

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 7

EXODUS

CHAPTERS 7-8

INTRODUCTION

God had told Moses that Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go readily. He would then smite Egypt with all His wonders which He would do in the midst thereof and after that Pharaoh would let the children of Israel go (3:19, 20). Moses and Aaron met with initial failure when they first approached Pharaoh to let their people go. When Moses turned to God and asked for the reason, God reiterated His promise. God revealed who He is to Moses and charged him to go to Pharaoh with Aaron. God would perform all the “signs and wonders” through them and in the end, Pharaoh would let them go.

God did altogether nine plagues (chs. 7-10) and one final one (ch.12) before Pharaoh let the people go. The nine plagues can be divided into three groups, each group of plagues more severe than the previous. The first three plagues touched the land of Egypt, the second the livestock, and the third the people. In each group, Pharaoh was

warned first for the first two plagues but the third plague came unannounced.

These plagues were not freaks of nature or coincidences. A careful study of the plagues provides sufficient evidence that these plagues were supernaturally wrought by the True and Living Almighty God. There are at least five unique aspects of the plagues that testify them as miraculous events: the intensification of the plagues, the prediction before the events, the distinction made between the Egyptians and the Hebrews, the orderliness of the progression of the plagues and the moral purpose.¹ Any attempt to rationalise the phenomenon in order to satisfy the unbelieving heart destroys the honesty and integrity of the text and the purposes for which they are intended.

There are many precious and permanent lessons that we can learn from these spectacular and stupendous acts of God.

OUTLINE

**A. THE FIRST PLAGUE: THE
POLLUTION OF THE NILE (7:8-
25)**

1. Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh to persuade him to let Israel go but he hardened his heart (7:8-13)

¹ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p.85.

2. Aaron smote the Nile before Pharaoh and it turned into blood (7:14-21)
3. The Egyptian magicians could do the same and Pharaoh hardened his heart (7:22-25)

**B. THE SECOND PLAGUE:
FROGS IN THE LAND (8:1-15)**

1. The rivers and the land were covered with an abundance of frogs (8:1-6)
2. Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go (8:7-14)
3. Pharaoh broke his promise and hardened his heart (8:15)

**C. THE THIRD PLAGUE: LICE
COVERED THE LAND OF
EGYPT (8:16-20)**

1. The land of Egypt was infested with lice (8:16-17)
2. The Egyptian magicians' response to the plague (8:18-19a)
3. Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:19b)

**D. THE FOURTH PLAGUE: FLIES
SWARMED THE LAND OF
EGYPT (8:20-32)**

1. Moses warned Pharaoh the LORD's judgement (8:20-23)
2. The LORD smote Egypt with swarms of flies (8:24)
3. Pharaoh promised with conditions (8:25-29)

4. The plague ended but Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:30-32)

COMMENTARY

Yahweh is More Superior

Moses obeyed God. His brother Aaron and he approached Pharaoh again. Pharaoh asked for a sign from Moses and Aaron. God had already instructed Moses what to do. He was to cast his rod on the ground and it turned into a serpent (7:10). Pharaoh called his magicians and they duplicated "in like manner" (2 Timothy 3:8).² Then Aaron's snake swallowed up the magicians' snakes. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart as the Lord had spoken.

The ability of the magicians to perform the act is not by any sleight of hand or trickery for the inspired Word describes that they did it in the same way. God has revealed in His Word that Satan and the fallen angels who followed him can also perform miracles.³ In the light of Scripture, these magicians

² Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

³ Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Revelation 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

are Satan's agents and they performed the miracles through the power of the Devil. In other words, in God's plan and purpose, He has given the angels whom He created the power to do great and mighty works.

The Egyptians had deified the snake. It is a symbol of protection and power. The Egyptian kings had the image of a snake-god on their headgear. The most significant part in this encounter is that Aaron's snake swallowed up all the other snakes. God displayed that He is more superior to the gods of Egypt. The stage is set for the battle between the Lord God of Moses and the children of Israel and the gods of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The First Plague — the Nile

The first plague was directed against the river Nile. It is appropriate because the Nile is considered sacred by the Egyptians. It is the lifeline of Egypt for without it, the lands adjacent to it would be like the deserts and the wastelands beyond them. The LORD told Moses to meet Pharaoh when he went to the river. He should ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go that "they may serve me in the wilderness" (7:15, 16). The turning of the waters of the Nile into blood was to demonstrate to Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews is the LORD — the ever present, active and powerful God.⁴ When the Nile was

turned to blood, it could no more give the life-supporting elements that it used to. This is to impress upon Pharaoh that the origin and sustainer of life is the LORD and not the Nile.

It should not surprise us that the magicians too could perform the thing and Pharaoh's heart was hardened (7:22). The fact that the magicians could still have "unbloodied water" to change suggests that the first wonder was immediately reversed, only to be repeated by the magicians. Nothing seems extraordinary insofar as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were concerned. The interval of seven days after the LORD had smitten the river gave Pharaoh ample opportunity to repent before God acted again in judgement. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

The Second Plague — Frogs

Moses approached Pharaoh with the request to let the people go that they might serve the LORD. Pharaoh was warned that if he refused, the river Nile would be infested with frogs. The frogs would enter into their houses, bedrooms and the beds, kitchens, ovens, kneading troughs and upon all the people (8:2-4). Moses told Aaron to stretch his hand, and frogs came out of the streams, rivers, and ponds on to the land as predicted by Moses.

The plague of frogs must have discomforted the Egyptians miserably. Imagine turning in to sleep at night to find frogs in bed with you; putting on the kettle to boil water and out jump the frogs; and walking on the streets,

⁴ Davis (pp.93-94) comments that it is not necessary to argue whether the Nile River was turned into human or animal blood. The water had all the characteristics of blood as viewed by Moses and the others.

stepping on frogs — frogs here, frogs there, frogs everywhere, not forgetting the croaking noise they all made!

The Egyptians associated the frog with the goddess of Heqt (*pronounced heqet*). The frog-headed deity symbolised fruitfulness and blessings, assuring the Egyptians of a good harvest for the frogs appeared in greater numbers during the time when the Nile was flooding, and of the women in childbirth. But the frogs had become problematic and a nuisance. The magicians too could do the same feat. They added more to the problem by doubling the number of frogs, but they could not remove the frogs. Pharaoh had to call for Moses and Aaron and asked them to pray to the LORD that He may get rid of the frogs. For the first time, Pharaoh used the name “the LORD”. He also promised to let the people go that they might sacrifice unto the LORD (8:8). Pharaoh recognised that it is *Yahweh* who could remove the frogs.

Moses’ initial reaction was one of jubilation (8:9). He asked Pharaoh to select the time for him to ask the LORD to remove the frogs! Moses’ words “*glory over me*” suggests that he gave Pharaoh the honour of choosing the date for the removal of the frogs. Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow.” It was done. All the frogs that were in the houses, the villages and the fields died. The Egyptians had once thought the frog was a symbol of blessings but the frogs were then gathered in heaps and the

land stank! When Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart, and went back on his word (8:15).

The Third Plague — Lice

We observe that no request was made to Pharaoh and neither was Pharaoh pre-warned of its imposition (8:16). The LORD just commanded Moses to say to Aaron to stretch out the rod and smite the dust of the ground and it became lice. These lice invaded the bodies of man and animals throughout the land of Egypt. Now the magicians tried to replicate the feat but this time they could not. They made a significant acknowledgement: “This is the finger of God.”⁵ How do we understand that this time the Egyptian magicians could not duplicate the feat? The appropriate interpretation is that God, who had allowed the magicians to replicate His feats in the past, had limited them this time. God restrained the demonical powers that they had used for their own purpose of self-exaltation before. Their failure is evidence that the God of the Hebrews is the living and true God who is sovereign and who is LORD. We observe that from now onwards, the magicians were completely helpless and powerless.

⁵ This expression is a symbol of divine power. The Law that God gave to Moses was written the “finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). Our Lord Jesus Christ told the Pharisees that He cast out devils with the “finger of God” (Luke 11:20). Compare also Daniel 5:5—*In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.*

The magicians and priests of Egypt were noted for the purity of their physical bodies. They were circumcised, shaved their hair from their heads and bodies, washed frequently and were dressed in beautiful linen robes. The priests could not carry out their priestly function as usual and effectively as they were afflicted by this plague. It humbled them and stained their glory. They became objects of dislike and disgust.⁶

The Fourth Plague — Flies

Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he still refused to let the people go to serve their LORD (8:19b). The LORD told Moses to rise up early in the morning and approach Pharaoh by the river again. Moses must warn him that if he still rejected the request, the land and the all the inhabitants of Egypt would be invaded with "swarms of flies". Moreover God would make a distinction this time between the land of Goshen where the Hebrews lived and the rest of the land. The land of Goshen would be spared the invasion of the swarms of flies. The purpose was that Pharaoh might know that "I am LORD" (8:22).

Pharaoh refused. The LORD acted. Swarms of flies filled the land except Goshen. The phrase "*of flies*" is italicised by the translators of the King James Version for the simple reason that it is not in the Hebrew text, which reads "swarms" (*arob*). The word "swarms" means a mixed one, a variety of insects, or diverse sort of flies. Some translated it as gnats or beetles that was

a symbol of the sum and of the abiding life of the soul. The Egyptians wore the effigy of this revered symbol.⁷

We see a response from Pharaoh at last. He called Moses and Aaron and said, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (8:25). Moses replied that it was not possible. The slaughtering of sheep, and cattle, which the Egyptians worshipped as gods, would offend them. They might turn violent towards the Israelites and stone them. Moses insisted that they moved out of Egypt. Pharaoh then made another compromise that they should not go very far away. Pharaoh also asked Moses to intercede for him and rid the land of the swarms of flies (8:28). Moses agreed to do so but warned him that he should not deceive him again (8:29).

Two significant developments took place. God made a distinction between His people and the Egyptians. This is strong evidence that the plagues cannot be explained away by human reason for they are supernaturally performed by God. Nature does not have personal intelligence to distinguish between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, Goshen and the rest of the land. We see that not only Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt were humiliated, but also the LORD pointed out that he would "put a redemption" between His people and the people of Egypt (8:23).

The other development is that we see that Pharaoh was weakening, but

⁶ Davis, p. 103.

⁷ Maxie D. Dunnam, p.117.

not much. He offered two concessions. But when the LORD did what Moses asked Him to do i.e. removed the swarms of flies, Pharaoh once again hardened his heart and refused to let the children of Israel go. We can understand why Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let Moses and the people go. Pharaoh is also struggling within himself. He was made to believe that he was a god. Giving in to Moses' God would diminish him in the eyes of his priests and people, and would reduce his power. He simply could not do so without being humbled by God.

LIVING BY FAITH

It is clear from this chapter that idolatrous worship of things and animals is futile and useless. Paul had pointed out that the people had worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. We learn, and that is the intention of God, that the one who is in control and is in charge is the living and true God. He is the LORD who is ever present, active, immutable, and keeps His promises.

Those who opposed and disobeyed Him cannot escape the displeasure of His anger. But those who trust and obey Him correspondingly receive from Him His protection and provision. God has shown this by putting a distinction between His people and the enemy. As the people of God chosen and bought with the precious blood of Christ, we take comfort and encouragement as we live and serve Him. God looks upon His children in

mercy and love, protecting and providing for those who fear, love and obey Him.

While Satan through his agents is able to perform similar feats of wonder and amazement, these acts only further aggravated the evil situations. They have no power to alleviate them. Satan's power is limited by God. The devil can only perform if God permits. The Apostle Paul learns this truth well. If God be for us who can be against us? (Romans 8:31). There is no one, really. God's love towards His people is not determined by "tribulation, or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword."

Today if we hear His voice, harden not our hearts, but obey and trust Him.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Exodus 7:8-13; 2 Timothy 3:1-17; Revelation 16:14

TUESDAY: Exodus 7:14-25; Ephesians 6:10-19; John 3:11

WEDNESDAY: Exodus 8:1-15; 1 Corinthians 8:1-6

THURSDAY: Exodus 8:16-24; John 8:1-11

FRIDAY: Exodus 8:25-32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Discussion Questions

1. What are the names of the two Egyptian magicians?

2. What truths can be drawn about Aaron's snake and the Egyptian magicians' snakes?

3. Which Egyptian gods were judged by the turning of the Nile into blood?

4. How does this first plague show the judgement of the gods?

5. How would a hardened heart be manifested today?

6. What different effect has this plague on Pharaoh than the previous ones?

7. What would be the reasons for Pharaoh's change of attitude?

8. What made the plague of lice more irritating than the previous ones?

9. What distinction is now put between the Egyptians and the Hebrews? What does it indicate?

10. What effect did the plagues have on Pharaoh so far? Why did Moses not conform to Pharaoh's suggestions?

11. Are earthly powers in conflict with God today? What are they?

12. Give a title to this chapter.
