

## The Finger of God (Exodus 8:1-32)

I These three plagues demonstrate God's power over 3 Egyptian gods. (If you are interested, there is a website that names the 10 Egyptian gods that God judged by these plagues. It tells why they were worshipped, and explains why God singled them out as targets for His Divine Wrath. You can find its URL in our bulletin, in Line 4 of the announcements. The frogs were symbols of the goddess of fertility, and the lice coming from dust was a symbol for the god of the earth, the dust, from which all men were created. These, along with the Nile River, were the most important gods in Egypt, secondary only to Pharaoh himself.)

A The Egyptian goddess of fertility and their god of earth turned against everyone who had been worshipping them. (How would we feel, if the people we trust for our security, the police and the army, suddenly became our enemies? or –and this seems to happen a lot now –if we spent 20 years being good students only to discover that a good education was no guarantee of a job offer? –or if we were to follow the liberals as they compromise godliness with worldliness, and then discover that God was really serious about what He wrote in the Bible and all the liberals and all their disciples will burn together in the same hell? (Of course, by then, it will be too late to repent!) We would think that our entire system of values had become meaningless, and that we had been utter fools to trust in something so undependable as humanism and secularism. Now we might be able to understand the shock the Egyptians must have felt when all water in the Nile and all its tributaries turned into blood, and when the frogs, symbols of fertility, began to mock them by their presence everywhere, and the very dust of which all men are created became the lice that tormented them. And perhaps now we understand a little better how *Egypt* and *egyptian-ness* are symbols for us, of the contemporary world and its culture. We need to prepare ourselves to leave it,

for our Promised Land in Heaven, just as the Children of Israel had to prepare to leave Egypt for their Promised Land in Canaan.)

B The plague of flies was different from the first three plagues. (We will elaborate some of these differences later. Here, let us say that this was the first plague brought on by Moses, without action by Aaron, and that this plague did not affect the Land of Goshen, where the Children of Israel lived. These differences are symbols for us too, of some striking spiritual truths.)

II Aaron started the plagues; Moses finished them. (The first three plagues, of blood, of frogs, and of lice, began when Aaron stretched out his rod and smote something. As we mentioned last week, such actions will help to establish Aaron's credibility with the Children of Israel. He would have been Nobody Important, without the command of Moses, but in his role as prophet for Moses, he proclaimed the Word of God with power, and demonstrated that power by starting plagues with his own rod. When Moses presents Aaron as the Chief Priest, Israel will accept him in that role. His rod will become one of the contents of their holiest treasure, the Ark of the Covenant, which would be kept in the Holiest Room of the Tabernacle, and later, of the Temple.)

A Aaron acted in the role of a prophet. (He never pretended to be any more or any less than God had decreed. As we noted previously, Moses and Aaron did exactly what God told them to do, and God did his part, and the Will of God came to pass. God told Moses to speak to Aaron as God spoke to him (Moses), and that Aaron would speak to the Children of Israel, and Pharaoh. God said that Moses would be to Aaron as God, and Aaron to Moses as Prophet of God.

Now we should note some interesting things about God's Prophets, at least the Biblical prophets. God's Prophets never invented their visions or authored their own messages; but there were plenty of false prophets who wanted to

*appear to be* real prophets, who *did* do these things. There still are; because there really is power in the Word of God, and real prophets can demonstrate that power as evidence of their anointing for that office. Now perhaps we understand why people pretend to have power from God when they don't. That power gives them influence, and humanistic people seek for influence over other people. That is how they feed their spirit of pride. Pharaoh did it that way; the Seven Sons of Sceva tried to do it that way in Acts 19; and more recently, preachers (well, pseudo preachers) like C.I. Schofield, Hal Lindsey, and a plethora of charismatic faith healers, have tried to do it that way. We should note that the imitations are possible because the Power of God is *real* or else it could not be counterfeited; and that if we are truly born-again believers, then we don't need the counterfeits.)

B Moses acted in the role of God to the Prophet. (He spoke the words which his prophet performed. Those words came from God, so the Spirit in those words was the Spirit of God. God has all power. He is the source of all power, spiritual or otherwise. Moses and Aaron, working together as hammer-and-nails in the Hands of the Divine Carpenter, said and did exactly what God commanded, and the Power of God manifested in the Plagues of Judgment against the gods of Egypt. Now it is certain that this was God's plan in the Book of Exodus; and it is equally certain that this is *not* how God has planned to do things in our times. In Exodus, the idea of having Just One God was strange to almost everyone. Now, we are supposed to *understand* that there is Just One God, and Just One Savior from Sin, and that He is the only Way, Truth, and Life by which anyone might approach the Father in Heaven. We are *supposed* to understand that Christ is God's revelation of His glory to Man, and that we, the Church, are the Body of Christ, animated by His Holy Spirit. We say, we are supposed to know these things, but most people who claim to be believers do not understand them well.

This is because humanistic leaders of institutional churches have perverted the Repository of the Grace of God into Sunday Morning Social Clubs and called it faith. They have pretended to speak for God when their message is not His; they have deceived themselves and attempted to deceive others about things God is really serious about: holiness, claiming that if it is in their heart it doesn't need to be in their lifestyle; and righteousness, claiming that membership in the church is as much righteousness as Christ requires of ordinary believers; and godliness, claiming that only the pastors are subject to such high standards of excellence, and that since he (or she too, now) is a minister then that is as much proof as ordinary church members need of godliness in the life of their leaders. False prophecy, indeed! We know that none of that came from the Bible, do we not? Such *misinterpretations* of scripture come from people who trust the humanistic leadership of institutional churches to do their Bible reading and praying for them. We should not be surprised, then, when people who are embarrassed by the absence of the Spirit of God from their churches (indeed, from their lives!) try to pretend that they are true believers and that their churches are O.K. in the eyes of God; and therefore that we, who are not afraid to speak God's truth from His holy Word, have the error. Let us never be brought under their yoke of bondage again.)

C Moses' actions from v. 20 remind us of Psalm 94:16-17. (If we read these Psalms in the context of Exodus 8, we will understand the change, from actions by Aaron to actions by Moses, more clearly. (3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 17:13; 44:26; 68:1; 74:22; 82:8) Now let us note that God intends to have His Way, and since He is God, there is no point in arguing with Him. So what happens, when God sends a messenger (Moses and Aaron, or another prophet) and the message is ignored, or rejected? **God Himself will arise, and vindicate His Word –and His servant who proclaims His Word!** There is plenty of scriptural justification for

*that* prophecy. When King David invoked the action of God by all these *arises*, he no doubt remembered God's actions in the first Five Books of the Bible. It was as if an expert craftsman is teaching a novice, and as part of the lesson he says, *Step aside, and let me show you how this is done*. Aaron, as prophet, demonstrated the Power of God for Pharaoh, and even Pharaoh's magicians realized that it was God's Power at work, yet the result was a hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Now Moses, in the role of God to the Prophet, will perform the miracles of the next few plagues by his own power and without a prophet, symbolic, as we say, of the Way God really works. That is, Moses will replace Aaron as the agent of action; as God will eventually replace Moses as Agent of Action, in a few chapters.)

III Pharaoh's heart was hardened, as God said it would be. (Moses, and probably Aaron, knew this because God told them so. There are some things we can know too, because God has told us so, in the Bible. One need not be a prophet to read the 3d Chapter of Revelation and compare it to the contemporary church, or to read the 24<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew and compare it to current events. Nor do we need be prophets to understand that materialism and secularism in the church is incompatible with the Kingdom of God, in spite of the protests of its defenders; or to declare unequivocally that *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever* insists on holiness, righteousness, and godliness in His Church now just as much as He ever did, no matter how liberals attempt to justify compromises with worldliness. But let us stay on topic; these things will be abundantly clear.)

A God intended and intends for Creation to reveal His glory. (Now the Glory of God, as we have noted, is much bigger than human vocabulary, arising as it does from our finite human intelligence, can describe. Revelation 4:11 tells us, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*. The part about

“for thy pleasure” gives us a hint about God’s purpose in Creation. We can see more theologically complicated explanations in the Epistles of Paul, but for now let us say simply that God does what God wants to do, for reasons that please Him. Now the glory of God is not in such a *statement* of omnipotence, but in its *execution*. That is, the Glory of God is not *just* that He has Will and Intelligence, but that He has Power to bring His Will to fruition. When we say that God intends for all Creation to reveal His Glory, we mean that God used and uses everything that He created to prove His power to do exactly that — in other words, His Power to be God. Now let us follow this line of reasoning a little further. If God has intelligence —that is, the power to reason, and He has Will—that is, desire, and all power —that is, the ability to perform the actions that will bring His Desire into being, if God has these attributes, then how does He use them? He planned. (From our point of view, the planning was in the past; but God sees the past and present and future as if all is present tense.) So to make this logic more consistent with God’s point of view we should say, He planned and plans. The planning had and has one purpose (because there is only One God with only One Mind and one ultimate divine purpose). That purpose is to make the Will of God (His Desire) be (not just become) –be real, in His Spiritual world and in our created world. That desire, as we said, is the revelation of His Glory—which we define badly as His ability to do what we just described as His Will. We take a long way around to describe the Omnipotence of God because one part of Creation in particular, humanity, has arrived at a point a long way from the glory of God. But God was still in control, and He is still in control now, too.)

B God foreknew all that would happen, and how to respond. (We should not digress here onto a discussion of the foreknowledge of God or predestination as a doctrine; we mention this only to point out that Pharaoh and Egypt, Moses and

Aaron and all Israel, all the ancient world, and all the modern world too, are all parts of Creation. God intended that all Creation should honor Him by revealing His glory and the part of Creation that includes humanity mostly does not. Did God know this from the beginning? Yes; He was and is prepared for alternative outcomes, if you will, for all possible eventualities. We believe that God created all things, and that all things work together for the good of those who love Him. This is possible because God is in control— not only of what we know as reality, but of all other possibilities that might just as easily have been, or have become, reality for us. Now in the specific case of Pharaoh and Moses, God told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart and he would not listen; let us save questions about whether God might just as easily have made Pharaoh cooperative for another sermon. The point is that God knew, *foreknew*, if you will, that Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and He told Moses as much. God also *foreknew* what to do about it. God also *foreknew* all of the details of all of our lives, and all of the alternatives that might just as easily have become part of the reality of our lives. God *foreknew* all that we or anyone else will ever say or do, in just the same way. He was, and is, and will continue to be in control of it all; He would not be God otherwise. This is the Heavenly Father Who revealed Himself to us in the life and work of Jesus Christ. We can only know Him, we can only approach Him, in Jesus. And this is much too serious to cover it up with *forms of godliness that deny the power thereof* (2 Timothy 3:5) and go on with our church-games on Sundays as if Jesus was part of the foolishness.)

C “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (This was the advantage of Moses and the disadvantage of Pharaoh. We know that Pharaoh had no chance in this contest, even if he did not know it. We should know equally well that no one else who is proud, ambitious, greedy-for-power-and-money, and

willing to do whatever it takes to have his way, has any chance in contest against God (or the servant of God) either. All arrogant and ambitious men, like Pharaoh, harden their hearts against God and the servant of God who would tell them the truth; then accuse the servant of God of arrogance for challenging them with Proverbs 1:20-33. *The Voice of Wisdom* speaks with the Word of God, not with the word of men, regardless of whose mouth God chooses to use to deliver the rebuke. And let us remember that God will use humble people to accomplish His Will (which is, again, to reveal His Glory) and not the proud; our little Church group here will stand or fall by our testimony for Christ, not by the permission or the approval of any institutional churches.

It works like this: if all we want is the Glory of God, then there is nothing that the institutional churches or their people can either offer us or threaten us with; they cannot possibly overcome a servant of God, who builds his hope on the solid foundation of faith in Christ as All-in-All. They can keep their multi-million dollar buildings and retirement pensions; give me Jesus. He is the Solid Rock; He is all my hope and stay. His Grace is sufficient for me.)

IV God will not compromise about His demands. (We all know that no one is perfect, and we know equally well that everyone knows that no one is perfect, especially me. Yet we behave as if we think that our imperfections are also the Will of God. If they were the Will of God too, then it would be O.K. even to advertise and boast of the imperfections, and promote the imperfections of others. But these do not come from the Will of God; the imperfections arise from the depravity of the human spirit, not from the working of the Holy Spirit. If the imperfections were also the Will of God then God would be very inconsistent; how could God, Who is holy, accept both righteousness and sin with equal moral ambivalence? He cannot; He does not; He would not be God if He did. God

made no suggestions; He made Commandments. There are no options for service; there are ordinances and commissions. We need to get serious about the Will and the Word of God, because God is serious about them.)

A For Pharaoh, it was *Let my people go!* (We will note here only that this demand appears 15 times before Pharaoh let them go, and even then, he chased after them to try to bring them back. We will not dwell too long on this point; we will say only that once God made the demand, He did not back up from it.)

B For Israel, it was *Deuteronomy 6:4-6.* (God repeated His demand for the love of His Children many times throughout the history of Old Testament Israel. He made the demand repeatedly because they failed to meet it repeatedly. God spent several centuries trying to teach Israel what that meant. They never did quite get the point. Like too many contemporary clergymen, the Jewish priests insisted upon receiving all the honor on God's behalf; as when a pastor says that giving money to his church (really, to him) is the same as giving it to God, or that obeying him is the same as obeying God. God was patient with Old Testament Israel, but as we saw as early as Genesis 6, the spirit of God will not strive with men forever. God repeatedly demanded love from Israel, and corrected them for their disobedience to His Commandments. After one particularly harsh correction (enslavement in Babylon for 70 years) they almost got the point. They institutionalized their obedience to the Commandments of God by creating a Cult of the Temple. This was what Jesus referred to when He said, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy* (Luke 12:1), and when He rebuked them with *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone* (Matthew 23:23). They had the letter of the Law without its spirit, and lost their

Temple because of it. Now the contemporary church has a form of worship without the spirit or truth of it (John 4: 23-24); and what shall we suppose its leaders will lose for their hypocrisies? Let us leave the judging and sentencing to God; and let us make certain that in our meetings, we worship our Heavenly Father in Spirit and Truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.)

C For us, God's demands appear in Romans 8:29. (At first it may appear that there is no demand here, only a theological observation on the part of the author. Yet there is a demand, which God makes of all His Children. It is that we be born again, by water and spirit, as sons of God. We who use the name Christian must not dishonor that holy name by which we are called (the name of Christ) by our misbehavior. The demand, obscure as it may appear at first, is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. That image is both tragic and majestic. Jesus came to this world for the specific purpose of dying to redeem mankind from sin; we will not find eternal life in Him unless we die too: figuratively, as the humanistic spirit in us dies away and is replaced by the Spirit of God growing in us; and literally too, for *It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that, the judgment* (Hebrews 9:27). The majestic part is that the Spirit of Christ grows in us, into the morally perfect, called of God, elect of Grace, justified by faith, image of Christ in all His glory. And we must die quite literally too. We will not live forever in Heaven if we insist on remaining part of this world forever, and that part can be both figurative and literal too. Those who refuse to repent and forsake worldliness may be likened unto one of the Hebrew slaves who refused to follow Moses out of Egypt. We must leave the world (represented by *egypt*) behind, and replace worldliness (*egyptian-ness*) with godliness. And the promise of God is that if we die in Christ, then we will also live in Him, by virtue of the Resurrection of the Saints.)

V Pharaoh's magicians recognized the finger of God. (Do we suppose that they searched their spell-books in vain, trying to find the incantation that would turn dust into lice? Or that they went to Moses later and offered to pay him to teach them his tricks? Our scripture tells us only that they told Pharaoh that this was the finger of God. Should we also suppose that they understood the difference between *the finger of God* and the *hand of God* and the strength represented by *the outstretched arm of God*? To us this says, here is only a little of what will come later, with much more disastrous effects. To us, this looks like God has turned on the light of understanding for the Egyptian magicians, to show them that they are no match for Him. To Pharaoh, though, it looked like a challenge to his claim of divinity. He begins to appear to us as a child who refuses to cry no matter how many times he is struck. He thinks that he cannot appear to be weak, no matter what happens. He is much too proud to surrender. Perhaps God will negotiate with him? He tried everything he could think of to save face, of course.)

A Jesus asked whether we could discern the signs of the times. (Let us digress here, from our historical inquiry once again, onto another point that makes this story so relevant to us. Jesus said, *ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?* (Matthew 16:3). He was referring to His presence among them, as the Son of God Who had come to redeem them from sin and the Son of Man Who would die as the sacrifice for all men, but the question stands as a challenge to ecclesiastical prognosticators of our time as well. In this context the 24<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew reads like the current edition of any major newspaper. What should we make of all the wars and rumors of wars, of the famines and earthquakes and pestilences, and of the signs in heaven and signs in earth? We should make out that the End of Time as we know it is at hand. And we should make preparations —spiritual preparations— to meet the

King of Kings and Lord of Lords when He returns to Earth again. And do we suppose that He will go around to every church that claims to be praising Him with their noisy music and applaud their performances? No, (Matthew 24:31): *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* The institutional churches are unlikely to suspect that anything is amiss at first, because none of their members will be missing. By the time the fire and brimstone begins to fall on their heads, it will be too late to do anything about it.)

B God's judgment will condemn our world too, just as it condemned ancient Egypt. (We have noted, and we shall revisit this point in later messages, that the 10 Plagues in Egypt fell on symbols for the gods the Egyptians worshipped. What is dear to the heart of *egyptians* (that is, worldly people) in our times? Should we answer that it is money, or that it is the things money will buy? One by one, the condemnation of God's judgment will fall on them all; and we should expect things to get worse instead of better, because the Finger of God is not His Hand, which is not His strong outstretched Arm, which is not His full presence intruding into our comfortable little world. But He will intrude, and when He does, we need to be free of it and ready to leave it for Heaven, just as the Children of Israel had to be ready to leave Egypt for their Promised Land in Canaan.)