

Epiphany 2
January 20, 2019

Exodus 7:14-25
91-82-94/85-329

Water into Blood; Water into Wine

- I. God's almighty power.
- II. God's saving power.

Dear Christian friends,

What was your first reaction to this reading? "What **in the world** does this have to do with Epiphany?!" THAT was **my** first reaction. The gospel reading SETS THE TONE for the day and the other readings support it. **Jesus turning** water into wine shows the power – the **love** – the **care** and **concern** of our Lord Jesus. But **Moses turning** water into blood SO THAT the fish all died and nobody could drink the water – WHAT **in the world**?!

Jesus turning water into wine was to "**reveal His glory**" and strengthen the **disciples' faith** in Him. That **miracle** was to answer the question, "JUST WHO is **this Jesus** of Nazareth?" That same question was LURKING BEHIND **Moses'** miracle. Pharaoh's attitude was "WHO is this **Moses**? Who is the **LORD** that I should **have to listen** to Him? PHUWIE on them!" Pharaoh needed a major **attitude adjustment**.

We now look at this miracle IN THE LIGHT of **Jesus' first** miracle. So we have "WATER INTO BLOOD; WATER INTO WINE." In **both** miracles see 1)God's almighty power and 2)God's saving power.

I. God's almighty power.

Let's recall the setting here. At that miraculous sight of the "**burning bush**" on Mt. Sinai God had called Moses to **lead the Israelites** out of slavery in Egypt. Moses was now 80 years old. God appointed Moses' older brother Aaron to be Moses' **spokesman**. Moses' FIRST MEETING with Pharaoh had disastrous results from the **Israelites'** point of view. Pharaoh brusquely brushed Moses off with a "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.**" Then to RUB IT in Moses' face Pharaoh ordered the **slave drivers** to no longer provide straw for making bricks – but the people were still to make the **same amount** of bricks. Moses' first meeting with Pharaoh ONLY MADE life more miserable for the Israelites and they were quick to blame Moses for their misery.

God, however, was not done with Pharaoh. "**Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Pharaoh's heart is unyielding. He refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When he goes out by the water, stand on the bank of the Nile (River) to meet him. Take in your hand the staff that was turned into a snake.'**"

Pharaoh was going to learn JUST WHO he was **up against**. In **ancient Egypt** the Nile River was considered one of their gods. The Nile provided the Egyptians with drinking water and the water needed to irrigate their **fields** and water their **animals**. The Nile was VITAL to **everyday life** in Egypt so they worshiped it as a god. Pharaoh was also considered a god. He was the human link to the **spirit world**.

The real God was ABOUT TO TEACH Pharaoh and the Egyptians a very basic lesson – there is ONLY ONE **real** God and He's not Pharaoh or the **Nile**. Following God's instructions Moses ordered Aaron, "**Take your staff, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt — over its rivers, streams, ponds, and all the reservoirs — and they will become blood.**" AND SO it happened! The water turned to blood – the fish all died – the river stank to **high heaven** – nobody could drink the water. "**Blood was in the entire land of Egypt, even in containers made of wood and stone.**"

Water INTO BLOOD - and now water INTO WINE. That was **Jesus' first** miracle. Moses turned water into blood with power GIVEN to him by **almighty** God. Jesus turned water into wine with almighty

power that IS HIS to begin with. Moses turned water into blood AS A SERVANT of **almighty** God. Jesus turned water into wine AS THE ALMIGHTY SON of God Himself in the flesh.

“But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their occult practices. So Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had told them. He did not take to heart even this.”

This wasn’t the FIRST or LAST TIME Pharaoh’s **“magicians”** were able to copy Moses’ miracle. Earlier **“in front of Pharaoh and his officials”** Moses had thrown down his staff and it had turned into a snake. **“By their secret arts”** Pharaoh’s magicians had done the same thing. **“But Aaron’s staffs swallowed up their staffs.”**

What shall we MAKE of this? We can’t brush this off as a TRICK – God’s Word clearly says that **“they did the same thing.”** But then it adds **“by their occult (secret) practices.”** BEHIND these magicians was the power of the devil. The devil is not almighty – ONLY GOD is – but he is far more powerful than us. The Bible warns about the devil doing **“all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders”** that **“deceive those who are perishing.”** Moses later warned the Israelites about false prophets doing **“miraculous signs or wonders.”** **“The LORD your God is testing you,”** Moses explained, **“to find out whether you love him with all your heart and all your soul. It is the LORD you must follow, and Him you must revere.”**

We have something similar today with all the miracles the Catholic church claims BY PRAYING to Mary or some other saint. Whether the miracle actually happened or not is NOT THE POINT. The point is that the message of the **alleged miracle** CONTRADICTS God’s clear Word. That right there reveals it as a **“counterfeit”** miracle. All of this is a GOOD WARNING for us to know God’s Word WELL so that we aren’t misled.

For Pharaoh the **water into blood** was NOT JUST a miracle but a PLAGUE – the very first of the **ten plagues** God would send on Egypt. Send with the message, “DON’T MESS with God. HE’S almighty – **you’re not!**”

That’s a message we all need to **take to heart**. Our sinful natures have the **same attitude** Pharaoh did – “WHO is God that I should listen to HIM? If God doesn’t like my **language** – my **morals** – my **priorities** – if God **doesn’t like** the shows I watch or the music I listen to – that’s His TOUGH LUCK! He can’t tell me how to live my life!” How we need to learn from Pharaoh NOT TO MESS with **almighty** God!

Water INTO BLOOD – water INTO WINE. See also...

II. God’s saving power.

Moses’ miracle was not just for PHARAOH’S BENEFIT. The Israelites also needed to **learn** JUST WHO their God is. They **needed** to clearly understand their Lord’s ALMIGHTY power – and ALSO SEE His love and **faithfulness**. David wrote in Psalm 62, **“One thing has God spoken, two things have I heard: that You, O God, are strong, and that You, O Lord, are loving.”** LOVE ALONE can’t save anyone. ALMIGHTY POWER by itself – **almighty power** in the wrong hands – is **scary**. But almighty power in LOVING HANDS – WHAT a combination! That’s just what God wants us to see in the water INTO BLOOD – water INTO WINE. **This almighty, loving God** is OUR God fighting FOR US.

Look and learn from God IN ACTION. The plagues continue. AT FIRST they also affected the Israelites. God was reminding them that BY THEMSELVES they were **no better** than the Egyptians. Their history in the OT shows how stubborn, defiant, etc., they could be. God’s grace alone had made them **God’s people**. As the plagues continue God distinguishes between the Israelites and the Egyptians – only the Egyptians suffer from them. The Israelites were NO MATCH for Pharaoh and his forces. But Pharaoh and his forces were NO MATCH for **Israel’s** Lord God!

Do you see the lessons for us? We must ever remember that it's ONLY by **God's grace** that we are God's people. We're no better than anybody else. But ever rejoice and take comfort in our ALMIGHTY – LOVING – SAVING God! So many of our **problems in life** are OUT OF our hands. We can't make everything turn out OK. We don't have all the answers. Life can BE SO SCARY if we only see what's wrong. But look again at that **water INTO BLOOD** – that water INTO WINE. That God "is for us" so who cares "who's against us!" That God has promised us, "**never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.**"

Water INTO BLOOD – water into WINE. Jesus' first miracle wasn't a LIFE OR DEATH **emergency** - it was simply an embarrassing situation. But that didn't stop Jesus from **helping** out. We shouldn't be afraid to go to God with our problems – NO MATTER HOW SMALL they may **seem to be**. We should also recognize – and be THANKFUL! – for how well God **daily takes care** of us.

But far more important than God's PHYSICAL **care** and **miracles** is His care and concern for our SPIRITUAL needs. Look what God's almighty power and **saving love** TEAMED UP to do for us. **We** were no match FOR THE DEVIL. We couldn't save ourselves from our sins – from dying and ending up in hell. The almighty and righteous ANGER and **judgment** that God unleashed on Pharaoh and Egypt could also have RIGHTLY FALLEN on you and me and all people.

But look again at that **water INTO BLOOD** – water INTO WINE. God is fighting FOR US – not against us. Look at JUST WHO **Jesus of Nazareth** is – the eternal Son of God born a true man! Jesus didn't come here to enable us to "**eat, drink and be merry**" – to enjoy a good life and then die and go to hell. Jesus came to rescue us from sin and Satan – death and hell and give us eternal life in heaven. Look at ALL the **miracles**! Jesus perfectly obeying every commandment and so providing us with the **righteousness to stand acceptable** in God's sight. Jesus taking the blame for the sins of the whole world - Jesus suffering and dying on the cross as "**the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.**" Jesus shedding NOT WATER but His own holy, precious blood to "**cleanse us from all sin.**" Jesus rising triumphant over death and the grave. Look and REJOICE! That is the love and power of OUR God. That is our forgiveness – our peace – our comfort – our **salvation**. BECAUSE this is the power and love of OUR God we can confidently face life and death. We are God's children – forgiven – **loved** – heading home to heaven.

"Jesus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." Water INTO BLOOD – water INTO WINE. What an epiphany – what a REVELATION! So our God has revealed His glory to strengthen our faith in Him. Amen.

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