

Text: Exod. 7:8-13

Title: "The failure to know that the LORD is God"

Time: 6/7/2020 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie were Dutch believers who were arrested in 1944 for hiding Jews from the Nazi occupation of their country. After months in prison, the sisters were transported to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany.

Betsie died there in December, but later that month Corrie was released due to what was found out to be a clerical error. Evidently, her prisoner number had been confused with another's. Shortly after her release, the Nazis murdered all the Ravensbrück prisoners who were in Corrie's age group. She exited that place just in the nick of time.

The passage we are studying this morning is an account that happened just prior to the start of the ten plagues against Egypt. If ever there was a time to obey the LORD and avoid His judgment in Egypt, the day of this passage was that time. In my outline of the Book of Exodus, I end with verse 13 a section I have called "Deliverance Resisted" (beginning in 5:1). With the start of the plagues in verse 14, the Lord demonstrates that His deliverance is irresistible. His enemies cannot stop His salvation of His people.

So the events of this passage are critical ones for the history of Egypt. Following the new chronology of Egyptologist David Rohl, what comes in the following passages eventually leads to the loss of the nation to the Hyksos invaders. He uses the Royal Canon of Turin to conclude that the hapless Pharaoh of our passage was the one in Column VII

Line 10 of that document, one named Dudimose [*Exodus: Myth or History?*, 147-149].

In addition, Rohl highlights an Egyptian account of a sage named Ipuwer called "The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage." The document mentions the Nile turning into blood, the destruction of crops and livestock, the ruination of Egypt, the period of darkness, the death of children, and the plundering of Egypt by slaves.

Prior to the development of the new chronology, one translator and commentator on the Ipuwer Papyrus had written this about his "Admonitions": "The description of chaos in the Admonitions is inherently contradictory, hence historically impossible. On the one hand the land is said to suffer from total want; on the other hand the poor are described as having become rich, of wearing fine clothes, and generally of disposing of all that once belonged to their masters" [quoted by Rohl, 152]. After that quotation the agnostic Rohl observes: "Yet, the strange contradiction here is perhaps the most striking parallel of all between Ipuwer and the Bible - because this is exactly what is described in the Book of Exodus."

Of course, unlike Corrie Ten Boom, Egypt fails to escape all of this in the nick of time, and they do so in this passage. Their failure comes from a set of falsehoods that they were basing their destiny upon, falsehoods that told them that Yahweh, the God of the Bible, was not exclusively God. I have titled the message this morning, "The failure to know that the LORD is God," and I want us to see three things that this failure caused in Egypt on this fateful day.

I. Failing to know that the LORD is God caused Pharaoh to ask for a miracle (v. 9).

Illustration: I was reminded in my devotions this past week that Jesus was given a very similar request during His ministry on earth: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, 'Master, we would see a sign from thee'" (Matt. 12:38). Jesus's answer was unequivocal: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (v. 39).

Application: The LORD grants Pharaoh's request for a miracle here in Exodus in a way He did not for the scribes and Pharisees. But that was not because Pharaoh was less evil than the generation of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus's day. No, in fact, the execution of signs and wonders would be multiplied in Egypt because Pharaoh was evil (7:3). What Pharaoh needed was not curiosity to see a miracle, but fear to hear the Word of the Lord (see Exod. 9:20, where Egyptians have had enough of the miracle, begin to fear God's word, and save their lives and cattle from hail).

In fact, had Pharaoh believed God's word and obeyed God's commandment, no miracle would have ever been necessary in Egypt. All would have known that Yahweh is God by faith in His Word through Moses and Aaron, rather than by seeing miracles. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and the ability to see God's miracles did not help Pharaoh please Him as His God.

The Bible is clear that God desires us to trust His Word, whether we get to see a miracle or not. In fact, as wonderful as the Lord's miracles are, they come to us in Scripture with the clear warning that the Lord is not the only One who can do miracles (Deut. 13:1-5). Jesus gave the same warning about miraculous signs (Matt. 24:24). Paul warns of the deception of antichrist in a similar NT passage: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9).

How do we know whether a miracle is from God or from God's enemies? The miracles of God's enemies always lead us to neglect, ignore, undervalue, turn away from, and disobey His word. This spirit of antichrist is alive and well in our day. Churches everywhere jettison doctrine and replace it with transcendent experiences, feelings, and wonders.

Let's not make that mistake. Let's live lives that demonstrate our confidence that God's Word is sufficient. Let's seek the reading, studying, and teaching of the Word of God, not signs and wonders in our day. Pharaoh asked for a sign as one who failed to know that the LORD is God.

II. Failing to know that the LORD is God caused the magicians to withstand Moses (vv. 10-12a).

Illustration: This past week my sons and I got out for a round of golf together. You can see some amazing things in the game of golf. I have often watched professions hit a hole in one or sink an approach shot from scores of yards away and been fascinated by what I saw.

Well, on Tuesday Kent hit an approach shot from the fairway that landed not on the green, but on the next tee box. He still had another approach shot of 60 yards or so remaining. With his next shot he caught the ball perfectly, and he sunk it right into the hole from that distance to score our only birdie of the day. It looked like Kent had suddenly turned into a pro golfer, but we all knew that was not true. What was true was that with that one shot, Kent did a great job imitating a pro golfer for a few minutes.

Application: Imitation is clearly going on in this passage. The real miracle workers, Moses and Aaron, cast their rod down on the ground, life in all its miraculous complexity is instantly created - DNA coding included, and the rod be-

comes a snake. But Pharaoh has his imitation that was good enough to provide some evidence that Egypt did not yet need to know that the LORD is God.

Certain snakes use catalepsy as a defense mechanism against predators, whose instincts to kill are triggered by the movement of prey. Under the heading "Catalepsy, death feigning, tonic immobility," the veterinarian website DVM360 notes the following: "Assumption of a rigid posture that could be misinterpreted as an injury has been described in *Trachyboa boulengeri* and the bandy bandy (*vermicillia anulata*) [two species of snake]" (Byron del la Navarre, "Behavior and morphological adaptations of reptiles (Proceedings)," May 1, 2011, <https://www.dvm360.com/view/behavior-and-morphological-adaptations-reptiles-proceedings>; accessed 6/3/2020)].

In a 1984 book entitled, *Die Schlange: die unbekannte Wesen* [trans. *The Snake: the Unknown Being*], the author describes how this defense posture has been induced by snake handlers throughout history. Archeological evidence has shown the practice was well known in ancient Egypt.

C. H. MacInosh says this about the way God's enemy's withstand His messengers through imitation: "Now, it is peculiarly solemn to mark the nature of this resistance to the truth. The mode . . . was simply by imitating, as far as they were able, whatever he did. . . . What Moses did they could do, so that after all there was no great difference. One was as good as the other. A miracle is a miracle. If Moses wrought miracles to get the people out of Egypt, they could work miracles to keep them in; so where is the difference?" (100-101).

Now we can look back with our scientific understand of the complex nature of living organisms with certain assurance

that the magician trick fell far short of the true miracle. Scripture is clear that “all things were made by [Christ], and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). Satan has the power to kill (Heb. 2:14), but not the power to give life. But those who saw them on that day would have asked, “So where is the difference?”

Jewish tradition gave the names Jannes and Jambres to these magicians. Paul mentions them in his description of the last days, the days you and I live in. He says that just like those men withstood Moses, we need to understand that there are going to be imitations of the truth that we need to be aware of, and he tells us how to tell the difference (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

What is the difference? Verse 9 gives the key answer: “form of godliness with power vs. form of godliness while denying the power.” The form of godliness is what we are practicing this morning – we are obeying the Lord’s command to worship Him on the Lord’s Day.

The power of godliness is the ability to change a person’s life from everything described in this list into godliness. The form of godliness happens for an hour on Sunday. The power of godliness happens 24/7. So what do we have? Let me ask us about just three in Paul’s list this morning: Are we lovers of self more than lovers of God? Are we a lovers of money more than lovers of God? Are we a lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?

If we can say, “I am more so a lover of God,” we can do so only because of the gospel’s power to save and God’s gracious mercy. If we have to honestly admit the true nature of our lack of love for God, we need that power. Failing to

know that the LORD is God, the magicians withstood Moses and denied the power of a life changed into loving God.

III. Failing to know that the LORD is God caused Pharaoh to ignore an important detail (vv. 12a-13).

Application: Aaron's rod becomes a snake, the magicians' snakes in catalepsy loosen up, and then Aaron's snake eats the magicians' snakes. At some level, we can understand Pharaoh's walking away telling himself that Aaron's snake was a magician's trick too. That would have been self-deception for obvious reasons, but in some ways the magicians gave him some cover for that. But what about what happened next? What does it mean, Pharaoh, that Aaron's snake ate all of those of your magicians? It as though the question never occurs to Pharaoh. It is completely ignored.

Ignoring important details is always one of the keys for justifying unbelief. Unbelievers say they do not believe the Bible without ever having read it. They credit themselves with being on the side of science while denying biblical creation without ever examining the details of evolution. They believe their lives will be fine, as our nation begins to crumble around them. They live as though they will never die, not noticing that death is real and happening to everyone. In their failure to know that the LORD is God, they are willing to ignore important details of truth.

Conclusion: Do you know that the LORD is God? If not, have you ever asked yourself, "Why not?" While still an atheist, philosopher Antony Flew wrote the following insightful passage in the introduction of his book on logic: "A prime cause of our being deceived is, for all of us, always our own desire to be so deceived. *How to Think Straight: An Introduction to Critical Reasoning* therefore insists through-

out that all of us constantly need to be asking ourselves what it is which we want to believe to be true, and whether our desires so to believe are stronger than our desires to know the truth, however uncongenial to us that truth may be. It is a truly existential challenge.”

That recognition ultimately caused Flew to change his mind from atheism to theism. What about us? Have we ever honestly examined the details? Have we constantly asked ourselves what is it that we want to believe to be true and why? Jesus explained, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Jesus said, “I am the Truth.” Do you want the Truth? Are you willing to do what the truth demands? It will cost us some of our love of self, some of our love of money, some of our love of pleasure, and require from us much more love of God. But only one answer will save us: “Yes, I want to know and obey the Truth.”

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching