

EXODUS 7:8-8:19 THE HARDENING OF A HEART

Today we come to the very familiar account of the plagues. The time had come for God to demonstrate His power and perform the signs that proved that Moses and Aaron were sent by God. It would take more than one miracle to accomplish His purpose. God would use ten plagues before He would deliver the Israelites. By the time these signs were done, God brought Egypt to their knees so they would be willing to let the Jews go. Everyone knew that He alone was God. To go all the way to ten plagues is quite remarkable. You would think that one or two would have been enough, but God wants Pharaoh to know without a doubt that this was the true God. At the same time, it shows how stubborn the human heart can be. We will observe over the period of time it takes to cover these plagues, that his heart gets more and more hardened. He already had a hard heart, because that is the nature of man. God made his heart even harder and Pharaoh, himself, hardened his own heart. God designed His plan that way to show the freedom He has in giving mercy to some and hardening others. Moses had a heart of unbelief himself, as we have seen. God granted him mercy and used him in the plan to deliver the Israelites and Pharaoh who had unbelief is not given mercy and God hardened his heart so that he would not believe God. This shows God's power and control over nature and people. The more sin abounds, the more God's grace super abounds. This demonstrates the glory of God. Romans 9 says God has vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and vessels of mercy to show the riches of His mercy. We believe this and at the same time, we are in awe of this doctrine, as we yield to this as a mystery too high and too deep for us to grasp.

So, as we think about this very difficult topic of God's freedom to do to man whatever He so desires, it should humble us and make us realize we should not ever make God out to be so comfortable in our thoughts that it reduces Him to being less than the great sovereign God that He really is. At the same time we know that man is responsible for his own actions as was Pharaoh, and consequences will follow, as a result.

1. PREVIEW OF THE PLAGUES 7:8-13

Before we get to the plagues, we have a preview that opens the proceedings, and establishes the pattern for the first several plagues: a sign from the Lord, a duplication from the magicians, and Pharaoh's heart is hardened.

This passage summarizes the battle between Yahweh and Pharaoh. This gives us a view of the final victory that will be won.

A. God's Instructions v 8-9

Exodus 4:3 is what God had mentioned previously.

The Snake The rod turned into a snake. Snakes represent

Egyptian power. The headdress of the Pharaoh, looked like a cobra. This staff turning into a snake is a direct challenge to Pharaoh's power.

B. Moses and Aaron Obey And Do Miracle v 10

They were to confront Pharaoh with God's power. The first time they confronted him it didn't go so well. At that time, they didn't perform any miracles. The rod turned into a snake right before Pharaoh's eyes. This must have made him fear.

C. Pharaoh's Magicians Copy Miracle vv11-12

Pharaoh intends a great show of force. He needs magicians to do this trick. Whether they did this miracle through deception and trickery or supernaturally, we don't know for sure. It was counterfeit, since it was not from God. They did not solve the problem, they actually were swallowed up and they couldn't make their snakes swallow up the staff of Aaron.

Satan can empower his people to do wonders. He counterfeits.

2 Thess 2: 9-10, 2 Cor 11, Matthew 24:24, Rev 13:11-15

2 Tim 3:8, Matthew 13:24-30, Gal 1:6-9

The case as far as Pharaoh is concerned, is disputable.

D. Pharaoh's Hard Heart v 13

The lesson was not learned as Pharaoh was confirmed by the so called miracles of the magicians. The miracle by God was not enough to convince him. He was already decided to be in unbelief. This was a hard heart and it was started by God.

Exodus 4:21, 5:2, 6:1, 7:3-4, Romans 9:17-18

2. FIRST PLAGUE—WATER TO BLOOD 7:14-25

PLAGUE---a blow, or strike, God deals out punishment

This one is the first of the ten plagues. This is an attack on Egypt's gods.

A. God's Directions to Give Warning To Pharaoh 14-18

Judgements of God are known by Him beforehand

God warns before He wounds

The Nile was where the baby boys were drowned at the outset of slavery.

B. Aaron Smites the Nile and All Water 19-21

The Nile River was very significant, so it is not by accident that God struck this. This river made abundant life possible where most of the area just beyond the river is desert. It was considered to be a goddess and was worshipped as such. She was the giver of life. But really, it was the I AM. Whatever is worshipped in place of the true God cannot give life, but only gives death. Yahweh actually owned this Nile, even though the Pharaoh thought it was his.

The Egyptians depicted the Nile as Hapi, which was a god that indicated the powers of fertility and nourishment.

To strike the Nile was to impact the heart of their diet: fresh water and fresh fish. Imagine this for a moment. The source of water is gone and the fish you feed the family with is gone. This caused stress all across the land. Seven days without water

had to be very difficult.

- C. Pharaoh's Magicians Copy Miracle 22
Once again they were only able to duplicate the miracle. They were not able to deliver Egypt from it. But they couldn't turn the bloody Nile back to water. This should have made Pharaoh think twice. But their counterfeiting confirmed him that God was not the only god.
- D. **Pharaoh's Hard Heart** 22-23
You would think he and everyone else would be saying, ok He is God and I'm thirsty. Let the people go. But the Lord's words meant nothing. He shrugged off the whole incident.
- E. Egyptians Seek For Relief 24-25
What had been a blessing in Egypt is now a curse. It was God's judgement. They tried to get water around the river. There was very little pure water and the fish in the Nile died and became such a stench. This lasted a whole week.

3. SECOND PLAGUE—FROGS 8:1-15

- A. How It Was Threatened 1-4
Pharaoh is warned here, before it was to happen.
Frogs were seen as sacred to Egyptians as they wore amulets in the shape of a frog. They never killed them. Furthermore, the goddess Heqt was represented by the frog. It was a symbol of resurrection and fertility. God was going to show that frogs don't know the secrets of life. If the Egyptians wanted frogs, frogs it would be.
It was going to be wall to wall croakers. Frogs in the bread, frogs in the bed, frogs in the clothes, frogs in the kitchen and cabinets and cupboards. Frogs would be everywhere. Every step that you would take could be crunching down on a frog. That's a plague.
- B. How It Was Inflicted 5-6
Frogs ruled the country.
They were a threat to the sanitary conditions for preparing food. When they died, their rotting bodies not only had an odor, but also posed a health catastrophe. How do you get rid of piles and piles of stinking dead frogs.
- C. Pharaoh's Magicians Copy Miracle 7
They once again did this to try to show that Moses and Aaron were not that special after all. The problem is that they didn't make the matter better but worse.
- C. How Pharaoh Begs 8
He did recognize Yahweh as the only one who could remove the plague. He saw that God was a power to be reckoned with. He even admitted that God was the one who did this.
He offered to let the Israelites go on the worship trip. But it was Only a strategy to end the plague.
- D. Moses' Intercession 9-14

Moses intercedes and God listens. The frogs died pretty well where they were.

E. Pharaoh's Hard Heart

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This was a hardening to God's mercy in stopping the plague of frogs. Pharaoh is not convinced that he is no match.

God desires to keep him penned against the ropes. God will not let Pharaoh quit so easily.

This hardening just continues throughout the plagues.

God said this would happen 7:3, 13-14

He saw clear evidence of the hand of God at work and still refused

To accept His word and submit. He resisted. 5:2 Who is the Lord?

God hardened him and he hardened himself. The same sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay. Pharaoh sinned against a flood of light, and God used him to accomplish His purpose.

4. THIRD PLAGUE—GNATS

8:16-19

A. How It Was Inflicted

16-17

This plague comes unannounced. The first two had an announcement. every third plague came without an announcement. He can do a surprise attack anytime He wants. God gave life to dust.

Gnat is a word that describes a biting, stinging insect that penetrates the nose and ears. It was like mosquitoes in a cloud. It was like dust.

They were nagging, pesky, lice or gnats.

This was a judgement against Set, the Egyptian god of the desert.

B. Pharaoh's Magicians Fail To Copy

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They could not copy this one. They knew this was beyond their magic. It was the finger of God. This was all about the power and authority of God. They were saying this is too big for us. This is no trick.

The gnats came from the dust of the earth which is not the Egyptians source of life. This was out of their element. They were baffled by it.

This is a deeper display of God's power.

C. Pharaoh's Hard Heart

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He was still unmoved

God's part in this is to bring to the surface what was already there.

He grew more and more obstinate.

Those that are not made better by God's word and providences are commonly made worse by them.

God is certainly having His way and winning the battle. It is really not a match at all as the battle with Pharaoh continues. God uses this so people will know that He is God. The only God is winning every battle very easily. He is sovereign in every way.