

Exodus 10:21-29 | Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” <sup>22</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. <sup>23</sup> They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. <sup>24</sup> Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, “Go, serve the Lord; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.” <sup>25</sup> But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. <sup>26</sup> Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the Lord our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there.” <sup>27</sup> But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. <sup>28</sup> Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.” <sup>29</sup> Moses said, “As you say! I will not see your face again.”

## Exodus 10:21-29 | Darkness

Genesis 1:1-5 | In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.  
<sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.  
<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

This same God for three days in Egypt did the opposite. That most fundamental aspect of creation, the first component of existence, light, was taken from the Egyptians. Egypt in an anti-type of the beginning is being brought to an end.

### 1. Plague

Exodus 10:21-22 | Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” <sup>22</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.

Like the 3rd plague and the 6th plague this plague is sent with no warning given to Pharaoh. Instead it acts as a sort of stamp of finality upon this last plague in the 3 cycles of three. And what better place to end then at the very beginning. The hand of Moses is stretched out toward heaven, the place where the light comes and instead there is darkness. The darkness is described in this strange way, a darkness to be felt. It is the same verb used when Samson asks to be placed where he can “feel” both pillars in the Philistine temple.

What is a darkness you can feel? I don't think we can say something simple like this darkness was merely the absence of light. That is insufficient, you cannot feel an absence. That's like explaining a life with an absence of happiness as feeling nothing. But if you've ever lived with such a feeling, where happiness is inaccessible then you know to describe this as a mere absence is worse than an understatement, it is neglect of tremendous suffering. This is not a darkness of absence it is a darkness of presence, presence of judgement. It is often said that God's judgement is the absence of God, but this is not the case. It is the presence of God in judgement.

Just like a guilty conscience is not the mere absence of a pure conscience, it is its' own thing, its' own experience. Not mere absence but alienation. Not aloneness but loneliness. Not lack of peace but war. Not lack of hope but anxiety. Not lack of happiness but depression. Not lack of light but darkness.

Exodus 10:23 | They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.

The darkness is of course a symbolic alienation from God and a symbol of his destruction but notice this alienation extends to the people of Egypt. They were unable even to see one another, none of them were able to rise. You can imagine being pinned down to your own home. Without the light of God there is absolute alienation from each other. There is an obvious burial of the land of Egypt as though they were dead, but there is glimmer of what will raise from their death. Because the land of Israel had light where they lived.

Light and darkness are the fundamental distinction of existence. And this distinction rests upon the people of God and the enemies of God. The light shown in Israel. The people of God is where the light of God shines. As alienation from God means darkness and alienation from each other so too does the light of God mean true fellowship. Consider John's teaching in his first letter.

1 John 1:5 | This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

God is light. Light is truth, because by it we see the way things are. Therefore if we walk outside of the truth, although we may claim we have fellowship with God, we live in a lie and therefore do not have fellowship with God. This is why the only real wisdom, the only real perception into the reality of existence is found in the fear of the Lord. Because God is light.

1 John 1:7 | But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Therefore if we walk in the light, as Jesus walks, then we have fellowship with one another. Unlike the Egyptians in the plague we see each other. And then we are the ones in the light who are covered by the blood of Jesus which makes us pure and cleanses us from all sin. This is the distinction finally between the people in darkness in the land of Egypt and the people in light in the land that the Israelites dwell. They are the ones who are under the blood of Jesus and by that they are able to stand in the light.

1 John 1:8-9 | If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So the people of God are to be a people of the light, this means we are not a people who are self deceived, by saying that we are a people who have no sin. But rather we are a people who understand we have sin and therefore confess it. And in our confession and bringing our sin into the light it is God who cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Do you then see all that this plague entails. It is exposing the weight of darkness that falls upon Pharaoh in his pride as he himself stands arrogantly opposed to the dark.

## 2. Pharaoh's Bargain

Exodus 10:24 | Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the Lord; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind."

Pharaoh sends them but he won't let them go with their livestock. Its interesting that it is livestock because this is something that seems to be truly the Israelite's as they brought livestock into the land of Egypt. Shepherds were anathema to the Egyptians we are told in Genesis. But it is also their means of sacrifice to the Lord. We haven't had the clarity of the levitical sacrificial system laid out for us yet but still Moses understands that they are going to a feast, to worship, and that worship which offers nothing to the Lord is meaningless. By the way do you worship the Lord and not give to his church? Or do you not give appropriately to his church? Do you save some for yourself of what he requires of you? Likewise sending the Israelites out with no food sets a timeline on their return.

Exodus 10:25-26 | But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. <sup>26</sup> Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the Lord our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there."

Moses makes an absolute claim however to bringing all that is there. But it is not some desert that they earned these things. This is not the root of the argument, the root of the argument is that all that we are and all that belongs to us ultimately belongs to the Lord, and therefore we will sacrifice none to you of what finally belongs to the Lord. It is not

merely that “you must also let us have” but Moses says, you will give sacrifices and burnt offerings. He is saying you in a sense will offer to the Lord.

### 3. You will not see my face

Exodus 10:27 | But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.

Make no mistake, this is the Lord’s doing. The people are bound up by pharaoh with the authority given to Pharaoh by the Lord one more time here by the penultimate plague. The Lord shows his wrath surrounding Pharaoh and we see that Pharaoh will not submit.

Exodus 10:28-29 | Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.”<sup>29</sup> Moses said, “As you say! I will not see your face again.”

Pharaoh can’t see. He threatens Moses to never see his face again. But he doesn’t even know what he is saying. Moses however takes it as a prophetic statement, it is true he will not see Pharaoh’s face again. Pharaoh doesn’t even know when he has stumbled upon the truth. How dark is his darkness.

Matthew 6:22–23 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,<sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Here is Jesus warning. The way you see the world determines whether or not you can apprehend the truth. If you see rightly then you see in the light. But if your eye is dark you cannot apprehend the truth. But it is a fearful warning because in our pride and arrogance we perceive the darkness as light. If the light in you is darkness how great is that darkness? Pharaoh does not even recognize the darkness he is surrounded by, how great is that darkness. Such is the deceptiveness of sin. But how then can anyone be saved?

Christ is the light of the world. But for three hours one day outside of Jerusalem darkness covered the earth as the Son of God cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me. Then shortly after he yielded up his Spirit to the Father. If the light in you is darkness how great is that darkness. But this darkness was swallowed up in light. For three days he was buried in the darkness. But after the three days were up he rose again. Even the darkness is not dark to him. By him you can be saved. By Jesus Christ, who on our behalf bore the darkness we might walk in the light of the glory of the children of God. Our God speaks light into the darkness. Hope in him.