

7

Our Heart Toward God

Encountering God

Text: Exodus 7-8:19

Key Verse: Exodus 7:5

Next Week: Exodus 8:20-10:29

EXODUS

Finding Freedom

OPEN

Up until this point in Exodus (ch.1-6), God has been preparing his people for their deliverance by revealing, calling, and giving Moses and the Israelites the assurance of his Word to save them, to do what he said he will do – even if it feels delayed – as we heard last week.

Now, chapter 7 marks a transition in the story to the 10 plagues. The plagues will be the means by which God will now reveal himself, to not only Pharaoh but all Egypt, but also the Israelites, too. The plagues will be how God displays his power, manifests his glory, and executes his just judgement to bring his people to a place of being free to worship Him, as each plague will strike at the heart of Egypt's false gods.

The plagues are a heavy read. We can respond to them in one of two ways – with a soft heart or a hard heart, to seeing them as acts of love and mercy to pry people away from false gods, or, like Pharaoh, respond to God with a hard heart, viewing God's judgement in an opposite way, as un-loving or un-just. About God's revelation, Charles Spurgeon wrote, "The same sun hardens clay and melts wax." How is your heart toward God? Like 'clay' or like 'wax' in response to God and His Word?

REFLECT

- In 7:1-5, what does God say about Pharaoh and what does God say in v. 5 will be the end result (purpose) of the plagues?
- In Ex. 1:16, 8:15, 32, what do we see about Pharaoh's own choices in regards to the condition or focus of his heart? How do you see his own choices and God's control of Pharaoh coming together?
- Pharaoh summons magicians in vv.11, 22. By whatever means, what were they able to do (at least up until a point?)
- In verse 8:15, how does Pharaoh's heart respond to relief?
- How do you see 'softness' in the magicians in verse 8:19?

DISCUSS

- In considering the power and phenomenon of nature God used in the plagues, we can only imagine the impression the plagues made upon the Egyptians (and Israelites) in this passage....try to imagine it yourself. Can you re-call a time of experiencing the power of nature that left an impression upon you? A storm, flood, or some other kind of nature related experience? What's your story on that?
- In Exodus, we see moments where Pharaoh is attributed to hardening his own heart but also God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Is there a difference? Who is ultimately responsible for the condition of Pharaoh's heart? God, Pharaoh, both? See also Ephesians 1:4-5.
- For a time, Pharaoh summons Egyptian magicians to try to replicate the signs Moses & Aaron perform. The text does not indicate the magicians' attempts were just illusions, suggesting there was a degree of spiritual power to their spells. In Ephesians 6, it talks about spiritual warfare. And in Revelation, it talks about counterfeit miracles of the enemy. What does all of this say to you about the possibility of encountering spiritual warfare today? Based on 7:12, how should we feel should we encounter spirituality or power not of God?
- Each of the plagues strike at the heart of Egypt's false gods, such as 'Hapi' of the Nile and 'Heket' of the frogs, showing their falsehood and God's power over them. What are some of the false gods of our culture that we can be tempted to look to for 'life,' instead of God? In this way, God needed to take the 'Egypt' out of the Israelites.
- Like Pharaoh, a season of peace can actually spiritually work against us sometimes (8:15). What is your experience? Explain.

APPLY/PRAY

Take time to pray for one another...

1. Ask God for a soft heart toward him...

Use scripture to give voice to your prayer petitions (Hebrews 3:12-15, Psalm 139:23).

2. Ask God to help you identify 'false gods' in your life to turn from.

3. Pray for our Alliance missionary partners:

Vera & Danny Kuranji (Serbia), Michael & Nikki Howell (Senegal),
Doug & Carol Woon (Japan)

