

“The Bloody River”
Exodus 7:14-25
(Preached at Trinity, January 7, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to this portion of our story the first plague falls upon Egypt. God’s almighty power is about to be unleashed upon the stiff-necked Pharaoh.
2. In **Verse 16** we find God’s command to Pharaoh repeated a second time.
Exodus 7:16 – “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness:”
3. Pharaoh’s heart was hard. He would resist hard but no one is able to resist the power of God.
Daniel 4:35 – “And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”
4. The battle would include ten plagues:
Blood, frogs, gnats, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and death.
In the end Pharaoh would be fully defeated.
5. In these plagues God will be declaring His absolute sovereign power and dominion.
God will have no rivals. All other gods will be crushed.
Exodus 7:17 – “In this thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD”
6. The Egyptians worshipped more than eighty deities – gods of the Nile River, gods of the land and sky, gods of the crops and livestock.
God was declaring before the Egyptians the 1st Commandment –
“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
7. The first two plagues were against the gods of the Nile.
The next four plagues were against the land gods.
The next three plagues were against the gods of the sky.
Finally the plagues culminated with the death of the firstborn.
8. The first plague involved turning the Nile into blood.
 - a. The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt. It provided water for drinking, for irrigation, for transportation. The yearly floods deposited the fertile topsoil in Egypt.
Without the Nile Egypt would not exist.
 - b. There were several gods of the Nile but three in particular.
Osiris – the primary god of the Nile
Nu – the god of life in the river
Hapi – the god of the flood, a fertility god. They saw the annual flooding as bringing life and strength to Egypt. They worshipped Hapi as the giver of life.
 - c. The words of an ancient Egyptian hymn: “Hail to thee, Oh Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive.”
 - d. God begins His assault upon Pharaoh at the very heart of his power – the Nile River.
9. Theologians have long debated the historicity of the plagues.
 - Some say they are not to be taken literally—that they were just meant to teach some spiritual truths.

- Some try to explain the plagues from a natural explanation. For example some say that the Nile didn't actually turn to blood but that it resembled blood. Perhaps heavy rain washed red soil into the waters.

Or perhaps it was red algae and a depleting of oxygen killed the fish.

- This doesn't explain how it suddenly occurred when Moses struck the Nile with his staff
- Nor does it explain how all the water in Egypt turned to blood
- The problem with a naturalistic interpretation is that Pharaoh would have seen it before. God was demonstrating His mighty power.
- Plus, Scripture treats the plagues as literal events

Psalm 78:43-44 – “How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: ⁴⁴ And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.”

Psalm 105:29 – “He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.”

- The best explanation is to take the passage at face value and see it as the miraculous judgment of God. It was real blood caused by God's wrath upon a sinful people.

10. The plague upon the waters of the Nile teach us several things we need to hear.

I. First, it confirms to us that God's commands are non-negotiable and unchanging

Malachi 3:6 – “For I *am* the LORD, I change not”

A. Every time Pharaoh was confronted by God he was given the same demand

1. It was non-negotiable – no counter offer was considered
2. God's terms remained the same – “Let My people go”
3. In essence God is telling Pharaoh, “Obey me.” Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

B. God's demand upon human beings has never changed

1. His law has existed from the beginning
2. God commands all to obey. He commands all men to worship Him alone
3. The penalty for sin has also never changed
Romans 6:23 - “For the wages of sin *is* death”
4. God was judging the Egyptians for the idolatry – God will have no rivals

C. The demands of the Gospel have also remained the same

1. The Gospel we preach is the same Gospel preached by Paul
Galatians 1:8-9 – “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
2. The Gospel presupposes sin – it presupposes that man has forsaken God's unchanging law. We need to be saved from sin and death.
The unchanging Gospel makes an unchanging demand,
Acts 16:31 – “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”
3. God still commands faith and repentance of every man

- II. The second thing we can see here is the reason for God's commands is also unchanging
- A. God does all things for His own glory
1. God commanded Pharaoh – “Let my people go”
 2. We find God's sovereign authority here.
“Let my people go”
 - a. As the battle for power began between God and Pharaoh God established His divine sovereignty.
 - b. God says Israel is His, Pharaoh says, “No they belong to me” – God is about to demonstrate His power.
 3. God declares, “that they may serve me in the wilderness:”
God does all things for Himself – their deliverance is for Himself
- B. The reason and motivation for everything that God does is His own glory
1. This is the reason Pharaoh was allowed to rise to power
Romans 9:17 – “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”
 - a. It is an amazing thought that every human being upon the earth exists for the glory of God.
 - b. God is working His purpose for His own glory
 2. God was delivering Israel for Himself – The goal of the Exodus was that Israel might go to worship and serve God.
Exodus 5:1 – “And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”
Exodus 7:16 – “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness”
 3. God *will* receive glory from all of His creation
 - a. Even Satan's works will bring God glory
 - b. Notice the magicians could only add to the plague, they could not reverse it. They made more blood, not less
 - c. Satan's power is ultimately self-defeating. We can see this the greatest at the crucifixion. Satan sought to defeat Christ not knowing that the crucifixion was accomplishing the will of God in the redemption of His people and Satan's greatest defeat.
- C. God rules over all. God's law is demanded of all men
1. God commands, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”
 2. Unfortunately Pharaoh was not interested in serving God. He was not interested in giving glory to God.
 3. This is the universal state of lost humanity. Human beings have universally bowed to other gods
Romans 1:21-23 – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”
 4. God will not allow this to go on forever – all sin will be punished

- III. Third, God is demonstrating here that He will have no rivals
- A. God begins by crushing the Egyptian gods of the Nile
Exodus 7:17-18 – “Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that *is* in mine hand upon the waters which *are* in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. ¹⁸ And the fish that *is* in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river.”
1. The Egyptians were dependent upon the Nile for their existence
 2. God took away their source of life for a week. Survival for a week without water in the arid climate of Egypt would have been terrible. Many probably died.
 3. Not only the water in the Nile but every vessel of water turned to blood
Exodus 7:19 – “upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and *that* there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of wood*, and in *vessels of stone*.”
 - a. The suffering must have been great. Imagine every water source in Baton Rouge suddenly becoming undrinkable
 - b. The smell of decaying fish filled the air
 - c. As the days passed they began digging in the sand in desperation
Exodus 7:24 – “And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.”
 4. God was stripping Egypt of their gods. God was proving that their gods could not come to their aid—could not meet their needs.
 Later Moses would declare:
Numbers 33:4 – “For the Egyptians buried all *their* firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments.”
 5. There is one God – He will not have rivals.
- B. God strips away the rivals we begin to embrace
1. God will not have rivals – He *will* be glorified supremely
 Have other gods crept into your life?
 What keeps you from complete devotion to God?
 Ask yourself what keeps you from prayer and God’s Word.
 2. Are there things in your life that have captured your heart?
 - The gods of pleasure? This is the god of our age.
 - Playstation 3 video games were going for as high as \$2000 on Ebay.
 - Nick Saban just signed a contract worth \$32 million – four million dollars a year.
 Average NBA player = 3.7 million
 Average MLB player = 2.5 million
 Average NFL player = 1.3 million
- 2 Timothy 3:4-5** – “. . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

- The god of money. People lust and covet after more. Gambling and the lottery are at all time highs.
1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
 - Materialism has gripped the soul of America
What happened in 1929 when the stock market crashed?
What would happen if it happened again? What would happen if the economy collapsed, gasoline went to \$25 a gallon, supermarket shelves became empty?
3. There are many gods in this world – The one true God will not have rivals.
 4. If everything were taken away tomorrow would you still trust Him?
Would you rest in confidence that God is doing His perfect work? Are you content in Him?
When Pharaoh and the Egyptians lost everything they hardened their hearts.
Exodus 7:22-23 – “and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. ²³ And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.”
 5. God is going to destroy everything in this world
2 Peter 3:12 – “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”
 - a. Is this your home?
 - b. How deep have you planted your roots deep in this life?

Conclusion:

1. God knows how to get our attention. He proved to Pharaoh that He is the one true God. Pharaoh was stiffnecked and hard hearted but he found out who God was. He never repented and never followed God but he still bowed.
2. Paul tells us that *every* knee will bow before Christ.
Philippians 2:10-11 – “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
3. How much better to bow now before the glorious Christ.