

## Exodus 7-8:24 • God's Signs and Wonders

### Introduction

God is not in the entertainment business nor is He engaged in putting on cosmic fireworks displays of His signs and wonders. God does everything for a purpose. God communicates with mankind many ways, running the gamut from admonition through His Word and teachers all the way to the most public and horrific displays of signs and wonders. But they all have the same thing in common: They're intended to focus us on His Word and message, **NOT** on the signs and wonders themselves.

In fact, if we studied all the uses of signs and wonders throughout the Bible we would learn that they're most often intended for non-believers rather than believers. That's because their main goal is to prompt attention to God's message that the witnesses of such events will hear and repent. They're not a guarantee that anyone **will** hear and repent, only a very forceful punctuation leading to the potential opening of one's ears. The signs and wonders performed by God as recorded in Exodus had a message to **BOTH** Israel and Egypt, **BOTH** believers and non-believers alike.

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. <sup>2</sup>You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. <sup>3</sup>But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. <sup>4</sup>When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. <sup>5</sup>The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

<sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron did it; as the LORD commanded them, thus they did. <sup>7</sup>Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

### [Read 7:1-7]

#### **Q: Why does God harden Pharaoh's heart?**

A: "...that I may multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt". (v.3)

#### **Q: What will be Pharaoh's response to the signs and wonders?**

A: He "does not listen". (v.4) It's important to note that it's not about the signs and wonders by themselves, but the message that accompanies them. Signs and wonders are not the message but rather punctuate and reinforce the message.

#### **Q: What will God do in response to Pharaoh's refusal to listen?**

A: "I will...bring out My hosts, My people...from the land of Egypt with great judgments". (v.4) God's response to closed ears is judgment. But it's important to note that He is not promising immediate relief to Israel from Egypt, but outlining a process that both sides will witness and go through in one way or another.

#### **Q: What is the ultimate purpose of God's signs and wonders carrying out His judgment that leads to the release of Israel? How does this explain the nature of what is really going on in this situation?**

A: "The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD". It's an indication that what is really at issue is a spiritual issue: The acknowledgment of the One True God.

#### **Q: If Israel represents Believers and Egypt non-Believers, for whom are signs and wonders aimed and why?**

A: They're aimed at non-believers because their purpose is to bring attention to the message of acknowledging and turning to God. Believers should already be "listening" as evidenced by their obedience to God's Word, so signs and wonders are not necessary for them in the same way. For believers, they reinforce the faith in God they already have shown by their obedience. For non-believers they're a drastic attempt to get them to listen.

<sup>8</sup>Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, <sup>9</sup>“When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’” <sup>10</sup>So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

<sup>11</sup>Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. <sup>12</sup>For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. <sup>13</sup>Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. <sup>15</sup>Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station 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. <sup>16</sup>You shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.”’ <sup>17</sup>Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. <sup>18</sup>The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.””

<sup>19</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

<sup>20</sup>So Moses and Aaron did even 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

### **[Read 7:8-13]**

**Q: Would you classify this event as one of the plagues?**

A: No. It’s a sign—an “attesting miracle”—meant to testify to God’s authority and power.

**Q: Why doesn’t God immediately begin with the plagues?**

A: He first provides the opportunity to recognize and come to Him by recognizing the power of His Word. Signs often accompany God’s messengers (i.e., Jesus, the Apostles, etc.) to provide a testimony to that message. Judgments are reserved and doled out by God as a result of not “listening” to the message and accompanying attesting miracles.

**Q: What should we learn from the magicians’ response?**

A: The false prophets and teachers of Satan have the ability to duplicate many signs, although they are not as strong as God’s signs. One of the chief ways to tell the difference between the two is examining the accompanying message as to whether or not it adheres to God’s Word.

**Q: According to the example of Pharaoh, what is the definition of a “hardened” heart?**

A: “He did not listen to them”. (v.13)

### **[Read 7:14-25]**

**Q: In examining v.16, how do we know the true purpose of signs and wonders?**

A: Because Pharaoh is not accused by God of not believing in the signs but that “you have not **listened** until now”. The purpose of signs and wonders is to draw attention to the message.

**Q: What is the message that God wants Pharaoh to adopt?**

A: According to v.17, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD”. It’s the acknowledgment and recognition of God’s sovereignty.

**Q: How do we know that this sign was not just a coincidence, something that happened to occur at the same time as a natural disaster hitting the Nile?**

A: Because of v.19, that all water was temporarily turned to blood, even the water already in household pots and pans.

**Q: What is the symbolism of blood and the message it might communicate in this situation?**

A: Blood represents death. Therefore the message is a strong lesson about the consequences of choosing to ignore God’s Word.

**Q: How did the magicians find fresh water to themselves change to blood to show that they could counterfeit this sign as well?**

A: As indicated in v.24, fresh water could be found by digging for it. It shows that although they may have been able to duplicate the sign, they could only do it to a very small and limited degree compared to what God did through Moses and Aaron.

**Q: In spite of the overwhelmingly larger size of God’s sign than that of the magicians, what was Pharaoh’s response?**

A: “He did not listen to them”. (v.22)

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the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood.

<sup>21</sup>The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup>But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. <sup>23</sup>Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. <sup>24</sup>So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile.

<sup>25</sup>Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. <sup>2</sup>But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite your whole territory with frogs. <sup>3</sup>The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. <sup>4</sup>So the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants.'""

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'"

<sup>6</sup>So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. <sup>7</sup>The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

<sup>8</sup>Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the LORD that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."

<sup>9</sup>Moses said to Pharaoh, "The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?"

<sup>10</sup>Then he said, "Tomorrow."

So he said, "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. <sup>11</sup>The frogs will depart from you and your houses and

### **[Read 8:1-15]**

**Q: What is the significant difference between this sign and those displayed previously?**

A: Although this one could be counterfeited, it could not be withdrawn without divine intervention. Pharaoh had to ask God to end it.

**Q: How is this one different from the previous in the way it ends?**

A: Whereas the others **BEGAN** as a sign from God, this one **ENDS** as a sign from God in asking Pharaoh to choose the time of its ending. It has a double-emphasis in its testimony not only as to its divine origins but its divine ending.

**Q: What is the condition Moses sets as to the ending of the plague and how does it fit in with our discussion of the purpose of signs and wonders?**

A: In v.10 Moses states, "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God." It's a subtle way of stating that Pharaoh should heed God's Word just as God will now heed his.

**Q: What was wrong with Pharaoh's "word"?**

A: It only lasted as long as there was a problem. As soon as the problem went away, he reneged and did not keep his word.

**Q: How would you describe Pharaoh's "faith" or "righteousness"?**

A: It existed only so long as to get out of a problem; it does not last nor is it sincere.

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your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.”

<sup>12</sup>Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. <sup>13</sup>The LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. <sup>14</sup>So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. <sup>15</sup>But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.’”

<sup>17</sup>They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.

<sup>18</sup>The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. <sup>19</sup>Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

<sup>20</sup>Now the LORD said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. <sup>21</sup>For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of insects on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of insects, and also the ground on which they dwell. <sup>22</sup>But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. <sup>23</sup>I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.’”

<sup>24</sup>Then the LORD did so. And there came great swarms of insects into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of insects in all the land of Egypt.

### **[Read 8:16-19]**

**Q: What is immediately different about the manner in which this plague is carried out versus the previous signs?**

A: There is no initial confrontation with Pharaoh. God initiates the plague without a formal declaration to Pharaoh.

**Q: What is different here regarding the role and abilities of Pharaoh’s magicians?**

A: This is the first sign or wonder they have not been able to duplicate to some degree. This causes them to testify, “*This is the finger of God*”. (v.19) They recognize God at work.

**Q: What is slightly different about Pharaoh’s response?**

A: He’s not just closing his ears to Moses and Aaron, but is refusing to listen to his own agents. The unbelief of the one man—Pharaoh—is not necessarily shared by all the other Egyptians.

### **[Read 8:20-24]**

**Q: How would you characterize the change in God’s stance and approach beginning with this plague? What is the lesson God might be trying to teach?**

A: God is escalating the power and emphasis of His signs by directing them solely against Egypt and exempting Israel. It’s the stark difference between obedience to His Word and rejection of it.

**Q: Why is Israel exempt? Is it simply a matter of God playing favorites?**

A: To this point, **EVERYONE** was equally affected by the plagues. However, the Israelites responded to the message the signs punctuated; therefore it’s not Israel that needs convincing but Egypt, the ones not responding correctly. You might say that Israel is passing the test of faith whereas Egypt is not.

**Q: What is God’s purpose?**

A: “...in order that you [Pharaoh] will know that I am in the midst of the land.” (v.23) The issue is recognition and acknowledgment of God’s presence and authority.

**Q: How did God give proof of this in the way this plague was carried out versus the previous?**

A: Whereas the previous plagues were initiated through Moses and Aaron, this one was not. It was instigated directly by God.

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## Overall Application

- *Can you see—even in judgment—all the ways that God tries to the very last to reach people? Why does God employ such wide and yet subtly different approaches?*
- *Can you see that the reason some people continue to struggle spiritually is because they refuse to listen to God? How can you assist such people? How will you pray for them?*
- *Are you—or anyone you know—in the “early” stages of disobedience where He is still using words or signs to coax you into listening to Him? Why is it going to require God elevating things to the level of judgments before you or they listen?*
- *Can you see that the desire to see signs and wonders is an indication of a wrong and disobedient heart? Why?*

## Epilogue

There are many parallels to the events and judgments of Egypt and the final events and judgments of the End Times. List and discuss as many as possible:

- God sent two witnesses to Pharaoh; in the Last Days He sends His two witnesses to the world.
- The signs and wonders escalate in their intensity.
- Just as some of the signs and wonders were counterfeited by Pharaoh's magicians, so some will be counterfeited by Satan and his followers in the Last days.
- Although there will be a wide variety of responses, the general response is unbelief in spite of witnessing great signs and wonders.
- The beginning signs and wonders affect everyone on earth, but just as at one point Israel is exempted, so God's chosen are exempted beginning at a certain point according to Revelation.
- Just as Israel is taken out—raptured, if you will—from Egypt, so the church is taken out of the earth.
- The signs and wonders are not a test of knowledge, but a test of faith.
- Others???