

# I Will Strike the Waters

Exodus 7:14-25, "So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear! Thus says the Lord: "By this you shall know that I am the Lord. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river." ' ' " Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.' " And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this. So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river. And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river."

Let's pray. Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for this passage that You have us in. Thank You for showing Your mighty hand, showing Your glory to Egypt. We pray that You will help us to see Your glory today. Please help us to praise and worship You. Please be with Mr. Horn, speak through Him and help us to grow in our knowledge and wisdom of You. Amen.

So as we come to the first plague in Egypt, I think it's important for us to note that there's another difference between the signs of Christ and the signs of Moses. As I pointed out before, one of the fundamental differences between the signs that Moses gives and the signs that Christ gives, is that when Moses gives signs they are signs of judgement and condemnation, they are the blood being poured out, they're the turning into a serpent, they are all these things related to judgement. When Christ comes and turns water into wine, He causes the blind to see, causes the lame to walk, they are signs of blessing as opposed to signs of judgement, they are signs of healing and signs of feeding and signs of care, signs that are related to protecting from demons. The one testifies that Moses has the ministry of condemnation and Jesus Christ has the ministry of life as it talks about in 2 Corinthians 3. There's another big difference between the signs that Moses gives and the signs of Christ. All the signs of Moses, except the initial sign that was towards the magicians of Pharaoh, all the signs that are done in Egypt are against

wide groups of people. The sign that Moses gives here with the blood is that it affects every single person in Egypt. The signs that Christ did, they tend to be towards one person or maybe towards 3,000 or 5,000 when you think about the sign of feeding the 5,000, but none of them were against the nation of Israel. The ministry of condemnation is a broad ministry, it is a ministry against all, while the ministry of life that Jesus Christ came to do was very specifically a ministry towards a group of people, towards a selected group of people. Moses' judgement starts with judging all and then separating a people, but Jesus Christ doesn't come to condemn because that was already done in the testimony of Moses so He comes to deliver and He doesn't just deliver a group of people. He heals ten lepers, He heals one blind man, He raises individual people up from the dead. He does show miracles towards groups, but it's much smaller groups than what Moses shows. It's the ministry of condemnation and the ministry of life, the ministry of condemnation is the ministry that applies to all. Moses' ministry applies to everybody who has ever lived, his ministry that says you are condemned because of your sin. His miracles reflect that, the signs he gives reflects that, that it's not about a group of people, but a general condemnation. This is what our ministry looks like too, it looks like Christ's ministry. People want revivals to be this thing where a whole community or nation revive, but a revival looks like Christ's ministry, it looks like one person being witnessed to and one person being saved here. It looks like sometimes there might be a group of ten that are witnessed to and believe together, but it's not the same picture with Moses where everyone sees and accepts the sign. With Christ there are a few who see it, there's a small group, this is the picture of our ministry. Just like I said a couple weeks ago, our ministry is patterned after Christ's ministry and not after the ministry of Moses. Let's consider the history of the ministry of condemnation.

Verses 14-18, "So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear! Thus says the Lord: "By this you shall know that I am the Lord. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river." ' ' " The Lord speaks to Moses, we don't know how long after this was that Aaron's rod becomes a serpent and swallowed up all the serpents of the wise men of Egypt, but we know that the whole thing, all these plagues can't take too long because it certainly doesn't encompass a year because Moses doesn't grow a year older, he's still eighty when they are delivered. So I would lean towards this being very quick, like the next day. "Pharaoh's heart is hard." God is telling Moses exactly where Pharaoh is. Pharaoh is responding exactly as the Lord said. Remember when Moses saw that Pharaoh's response to one serpent eating the other serpents, he doesn't necessarily know how Pharaoh is thinking. We can often think we know what someone is thinking and what they are doing. A lot of times someone can have a very negative response to the presentation of the gospel and they go home and think about it and repent. Someone else can receive it with joy and they can go home and someone else can mock them about it and soon they are far harder than they were at the beginning. We can't tell

where somebody's heart is, but God knows and makes it clear to Moses where Pharaoh's heart is, Pharaoh's heart is hard towards the things that he saw. In this case, Moses doesn't have to guess where Pharaoh is, he's been told. His response is to disobey God. He was commanded by God to let God's people go to worship Him in the wilderness, to feast before Him in the wilderness, but the outward sign that his heart was hardened is that "he refuses to let the people go." That's always the sign of a hard heart. It's not the heart that says they love God that's a sign of a soft heart, the sign of a soft heart towards God is the one that says they want to obey God. Pharaoh was given one commandment, remember this was before all the giving of the law, and Pharaoh is given one commandment- let the Israelites go. We can tell the state of Pharaoh's heart because he refuses to let the people go. How we respond to God's commandments tells us what the state of our heart is. We either want God as a law giver, as the Lord, or we do not. It's one or the other and Pharaoh didn't want to be told by God what to do. So He commands him to "Go to Pharaoh in the morning." If you remember back to chapter 2, Pharaoh's daughter would go out to bathe in the river and at the time this was a very common practice, even though Egypt was the center of demon worship, the Satanic symbols that people continue to use are all from Egypt. Still they thought that before you could approach worship you had to bathe so it was common for all the people to bathe in the river. This is probably what Pharaoh was doing, he would go to the river every morning to bathe so when he goes out to the water, when he is walking out to the river. Again, this was probably to prepare to worship because that's why they would bathe because they didn't think they could worship unless they were cleansed by water. Here's the picture when Pharaoh is going to worship a false God, Moses is supposed to meet him on the way and demonstrate to them who the true God is. So "you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him." Moses probably could have known exactly where Pharaoh was going, it was probably all ritualistic that he would go and bathe at a certain time and place, this was the pattern of the religious life of the Egyptians. The river being referenced here clearly would be the Nile. The Nile was considered to be the connection to afterlife, it was the connection to Hades, it was where the god Osiris, their god of life, where he brought people to life was through the river and where he took them away to death. They would put the bodies of the deceased to float out on the river. The river was their sign of life and death so when Pharaoh was going to the river, this is the Nile. He was also commanded, "and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand." He was supposed to take that so when he stands before Pharaoh, Pharaoh would have the testimony of what went before, clearly God was superior to these demons because the rod that God turned into a serpent consumed all the other rods and did that miracle of consuming all these other serpents, a testimony against Pharaoh's hardness of heart. What Moses is supposed to tell Pharaoh through Aaron, "And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you.'" He's supposed to make it clear to Pharaoh that he's not doing it to demonstrate his own power. The magicians were demonstrating their own power and their ability to manipulate the natural world and that's why they could turn water into blood and rods into serpents. Moses starts by saying the opposite, he's here because the God of the Hebrews has sent me to you. Then he says, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness". Moses was repeating what God had said which was that Pharaoh had a duty to let the people go to serve Him in the wilderness. Pharaoh is thinking they are his slaves and God is saying they are His possession, not his possession. Pharaoh had taken people that were free and made them slaves prior to this and God is saying

they are still His people, He still has the right to command them and send them out. Before it said so they could feast before the Lord in the wilderness and now it says that they may serve Him in the wilderness. It's really easy for us to forget that feasting is a means to serve God. When we think of serving God, you could be thinking of the labor that you should do, you could be thinking of the obligation that you have to preach the gospel or the obligation that you have to feed the poor, the obligations that you have to do other work for God and these are other works that we are supposed to do for God, but remember Israel, how they were supposed to serve God. Three weeks a year they were supposed to go feast in Jerusalem, once a week they were supposed to feast on the Sabbath day, every new moon, every 28 days they were supposed to feast. They were supposed to be serving God by feasting one out of every four days roughly. God is a good master, He's the opposite of Pharaoh who says, 'Make bricks without straw.' He says here, "Come serve Me, feast before Me, rejoice before Me. This is how I want you to serve Me." This is like how a father should desire his children to serve him, not by saying he's going to see how much work he can get out of you or how wealthy I can get on your back. Instead it should be, serve me by doing things that we rejoice in together. This is the picture of what God does, this is how He was calling them to serve Him. He was calling them to serve Him to rejoice before Him. As we take the Lord's Supper this afternoon and as we eat together, let's remember this is part of how we serve God. Not just when we pray and examine ourselves before we take the cup and before we take the bread, this is how we serve God, we rejoice together as a people, we exhort one another to love and good works, we demonstrate care for one another, we testify that we are Christ's disciples by showing that we care for one another. God does not say He's going to give us a horrible yoke that you can't bear, He says He will give you a light yoke and part of that light yoke is things like the Lord's Supper. Let's remember that these are times that we are supposed to rejoice. We are to rejoice in God's mercy and that's how we glorify God and serve God. Let's make sure when we're thinking of serving God that we're not thinking of serving God like people thought about how they served Pharaoh because the God that we're called to serve tells us to serve with joy. He tells us that our sacrifices have to come before Him with joy. This is the service that He requires from us, let's remember how good a God we have and how much better a slave master He is than Pharaoh. He's completely different. Pharaoh says to make bricks without straw, God says to serve Him and go feast to Him in the wilderness. This is the difference between God and Pharaoh. Make sure you see God like God and not like Pharaoh because that's the big charge that happens over and over again in the church. People say God has all these rules that we are supposed to obey. Yeah, rules that are for our good, rules that are to be a blessing, rules that are to turn us from things that are destructive, things that pay the wages of death. That's not a bad thing, that's a good thing. Never think of God like being a slave master like Pharaoh, God is a good Lord, He is the Lord that calls us to feast and not to sorrow. "But indeed, until now you would not hear!" Twice Moses and Aaron had gone to Pharaoh and twice he rejected their message so God declared that a sign of judgement would be given to them, a sign that would have real impacts on the economy of Egypt. A sign that would demonstrate God's power far above the power of Pharaoh. What we should recognize is that Pharaoh had a duty to see the truth before he saw these judgement. He had a duty to see the truth when Moses came and said that God said, "Let My people go." He had the responsibility to see it when the rod turned into a serpent. We're not supposed to go, 'God prove to me that You're real. Once You prove to

me that You're real I will do something that You are commanding me to do.' God can hold you guilty for that, He doesn't have to show it or demonstrate it, but to Pharaoh He is going to make it clear that judgement was coming upon him because he would not hear. Moses is supposed to say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord." This is said a lot in Scripture. I think I found 413 times that it says this phrase. It was first used in Exodus 4, it's not in Genesis at all, but in Exodus 4 it's used when God told Moses to announce to Pharaoh that if he did not let His firstborn son Israel to go, that God would kill his firstborn son, the firstborn son of all Egypt. That's the first time that it's used and when it says, 'Thus says the Lord' in the NKJV, it's almost always related to judgement. This is God declaring a judgement on a people. So again, it ends up being used 413 times, over half of those are in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The next book is Isaiah that has the next largest number and it's about God saying He is judging this people because that's what Isaiah is about, that's what Jeremiah is about, that's what Ezekiel is about and Exodus is about. God is declaring the judgement on Pharaoh so when you see, 'Thus says the Lord', remember what it means. It means God is going to judge and He is going to declare His decree. "By this you shall know that I am the Lord." He's declaring that Pharaoh will know that it's God. He hardens his heart right after, but don't think that knowing God is God is salvation. It's not, Pharaoh knows that God is the Lord, but he refuses to obey. So even though he knows that, even though God proves it to him, even though this isn't in his doubt, his response is still to not obey, that's what hardness of heart looks like. Not to say you don't know God, but to say you're not willing to obey God. Pharaoh will know after the first plague that He's the Lord, he will know that Egypt has been judged, he will know that God is the One who judged it, but still Pharaoh will harden his heart and will not obey the commandment to let the people go that God has given him. "Behold, I will strike the waters." God declares that He will strike the waters. Even as He has Moses tell Aaron to strike the waters, He starts by saying, "I'm going to strike the waters." Again, remember the importance of water to Egyptians. Even today there is a two week holiday every spring in Egypt that's the two weeks that the Nile would flood because the Nile was so regular in it's flooding that they scheduled their calendar around it's flooding. Now they built a dam so it doesn't flood anymore, but it's still so central to their culture that they continue to have a two week holiday every spring that's called the Inundation, which is when the Nile would flood. Their whole calendar was based on the Nile. The Nile would flood during this period and after it was the growth season and after that was the harvest season. They would have all their schedule based on what the Nile did so when God says He will strike the rivers, this is striking what made Egypt, Egypt. At this point in time it's probably the most powerful nation in the world and the reason it's so powerful is because it was a constant water supply. It was also central to their worship to Osiris, this messianic person that was supposedly put to death and came back to life. When God strikes the river He is judging Egypt and saying, "I have power to judge Egypt and there is nothing your god's can do." So He says He will strike the waters "which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand." Moses is speaking these words as coming from God and God says the rod is in His hand. He is freely associating with His people, He has already called them His firstborn son so when He has Moses command Aaron to strike the water, He's saying that when you see that, it's His hand that has struck the water even though it's Aaron that's physically doing it. When we see the language in the New Testament about the church being the body of Christ, God is already using that language with Israel before. He's using it because it's Aaron and Moses striking, but God is saying it's His hands that are

striking the waters. "And they shall be turned to blood." The turning of water to blood is a declaration of judgement, it's a declaration of judge being poured out and spilt. If you remember back when God told Moses about the Israelites, when he goes to the Israelites and asks why they will believe him and He gives him three signs, He gives him the sign of the rod turning into a serpent, He gives him the sign of leprosy where he puts his hand into his coat and pulls it out and it's leprosy but when he puts it back in it's healed, and then He says something else in Exodus 4:8-9, "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land." This was a sign if the Israelites didn't believe. We know from the text that they believe, but if they didn't believe God is saying as a sign of judgement, take water and pour it on the land and it will become blood. It's the testimony that God will shed their blood because of unbelief, so that's what He is doing to the whole nation. He is testifying to the whole nation that their blood will be shed, that their water will be turned to blood if they won't believe the first two signs. Moses was to testify to the Israelites that their blood was going to be poured out and here he is testifying to the nation of Egypt that their blood will be poured out. Later, just like now it's a picture of judgement on all of Egypt, it becomes a picture of judgement on Jerusalem in Revelation 14:19-20, "So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs." This picture of blood on the land is the picture of God pouring out His wrath. Revelation 16:1-6, "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." This is exactly what God is doing here. They have been persecuting the Israelites, the firstborn son of God, for more than eighty years. We know Moses is born in the midst of the persecution and God is saying He will pour out your blood so He makes the water turn to blood so they would understand this is the judgement that comes upon them, that instead of having water to drink they will be given blood to drink, that that is their just do. That is what they deserve because of the wrath of God. Even now, the idea of blood to drink is still something that's associated with the worship of Satan. Again, that comes from Egypt, the worship of Satan and patterns of Satan worship, the symbolism and everything else is from Egypt. They thought they wanted to bring blood, but then they are given blood to drink and they find out what a terrible judgement it is. "And the fish that are in the river shall die." Just like in Revelation 16 when the bowl is poured out so the water turns to blood, all the fish die. The Bible teaches that life is in the blood, that doesn't mean that blood gives life. Instead, blood is a pretty dangerous substance to drink, to be consumed. A human drinking more than a couple teaspoons of blood

can make them quite sick because blood has such a high concentration of iron in it and the human body cannot get rid of iron well. You can make yourself quite sick by drinking human blood. They think life is in the blood, you drink the blood of a bull and this gives you the strength of a bull. That's not how it works, but this is how many pagan religions believe, that if you drink the blood of an animal you get the strength of that animal. But that's not true, what it does instead is it kills. It's destructive, it's not a blessing. Humans can't drink blood and fish can't either so all the fish die, all the fish that are in the river die when it turns to blood, they can't survive. And "the river shall stink." It seems like what happened is the river was turned to blood and because of the current and other thing, that it would flow into the Mediterranean. I don't think it continued to be turned to blood, I think it was a one time thing and then the natural processes clean it up. When you think of the natural processes, a lot of the Nile runs through some pretty marshy soil so the water might wash away the blood, but all those fish are going to get stuck in all the reeds. Egypt is pretty well-known for it's reed, that's where we get the word 'paper' from, papyrus. They had all these reeds and the fish would get caught in it and they would begin to rot and the whole nation would stink because of the river. It's just this picture of the consequences of sin, it brings judgement upon you and it stinks. We think it doesn't stink, but the stench of sin is horrible, the consequences and the filth of it and the destruction of it. So this wouldn't have happened, all the fish dying, like immediately, but the stinking would have started because of the blood. Blood doesn't smell that pleasant, but then all the rotten fish would get worse and worse so it would take a while for the river to stink. "And the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river." ' ' Again, probably in religious ceremonies at least, the priests would drink blood and people would probably drink blood, but now they would loathe the idea, they would see what it was pointing to, they would see that it points to death and destruction and they would loathe, they would hate the idea of drinking that water that had turned to blood. Even as the water washed away the blood and you have the water that had all these dead fish in it, these rotting fish in it, they would still hate to drink it. They thought this thing was good, but they would find out it was quite bad.

Verses 19-21, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.' " And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." So "Then the Lord spoke to Moses." He had given Moses the message to say to Pharaoh and now He gives a commandment to Moses. "Say to Aaron." He's not supposed to do this himself, God had given Aaron to be his prophet, this picture of God and His prophet. He has Aaron strike it so Moses is to say to Aaron, "Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt." Obviously Aaron couldn't strike all the waters of Egypt, but he struck the Nile right there as a testimony that all the waters were being struck so Pharaoh couldn't separate the actions of Aaron and Moses because the first thing when there's not that direct cause and effect, the first

thing people do is try to make excuses. They say there was an algae bloom, on the internet people try to say that the algae bloom off the coast of Florida is what happened in the Nile. Well, Pharaoh is standing there and couldn't have thought that had happened because instantaneously it all turns into blood. This isn't like watching a bloom that happens over weeks, but people who aren't present make all these excuses. God is making it so that Pharaoh sees the water turn to blood and he has no excuse, he has no ability to say there's this other explanation for it. And Aaron wasn't just supposed to take any rod, he would have taken Moses' rod that God said was the way that the miracles, that the signs would happen. So this rod, who turned into a serpent and back into a rod, Aaron is using that so it's harder for Pharaoh to come up with an excuse because Pharaoh will know. He shall know after this happens that God is the Lord, that He is the ruler of heaven and earth. Pharaoh knows that even when his heart is hardened, Pharaoh knows that. "Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt; over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water." Obviously He's just symbolically doing this, but He's doing it in such a way that Pharaoh knows when he strikes the Nile with that rod and all this other water turns to blood, Pharaoh knows this was from the hand of God. "That they may become blood." The reason the Nile floods is because there are a bunch of other streams that go into the Nile and all of those turn to blood. It's not just the flowing water that turned to blood, it was all the ponds, it was any body of water. This is throughout the nation. Everywhere in Egypt they would have seen, been around water that turned to blood because people can't live unless they have a source of water so everybody in the nation would have been someplace where they would have had a source of water nearby and it would have turned to blood. "And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt." It would have been evident to everyone in Egypt, but think about all the Egyptians. The Israelites, Moses had gone and said, 'I'm going to go to Pharaoh and say to him that God said, "Let My people go".' They would have had this idea of what was going on, but can you imagine just the normal Egyptian that's out working in his field, he has no interaction with the Israelites, he's not getting the bricks that Pharaoh is assigning them and all of a sudden the pond that he has in his yard turns to blood. They would know something was going on, but they didn't have a context, still they were under judgement and it was a testimony of judgement and condemnation over all of them. All these Egyptians that wouldn't have known what was going on, they still received the judgement. We're all condemned in Adam's sin, we're all condemned. We can't just say that the gospel wasn't preached. In Nigeria, when I was there last time someone went, 'But the gospel, nobody had proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ here 140 years ago, how can they be condemned?' The answer is that because they still had a testimony of who God is, they had a responsibility to repent so they could be judged. Lack of knowledge doesn't mean you can't be judged by God. Sin is sin, God still judges sin. The Egyptian who had no idea why his pond turned to blood, he still receives the testimony of the wrath of God upon sin. It's not just rivers, it's not just ponds, it's "both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.". It's not just the natural bodies of water, but it's also things made by man to contain water so that it's available and nearby because it was so necessary. All of them turned to blood at the same time. Think how disruptive this would be, it's probably hard for us to even recognize how this would turn everything upside down. Your whole day, you can last for a long time without water, you can last weeks and months without food, but you can't last long without water. All of a sudden there's no water in the nation, this would mean that now everything in the nation changes, the focus of it

completely changes. Right now the nations are panicking because of the coronavirus and all these people are doing things, this is like on a far, far, far more vast scale than the coronavirus that's in China. This is everybody all of a sudden going, 'I have no water, how am I going to make it through the next 24 hours?' So the extent of the judgement and the testimony of the judgement is vast and we should recognize that. Nobody just goes, 'Well, all the water around me turned to blood so I will just keep doing what I was doing.' That doesn't happen, whatever they were doing now becomes secondary to them getting water. Water's not just used to drink, it's also used to cook with. A lot of the water that we get so you don't die of thirst is actually from food, but if it all turned to blood, you can't cook food in water anymore. It's important to remember when they are hit by these first three plagues, the Israelites are hit just as much as the Egyptians are. They would have had some contact and would have known because of the signs Moses did for them and they would have known that Moses and Aaron were going into Pharaoh to let God's people go. They would have known these things, but at the same time their ponds would have turned to blood too, the water in their pitchers would have turned to blood too, their lives would have been disrupted as well. They would see the power of God and have a context to say this was from the hands of God so it would have been easier for their hearts to be softened. They also could have said, 'Why is God doing this to us?' Remember what they did when Pharaoh rebuked them and told the taskmasters to make them work harder. Their response was not that God was delivering them, but their hearts were hardened. So some of them, their hearts would harden when they saw this and some would have seen the hand of God and had their hearts softened. "And Moses and Aaron did so." They are doing what they are told. For a long time Moses pushed back, but we don't see him pushing back now, he goes to the end and he does this sign of condemnation on the whole nation. They did "just as the Lord commanded." No longer are they pushing back. Remember this happens a lot too, this is the pattern of how things happen. You're faithful in the small things and you are given greater things. When Moses went in to say to Pharaoh, 'Let My people go', and Pharaoh ignored him, now he has started on a path and the path makes him have to take bolder and bolder actions. This is part of the mercy of God. We think of martyrs to the faith, they don't become martyrs the first day. A lot of people think, how can I ever resist recanting if they were going to burn me to death? Well, that burning to death is twenty years down the road. You take one step of faithfulness and that leads to another step of faithfulness and that leads to another step of faithfulness. Just like Pharaoh's on a path where he becomes less and less faithful, as the signs get bolder, the harder his heart is hardened. Moses and Aaron are on the different path, as each sign goes, it's easier for them to walk into the next sign even though they are going to do things like go into Pharaoh and say every firstborn son of Egypt is going to die. God is training them to be bolder and this is how it works now, it's that we are on paths. We are either on a path where we are being faithful in what we are given so we are given more on our path or we are being faithless on our path and we are being given greater and greater judgement. So we should always care about the path we are on because it indicates whether we are maturing in the Lord or not, whether we are faithful servants or not because faithful servants are given more work to do and that's what we are supposed to desire to be. "So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river." This word could be symbolic or he could have physically struck the water, but either way there is a point in time where all the water is turned to blood and Pharaoh knows this is from the hand of Moses, this is from Aaron. "And all the waters that were

in the river were turned to blood.” This had to be quite shocking, it was “in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants,” and all of a sudden this river that they see as what makes Egypt, Egypt, all of a sudden it’s no longer water, it’s all blood. Again, like I said last week, it’s not just in the sight of Pharaoh, but also in the sight of all his servants. A lot of times the testimony isn’t just to the person who Moses is speaking to, all his servants hear it too and some of his servants believe. We know because later they hear hail is going to come and destroy the cattle so some of Pharaoh’s servants take their cattle and put it in the barn. So we see belief and so Moses and Aaron here are testifying not just to Pharaoh, but the sight of his servants. “The fish that were in the river died.” All the fish die throughout the land, “the river stank”, everything started to putrify and the stench would have been horrible. You would have been able to smell this throughout whole country. “And the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.” The river that they considered to be the lifeblood of their nation, the river that they considered why they could have food whenever there was famine. When there was famine in the land everyone would run to Egypt because of the Nile and all of a sudden this river that is their strength, this river that is their life, all of a sudden it becomes this thing of death. This is the testimony of God, that He judges, He is the God that condemns. “So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” The picture of judgement, a picture of shedding of blood, the picture of rotting corpses was everywhere. The rivers, the ponds, even in buckets, the picture is judgement could not be escaped, but still Pharaoh would not see.

Verses 22-25, “Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this. So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river. And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river.” So Pharaoh wants a reason to not believe. God has said, ‘You will know that I am the Lord’, so Pharaoh knows He is the Lord but still wants an excuse not to submit. We don’t know the context, we know his servants were there, but my guess is that he did the same thing here as he did with the rod. He calls the magicians and scorcerers and tells them to prove that they have the same power that God has. They do the same with their enchantments. We shouldn’t think they did the same in the sense of turning all the water into blood, it was already turned to blood. He didn’t do it throughout all the nation because the text reads this all happens the same morning, is that the magicians come and they’re able to turn water into blood. So they get a little bit of water, probably by digging a hole, they get water and then they’re able to turn that little bit of water into blood. Completely different than what God did, on a completely different scale. The demons have power, but God has never given the demons power to do that to a whole nation. He can do it to a cup of water to turn into blood so Pharaoh’s heart can be hardened, but they didn’t cause all the waters in the Nile to be turned into blood because it was already blood. They didn’t cause ponds that were fifty miles away to be turned into blood, they were already blood. When they do their whisperings and their calling upon demons, it’s for a very limited scope thing. This happens all the time because what Pharaoh is looking for is an excuse to say God isn’t God. It reminds me of evolution because the “scientists” say they produce life, but what they mean when they say that is they take this primordial soup, this stuff that has all the ingredients in it for amino acids, they run an electric

wave in it and they have these amino acids that last for a millisecond or for a very short time period because they can't survive in an anaerobic environment, and it breaks down, but they say they produced life because they produced one amino acid. This is the same thing, the magicians of Egypt say they took a cup of water and turned it into blood, therefore we can turn all the water in the whole nation to blood. No, they can't anymore than the "scientists" can create life, they can't do it. They can create one amino acid. It's a whole different scale, but because people want to not have to accept there is a God who tells them what to do and can give them commandments, they look at that little example that doesn't prove anything and they say, 'See? That proves it all, there is no God.' That's why the scientists do it, that's why Pharaoh wanted the magicians to do it, to say he didn't need to submit to God. Scale really matters, obviously none of us here I pray can turn water into blood because that requires demons, but even so it's a lot different turning the Nile into blood than it is to turn a cup of water into blood. The scale really matters, only God does things on that vast of a scale. Like someone who builds a brick then no one would turn around and say because you can make a brick, you must know how to make a skyscraper, but that's essentially what Pharaoh is doing with the magicians. They can turn a cup of water into blood, therefore they can do it throughout the whole nation. It doesn't work that way, scale really matters. It was enough for Pharaoh's heart to grow hard. He sees they can do even though it's on a completely different scale and he desires so much to not have to submit to God, that it's his excuse to not do what God has commanded him to do and he says, "I don't need to submit to God, I don't need to heed Moses and Aaron, I don't need to listen to what they said was the message that God had given them." Even though his country was turned upside down and everyone would have to change what they were doing to seek water, where before that could have been the furthest thing from their mind because they lived next to the Nile, all of a sudden this becomes a primary thing, and because they could turn a cup of water into blood Pharaoh says he doesn't need to submit to God. It's just "as the Lord had said." The Lord had told Moses that after Moses went into Pharaoh, and Moses was surprised the first time that Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go, Moses didn't think it would be as difficult as God has said, but it's turning out exactly as God said. God's hardening Pharaoh's heart as a testimony so we understand what sin does, He's hardening it so we can look at examples and see what we are like. You talk to so many people about so many things that they don't want to accept in Scripture and almost all do the same thing, they look for one exceptional case and then they point to that exceptional case. It's like abortion, that's the most obvious case. Abortion is killing a baby, but people say, 'But what about a woman who is raped a hundred times and now she is pregnant? How can you expect her to raise the baby of her rapist?' I'm sorry, that's trying to make an argument off of an extreme case. That's not the normal case, but when we do that we are doing exactly what Pharaoh did. Pharaoh just wants some excuse to say he can ignore all of the reality, I just have to come up with one thing. We need to make sure we don't do the same thing because it's easy to do when we see a passage we don't like. I've had people do this, talk to me about this with things like divorce, I've had them talk to me about it with all type of things where they turn around and say, 'He can't mean that because of this exception' instead of going, 'Just believe the commandments of God.' "And Pharaoh turned and went into his house." This is why I think it was that same day, because Pharaoh turns and goes into his house. I think he calls the magicians, they produce the blood right there, and God's hardened this heart even though the effects will continue for seven more

days before the next plague. So Aaron's rod had become a serpent and swallowed them up, but he doesn't believe that. So they come and show they can turn some water into blood and his heart was not moved, Pharaoh did not change because he found an excuse, he found a reason, he found something to say God is not special, God does not have authority over me like anybody else. He refused to believe the evidence of his own sight, he saw the water turned into blood everywhere, but that wasn't enough, he needed any excuse to grab onto to say he wouldn't listen to God. We need to understand what the hardness of heart looks like. "So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink." God's purpose was to testify that they were under condemnation. God's purpose was not to kill them. If He would have made all the water in the soil also be blood, they would have died, but God still provided water for them. Even as the testimony of His wrath, the testimony that we are all under His condemnation, He does make it so there is water that is produced, that there is water that they can drink so they survive. Understand the picture, it's this blood, whether it's blood like human blood or some other blood, it's the spilling of blood, the thing produced by life is death. But God still has the world purify. As the blood goes through, we can put a septic in our front yard and put a well in the back yard, but God has made it where the world constrains and cleanses out sin. This is true with all kinds of sin right? The drunkard has a headache in the morning so he can't work and at some point in time he needs to get over his headache so he can get enough money to provide to survive. This is how God ordered the world, that the world puts these constraints on sin and it puts constraints that it creates pure things out of judgement. So even as they dig into the water table around the river, the soil of the river has cleansed the water so it's no longer blood and it's actually water. This is the mercy of God, this is the testimony of how God has ordered the world, that He doesn't cause our sin just to create greater and greater destruction, which would have been a natural way to order it, instead He causes the earth to put constraints on it, causes the earth to clean up what man does. We need to remember it's what comes from man that defiles, not the other way around. The earth is cleansing and man is defiling. "They could not drink the water of the river" so they had to do very different work than they were probably expecting to do that day. "And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river." God gives them enough time to recognize the effect, He gives them enough time to have to deal with this, He gives them enough time for the river to start to smell, but then the next plague comes. This I think is more of an introduction to the next chapter where God sends the next plague, but He gives us a real sense that it's not that a plague comes and then nothing happens for a month. This comes and then a week later there is another judgement. Even though their hearts are hardened and Pharaoh's heart is hardened, God is still moving and acting in a rapid way. Frequently with someone who is caught in their sin and feeling the effects of their sin, God doesn't move this quickly, but here He is moving and he is moving after seven days. There is probably something else here with the picture of seven days. There is the condemnation and seven is the picture of the week and creation or all of time in another sense, it's also a picture that this condemnation was not just on Pharaoh but on the condemnation that's in the world because of sin.

Applications:

1. Knowledge of the Lord is not enough. We see God says that when Aaron turns the water into blood Pharaoh will know that God is the Lord, but that's not enough to cause Pharaoh to repent and obey. That's not enough to be converted to know that God is the Lord. It requires more than that, that can be enough to constrain our rebellion, that can be enough to constrain our sin, but it's not how you get a heart that's soft towards God, it's not how you get a heart where you turn to God. That's because faith is the gift of God lest any man boast. Just knowing who God is isn't enough. If we just know who God is we will come up with excuses as Abraham said, "You can send someone back from the dead and they still wouldn't believe." We come up with excuses just like Pharaoh did. Don't think knowledge of the Lord is enough, you actually have to submit to God. You have to have a soft heart not a hard heart. Sometimes when people are confronted with the knowledge of God, their response is to turn to the things of God and other times their response is to get harder and to try to come up with greater excuses as to why they can ignore what God has said. Don't think that knowledge of the Lord is enough, it requires submission to God.
2. God frequently curses people with what they want or what they think they want. Historically many people in false religions drank blood and yet they would have loathed it just like the Egyptians did if that was all they had to drink, it would become death. This thing that they thought they wanted would become death. We should recognize that God can curse us that same way. He curses the Israelites in the wilderness, they say they want flesh and meat to eat, all they had was manna for days and they were tired of it. He causes there to be quail for three feet deep all around the camp until they start to rot and to smell. God frequently curses people with what they think they want to teach them how this isn't what they really want. I think the most common way we see this today, and probably throughout history, is money. The prosperity gospel is how you will get rich. Some people who practice that get really wealthy, there are some preachers of the prosperity gospel that have three 747's, I mean they get filthy rich, but we shouldn't think of that as any different than Pharaoh getting all the blood that he could possibly drink. It's a curse, it's not a blessing. God can curse us with what we think we want. Proverbs 30:8-9, "Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God." We need to recognize that God can judge us by giving us exactly what we think we want.
3. Don't look for excuses not to believe. That's what Pharaoh does in this passage and throughout the plagues, he looks for reasons not to believe and as his heart gets harder and harder he has to look less and less for reasons not to believe. God had made it so he would know that Jehovah was the Lord, yet when he sees the enchantment of the magicians, he uses that as an excuse to go into his house and to refuse to submit to what Moses and Aaron have given him from God. He uses it as an excuse to deny the evidence that he is seeing the power of God. We need to be really careful not to do the same. Understand, the church in America constantly says to do the same as Pharaoh. AIDS comes upon sodomites so that it is a terrible plague, it's still considered a pandemic. We're talking about the pandemic with the coronavirus where 2,600 people

have died, with AIDS, something like 30 or 40 million people have died and it was directly related to sodomy and the church goes, 'We can't say this is God's judgement on sodomy.' When the church says that, it is exactly like Pharaoh. That's not what we are supposed to be like. When we see the judgement hand of God we are supposed to say, 'This is from God.' That's how people repent, that's how people fear God and they stop doing evil. Instead when you say God wouldn't do that, what you are doing, that's why we have sodomite marriage thirty years later. Because instead of the church saying you should see this as a sign of judgement from God when pestilence comes, God says He sends pestilence to judge a people, He says to the Israelites if they don't obey His commandments, all the pestilence that was upon Egypt will come upon you in Deuteronomy 28, and if we're not willing to say that these pestilences come upon people because they disobey God we're not teaching people to fear God. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and it's the beginning of knowledge. We need to be really careful that we don't do the same thing that Pharaoh does and come up with some excuse where someone says this isn't the judgement of God. That's why Pharaoh wanted the magicians to change water to blood so he could say he didn't have to obey God since his magicians could do the same thing. When we deny God's judgement, when we deny His condemnation, when we deny what He does, we are doing the exact same thing Pharaoh does and we are being a curse to people instead of a blessing. There was a hurricane some years ago that wiped out one of the most corrupt cities in the United States, just a horrible city. Judgement comes upon it and the church goes, 'No, no, it can't be that!' It's always that God sends hurricanes and earthquakes and pestilence, they are always from the hand of God and we should never say they aren't from the hand of God because it is and when we do that we are acting like Pharaoh, not like Moses. Christ saw all things as coming from the hand of God. I'm using examples of large numbers of people, but it goes down to one person, when judgement comes on you in your life do you look and say, 'Well I can use this excuse why I don't have to see it as God's chastisement, I can use this excuse as to why I can say I don't need to turn from my sin because this isn't God doing it.' Let's make sure that we're not acting like Pharaoh individually or as a church. These are questions we should ask ourselves. God sends these things and we are acting like Pharaoh if we say they aren't from God. No, it is from God and we need to ask ourselves why God is doing it.

4. Is your heart being hardened or softened towards the things of God? You look at Moses and you look at Pharaoh, Moses didn't want to obey much differently than Pharaoh. Moses comes up with all kinds of excuses as to why he doesn't want to go, he comes up with all kinds of reasons and even after he's sent he goes to Pharaoh and Pharaoh says he isn't going to let the people go, Moses kind of says to forget it because it's not going to happen. Moses and Pharaoh aren't that different except that they are on completely different paths. Moses keeps getting his heart more and more softened towards God, he becomes more and more obedient towards God while Pharaoh gets more and more hard towards the things of God, he gets more and more aggressive against the things of God. This is what happens when judgements come, this is what happens when we live our lives. Either we look at things and our hearts become softer towards God or we look at things and our hearts become harder towards God. Or to put it in the context of the

parable of the sower, forgetting the first two seeds, but there are seeds that are sown among the thorns and seeds sown on the fertile ground. The seeds sown look the same, but over time the one keeps getting choked out and it keeps more and more of a focus on the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the things of God become secondary. That's the picture of your heart being hardened by things rather than softened by things. Rather than seeing the temptation of the world and saying you need to turn from it, we say it's not that bad. That's what it looks like for your heart to be hardened as opposed to your heart being softened. With Moses, each time one of these things happens he becomes bolder and more forthright, he produces greater fruit, he's the seed that is sown on the fertile soil. When you look at the things that happen in your life, does it cause your heart to be hardened towards God or softened towards God? Look back and think of what happened over the last year and ask yourself, did the things that happened over the last year in your life cause you to become softer towards God or harder towards God? Patterns matter, this is how God matures His people and this is also how He shows people that aren't His, that they aren't His. Not that they don't start out the same, they start out looking the same, but He causes them to look different over time. We need to make sure because there can be periods where things appear to harden our hearts, but we need to repent and make sure that we are willing to see from God, we are willing to hear the words of God. Pharaoh saw and he knew, but he wasn't willing to do it. This is the picture that Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10-17, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Everyone is on one of the two paths, they are either on the path causing them to grow nearer to God or that path where they deceive themselves and they grow worse and worse. Examine yourself and see if you are being softened to the things of God with the things that are going on around you rather than hardened. If they are being hardened, repent, don't think that it's going to get better, it's going to get worse. Wicked men grow worse and worse deceiving and being deceived. This is the trajectory of the person who was the seed that was sown among the thorns. Make sure that you're on the trajectory of the seed that was sown on fertile ground, that it grows and multiplies and produces. Paul, in writing to Timothy, tells us how to do this, stay in the things of God, don't look for excuses to ignore it like Pharaoh did, instead desire to know what God says and desire to embrace it. That's how to make sure that you're on the right path and not the path of destruction.

Let me close us in prayer. Oh Lord God we do thank You for Your word this morning. We do pray that You teach us the things that we are to learn from it. We pray that You guide us to

greater understanding, greater zeal for Your ways for Your ways are ways of joys, they are ways of blessing. It's so easy, the false blessing, the false joy that's in the world to look like it's the true joy of the Lord, but Your ways are the path to true joy. Let us be a people that have hearts that recognize this and know this and seek to die to ourselves, to walk in the goodness of Your ways. We ask this in Your Son's name, amen.