

Most of here, even the little children, can tell the story of Moses and the ten plagues. It is exciting to read about the wonders God wrought against the Egyptians and even more amazing to see how stubborn Pharaoh was despite the overwhelming evidence against him. But today I would like us to focus on a part of the story we all know is there, but it is easy to skip right over and miss the significance of what is being said.

The demand of God through Moses was that Pharaoh allow Israel an opportunity to worship God (Exodus 7:16). Pharaoh's initial response was to not listen and to ignore the demand. *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.*

Think how many people do the same today. We are here to serve God and keep his commandments. *Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (14) For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Yet many simply will not listen nor concern themselves about God, church, or worship.

After the plague of frogs, Pharaoh said he would let the people worship. *Exodus 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.* But once the problem was solved, he returned to not listening. *Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*

We see this as too well. People who become "religious" in fox holes. When troubles come upon them they will pray to God, but you don't see them in church when life calms down. What kind of commitment and worship is that? Both God and man can see that their words do not match their actions. Speaking of the wickedness of Judah, God said by the prophet

Isaiah. *Isaiah 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* God doesn't heed nor does he hear sinners. *John 9:31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

After the plague of lice (or gnats), Pharaoh's own magicians said this was the work of God. *Exodus 8:19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.* Do we not see this as well? Some only see and accept what they want to accept. Nothing else matters to them. Even when others try to convince them, they still refuse to listen and denied the evidence. The Greeks did this in the days of Paul. They ignored the evidence and Paul writes of them. *Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. (20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) 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.*

It continues today. Evidence of a Creating God is all around but people ignore it. Mention to the secular people about the benefits of worship and attending church and they view is casually with no significance attached. Worship has no impact on them. Such was the attitude of Pharaoh.

After the plague of flies, Pharaoh offers a compromise - Exodus 8:25. *Exodus 8:25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice*

to your God in the land. You would think this is exactly what Moses wanted but we find that Moses rejects it; it was not the right place. - *Exodus 8:26-28 And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?*

(27) We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us. (28) And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.

How many today try to worship God in the wrong place? A lot of people think they can worship God anywhere on the Lord's day: in a boat while fishing, or in car heading back from a vacation, or even laying in bed after sleeping in on Sunday morning. *Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

An essential point of worship is coming out of the world to join with others called out of the world. God wants us out of the world and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17). Some imagine that one church is good as another. To Pharaoh, it didn't matter whether their worship was among his idols or elsewhere. In a sense Pharaoh is asking Moses not to be so extreme. But God's worship is distinctive from the world.

It was after the plague of hail that Pharaoh offered another compromise. *Exodus 9:27-28 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. (28) Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.*

He offered sorrow, as if that was enough to satisfy God. Moses pointed out that it was not real. *Exodus 9:29-30 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S. (30) But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.* It was a sorrow without change. *2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* It is the type of service many people try to offer. They cry, they moan, they bewail how sinful they are ... but they never change their life.

During the plague of locust, Pharaoh offered to let the men go and worship, but the women and children were to be left behind. *Exodus 10:8-11 And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? (9) And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD. (click)(10) And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. (11) Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.*

Pharaoh knew that if he retained control over Israel's families, it didn't matter what the men did. Moses' response was that all the people, young and old, must go. God wants everyone. Church is not a club for old people - Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1. Young people have work to do - I Timothy 4:12. Some look at church as only for young people. Youth groups, social activities, all push the elderly aside. The elderly should be honored - Leviticus 19:32. Peter tells us that the elderly should be relied upon for wisdom. - I Peter 5:5. True worship and service to God requires everyone.

Finally, after the plague of darkness, Pharaoh offered one last compromise.

Exodus 10:24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. Pharaoh realized that if he retained control of Israel's wealth, he still had leverage over Israel. Moses again refused - Exodus 10:25-26.

Again we see people who think the same way. As long as they are not required to make too great of a sacrifice, they are willing to be Christians. We cannot hold to both. When we make something, we intend for it to be used for the purpose we designed it. When God created us, He had His purpose for us. ***Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.*** God wants us entirely which is. ***Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*** We take all that God has blessed us to use in His service.

Moses was addressing Pharaoh's argument for compromise on behalf of Israel's worship, but those statements tell us something about the nature of worship. Will we follow the path of righteousness, living and worshiping in the way God has laid out for us?

There is no better time than the opportunity we have at this moment. We're discussing things that Christians are expected to do. Are you a NT Christian?