

The Book of Exodus

The First Three Plagues

Text: Exodus 7:8 – 8:19

Introduction:

1. After the first appearance of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, the king rejected God's command and increased the burden upon the children of Israel.
2. Upon doing so, Pharaoh asked an important question: "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"
3. Now, God will answer that question by proving His authority and power to Pharaoh.
4. This is the beginning of God's sending ten plagues upon Egypt.

I. The First Demonstration of Power (Exodus 7:8-13)

- A. Naturally, Pharaoh would want a demonstration of power to prove that Moses and Aaron were speaking for God.
- B. God instructed them to answer that request by Aaron casting his rod before Pharaoh, whereupon it would become a serpent.
 1. Obviously, this is the same rod from Exodus 4:2-3, only it is in the hands of Aaron as the spokesman for Moses.
 2. The rod was often a symbol of power or authority; thus, this becomes a contest between God and the false gods of Egypt.
 3. Interestingly, the word translates 'serpent' is never rendered this way in any other passage.
 4. Here, the Hebrew word is *tanneen* or *tanneem* – a word which means, "Sea or river monster, dragon; a large reptile (of water or land).
 5. The word in Exodus 4 is *nachash* – the general word for a snake or serpent.
 6. While it probably still refers to a snake here, it seems to indicate a large, frightening, and vicious one.
- C. Faced with this challenge, the wise men and magicians of Egypt performed a similar display.
 1. Using enchantments, they cast down their rods which then became serpents.
 - a. "Wise men" – learned in the wisdom of men, occult arts
 - b. "Sorcerer" – one who practices witchcraft; to whisper or incant
 - c. "Magician" – astrologer, diviner; one who draws magical lines
 - d. "Enchantment" – literally, blaze or flame; enwrapping to be covert
 2. Thus, their feat was not miraculous, but performed using trickery.
 3. In Titus 3:8, two of these magicians are named – Jannes and Jambres.
- D. However, God proved His power by causing the serpent from Aaron's rod to destroy and consume the serpents produced by the Egyptians.
- E. Yet, in spite of this, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he refused to listen to Moses.

II. Plague One: *WATER TURNED TO BLOOD* (Exodus 7:14-25)

- A. Because Pharaoh hardened his heart, God determined to prove His power by sending plagues upon Egypt.
 1. These plagues would serve as evidence of God's strength and authority.

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2. They would serve as punishment for the rebellious Egyptians.
3. And, they would serve as evidence of the folly of Egypt's false religion and the powerlessness of their false gods and goddesses.
- B. The first plague was to come as Pharaoh went to the Nile River in the morning.
 1. This early morning visit to the Nile was an act of worship by Pharaoh.
 2. The Egyptians believed that the Nile was inhabited by and was the realm of the god, Hapi.
 - a. The god Khnum was the guardian of the Nile's source.
 - b. It was believed that the Nile was the bloodstream of the god Osiris.
 3. Thus, as Pharaoh came to worship this false god, he was challenged by Moses and the superior power of Jehovah.
- C. Thus, when Aaron took the rod and struck the water of the river, it turned into blood.
 1. Earlier, this river had received the blood of the Hebrew children who were cast into it at the command of Pharaoh (Exo. 2:1ff).
 - a. Savak was the god of the crocodile – pictured with a crocodile head.
 - b. It is likely that many of the Hebrew children had been offered to him as a sacrifice.
 - c. Now, those crocodiles also would suffer defeat from Jehovah.
 2. Now, the river has become blood and the creatures dwelling in it died.
 3. Thus, the god Hapi has been discredited by suffering defeat at the hands of Jehovah.
- D. This plague affected not only the Nile River, but also the streams, canals, and pools in Egypt.
 1. The vessels of wood and stone were used for filtering the water before drinking; yet, they also were affected.
 2. The only source of fresh water was that which could be reached by digging wells.
 3. Furthermore, the death of so many fish robbed the Egyptians of one of their primary sources of food.
- E. When the magicians of Egypt conjured a similar feat, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to obey God.
- F. This plagued lasted for seven days.

III. Plague Two: *FROGS*

(Exodus 8:1-15)

- A. Moses made request of Pharaoh again, warning him that if he refused to free the Israelites, God would send a plague of frogs upon Egypt.
- B. These frogs would come forth in hordes and spread throughout the land – into houses, beds, ovens – everywhere!
- C. This was another attack against the false gods of Egypt.
 1. Heka was the frog-headed goddess who was called “the Queen of the two worlds.”
 2. As frogs lived in water and on land, she was seen a living in this world and the unseen realm.
 3. As a goddess, she was also connected to fertility.
- D. Pharaoh responded to this plague, calling for Moses and Aaron to remove the frogs from the land.
- E. However, when they died and began to stink, Pharaoh went back on his word.

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IV. Plague Three: *LICE*

(Exodus 8:16-19)

- A. After Pharaoh's dishonesty concerning the previous plague, God gave him no warning of the coming third plague.
- B. The Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to smite the dust of the ground with the rod so it would become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.
 - 1. The Hebrew word for 'lice' comes from a word that means, "To plant or to fasten."
 - 2. Thus, it refers to an insect that fastens itself to other animals or men.
 - 3. This word is always used in the plural, emphasizing a swarm or large collection of these insects.
 - 4. Some suggest that these were gnats, fleas, mosquitos, lice, or some other biting bug.
 - 5. Lice is probably the best understanding of these creatures.
 - 6. Whatever they were, they would be a tremendous and painful nuisance to the Egyptians.
- C. This plague was also a defeat of the false gods and false religion of Egypt.
 - 1. The god Seb (or, Geb) was viewed as the god of the earth.
 - 2. By turning dust into lice, the power of this false god was proven nonexistent.
 - 3. Also, this was an attack against the priesthood of the Egyptians.
 - 4. Egyptian priests performed their duties on behalf of the people.
 - 5. In order to serve, they had to be extremely careful about the cleanliness of their bodies.
 - 6. In fact, they would shave their heads and bodies every three days "for fear of harboring vermin, while occupied in their sacred duties."
 - 7. Now, the entire priesthood of Egypt was unclean because they were afflicted with lice.
 - 8. Brother Turner stated: "In short, the Egyptian priests were literally lousy."
 - 9. Not only were the gods of Egypt proven powerless, but also their priests were rendered unable to carry out their religious duties.
- D. The magicians of Egypt attempted to replicate or counterfeit this plague, but they were unable to do so.
 - 1. The magicians had been able to copy the first two plagues by trickery and deceit.
 - 2. However, their actions only made the conditions in Egypt worse.
 - 3. If they had truly possessed magical powers, they would have reversed the plagues of God.
 - 4. Now, they have been proven powerless to perform any true miracle.
 - 5. They – along with Egypt's gods and priests – have been utterly discredited.
- E. Finally, they admitted, "This is the finger of God."
- F. Still, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to obey God.