

We left Moses complaining before God about his inability and God’s lack of action during the first encounter with Pharaoh. In verse 13 of the last chapter, we are told that God renewed His charge to Moses. Chapter seven is an account of that command and of Moses’ obedience by faith.

Commented [Paul Wall1]: Exodus 6:13 (ESV)
13 But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. God had already said this in 4:16. But now God is telling Moses to "see" that what God has said has come to pass. It is another command of God to walk by faith and then see that what God says is reality. (2Corinthians 5:7) The only way Moses is going to see it is if he obeys God and goes back to Pharaoh again. He escaped with his life last time, and his people suffered for the exchange. But God says His word is reality, not how Moses was interpreting the conditions around him at that time.

Commented [Paul Wall2]: Exodus 4:16 (ESV)
16 He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him.

Commented [Paul Wall3]: 2 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)
7 for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Did it look like Moses was God to Pharaoh? No way! It looked like Pharaoh made a fool of Moses. But God was saying that is only how it appeared. God’s perspective is reality. Moses’ perspective is just a snapshot in time. Believe God!

It reminds me of when Ida left us. The shell looked as if life was fading but the Word tells us she was entering into everlasting life. I could believe my eyes at the moment or I could believe the never failing Word of God. (John 11:25) See, *"death where is your victory; where is your sting?... thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1Corinthians 15:54-56) Believe God!

Commented [Paul Wall4]: John 11:25 (ESV)
25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

God told Moses he would be God to Pharaoh. The word "like" is not in the Hebrew text. Of course, God is not saying that Moses is divine, but rather that God is at work in Moses. Pharaoh thinks he is the incarnation of a god. God is beating Pharaoh at his own game by being God in Moses.

Commented [Paul Wall5]: 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 (ESV)
54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."
55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though this terminology is not used again in Scripture, the New Testament calls us God’s ambassadors. (2Corinthians 5:20) We represent God to unbelievers. They may have been avoiding an encounter with God, but when they encounter our love and concern, they are encountering God’s love and concern. The ultimate example of this was Jesus Christ who is divine and actually is God with us. (Colossians 1:15)

Commented [Paul Wall6]: 2 Corinthians 5:20 (ESV)
20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

To be God’s ambassador is a big responsibility! We must carry it out the way Moses did, by faithfully doing what God instructs us to do in demonstration of the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) And just in case you think you are too old to start down this road, remember Moses was 80 and his brother was 83!

Commented [Paul Wall7]: Colossians 1:15 (ESV)
15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Commented [Paul Wall8]: Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In verse two, God told Moses that he is to go back to speak to Pharaoh. Moses sounded like he was trying to use his inabilities to get out of the task, and God simply said, "You shall do this!" It is the same with us. Ephesians 2:10 tells us God planned in advanced the good works we will do. There is that mystery of free will and the sovereignty of God.

Commented [Paul Wall9]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Well, Moses could have packed it up and headed back to Midian and lived out his years as a shepherd, maybe even taken his father-in-law's role as the priest of Midian. But he heard God's command and he believed God when God said, ³ *But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.* God had told him this before, but Moses needed the reminder that God was still going to do all He promised. Fellow believer, we can count on His promises, no matter how things appear at the moment. (Joshua 23:14)

Commented [Paul Wall10]: Joshua 23:14 (ESV)
14 "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.

I'm not saying we should ignore the facts around us. Sometimes the evidence around us shows that we are in error. I am saying that when God's word is clear on an issue, you should believe God and not your temporary circumstances. (2Corinthians 4:18) God will complete what He has started. He will deliver His people from the land of Egypt. He will deliver us from the bondage of sin. He will present us faultless before God's throne. (Jude 1:24) He will because He cannot lie. What He says is reality!

Commented [Paul Wall11]: 2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)
18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

There is another reason that God has chosen this course of action. ⁵ *The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.*" God is delivering His people so the Egyptians will know the true God is YHWH, not Horus, or Isis, or Pharaoh or the Nile, but YHWH! The word used here "to know" is not just knowledge but experiential knowledge. God wants us to experience Him! God so loved the world that gave His Son. (John 3:16) We tend to think that the Old Testament is all about God and Israel. It is, only so far as Israel was supposed to become a nation of priests for the world to know the true God. (Exodus 19:6)

Commented [Paul Wall12]: Jude 1:24 (ESV)
24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

Commented [Paul Wall13]: Jude 1:24 (ESV)
24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

Commented [Paul Wall14]: Exodus 19:6 (ESV)
6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

The Old Testament is really a book that reveals God and His desire to restore the marred image of God in mankind. God is not just bringing Israel out of Egypt, but bringing all who are seeking the true God out of Egypt. A great number of people that were not of Israel will depart with Israel because God is going to prove that He alone is sovereign. (Exodus 12:38)

Commented [Paul Wall15]: Exodus 12:38 (ESV)
38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds.

Commented [Paul Wall16]: Exodus 4:1 (ESV)
1 Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.' "

I have wondered why Moses didn't use the signs God gave him to convince Pharaoh at the first encounter. If you read chapter four carefully, you will see the signs are for the Israelites to believe. (Exodus 4:1; 5) The next verse is the first time God told Moses to use the signs before Pharaoh. Moses was faithful to do

Commented [Paul Wall17]: Exodus 4:4-5 (ESV)
4 But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—
5 "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

only what God instructed. That is why God picked him. That is the kind of people God is seeking. The person who runs off using God's gifts to show their greatness loses the assignment. Pride will disqualify them from service. But the humble servant who only obeys is given more to do. (Luke 16:10)

⁹ "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.' " Now he has the green light to use the signs before Pharaoh. But notice that Moses must wait for Pharaoh to ask. This is the basis for the Jews' encounter with Jesus, asking Him for a sign. (Matthew 12:38) They believed that if the One like Moses came to deliver them, He would perform miraculous signs like Moses. Jesus did! (Deuteronomy 18:15) They just didn't accept the healings as a sign. In doing so, those who opposed Jesus were putting themselves in the same category as Pharaoh, people with a hard heart.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. ¹² For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Remember that the staff was a symbol of authority. The shepherd's staff in particular was the symbol of the one that ruled the people. That is why you see busts of pharaohs holding a shepherd's crook.

This is a confrontation of who has the right to rule. Pharaoh insists that he is a god, the very incarnation of Ra and Horus, and that all must obey him. God gave him a reasonable request and Pharaoh has refused to share his glory with God.

There are accounts, even today, of a snake in Egypt that can become stiff when a nerve is pinched in its neck. Moses was performing a miracle. The magicians were doing a trick.

God was declaring that He was the true authority in the staff, and the only wise God and deity for that is what the snake represented to the Egyptians. That authority, wisdom and power was in the hand of Moses, God's instrument.

The magicians represented Pharaoh. They did their trick that declared symbolically that Pharaoh was the one who has authority with many gods. But then something happened that must have really shaken them. Moses' staff swallowed up their staffs. Notice the text didn't say snake but staff. That's because the emphasis is on who has the authority. The magicians couldn't duplicate that!

The Egyptians saw the act of swallowing something as taking on its attributes. What was symbolically declared was that the God, YHWY, is the only sovereign Lord. All power and all authority comes from Him! (Job 12:13) That was a powerful statement! It must have infuriated Pharaoh. But what could he do? It

Commented [Paul Wall18]: Luke 16:10 (ESV)
10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

Commented [Paul Wall19]: Matthew 12:38 (ESV)
38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."

Commented [Paul Wall20]: Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)
15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

Commented [Paul Wall21]: Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), II.13.3 (p. 72)

Commented [Paul Wall22]: Job 12:12-13 (ESV)
12 Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.
13 "With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.

was a miracle. ¹³ *Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

Pharaoh had been warned. The sign was clear, but Pharaoh refused to yield. When God gives someone a clear sign and they refuse to yield, He must then do something more forceful to get through their hard heart. It was time for the first plague. All of the plagues came as a judgment on one of the things that Egyptians worshiped. (Exodus 12:12)

The Nile was considered a god that brought life. It watered the fields with its annual flood. It provided fish in abundance. The act of throwing babies into the Nile when Moses was born may have been an act of worshiping the Nile. (Exodus 1:22)

God told Moses to go down by the Nile and wait for Pharaoh to come. Pharaoh most likely came each morning to observe a religious ritual of worship to the Nile. Upon Pharaoh's arrival Moses was told to tell him, *...so far, you have not obeyed.* ¹⁷ *Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood.* ¹⁸ *The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."* God even wants Pharaoh to know that He is the LORD!

Right then and there Pharaoh could have yielded, but his heart was hard. The LORD does give us warnings. He often tells us what the consequences will be if we continue to harden our heart. (Proverbs 28:14)

Did you notice that it is Moses that is speaking? God told Moses to say these things. The man who complained that he couldn't speak is now speaking the very words of God. God's power is perfected in our weakness. (2Corinthians 12:9)

Aaron took the rod of God and stretched it out over the land and then struck the river with it. The water turned to blood. The Egyptian magicians also did the same. Some people believed they were using demonic forces. It may be, but it's my opinion that they were just tricksters. They could cote the tip of their staff in a clear chemical that would turn water red, but could they turn a whole river into blood?

Egyptian records describe these magicians as students of the magical arts found in the "House of Life", a special section of some Egyptian temples that housed records of magical arts, spells and charms. They were considered to be theological experts.

In the 1950s, Greta Hort gave a natural explanation for the plagues that were described in the Bible. She believes that a single cell organism (flagellates) came

Commented [Paul Wall23]: Exodus 12:12 (ESV)
12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.

Commented [Paul Wall24]: Exodus 1:22 (ESV)
22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

Commented [Paul Wall25]: Proverbs 28:14 (ESV)
14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Commented [Paul Wall26]: 2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)
9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

down river from Ethiopia and under certain conditions multiplied to the extent that the water turned red. The abundance of these organisms upset the oxygen content in the water causing the fish to die. On very rare occasions this does happen.

The Bible, however, says it turned to blood. Is that just descriptive or was it actually blood? Even if it was caused by a natural phenomenon, the miracle would then be that God told Aaron to dip the rod in the water at just the time these organisms were about to explode numerically. That's just as big of a miracle. It's interesting that those who feel the need to explain away the miracles of the Bible don't see that they've simply described a miracle in different terms.

Only today, with microscopes and the knowledge of microbiology, could someone predict an explosion of an organism. Even then, they would have great difficulty predicting the moment of the color change in a body of moving water. That would be nearly impossible even with modern science.

Egyptians believed the Nile was the god Osiris' bloodstream, the god that caused it flood each year providing fertility for crops. It was ironic that God turned it to blood. The Egyptians sang songs to river praising its sweet smell and gift of food. Now it stinks and the fish are dead. It was God's revelation to the Egyptians of the futility of worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. (Romans 1:22-25)

God showed that the Nile was not the Giver of Life. God alone is the source of living water. He is the well that never runs dry. He is the only One that satisfies our spiritual thirst. (John 4:14)

There was a cultural factor in the plagues that we must understand. Pharaoh had the responsibility of keeping order in Egypt. The world outside of Egypt was considered to be in a state of chaos. Pharaoh was believed to keep the gods pacified so that catastrophic events did not occur, so that chaos did not invade Egypt. When the water turned to blood, Pharaoh would have been concerned that the perception of the people would be that he had not done his job, or that the gods were angry with him.

One description of chaos from 2000 B.C. speaks of blood everywhere. "*Verily, the heart is horrified, For affliction pervades the land, Blood is everywhere... Verily, the river is blood, but one drinks from it...*" Just as Pharaoh had caused the Israelites to blame Moses, now God has turned the table and the Egyptians will be blaming Pharaoh for this invasion of what they saw as chaos.

God was showing everyone in Egypt that He alone brings peace and order. The Hebrew word is *shalom*. What are you looking to for peace and provision in your life? Has God struck you 401k to show you it is not god? Does God need to bring

Commented [Paul Wall27]: Romans 1:21-25 (ESV)
21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,
23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,
25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Commented [Paul Wall28]: John 4:14 (ESV)
14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Commented [Paul Wall29]: The Admonitions of Ipuwer

more judgment on our gods so that we will see that He is our only source of peace and provision?

²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. Moses survived again. He did what God commanded, and though Pharaoh didn't take it to heart, the Egyptians had to consider it. The God of the Hebrews had proven His authority over their god, the Nile. The one that they thought gave life, now stunk of death.

The only way for the people to get water was to dig along the shore. Every time they went for water that week, they knew the God of the Hebrews was greater than Osiris and the Nile.

The plagues were revealing the glory of the God of Israel, not just to the Egyptians, but to Israel, and to the whole earth. God is working in every life, even in the lives of the hard-hearted ones. They will bow the knee to Him or die in rejection of the One they know in their heart of hearts is the Lord of all.

God is doing the same today through the message of Jesus, the Gospel. When we hear the Gospel record, we know there is none like Him. We either bow in surrender or we harden our heart to the point of no return. (Proverbs 29:1)

We look at the everyday miracles around us and we decide to admit Jesus is Lord, or like Pharaoh, we go into our house and allow our heart to be hardened. How many signs do we need? Is your hard heart causing God to be more forceful with you? All authority belongs to God. The sooner we yield the better! We must see Him and Him alone as our only source of provision and peace.

Questions:

- 1 What was God's answer to Moses' prayer?
- 2 What did God instruct Moses to do?
- 3 What was God's heart behind the plagues?
- 4 Why didn't Moses show the signs at the first encounter with Pharaoh?
- 5 What was the meaning behind the Moses' staff swallowing the others?
- 6 What did the Nile mean to Egyptians?
- 7 What was Pharaoh's reaction? Why?
- 8 What did it say to the Egyptians about Pharaoh?
- 9 What did the plague reveal? NT?

Commented [Paul Wall30]: Proverbs 29:1 (ESV)
1 He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

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