

## A Contest of Rods, Serpents and Wills Exodus 7:8-16

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh holding on to God's promise and expecting to amaze the king by making a staff become a serpent. Instead the two Hebrew brothers were themselves amazed when the Egyptian wise men (magicians) did the same thing. I think the Egyptians used trickery of some sort, but whatever they did, God overruled it. Nevertheless, Pharaoh remained unmoved and determined not to let the Israelites go. This incident helps us to understand better that our contests with evil are not easily won. God's opponents are clever and strong-willed, and we need to be prepared for a long struggle. But keep in mind, the Lord has never lost a contest.

### I. **The Wise Men of Egypt**

- A. So beware of worldly wise men, whose "secret arts" come straight from the devil.
- B. Their job is to convince you that God is weak and unable to stand against them.
- C. Keep in mind 1 Cor 1:20 –  
For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness."
- D. Israel dealt with dubious wise men at various times, but one group was right about Jesus.
- E. Truly wise people believe the Bible and trust the Savior whom God has sent.

### II. **God's Miracles and Evil's Faux-Miracles**

- A. Besides granting us the light of His Word, the Lord still performs the supernatural.
- B. The age of miracles is over, but God answers prayer, even for the most amazing things.
- C. But the Apostle Paul warned us about "lying wonders," things that confuse us.
- D. Note 2 Thess. 2:9 re the Antichrist –  
Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders
- E. Make sure that what amazes you agrees with the Bible, for Satan has his counterfeit miracles, just as he did in Pharaoh's court.
- F. Faux miracles don't last. God's power always endures.
- G. The incarnation of Christ and His Atonement are the inimitable miracle vs. all fakes.

### III. **God's One-Upmanship**

- A. God's opponents always think they are one step ahead of Him (or ahead of His Church).
- B. It's likely the magicians were expecting the staff-to-snake demonstration and had prepared.
- C. Moses & Aaron had no answer, but God was way ahead and had prepared a stronger snake.
- D. Listen to Isaiah 47:9-11 –  
I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure... yes, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.
- E. The Lord anticipates the schemes of the devil and always stays ahead of him. (Eph. 6:11)  
Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
- F. You can't outsmart the Lord, and believers need not doubt the outcome of any confrontation.  
The resurrection follows the cross.

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### IV. **God's Voices and Pharaoh's Heart**

- A. Moses and Aaron heard God's voice and in turn became the voices of God to Pharaoh.
- B. It takes a work of grace in the heart to hear clearly the voice of God and to respond to it.
- C. Pharaoh heard the brothers speaking, but his hard heart had no ears.
- D. But note what happened to Lydia by the river at Philippi. (Acts 16:14)  
And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
- E. Those who are obstinate will follow Pharaoh's example in shutting out the voice of God.
- F. The king never really heard the Lord until it was too late.