

Give Thanks for God's Sovereignty and Supremacy (Exodus 7:8-8:19)

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History tells us in 1623, Pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts 'set apart a day of thanksgiving.' In 1668, the same colony decreed Nov. 25th, the 4th day of the week a 'day of thanksgiving.'¹ Nov. 1777, the Continental Congress of this new nation issued the 1st national proclamation for a day 'set apart...for SOLEMN THANKSGIVING and PRAISE...penitent Confession of their manifold Sins...and their humble and earnest Supplication that it may please GOD through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, mercifully to forgive and blot [sins] out of Remembrance; That it may please [GOD] graciously to afford his Blessing on the Governments of these States...'²

'1779, by the United States in Congress, a Proclamation: Whereas it becomes us humbly to approach the throne of Almighty God, with gratitude...[they listed several blessings but] above all, that he hath diffused the glorious light of the gospel, whereby, through the merits of our gracious Redeemer... beseech him that he would be graciously pleased to influence our public councils, and bless them with wisdom from on high...and crown our arm[ie]s with victory; that he would grant to his church the plentiful effusions of divine grace, and pour out his holy spirit on all ministers of the gospel; that he would bless and prosper the means of education, and spread the light of Christian knowledge through the remotest corners of the earth...'³

We need to pray that today, amen? And we need to see that in Exodus.

- God says in Ex 9 His purpose in judging Egypt and blessing His people is that His name would be proclaimed in all the earth.
- Many of the Pilgrims had that vision as they came to America
- They proclaimed God's name to native Americans
- this nation became a launching pad for missions to the world.

One writer explains 'American Puritans and pilgrims like Mather, John Winthrop, John Cotton, William Bradford...and many others placed Exodus at the center of their vision...Exodus was one of the most potent elements in the construction of [one] historian called "the Puritan origins of the American self." The Puritans made Exodus an organizing principle of their experience'⁴

So turn to Ex 7 but know that this story is a part of our story as God's people

Even deists and founding fathers saw parallels with England and Egypt

- and God's people let go to worship freely in the New World.
- Thomas Paine wrote as the 1775 Lexington massacre 'was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen tempered Pharaoh of England for ever.'⁵
- A month after the 1776 Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin drafted a sketch of a seal for the U.S., Moses standing on the shore of the sea, and other Exodus images.
- Thomas Jefferson proposed Israel after the Exodus seeking a promised land.⁶
- The U.S. chose a different seal from Exodus, a pyramid and an eagle
 - o (how God describes deliverance in Ex 19, see back of \$ bills).
 - o God's all-seeing eye saw the suffering of Israelite slaves building Egypt's monuments

America and its church isn't the replacement of Israel

- but there's relevance in Israel's story for us today and our thanksgiving.

Ps 95 says *'let us come into his presence with thanksgiving'*

- but it also warns us not to have hard hearts like in the Exodus story.

In Ex 5 Yahweh God gives His declaration

- Pharaoh replied 'who is Yahweh that I should obey?'
- In Ex 7 Pharaoh will find out.

7:10 *So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.* ¹¹ *Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts.* ¹² *For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. **But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.*** ¹³ *Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* ¹⁴ *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go."* ¹⁵ *Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent.* ¹⁶ *And you shall say to him, 'The **LORD [Heb. Yahweh]**, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness." But so far, you have not obeyed.* ¹⁷ *Thus says Yahweh, "By this you shall know that I am Yahweh: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood.* ¹⁸ *The fish in the Nile shall die... [1st plague, in ch 8 plagues, frogs, gnats, flies]*

This is so Pharaoh will know who the true Lord Yahweh is, and so Egypt will know (7:5)

This led to thanksgiving for Israel. Ps 105: *'Oh give thanks to Yahweh...He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land...He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country...he brought out Israel...Egypt was glad when they departed...'* So Egypt was giving thanks, too, when the plagues stopped, and some later join the worshippers

Title: Give Thanks for God's Sovereignty and Supremacy

1. Over Rulers and Evil (7:10-15)
2. Over Life and Death (7:16-25)
3. Over the Natural and Supernatural (8:1-19)

The hero of this story isn't Moses or Aaron.

- This is not about their power, ch 7, v. 8 says they were both over 80 years old.
- They needed a staff because they were old (to hold up, help walk).
- This isn't about a mighty man, it's about the almighty hand of a supreme God.
- He can use this walking stick to change into a snake
 - o and the same piece of wood to change the Nile into blood.
 - o **And He can change complaining Moses in ch 6 to courageous Moses in ch 7**

But in v. 11 the evil ruler of Egypt tries to duplicate v. 10 or deceive.

- I read there were ways to paralyze or hypnotize snakes to be rigid temporarily,
- then they wake up when thrown down.⁷

- But they couldn't take a snake by the tail and turn it back into a staff like Moses. This shows God's supremacy and sovereignty over Pharaoh
- God controls rulers and evil in His hand
- and a king's heart is like channels of water God's hand can turn so easily in any direction.
Even the evil one, the ruler of demons, is under God's sovereign rule (Job, Luke, etc.)

Also in v. 10 the word for God's staff is a word for a greater serpent than Egypt's

- (Heb. *tannin*, a great sea serpent vs. smaller snakes).
- And in v. 12 God's serpent doesn't just kill their snakes, it eats them.
- It's like Pac-Man gobbling up enemy characters trying to run (Atari sound effects).
- It isn't just God defeating them, it's God devouring them, they're gone, non-existent, nothing to see or be afraid of, not a trace, not even a crumb.
- This is absolute supremacy in victory. **Point:**
*the only God whose power none can contend...whose name and praise will never end
...unshakable, unstoppable, That's what You are...
In the good times and bad, You are on Your throne, You are God alone⁸*

God's supremacy is His superiority, or His preeminence.

- He's matchless, unrivaled, unbeatable.
- This is what Israel and Egypt needed to see
- And it's what we need to see as the evil rises in our land.
- People want to flee our State's Governor but what if he becomes president?
- Whoever or whatever America elects (or didn't elect recently)
 - o there's an un-elected King who is in charge.
 - o There's a sovereign supreme God over the supreme court
 - and overruling evil to His purposes.
- No matter what seats change in our govt.,
 - o our unchanging God is always seated on His throne.
- The house and senate is not controlled by either party, ultimately,
 - o sovereign God is in control.

He doesn't approve of evil, but can use man's evil intents for good God intends (Gen 50:20).

This is a doctrine we need to HEAR so we FEAR no evil if He is with us (Ps 23)

In Thanksgiving proclamations of the 1780s, the U.S. Congress often spoke of God as supreme:

- 1783-84 'the supreme Ruler of all human events...the supreme Ruler of the universe'
- 1781: the supreme Disposer of all events...it is the duty of all to thankfully acknowledge⁹
- Also spoke of adoring God's superintending providence, another way to say sovereignty

Charles Spurgeon called sovereign providence the soft pillow we rest our head on at night

John Piper said 'I love to sweeten my mouth with the supremacy of God before I go to sleep.'¹⁰

We need to give thanks for God's sovereignty and supremacy over rulers and evil.

- v. 12 is a preview of the plagues overwhelming Pharaoh
 - o and the Red Sea swallowing his army. After the Egyptian chariot riders drown
 - o *swallowed* is the same verb Israel sings of their enemy swallowed up in death.¹¹

This staff swallowing the magician's staffs is a picture of how God has His enemies for lunch. –

- This is a show down, and God shows Pharaoh he'll go down.

Egypt had great pyramids and a great empire, but they'll soon know the Lord is greater

- Their snakes don't just bite the dust, they get eaten up!
- Point: no one and nothing is a match for the supreme God above Egypt's gods.
 - o God is King over earthly kings.
 - o There's no challenger or challenge too big for Him.
 - o He has no competition and His 'battle' with Pharaoh is a no-contest.

Thank God for His sovereignty and supremacy over rulers and evil!

- In ch 1 we saw Pharaoh's evil infant-killing plan has chilling parallels to the 21st century rulers and their culture of death.
- Woe to those who call evil good, who call the evil of killing a 'good' women's right
 - o Whether babies thrown in the ancient Nile
 - o or unborn babies thrown in a modern abortion clinic trashcan
 - o God will judge and God can rescue.

That's the message of Ex 7 and following we'll see in this next section.

- The river where Pharaoh killed babies God turns to blood in judgment
- and God will rescue Israel through water.
- This is a classic epic battle rooted in Gen 3:15, the enmity between the serpent and his people and the seed of the woman who crushes Satan's head

The battle isn't just against flesh and blood, there's spiritual warfare and spiritual forces here
- The serpent that deceived Eve also deceived Egypt (occult magic, satanic religion).
- The serpent was worn by Pharaohs on their crowns.
- It was often a raised cobra ready to strike to show their power to strike enemies.
- But God will strike Pharaoh and show His superior power and defeat the serpent crown.
- **SHOW SLIDES.** This uraeus serpent symbolized Egypt's supremacy
 - o but God shows real supremacy
 - o even the serpent God eats and Satan has a head-crushing defeat.

Rom 16:20 says to Christians 'God will soon crush Satan under your feet'

Give thanks God is supreme and sovereign #1 over rulers and evil, and #2 over life and death

v. 17: "By this you shall know that I am Yahweh: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. ¹⁸ The fish in the Nile shall die...

This is to Pharaoh who said 'who is Yahweh?' He'll know now who Yahweh is!

Pharaoh's staff symbolized his own sovereignty and supremacy.

- God's staff show His is real.

Remember the context:

- earlier Egypt's king ordered all Jewish baby boys to die and be thrown in the Nile.
- It was on the bank of this river that the king's daughter rescued this same Moses on the Nile in a basket.
- It was in the morning when she went to the water (like the king in v. 15).

Back to the scene of the crime, where Moses was rescued is where Israel's deliverance starts.

One writer says Moses 'will smite the water that could have become red with his own blood.

His stroke turns it into a sign of death, destruction, and guilt for Pharaoh and the Egyptians.'¹²

Moses wrote earlier in Gen 4 how innocent blood cries out to God who will judge.¹³

- He'll write later how blood by reason of the life is required by God's justice (Lev 17:11).
- And the Nile was the lifeline of Egypt, water, food.
- They worshipped it, maybe what Pharaoh came to do in v. 15.
 - o We sang hymns today, ancient Egypt sang a Hymn to the Nile: 'bringer of food...creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance.'¹⁴
 - o But the true Lord of majesty and Creator of all is bringing the Nile's food to an end, this is not good, and the sweet fragrance will turn to stank.

²⁰ *Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood.* ²¹ *And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.*

- Not just in the river, v. 19 says in their ponds, pools, even personal containers of wood and stone at home!
- There's no EID or water bottles to buy, but if there were, it would all be blood
- To get water to drink, Egypt now had to dig...like slaves.

²⁴ *And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.* ²⁵ *Seven full days passed ...*

- Some of you can't imagine days without Wi-Fi, but this is a week without water!
- This would mean death unless they got on their knees literally to dig for water.
- Do they pray? Do they look up to Yahweh? Not yet.
- But don't miss God's supremacy over life and death and the irony:
- Egypt had forced Israel to do their manual labor, now Egypt is forced to manual labor
God is beginning to bring Egypt to its knees, and He's just getting warmed up

This is a warning shot across the bow of any boat on the Nile.

- Yahweh is the supreme judge and the blood of the sons of Israel calls for judgment.

This 1st plague previews the last plague where God will shed the blood of the sons of Egypt.

- Blood will also deliver Israel at the same time, the Passover lamb's blood.
- And by water God will bring the death of Egypt's army in the Red Sea.\
- Life and death is in God's hands
 - o and judgment comes when man tries to take it into his hands.
Vengeance is the Lord's, He will repay, including America's culture of death

²² *But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* ²³ *Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart.*

- By either sorcery or sleight of hand
 - o they turn some sample of water to at least look like blood to Pharaoh,
 - but that didn't solve the issue or show superiority.
 - Pharaoh just has more red fluid he can't drink!
- If they had real power it would have helped to turn the blood back to water
- If God's power wasn't superior, they could reverse God's work, but they can't.

God alone is supreme. Moses and Aaron must be thankful God has real power of life and death
PTL He is sovereign over all of life to the day we die, and He can't be overruled

3rdly finally be thankful for God's sovereignty and supremacy over the natural and supernatural

8:1 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. ² But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. ³ The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. ⁴ The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants."*

- So frogs will jump on Pharaoh himself and in his bed and on all his servants.
- Imagine opening your stove or cupboard and there's toads in the Tupperware!
- Imagine endless 'ribbits' by the millions.
 - o End of v. 6 they covered the land, every step you take.
- Imagine the screams of women and children, the slime,
 - o here a frog, there a frog, everywhere.
 - o The place is hopping.
 - o It's humorous to picture them pop up everywhere
 - o and it's humiliating to Pharaoh who was supposed to have supernatural power to control Egypt's land.
 - o I mean, this is embarrassing! He's impotent before the Omnipotent!
 - o Egypt's emperor has no clothes and has no way to get rid of all the croaks!
 - o 'The frog was one of a number of sacred animals that might not be intentionally killed and even their involuntary slaughter was often punished by death.'¹⁵

They can't keep them out, they can't kill them, and the sorcerers can only cause more to come!

⁷ *But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.*

- Notice they didn't create frogs, they made frogs come up on the land.
- Great, more frogs! What Egypt really needed is somebody to make frogs go away!
 - o They can't reverse God's work!
- Pharaoh's sorcerers vs. God isn't like Sauron vs. Gandalf
 - o it's like squirt gun vs. the Great Wall.

Egypt has no power to take this away, Pharaoh knows and doesn't ask his magicians for help.

⁸ *Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with Yahweh to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to Yahweh."* [translations say he begged to pray/entreat Yahweh] ⁹ *Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile."* ¹⁰ *And he said, "Tomorrow."* Moses said, **"Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like Yahweh our God."**

Pharaoh didn't have a prayer (literally) so he asks for prayer to the incomparable God

That's the point: His supremacy (no one like Him)

- over the natural world and the supernatural (false gods).

Ps 78:45 says God sent ‘*frogs, which destroyed them.*’

- Not just a distraction, it was destruction.
- In humiliation, Pharaoh is standing in the need of prayer.
- He calls the prayer line of Moses and Aaron.

Egypt’s king ‘knew that God had sent the frogs and that only God could take them away. By asking for their removal, he was admitting [Yahweh’s] power over all creation. [Pharaoh’s prayer request uses the] word for supplication, for making a humble entreaty...’¹⁶

Moses let Pharaoh call it (the day) and Moses humbly prays for his enemy

¹³ And the LORD did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. ¹⁴ And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.’ ” ¹⁷ And they did so. 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 in all the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God ...

Whatever powers they thought they had, they confess God’s superior power

These guys can’t bring out a gnat or swallow a serpent.

- Whatever deception or demonic miracle they try, God stops it by His finger.
- One writer sums it up, the sorcerer’s ‘resources fail them, natural or supernatural...gods or magical powers forsake them...gnats attacked them as well.’¹⁷

Next week we’ll look more at the Egyptians gods and how the true God is insulting them here.

- But we can already see the Egyptians see this is *the finger of God*
 - o i.e., this is a real ‘act of God’

This is no natural disaster, this is a supernatural divine judgment

If this is His finger, wait till His mighty hand comes (and His all-powerful arm) in the Exodus! Ps 136 applies all this to Thanksgiving: ‘*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good... Give thanks to the God of gods...Give thanks to the Lord of lords...to him who alone does great wonders ...and brought Israel out from [Egypt]...with a strong hand and an outstretched arm... overthrew Pharaoh and his host...Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love...*’

Our closing song: My heart is filled with thankfulness To him who reigns above,

Whose wisdom is my perfect peace, [and for believers] ev’ry thought is love.

For ev’ry day I have on earth Is given by the King;

So I will give my life, my all, To love and follow him.¹⁸

Application: Do you admit God is God but not repent like these Egyptians?

- You want relief from sin’s consequence like Pharaoh, but not want repentance from it?
- Do you see God’s power but not submit to His lordship in your life?
- Do you just want to get rid of inconveniences but not your iniquities or idolatries?
- Is it what stinks that bothers you or is your sin bothering you?

Do you ask for prayer but not do what God calls you to do?

- If God is not your supreme Savior, His judgment is coming,
- unless you turn from your sin and trust and treasure Christ supremely.

If you plead for mercy sincerely, He'll do more than take away the suffering that plagues you

- He'll take away your sin that's a stench to God.
- There's wonder-working power in His blood.
- His life and death saves.

If you can say Jesus is the Lord who is my shepherd, you can say His staff it comforts me.

- Jesus also met people on the shore but He gave fish for them miraculously
- and He provides all our needs graciously.
- He showed His power to change water to wine
 - o and change hearts that once were hardened
 - o He defeated the serpent on the cross.
 - o Like He devoured enemies in the past, He rose again to destroy the last enemy,
 - death is swallowed up in victory!

Whatever demons may have been behind Egypt's sorcerers who said 'this is the finger of God,'

- Jesus said in Lk 11 *'it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons...'*¹⁹
 - o Jesus is sovereign and supreme over rulers and evil, over life and death
 - o Over natural and supernatural, so give thanks to God!

Col 1 says we're to be '*giving thanks*' that Christ is '*over all creation... thrones or powers or rulers or authorities [sovereignty]... so that in everything he might have the supremacy*' (NIV).

¹ It read in part "taking notice of the goodnes of God to us in the continuance of our civill and religious liberties, the generall health that wee have enjoyed, and that it hath pleased God...to blesse us...propose unto the severall congregations...the 25th day of November next...ye fourth day of the weeke, to be kept as a sollemne day of thanksgiving" https://pilgrimhall.org/giving_thanks.htm

² https://pilgrimhall.org/pdf/TG_First_National_Thanksgiving_Proclamation_1777.pdf

³ https://pilgrimhall.org/pdf/TG_Continental_Congress_Proclamations_1778_1784.pdf

⁴ <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/pilgrims-american-jewish-holiday>

⁵ See "Pharaoh" in David L. Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Eerdmans, 1992). See also <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/2011/11/04/pharaoh-was-a-nazi/>

⁶ <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/pilgrims-american-jewish-holiday>

⁷ John J. Davis, *Moses and the gods of Egypt*, 2nd edition, 91: "It is certain that the charming of serpents has long been practiced in Egypt ... apparently the asp, can be made to appear as dead or rigid as a stick, and of course, restored to its natural state again. K. A. Kitchen notes that this kind of conjuring was not uncommon in Egypt. The cobra ... could be rendered immobile if pressure was applied to the muscles at the nape of the neck.' John Currid adds 'It is well known that a group in Egypt called the Psylli were able to put a serpent into a state of catalepsy...' - *Exodus 1-18*, vol. 1, EP Study Commentary (Evangelical Press, 2000), 162.

⁸ "You are God Alone."

⁹ https://pilgrimhall.org/pdf/TG_Continental_Congress_Proclamations_1778_1784.pdf

¹⁰ John Piper, *Taste and See: Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 12.

¹¹ Exodus 15:12 and context before.

¹² Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus 1-18*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Lexham Press, 2016), 373.

¹³ Genesis 4:10, 9:5-6, etc. Note how Pharaoh tried to stop v. 7 in Exodus 1.

¹⁴ Davis, *Moses and the gods of Egypt*, 102.

¹⁵ Davis, 108, citing George Rawlinson.

¹⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus* (Crossway, 2005), 231.

¹⁷ Carpenter, 384.

¹⁸ Getty Music, "My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness."

¹⁹ Luke 11:20.