

CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH
The Life of Moses: Deliverance through Faith.
Exodus 7:1-13:16
 Chadron Berean Church

I hope that by now in our study on the life of Moses, he is starting to look a lot less like Charlton Heston or the Price of Egypt, and a lot more like you and me. When Scripture records history, it tends to revolve around *individuals* like Moses. It's a *personal* book. God is a *personal* God. It's hard to write history without *people* because people are part of making it. But because God used some of these individuals in the Bible extraordinarily at times, and a lot of times history is covering the highlights, we sometimes we feel like these people were cut from a different cloth than us—that we could never be used by God as they were.¹ If we think that, that's a problem. It's a problem because we won't be as inclined to give *our lives* to God and see how He can use us as well. That's sort of what we're going to talk about this morning as we open God's Word.

Last week we witnessed Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh. Moses seemed to think Pharaoh would be nice and generous, releasing the Hebrews (nation of Israel) with his blessing. But Pharaoh might as well have laughed out loud when Moses said to let God's people go. Being viewed as an incarnation of the primary gods of Egypt, he said, "*Who is the Lord?*" and he increased the labors on the Hebrew people and the Hebrews cursed Moses and Aaron. This led Moses to despair, questioning God's goodness and calling on his life. However, we left off with Moses being reassured that God would be with him, enabling him to do His will. God said, "*I will make you God to Pharaoh and Aaron will be your prophet*" (Ex. 7:1). So what we will see today is Egypt's gods, represented by Pharaoh vs. Yahweh, represented by Moses in a divine showdown. It kind of reminds me of an old western. It's a showdown between the good guys and the bad guys, and we see who is more powerful (Ex. 12:12; 7:5; 13:3, 9, 14, 16; Num. 33:4).

8 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9 "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Work a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, so that it may turn into a serpent.'" 10 So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and so they did, just as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it turned into a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they too, the soothsayer priests of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. 12 For each one threw down his staff, and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.

I. A WARNING TO PHARAOH. (7:8-13)

God tells Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh again, and to prove they're intentions by **working a miracle** with **Moses' staff**. And notice what it says in verse 10: "*so they did just as the Lord had commanded.*" Don't miss that because last time we saw Moses, he was in despair, arguing with God, making excuses, and giving up on his calling. The picture we see now is him exercising **immediate, loving obedience to God**. I think this shows us some growth and trust in

Moses' spiritual life. And get this: because of his **obedience** to God's call, he is going to be used of God in incredible ways.

So again, the staff is thrown down and turns into a **serpent** just like before. However, Pharaoh's **sorcerers**, some **priests** of Egypt's gods, also turn their staff into a serpent. Since there were several varieties of cobras in Egypt and they seemed to be obsessed with cobras—making some of their gods in the image of cobras (i.e., Wadjet; Mertseger)—it was probably a cobra. Pharaoh even wears one on his forehead at times. He was to be feared as the serpent is feared. In one writing they've discovered, the Pharaoh upon assuming the throne would even pledge himself to a serpent spirit. Sounds a lot like an old foe from Genesis 3 if you ask me...

But **2 Timothy 3:8** reveals the names of Pharaoh's sorcerers, probably passed down through Jewish tradition: **Jannes and Jambres**. And they are used there as an example of the kinds of false teachers who oppose truth with counterfeit miracles and will one day be stopped and their folly be made evident to all. Some speculate whether the sorcerers were illusionists or snake charmers or in touch with real dark powers. Apparently you can paralyze a snake and make it look like a staff and when you throw it down it comes back to its senses. But my guess is d) all the above. Illusionists, charmers, and real dark power involved. Egyptian writings speak of their power and Satan we know, too, can perform false miracles, signs and wonders, as he will in the very last days before Jesus' return. He will deceive many with his signs (2 Thess. 2:8-9).

But notice the main point and **powerful symbolism** in Moses' snake **swallowing up** their snake (some snakes are ophiophagous).² It's a **warning** of what is to come, a preview of coming attractions showing that Yahweh is more powerful than Egypt and Egypt's gods, and He will *swallow up* the Egyptians. In fact, those same words "*swallowed up*" will be used to describe the Egypt's army being *swallowed up* by the sea. So the message is clear: Egypt must let Israel go or be devoured by Yahweh. Pharaoh though, brushes off the warning.

Now we're going to get into what is typically referred to as the **ten plagues**. The Bible calls them "**miracles, signs and wonders.**" However, plague is not all that bad of a term. It does convey the thought well that these are blows and wounds to Egypt. They are by far one of the greatest demonstrations of God's power in all of history. By the way, there are really only **4 eras** of great, abundant miracles in the Bible: the Exodus, the days of Elijah, Jesus' ministry/apostolic era, and lastly during the Tribulation period just prior to Jesus' coming. And it's interesting that the first and last eras of miracles getting peoples' attention involve judgment.

II. THE FIRST PLAGUE: NILE TO BLOOD. (7:14-24)

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning just as he is going out to the water, and position yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. 16 And you shall say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened up to now." 17 This is what the Lord says: "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I am going to strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned into blood. 18 Then the fish that are in the Nile will die, the Nile will stink, and the

Egyptians will no longer be able to drink water from the Nile.””” 19 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, so that they may become blood; and there will be blood through all the land of Egypt, both in containers of wood and in containers of stone.’”

20 So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants; and all the water that was in the Nile was turned into blood. 21 Then the fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. 22 But the soothsayer priests of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said. 23 Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. 24 So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, because they could not drink from the water of the Nile.

So Pharaoh goes out to the **Nile** in the morning as appears to be his habit, probably for ritual purposes. In Egypt, the Nile and the sun were connected with the gods and were viewed as the great sustainers of life. In this desert wasteland, especially in ancient times, life revolved around the rivers. The river was their lifeblood (pun intended); transportation, irrigation, drinking, washing, fishing, etc. And if something was wrong with the river, according to their own literature (Admonitions of Ipuwer), they saw it as a bad omen—a sign that a god was angry and they needed to amend their ways.³ Well, something’s definitely wrong when **the Nile and all the water in Egypt turn to blood!** The source of life is now a source of death.

The actions of his **magicians** (fake or real) to do the same thing reinforce Pharaoh’s resolve to ignore this plague. It’s somewhat humorous that they **can’t reverse or stop any** of the plagues. They can only add to it, mimicking it. That’s what Satan does. He is not an innovator. He is a counterfeiter. He always deceives by mimicking something God does (e.g., false Christs).

But now that we’ve got a sample for what the plagues are like, we’re going to move through them quickly and then look at the big picture. Remember our focus is on the life of Moses, not the plagues (though it’s hard to skim over because it’s such a great account). But by focusing on the plague details, you can actually miss God’s purposes through them, and I don’t want us to miss the forest by studying the trees this morning. But what you will notice as we go through them is that these plagues will increase in **intensity**—from **warning**, to **misery**, to **disaster**, to **death**.⁴ And Pharaoh goes from being unconcerned, to angry, to despairing, to completely mad.

2nd Plague: Frogs. [show slide with plagues chart]

This is kind of a humorous plague to me. Frogs are not dangerous, but they would be a huge nuisance. The wives are screaming and the children are playing! At least initially. But it’s sheer chaos, no doubt. And one of the things Pharaoh was supposed to maintain as through his “sovereignty” was order. It’s like God said too, “*You want to worship frogs? Here you go!*”

3rd Plague: Gnats

Just imagine your nostrils and ears being filled with gnats. You're afraid to breathe through your mouth they are so thick. It's worse than the Canadian woods in the summer. It's torture. What's significant here is that **the magicians cannot copy this one**; they say to Pharaoh, "*It is the finger of God.*" So they finally confess a divine power is at work that they can't match.

4th Plague: Flies

Significant is that the **Israelites are now exempted** from the plagues. God begins to make a **clear distinction** between His people and those who aren't. Those who aren't His people face God's wrath. And remember too, while some of these are natural phenomenon, it's evident through the **intensity** of them, the **distinctions** made, and the **timing** factor—how they begin and end at Moses's word—that they are a supernatural work of God.⁵

5th Plague: Livestock

The Egyptian livestock die. This is the **first major economic disaster** for the Egyptians. Can you imagine all those bloated animals? And the stench?! Who stinks now (5:21)?

6th Plagues: Skin Ulcers

Boils and sores on the skin. This is the first plague to **strike Egyptians persons directly**. At this point, the magicians are helpless. Any thoughts of mimicking God are long forgotten.

7th Plague: Hailstorm

And intense **lightning** (possibly ball lightning). Not a single hailstone falls in Goshen though. But this storm creates more **economic turmoil** in Egypt and even causes a little crack in the hard heart of Pharaoh. He shows **remorse** but is ultimately **unrepentant**. At this point, God lets Pharaoh know that He has allowed him to remain (and not be consumed) so that He can continue to showcase His power. If there was any green blade of grass left, it was devoured shortly after:

8th Plague: Locusts

After Moses announces this plague, Pharaoh's servants beg him to let Israel go before all of Egypt is destroyed. Pharaoh tries to get Moses to compromise and is once again found in a false state of repentance. Any signs of repentance fade once the pressure is off him.

9th Plague: Darkness

This is a darkness which "*can be felt.*" A "*thick darkness*" in all the land of Egypt for 3 days. They could not see one another or go anywhere. It's just supernatural darkness like on the cross when Jesus died. It must have felt like being in a cave when you can't see your hand right in front of your face. It's a graphic reminder of a lifeless and void state without God (Gen. 1:2), and much like hell will be like. Hell is referred to as "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12).

10th Plague: Death of the Firstborn

Egypt, who had murdered many Hebrew infants, would now face judgement on their firstborns. Israel, God's "firstborn" (Ex. 4:22-23) was protected from this judgment **only if they had the blood of an unblemished male lamb applied to their doorposts**. To apply it and eat the Passover meal in haste (bags packed and ready to leave Egypt) was **an act of faith**. It's a reminder that

only those who apply the blood of Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, through faith are going to be spared the coming wrath of God at His return and in eternity (Rev. 6:16-17; 19:11-20:14).

At this point, I want to think about **the purpose for the signs and wonders** we call plagues. We might be tempted to look at the Exodus and think that God is out of His mind—that God is a big cosmic bully. In an era of feel-good Christianity, we might think it surprising to hear of God pouring out judgment on people or evil. But I warn you that if that’s what you’re thinking, you might just have a God of your own making. God’s not a cosmic bully. This is not just on OT thing. Jesus pours out His wrath on sinners in the NT too (Rev. 2:20-23; 6:1,16-17). This is a **holy God** who judges sinners, but it is also mixed with mercy throughout. Remember, if God were being completely just, no one would survive. Israelites are just as guilty of being sinners as the Egyptians. They’re all descendants of Adam as we are. Tony Merida wrote, *“If we protest against God’s judgment, it is a sign that we have minimized our sin and God’s blazing holiness.”*⁶ Sin is treason against God’s kingdom and the punishment is death.

And I want to mention this too: to protest against the **hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by God** is likewise a **minimizing, but of God’s sovereignty**. Exodus doesn’t explain all that It just states it unapologetically. And Paul drew on this element in Romans 9 to teach that God is the Potter and we are clay. God has that freedom. He says that God *“has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires.”* (9:18). That’s a hard truth to accept at times but it’s exactly what Exodus is revealing about God’s sovereign power. Exodus shows us that...

God wants to be known and worshiped as the holy, sovereign God that He is.

There’s no one like Him and He can’t be thwarted. God’s only objective is not to get Israel out of Egypt, but to **make Himself known** through a showcase of His power that will last throughout all of history as it has until this day. Several times throughout the account God says that **He is multiplying His signs and wonders (11:9) so that all will know Him**—from Israel (6:7), to Egypt (7:3,5), to Pharaoh (8:10), to Jannes and Jambres (8:19), to the next generation (10:2), to the Canaanites in the promised land (15:14-16), and to **all the earth** (9:16; 29). He will be **honored** through it all (14:4, 17, 18). Over and over and over again throughout the account it says, *“That you may know”* (Deut. 4:34-40).

When you think about it, we should see it as an act of grace for Him to reveal Himself in such a holy display so that the world can know Him and amend their ways. I think too, you know, that only when you have a God this big—totally other-than and sovereign—can you rest and serve Him properly. Aren’t you more likely to give your life for a God like that? More likely to worship Him? To pray to Him? I don’t know about you, but I would have trouble praying to a God who isn’t sovereign. And I’m convinced **our greatest happiness in life will come when we know and pursue and live for this holy, sovereign God of glory.**

But let’s think about that for a second. Let’s balance this sovereignty with human responsibility. God’s part and our part. God choose to reveal Himself, but how did He do it? Through signs and wonders, yes. But also through representatives and spokesman—*individuals* like Moses and Aaron—ordinary, inadequate representatives in and of themselves. So, it’s interesting that this

sovereign and holy **God wants everyone to know that He is Yahweh, but He wants to use us to do it.**

God wants to use us to make Him known.

What a privilege, huh? God doesn't need us but desires to use us. What a holy calling! See, history doesn't end with Moses, or David, or the prophets or apostles. He is still using everyday people to make Himself known. Kings and common people. Men and women. The elderly and the children. The bold and the timid.⁷ But as believers, are we among them?

You know **Psalms 90:12** says, *“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* Have you numbered your days? Don't let this make you anxious but the average life expectancy is only 77 years. Think about that sobering reality. Life is mist (James 4:14). In light of eternity its necessary to ask yourself, *“What am I living for? How am I spending the few days of my life?”* Life is so much more than living for the weekend, than trying to get through school, than trying to launch a business, than trying to raise a family and get them out the door so I can retire... Don't you want to live for something more than Friday night? Don't you want a purpose that goes beyond and gives meaning to your day to day? Consider this morning the possibility that God might have a purpose for your life beyond that. That God might use you to do great things for Him, because **the Exodus shows us how much God can accomplish through those who will obey God's call.**

Moses heard the call. Even though he struggled with it for a while, and kicked against the goads a few times, fought with the Potter, he eventually **responded in obedience** and **God equipped him for the task** as he carried it out. Moses wasn't cut from a different, superior cloth than us. He was cut from the same cloth. He was an ordinary man with similar struggles, excuses, limitations, and hesitations just like you. But like him, you need to do as the Lord commands. His biggest problem wasn't knowing God's will. It was doing it. But be obedient. He who is faithful with little will be faithful with much (Luke 16:10). You have step out in faith and serve Him. Start where you are. Start with what you know He wants you to do. And he who is faithful with little will be faithful with much (Luke 16:10).

Scripture	Plague	Israel Exempt	Possible Egyptian “Gods” alluded to
7:14-24	Nile to Blood	No	Hapi, spirit of Nile; Khnum, guardian of Nile
7:25-8:15	Frogs	No	Heqt, form of a frog; Hapi, spirit of Nile
8:16-19	Gnats	No	perhaps an attack on Egyptian priests
8:20-32	Flies	Yes	Uatchit, a god who manifest himself as a fly
9:1-7	Disease on Cattle	Yes	Apis bull revered; Sacred cows Ptah, Mnrvis, Hathor
9:8-12	Boils/Sores	Yes	Sekhmet, goddess with power to heal; Serapis, healing god
9:13-35	Hail	Yes	Seth, protector of crops; Nut, the sky goddess
10:1-20	Locusts	Yes	Isis, goddess of life; Seth, protector of crops
10:21-29	Darkness	Yes	Re, the sun god; Atum, god of setting sun
11:1-12:36	Firstborn	Yes, if blood of lamb is applied	Osiris, giver of life; Pharaoh was also considered deity

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 192.

² Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 275.

³ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 271

⁵ *Ibid.*, 319.

⁶ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Exodus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014), 52.

⁷ Swindoll, 192.