

Exodus 8
June 22, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What are some examples of God's undeniable power that you recall from Scripture?
[Resurrection, i.e. conquering death, walking on water, parting the Red Sea, many miracles, etc.]

For many of us, our understanding that God is an all-powerful or omnipotent God came from our Bible readings. But at some point in our journey, having the head knowledge that "God is omnipotent" moved from being a doctrinal-like statement to something that was real and personal. For me, I have seen God's power through prayer. I have seen Him work out situations in my own life and in the lives of others that clearly revealed His undeniable power.

Q: How about for you? When did you discover that God's power was undeniable? Was it an event, or a process, or both? [Let people engage.]

But not everybody is willing to acknowledge God and His undeniable power. Moses has run into this with Pharaoh. Pharaoh made it clear to Moses that he did not know the Lord. Thus, he had no intention of letting the Israelites go. (Ex 5:2) God has begun the process of revealing His power to Pharaoh. In Ex 7:17, the Lord instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh when he describes the staff turning the Nile River to blood, "By this you will know I am the Lord." But that didn't work because the Egyptian magicians were able to replicate making the Nile river turn to blood.

While Pharaoh is bent on denying God's power, God is driven to not only demonstrate His power to Pharaoh, but also to the Israelite children. His ultimate goal is to be worshiped by the Israelites. He wants to be celebrated for his "mighty acts and judgments" (Ex 6:6) for freeing them from their cruel bondage.

Transition: Do you realize He is still looking for us to do the same? I want to invite you to consider this: All of us as Christians CAN worship God as an all-powerful God BY affirming the WAYS He proves His undeniable power in our lives. Before we apply this in our own lives, let's begin our study and look for ways that God proves His power to Pharaoh/Israelites.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Ex 8:1-15 Plague #2]

Observations/Process Qs-

V.1:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.'

V.2:

- If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs.

V.3:

- The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs.

V.4:

- The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials.’ ”

V.5:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’ ”

V.6:

- So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land.

V.7:

- But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts; they also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.
- Observation: That’s all we need...more frogs! Point of Interest: Egyptians regarded frogs as having divine power, so they were not to be killed. (See commentary by Toussaint)

V.8:

- Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.”
- Q: What does Pharaoh’s statement reveal about his knowledge of the Lord? [He’s starting to become aware of the reality of the Lord and His strength.]

V.9:

- Moses said to Pharaoh, “I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.”

V.10:

- “Tomorrow,” Pharaoh said.
- Moses replied, “It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God.”
- Observation: Because the Egyptians were a pantheistic society, they worshiped all kinds of gods and goddesses, so Moses is emphasizing that when he prays to the Lord and the frogs disappear at the requested time, Pharaoh should understand that there is no one like the Lord our God.

V.11:

- The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials and your people; they will remain only in the Nile.”

V.12:

- After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the LORD about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh.

V.13:

- And the LORD did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields.

V.14:

- They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them.

V.15:

- But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

- Q: What do you think about Pharaoh's decision to harden his heart after God gave him relief? [He did what we sometimes do – we run to God for help in a distressful situation, and as soon as He helps us, we go about our merry way. We unwittingly treat our relationship to God as a consumer relationship, i.e. what can I get from Him?]
- Q: So how did God show His power in this passage? [See yellow highlights]

[Read Ex 8:16-19 Plague #3]

V.16:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,' and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats."
- Notice: God did not give Pharaoh warning for this plague as He had done in the past.

V.17:

- They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats.

V.18:

- But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals.
- Observation: Satan's power is limited, so I find it intriguing that the magicians didn't know if they had the power to produce gnats until they tried it.

V.19:

- The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.
- Q: So how did God show His power in this passage? [See yellow highlights]
- Q: What does this tell you about the demons knowledge of God?! [They know that God is more powerful than they are.]

[Read Ex 8:20-30 Plague #4]

V.20:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the water and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.'

V.21:

- If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies, and even the ground where they are.

V.22:

- "But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land."

V.23:

- I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow."

V.24:

- And the LORD did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials, and throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

V.25:

- Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.”

V.26:

- But Moses said, “That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the LORD our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us?”
- Note: Cows were sacred to the Egyptians.

V.27:

- We must take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, as he commands us.”

V.28:

- Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.”
- Q: How would you describe the progression of Pharaoh’s understanding of God? [He is acknowledging God is real, but he is still trying to stay in as much control as possible.]

V.29:

- Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only be sure that Pharaoh does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.”
- Notice: Moses calls Pharaoh out for his deceitfulness.

V.30:

- Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord,

V.31:

- and the LORD did what Moses asked: The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not a fly remained.

V.32:

- But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.
- Q: So how did God show His power in this passage? [See yellow highlights]

LOOK:

We spent this morning identifying the multiple ways God demonstrated His undeniable power. As we wrap up, I invited us to consider that God wants us to worship Him by acknowledging the ways He has demonstrated undeniable power in our own lives.

To apply this, consider asking the Lord to bring to your attention every time He displays His power in your life. Or ask Him to bring to recall times He showed His power in your life in a significant way, and you’ve just forgotten.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 5–10)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The ten plagues of Egypt accomplished several things: (1) they were signs to Israel, assuring them of God's power and care, 7:3; (2) they were plagues of judgment to Egypt, punishing the people for persecuting Israel and revealing the vanity of their gods, 9:14; and (3) they were prophecies of judgments to come, as revealed in the Book of Revelation. Note the sequence of the plagues. They fall into three groups of three each, with the tenth plague (death of the firstborn) set off last:

1. Water to blood, 7:14–25 (warning given, 7:16)
2. Frogs, 8:1–15 (warning given, 8:1)
3. Lice, 8:16–19 (no warning, and magicians could not duplicate, 8:18–19)
4. Flies, 8:20–24 (warning given, 8:20)
5. Murrain on cattle, 9:1–7 (warning given, 9:1)
6. Boils on the people, 9:8–12 (no warning given, magicians afflicted, 9:11)
7. Hail, fire, 9:13–35 (warning given, 9:13)
8. Locusts, 10:1–20 (warning given, 10:3)
9. Thick darkness, 10:21–23 (no warning, Pharaoh refused to see Moses again, 10:27–29)
10. Death of the firstborn, 11–12 (the final judgment).

The plagues were actually a “declaration of war” against the gods of Egypt (see 12:12). The Nile River was worshiped as a god since it was their source of life (Deut. 11:10–12), and when Moses turned it into blood, God showed His power over the river. The goddess Heqt was pictured as a frog, the Egyptian symbol of resurrection. The plague of frogs certainly turned the people against Heqt! The lice and flies brought defilement to the people—a terrible blow, for Egyptians could not worship their gods unless they were spotlessly clean. The murrain attacked the cattle which were sacred to the Egyptians; Hathor was the “cow-goddess” and Apis was the sacred bull. The gods and goddesses that controlled health and safety were attacked in the plagues of boils, hail, and locusts. The plague of darkness was the most serious, since Egypt worshiped the sun god, Ra, the chief of the gods. When the sun was blotted out for three days, it meant that Jehovah had conquered Ra. The final plague (the death of the firstborn) conquered

Meskhemit the goddess of birth, and Hathor, her companion, both of whom were supposed to watch over the firstborn. All of these plagues made it clear that Jehovah was the true God!

We may trace these same plagues in the Book of Revelation, when God describes His final conflict with the god of this world, Satan: water to blood (Rev. 8:8 and 16:4–6); frogs (16:13); disease and afflictions (16:2); hail and fire (8:7), locusts (9:1ff); and darkness (16:10). The Egyptian magicians were able to imitate some of Moses' miracles—turning the rod into a serpent (7:8–13) and the water into blood (7:19–25), and bringing forth the frogs (8:5–7). But they could not turn the dust into lice (8:16–19). Second Timothy 3:8–9 warns us that in the last days false teachers will oppose God by imitating His miracles. See 2 Thes. 2:9–10. Satan is a counterfeiter who deceives the lost world by imitating what God does (2 Cor. 11:1–4, 13–15).

III. The Compromises

Pharaoh is a type of Satan: he was the god of Egypt; he had supreme power (except where limited by God); he was a liar; he was a murderer; he kept people in bondage; he hated the Word of God and the people of God. Pharaoh did not want to release the Jews, so he offered four subtle compromises:

A. *Worship God in the land (8:25–27).*

God demands complete separation from the world; the friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). Since the Egyptians worshiped cows, they would be offended if they saw the Jews sacrificing their cattle to Jehovah. The believer must “come out and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).

B. *Do not go too far away (8:28).*

“Don't be a fanatic!” says the world. “It's fine to have religion, but don't get too serious about it.” Here we have the temptation to be “borderline believers,” trying to stay close to the world and close to the Lord at the same time.

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 121–123). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

b. *Plague 2: Frogs (8:1–15)*

8:1–4. God told **Moses** to return to **Pharaoh** with an ultimatum to release the Israelites or face further judgment, this time **frogs**. (**If you refuse** also is stated in 9:2; 10:4.) **Frogs** were normally abundant in **the Nile** after the waters receded in December, but the people would not have expected them in August. The frogs would normally stay near the Nile but now they left the Nile, invading **the houses** (8:3), courtyards, and fields (v. 13) probably because of the dead fish in the Nile. The Egyptians regarded frogs as having divine power. In the Egyptian pantheon the goddess Heqet had the form of a woman with a frog's head. From her nostrils, it was believed,

came the breath of life that animated the bodies of those created by her husband, the great god Khnum, from the dust of the earth. Therefore **frogs** were not to be killed.

God said He would cause another of their deities to be a curse to them, not a help. These sacred animals would multiply and infiltrate people's bedrooms. This is ironic since the frog-goddess Heqet was believed to help women in childbirth. Here the frogs entered people's kitchens and even crawled on the people themselves (vv. 3–4).

8:5–7. Following God's instructions, **Moses** commanded **Aaron** to enact the judgment (v. 5), which he did (v. 6). In the first three plagues Aaron used his staff (7:19–20; 8:5–6, 16–17), and in plagues seven and eight Moses used his own staff (9:23; 10:13). Again the Egyptian **magicians** were able to duplicate the feat (cf. 7:22), but ironically they increased their own distress! (8:7)

8:8–11. Here the narrative shifts to **Pharaoh** who apparently did not want his magicians to repeat the plague but to remove it. He turned to **Moses and Aaron** for help, which showed that his knowledge of the God of the Hebrews had improved (cf. 5:2). He sought divine aid, being so distressed that he was willing to grant Moses his wish. **Moses** allowed the king to set the timetable for relief from the plague, but Moses wanted him to know the reason: **so that he would know there is no one like the LORD ... God** (8:10). **Pharaoh** asked that **Moses** pray the next day for relief from **the frogs**.

8:12–15. **Moses** prayed and God caused the plague to subside the next day. The carnage of frog carcasses caused a stench throughout the land (**the land reeked of them**). **But ... Pharaoh** reneged on his promise.

c. Plague 3: Gnats (8:16–19)

8:16–19. Unlike the previous two plagues, this one came without warning. This was also true of the sixth and ninth plagues. This may have been because of Pharaoh's false promise of release (vv. 8, 15). The judgment was sudden. **Aaron struck the dust** with his **staff**, and flying, biting insects covered man and beast. The Hebrew word for **gnats** is *kinnîm*, which occurs only here in the Old Testament. It may mean gnats or perhaps mosquitoes. The statement **the dust will become gnats** may be a way of saying the gnats were unusually numerous.

This plague may have been an attack against Set, god of the desert. Also it may have been directed against the Egyptian priesthood. The priests prided themselves in their purity with their frequent washings and shavings, and their wearing of linen robes. Here the Lord polluted the religionists with pesky insects.

The magicians, unable to duplicate this miracle, admitted that it was God's doing (**This is the finger of God**; cf. 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3; Luke 11:20). **As the LORD had** indicated (cf. Ex. 7:3) **Pharaoh** remained obstinate and unrepentant (cf. "just as the LORD had said," in 7:13, 22; 8:15).

d. Plague 4: Flies (8:20–32)

8:20–24. This fourth plague begins the second cycle of three judgments; this is evident by the phrase **in the morning** (v. 20; cf. 7:15; 9:13). Like the first three plagues, these three were restricted to the Egyptians (**I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where My people live**, 8:22). This showed that God made **a distinction between** the Israelites and the Egyptians (cf. 9:4; 11:7), marking His people for deliverance and the others for judgment. This would further demonstrate God's sovereignty and power.

The Lord instructed Moses to **confront Pharaoh** once again by the Nile (cf. 7:15) about releasing the Hebrews. If Pharaoh refused, **swarms of flies** (8:21) would be sent on **the Egyptians** and in their **houses**. The flies may have been attracted to the decaying frogs. **Dense swarms of flies** (v. 24) is literally, “a heavy or oppressive swarm.” These flies may have been the dog flies known for their painful bites. They may have represented Re, a prominent Egyptian deity. Or the flies may have been *Ichneuman* flies, who depicted the god Uatchit.

8:25–32. Smarting under the cumulative weight of the judgment of four plagues, **Pharaoh** was willing to suggest a compromise. The Israelites, he said, could **sacrifice to their God**, but in Egypt, not in the desert. This compromise was unacceptable to **Moses**. He explained that their animal **sacrifices** would **be detestable** in Egypt. This may have been because the Egyptians considered sacred the bull which represented the god Apis or Re and the cow which represented their goddess Hathor. **To the Egyptians** this would be blasphemy and would result in rioting.

Pharaoh’s second compromise was to allow them to go only a short distance into **the desert** (v. 28). Accepting this compromise **Moses** sternly warned **Pharaoh** not to be practicing deceit as he did earlier (vv. 8, 15). This was a remarkable—even daring—statement since Pharaoh was supposed to be the model of justice and truth.

Moses left Pharaoh, thinking that the monarch might keep his word. So as **Pharaoh** had asked, Moses **prayed** for relief from the plague. But again **Pharaoh** changed his mind and refused to keep his word.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 97 – 98). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

8:7 See note on 7:9–10.

8:26–27 The Bible never says that Moses tried to deceive Pharaoh in requesting permission to leave Egypt in order to conduct a sacrifice. Apparently, on three occasions (vv. 26–27; 10:9, 25–26) the Lord told Moses to make relatively minor requests of Pharaoh—all of which would be turned down—to show the extent of his hardness of heart (see note on 5:1).