

Exodus Chapters 7-8 - John Karmelich

As I studied these chapters I kept thinking of the line, "Who's in charge here anyway?" These chapters are among the most famous in the bible: "The 10 Plagues of Egypt!" I know this is familiar ground to most of us. Hopefully, I'll show you a few things you might not have considered, but as always I'd like everyone to ponder, "Why does God want us to know this stuff?" or "Why are all these details here for us to study?" As I've said in the past few lessons if God's God, He could just killed all of the Egyptians and told the Israelites your new homeland is "that way" so get moving! Instead we get God doing great miracles through Moses as well as his brother Aaron (yes the 10 plagues). They pretty much ruined the land of Egypt so the Israelites could leave on God's terms! It fascinated me that the Egyptian leader did ask Moses to stop the first set of plagues when the Egyptian magicians couldn't duplicate them. That is a great example of who's really in charge. You'll find these chapters are full of examples like that!

Here is the important thing: I assume my readers are devout Christians so I won't ask if we believe that Jesus is God and He's lord of our lives. The underlying question is what areas of our lives do we fail to give Him to be in charge of? Sin is something all of us struggle with. We might have prayed 1000's of times for God to help us with some aspect of our lives we struggle with. The idea of accepting God's in charge of our lives is also about accepting that we live on His timing. Yes He wants us to turn from sin as much as possible. Not to earn points or be "more saved". The basic purpose of life is to glorify God with our lives. When we mess up, again even if it's a 1,000 times, we confess it, make the effort to turn from sin and ask God to help us on His timing be the person He wants us to be. That is what living the Christian life is all about. As we study these chapters, I'd like you to notice the power struggle that not only occurs between Pharaoh and God but also the efforts Moses makes to please God as Moses works on doing God's will. Living as God desires is remembering He lives inside of us and He's wants to lead us if we're willing to let Him lead. Speaking of leading, let me lead you to the text itself:

We last left off in the previous chapter Moses in effect gave his genealogy, as if to say I'm just the man God picked to do this and I'm doing the best I can given what God called me to do. (Realize God never gives us a command that He doesn't empower us to obey!) That chapter ended with Moses telling God in effect I'm not worthy to do this task. I'm sure God let it sink in that if He leads us to do any task, He will make it possible. That leads us to Chapter 7. God tells Moses that he'll be like God to Pharaoh (the point is the Egyptian leader will respect what Moses says as it'll occur!). God also is telling Moses that Aaron will be his spokesman. Remember that we are called to preach Jesus (the great commission!) so in that sense we're like Aaron in that role! Then we get into God hardening Pharaoh's heart. In Exodus there are an equal number of times where the text states the Egyptian king (Pharaoh) hardened his own heart and the fact that God hardened his heart. Here's how I figure that: God gives us so many chances to accept Jesus and then He says in effect, "If you don't want Me, you can live as you desire and then it will be even harder to repent". As a pastor I read puts it, "Don't go down that road, it's greased"! None of us knows who'll repent or when, so we pray for all people. Just realize just as Pharaoh rejects Moses here, the Pharaoh is responsible for his own salvation despite the fact God knew Pharaoh would do it!

Anyway, Moses and Aaron knew who was in charge and obeyed. Then of all things, we get their ages listed. Many of us picture a young Charlton Heston speaking to the Pharaoh. ` However Moses was 80 when this happened and Aaron was 83! That means Aaron was born before the order was given for the death of the Jewish male babies 80 years earlier!

With that said it's time for "Confrontation #1". This is prior to the actual 10 Plagues. The Pharaoh asks in effect, "Why should I let you leave" and the miracle process began. Moses threw his stick down and

the stick turned into a snake (or possibly a crocodile). Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing. It led to Moses' animal eats theirs to show who's really in charge. The Pharaoh wasn't impressed and that's how this battle of miracle confrontation ends. That of course leads us to Plague #1.

The first plague was Moses turning the Nile River into blood. It's meant to be a pun since the Pharaoh before him (80 years earlier) drowned the Israelite babies in that river. However the text says it wasn't just in the river, the water turned blood was also in their storage containers. That fact alone shows this wasn't a natural occurrence. Realize each of these plagues counteracted one of the Egyptian gods. Even the river itself was considered a god! It started with Moses telling Pharaoh "let us go" and obviously he didn't. Pharaoh's magicians did some trick that mimicked what God did. The Egyptians had to dig into the ground to get fresh water. The text says seven days past to let everyone know "who's in charge".

Plague #2 started with Moses approaching Pharaoh with the usual cry to let God's people go. As usual things didn't change so frogs appeared everywhere. The Egyptians considered frogs sacred. They went in their houses and on their food. The Egyptian magicians made more frogs appear. The Pharaoh must have figured "It's a good trick but still a trick". Notice Pharaoh asked Moses to make it stop and not his own people. Moses then showed hoospa as he told Pharaoh to name the time when the frogs will leave and God agreed to that! Then of course when the frogs were buried (imagine what the Egyptians must have thought burying all the frogs because of this battle of the gods!).

Plague #3 had no warning. (That's a pattern that will repeat for #6 and #9). The plague was gnats. It's most likely a biting insect. The magicians actually said "This is the finger of God" so they knew who's really in charge. There's no mention how this plague ended but we assume Moses called for it to come to an end.

Plague #4 (the final one of these two chapters) was flies. Probably it's a biting insect but it's a topic the scholars debate over. For plagues #1, #4 and #7 Moses gives the "let me people go" command. This is a pattern of threes we get up to Plague #9. This biting insect plague "bugged Pharaoh" so he decided to try to compromise with Moses. A standard demonic trick is to get us to compromise with God's desires for us! (Like when people say hey, you don't have to get too religious!) The Pharaoh then asked Moses to only sacrifice in Egypt or don't take their children with them on the trip. What's the underlying point is the Pharaoh refuses to accept God as being in charge! That's why Pharaoh tried to compromise with His will. As we know, this battle will continue over the next few chapters. (Six more plagues to go!)

The underlying message for believers is there's is no compromising with His will. Remember we're not saved to go do whatever we want. We're saved to use our lives to make a difference for Him. How we do that is a matter of knowing what gifts we have, the needs at any moment and prayer about what God wants us to do. If you see that in the text, you got it.

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John