

EXODUS 7: 7 - 25

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

The theme of Exodus is one of redemption. The Hebrew slaves are being freed from their bondage. Moses is God's chosen instrument in this endeavor. Jesus was sent by the Father to free us from the bondage of sin and death. We no longer have to be bound by the world. We can be free also.

Last week we stopped at verse six of chapter seven. God was explaining to Moses in more detail what He planned to do.

I cannot stress enough that this plan is a process. It is more than just a way to get the Hebrews out of Egypt. God could have done that in any number of ways. As you read through the Bible you will see a phrase that is repeated often. It is God reminding Israel that He is the one that delivered them from Egypt. Israel had to learn that lesson and they had to be reminded of it often. They also had to be reminded why they were delivered. They were part of a covenant. They were to be a

light to the world. They were to be a nation that was different among all the pagan people of the world. They were to be a visible symbol on earth of the invisible God of Heaven. Moses was the visible representation of the invisible God to the heathen.

I believe it was F.B. Myer that said the church - that is **Christians everywhere are the Bible to the world. What the world refuses to read is what they are to see when they look at us.**

God sent Moses “as God” to Pharaoh to be a witness. We are sent to be a light unto the world for Jesus. That is our vocation. WE are to be priests to the unsaved world in order that people are able to see the kingdom here on earth prior to Jesus bringing the fulfillment of it.

A mixed multitude will come out of Egypt because of what they see. We have that same mission – to show others what a delivered people look like.

As we pick up in verse seven, Moses and Aaron are about to put some punch behind their words. Up to this point they have given Pharaoh God’s

ultimatum. Now they will unleash the power of God on Egypt. Remember, God said that everyone would know whom HE is when this is over. Everything is for our benefit and God's glory.

7 And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty- three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

We can work through the Biblical chronology and find that they year of the exodus was around 1491 BC. What may look to some as just a flippant statement of Moses' and Aaron's age is very important when it comes to our timeline.

8 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9 "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent. "' 10 So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they

also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12 For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. 13 And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

God gave the miracle of changing a rod into a serpent when he was still in Midian. He was told to change his staff into a serpent. So at first it looks like Moses is merely replicating the miracle through the staff of his brother Aaron. But there is something different about this instance. The Hebrew words that are translated serpent are different. The Hebrew word used here in chapter seven represents something more akin to a crocodile. The crocodile was symbolic of Egypt. You can see images of crocodiles still to this day in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. The crocodile could almost be seen as equal to the flag of Egypt.

So when Aaron cast down his rod it is possible that it became a crocodile. This would have much meaning by itself. But God knew what the response of Pharaoh and his magicians would be. As Moses' crocodile sat there hissing and writhing

on the floor of the palace, Pharaoh had his magicians replicate the miracle.

There are a couple of things I want to touch on here. First of all we have no reason to see these acts as anything other than miracles. There is no figurative language. We tend to be a little arrogant in our modern way of thinking. Many times our ideas about ancient peoples are skewed. We tend to think of them as not being as sophisticated as we are - backwards. That is not at all the case. May I remind you that we still don't know how they lifted the giant blocks of stone that form the Great Pyramid?

These people, especially the ones in Pharaoh's inner circle were well educated. They would not at all be fooled by parlor tricks or some slight of hand. Besides, how do you just pull a crocodile out of your sleeve? A regular snake would be hard enough, but they didn't know what Moses was going to do. The Bible tells us that Satan can perform lying signs and wonders. This is the plain reading of the text so there is no reason to water this down to something akin to a Vegas magic show. The supernatural was taking place in order

to show all concerned parties which God was boss.

We will see in subsequent encounters that Pharaoh's magicians can duplicate the miracles of Moses and Aaron but they are powerless to stop them, let alone do anything to help the situation. In fact by producing more of what Moses and Aaron produce, they just make the problem worse. The situation is exacerbated each time.

At any rate, Moses' crocodile eating those of the magicians symbolized God conquering Egypt. This was the first of the many bad signs Pharaoh would see.

13 And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

This is actually the meat of the matter. Pharaoh could have decided to heed the miracle of the staff and crocodile but he didn't. Instead his heart grew hard. As has been mentioned elsewhere, sometimes the Bible says Pharaoh hardened his heart and sometimes it says that God hardened his heart. So which is it?

- The first five plagues – Pharaoh hardens his heart.
- Second five – God hardens Pharaoh’s heart.

The answer is both statements are true. This is not a contradiction. God declares the end from the beginning. This means that He knows what will happen before it ever occurs. He knew Pharaoh would not humble himself and believe in YHWH. Therefore when God placed miracle after miracle and plague after plague before him the result was that Pharaoh got madder instead of being humbled.

On the other hand, Pharaoh like anyone else has the freedom to choose whether or not he will humble himself. His pride got in the way and he chose to fight God rather than follow Him. We all have this same choice. Some things soften in the sun and some harden. It is the same sun. Some things like sugar dissolve in water. Concrete on the other hand hardens. The water is the same but brings about two opposite reactions.

Some people bow to God and others shake their fists in vain. It is the same God but once again we see two different reactions.

The First Plague: Waters Become Blood

14 So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go. 15 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. 16 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! 17 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. 18 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." "

19 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. ” 20 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. 21 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.

This is the first plague to be unleashed on Egypt. Moses and Aaron met Pharaoh as he went to the river first thing in the morning. Contrary to what some may say, Pharaoh was not going down to the river to take a bath or use the restroom. The Egyptians, especially those of the upper classes had running water and even indoor plumbing.

Pharaoh was going to the river for a ceremonial washing. The Nile River played a big part in the multi-god universe of the Egyptians.

There were three different gods connected with the Nile. Khnum was the guardian of the Nile. Hapi

was said to be the spirit of the Nile and the Nile was said to be the bloodstream of Osiris. Earlier in Exodus we saw Pharaoh's daughter bathing in the Nile as a fertility rite.

The Nile was the backbone of Egypt. The Empire could not exist without it. Therefore the gods of the Nile were some of the most important in the pantheon of Egyptian gods. With one fell swoop God had shown them to be powerless. YHWH, God of the Hebrews won the second round/ first plague.

God not only turned the Nile River into blood but He also turned all the other water sources into blood. The Egyptians resorted to digging in the sand in hopes of finding fresh water.

You may ask if there is any evidence of these events. After all, if the Bible is true we should find evidence of such a calamity. Well, there is evidence of it. In the Leiden Museum in Holland is a copy of a papyrus. It reads:

'Nay, but the heart is violent. Plague stalks through the land and blood is everywhere...

Nay, but the river s blood. Does a man drink from it? As a human he rejects it. He thirsts for water... Nay, but gates, columns, and walls are consumed with fire... Nay but men are few. He that lays his brother in the ground is everywhere... Nay but the son of the high-born man is no longer recognized... The stranger people from outside are come into Egypt... Nay, but corn has perished everywhere. People are stripped of clothing, perfume, and oil. Everyone says “there is no more.” The storehouse is bare... It has come to this. The king has been taken away by the poor men.’

Keep in mind that this isn’t just drinking water but water for cattle and crops. The entire economy was affected.

But while the Egyptians as a whole were affected by the lack of water and stench, the most drastic effect was that of Pharaoh’s heart.

22 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. 23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his

house. Neither was his heart moved by this. 24 So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river. 25 And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river.

All the Egyptian magicians could do was to make things worse.

The power of Satan does not produce good things - only more bad things.

Things went on like this for a week without any more confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh. Had Pharaoh just let them go they would have been back from worshipping by now.

So Pharaoh went back into his house having his heart hardened a little more. This was the second chance he had to repent and he did not take advantage of it.

God is a God of second chances. How is your

heart? Have you taken advantage of God's pleas for your repentance of that sin that so easily besets you? What about that relationship that isn't edifying for you? What about those friends that tend to take you away from God rather than joining you in following Him?

Are we going to harden our hearts as Pharaoh or bow to God and be obedient to His will? This is our redemption we are talking about.

Egypt is a "type" of the world. How many of us would rather be left behind in Egypt than make the journey to the Promised Land?

Why would we want to stay when all that is there is bondage, bloody rivers and the stench of death?

What say ye?

Pharaoh has nine more shots at it. None of us know how many more we have. After all, we aren't promised tomorrow.

But everyone is promised some measure of grace. Pharaoh is experiencing it now. Some may say that god is stringing out Pharaoh – and in a sense

that is right. God is extending chance after chance for him to repent. But Pharaoh has been taught since childhood that he can do whatever he wants. He is seen to be the incarnation of Horus. And he is not willing to step down from the pedestal on which he has been placed.

We all have that same scenario going on in some respect. But we must know at the end of the day that God is the only one on the throne. And in His grace He is constantly extending opportunity after opportunity – even in the midst of trials, for us to step down from our self-appointed thrones and follow Him.

God is calling us to humility and repentance. Will we heed that call and respond to His grace? The only outcome is our deliverance.

Closing prayer:

(Soften our hearts)

Father, I do not cease to pray for this family of believers and to ask that we may be filled with the knowledge your His will in all wisdom and

spiritual understanding; that we may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.