

**THANK GOD FOR THE BIBLE.**

Thank God for the Bible, whose clear shining ray lighted our path, and turned night into day; whose wonderful treasures have never been told; more precious than rubies, set round with pure gold.

Thank God for the Bible! In sickness or health, it brings richer comforts than honor or wealth; its blessings are boundless, an infinite store; we may drink at a fountain, and thirst nevermore.

Thank God for the Bible sent down from above, leading to mortals God's infinite love! O boundless sea with its bright shining shore where the glorified dwell and are safe forevermore.

Thank God for the Bible—rich treasures untold laid up in store in its city of gold, the beautiful home of the saved and the blest; where no sorrow can come, where the weary find rest.

Thank God for the Bible! how dark is the night; no ray from its pages sheds forth its pure light: Jesus, no Bible, no Heaven of rest,—how could we live, were our lives so unblest!

There are millions who wander in darkness to-day, Jesus, no Bible, no knowledge to pray; help us to feel, and to act, in his sight, under our thanks, now, by giving them light.

**A LITTLE WHILE.]**

A soul, a little while  
And thou shalt be released,  
And Fortune shall have ceased  
To frown for thee or smile.

A little space,  
A few brief months or years,  
Too brief, O soul, for tears,  
Then to thy resting place.

Wherefore art thou stirred  
With weak and idle rage,  
To beat against thy cage  
Like a poor captured bird?

Be still, poor soul, be still;  
Beseech the sparrow's fall:  
By woes he knoweth all;  
Hush, hush, and wait His will  
—New York Tribune.

**Sabbath School.**

**BIBLE LESSONS.**

Lesson, 5—July 31.

Exod. 7: 8-17.

**MOSES AND THE MAGICIANS.**

**GOLDEN TEXT.**

They showed his signs among them, wonders in the land of Ham.—Psa. 135: 27.

**TOPIC.—Deliverance Refused.**

**DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Exod. 7: 1-7; Tuesday, 1 Kings 18: 24-39; Wednesday, Matt. 4: 1-11; Thursday, 2 Tim. 3: 16-17; Friday, Acts 19: 23-34; Saturday, Amos 8: 1-10; Sunday, Heb. 3: 7-14.**

**LECTURE BY PROFESSOR W. HENRY GREEN, D.D.**

Chap. 7: 8-13, the first miraculous sign shown to Pharaoh, and proves actual: verses 14-17, the first threat, the first miracle: commonly translated, "wonder," as in verse 8. Some speak of the ordinary course of nature, and for which natural laws are not sufficient to account, and accordingly prove that Moses and Aaron were acting as they proceeded to be, under supernatural direction. There was no impropriety Pharaoh asking for such an attestation. It is one important aim of the Bible to furnish credible evidence to the messengers of God: Heb. 2: 4. For you see, the evidence of the truth of your faith. *Thy rod.* The rod which is mentioned in verses 10, 12 and 13, called Aaron's, as appears from verse 17, the same that is elsewhere called the rod of Moses, and in 4: 20 the rod of God. *It shall become.* In Hebrew, the imperative form is used, "let it become." *Serpent.* This was the first of the signs given to confirm his own faith (4: 1-17), and subsequently repeated by Aaron before the elders of the people (5: 1-6). The rod was the staff which he used in tending the flocks of Israel, and the badge of the peaceful shepherd, in which he was then engaged. He bidden to cast it from him, and it became a serpent, from which he was obliged to flee. This aptly represents the perils from renouncing God, was about to do at God's command, his quiet vocation and encouraging the wrath of Pharaoh. But he shrank from it at first, he

is told to take it by the tail, and it becomes a rod again in his hand. He shall receive strength to vanquish these formidable perils, and he gets his rod again, now the rod of God, the rod of miraculous virtue, the badge of his new office as the shepherd of the Lord's people, and the rod with which he shall smite them who had smitten Israel with the rod of the taskmaster. When the same sign was exhibited to the people, the serpent once more represents the hostile power of Egypt, as the embodiment for the time, of the power of the old serpent (Gen. 3: 1; Rev. 12: 9) in its ever-enduring hostility to the kingdom of God. At first it seemed only to be made more active and threatening by Moses coming (5: 22, 23), but he should finally overcome it. The word translated "serpent," in this and the following verses, is not the same that is used in 4: 3, but is a more generic term, including crocodiles and other aquatic monsters, and is repeatedly employed by the prophets as a symbol of Egypt (Isa. 51: 9; Ezek. 29: 3). In our version, it is mostly translated "dragon," though serpents are plainly meant in some other passages (Deut. 32: 33) as well as in this.

Vs. 11.—Pharaoh was determined to see whether Moses and Aaron could not be equalled or outdone by the wonderworkers of Egypt, who are here called *wise men*, from their sagacity, and *soothsayers* from their use of incantations. The word translated *magicians*, if it is to be explained from the Hebrew, means "sacred scribes," who were familiar with the hieroglyphics, and possessed of the traditional learning of the nation; or it has been suspected that it may be an Egyptian term meaning *those who announce mysteries* (compare Gen. 41: 8, and like classes at the court of Babylon, Dan. 2: 2). Tradition names two of these men Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3: 8). *Enchantments*: Properly secret or occult arts.

Vs. 12.—There has been, and is, the greatest diversity of opinion respecting the acts of the magicians here recorded. Some compare them with the marvellous tricks of serpent-charmers (Psa. 58: 5; Jer. 8: 17) in Egypt at the present day, who are said to make serpents as rigid and inflexible as a stick. Others think that by their jugglery they deceived the eyes of the spectators and made it appear as if their rods were converted into serpents. Others still are of the opinion that they were aided by satanic influences. The Bible offers no explanation, but merely describes things as they seemed. It looked as though the magicians did the same with their rods that Aaron actually did with his. But even thus they were discomfited, for Aaron's rod swallowed up all theirs.

Vs. 13.—*He hardened:* Literally, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. The Hebrew expression is identical with that in verse 22. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is, however, in other passages, described to the Lord (Exod. 4: 21; 7: 3; 9: 12; 10: 1, 20, 27; 11: 10; 14: 4, 8), and with like frequency to Pharaoh himself (7: 14, 22; 8: 15, 19, 32; 9: 7, 34, 35). These are, in fact, but different aspects of the same truth. The Lord did not exert a direct or positive influence upon Pharaoh to make him worse; but he withheld from him his restraining grace, and so ordered the providential circumstances that the wickedness of his nature would manifest itself in this particular form. The Lord gave Moses up to his own headstrong will, suffered his pride and obstinacy to run on unchecked, and allowed his impiety to work out its own punishment by involving him in ever deepening sin and ruin. Thus the preaching of the prophets and of our Lord himself, is said to have hardened men's hearts (Isa. 6: 10; John 3: 27-40); not that this was its aim or its legitimate tendency, but to the unbelieving and the disobedient it afforded a new occasion for the evil of their nature to develop itself in yet more aggravated forms. Thus the gospel may be a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life (2 Cor. 2: 16; compare also 2 Thess. 2: 11). Under still another aspect the blindness and obstinacy of men under the means of grace is attributed to Satan (2 Cor. 4: 4). The hardening of Pharaoh's heart which is so repeatedly spoken of in this narrative, is expressed in Hebrew by three different verbs, which differ slightly in their radical sense, although the general idea intended by the phrase is in every case substantially the same. That which occurs in this verse, and in ten other places, means properly *to be, or make firm, stout, strong*, that is, obstinate. Another, which occurs six times, namely (7: 14; 8: 15, 32; 9: 2, 34; 10: 1), means *to be, or make heavy*, that is, insensible. And the third, which occurs but once (Exod. 7: 3), means *to make hard*, that is, obdurate. All these qualities are combined in a course of impenitence and sin. *As the Lord had said* (see Exod. 3: 19; 4: 21; 7: 3, 4); No more display of miraculous power is sufficient to change the heart, or to produce real faith (Matt. 11: 20;

Luke 16: 31). Men may be intellectually convinced of the truth, and yet not practically obey it (John 13: 17; Rom. 1: 32).

Vs. 14.—As the miraculous sign had produced no effect, severe measures will now be tried.

Vs. 15.—*Get out unto the water:* Perhaps to offer religious worship to the river, which was reckoned a divinity. This gives greater significance to the plague about to be inflicted (Exod. 12: 12). Some have thought that Moses was now sent to meet Pharaoh at the river because he was refused admission at the palace; but the reason rather is because his message had relation to the river.

*Stand:* Or more exactly, *station thyself, take thy stand.* The rod: There was of course, no virtue in the rod itself, by which the miracles were wrought; and yet Moses could accomplish nothing except as he employed the instrumentality which the Lord directed. And it is so with the means of grace.

Vs. 16.—*Wouldst not hear:* Literally, *hast not heard.*

Vs. 17.—Pharaoh had insolently declared that he did not know the Lord (5: 2). He shall now be made to know him, and know him to be the Lord or Jehovah; that is, the self-existent One, upon whom all other beings are absolutely dependent. *I will smite:* Moses passes almost imperceptibly from speaking in the name of God to speaking in his own person, just as the prophets use the first person interchangeably of God and of themselves (Isa. 21: 2, 3; Micah 1: 6-9; Hab. 1: 2, 5). *Turned to blood:* Not necessarily converted into the actual substances of blood, but resembling blood, as when the moon is said to be turned to blood (Joel 2: 31). This fertilizing, life-dispersing river, upon which Egypt was dependent in so many ways, was suddenly converted into a repulsive spectacle, offensive to every sense. Its waters, famed for their sweetness and delightful taste, became nauseous and utterly unfit for drinking, and the people were forced to seek such a supply of this most necessary element as they could obtain by digging for it, though the wells of Egypt are proverbially wretched and unwholesome; and the fish, which formed an important article of food (Num. 11: 5), died: The bloody river was in just retribution for the murder of Israel's infant children (Exod. 1: 22; compare Rev. 16: 6), and was besides a presage of their own destruction. Jehovah thus showed himself to be the Lord of the Nile, able to do with it precisely as he pleased, and that it was to his favor Egypt owed all the benefits derived from it. It was thus that God withdraws the good things which he has given, and for which we have been unthankful, in order to make us more sensible of our obligations to him.

It is observable that the plagues sent upon Egypt for the most part take their form from inflictions to which the country is liable from natural causes, and by which it is visited from time to time. This adaptation of the narrative to the peculiarities of the region in which these events are said to have occurred is interesting as an incidental evidence of the reality or the occurrences and of the genuineness of the record. This has sometimes been urged as though it did away with the supernatural character of the events, and implied that there was nothing in them beyond what can be accounted for on natural principles. But the unexampled intensity of these plagues, the combination in so short a time of what otherwise occurs singly and at more distant intervals, their coming and going at the bidding of Moses and as foretold by him, the discrimination made in several of them between Egypt and Goshen, and the connection of the whole with the release of Israel from bondage, impresses upon them a supernatural character which cannot be effaced. Plagues of this familiar description showed more clearly than an irruption of strange and unheard-of horrors could have done that Jehovah ruled in Egypt, and that all the agencies operative there were under his control and subject to his will. The frogs, lice, flies, murrains, blains, locusts, were indigenous pests, and so was the darkness if produced, as it probably was, by the simoon. It is not so clear to what natural phenomenon the blood in the river attached itself. Some have been disposed to link it with the reddish appearance of the water at a certain stage of its annual overflow, which, however, is simply due to a mechanical mixture of earthly particles, does not mar its salubrity, and is easily removed by filtering the water or allowing it to stand. Others think of the reddening of the water by numberless infusoria or microscopic fungi a phenomenon which has been observed, but only occasionally, and on a more limited scale.

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