

JUNE 17th
JUDGMENT ON THE NILE

“Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.” ’ ’ ” **EXODUS 7:17-18**

We become what we worship. That’s the central idea and title from theologian G.K. Beale. His subtitle for the book is *A Biblical Theology of Idolatry.*” It’s true, isn’t it? God has clearly stated in His Word that when we make false gods, we become like them. Psalm 135:15-18 says the following: “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.” It’s completely stupid...and we continue to substitute our God for the false gods. Sure, we may not worship the Nile River or Pharaoh, but we show in our hearts our sinful tendency to worship acceptance, money, security, or independence. Here in these next few chapters in Exodus, God brings judgment against the gods of Egypt. We can learn some things and be challenged as we examine the Nile River debacle.

As you read Exodus 7, you’ll notice that God calls Moses to go out to the banks of the Nile in the morning, when Pharaoh goes out to the river. The Bible doesn’t tell us what Pharaoh does when he goes out to the river. It could be his morning bath or morning swim routine. He could be looking out over the river as he blesses it for providing rich food. We don’t know for sure. But we do know what the Nile represents to Egypt. According to Phil Ryken’s commentary on Exodus, the Egyptians saw three gods of the Nile: Osiris, Nu, and Hapi. Hapi was a fertility god who was shown as a bearded man with female breasts and a pregnant stomach. Where would they get this awkward picture from? The Nile flooded its banks every year and when it receded, it left a rich topsoil that provided healthy crops. They believed that every good crop came from the god of the Nile. But God. God begins with the Nile to show that He is the supreme God. There shall be no other gods before him. He judges the sin of the Egyptians and shows that their false god has no power over Him.

Have you ever wondered about the Egyptian magicians? We have mentioned before God’s power over Satan’s power. Even as the magicians use Satan’s power to mimic some of these “plagues,” there is an important idea that can sometimes be missed here. Phil Ryken does well to point it out. The magicians are able to also produce blood, but it doesn’t reverse the turning of the water into blood. They can mimic the blood, but they can’t reverse the miracle. They can’t overturn God’s initiative in judging the god of the Nile River. This is key here. It reminds us once again that Satan does have power, but that power has always been eternally underneath God’s power. You can check out Job 1 and 2 if you still wonder about those truths. While Job’s suffering doesn’t make sense to Job’s friends or to Job, we can read those intro chapters and see that Satan only attacks with God’s permission.

Men, what does God have to teach us here? We can quickly point the finger at others here in Exodus or our world and say, “that’s a problem for them, but not for me.” The judgment against the Nile was to show the Hebrews and the Egyptians that Yahweh is the LORD. And what’s key about Exodus 7:17 is how it begins, “Thus says the LORD.” God speaks into our idolatry and consistently reminds us that He is God. He is the Lord. This is not new info that God is giving to us. Why the need to tell us repeatedly? Because we drift. We walk away. We place ourselves on the throne. How do we fight against our sinful idolatry? By renewing our minds with God’s truth about who He is. Will we go to God’s truth and remind ourselves of His greatness and glory today?

Spend some time thinking about idols that have replaced God in your life. Confess this to God and ask Him to help you keep Him as God in your mind and heart today.

For Further Reading: Psalm 135

