

Message #13

Exodus 7:8-25

D. L. Moody once said Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh's court as a somebody, forty years in the desert as a nobody, and forty years showing what God does with a somebody who knows he is a nobody. Moses is 80-years-old but what he is about to experience and accomplish is something that has never been equaled by any man on earth.

We come now to what has been called the "ten plagues upon Egypt." Actually, all of these things, which turns out to be more than ten, are designed to show the greatness and power of God to the entire Egyptian world.

Now before we get into the text proper, we would like to make some key observations about all of this:

Observation #1 - The word that is actually used the most to describe these things is the Hebrew word "oth" (sign) which is a word that refers to something God does that reveals a miraculous sign that points to His majestic sovereignty (4:8, 8, 9, 17, 28, 30; 7:3; 8:23; 10:1, 2). God, Himself, actually calls these things that He does "signs" (10:1-2)—**Signs that point to Him.**

Observation #2 - The actual word "plague" (Exodus 11:1) is the word "nega" which means God strikes a blow upon someone in some form of physical calamity (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 532).

Observation #3 - The Hebrew word used in 7:9 is the word "miracle" (mopheth) which is a word that refers to a divine miraculous sign or proof that leaves people standing in awe (*Ibid.*, p. 458). These are, in fact, supernatural miracles, not some natural phenomena that may be explained scientifically.

Observation #4 - The Hebrew word used in 7:4; 12:12 is the word "judgment" (shaphat) which refers to a judgment or punishment that God does target someone with. It is designed to show God is the sovereign ruler and governor of all things (*Ibid.*, p. 844).

Now we learn from Numbers 33:4 that these things God would do were actual judgments "on their gods." In other words, the Egyptians had all kinds of deities and God did these miraculous things to show that their "deities" were not Deity. **These signs would and do totally humiliate the Egyptians physically and religiously.**

So our conclusion is that these plagues are actually a series of miraculous physical calamities that God performs as a judgment to leave people standing in awe of Him and to point to the fact that He is the only Sovereign God and Governor over all things.

In all reality, there are not ten of these kinds of things God does before Pharaoh lets Israel go, there are eleven:

- Sign #1** - Aaron's staff becomes a snake. **7:8-13**
Sign #2 - Water is turned to blood. **7:14-25**
Sign #3 - Frogs inundate Egypt. **8:1-8:15**
Sign #4 - Gnats attack the Egyptians. **8:16-19**
Sign #5 - Swarms of flies attack Egyptians. **8:16-28**
Sign #6 - Livestock of the Egyptians dies by pestilence. 9:1-7
Sign #7 - Boils break out on Egyptian people and animals. 9:8-12
Sign #8 - Hail kills Egyptian livestock and people. 9:13-35
Sign #9 - Locusts destroy Egyptian crops. 10:1-20
Sign #10 - Darkness dominates entire land of Egypt. 10:21-29
Sign #11 - Death on the firstborn of Egypt. 11:1-10

Now we begin tonight by analyzing the first two sign miracles that truly do display the majestic sovereign power of God:

SIGN MIRACLE #1 – God turns Aaron's staff into a snake . **7:8-13**

In Numbers 33:4, we read that “The LORD had also executed judgments on their gods.” So every one of the things we are about to see were, in fact, judgments of God designed, in part, to show these Egyptians that their “idolatrous-gods” were nothing. Now the Egyptians worshipped the snake. In fact, the actual crown of the Pharaoh/king had a snake on it.

This sign had been given to Moses by God for two reasons:

Reason #1 - God wanted Moses to perform this sign in order to convince the Israelites that he had been called by God so they would believe (**4:5**).

Reason #2 - God wanted Moses to perform this sign before Pharaoh so he could see the power of God before God hardened his heart (**4:21**).

So going into this, we know God is going to let Pharaoh see this sign and then He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart.

Now we may remember how this actually works. The staff is thrown down on the ground and it becomes a snake and then you grab the snake by the tail and it becomes a staff again (**4:3-4**).

In **verses 8-9**, God spoke to Moses and Aaron and said when Pharaoh asks them to perform some miracle, Moses was to say to Aaron take your staff and throw it down that it may become a serpent. **There are two different Hebrew words used here for “serpent” in this text.** The word “serpent” in **7:9, 10, 12** is the word “tannin” and the word in **7:15** is “nchash” which was used earlier in 4:3. **The emphasis of the noun “serpent” here is that this would be a very large , great serpent** (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 869). We may suspect that this Mosaic staff would be turned into a very large serpent, larger than what he previously saw.

In **verse 10**, Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and did just exactly what God told them to do. Aaron threw down his staff and it became a serpent.

According to **verse 11**, Pharaoh is not impressed with this because he called for the wise men (hakamim), the sorcerers (mekash-shephim) and the magicians (hartummim) of Egypt and they threw down their staff and their staff also turned into a serpent.

Now these were false religious leaders whose whole existence depends on them fooling people into following their lying system of religion. These men want the Egyptians to think snakes are gods, the Nile is a god and frogs are gods. Their financial support is contingent upon people believing this. So we may assume that these guys know how to play a religious game in order to fool people.

Now the big question that has been raised here is whether or not these Egyptians were actually replicating some supernatural miracle or was this some sleight of hand illusion? Was Satan actually helping these demonic religious people to perform a miracle similar to God, or was this simply some entertaining magical trick like you would see in Las Vegas?

We basically have only three possibilities here as to what these Egyptians did with their staff:

- 1) They did turn a staff into a serpent by the power of Satan, which was permitted by God.
- 2) They did turn a staff into a serpent by the direct power God gave them.
- 3) They appeared to turn a staff into a serpent by a sleight of hand illusion.

There are five observations we want to make in trying to answer this question:

Observation #1 - Moses and Aaron are not ever said to be magicians by Pharaoh like the Egyptians.

We actually know two of the names of the magicians because the Apostle Paul gives us their names: Jannes and Jambres (II Timothy 3:8). Paul said they were depraved men who were opposed to truth. Interestingly, Paul uses their names in a context that describes those who have the ability to trick weak, gullible people (II Tim. 3:6). He specifically says that as the Church Age nears its conclusion, these kinds of religious tricksters will surface more and more.

Notice it is the “magicians” who appear to do what Moses and Aaron did, not the sorcerers. Now we do know that if a snake is kept in a cool environment, it can appear to be a stick. In fact, that is how Paul got bit by a viper (Acts 28:3) on the island of Malta. When the snake started to warm up near the fire, what looked like a stick became a snake. Magicians are good sleight of hand tricksters. They can use boxes and curtains and quick change tactics to make it look like a staff becomes a snake.

Observation #2 - The text says that these magicians did this by their “secret arts,” which literally means something “hidden” (*Ibid.*, pp. 431, 437).

This word could refer to some dark secret satanic practice or it could refer to the interpretation that this was some hidden trick. The magicians could only duplicate the first three signs (staff, water, frogs) but could not duplicate the rest of them. In fact, when God caused the gnats to attack man and beast, they realized this was the finger work of God (Ex. 8:19).

Observation #3 - The end of **verse 12** says Aaron’s staff “swallowed up their staffs.”

This was not something the magicians could do. There was not any substitutionary trick they could perform to top that. By the way, here is one of those details most people who own Bibles completely overlook.

The actual Hebrew words say the “staff swallowed up their staffs,” not the “snake swallowed up their snakes.” This is even more of a miracle. When the staff was in the staff state, which would be a shepherd’s staff, it swallowed up the other staffs that were the magicians wands or staff.

This showed Pharaoh that God would demolish the Egyptians and all their religious beliefs.

Observation #4 - God intentionally started with this, knowing exactly what Pharaoh would do.

This would be **sign number 1**, or we could call this round one with ten rounds to go. By the time this fight is over, Pharaoh will let the Hebrews go. God will win; Pharaoh will lose.

Observation #5 - The miracle of God changing dust into gnat life (8:16) could not be duplicated by the magicians (8:18).

Magicians are able to perform impressive sleight of hand tricks, but they cannot create life. Even if we conclude Satan was permitted by God to give them special powers to do these tricks, he cannot create any life. **Satan does not give life, he destroys life.**

Based on these observations, we would suggest that there is a good possibility that these men could not really even do the miraculous. It is possible they were illusionists who had been fooling Pharaoh and the Egyptian people by their religious trickery. It is perhaps a combination of satanic activity and human deception. Satan is the founder of all lies and false religion and this would not be beyond what he does.

When Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and this all happened, we read in **verse 13** that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not listen to them “as the LORD had said.” Not only had the LORD said it, He was the One doing it.

Now in verse 14, we come to the first of the ten judgment/plagues. The description and outworking of these plagues begins at **Exodus 7:14** and actually ends at Exodus 12:32.

However, when we carefully analyze these plagues, we may notice that they appear to come in three sets of three, with the final plague being unique in itself and is specifically identified as the “one more plague” (Ex. 11:1):

- 1) The account of the first of the three plagues series always begins with God giving a reason to Moses for the plague—**Ex. 7:17**; 8:22; 9:14.
- 2) The account of the first of the three plagues series always starts in the morning —**7:15**; 8:20; 9:13
- 3) The last plague of the three plagues series comes on Pharaoh without any warning —8:16; 9:8; 10:21
- 4) The first set of three plagues may have affected both the Egyptians and Israelites, but all the other plagues only affected the Egyptians .

SIGN MIRACLE #2 – God turns the Nile water into blood . **Ex. 7:14-25 (PLAGUE #1)**

Three of the three plagues actually involve the Nile River—Plague #1 (**7:15**), Plague #2 (8:3) and Plague #3 (8:20). The reason for this is that the Egyptians mythologically believed that the Nile River was a sacred “god.” Not only was the snake worshipped by the Egyptians, but so was the Nile. In fact, many of their invented “gods” were associated with the Nile River.

For example, Khnum was considered to be the deity who guarded the Nile. Hapi, who was depicted by a fat man with the breasts of women which supposedly represented fertility and nourishment, was supposedly the spirit of the Nile. One of the more famous deities was “Osiris” who was supposedly the deity of the underworld with the Nile supposedly his bloodstream.

Well, God was about to shatter their view that the Nile was a deity. Their invented Hapi would not end up happy.

In **verse 14**, the LORD said to Moses that Pharaoh’s heart was stubborn and he refuses to let the people go. Of course, this is true because God is hardening his heart. But we do learn something here about this process—**from a human perspective, the individual thinks he is making the decisions about what he will or will not do.** That to me is the factor that makes a man accountable. He perceives that he is deciding and he is choosing when in all reality he isn’t.

Let me illustrate the point. I have been playing Frisbee with our new pup. She loves to play Frisbee. Now when I get tired and want her to go into the house, I just take the Frisbee and head into the house and she is right after it. Now from her perspective, she is deciding to go after the Frisbee. I know her nature and she is going to follow it. In all reality, I am controlling her decision, she just doesn’t know it. That is the way this works here; God is controlling Pharaoh’s heart and he just doesn’t know it.

According to **verse 15**, Pharaoh went down to the Nile probably to bathe and Moses was to meet him there with his staff. According to **verse 16**, he was to tell him that he was to let Israel go and then he was to say that when I take this staff and hit the water of the Nile, it will become blood and the fish will die, everything will stink and people will have a hard time finding drinking water (**verses 17-18**).

Then, according to **verse 19**, Moses was to take his staff and stretch it out over all waters such as rivers, streams, pools, reservoirs and they too, would become blood. Every bit of water stored in wood vessels or stone vessels would be turned to blood.

According to **verses 20-21**, Moses and Aaron did exactly what God told them and the Nile was turned to blood, the fish died, the stench was unbearable, and drinking water was gone for seven days (**verse 25**).

Now some liberals and also the pseudo-intellectuals of the History Channel have tried to convince people that this was not really a miracle, but was just something that typically happened toward the end of June that made the Nile look reddish. What they say is that toward the end of June, the waters of the Nile begin to rise and are colored dark red by the silt carried down from the headwaters. For about a three-month period the water looks reddish.

But we may easily disprove the secular scoffers and prove that what is recorded in Exodus 7:17-21 is, in fact, a miracle of God by offering six evidences:

- (Evidence #1) - The text says God would turn the water into blood, not the water into the color red (7:17, 19). The Hebrew “blood” (dam) is not “red” (adom).
- (Evidence #2) - The water is changed by Moses striking the water with his staff (**Ex. 7:17**) - not by the rising of the water level of the Nile.
- (Evidence #3) - All the water was totally undrinkable (**7:18, 24**), which never happened when the Nile was just some reddish color.
- (Evidence #4) - The condition of the Nile lasted just seven days, not three months (**7:25**).
- (Evidence #5) - All the fish in the river died (**7:18, 21**), which never happened when silt ran into the river.
- (Evidence #6) - God, at different times, displays His power by transforming water into something else. He turned water into wine in John 2 and water into blood in **Exodus 7**.

The only sane way to interpret this is that God did perform a judgment/sign/miracle on the Nile in that He literally turned it into blood.

But according to **verse 22**, the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate this in some way so Pharaoh wasn't fazed at all by this. The word “same” (ken) means in the same base manner (*Ibid.*, p. 403). Again we are faced with three possibilities:

- 1) The magicians did this by satanic power permitted by God.
- 2) The magicians did this by direct power given by God.
- 3) The magicians appeared to do this by some sleight of hand trick that turned regular water into some reddish water.

One question worth asking from **verse 22** is where did the religious frauds get the water since Moses and Aaron had already turned water to blood? It is possible they had some type of chemically treated water that appeared to change color. But whatever the case, when Pharaoh saw this he went to his home not concerned about anything (**verse 23**).

According to **verse 24**, all the Egyptians were digging around the Nile to find some water to drink. By the way, one thing that often gets overlooked here is that after seven days, God, in pure grace, turned the blood back into water.

Now one thing about Pharaoh that is so applicable today is that God shows him that he is heading to judgment and Pharaoh doesn't seem to be concerned about it. God is displaying his power today through sink holes, fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, power outages and storms and people are more concerned about their house than their own soul. Don't let us make the same mistake. Plead with God to always make your heart soft and tender to His Word and will. Once we learn that we are nothing, that is when we will see God do something.