

# Seconds Out!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 11.

Exodus chapter 11. We're going to look at the whole chapter. But if we just read again at verse 4. Exodus 11 at verse 4.

So Moses said, And so on.

As many of you know, we have been learning that the ten plagues of Egypt are literally the ten blows of Egypt.

Because the image and the illustration that's used in the Bible is the image and illustration of entering into the boxing ring and coming to blows with God.

[ 1 : 21 ] And throughout these ten plagues, Pharaoh has been going ten rounds with God. And you know, at first, when I first came to these plagues and realized that that's the image and the illustration that's been used of entering the boxing ring, I thought it was a very interesting way to describe the plagues in Egypt.

But then I read an article this past week which highlighted that 3,000-year-old paintings were found in Egypt which portrayed people fighting with their fists.

And it suggests that similar to ancient Greece and ancient Rome, boxing was a sport often carried out in Egypt. Now, as you know, boxing has always been a contentious and even a controversial sport where it's loved by some and hated by others.

Fans see it as the ultimate test of a person's physical and mental strength. But foes consider it as brutal and barbaric and something that should be completely banned.

And what's interesting is that in the year 500 AD, boxing was banned. It was banned within the Roman Empire and it was banned by the Roman Emperor Theodoric the Great.

[ 2 : 37 ] Because as a Christian, Emperor Theodoric the Great, he believed that the human face was made in the image and likeness of God. And therefore, to damage the face in a fight, he said, was to damage the image of God.

But you know, when it came to this fight with Pharaoh, Pharaoh wasn't interested in God's image. In fact, Pharaoh had no care or concern for the Lord or the Lord's people.

Which is why he keeps coming to blows with God. He's going ten rounds with God. But just before we come to the final round, which is in chapter 12, where the Lord is going to land this knockout punch of a plague, the plague of death.

Before we come to that chapter, we have this interim chapter in chapter 11. And as you can see, in comparison to all the other chapters in Exodus, it's a very short chapter.

But there's a reason for that. Because, you know, when you look at this chapter, when you come to Exodus chapter 11, I want you to see that it's as if the boxing ring, the bell of the boxing match, it has just rung.

[ 3 : 52 ] Bringing an end to round nine, which was the plague of darkness. We saw that last Lord's Day. And just before the clash and the conflict of the final round commences, there's this proclamation.

Seconds out. Seconds out. That's the proclamation the referee would give when the one minute rest between the two rounds is going to come to an end.

The referee would shout, seconds out. Meaning the seconds who were standing in the corner of the fighter, the fighter's coach or cut man. The referee would proclaim to them seconds out.

Signaling that they must leave the ring and return ringside before the bell sounds for the start of the final round. And in a sense, that's what we have here in this interim chapter, in chapter 11.

Just before seconds out is proclaimed, we're given a promise and a plague. A plague and a promise are pronounced. Just before seconds out is proclaimed, there is a promise pronounced and then a plague pronounced.

[ 5 : 03 ] And that's what I want us to see in this interim chapter. It's just before the bell of the final round commences. So just before seconds out is proclaimed, there's a promise and a plague pronounced.

So first of all, we see a promise pronounced. A promise pronounced. Now we see that in verse 1. It says, The Lord said to Moses, Now as we said, the ten plagues of Egypt, they are the ten blows of Egypt.

Where Pharaoh, he's now entered the boxing ring. He's coming to blows with God. And he's going ten rounds with God. And as we've stood ringside over these past number of weeks, we have watched and we have witnessed the Lord, this covenant God, the creator God of his people. And we've watched and witnessed him defeat and destroy one after another all these Egyptian gods. And I'm sure you remember way back in round one.

Right back in round one, we saw the Lord deliver his first blow to Happy. Happy was the God of the river Nile. And the Lord made Happy unhappy when he turned the river Nile into blood.

[ 6 : 44 ] Then in round two, the Lord embarrassed and he exposed the frog-headed goddess called Heket. And he did so by plaguing Egypt with frogs.

Then in round three, the Lord took a swing at Seth, who was the aardvark god of the desert. And he did so by raising fleas with only one finger. Then in round four, the Lord undermined Uachet, the goddess of flies.

And the Lord did so by sending swarms of flies that covered the ground and filled the air. Then in round five, the Lord destroyed the sacred apis bull of Egypt by bringing a personal pestilence upon all the Egyptian livestock of the field.

Then round six got even more personal when the Lord brought this pandemic, a pandemic of pus-filled boils upon all the Egyptians, which made them, their appearance, it made their appearance covered in boils.

It affected their attractive appearance. But it also attacked this Egyptian god Sekhmet, who was a fierce lioness and a goddess of healing.

[ 7 : 55 ] Then in round seven, the Lord knocked out Newt, the goddess of the sky, who was said to pour down blessings and benefits from the sky upon all the Egyptians.

But when the Egyptians looked into the sky, what did they see? But there was balls of hail and fire falling, destroying all their trees and all their crops. And then we have round eight, which we're looking at last Lord's Day.

Round eight, the Lord sent locusts. Locusts devoured the land of Egypt and destroyed Osiris, the god of fertility and agriculture and vegetation.

And then in round nine, the previous round, the Lord made Ra, the god of the sun. He made him disappear.

The Lord brought deep darkness upon the land of Egypt for three days. And as we said time and time again, the Lord defeated and he destroyed all these Egyptian gods in order to declare and to demonstrate his presence and power in comparison to the impotent and the ineffectiveness of the gods of Egypt.

[ 9 : 08 ] But of course, as Pharaoh fought with the Lord, the question we keep asking here, the question we keep coming back to is, how did Pharaoh react?

How did Pharaoh respond when the Lord defeated God after God after God and destroyed all these dead gods? How did Pharaoh respond?

And we see that what's remarkable is that regardless of the fact that the Lord destroyed Happy and Heket and Seth and Uachit and Apis and Sekhmet and Newt and Osiris and Ra, they were all proven to be powerless gods and yet none of it.

You look at Pharaoh here in chapter 11 and none of it deterred him or discouraged Pharaoh. None of it made him see that the Lord was speaking or even shouting into his life.

None of it made him repent and return to the Lord. And as Solomon says, like a dog that returns to its vomit, Pharaoh repeated his folly.

[ 10 : 17 ] Pharaoh had hardened his heart. He had hardened his heart by stubbornly rebelling and resisting and refusing and rejecting the Lord. Pharaoh refused to submit and surrender to the Lord.

Pharaoh refused to confess and commit his life to the Lord. And now the fight with Pharaoh is almost over. Pharaoh refused to submit and destroy.

But sadly, as we were singing in Psalm 115 earlier, we sang those words in verse 8. I don't know if you noticed them. Those who worship false gods become like them.

Those who worship false gods become like them. And for Pharaoh, he was going to become like these Egyptian gods. Pharaoh was going to be defeated and destroyed like these Egyptian gods. He was going to be proven to be powerless like all these Egyptian gods. He was going to be shown how impotent and how ineffective he really is like all of these Egyptian gods.

[11:20] And this, you know, this is the solemn and sobering point about this chapter, chapter 11. In many ways, you might read it and think it's an insignificant chapter.

But you know, it's actually a very solemn one. And a very sobering chapter. Because this chapter is telling us, Pharaoh has missed his last opportunity for repentance.

That's what this chapter tells us. Pharaoh has missed his last opportunity to repent. But you know, Pharaoh wasn't the only king in the Bible who missed his last opportunity to repent.

There was also a king called King Herod. And we were considering him last Monday at Christianity Explored. And you can watch the video for yourself if you follow the Christianity Explored link.

It's on our website or in the weekly email that's sent out. And I'd encourage you to watch it because like this chapter here in Exodus 11, in Mark chapter 6, you have a solemn and sobering chapter of what happens when you silence your conscience.

[12:33] In Mark chapter 6, we read that Herod had put John the Baptist in prison for preaching and proclaiming to him that he was a sinner.

And John the Baptist told Herod that he was a sinner because he had committed adultery. He had committed adultery by marrying his brother's wife, Herodias. However, the irony was that Herod would go to John's prison and listen to John preach.

In fact, Herod enjoyed listening to John preach. Herod enjoyed listening to the gospel. He enjoyed being challenged by the truth of God's word. Herod enjoyed, as it were, coming to church.

He enjoyed coming to church. And you know my unconverted friend here this morning or at home online, Herod had many opportunities to repent. He had many opportunities to believe in the gospel. But instead of using and utilizing all these opportunities that were confronting him, he silenced his conscience. He silenced his conscience.

[13:38] We read that an opportunity came on Herod's birthday when Herod had a birthday party. And he invited all his friends and his neighbors and all his work colleagues.

They all came along. And as Herodias' daughter danced in front of all the dinner guests, Herod dared to ask her what she wanted. And when Herodias heard those words, she didn't need to be asked twice.

She said, I want John the Baptist's head on a platter. And in that moment, Herod had a choice to make, just like we all have a choice to make. Herod had to decide, do I respond to this request or do I repent?

Do I respond to what I've been asked to do by those around me? Do I please the crowd or do I repent to the Christ? Do I please the crowd or do I repent to the Christ?

You know, what's so sad, what's so sobering, what's so solemn is that Herod silenced his conscience when he sliced John's head.

[14:47] Herod silenced his conscience when he sliced John's head. And like Pharaoh, what Herod didn't realize is that he not only silenced his conscience, he had missed his last opportunity to repent.

Because when Herod came face to face with Jesus, something he had longed to do for years, he longed to meet Jesus face to face and ask him lots of questions.

And when he came face to face with Jesus, Jesus said nothing. Jesus stayed silent. And you know, my unconverted friend, the application for you is clear.

Crystal clear. Don't be like Pharaoh. Don't be like Herod. Don't silence your conscience. Don't squander your opportunities to repent.

Because you never know. Oh, you never know. When you've silenced your conscience and squandered your opportunity to repent for the last time.

[15:57] You never know. When you've heard the gospel for the last time. You might not be here next Lord's Day. And I don't say that flippantly.

You know what I mean. We've seen it so often. We saw it recently. Didn't we? We saw it recently. We don't know when our last opportunity will be.

We're reminded so often that life is uncertain, that death is sure, sin is the cause, Christ is the cure. My friend, let this be a solemn and a sobering warning to you.

Let it be a loving warning to you though. I warn you out of love. I warn you because I love you. And I want you to be saved. And you know that. You know that. You know that to be true. You know that I want you to be saved more than anything else.

[16:59] So let it be a solemn and a sobering warning to you of what happens when you silence your conscience and squander your opportunities to repent. Don't.

Make these opportunities count. Use them and utilize them by seeking the Lord while He's to be found. But you know, as I said, before the clash and the conflict of the final round, before it commences, just before seconds out is proclaimed, we see that a promise is pronounced. And the promise is, I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and Egypt and he will let you go. The Lord promised that this will be the final blow. This is going to be the knockout punch to Pharaoh.

And when Pharaoh gets knocked down, the Lord says, he's not getting up again. He's not getting up again. He will let you go. And he will let you go completely.

And you know, looking at this chapter, you might think, well, we've actually become sidetracked by all these plagues and pestilences and pandemics in Egypt. We've been sidetracked by what it's actually all about.

[18:12] It's all about letting the Lord's people go. It's all about rescue. It's all about redemption. It's all about restoration. It's all about salvation from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

And you know, looking at these, all these plagues and pandemics and pestilences that we've been looking at, you know, how often do we get sidetracked with other things?

Even as Christians. How often do we focus on secondary issues rather than the gospel and the Great Commission? How often do we forget why we're here on a Sunday morning and a Sunday evening?

We're here to worship God. How often do we lose sight of why it is we come to church? We come not for ourselves, but to give glory to God.

Or even why we watch online. It's not about you sitting there at home receiving. It's about you giving. And it's all to bring us back to the knockout punch.

[19:16] It's to bring us all back to the knockout punch. This is what this chapter is all about. It's all about preparing us for the next chapter, which is the knockout punch. The final blow. And as we'll see in the next chapter, the final blow points us forward to Calvary.

The final blow where death is defeated, sin is destroyed, and Jesus is the wonderful Savior. My friend, you know, that's why we're here this morning.

That's why we've gathered for worship. Let's not ever get sidetracked with secondary issues. It's all about the rescue. It's all about redemption. It's all about restoration. It's all about salvation from slavery and bondage to sin by Jesus.

It's all about this knockout punch where Jesus defeats death and sin and sorrow. It's all about His great demonstration of love towards us and His declaration and offer of eternal life for us.

It's all about the knockout punch. And that's what we'll see in the coming weeks. We'll see the final plague and the knockout punch. And we'll see that it's all pointing us to Jesus.

[20:30] It's all pointing us to Jesus. But just before seconds out is proclaimed, we see a promise pronounced. He will let you go. Secondly, we see a plague is pronounced.

The final plague. So a promise is pronounced and then a plague is pronounced. Look at verse 4. So Moses said, Thus says the Lord, About midnight, I will go out in the midst of Egypt and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the hand mill and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt such as there has never been nor ever will be again. But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, Get out, you and all the people who follow you. And after that, I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

You know, after the previous plague of darkness, Pharaoh thought he had seen the last of Moses. And Moses had thought that he had seen the last of Pharaoh. Because at the end of chapter 10, Pharaoh said to Moses, he said, Get away from me.

[ 21 : 57 ] You will never see my face again because on the day that you do, you shall die. And Moses had said to Pharaoh, I will never see your face again. And yet neither of them were right.

Because the Lord called, commissioned, and commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh one last time. One last time.

But this time was different. In the past, you remember that Moses didn't know how Pharaoh would react or respond to the Lord when a plague was pronounced before him, in his hearing.

You remember that when Moses first appeared before Pharaoh, way back in the early chapters of the book of Exodus, Moses appeared before Pharaoh and he preached with passion and power. Moses presented the mission and the message of the Lord. He proclaimed the word of God with confidence and conviction. And with that, Moses, he expected the Lord to move.

[ 22 : 57 ] He expected the Lord to do mighty and miraculous things in the heart of Pharaoh. He expected Pharaoh's heart to be penetrated and bring him to surrender and submit to the authority of the Lord.

He expected Pharaoh to just bow down his knee immediately. But as we've seen, that's not what happened. It's not what happened at all. Because Pharaoh had a heedless and a hollow and a hardened heart.

Pharaoh was unaware and uninformed and unacquainted with the Lord. So much so that Pharaoh stubbornly resisted and rejected the Lord. He refused to submit and to surrender.

He refused to confess and to commit his life to the Lord. But now, Exodus chapter 11, after all these plagues and pestilences and pandemics, after all these declarations and demonstrations of the Lord's presence and the Lord's power in Egypt, after watching and witnessing the Lord defeat and destroy all these impotent and ineffective gods, Pharaoh is someone who is no longer unaware. He's no longer uninformed. He is no longer unacquainted with the Lord. Because Pharaoh knows who the Lord is.

[ 24 : 20 ] Pharaoh has heard the Lord speaking into his life. Pharaoh has seen the Lord moving in power. But now, Exodus 11, he's too late.

he's too late. And you know, my friend, the same could be said of you as well, couldn't it? Because you were there in Exodus 3 and Exodus 4 and Exodus 5 and Exodus 6 and Exodus 7.

You were there throughout all these plagues, listening and watching and witnessing. You were there when the Lord was defeating and destroying all these impotent and ineffective gods.

So like it was said of Pharaoh, it could be said of you. You are no longer unaware of who the Lord is. You are no longer uninformed of who the Lord is.

You are no longer unacquainted with who the Lord is. You know who the Lord is. You have heard the Lord speaking into your life.

[ 25 : 31 ] You have seen the Lord moving in power. But is it too late? You know, my unconverted friend, let this be another loving warning to you.

Because as my good friend J.C. Ryle once asked, what is hell? What is hell? We don't like talking about that, do we?

Hell is the truth realized too late. And I never want to talk to you about hell without reminding you that I love you. That's why I say it.

Hell is the truth realized too late. You know, that was Pharaoh. The truth realized too late. Will that be you?

The truth realized too late. Oh, my friend, take heed. Take heed and take to heart the loving warnings of Scripture.

[ 26 : 38 ] Be in time. Come now. Come now. Today is the day of salvation. You know, when the Lord called, commissioned, and commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh one last time, this time was different because this time in Exodus 11, it didn't matter.

It didn't matter how Pharaoh would respond. It didn't matter how he would react to the Lord. The plague of death was coming. The plague of death was being pronounced.

And for Pharaoh, it was now too late. It was too late. Just before the bell was going to sound for the start of this final round, just before seconds out is proclaimed and everyone has to stand ringside again before they start coming to blows once more, this plague is being pronounced.

The Lord is pronouncing his final plague and knockout punch to Pharaoh. And he says to him, thus says the Lord, about midnight, I will go out in the midst of Egypt and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill and all the firstborn of the cattle.

And as you can see there in those verses, this plague is, it's very personal. It's very particular because it's going to have an impact upon every family in Egypt regardless of who they are.

[ 28 : 10 ] Whether they're on the throne, we're told, or whether they're at the threshing floor, whether they're in riches or in rags, whether they're a prince or a pauper, this powerful and painful plague, it will have an impact and an influence upon every single Egyptian.

And you know, what's remarkable is that the last Egyptian God who is being revealed and even ridiculed by the Lord, it's called ISIS. Not ISIS, the terrorist organization, but ISIS, the Egyptian goddess of life, the protector of children.

In fact, ISIS was said to be one of the greatest goddesses in Egypt. She's often described and depicted as having a throne upon her head. But like all the others, all the other gods before her, ISIS will be dethroned.

She will be demoted in Egypt. She will be proven to be powerless. She will be impotent and ineffective for the Egyptians when the Lord sends the destroyer to kill all the firstborn sons in Egypt. Now, the question that often arises is, well, does the Lord go about killing babies? Does the Lord go about killing babies in chapter 12?

[ 29 : 34 ] And of course, the answer is no. This plague which is pronounced is not the same as that which was pronounced by Pharaoh in chapter 1 or even the Herod we mentioned in, or it was actually another Herod, when Jesus was born.

Because you'll remember that both Pharaoh and Herod, they ordered that all boys under the age of two would be put to death. But this is different here. This goes much deeper than that.

Because the firstborn sons in Egypt wouldn't have just been young people, young sons. they would have been sons and fathers and grandfathers, maybe even great-grandfathers, the firstborn.

My friend, the personal, powerful, and painful nature of this plague is that it would have had an impact and an influence upon every generation in the family.

But the thing is, the Lord isn't killing babies. the Lord is bringing judgment upon Pharaoh as the representative of the people.

[ 30 : 45 ] He's bringing judgment upon Pharaoh for his sin and for his rebellion. And you know, this is something we need to remember about the Lord. You know, the Lord is long-suffering.

The Lord is very patient. Very patient. He's patient because He keeps us on mercy's ground. and gives us opportunity to find Him.

The Lord is long-suffering. But as Exodus 11 shows us, He is not all suffering. He is long-suffering, but not all suffering.

And our Bible repeatedly reminds us that the Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. No pleasure at all. But our Bible repeatedly reassures us that the Lord gives us many opportunities to repent.

Many opportunities. He gives us plenty of time. But Pharaoh's opportunities to repent had run out. And as our creator and covenant king, He is the Lord who is holy and who hates sin.

[ 31 : 54 ] And the Lord is sovereign, says the Bible, and the Lord must sort out sin. Therefore, in His sovereign right, as the creator and the covenant king of His people, the Lord must bring justice.

And He must bring judgment upon sin according to His timetable. And as our Bible teaches us, the wages of sin is death.

The wages of sin is death. The payment and punishment we deserve for our sin is death. That's why the plague which Moses pronounces is a plague of death.

The wages of sin is death. But as we'll see in the coming weeks as we look at chapter 12, you know, what's beautifully woven or interwoven with this final plague, this knockout punch, is the promise of the Passover.

That the wages of sin is death. That's what's proclaimed in the nation. But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 33 : 06 ] You know, that's what we see. The final plague, the knockout punch, it has interwoven in it the promise of the Passover. that when they're covered in the blood, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

That's what we're going to see in the next few weeks. And that's what Paul reminds us in Romans 3. The wages of sin is death, but, but the free gift of God that's held out to each and every one of us.

Doesn't matter what you know. Doesn't matter how good you think you are. Doesn't matter how bad you think you are. The free gift of God held out to you is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. My friend, that's the good news message of the gospel. And it's the message that's being held out to you again today. That before seconds out is proclaimed, before the bell of the final judgment rings, before the knockout punch of punishment is landed, before the plague of death comes, Exodus chapter 11 is reminding us that it was too late for Pharaoh.

But it's not too late for you. It's not too late for you. You have an opportunity today to repent, to turn from your sin, to turn to the Lord and say, Lord, I'm sorry.

[ 34 : 33 ] I need forgiveness. I need mercy. I need you to cleanse me and create within me a clean heart. Because the wages of sin is death.

But the free gift, the free gift, we often say there's nothing in life that's free. Well, this is free for you. The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

My friend, Exodus 11, is reminding you, do not waste your opportunities because here is another one being presented to you again this morning.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our gracious God, we plead that we would have eyes to see who Jesus is, that we would have ears to hear his voice speaking to us, and that we would have hearts to receive his truth.

Oh, Lord, we ask that we would use all the opportunities that are put before us, that we would not be like Pharaoh, to waste them and to harden our heart, but that we might take the opportunity while we yet have time, whilst we're on mercy's ground, while the opportunity is before us.

[ 36 : 02 ] Oh, Lord, speak to us, we pray. Bless thy truth, we ask, that we would come seeking the Lord, while he is to be found, and calling upon him, while he is near.

Do us good, then we pray, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing in Psalm 105.

Psalm 105, and the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 105, we're singing from verse 23 down to the verse 36.

We've been singing these verses the last few weeks. It's wonderful verses that remind us about the history of what happened in Egypt, the plagues in Egypt.

So Psalm 105, verse 23, Then Israel came down into Egypt to stay, in Ham's land to sojourn for many a day. The Lord caused his people to prosper and grow, and so they were seen as a threat to their foe.

[ 37 : 20 ] We'll sing down to the verse 36 of Psalm 105, to God's praise. then Israel came down into Egypt to stay, in Ham's land to sojourn for many a day.

The Lord caused his people to prosper and grow, and so they were seen as a threat to their foe.

He turned the Egyptians against Israel, and caused them to plot his own servants to kill, then Moses and Aaron his chosen beast said, performing his wander to Egypt they went.

Because the Egyptians despised his command, he sent utter darkness to cover the land.

Their waters and rivers he turned into blood, the fish of the Nile was destroyed by the Lord.

[ 39 : 21 ] Their land teemed with frogs which invade in their rooms, and their victories were smashed.

His words warmed their homes, the rain became hail, and the lightning boasts flashed, each struck down their vines, and their victories were smashed.

He spoke and the locusts and grass offers came, and every green thing was consumed as by flame, and then he took vengeance on all the first floor, the first fruits of manhood of Egypt were gone.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and for the Lord. The Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.