

wonders is not merely to counsel Egypt to let the Lord's people depart, nor to punish her for oppressing them, but to reveal Jehovah as the supreme ruler, against whom the gods of Egypt are helpless to protect their worshippers.

Exod. 7. 8-17.

[Memory Verses 15-17.]

8 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you : then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

June 6. 39: What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded : and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Exod. 4. 2, 3: And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent: and Moses fled from before it.

11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

2 Tim. 3. 8: Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. Gen. 41. 8: And [Pharaoh] sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream. Dan. 2. 2: Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams.

12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents : but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.

Job 9. 4: Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Dan 5. 20: But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.

Explanatory and Practical.

Verses 8, 9. The Lord spake. In what manner cannot now be known; perhaps by direct impression upon their minds, so strong as to be supernatural. **Unto Moses and unto Aaron.** Probably to Moses directly, and through him to Aaron. **When Pharaoh shall speak.** It was taken for granted that Pharaoh would demand some proof that the two brothers bore a message from God, and were not deceivers. 1. Those who speak as God's heralds must expect to have their authority called in question. 2. Every disciple needs to know the evidences on which his faith rests. **Show a miracle.** A miracle is an event wrought by divine power, contrary to the usual order of nature, for the purpose of attesting a messenger as coming from God. **For you.** For yourselves, in proof of your authority. **Take thy rod.** The shepherd's staff which Moses had carried in the wilderness, and which had been used in working miracles, he had now transferred to Aaron. **A serpent.** The word here is not the same in the Hebrew with that in Exod. 4. 3. There it means "a serpent;" here it is a word translated "dragon" in Psa. 74. 13. Some have thought it refers to the basilisk, or asp, others to the crocodile, which was common in the Nile, and a symbol of Egypt.

10, 11. Went in unto Pharaoh. To the royal palace. **It became a serpent.** The shepherd's staff suddenly was transformed into a dragon of the Nile, probably the fierce crocodile: a symbol that the shepherd-race of Israel may become a formidable foe, if God's message be disobeyed. **The wise men.... sorcerers.... magicians.** Three names applied to one class of learned men well known in Egyptian history. The first word relates to their supposed knowledge, the second to the incantations by which they were supposed to obtain help from spirits, the third is a general term meaning sacred scribes. Pharaoh's purpose in sending for these wonder-workers was to show that either Moses and Aaron were only magicians like those of Egypt, or, if their works were supernatural, that their God was no more powerful than the gods of Egypt. **In like manner with their enchantments.** They imitated the miracle by their magical arts, but whether by the assistance of spirits or by mere sleight of hand, the record does not declare.

12. They cast down.... became serpents. Outwardly the same effect was produced. The magicians of the Oriental world have in all ages exhibited feats which seem miraculous, just as in our time and land some spiritualistic mediums have also done; but in our opinion they have all alike been the result of skill, and not of supernatural aid. **Aaron's rod swallowed.** Showing that his God was mightier than theirs, and prophetic of the religion that was to swallow up all the boasted wisdom of Egypt.

13, 14. He hardened Pharaoh's heart. An incorrect translation. It should be, "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened," as in verse 22, where the words in Hebrew are the same. 3. Unbelievers can always find an excuse for their unbelief, and sinners for their sin. 4. Men pervert the very evidences of divine truth into arguments against it. Ten times in this book it is said, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart," and precisely the same number of times that "Pharaoh hardened his heart," or similar expressions. The latter indicates the human side of the narrative, the voluntary, responsible act of man; the former represents the divine side, God's judgment upon man for his resistance to the divine will, in the increasing insensibility of his nature. Pharaoh refused to believe, and therefore, by the operation of the divine law, God hardened his heart. **As the Lord had said.** They might have been discouraged by his obduracy, if they had not been already