

God had shown Pharaoh through Moses' staff that the God of the Hebrews is the God of all authority. The staff of Moses swallowed up the staffs of the magicians. Then God had Moses confront the source of the Egyptians security, the Nile, believed to be the bloodstream of Osiris. Ironically, the water turned to blood which made the river stink of dead fish. Pharaoh was unmoved. His heart was hardened.

Don't you wonder if Pharaoh really believed his own religion? When he, as the incarnation of Ra and Horus, went into temples to appease the many gods of Egypt, did he really think of himself as a priest? Or did he know it was all a way to control the people? When he saw these miracles take place, did he really believe that his gods were as powerful as the God of Israel?

My suspicion is that he knew or at least came to realize in time that the God of the Hebrews is the God over all. **Yet Pharaoh could not relinquish his power or his pride and give in to God's commands.** (Proverbs 21:24)

Commented [notes1]: Proverbs 21:24 (ESV)
24 "Scoffer" is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

Does that sound familiar? How many unbelievers know the God of the Bible is real, all-powerful, directing the course of history, and yet they will not yield to His command to know Him and be saved. (John 17:3) How many believers know He is God and yet will not come out of Egypt by living in compromise? (1Peter 1:15-16) I suppose to some extent we have all experienced that condition of a hard heart.

Commented [notes2]: John 17:3 (ESV)
3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Commented [notes3]: 1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)
15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? I believe Pharaoh did as is clearly stated at the end of the next plague. Later we will see the text state clearly that God hardened his heart, but not until the sixth plague. (Exodus 9:12)

Commented [notes4]: Exodus 9:12 (ESV)
12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

God had shown His power to be greater than the temples' magicians, and greater than the god Osiris (Lord of the Dead, God of Resurrection, One who causes the Nile to flood). We saw how that symbolized things we look to for security other than God. The people of Egypt were no doubt shaken by this first plague and what it said about Pharaoh's ability to appease the gods and keep their world at peace. (John 16:33)

Commented [notes5]: John 16:33 (ESV)
33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Since he would not yield, a second plague was in order. Yet, God first gave a warning and a chance to change his mind. *¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me."² But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs.* God was saying, "Let my people go and worship someone other than you, Pharaoh! Let them serve me!" God was demanding. He has a right to demand. He is Creator. We ought to serve Him. Notice again that worship and service are interchangeable. To truly serve God is to worship Him and vice versa.

God warned of the severity of the plague. This wasn't just a few frogs, but frogs in everything, in pots and pans, in their beds, everywhere! **Heqet** was a frog headed woman goddess that was worshiped as the goddess of fertility. Amulets of little green frogs have been discovered from this era in Egypt that were supposed to help women become pregnant.

Apparently Pharaoh was unmoved by the warning and refused to let the people go, so God had Moses proceed. The frogs they loved to worship were everywhere. The abundance was disgusting. God is showing the Egyptians that their false gods are a curse, and not a blessing.

⁷ *But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.* How did they do that since it was already happening? Perhaps they just took credit for something already taking place. Whether it was demonic power or deception, Pharaoh believed his magician priests could do the same. The difference was that the magicians couldn't get rid of the frogs.

⁸ *Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."* Pharaoh said, "I give up. Go! Just ask the LORD to take away the frogs." But when the LORD did, Pharaoh changed his mind. The pressure was off, so his commitment was off.

Isn't that typical? "Lord, if you'll just heal me, if you'll just save me from this financial crisis, if you'll just help my kid get off drugs... or whatever is the immediate 'plague' then I'll do the thing you've been asking that I've been avoiding. God, just let up and I'll get serious about serving You." God takes the pressure off and we slowly go back to our old ways.

⁹ *Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile."* God was so gracious to Pharaoh as to even let him pick the time. God knew Pharaoh would go back on his word, but God still gave him every chance to know Him.

¹⁰ *And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.* The magicians couldn't get rid of the frogs or they would have already done it. Pharaoh is given grace to see the power and greatness of God even though he will not change. God is the same with everyone. (Acts 10:34) There will not be a soul in hell that did not harden their heart time and time and time again. Not a soul there will say, "If I only knew..." They can say it, but let God be true and every man a liar. (Romans 3:4) God reveals Himself to the godly and the wicked. (John 1:9)

God did what Moses asked. The frogs died and the Egyptians piled them in heaps. The rotting frogs made the land stink. Again, chaos had invaded the false sense of peace in the land of Egypt, and the people would have seen Pharaoh as the one to blame.

¹⁵ *But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* He hardened his heart! He refused to listen. This is the curse of the sin nature. (Isaiah 6:10) We tend to think that the pressure on us is perhaps just a natural phenomenon, just a part of life and not the Lord dealing with us. This refusal to listen was the indictment against Israel in their last days. (Jeremiah 7:27) It isn't just a problem with Pharaoh's ears.

Commented [notes6]: Acts 10:34 (ESV)
34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

Commented [notes7]: Romans 3:4 (ESV)
4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

Commented [notes8]: John 1:9 (ESV)
9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Commented [notes9]: Isaiah 6:10 (NIV)
10 Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Commented [notes10]: Jeremiah 7:27 (ESV)
27 "So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you.

Mankind has the same problem. We want to listen to our own whims. We want to do it our way. We want to stay in control. We don't want to bow the knee and give anything up. We want to save our life and we end up losing it. (Luke 9:24) It's no surprise that Pharaoh did this. We all do it. Our only hope is the life of Jesus in us. We all have a hard time listening because we know that if we hear, we will have to let go of our will and ways.

Commented [notes11]: Luke 9:24 (ESV)
24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

There was no warning for the third plague. Out of the dust came gnats or in some translations lice. The Egyptians worshiped **Geb** as the god of the earth. Instead of blessing them with goodness from the land, it brought forth another annoying pestilence. Whether gnats or lice, they covered man and beast, creating an unbearable annoyance. Only the land of Goshen was exempt, which showed God was in the midst of His people protecting them. (Psalm 91:7)

Commented [notes12]: Psalms 91:7 (NIV)
7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

I wonder if the plagues that did not harm Goshen were ones that the Israelites had not allowed to creep into their religious worship. The workers on the tombs, some of whom were Hebrews, had a temple that included all these gods. The Hebrews had been influenced by Egyptian gods, as we will see later.

The Egyptian magicians were unable to reproduce this miracle. *¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* They called it "the finger of God". God had invaded the present in breaking the normal cycle of things and manifested his wrath against these false gods. Of course these idols were nothing. Yet, behind them are demons that accept the worship of man and encourage the continuation of idolatry. (1Corinthians 10:20)

Commented [notes13]: 1 Corinthians 10:20 (ESV)
20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Jesus used the phrase "finger of God" when speaking of how He cast out demons. He described it as the kingdom of God having broken into the routines of life doing the miraculous. (Luke 11:20)

Commented [notes14]: Luke 11:20 (ESV)
20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Pharaoh again hardened his heart and refused to listen to God's demands. What would it take? How much do we as individuals have to see before we humble ourselves and submit to God? How much do we as a nation have to endure before we recognize our punishment is from God to turn us from our idolatry? What will it take for us to listen with our heart?

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." God again is gracious enough to warn Pharaoh, in spite of Pharaoh's hard heart. Apparently Pharaoh is still worshipping his false god the Nile each morning, even after the first plague. It has always amazed me how people can be shown a false god is detrimental to them and yet continue worshipping it. (Isaiah 46:6-7)

Commented [notes15]: Isaiah 46:6-7 (NIV)
6 Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it.
7 They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles.

The demand was made again, and a warning was given. "Let my people go, or else..."

The next plague is called a swarm. This may be mosquitoes, scarabs or it may be a blood sucking fly or even a mixture a flying pests. (Psalm 78:45) We have a blood sucking fly in our area. When I used to swim in the creek, I remember how I hated

Commented [notes16]: Psalms 78:45 (ESV)
45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them.

them. They would try to land where you couldn't swat them and bite into your flesh. Imagine great swarms of them biting you all the time. It would drive you mad! This could have been addressing the god **Khepri**, Egyptian god of creation and movement of the sun. His image was of a man with the head of a fly. Egyptians also worshiped Baalzebub that is mentioned in the New Testament (Luke 11:15), Lord of the Flies, who was to keep swarms of flies out of Egypt. **God is again showing the gods of Egypt to be a curse rather than a blessing.**

Commented [notes17]: Luke 11:15 (ESV)
15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,"

Once again the plague was not going to touch Goshen. Verse 23 literally says that God put "redemption" between my people and yours. Redemption is what saves people from judgment. It was to be clear to Pharaoh that this was from God, and that God was protecting His people. (Leviticus 20:24)

Commented [notes18]: Leviticus 20:23-24 (ESV)
23 And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them.
24 But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who have separated you from the peoples.

Pharaoh tried a compromise. ***25 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land."*** Moses explained that their sacrificial animals were worshiped by Egyptians and it would create conflict, possibly even the stoning of the Hebrews by the Egyptians. Rams and cows were sacred to Egyptians. Imagine a barbeque in front of a Hindu temple. It sounded like a possible compromise, but it wasn't what God had asked. God wants us out of Egypt altogether, not a compromised worship with one foot in both worlds. You have to leave Egypt to get to the Promised Land.

28 So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me." Pharaoh knows what is about to happen. He doesn't want to lose his labor force. He relents to get rid of the flies, but again, when the pressure is gone, he'll go back on his commitment.

29 Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." It's as if they both know they have more rounds to go. Moses is saying, "You better not be cheating!" Pharaoh knows when the flies are gone he'll go back on his word. Back and forth they go. Meanwhile, god after Egyptian god is being declared to be powerless at best, and at worse a curse.

32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go. This is getting to be like Charlie Brown and Lucy with the football. She promises not to move it. When Charlie goes to kick it, she moves it every time. Pharaoh keeps promising and renegeing. (Matthew 5:37)

Commented [notes19]: Matthew 5:37 (ESV)
37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

God graciously warned Pharaoh again. This time God gave him another chance to listen and a warning of what will come. It is the warning of a disease that will destroy the livestock. Pharaoh's wealth was largely in livestock. Once again, Goshen was to be spared. (Mal 3:16-18) Once again, Pharaoh can see there is none like YHWH! (2Samuel 7:22)

Commented [notes20]: Malachi 3:16-18 (ESV)
16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.
17 "They shall be mine," says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.
18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

Horses and cows were sacred animals to the Egyptians and highly valued. The cow god, **Apis**, represented Pharaoh's courage, strength, virility and fighting spirit. The cow

Commented [notes21]: 2 Samuel 7:22 (ESV)
22 Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

goddess **Hathor** was depicted with cow horns, with the sun between them. She was thought to nourish the Pharaoh and was the goddess of love and glamour.

God gave Pharaoh a night to reconsider. It's hard to imagine, even experiencing plague after plague he just will not yield. He fit the description from the poem *Invictus*, "His head is bloody but unbowed." Pharaohs prided themselves in determination. God called this stubbornness and a hard heart. Determination can be good, bad or neutral, but a hard heart is always a selfish heart. (Philippians 2:3)

By morning Pharaoh was still unwilling to yield. The plague struck. Pharaoh had to wonder why his gods had let him down again. He sent someone to see about the cattle in Goshen. Not one of them had died. The message was crystal clear! The evidence is undeniable. What will it take?

^{7b}But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. The Egyptians believed that when a person died, their heart would be weighed. The feather represented what is right and just. If their heart was heavier than a feather, they would be consumed by the creature Ammit (devouress or swallower). Every time the heart is described as hardening, the Egyptians would read it as being heavier. The guilt of Pharaoh was piling up. The assurance of judgment was getting more certain with each plague.

The miracles we see around us may not be as great a sign as those in the Exodus, but we do see signs that require us to either yield our heart or harden it. Some of the greatest signs for me were not afflictions but the deliverance from the affliction. It's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance, if we are willing to receive it. (Romans 2:4) It was the lifting of each plague that should have caused Pharaoh to repent.

God shows our gods to be nothing but a curse, and we must make a choice. **We will carry on and harden our heart, or we will yield and rid our lives of those gods.** (Matthew 4:10)

We don't have the bizarre gods of Egyptian mythology, but we have the gods they represent, security, power, sex, prosperity, etc. We don't call them gods. At times we sing to them. We believe in and trust them just like the Egyptians trusted their gods. We think our gods are beneficial and blessing our life, when really they have become a curse. We get on that hamster wheel of making more money or gaining respect or pleasing our self in some way. It looks like it is satisfying, but it ends up being a never-ending cycle of destruction. (Ephesians 4:19)

The real God comes along and smashes them right before our eyes. We have to make a choice. Will we still believe in them even when we have discovered that they are powerless to save us, when the satisfaction is temporal and even harmful? Will we harden our heart like Pharaoh? Or will we let the love of Jesus soften and break our heart until we serve and worship Him alone?

Questions:
two gods incarnated?

1 Do you think Pharaoh believed he was really

Commented [notes22]: Philippians 2:3 (NIV)
3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Commented [notes23]: Romans 2:4 (NIV)
4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Commented [notes24]: Matthew 4:10 (ESV)
10 Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' "

Commented [notes25]: Ephesians 4:19 (NIV)
19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

- 2 Why did God send a plague of frogs?
- 3 Why did God allow Pharaoh to pick the timing for the frog removal? Lesson?
- 4 Why did Pharaoh harden his heart in verse 15? Relate?
- 5 Why did God exempt Goshen?
- 6 What did the magicians call plague #3? How did Jesus use the term?
- 7 How did God reveal the gods of Egypt to be a curse rather than a blessing?
- 8 What is the difference between stout-heartedness and hard hearted?
- 9 How did the Egyptians read "hard hearted"?
- 10 Why do you think Pharaoh sent someone to check on Goshen?
- 11 How can we relate to the gods of Egypt?
- 12 Consider Malachi 3:16-18 in reference to our text.