

<b>Warnings, Usages of Staffs, and Pharaoh's Responses to the Plagues</b>			
<b>Plagues</b>	<b>Warnings</b>	<b>Uses of Staffs</b>	<b>Pharaoh's Responses</b>
<i>First Cycle</i>			
1. Nile turned to blood	Warning—to Pharaoh at the Nile in the morning (7:15–18)	Aaron's staff (7:19)	Did not listen to the request that the Israelites be released (7:22–23)
2. Frogs	Warning—to Pharaoh probably in his palace (8:2–4)	Aaron's staff (8:5–6)	Agreed to let the people go if the frogs were taken away (8:8)
3. Gnats	No warning	Aaron's staff (8:16–17)	Refused to listen to his magicians' suggestion (8:19)
<i>Second Cycle</i>			
4. Flies	Warning—to Pharaoh at the Nile in the morning (8:20–23)	No staff used	Suggested the Israelites sacrifice in Egypt (8:25)
5. Death of livestock	Warning—to Pharaoh probably in his palace (9:1–5)	No staff used	Refused Moses' request (9:7)
6. Boils	No warning	No staff used	Refused Moses' request (9:12)
<i>Third Cycle</i>			
7. Hail	Warning—to Pharaoh in his palace in the morning (9:13–19)	Moses' staff (9:22–23)	Promised to let the Israelites go if the rain and hail were stopped (9:28)
8. Locusts	Warning—to Pharaoh probably in his palace (10:3–6)	Moses staff (10:12–13)	Offered to let only the men go (10:11)
9. Darkness	No warning	(Moses' hand; perhaps the staff was used; 10:21–22)	Agreed that the people could go but not their animals (10:24)
<i>Culminating judgment</i>			
10. Death of the firstborn	Warning—to Pharaoh probably in his palace (11:4–8)		Urged the people to go! (12:31–32)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, *The 10 Judgments of God on Egypt* (Exodus 7:14–12:36).

**Exodus 7:14-25**  
*Plague 1: Water Turned to Blood*

There has been a lot of discussion over the recent past about the economy

- There are a lot of questions and concerns

What will happen if the healthcare bill is implemented?

- Can our economy sustain such a financial burden?
- If the economy did buckle, what would happen?

Of course, this isn't the first time that such thoughts have been entertained

- The stock market did crash back in 1929 (also known as Black Tuesday)
- Then there was Black Monday in 1987
- Most recently, in 2008, there was a big concern over banks and the loans they had extended

But what would happen if a strike to our economy happened without warning?

- An immediate blow to the economic structure that would bring everything to a screeching halt

That very thing happened in Egypt several thousand years ago

- This is the focus of our study this morning

Before we dive into our study of the first plague, we need to step back and look at the big picture

There are ten plagues in total

- Turning the Nile into blood
- Frogs
- Gnats
- Flies
- Death of livestock
- Boils
- Hail
- Locusts
- Darkness
- Death of the firstborn

These ten plagues may not seem very important to us

- But they were strategic targets that the LORD aimed to demolish

You must understand that Egypt was a very polytheistic society

- They believed in many different gods

It is hard to know for certain just how many gods the Egyptians worshipped

- Some scholars guess that there were at least 80<sup>1</sup>

Can you imagine serving 80 different gods?

- Learning their names
- Learning what they like/dislike
- Learning what area of responsibility each one has

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 94.

Each one of these plagues took dead aim at one of the Egyptian gods

- These plagues weren't just random acts of God

With each plague, the LORD was showing His sovereignty, power, and authority

- Over the gods of Egypt
- Over the king of Egypt

There is some level of structure to these 10 plagues as well<sup>2</sup>

- They are not just listed in a random way

Of course, the 10<sup>th</sup> plague – the death of the firstborn – was the climax of the plagues

- But there were 9 others plagues before this

As you can see in your handout, there are 3 groups of 3 plagues

- $3 \times 3 = 9$

This isn't just a made-up scenario

- There are all sorts of clues that God intended this  $3 \times 3$  pattern

For example, look at the “Warnings” column of your handout

- Plagues 1, 4, and 7 occur in the morning
- Plagues 2, 5, and 8 occur in the palace
- Plagues 3, 6, and 9 have no warning

Look at the use of staffs

- Plagues 1-3 – Aaron raised the staff
- Plagues 4-6 – no one raised a staff
- Plagues 7-9 – Moses raised the staff

How about the scope of who was affected?

- Plagues 1-3 – everyone was affected
- Plagues 4-9 – only the Egyptians were affected; the Israelites were sheltered and protected

Consider the effect that these plagues had on Pharaoh

- Plagues 1-3 – there was no effect on him
- Plagues 4-9 – these had an effect on him, but there was no genuine repentance

The theme of Pharaoh's hardened heart surfaces 14 times in relationship to these 10 plagues (Ex 7:14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34–35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10)

- In the first 5 plagues, Pharaoh is hardening his heart
- But in the last 5 plagues, it is the LORD who hardens Pharaoh's heart

Beginning in plague 1 and continuing through plague 10, there is a building intensity

- God doesn't hit Pharaoh with the biggest plague at first
- God saves that until plague 10

The first three plagues were fairly brief in nature<sup>3</sup>

- They were mainly an inconvenience

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<sup>2</sup> Cornelis Houtman, *Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, Exodus, Vol 2*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *NAC, Exodus*, 187.

Plagues 4-6 were much more harmful

- Plagues 7-9 were even more severe
- Plague 10 was catastrophic

As you can see in this brief overview, there is a remarkable symmetry and order in these 10 plagues

- God knew what He was doing!

This brings us to another crucial question, “How are we supposed to understand these plagues?”

- Are they Divine miracles?
- Or are they merely natural occurrences that took place in Egypt?

Here is a sample of how someone describes the plagues in a non-miraculous manner<sup>4</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> plague – water to blood

- Severe flooding of the Nile caused large amounts of red sediment from Ethiopia to make the water appear red

2<sup>nd</sup> plague – frogs

- The frogs, because of the flooding of the Nile and the reddish tint of the water, would have left the water for land

3<sup>rd</sup> plague – gnats

- The algae in the water, due to the rising flood, would have proved fatal to the fish
- This would have been ideal breeding ground for gnats

4<sup>th</sup> plague – flies

- As the Nile’s waters receded, this would have produced breeding grounds for flies in great quantities

5<sup>th</sup> plague – death of livestock

- The flies would have carried infectious diseases which would have killed the frogs and livestock

6<sup>th</sup> plague – boils

- The disease would have struck animals and humans alike, creating boils

7<sup>th</sup> plague – hail

- The flooding of the Nile would have ended in late Fall
- A hailstorm would have arrived in January or February, in perfect chronological position

8<sup>th</sup> plague – locusts

- The prevailing east winds in March or April would have brought in hordes of locusts

9<sup>th</sup> plague – darkness

- In the early spring, a blinding sandstorm would have created this darkness

How do we respond to this?

- Does this have any validity?

God could have used the natural calendar and events of Egypt to confront Pharaoh

- But how would Pharaoh have known that this was the LORD and not just nature?

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 52-53.

A few things argue against a merely naturalistic explanation of these plagues<sup>5</sup>

- The fact that Israel was sheltered and unaffected beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> plague
- The natural explanation works only if the floods had already started; however, Exodus 7:24 seems to indicate that the water was low
- The change in the water was immediate, not gradual (as would be the case with the floods)
- Moses was able to predict with absolute precision when these events would take place

The biggest argument against a purely naturalistic explanation is that this would not have accomplished God's purpose<sup>6</sup>

- God set out to prove that He is sovereign over Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods
- This wouldn't be accomplished by using the normal, everyday issues that the Egyptians faced

What are the major purposes of the plagues?<sup>7</sup>

- To deal a major blow to the Egyptian god's impotence and inability to counteract the LORD
- To force Pharaoh to let Israel go
- To show that the LORD's sovereignty, power, and glory
- To show that Israel is God's people, protecting them from plagues 4-10

### **Let's read Exodus 7:14-25**

Throughout our study of these ten plagues, there will be a similar outline used

- It will vary slightly from week-to-week
- But, for the most part, it will stay the same

Here are the main elements of the outline

- The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)
- The servant's responsibility (7:19-20a)
- The plague's result (7:20b-21)
- The magician's response (7:22)
- The Pharaoh's reaction (7:23)

### **I. The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)**

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go.

Don't skip over those opening words, "**Then the LORD said to Moses**"

- This phrase is used to open every single one of the ten plagues (7:14; 8:1, 16, 20, 9:1, 8, 13; 10:1, 21; 11:1)

We remind ourselves that these plagues were not Moses' idea

- They weren't a clever idea that he developed

No, these plagues were God's idea

- They were part of God's plan

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<sup>5</sup> Davis, 93-94.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word, Exodus*, 219.

<sup>7</sup> Youngblood, 50.

Yet again, we have here in verse 14 a reminder that “**Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn**”

- Literally, his heart is “heavy”
- This is one of the ways in which Pharaoh’s heart is described

The Egyptians believed that when someone died the person went to judgment in the underworld<sup>8</sup>

- The person’s heart (the very essence of a person) was weighed on the scales of truth

On one pan was the feather of truth and righteousness

- On the other was the heart of the deceased

If the heart was heavy, the person was unjust, condemned, and thrown to the Devouress to be eaten

- If the heart was pure, the deceased would go to the Egyptian afterlife

Isn’t it interesting that God gives Pharaoh’s heart the designation of being “heavy”

- Even in the Egyptian world, he would have been condemned

We learned last week that Pharaoh’s heart was not becoming hard

- His heart has already become hard
- Yet, it would continue to become harder and harder as we move forward

Not only is Pharaoh’s heart stubborn

- We are told that “**he refuses to let the people go**”

Time and time again, the Lord has demanded that Pharaoh let the Israelites go

- Time and time again, however, Pharaoh has refused

The plagues would be God’s way of prying Pharaoh’s control from the Israelites

- God would show His strength and sovereignty

**15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile;**

Moses is commanded to “**go**” to Pharaoh

- The use of the imperative makes it clear that this isn’t optional

But notice the specifics of what the LORD told Moses

- “**Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile**”

First, notice that Moses meets Pharaoh “**in the morning**”

- As we have noted already, this is repeated in plagues 1, 4, and 7 (7:14; 8:20; 9:13)

What was Pharaoh doing early that morning?

- He “**is going out to the water**”

Clearly, the Nile River is in focus here

- Pharaoh was going down to the water

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<sup>8</sup> John D. Currid, *An EP Study Commentary, Exodus*, 165.

But for what purpose?

- Ultimately, the Bible doesn't tell us

Several options have been suggested

- He could have been going down to the Nile to bathe
- He could have been going down to the Nile for a leisurely stroll
- He could have been going down to the Nile in order to perform some act of worship

Does the last one seem far-fetched to you?

- It shouldn't, once you understood how the Egyptians viewed the Nile

If you remember from our study in Exodus 1, the Nile River played a significant role in the Egyptian culture<sup>9</sup>

- It provided the water to drink
- It provided the water to bathe in
- It irrigated their crops
- It brought mineral rich mud which made the crops grow
- It was also a means of transportation

So we can see very clearly that the Nile River was a very important part of the Egyptian culture and religion

- It's no surprise, then, that the LORD targeted the Nile as His first target in the plagues

The Egyptians worshipped the Nile River; they considered it<sup>10</sup>

- "the giver of life to the two lands"
- "the lord of sustenance"
- the one "who causes the whole land to live through his provisions"

There were songs written to express worship and praise to the Nile

- "Hail to thee, Oh Nile, that issue from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive!...He that waters the meadows which Recreated, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water: that is his dew coming down (from) heaven."<sup>11</sup>

and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent.

Moses was to take "**the staff that was turned into a serpent**"

- This recalls the event that we studied last week

Aaron's staff literally turned into a serpent

- Furthermore, Aaron's staff swallowed up the staffs of the magicians

This staff would be a visual reminder of the LORD's victory

- This would be a reminder to Pharaoh of how he and his magicians had been defeated

Sometimes Moses has the staff

- At other times, Aaron will have the staff

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Bentley, *Travelling Homeward*, 108.

<sup>10</sup> Currid, 164.

<sup>11</sup> Davis, 99.

As I mentioned earlier, the staff plays a visual factor in these 9 plagues

- Plagues 1-3 – it is Aaron’s staff
- Plagues 4-6 – no staff is mentioned
- Plagues 7-9 – it is Moses’ staff

16 And you will say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.”’

Moses is told what he is to say to Pharaoh

- Let’s notice a few key components here in verse 16

First, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you”

- This isn’t Moses’ idea and plan
- This is the LORD’s idea and plan

Moses is under Divine command

- Yahweh Himself has sent Moses

Yahweh identifies Himself as “the God the Hebrews”

- Israel is monotheistic
- They should have only one God

Second, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness”

- As we have already seen, this isn’t the first time that God has told Pharaoh this

Pharaoh had been using and abusing the sons of Israel

- Pharaoh refused to allow them to go

But notice the purpose why Israel needed to leave Egypt, “that they may serve Me in the wilderness”

- The LORD demanded that Israel worship Him<sup>12</sup>

Up to this point, Pharaoh wanted the glory

- But the LORD demanded the glory from His people

Nevertheless, Pharaoh had “not listened until now”

- He had not obeyed Yahweh’s demand

17 ‘Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD:

In verse 17, Moses speaks the typical prophetic language, “thus says the LORD”

- This phrase occurs 418 times in the Old Testament
- 85% of these occur in the 17 prophetic books

What is it that Moses is to tell Pharaoh?

- “By this you shall know that I am the LORD”

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<sup>12</sup> Ryken, 217.



So we see that one of the Divine purposes of the plagues is so that Pharaoh might “**know**” that the God of Israel is “**the LORD**”

- This goes back to Exodus 5:2, in which Pharaoh said, “**Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.**”

Through these plagues, Pharaoh would come to a better understanding of who Yahweh is

- But not in a saving way

How sad it is that Pharaoh saw much of Yahweh’s power

- Yet his heart became more and more hardened!

behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it shall be turned to blood.

Now, for the first time, Pharaoh hears what will happen in the first plague

- Of course, Pharaoh didn’t know this was plague #1
- He didn’t know that there would be much more after this

The LORD makes it clear that He “**will strike the water that is in the Nile...and it shall be turned to blood**”

- God targets the Nile River
- The language of “striking” is the language of judgment<sup>13</sup>

Could it be that God was striking the Nile because of what Pharaoh had done in chapter 1?

- Remember Exodus 1:22, “**Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, ‘Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.’**”

God was turning the Nile River to blood

- Perhaps as retribution to what Pharaoh had done with the Hebrew boys<sup>14</sup>

Think of what must have been going through Pharaoh’s mind!

- The mighty Nile...turned into blood?

Did the Nile River become blood?

- Or did the water just take on a blood-like color?

If we take Scripture at face value, we must confess that there is no hint of a non-literal meaning

- We come to the conclusion that this water became literal blood

This is staggering!

- Water turned to blood

Of course, Jesus had the power to turn water into wine

- That was His first miracle (John 2:1-11)

Is it too much that God could turn the mighty Nile into blood?

- Of course not!

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<sup>13</sup> John L. Mackay, *A Mentor Commentary, Exodus*, 146.

<sup>14</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary, Exodus*, 39.

18 And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul; and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.”””

What would happen when the Nile River became blood?

- The fish in the Nile would die
- The water would begin to stink
- The Egyptians couldn't drink the water

You can see the chain reaction that this causes<sup>15</sup>

- Turning water to blood causes many other problems

The Nile River immediately turned into a river of blood

- Not just color
- But molecular structure as well

Fish can't survive in blood

- They immediately die
- Their rotting, decomposing bodies now made the water stink

Fish were a common food for the Egyptians

- God was showing the Egyptians that their gods couldn't supply their needs

Is it any wonder that the Egyptians don't drink the water?

- Who wants to drink blood?
- What wants to drink blood that has decomposing fish in it?

God was showing Pharaoh that He has the power of death

- He can give life
- He can take life

This is what the LORD revealed to Moses

- Moses was to communicate this to Pharaoh
- **The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)**

## **II. The servant's responsibility (7:19-20a)**

19 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"

Now the plan of God is put into action

- The LORD tells Moses who in turn tells Aaron what to do

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<sup>15</sup> John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*, 97.

Aaron is to raise his staff and stretch his hand over the waters of Egypt

- The Nile itself
- The rivers
- The streams
- The pools
- The reservoirs

It seems as if every single bit of water supply was immediately turned to blood<sup>16</sup>

- Instantaneous!

Not only was there blood in the water, but there was also blood in the wood and stone

- These could be water containers
- They could be associated with pagan religion
- We are not told

20 So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that *was* in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants.

We are told that Moses and Aaron “*did even as the LORD had commanded*”

- They were obedient

Isn't it wonderful when you are obedient, and God works through you?

- There is nothing like it in the world

Right before Pharaoh's eyes, the water became blood

- The sight!
- The stench!
- **The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)**
- **The servant's responsibility (7:19-20a)**

### **III. The plague's result (7:20b-21)**

and all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned to blood.

Just as God commanded, “*all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned to blood*”

- There were no rebellious water molecules!
- All the water was immediately turned to blood

21 And the fish that *were* in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.

Just as God had said, “*the fish that *were* in the Nile died*”

- As a result, “*the Nile became foul*”
- Consequently, “*the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile*”

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<sup>16</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Tyndale OT Commentary, Exodus*, 90.

Think of how fast this must have taken place!

- Immediate!
- The people had no time to grab extra water before it turned into blood
- **The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)**
- **The servant's responsibility (7:19-20a)**
- **The plague's result (7:20b-21)**

#### **IV. The magician's response (7:22)**

22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts:

We are re-introduced to “**the magicians of Egypt**”

- We are told that they imitated what Moses and Aaron had done
- Except that the magicians did so “**with their secret arts**”

We saw last week how the magicians' staffs were consumed by Aaron's staff

- The LORD showed Himself to be sovereign

But let's ourselves ask a few questions

- Where did they get the water to turn to blood?
- How did they turn water into blood?

The biggest question is one that you may not have thought of<sup>17</sup>

- Why didn't they reverse what Moses and Aaron did?
- In other words, if they were had power, then why didn't they reverse the plague and restore the Nile and all the water supplies back to water?

The short answer is that they couldn't do this

- Their powers and abilities were limited

The very best that the magicians could do was to make things worse

- Think about it
- In further multiplying water into blood, they only compounded the problem!

Perhaps God had prevented the underground water from being contaminated

- Perhaps God had allowed water that was already drawn out of the Nile River to be safe

If so, then the magicians just took the little bit of potable water and rendered it undrinkable

and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Upon seeing the magicians replicate (or try to replicate, at least) the plague, “**Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD has said**”

- His heart grew harder
- He refused to obey and submit himself to the authority and sovereignty of Yahweh

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<sup>17</sup> Mackay, 148.

But Moses wasn't surprised by this turn of events

- No, the LORD had already told Moses that Pharaoh wouldn't listen to him
- **The LORD's revelation (7:14-18)**
- **The servant's responsibility (7:19-20a)**
- **The plague's result (7:20b-21)**
- **The magician's response (7:22)**

#### **V. The Pharaoh's reaction (7:23)**

23 Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this.

Even after seeing the mighty Nile River become blood, "Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this"

- He wasn't affected by this!

Wasn't he concerned about how long the plague would last?

- Wasn't he concerned that one of his main gods was threatened by the LORD?
- Wasn't he concerned that his people wouldn't have sufficient drinking water?

It seems that the answer to all these questions is, "No!"

24 So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile.

Verse 24 is a pitiful picture

- The Egyptians "dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile"

Pharaoh may not have been concerned

- But the Egyptians were!

We are not even told whether or not these efforts were successful

- Perhaps they labored in vain
- Perhaps the LORD was gracious to allow some water to be drinkable
- We are not told

25 And seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

How long did this plague last?

- Verse 25 seems to indicate 7 days

Think of it!

- An entire week without drinkable water
- An entire week of enduring the stench of the Nile River which had been turned into blood
- An entire week of not having fish to eat, since they had died in the Nile

God was gracious, however, to stop this plague after 7 days

- This was His common grace to unbelieving sinners!

This wasn't enough, however, for Pharaoh to repent

- His heart was hardened
- He refused to obey

What will it take for you, dear friend, to repent?

- How long will you play games with religion?

God may have to bring a direct, frontal assault on your god

- Just as He did with Pharaoh and Egypt

If you refuse to give Him glory, He may just come after your god

- Finances
- Home
- Beauty/appearance
- Fame
- Friends
- Family
- The list is endless

In the future, there is a day of judgment

- God has promised that He will pour out His wrath on those who don't submit to Him

Listen to the account in Revelation 16 of the bowl judgments

- “And the second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like *that* of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. And the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, ‘Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it.’ And I heard the altar saying, ‘Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.’”

Why was God bringing this judgment on these people?

- Revelation 16:9, “And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give Him glory”

Dear friend, if you refuse to give God the glory, then He will show you His power

- If you still refuse, He will eventually show you His wrath
- Forever!

Learn from Pharaoh

- Don't harden your heart any longer
- Submit yourself to God