joints and marrow, and says it's a discernor, a divider of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Only God's word can do that. It divides.

Psalm 118, verse 5, I called upon the Lord in distress, and the Lord answered me and set me in a large place. God has a place of refuge for us. Psalm 46, verse 1, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. And so he that feared the Lord, in verse 20, among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses. You know that there were some of them who as soon as they heard there was another plague coming, they're like, get in the house. Proverbs 10, verse, I'm sorry, 18, verse 10, it says, the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous runs into it and is safe.

A home that fears God's word never needs to fear God's judgment, right? And I think there's something else here too. You know, our homes, our homes are a place that are judgment-free. And I don't mean like you can just do anything and get away with it, you know? Just ask my kids. It wasn't like that.

But judgment-free in the sense that, you know, you know it's a place you're accepted. You know it's a place where it's like, man, this is a place I should be safe. This should be a refuge where I can go, where I'm loved for who I am. And so a home that fears God's word, that's what our home should reflect. We should never need to fear God's judgment. And we never need to use God's judgment in our homes as a stick to beat people with, because our judgment's been taken at the cross, right? We use God's grace. We use God's mercy, his long-suffering. And it's hard sometimes.

It's like, God, I know you extended long-suffering to me for years. I don't want to extend long-suffering to this person, because I want them to change now. Because I want the solution now. I want this to be fixed now. So I'm going to step in and try and use judgment. There's a scripture that says, the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. It's not for us to enact judgment. That is in God's hands. And he's judged at the cross. Our place now is just like Moses, to speak forth God's word and let it divide. But a home that fears God's word never needs to fear God's judgment.

[29 : 07] But he that regarded not the word of the Lord, this literally means their heart was not prepared for God's word. Their heart was not set upon God's word. He that would not prepare his heart for the word of the Lord, he left his servants and his cattle in the field. And an unprepared heart results in an unprepared life, doesn't it? If their heart wasn't going to be prepared, well, they're not going to reflect that in their life. They're not going to choose to live in any other way. We only do what we believe. We've said that many times. You only do what you believe. You don't do what you don't believe. You don't get in your car and start it because you don't believe it's going to work because someone took the battery out. I'm just going to see what happens. You know, you get in because you believe it's going to start. Jesus in Matthew 23, verse 37, he talks about how he would have gathered Jerusalem as a refuge, but they would not. They would not set their heart. They were not prepared. He said, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killed the prophets and stoned them, which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not. He was willing to gather them. He was willing to bring them in for a refuge. Just come into my house, this place a refuge. But they would not. They would not prepare their hearts. And the Lord said to Moses in verse 22, Moses, stretch forth your hand toward heaven. Here's that word heaven again. That there may be hail in all the land of Egypt upon man, upon beast, upon every herb of the field throughout the land of Egypt. Now, this isn't just like little hailstones. This is some big hailstones. There's a verse in Job when the Lord responds to Job at the end of Job in Job 38. It says that he spoke to Job out of the whirlwind. And God, for a couple chapters, begins to speak to Job. And one of the things he tells him, he says in verse 22, he says,

Job, have you entered into the treasures of the snow? And we could talk about that forever, right? Treasures of the snow. First treasure is, it's not here, it's somewhere else. We think of the snowflakes, not one the same. They're all different. You think of how snow covers the most ugly thing and makes it beautiful, makes it white. There's so many pictures there.

And God says to Job, have you entered into the treasures of the snow? Have you seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

That God has hailstones that he reserves specifically for times of battle and war. In Joshua chapter 10, when they're in the land fighting the people in the land of Canaan, Joshua's fighting on behalf of the Gibeonites and he's fighting the Amalekites.

And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, the Amalekites, and were going down to Beth-haron, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah. They died.

[31 : 45] And they were much more which died with hailstones than them whom the children of Israel slew with the sword, that God had reserved his hailstones for battle and for war. There's a time again where God is going to use those hailstones reserved for battle and war. In Revelation 16, 21, it says, and there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent. That's a hundred plus pounds, anywhere between a hundred and 130 pounds, hailstones falling from heaven.

And yet men blasphemed to God, just as Pharaoh was doing, because of the plague of the hail. The plague thereof was exceeding great. Those who refuse refuge will come under wrath. Those who receive refuge, they're not under wrath. But those who refuse the place of refuge, there's no other alternative but God's wrath. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail. Here we have again. The Lord said, I'm going to do it. Moses went and said, he's going to do it, and God did it. And the Lord sent the thunder and the hail, and the fire ran along the ground, and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. Now the fire running upon the ground can be like, oh, it's a storm, there's lightning. But the wording is literally that it set things on fire. So whatever this is, whether it's meteorites, or whether it's just God's special judgment of his own hail that's coming down, and here's the ground, and setting things on fire. But this is God using the natural to become supernatural. To us, it's like, this is crazy. This is supernatural. But remember, to God, the supernatural is natural. This is nothing for him. This is very natural.

And so there was hail and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, or very heavy, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt, since it became a nation. God's supernatural involvement in the natural is proof that the nation is under judgment. Now that doesn't mean every natural crisis or phenomena is supernatural. But it does mean that when God supernaturally steps in to use the natural upon a nation, it's proof that it's under judgment.

But when you look through scripture, you never have to guess. You never have to guess, man, was that storm the Lord? He tells us, and they know it. This was hail that was coming down. They knew this was divine. This wasn't just a freak storm. So yes, God is using the supernatural. He's using the natural to prove that the nation is under judgment.

But that is for him to decide, not us. We don't look at every natural crisis, and we don't look at like a hurricane that just happens. Well, that's God's judgment. No, that was a natural phenomenon.

[34 : 26] Whether God was involved in that or not, that doesn't change what his word tells us. And we let his word speak to circumstances. We don't let circumstances determine his word. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast. And the hail smote every herb of the field and break every tree of the field. I don't think there's that many trees in Egypt, but however many there were, they're gone now. And everything that was growing at this time as well. God's judgment makes no exceptions. It didn't leave anything out.

Except what? Only in the land of Goshen. Remember what that word meant? The land of drawing near. Only in the land of Goshen, the place of drawing near, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. They were under the refuge of redemption by being drawn into God's house.

And so Pharaoh now sends and calls for Moses and Aaron. He says unto them, Oh, I've sinned this time. The Lord is righteous. Now my people are wicked. Yes. Oh my word. I thought Pharaoh had passed the point of no return and here he repented. No, because if we continue down in chapter nine, the last two verses tell us that, oh, and Pharaoh hardened his heart again.

And so did all of his people. Pharaoh is a picture here of false repentance. It even sounds like it. Oh, I've sinned. The Lord's righteous. Everybody else is wicked. Fine. Okay. Everybody's a sinner.

Gotcha. Fault repentance is acknowledgement without confession. Confession. True confession will result in change. First John chapter one, verses eight and nine. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Okay. Well, Pharaoh's saying he sinned. If we confess, not just if we say, look, if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us. It doesn't then say, if we say we have sin, he is faithful. No, if we confess to say the same thing as to agree with God's word. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. False repentance is simply acknowledgement without confession.

[36 : 33] All right. I acknowledge, but I'm not going to confess. I'm not going to say the same thing as I'm not going to say, yes, God, you are righteous. You are Lord. I need to change my ways in response to what you're doing. And so he says in verse 28, pray and treat the Lord for it is enough that there be no more mighty thunderings in hail. Now we'll let you go and you shall stay no longer. False repentance only focuses on changing the circumstances, not interested in changing his heart. He just wants these circumstances to change. Hey, pray to God that all of this would stop. And false repentance lacks sincerity. There's nothing sincere here about Pharaoh. I've sinned. The Lord's righteous. I and my people are wicked. I'll let you go. You won't stay any longer. Sure, sure, sure. And Moses said unto him, as soon as I'm gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord. Here we see a picture of mercy. Mercy does not delay. As soon as I'm out of the city, I'll spread out my hands to the Lord.

Mercy is found in weakness. Moses spreading out his hands to the Lord is a sense of his own weakness, of his own inability, that he's beseeching God to do this. And the thunder shall cease and neither shall there be any more hail that thou may know that the earth is the Lord's and mercy testifies to our responsibility to God. Pharaoh, the earth is the Lord's and you're the Lord's as well. But as for you and your servants, Pharaoh, in verse 30, I know you will not yet fear the Lord because true repentance seeks the heart of God. True repentance is not about the circumstances, not about changing the situation. It's seeking God's heart.

As Pharaoh says, Moses, I know you do not honor, reverence, or respect God. You only want the circumstances to change. Pharaoh expected from God what he was not willing to give himself. He said, I want God to respect me, but I'm not going to respect God. But we have this little footnote here, or parentheses in a sense, in verse 31 and 32. It says, And the flax and the barley were smitten, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was bold.

But the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up. Well, what does that mean? Well, those first two plants, the flax and the barley, the flax was for clothes and the barley was for their drink, was for like alcohol. The last two, the wheat and the rye were for their food. And here's a picture of God's mercy in the middle of judgment. He didn't destroy their food. He made it very uncomfortable for them with the flax and the barley, but the wheat and the rye were not smitten.

And I can't help but think back, remembering when God brought Joseph, right, into Egypt to keep many people alive, and that Joseph used that time to make Egypt the great nation that it is today during the time of Moses that God is bringing judgment on. I think of how Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 45, verse 7, he said, God sent me before you to preserve your posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. During those seven years of plenty that Joseph stored up grain into Egypt. And I can't help but think that in God's heart, he's still looking back and thinking, but for the sake of Joseph, for the sake of my servant Joseph, my mercy and my grace will extend.

[39 : 48] And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, in verse 33, And he spread abroad his hands unto the Lord, and the thunders and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. What a surprise. God's judgments, they're never an option. Think, well, why are you doing this, God? Isn't there some other way? I'm sure there was another way you could have done this. God's judgments are never an option. It's not just one thing he picks off the shelf. They are the only means by which to deliver his people. There's no other means to deliver God's people, but through judgment. You and I have been delivered through judgment.

There's no other way that we can come to him. We can't get around judgment. We must come through judgment. They're the only means to deliver his people and to reach a hard heart. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, what does it say? He sinned yet more and hardened his heart, he and his servants. Pharaoh sinned yet more. And what was his sin?

His sin was not ascribing to God the works of God, right? It's the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Ascribing to God, well, that's not really God. That's not his voice. That's not his word. That's not his work. That's Satan, or that's a natural phenomenon, or that's something else. But I don't need to respond to God and his word. And Pharaoh then sinned more and more and hardened his heart and his servants. And this is where it's not just Pharaoh, but there's the Egyptians as well.

And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened. That's a definitive statement there. The heart of Pharaoh was hardened. Neither would he let the children of Israel go as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

And as we had said, if Pharaoh thought he was accomplishing anything with his resistance against God, he was completely wrong for all of his stubbornness and all of his rebellion, God was just taking that, using it to glorify himself in the end. And here we see false repentance never lasts. How quick that repentance was. Oh, I've sinned. My people are wicked.

[41 : 49] The Lord is righteous. False repentance never lasts. An unprepared heart is an unrepentant heart. And an unrepentant heart is an unredeemed heart. And an unredeemed heart has no standing before God.

When we do not prepare our hearts, we're not going to repent. An unrepentant heart does not have the option to be redeemed. What does repent mean? Do I feel really bad about my sins? No. It just means to turn. To turn. What am I turning to? I'm turning to God's word. I'm turning away from the false idols of the world, away from the world's magic, away from their wisdom, away from my own flesh, and I'm turning to God's word. But an unrepentant heart is an unredeemed heart. And then an unredeemed heart has no standing before God. How do we prepare our hearts? So I have turned to God. I've repented.

I've been redeemed. So how do I prepare my heart? How do I gain standing with God now? How do I continue to walk like Moses so that when the magic of this world, you know, just falls away into pixie dust, how do I still stand? We do that by setting our hearts on seeking refuge. We set our hearts on seeking refuge. First Chronicles 22 19 says, now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord, your God. Arise therefore and build you the sanctuary of the Lord, your God. That's David speaking to Solomon. David speaking to the men around Solomon. He said, set your heart and soul to seek the Lord.

And how did they do that? He said, build a place of refuge, build a place that my people can come and find refuge. Psalm 84 verse 2, my soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. We set our hearts on seeking a place of refuge. The only place we're going to find that is in the Lord. And how do we do that? We do it according to God's word and we do it in God's word. As Jesus, the word made flesh in Matthew 11 says, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. How do I gain standing with God? How do I prepare my heart? Why seek a place of refuge? I set my heart on seeking refuge, but I do it according to God's word.

[44 : 03] I do it in God's word by Jesus, according to his word and according to the one who's the word made flesh. I do that continually. We don't just do it once. We don't go to the Lord and say, Lord, thank you so much. You've taken my heavy yoke. I'm set for life. I don't know how often you go, but it's continual, isn't it? It's never good enough to be like, well, you know, last week I was in church and I'll wait till next week and I'll meet with the Lord again. It'll be wonderful. Boy, I hope you're seeking that place of refuge. I hope you're preparing your heart all week to be in that place of refuge because we're to do that continually. Psalm 55, verse 16 and 17, the psalmist writes, as for me, I will call upon God and the Lord shall save me evening and morning. And at noon, I pray and cry aloud. He shall hear my voice. I will cry aloud morning, evening, and noon. It's a continual thing, continually setting my heart on seeking God's place of refuge. And we have a promise that God promises to save all those who will respond to his word and cry out for refuge. As he says, he shall hear my cry. I will call upon God and he shall save me. Hebrews 7, 25 tells us that wherefore he, Jesus, is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them. Why am I going to cry morning, evening, and noon?

Morning, noon, and evening? The Lord, why am I going to do that? Man, because he's ever living to hear those prayers. He lives to ever make intercession for me. Why would I not take advantage of that refuge?

And as we said at the beginning, now this changes everything. Malachi 3, 6, for I am the Lord, I change not. The rest of that verse says, therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed. Now that changes everything. The fact that God does not change, the fact that God's mercy and God's judgment don't change. Now to Pharaoh, that was a terrible thing. God's judgment will not change. Well, I don't want to be under God's judgment. I'm going to come under his mercy. For you and I, it's a wonderful thing that God does not change. I am the Lord, I change not. Because God does not change, we can be assured that we will change. That's our hope. The hope that we have is that we're not going to be in Egypt forever, right? Maybe all the plagues aren't coming upon us like they are upon the world, but we're still here. I still long for a better place. I still want a refuge that's eternal.

I still want a refuge wherein dwells the word of God in flesh. Well, because God will not change, we can be assured that we will change. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a moment. In the twinkling of an eye, the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

So, I'm sorry. What was his name? I'm sorry, uh, here, Clytus. Change is not permanent. But for you and I, it is certain. It is certain that we will be changed because God does not change. Every time he said to Moses, go and speak to Pharaoh, Pharaoh, I'm going to do this.

[47 : 16] Right afterwards, we see Moses did it and then God kept his word. But you know what he spoke to us? He came and said, hey, go and speak to my people, right? Imagine Moses doesn't tell us this, but I can picture him after going to Pharaoh. Maybe then he goes to Goshen and says, hey guys, I just want you to know what's coming. Don't worry, it's not going to come upon you because God doesn't change. And God has said that you are under redemption, that this will not come upon his people. We have that same promise because God won't change. Father, thank you. The Lord, not only are you unchanging, Lord, but Lord, you tell us the fact that you are unchanging is for us. That Jesus unchangingly came and became flesh. The word made flesh. That his death was once for all. It doesn't need to change. It doesn't need to be added to. And three days later, he rose again to live and die no more.

That's unchanging. That life will never end. And because Jesus lives and lives forever, Lord, we know that we will live and live forever. We have a wonderful promise that change is coming for us. Change is coming for this world too, Lord. There will be a point in time where you will say, that's it. The door is closed. There's no more repentance to be had. I will confirm man's heart in that they have affirmed that they will not believe my word. Lord, there is change coming.

There's tribulation coming. But Lord, those who have entered into your refuge do not partake of your wrath. Thank you, Jesus. Today, we want to respond to that and say, yes, we respond and we run into your house of refuge. We stand upon the word of God. We seek you not just because of circumstances, but we seek you morning, noon, and night because you are our only refuge, our only hope. And that hope is permanent, unchanging, and eternal so that I know one day I will live with you permanent, unchanging, and eternal. Thank you for your word. Thank you for this beautiful picture, Lord, of your grace, Lord, of your mercy in the midst of judgment. Truly, Lord, the greater your judgment, the greater your mercy is displayed. We thank you for that, Lord. Lord, what looked like the end of the world to Egypt was simply the beginning of the next thing for your people. Lord, help us to see that in our lives today, the things that are taking place around us, Lord, our circumstances.

Maybe it looks like the end of something. But Lord, to realize, because you're unchanging, it's just the beginning of something whole new and wonderful. We love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Temptation in our own understanding is kind of to put it backwards. You know, a prepared heart is a prepared life, but we see the circumstances. We see things falling apart, and we try to first grab a hold of the circumstances to make that better. But God does it backwards. He says, prepare your heart first. Go to the Lord. If it's a mess, let God prepare your heart. He'll take care of the circumstances. A prepared heart will prepare you for whatever it is that God has in front of you.

[50 : 28] May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. God bless you.