



## Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 7:14 - 8:19

Topic

Starting with the Nile River, God performs a series of signs to convince hard-hearted Pharaoh to let the Israelites go

Title

*"Pharaoh in de-Nile"*

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Top 100 lists, or Top 10 lists, peak our curiosity. It's fun to try to predict the things on the list, and to see how our personal rankings stack-up against what others think.

In 2016, *The Hollywood Reporter* compiled a list of the Top 100 Movie Quotes. In the interest of time, I'll give you their Top 5:

- #5 "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore" (*The Wizard of Oz*).
- #4 "May the Force be with you" (*Star Wars*).
- #3 "You're gonna need a bigger boat" (*Jaws*).
- #2 "Here's lookin' at you, kid" (*Casablanca*).

The American Film Institute had the Casablanca quote at #5, with their #2 being, “I’m gonna make him an offer he can’t refuse” (*The Godfather*).

What would you say is #1? Frankly, every list has the same #1. I won’t say it, because we’re in church. It’s Rhett Butler’s last words to Scarlett O’Hara at the end of *Gone With the Wind*.

Growing up in the sixties, it seems like every year around Easter we watched *The Ten Commandments*. It’s not historically accurate; it’s not biblically accurate; but for a movie released in 1956, it has stood the test of time.

There is one incredible quote in the film that, while not in the Bible’s account, nevertheless is an expressive summary of the contest between Moses and Pharaoh. Slouching on his throne, having been defeated, Yul Brenner as Pharaoh says, slowly and distinctly, “His God **is** God.”

In the Book of Exodus, Moses delivers God’s message to Pharaoh, saying, “Let My people go.” Pharaoh asks, with disdain, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (5:2).

In chapter seven we’ll read, “By this you shall know that I *am* the LORD” (v17).

By “this” God means the series of ten signs in which He proves that “His God **is** God.”

We’re going to look at those signs, three at a time, building up to the tenth and final sign - the death of the firstborn throughout Egypt.

Today we'll read about water turned to blood, and the multiplication of frogs and gnats. Those were incredible historic events that happened just as reported by Moses.

But we want more than that. We want to know how these events apply to us today. Along those lines, I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 You Struggle Against The Powers Of This World, and #2 You Suffer Alongside The People Of This World.

## #1 You Struggle Against The Powers Of This World

We're taking the signs by threes in the interest of time, for sure; but there are good reasons in the text to see them grouped together:

- For example in each series the third sign is not announced to Pharaoh; it simply occurs without warning.
- The third sign in each group also breaks a pattern. Today we will see that the first two signs - water turned to blood and the multiplication of frogs - can be duplicated by Egypt's magicians. The third sign - the multiplication of gnats - cannot be duplicated by them.
- In the second group of three - flies, livestock, and boils - the magicians stand in Pharaoh's presence for the first two, but after the third they can no longer stand in his presence.
- In the third set Pharaoh repents after the first two - hail and locusts - but ultimately reneges after the third - darkness. He then dismisses Moses once-at-for-all, setting-up the final sign - the death of the firstborn.

One more thing before we begin. It is commonly taught that each of the ten signs was directed at defeating one of Egypt's gods.

That's sort of true. As far as God vs. god, there were something like 150 gods in Egypt, so no two lists of the ones God supposedly defeated ever agree. It's better to see God proving Himself superior to all Egypt's gods, and to all false gods, rather than just ten of them. By these ten signs He leaves no doubt in anyone's mind.

Exo 7:14 So the LORD said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go.

Exo 7:15 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.

Exo 7:16 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!

We spent a good while in our last study explaining that Pharaoh's hard heart was his own free-will response to God's efforts to reach him. We compared this to the modern practice of nations applying sanctions to rogue nations, attempting to get them to relent from their nuclear ambitions. In many cases, it only serves to harden them against the rest of the world, and to remain committed to their maniacal designs.

God gave Pharaoh lots of time to change his mind. According to *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*,

The 10 plagues may have occurred over a period of about nine months. The 1st occurred when the Nile rises (July-August). The 7th was in January, when barley ripens and flax blossoms.

The prevailing east winds in March or April in the 8th plague would have brought in locusts. And the 10th plague occurred in April, the Passover month.

God was patient with Pharaoh - not willing any should perish.

Exo 7:17 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.

Exo 7:18 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."

Exo 7:19 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.*' "

Exo 7:20 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.

Exo 7:21 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.

You probably noticed I've been calling these "signs," not "plagues." These certainly were plagues upon Egypt, but they were first and foremost signs to introduce God to Pharaoh.

In the last few years it has become popular to try to describe all these signs by reducing them to some natural occurrence.

We would reject that; there's no room in the text for us to come to that conclusion.

We need to not be embarrassed by the Bible's supernatural stories. You'd expect God to perform incredible signs. Besides people are more open to the supernatural than ever. It's not a time to shrink away from Jonah being swallowed by a great fish - not while mainstream scientists are relying on ancient astronaut theories to describe human origins.

Our supernatural is better than theirs - 'cause it's true.

Exo 7:22 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.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul names two of the magicians. They were Jannes and Jambres. They duplicated the sign; or, at least, they, too, could turn a quantity of water into blood.

Why didn't they try to turn blood into water. I mean, seriously; more blood wasn't the thing they needed.

Perhaps they did try to reverse it; we're not told, but that would be logical. So why make more blood?

They were probably attempting to establish that they and their gods were just as powerful as Moses and the God of Israel. Whatever He could do, they could do.

It does serve to warn us that the servants of Satan can at times produce signs and wonders.

It's important to listen to the doctrine, to the teaching, in order to determine the real source of a sign.

Exo 7:23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this.

Pharaoh was not convinced God had the power to defeat Egypt.

After 400 years, why wait another nine months? Again I must point out the great lengths God was willing to go to in order to try to reach Pharaoh.

Exo 7:24 So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river.

Exo 7:25 And seven days passed after the LORD had struck the river.

Like so many despots, ancient and modern, Pharaoh had no compassion for his own people.

Before moving on, are you wondering how the Egyptians could go seven days with such little potable drinking water? One word: *Beer*.

No, it's not in the Bible, but we know from ancient Egyptian scholars that beer was a preferred beverage. It was so prevalent that it was used as wages.

Maybe they went on a seven-day beer-bender while the Nile ran red.

Moses had struck first-blood, but Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Exo 8:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

Exo 8:2 But if you refuse to let *them* go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs.

Exo 8:3 So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls.

Exo 8:4 And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants." ' "

Remember Frogger? One of the greatest classic arcade games of all time. In Egypt, instead of trying to get the frog to safety, the people were trying to avoid stepping on frogs.

There was nothing remotely playful about having frogs everywhere. Even those of you who think reptiles and amphibians make great pets have to be creeped out about this many frogs.

Why frogs? I don't know, and neither does anyone else. Yes, there was a deity who had a frog's head. But, again, God wasn't taking on a few of Egypt's gods; He was showing Himself the only God.

Exo 8:5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.'

Exo 8:6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.



Our attention is so fixed upon Pharaoh that we are overlooking the obedient faith of Moses and Aaron. It wasn't easy to believe that frogs in this quantity were going to appear.

Exo 8:7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.

If frogs were already everywhere, how did they know that more frogs were produced? Maybe they hopped like an Egyptian.

Exo 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the LORD that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."

That must have sounded great to everyone. It was short-lived.

Exo 8:9 And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, *that* they may remain in the river only."

Exo 8:10 So he said, "Tomorrow." And he said, "*Let it be* according to your word, that you may know that *there is* no one like the LORD our God.

In other words, pick the exact time you'd like this to stop; Moses would pray; the frogs would be (mostly) eliminated.

Exo 8:11 And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only."

Exo 8:12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.

Exo 8:13 So the LORD did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields.

Exo 8:14 They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank.

This would have been a frog-gigger's dream time to be alive. I guess frog-legs weren't on the menu.

Truth is, and I'm being serious, the Egyptians ate a mostly plant-based diet. An article on InsideScience.com stated, "If you're a vegetarian, tucking in along the Nile thousands of years ago would have felt just like home." A French research team, working with 45 mummies, by testing for carbon-ratios, were able to determine not only did the Egyptians eat mostly plants, they ate very little fish. Who knew?

Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

Did you ever have the experience of crying out to God, and having Him help you - only to then turn your back on Him?

Or maybe a nonbelieving friend or family member turned to the Lord in the midst of a difficulty, only to fall-away once it was over?

"As the Lord had said" points to God's foreknowledge. Of course He knew beforehand what Pharaoh would do. But God's foreknowledge didn't cause Pharaoh to harden his heart.

The next sign started out differently.

Exo 8:16 So the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.' "

Exo 8:17 And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

There was no going to Pharaoh; there was no warning.

The Hebrew word translated "lice" occurs only here in the Old Testament. *Gnats* or *biting insects* is a better translation.

Exo 8:18 Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast.

It wasn't that gnats are harder to produce than frogs. God determined it was time to show Egypt that the powers of their magicians was not on any par with His.

Exo 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This *is* the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.

This is a great admission of God's power. He only needed to lift a finger to accomplish the sign. It should cause one to tremble at what He could do. Notwithstanding, Pharaoh only strengthened his resolve to defy the Lord.

Obviously this whole episode is unique. It was the one and only time God was working in this particular way to deliver several million Jews from bondage and into their Promised Land.

At the same time, at its core, it is happening everyday; and it involves us.

At its core, the man (in this case men) of God have a message of deliverance for those held captive by the ruler in charge, who depends upon the powers that aid him in his nefarious kingdom.

That's a perfect description of the situation we find ourselves in as Christians:

- Satan is the ruler of this world.
- He promotes a nefarious kingdom of darkness.
- He is aided by various “powers.” More specifically, by “principalities [and] powers... [and] the rulers of the darkness of this age... [and] spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*” (Ephesians 6).

We are in the midst of Satan's kingdom, sent out with the message of deliverance - the Gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe - freeing them from sin and from Satan.

We don't carry a staff or a rod that can turn into a crocodile or bring forth mighty signs. That's not the kind of warfare we are currently waging.

Instead, we have spiritual weapons; but they are every bit as powerful, because their source is the same as Moses' staff. Their source is the living God.

We need to be committed to the truth that spiritual weapons are superior. To put it negatively, we need to reject carnal weapons.

While you may eventually file a grievance at work, for example, try love and mercy and forgiveness. And even if you must go through some process, depend upon grace to sustain you. You are most likely right where God wants you, to reach some 'pharaoh' with the message of the Cross.

## #2 You Suffer Alongside The People Of This World

There's something else subtle but powerful to reflect upon regarding the first three signs. While not everyone agrees, it would seem that the Israelites were affected by these three signs just as much as were the Egyptians.

Here's why I think they were. The next sign, the fourth, is flies. In Exodus 8:22-23 we are told,

Exo 8:22 And in that day **I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell**, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the land.

Exo 8:23 **I will make a difference between My people and your people.** Tomorrow this sign shall be." ' "

For the first time we read that God exempted Israel from the effects of a sign. The same is said of the fifth sign:

Exo 9:4 And the LORD will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all *that* belongs to the children of Israel." ' "

While no direct mention is made of a distinction in the sixth sign, the implication of Exodus 9:11 is clear: "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, **and upon all the Egyptians.**"

From the plague of the hail the Israelites were also exempt: "Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail" (9:6).

Of the eighth sign, locusts, Exodus 10:5 & 6 says that it was directed against the Egyptians: "...and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remains unto you [the Egyptians] from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you [the Egyptians] out of the field: And they shall fill the houses, and the houses of all their servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians....."

In the ninth plague, darkness, we read, "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (10:23).

There was no mention of any exemption from the first three signs. The Bible calls attention to the exemption starting with the fourth sign. So I'm saying the Israelites endured water turned to blood, and frogs, and gnats.

What can we make of this? First of all, we already realize that Christians are not exempt from the tragedies and catastrophes that occur with increasing frequency in our fallen world. One writer put it like this,

Rain and sunshine, flood and drought, plenty and famine, prosperity and depression, war and peace, lightning and hail, tornado and hurricane, health and pestilence - all these befall the wicked and the righteous in common.

The difference between believers and nonbelievers in catastrophes is that God can work all things together for our good in them, and through them. They can be used by God to further our sanctification - to further our spiritual growth toward holiness, toward our being more like Jesus.

Let's take a step further back. Instead of starting with us, and wondering why we are not exempt from certain sufferings, we ought to start with Jesus.

Jesus was eternally God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in perfect fellowship, in Heaven. What did He decide to do in order to save the human race?

Php 2:6 ...being in the form of God, [Jesus] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Php 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

God became man. Deity took upon humanity. Of this we read, with wonder and awe,

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

In other words Jesus came into our world and suffered alongside of us. We can list some of those 'alongside' sufferings:

- Jesus lived in poverty.
- Jesus suffered from exhaustion.
- Jesus experienced grief.
- Jesus was betrayed.

After all that, Jesus died in our place, in the cruelest way - mocked by His own creations on the Cross at Calvary, after being mercilessly beaten and scourged.

We might mention, too, that in His resurrection from the dead, Jesus now has a glorified human body that still bears at least some of His scars. Even in His glory, He shows how He suffered alongside of us.

With the perspective of Jesus suffering alongside us to save us, we can certainly suffer alongside the lost, to give them the opportunity to be saved. The Lord is only calling us to do what He did to a much greater degree than we could ever fathom.

Believers and nonbelievers are watching you to see if Jesus makes a difference in your life, and especially in your difficulties.

You don't want people to say of your spiritual life, "I see dead people."

No, by the sustaining grace of God, you want them to say, "His God **is** God."