



# 2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: November 10<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: November 9<sup>th</sup>



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus

November 10

Ephesians 6:12

I still vividly recall the first time I saw a “magician” in real life. In fifth grade, my class went on a field trip to a local performing arts center to see a magic show which blew me away. I remember sitting, absolutely enthralled, by the sleight of hand tricks that I now know to be a total façade. At the time, I marveled that someone could have such power as to cause a rabbit to mysteriously appear out of thin air!

Over the years, I have realized that “magic” (and other illusions) all thrive on what a person either cannot, or will not, perceive and this makes me very skeptical of any manifestation of power that might seem otherworldly. Nevertheless, there is a biblical category for the supernatural and, although our God is preeminent in that category, there are other parties involved.

Yesterday’s text reminds us that there were two groups of people performing signs before Pharaoh. Moses and Aaron derived their power from God, but the magicians were able to replicate some of the signs by another source of strength. While the narrative is clear that the magician’s power is not sufficient to totally copy the Lord’s abilities (more on that in a future devotion), we must also be aware that their signs were, evidently, very real.

Today’s passage reminds us that this is not to take us off guard. Instead, we should be aware that we are locked in a cosmic battle, and it is a skirmish that involves power on both sides. To be clear, we do believe that the Lord is primary, that He will win the day and that there is no prospect of His defeat, but that does not mean that there are no forces on the other side!

While I’ve never seen a manifestation of power like the ones recorded in Exodus 7-8, I am keenly aware that we are fighting one who is able to accomplish some undeniable feats. Satan’s ability to deceive includes the power to trick our senses and this is why the Word of God is so central to our spiritual success. While the magicians could replicate some of the signs, they were totally ill equipped to speak the very Word of Moses’ God. It was the revelation which predicted His powerful signs and these two things combined make a special, and unparalleled, team.

I suppose what I am trying to say in this devotion can be boiled down to this basic thought: allow God’s Word to define and illuminate God’s world and God’s works. While the world might be able to produce a bogus “sign”, it cannot refute nor replicate God’s supernatural ability as revealed and defined by His totally trustworthy Word.

November 11

1 John 4:4

The very fact that pagan magicians could tap into power that creates mirrors of God's signs can be unsettling to those of us who are opposed to evil. We could easily be concerned, and even worried, when we consider these truths if it weren't for the biblical truths that reassure us that our God is more powerful than our enemy.

Today's passage reminds us of two truths. John tells us that there is a foe "in the world". The "he" that is in the world is clearly Satan. We know this because Satan is often tied to the world in the Scriptures. He is called the "god of this world" in 2 Corinthians 4:4. We are told that he is active, we are reminded in the Word of God that he is powerful (he "blinded the minds and hearts of unbelievers" according to Paul) and we are reminded that he hates us. In fact, Peter tells believers that Satan "prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour".

John's point couldn't be clearer... there is a formidable foe that lurks in our world. Nevertheless, there is a "greater" reality at play and that is our God. The "He that is in you" in this case is clearly the Lord. He is the One who indwells believers and it is because of His presence within us and His power in all the cosmos, that we have no reason to fear the advances of our enemy.

When Moses stood before Pharaoh and observed the counterfeit miracles that the magicians were able to conjure through the supernatural work of the enemy, he had no reason to be distressed. This is not because he was able to deal with the forces of darkness himself but because he represented the great "I AM". God reminded Moses, many times, that the source of his strength and the reason for his expectation of success was not grounded in his humanity. Moses constantly bemoaned his lack of qualifications and every time the Lord reminded the scared prophet that He was there.

Every time Moses complained about his inadequacy, the Lord responded, "I AM sufficient." Every time Moses was confronted with opposition, the Lord responded, "I AM able". Every time Moses encountered false signs, the Lord responded, "I AM greater" and He proved as much!

There came a time when even the magicians admitted the truth of 1 John 4 stating, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). Really what they were saying is that we have encountered One who is greater than anything we have seen prior. Or, stated differently, greater is He who was in Moses than he who was in Pharaoh's palace.

November 12

1 John 3:8

I sincerely pray that yesterday's devotion was comforting and helpful. It always settles my soul to remember what the Lord has revealed to us in His Word. We can trust the Word of God entirely, but the Lord has been gracious to not only reveal what is true in Word, He has also demonstrated His power over Satan in deed.

That is the point of today's verse where we read that Christ has appeared to "destroy the works of the devil". What does this mean? The works of the devil here are in reference to sin as we see in verse 7. The point then is that Christ appeared so that He could overwhelm and annihilate the sin that constitutes Satan's life's work and his power over people.

The god of this world came to tempt mankind to sin. The result of this sin was bondage. We were all born into this slavery but, by God's grace, Christ came to triumph over sin by never giving in to temptation and then to destroy the power and penalty of sin by dying to atone for our transgressions and rising again.

The point then is that God not only says He is greater than Satan, He has proven it in Jesus by dying and rising. Satan's hold on mankind is undeniably strong. There are many supernatural realities and forces at play that are all designed and deployed by our enemy to keep us at bay but, the Lord has come to free us from those strongholds and, at the resurrection, Jesus proved what 1 John 4 taught us yesterday namely that He is in fact greater.

My goal in writing this devotion is straightforward. The desire is just to remind you that Christ has already shown us that He is greater. There is no conjecture here, the Lord took every arrow and assault that Satan could throw at Him including the greatest enemy of all which is death and Jesus rose victorious. Now, that victory is being worked out in the world. It may not always seem like Jesus is winning the war but, His church continues to grow and prevail, His resurrection has occurred, and His place of prominence has been established for all time at the right hand of the Father.

One day, this victorious Lord will return and, when that happens, the victory will be demonstrated for the world to see. Until that time, we follow Him in faith, trusting that the One who destroyed the works of the devil on Calvary some 2,000 years ago, is not going to forfeit His victory today.

November 13

Exodus 8:19

One of the more astounding aspects of Exodus 8 is that the magicians (pagan unbelievers) recognize the source of Moses and Aaron's power. In fact, the power of God becomes so evident to them that they speak to Pharaoh about their observation. Obviously, the point of their speaking was to admonish Pharaoh to understand who he was up against and they were absolutely correct in their warning. For the next four days, I want us to consider all of the good reasons why the magicians would make this observation. The goal is not to simply commend them in seeing, the goal is for us to walk away with a greater understanding of how we can recognize, or discern, the difference between the finger of God and the deceptions of our enemy.

First, I want you to notice that the finger of God was evident to them based on the miraculous. This is an obvious observation, but it bears mentioning nonetheless... God was present and they could know that He was present because there were signs that were being performed that had no other explanation. Folks, when God shows up, He will always announce His arrival with power. In this case, the power was manifest in the materialization of numerous frogs and gnats and the like but don't let the particulars skew the general truth.

While it is true that we have not been plagued by hoards of frogs or a swarm of gnats, it is equally true that the finger of God has been clearly seen in our midst by powerful signs. What are the signs that I speak of? Two come to mind. First, there is the sign of the resurrection. Remember, we worship a RISEN Savior. Our Lord defeated the grave, He overwhelmed the very enemy that no mere mortal could hope to conquer and He did this as a sign that the very "finger of God" was upon Him. Christ deserves our worship and, when we gather to exalt Him and scatter to proclaim Him to our community and world, we speak about One who accomplished that which no magician or demonic foe could ever hope to replicate.

Second, there is the effect of God's salvation. The Bible says that we (those of us who are believers in Christ) were dead but now we are alive. Stated differently, we are new creations. We have been indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit and, consequently, we are different than we used to be. The finger of God is seen, in this instance, in life change. When you gather at a place like Smyrna (or countless other Bible believing churches), you are literally interacting with men and women who have a testimony of a sign that is even greater than the plagues. They have been transformed by God and, when you see this

November 14

Exodus 8:19

As we continue our study of the magician's words in Exodus 8:19, let me offer a bit of a point of clarification regarding the list of signs that demonstrated God's presence and power in Exodus 8. While it is true that there were numerous reasons for the magicians to offer their warning to Pharaoh, the signs that are present in Exodus 8 to unveil the finger of God are not meant to be exhaustive.

What I mean is that we should be aware that there are other ways that God might announce His presence. We see, for instance, in Isaiah 6 that sometimes (rarely) He simply appears in all His glory, overwhelming whoever is in His midst. At other times, the Lord speaks through acts of service or moments of worship. Nonetheless, these signs that are described for us in chapter 8 are helpful and often present in true works of the Lord.

Today's piece of evidence is the presence of the Word of God. Don't forget that Pharaoh was not first confronted with a plague, the Lord's initial step was to send Moses to declare the Word of God in Pharaoh's midst. God rarely, if ever, moves without speaking and that speaking is an act of both grace and necessity.

God's grace is made known in His Word because without His Word we would have no ability to properly understand what He has done, is doing, or will do. Therefore, His speaking is also necessary. Consider for a moment the disconcerting and confusing possibility that would have confronted Pharaoh if God didn't speak! How in the world could he have made sense of frogs, gnats, flies and the like if the Lord didn't tell the ruler of Egypt why this was happening.

Frankly, the supernatural can get both weird and unintelligible very quickly without revelation and this is why the finger of God always includes the Word of God. I say this to encourage and admonish you to never divorce your observations about the relative presence of God's power from the declaration of God's Word. In our world today, many people proclaim to have experienced God or, even worse, to act with power on God's behalf without judging and guarding their lives by the Word of God. The result is often whacky and untethered nonsense which does not prove anything but mental illness!

We must be constantly evaluating all that we see and hear by the Word of God and, when we do, we can quickly discern whether the circumstance at hand is the result of the finger of God or the product of a false god.

November 15

Exodus 8:19

Today's devotion is meant to further illuminate the characteristics of a move of the Lord. My desire is to utilize the circumstances as described in Exodus 8 to demonstrate the ways in which God often moves so that we can recognize both His movement in our lives and discern the times in which the deceiver is attempting to lead us astray.

Let us continue our study by recognizing that a move of God always has purpose. Years ago, I read about the "Azusa Street revivals". For those who are unfamiliar (and I sincerely hope most of you are), this was a series of meetings that took place in California in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century which, supposedly, included many powerful signs and manifestations of supernatural gifts leading to a supposed "revival".

While we do not deny that revival is a real thing and we further affirm the truth that God is able to work all kinds of miraculous things in our midst, but we must understand that this working always has a purpose. The effect of the Azusa street revival was not the furtherance of the Kingdom, frankly it was hysteria! People got all worked up and left with all kinds of designs that didn't pan out. One of the more humorous stories that emerge from this unfortunate series of events occurred when a group of people decided that they were going to China to share Christ in tongues! They just knew that the supposed "languages" they had heard at this gathering was Mandarin (or some other Chinese dialect) and so they traveled to the far East in order share the Gospel in tongues. When these misguided souls arrived on the mission field, they realized quite quickly that they were just speaking gibberish!

In our text today, we see the opposite of this kind of mindless, purposeless manifestation of "power". Instead, the Lord is clearly moving here for a reason! The purpose behind the plagues is not to simply show off, the reason for the plagues is to demonstrate the power and authority of God, leading to the liberation of the people of God for God's redemptive and covenantal purposes.

Dear brother and sister, our God is never frivolous. He is always up to something and that means that when His finger is truly present, there is purpose and not mere hysteria and emotionalism. Interestingly enough, the purpose today is the same. God exists for His glory (which He achieved by overcoming Pharaoh and the Egyptians) and the good of His people. When He shows up, we will walk away reminded of His good and worthy nature and thankful for His grace in saving and sanctifying His people.

November 16

Exodus 8:19

The final devotion is dedicated to asking this question, “what should we do when we see the finger of God?” The answer, at least in this case, is the opposite of what Pharaoh did! One of the more heartbreaking but illuminating moments in all Scripture happens when even the magicians tell Pharaoh that God is present only to see him reject the one true God anyway.

Some people claim that they reject God because they don’t have enough “evidence”. While passages like Romans 1 refute the idea that there are not ample proofs in the world that speak of God’s power, the truth is that more evidence would not change the outcome in the slightest.

The human heart is dead set on rebelling against the Lord and evidence alone won’t change the outcome. In Luke 16:31, we are reminded that even the sign of a man returning from the dead won’t convince those who reject the revelation of God. Pharaoh is an example of this hard-hearted refusal to submit to the clear presence and instruction of God.

Pharaoh’s example provides a great warning to us today. His demise was sure because He rejected the God of life. There was no other outcome that was possible except his condemnation and this is true for all who refuse to embrace and submit to the authority of the Lord.

Have you responded to the finger of God in your life? Are you actively seeking to obey His clear Word? Are you willing to submit to His clear instructions? Are you joyful at the sight of His unmatched power in your life? Are you desirous of His glory? If so, you have every reason to believe that He will save you like He did His covenant people Israel. If not, you have every reason to prepare for the inevitable demise that awaits those who refuse Him.

Pharaoh’s presence in the Scripture constitutes God’s grace towards us all. In this pitiful and unfortunate example, the Lord reminds us that it is folly and dangerous to see Him and refuse to submit. I pray that you see the foolishness of Pharaoh’s ways and that you will learn from his transgressions. If you see God’s finger today, don’t harden your heart like the leader of Egypt did! Submit to the Lord while there is still time and trust that He will see to it that you are saved for all eternity.