

Prophet OR Magician?



*Discerning the Gold
from the Gold-plated*

MODUPE KUMAPAYI

Prophet or Magician?

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Publishers

ICBN

(International Christian Book Network)

Block 5, A Close, 412 Road, Gowon Estate, Egbeda,

Lagos. +234-803-377-7797, +234-815-043-0753

icbnpublishing@gmail.com

ISBN

978-978-61413-2-9

Author's Contact

Email: modupekumapayi@gmail.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural references are from the KJV (*King James Version*) of the Holy Bible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge God's unconditional love for me especially expressed in His role as Father. He gives me care and protection. Like in every writing venture I undertake, I lean on Him for support. This time, it wasn't different; only that I leaned a little more than usual. Thankfully He remained steady. Thank You, God, for steadying my heart and my hands.

I appreciate my dear mum, Fadekemi. She not only took me to church, she always allowed me borrow her Bibles, Bible commentaries, handbooks, concordance etc. She also gifted me my first-owned Bible. Thank you for encouraging my search for the truth even from a young age. May God continue to bless you.

I am grateful for the kindness and support shown me by Editor John Oseh of the International Christian Book Network. With you working on my first two books *pro bono*, you greatly encouraged my writing; then with your continuous input my books end up being more refined. May God continue to bless you, sir.

DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to all God's children, young and old, who are earnestly seeking for the truth. It is my prayer that on the pages of this book you'll find the truth you need to free yourself from those who have laid hold of you.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

RUN... RUN... RUN!

Hmm! Sometimes I'm amused, sometimes I fear. Until Modupe sent in the script of this book, I can't say I had had full rest of mind about certain preachers and supposed ministers of the gospel whose books have come to ICBN for editorial services. "Sometimes I'm amused, sometimes I fear."

Some ministers have acted honourably; but the questionable character of some is so brazen, they leave me wondering who they truly are, and what their source truly is. There are just so many impostors parading themselves as ministers of God, some with branded profiles as "Prophets of God" when nothing in their character and conducts matches that profile. "Sometimes I'm amused, sometimes I fear."

Modupe Kumapayi, an author now of no mean spiritual resource – with nine books now published, and a few more in the works – is no more to be taken lightly. She shocks me in many ways whenever she sends in a new script. Not only is her focus on Bible truths appealing, her handling of the word of God is proving to be unique, compelling, and a message for all. Would she be accepted by all? The sincere readers, yes; but the crowd of those for whom the word of God mean nothing, I fear they may scorn.

My appeal always will be, read Modupe. See things for yourself. Does she deviate from the truth?

Not as far as I can see. Is she serious? Very much so, as far as I can see. Would the time invested in reading her books be worth your while? Much more than you can imagine. As editor, with works running in hundreds from authors across the world, I can vouch for a true writer for God when I see one. Modupe triggers in me an unusual excitement!

This particular book, *Prophet or Magician?* has turned out a real shocker to me, one of her best, if not the very best so far. After now, I believe magicians posing as ministers of God will have no place to hide. They either repent themselves, and cease from their pretenses and evil life, or leave the hapless people they deceive to go free, so they can find the truth in Jesus Christ and be truly saved.

For those under the captivity of magicians, I plead: Don't remain a captive after reading *Prophet or Magician?* You deserve to know the truth and be truly free to serve the One and True God, not controlled and manipulated by deceivers who will plunge your soul into damnation. The one way I can tag this book is "Freedom at Last". So, run away now from the magicians who have deceived you until now. It's time you began enjoying true freedom in Christ.

John Oseh

Managing Editor

International Christian Book Network (ICBN), Lagos

INTRODUCTION

DELIVER YOURSELF!

“Deliver thyself”. Two words that mean responsibility. But they also reveal the power of choice in the face of captivity or looming captivity. As an imperative sentence, it’s a command that holds a promise of freedom; yet it could also be read in passing. It all really depends on who’s reading, or maybe on what state the person reading is in. How aware are you, of the times we’re in, and the state you’re in? Do you know that we’re in the last days, and that perilous times have come? Do you know whether you’re free indeed or someone has managed to gain control over you? Who is reading this introduction right now, what state are you in?

It’s important you provide genuine answers to these questions because they would determine if this book will mean anything to you at all; if it would be the way out of that need you have, or if it would be just another book filled with Bible facts. I’d hate for it to be the latter; because, then the purpose for my writing this book would have been defeated, my efforts wasted.

What then is my purpose for writing this book? This book is the result of my attempt to create awareness about the rise of ‘magicians’ disguised as prophets in the body of Christ, to bring to the forefront of our minds knowledge about the true

prophet of God, which will be good news to those who are not aware and have been lacking knowledge on the matter; it's also to offer healing for those who have suffered wounds in the hands of these magicians and to declare hope and freedom for those who have been held captive and dominated! I want you to know you can be set free, and the time is now.

In this book I explored the man and prophet Moses; his character and the early stages of his ministry, especially while he was in Egypt; and as you might have guessed, I also used the magicians of Egypt, in Pharaoh's palace to be precise, as a case study. You'll discover just like I do too that there's a lot of useful information in what people often regard as Bible stories.

As has become my writing style, everything is made simple and concise; all that will be required of you is found in the words of Jesus recorded in Mark 4:24-25. *"Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."*

In summary, it will do you a whole lot of good if you pay careful attention to what you're about to read. It will determine what you'll get out of reading this book.

SECTION I

BACKGROUND CHECK

The Holy Scriptures leave us in no doubt who God's true prophets are, in comparison with false prophets, false teachers who though pose as ministers of God but are impostors, liars, pretenders and outright magicians. Before the event at Pharaoh's courts where Moses and Aaron had exposed the fraud of Pharaoh's magicians, God had evidently called and appointed Moses and Aaron to the task. So the miracles the duo performed in Egypt were no fluke, but the true hand of God against Egypt, and all were meant to force Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go free.

ONE

THE CALL OF MOSES

In Exodus 3, we learn that on a day that seemed like every other day, the man Moses went about his chores. In all that he envisioned for his life, a shepherd had never even been a stray thought; but there he was a shepherd keeping not his flock but that of Jethro his father-in-law who was a priest of Midian. He had led the flock to the backside of the desert and when he came to the mountain of God, i.e. Horeb (Sinai), the events that ensued disrupted the entire course of his life.

GOD CALLS A SHEPHERD

Moses had once been ambitious. But he wasn't any longer. Back then he had been younger; but those years were now long behind him. The ambition? It had come with the territory. He had been raised as a Prince in Egypt and had desired, and even tried to help the Hebrews but had failed. Now he was in Midian, and had been for forty years. Now at eighty years old not seeking to be anything than who he

already was, nor trying to do anything other than what he was already doing, God suddenly showed up with an assignment least on the mind of the shepherd. So we see, Moses at this time of his call was content rather than ambitious, having accepted his situation as adequate.

Moses had accepted his situation as adequate and wasn't seeking to make it better and could have easily lived all of his life in that manner if God had not gone looking for him. Yes, God sought Moses out, not the other way round. In fact, Moses didn't even know God personally other than what he had heard of him briefly, and perhaps casually. He had spent the better part of his childhood and a brief part of his adult life in Pharaoh's house, and had also lived a good part of his adult life with a Midianite priest and his family, none of whom knew God; so no, Moses didn't know God let alone seek Him out.

God knew Moses. He had known him before he was born, and had a specific mission for him. In fact, Moses' life had gone exactly according to plan. He had been born at the right time into the right family, and had even been given up by his mother Jochebed at the right time so he could meet and be adopted by the King's daughter so his life could be preserved. God had watched over Moses while he grew and became learned in Pharaoh's house. He knew when he ran off from Pharaoh's house because he had murdered an Egyptian. He knew Moses was now

living with a Midianite family and had the job of a shepherd. I dare say God had Moses where He wanted him, doing what He wanted him to do. So, when it was time for the next phase of his life, God knew exactly where to find him; and find him He did.

God did get Moses' attention in the most dramatic way – via a burning bush that wasn't consumed. Moses himself tells us what had happened, how he heard a voice which he later attributed to God, audibly calling out to him by name. So Moses hears the Voice (Exodus 3) and responds. But how did Moses know whose voice it was? According to Moses, the voice tells him not to draw nigh and to put off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Moses does as he is told and then came the introduction.

The voice tells him that He is the God of his “father”. Wait a minute; which father? As an adopted Egyptian prince he had no father. But as a Hebrew, Amram, a descendant of Levi – the third of the twelve sons of Jacob, was his father. But the voice keeps speaking, He tells Moses, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Fully understanding that this voice was that of a God, one who knew his true origin as a Hebrew, Moses had a spontaneous response; he hid his face, afraid to keep looking upon the burning bush. But just because the voice which had so dramatically gained his attention and had introduced himself as God, all the while revealing his

true origins claimed to be God, didn't necessarily mean it was true, right? Let's keep reading.

Next, the Voice that claimed to be God tells him of what has come to His notice, the affliction of the Hebrews. And in the same breath reveals that these Hebrews were His people. He would later even call them His "son", His "firstborn". He said He had heard their cry, knew their sorrow and was revealing Himself because it was time for Him to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them to the Promised Land even though it was at the time occupied by Canaanites. And He was revealing Himself particularly to Moses because he had a role to play in His grand plan. He had chosen him and was now commissioning him to go to Pharaoh in Egypt and bring out His people – the children of Israel.

AN OVERWHELMING TASK

At this point, if I was in Moses' shoes, I would doubt this voice was God's. Why? For not many reasons but few. One of which is God's plan appears ridiculous and elaborate in different ways! Imagine the Hebrews who had long been in Egypt and had been in slavery for over four centuries! How were they to be delivered just like that; where's the army, the weapons, the alliance? And by Whom, just a Voice, that claimed to be God? And through whom, he, Moses, a fugitive?

These thoughts may have flooded the mind of Moses the same way I would have thought, and most likely so going by his response to God. His first words might have carried no disrespect to God but it revealed Moses' doubts about the ability of this Voice, or rather this God, though he clearly disguised it as concern about his insignificance and inadequacies.

The Voice, now identified as God, assures Moses of His continual presence on the mission, and even speaks of a time in the future when Moses would have succeeded on the mission and would return to the same Mount Horeb with the people and serve Him. This does eventually happen; but back when God spoke, there was nothing to guarantee that it would happen.

Moses, still full of doubt, continues to reveal his concerns. If he undertook the mission, how would he answer questions about this Voice's identity to the children of Israel? Sure, he could tell them He was the God of their fathers; but what else? Did He have a name? This Voice called God then revealed more about Himself to Moses. He tells him, He is "I Am That I Am," implying that He is sovereign and independent. If you ask me, this information was more for Moses than the people he was sent to; because, afterwards, God reiterates His earlier introduction to Moses, and says that would be sufficient also for the people He was sending him to.

In fact, that would be His memorial to all generations.

Two, the Voice reveals He knew how the Israelites operated – like insider information. They had elders who were from the twelve tribes. Each tribe had its own elders that represented them and their interests. God revealed this when He instructed Moses to ask to meet with these elders. And when they granted him audience, he was to give them certain information. The exact words to be spoken by Moses to the people was given to him by God; and he was to repeat the words verbatim – making him not just a messenger but a mouthpiece.

The message? To the people of Israel, Moses was tasked with revealing God's identity, informing them of His visitation, His awareness of their plight and His plan of deliverance; and all of that was meant to fill them with hope, then help them respond well to Moses and ultimately God. This was the second foretelling of the future made by this Voice which claimed to be God. The first had been that Moses would successfully carry out this mission and return to Mount Horeb (Sinai) with the people to serve God.

CONFRONTING PHARAOH

But the Voice is far from being done speaking. Three, He tells Moses that he and the elders were to approach Pharaoh and repeat verbatim, the next set

of words He reveals to Moses. The words? They were to inform Pharaoh of God's desire for His people to go into the wilderness, a three-day journey, in order to sacrifice to Him. But then the Voice quickly adds that Pharaoh would not let them go, at least not by repeating those words. Yet, they were to say those words to him.

Four, the Voice tells Moses that He would stretch out His hand to smite Egypt with all His wonders which He would do among them; and only after that would Pharaoh let them go! There's also a fifth. He tells Moses that the people will be favoured in the sight of the Egyptians: and of a surety it would happen that when they leave Egypt, they wouldn't go empty, but leave with jewels of silver, gold etc. Again, at this time, it would seem, there's no guarantee – except solid faith in God – that any of these things would happen. But did they all happen eventually? The answer is yes. And proof of it is in the Scriptures and in the mouth of the Jews.

The conversation between God and Moses is far from over. We know that this Voice – which identifies as God – knew things, including Moses' true origin, the affliction of the people of Israel and how things worked in their community. He had also predicted at least five things which included the obedience of the Israelites and Pharaoh's character, and what it would take to break Pharaoh's will.

In Exodus 4 the conversation between the Voice and Moses continued, even though it was more of a debate than a conversation. Moses continues his opposing arguments disguised as concerns about the outcome of his trip back to Egypt. Still testing the Spirit that spoke to him (though unintentionally), Moses tells Him about his fear of not being believed by the people he was sent to. Then the Voice responds by equipping Moses with the ability to perform instantaneous miracles and even reverse them. With the rod in his hand and by following God's instructions he sees it turn into a serpent. Again by following instructions he is able to see it turn back into a rod.

But the miracle-working power was not for Moses' personal benefit nor for exploiting the people, it would be for one purpose only: so that the people may believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who had sent Moses. That was just one miracle. Another followed. This time, after obeying instructions from God, Moses saw his hand become leprous, and then turned again to a healthy human flesh. The miracles/signs were to help the people believe. The idea of the multiple signs was, if the people didn't believe the first two miracles, they would see more!

AN ADAMANT MOSES

Moses moved on from that to talk about his personal limitations. He wasn't fluent in speaking even if he was learned and might be so too in writing. Bible scholars say Moses had speech impairment and stammered. When the Voice replies, we learn more about who He is. He was God Himself God the Creator of the heaven and the earth, Creator of man (all humans), including Moses, and his body parts, including his speech organs and their functions. Later He would reveal the whole creation history to Moses who writes it all in Genesis, the first Book of the Bible.

In the meantime, He also revealed that He was a Teacher. He promised that if Moses went on the mission, He would "be with his mouth". I believe this is by teaching him what to say, thereby enabling him to speak fluently. Moses, still reluctant, categorically tells God – the One that wasn't created but was Creator Himself, the One that knew all things, predicted all things, and could make things happen, and even gave people the ability to make seemingly impossible things possible – to send someone else in his stead.

Of course God was irked, and understandably so. Thankfully, this reluctance or brief rebellion by Moses, helps both him and us know what else God was about. While responding to Moses, both Moses

and us get to discover just how well God knew him and us. He mentions Moses' older brother by three years, Aaron, calls him by name, and even tells of his ability. Aaron was an eloquent one! But Moses was the chosen one.

In the same breath God gives us a sixth prediction; this time, He tells of a reunion between Moses and Aaron, a happy reunion, and something that would soon come to pass, unlike the previous prophecies that would happen later in the future. But that also revealed that God had spoken to Aaron and told him where to meet Moses, and that Moses would tell him the work they were to do. We could take this to mean that Moses' commission was confirmed. But it also meant what was supposed to be a dynamic duo of God and Moses was now a trio, because Aaron would join God and Moses in the work in the ways God later revealed to Moses. Aaron would be Moses' spokesman/mouthpiece while Moses was to be God's spokesman/mouthpiece. And so it became: God, Moses and his rod which was for signs (and wonders), and Aaron was to join for the mission to begin.

TIME TO LEAVE

The conversation ends. The initial personal encounter ends. Now Moses would return home to give Jethro a light reason for wanting to return to

Egypt, and Jethro would allow him, sending him off with a blessing. But just before he leaves, Moses would hear God again. This time in the comfort of his home, proving He could be heard anywhere, and that Moses' secret and deepest fear are known to Him. He graciously relieves Moses of his fears.

Indeed, God knew Moses was a murderer, and had become a fugitive to escape punishment. And no, He wasn't sending him to die; when he returns to Egypt he would see that he was doing so at the right time. Those who would have killed him were already dead; as this present assignment would involve the members of Pharaoh's court for whom the former offence is no longer a priority. This was the seventh prediction. It turned out to be true also. Moses didn't know it yet; but true to God's word, by the time Moses would return to Egypt and till he left, there was no mention of the Egyptian he had murdered forty years earlier.

Moses eventually does set out of Midian with his wife, Zipporah, and sons: Gershom and Eliezer. Of course he had with him his rod, which was now the rod of God, on this mission that was completely God's. And on the journey God continues to speak to him. And so there would be no disappointment, God reiterates His instruction about the wonders that must be done before Pharaoh, but also about Pharaoh's stubbornness. He goes on to tell Moses

what to say verbatim to Pharaoh, including the threats concerning his first born.

It's safe, therefore, to conclude that Moses knew God, was chosen and commissioned by God, became imbued with several abilities by reason of his interactions with God and for the sake of his assignments, including knowing the past, like the history of the world which he wrote in Genesis, the present, the current state of Israel in Egypt, and future events that are still relevant today and time to come. Thus, Moses, like the other prophets in the Bible served as messengers from God and mouthpiece by whom God has revealed the good news of His will to the world. Sometimes the news God's prophets bring are not pleasant; they could even be threats of punishment. But for God's obedient children, whatever God says is good news.

Before Exodus 4 closes, we learn that Moses had another encounter with God, one which was quite different from the first. This time unlike the first when God met with him with the aim of sending him on a mission, he says the Lord met with him the second time around because He sought to kill him. Why? The reason isn't explicitly given but it is widely accepted by Jewish theology and in Christendom that this is because of something Moses had failed to do – the circumcision (Genesis 17:14). Bible scholars are divided as to whether it was Moses himself who was uncircumcised or one of his sons, that he had

failed to circumcise. By divine revelation and intervention still, Zipporah his wife knew exactly what to do to remedy the situation and her quick action in circumcising one of her sons while Moses was indisposed ended up saving the day and the life of the Prophet of God.

The take away from that encounter for not just Moses but the rest of us is that not even those who are true prophets of God are infallible or above His reproof. They too, like all God's children, are expected to uphold God's standards; and when they fail to do so, they are rebuked and judged.

Also in Exodus 4 we see God's sixth prediction fulfilled concerning Aaron and Moses meeting again after forty years. And yes, the reunion was a happy one. Moses fills Aaron in on his first encounter with God, and shows him the signs God had shown him. Aaron believes and partners with his younger brother. Eventually in Egypt, together they gather the elders of Israel and Aaron acted as Moses' mouthpiece as God had appointed. They didn't forget to work the miracles either. God's second prediction came true also, as the people believed; in fact, they worshiped. This, in my opinion, brought about a nationwide revival (spiritual re-awakening), something in alignment with God's will, and must have pleased Him greatly.

THE MAGICIANS OF EGYPT

By Exodus 7 verses 8-13, the word ‘magician’ has entered the narrative, as the magicians of Egypt appeared on the scene. But before the magicians were mentioned and appeared, the Scriptures had revealed that God spoke to Moses and Aaron. He was sending them to Pharaoh. But this wasn’t their first encounter with the king of Egypt (You can read chapters 5 and 6 to catch up). This time God tells His servants that during their meeting with Pharaoh, he was going to ask them to show him a miracle, and they were supposed to oblige him and let him see their rod turn into a serpent.

MOSES ROD BECOMING SNAKE

According to God’s command, Moses and Aaron went to meet with Pharaoh and during the course of their meeting, Pharaoh did ask for a miracle, just as God had predicted. And they obliged him. Aaron cast down the rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. It was during this miracle

showcase that the word magician is mentioned; because Pharaoh, the king of Egypt who is also regarded by some as a god in Egypt was feeling competitive and so called in these makeshift prophets in order to replicate the miracle of the rod of Moses becoming a serpent. Let's bear in mind that "to replicate" can be taken to mean a repetition of something that has already originally been done, and also to make a close or exact copy of something.

These magicians of Egypt were Egyptians living in Egypt. It means they were neighbours to the Israelites who were sojourners in their land. But unlike the Israelites who had ties with God, the magicians like other Egyptians, including Pharaoh, didn't know God, neither did they have any history of relationship with Him. Instead they had their own array of gods which usually are images, idols, animals, or other objects considered and worshiped as divine and alleged to have power. Now these images, considered divine and said to be powerful, do not of their own have any power; they are no gods really, and are nothing, for there is only one true God. However, they are often deemed to be powerful because devils (aka demons) who were fallen angels that possess some level of power operate through them (See 1 Corinthians 8:4, Deuteronomy 32:16-17). How so? It is because these demons desire worship and want to be served. You won't be wrong

if you said idolaters are truly worshipping and serving devils.

Now these magicians were no ordinary idolaters; they were on a different level than most. A higher one. By this I mean they were more knowledgeable; in fact, so knowledgeable that they could practice their idolatry all by themselves; they didn't need an intermediary or consult in their worship. They were so skilled that they could give information and instructions, and even perform tricks for all to see. They were considered powerful.

In the Scriptures, these magicians (Jannes and Jambres, Paul mentions them in 2 Timothy 3:8) appeared on the scene because Pharaoh called for them; but their true calling and even their summon on the scene that day came from these devils under whose influence and in whose service they all really were. Why was there a need for them to appear? As earlier mentioned, Moses and Aaron, the true Prophet and servants of God, were on the scene and had performed a miracle using the power of God. Pharaoh for reasons best known to him suddenly felt the need to summon his magicians to replicate and scorn the miracle of God. Pharaoh's behaviour is not surprising anyway, because, usually, where true servants of God are, there are usually those who are of the devil, counterfeits ready to oppose. The very presence of a real miracle is often a summon for imitators to attempt their own imitations. The

Scriptures reveal the magicians came and did in like manner; meaning they also turned their own rods into snakes, but not by the power of God; they did so with their enchantments, which are usually series of words said as spells or charms.

Here's what we know so far, that magicians are idolaters. This means they worship and serve devils. That they are knowledgeable and skilled in the worship of devils so much that they could provide instructions or serve as guide for others. They are under the influence of these devils who summon them to appear even in the same space as God's true prophets; in fact, they can even imitate them. However, their works won't be considered as true miracles but tricks and acts because they are not from God who they neither know nor serve, but by these devils and via spells or charms. In summary another word to use to define magicians would be imitators.

MAGIC AS TOOL OF DECEIT

God had called and commissioned Moses a prophet and given him a partner in Aaron for a specific mission: to deliver His people. And He had given Moses the ability to perform miracles because these miracles were to serve as signs and a voice, helping the people to believe in the One who had sent them, the one true God, and the message He had for them. But Satan too through Pharaoh had called and

commissioned his own magicians as decoy; they were there to lure the people into spiritual captivity. And their increase in the knowledge of occult practices, including their ability to perform tricks/acts also served as a voice raised to oppose the truth and take the people further and further into spiritual captivity.

Moses, the true prophet of God and his partner Aaron had met with Pharaoh and even worked a miracle by the power of God as God had commanded, ultimately for the good of the people of Israel and to the glory of God. They were not looking to get into a competition. But the magicians weren't there for any noble cause as we have earlier mentioned. And even if they were blinded to the very spiritual reason earlier mentioned, they enjoyed a competition, a chance to showcase their knowledge and power in contrast with others. Apparently, an opportunity for self-aggrandizement and establishment of superiority could not be missed! Most times, magic was sought out, even though in this case the magicians were summoned. I'm sure they were more than excited to join the competition.

Scriptures record that the rod of Moses (but used by Aaron) and those of the magicians all turned into serpents. At that point, I doubt if even Moses knew what next to do, since all he knew had ended there and this wasn't the time to turn the serpent back into a rod. Thankfully, the One who sent him decided to step in. God proved His authenticity and dominion

when Aaron's rod-turned-snake suddenly swallowed up all the other snakes. A winner emerged!

As I round off this chapter, I can't overlook the fact that there was an audience there that day. These were Pharaoh's courtiers and servants. Now imagine the scenario. Here is Moses, Aaron and the magicians of Egypt, all probably dressed alike in cassocks, and all perform 'miracles'. There you are in the audience on a quest for the living God and His true prophet/servant. Upon seeing the miracle workers, and unable to initially differentiate Moses from the magicians, because they all dress alike and speak alike and each had performed miracles, how would you tell them apart, especially if there are no serpents and one isn't swallowing up the other in the end? Nearly impossible, right?

Well, I came up with that scenario so we can understand certain things. The magicians in Egypt might be conspicuous and easily discerned, but today, these imitators aren't so easily discerned. Their imitation is almost perfect. They look the part of a true Prophet. They can be found in the presence of true prophets. They are knowledgeable not only about their dark arts, but also about the Scriptures. While they might not perform miracles using the power of God, they do give the people a show. They give them signs and wonders using the power of the devil; meanwhile ranting in what they call tongues, when the actual truth is that they are uttering

gibberish, or merely repeating words or making incantations and even casting spells on the hapless and gullible people trapped in their deceit.

You can't in the moment know that they are magicians. I know someone might be thinking, but can't Christians with the Spirit of God discern these things? It's a pity, but the truth is, there are instances where even the very elect get deceived! And except, just like in the case of the magicians of Pharaoh, God decides to step in to distinguish Himself and His own from the rest, by revealing surprising/previously unknown facts, you won't be able to distinguish anything!

One more thing we must absolutely know is that sometimes magicians become visible and noticeable to us over time, just that some things take time to truly manifest. Imagine if one of those in the audience at Pharaoh's courts had left before the end of that event, and didn't get to see Moses' serpent swallow up the snakes of Pharaoh's magicians; such would have missed out on the revelation, right? So, yes, some things take time to manifest. The main message here is, we all have to be aware, observant and patient.

Someone who, no doubt, went further and further into spiritual captivity that day was Pharaoh. I in fact see him as a willing captive. He was in the presence of a true prophet and servants of God; he had seen Moses and Aaron work a miracle by the

power of God, and had also been the one to call for his familiar magicians, and seen them perform their tricks; yet, even though Pharaoh saw the rod of Aaron swallow up the rods of the magicians, that day ended with his heart even more hardened (verse 13).

Why do you think that is?

Some may say it was because he wasn't genuinely seeking out the truth since the real deal was made obvious in the end. If you support this school of thought, you won't be wrong. But I'd like you to add something else to that. Notice that the mere existence and appearance of the magicians are a threat to any and everyone's spiritual freedom! Imagine staring the truth in the eye and yet refusing to acknowledge it. That's what Pharaoh, along with his courtiers did. They saw through the lies of the magicians, and could see the superiority of the miracles of God through Moses and Aaron, yet they remained adamant.

My concluding admonition is, we can't act indifferent to the appearance of magicians; we ought to treat magicians like the threat they truly pose, and seriously guard the truth that we have.

SECTION II

MIRACLES AND FALSE WONDERS

Isn't the Number 10 fitly symbolic of "complete and full"? In Egypt, after several admonitions, and Pharaoh remained recalcitrant and adamant, refusing to let Israel go free from the captivity the tyrannical king held them in Egypt, God finally stepped in to rain on the land His complete and full fury. Rather curiously, the ten plagues God rained on Egypt to force Pharaoh to comply would perhaps have been less compounding had Pharaoh's magicians not added their own false wonders to complicate matters and further harden Pharaoh's heart. At last, Pharaoh bowed to God's will, as did all the magicians of Egypt.

THREE

THE PLAGUE OF BLOOD

During the call of Moses and before he reunited with Aaron, then Aaron's appointment and the return of the two brothers to Egypt, God had informed Moses ahead of time that Pharaoh won't give in easily to his demands, at least not until He had smitten Egypt with all His wonders (aka miracles, plagues). Moses had also presented his concerns before God about the people's unbelief. God had then proceeded to show Moses at least two miracles, even mentioned a third. He then commanded Moses to make sure to perform these miracles before the people and Pharaoh. So the major purpose of the miracles was dual: one was that it served as a means to break Pharaoh's stubborn will; the other was that it served as a means to help the people of God to believe that He (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) had sent Moses on this freedom mission. Well, for us, as we explore the world of prophets and magicians, it helps sharpen our discernment.

SOMEONE NEEDED CONVINCING

The second miracle which is the first plague, the plague of blood, is recorded in Exodus 7:14-25. We will be looking a little closely into it under this chapter.

Like all of Moses' actions so far, the turning of river Nile into blood was done at God's command. It happened the very next day after the rod turning into serpent contest that had held in Pharaoh's palace. God had distinguished Himself and His servants by making sure the rod Aaron cast down swallowed all the other rods of Pharaoh's magicians. But the contest for the ultimate power was just getting started even though the winner had long been established.

God instructs Moses to meet up with Pharaoh at another time and location. This time it would be in the morning, outside the palace, by the river's brink. Moses, with his now famous rod in hand, was to reiterate God's will and then announce God's judgment for Pharaoh's stubbornness and disobedience, then carry out the very judgment by using the rod, right before Pharaoh. He was to smite the waters which are in the river, which in the instant will turn to blood. But not only will the colour of the river change, the effect of the colouration will become poisonous to the fish in the river, and the

death of the fishes will cause the river to emit unpleasant smell.

The colouration of the river, its poisonous effect on the fishes as well as its stench will make the water not potable to the Egyptians. That day, Moses alongside Aaron carried out God's instructions in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, stretching out his hand, lifting up his rod and smiting the waters in the river; and the plague of blood came to be. It started with the river Nile but extended to the streams, rivers, ponds, pools of water throughout all the land of Egypt. Even the waters collected in their vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone, all became blood.

Bible scholars say God began the plagues with the Nile for many reasons. The first and foremost being that it was an object of worship (a god); the Egyptians considered the Nile sacred and worshiped it. Seeing their sacred river turn into blood was supposed to get their attention, and turn their focus towards the much greater God than their Nile was. Another reason is that it was a source of the nation's economy. If one of their gods being embarrassed didn't bother Pharaoh, then the nation's economy taking a hit due to the condition of the Nile, even if it was for one day, ought to get his attention, even make him consider this God of the Hebrews, whether he liked to or not. And if that didn't do it, what about the cries of the people? His people, the Egyptians, when they didn't have water to drink?

They would have looked up to him, Pharaoh, who they also saw as a medium between them and their array of gods; he was himself even considered by some as a deity to fix the problem permanently.

PANIC IN EGYPT

The plague of blood got Pharaoh's attention quite all right, which was why he summoned again the magicians of Egypt. When they appeared on the scene, Scriptures reveal that with their enchantments they were again able to imitate the miracle of the plague of blood – a false wonder. Apparently, that wasn't why there were summoned, at least not fully. Pharaoh must have wanted them to undo what had been done. But here's where it gets interesting; they imitated the miracle by performing a false wonder, but were not able to reverse the plague. So the plague persisted with all its effects.

That day ended with Pharaoh's heart still hardened, even though the problem wasn't solved. As for the Egyptians, they did find some water to drink after digging round about the Nile, but that was merely a temporary relief for a small number of people; it wasn't a permanent solution to the problem which many Bible scholars believe lasted for at least seven days, a length of days that, as an edict by God, could not be changed by the representatives of any devil!

It is impossible to read these portions of the Scriptures and not wonder why God allowed the magicians to be able to imitate the miracle. It would have been easier if they were unable to work any false wonders; but they were allowed this devious ability. And I have come to the conclusion that perhaps God allows it just so we can be aware of dark powers and dark practices. Many people wouldn't believe in their existence if they weren't allowed any kind of expression; they also wouldn't believe these were lesser powers if they weren't allowed to imitate God and He gets a chance to distinguish Himself.

Anyway, rather than dwelling on the why's, let's talk about how God distinguished Himself once again. In the first miracle, the rod of God, that had been turned into a serpent had ended up swallowing the other rods which those magicians turned into serpents too. The magicians of Egypt were unable to reverse what God allowed to happen or shorten the length of it as it persisted for at least seven days. This means they weren't able to offer a permanent solution to the problem of the people, despite their powers, knowledge and their skill. As for Moses and Aaron, if God had wanted them to reverse the plague themselves He would have shown them how even though in this case it was something He chose to do Himself in His time.

MODERN PLAGUE OF BLOOD

Today, you may not see any Nile turn into blood, but the plague of blood still occurs, though expressed in different ways, but allowed by God for reasons known by Him and can only be reversed/stopped by God and through the people He chooses to use. I'll explain. First let's read a popular event recorded in the Scriptures. You will find it in two gospels, Mark 5 and Luke 8. Let me share the account in Mark 5:25-34.

“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down

before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.”

The writer of this gospel refers to the woman's illness as the issue of blood and a plague. Jesus also calls it a plague. The word 'plague' could be understood as meaning a disease, yet it could also mean a curse – indicating that it's root is spiritual; and it had expressed itself in one area of the woman's life: her health, leaving her with a medical condition. But not only her health was affected, even though that was the one that was most conspicuous, it also had financial implications as well as psychological ones seeing that she was considered unclean (Leviticus 15:25-27) and therefore separated from her family and friends; and, if she wasn't married yet, getting married and having children was affected too. It even affected her relationship with God.

Today, just like the woman whose story we read, a lot of people are experiencing the plague of blood, which expresses itself not only in their health, but in their finances, their psychological well-being and even in their relationship with God. But unlike the woman in the story, we know now that it's not just one member of a family that goes through this, even though sometimes there's one scapegoat who, like her, is singled out to endure these afflictions. There are other instances where several members of a

family, either from different generations or the same generation, experience a pattern of negative events, ranging from minor health challenges to their marital status, including different kinds of challenges affecting jobs, career, finances, psychological well-being, relationships, marital status, child-bearing issues, etc.

Why do these things happen, these bloodline issues/curses? Various reasons may be responsible: one of it is that it's a negative judgment for someone's action or inaction. The Scripture quoted reveal that the woman met many physicians who had a reputation of being healers, and who claimed to be knowledgeable and skilled enough to reverse this plague and halt its effect for a fee. But despite their reputation and their claims and all the 'solutions' they promised, no permanent remedy was achieved. In fact, each therapy left the woman in a worse off condition than the acclaimed physicians met her.

In the same way, there are many people out there who have become aware of the blood plague and it's expression(s) in their own life, or in the lives of their family members, and are in search of a cure, especially spiritual cure, a permanent cure. These people often fall prey to magicians who sometimes disguised (sometimes not disguised at all) as prophets of God. They have a reputation of being "healers" and claim to be powerful, knowledgeable and skilful. They make empty boasts about being able to reverse

the bloodline curse and halt its expressions. But despite the victims doing all the spurious prophets ask them to do, including dropping “sacrificial” offerings/seeds”, and many atrocious things, the plague and its expressions persist, and the duped victims are in a worse off condition than before, some being abused and some even losing their lives.

It took the woman twelve years, but she eventually discerned that her complete and permanent healing and restoration would not be found in the hands of the physicians. Meaning her focus would have to change; she would have to try Someone different, Someone that the people were calling the Healer and Prophet (even though He was much more than those titles – He is actually God). Thankfully she did seek Jesus out and didn’t fall into the hands of a magician, and this time received her healing and restoration via her faith, and not for a fee.

There are non-believers and even professing Christians today still patronizing magicians, whether disguised as prophets or not. The non-believers don’t know any better; but for the Christians, many of whom are un-discerning, but among them are those who do so with their two eyes opened! They’ve been to and continue to go to various shrines that pose as churches, and submitting themselves to these magicians (some males, some females) and doing all the magicians ask, even though they are yet to receive

their permanent healing and restoration. If this is you, tell me, when will it be time for you to discern that those magicians are false healers/prophets? Charlatans! That's what they are. Isn't it time to change your focus to the one true God? If the test of true prophecy is the literal fulfilment, and a true prophet of God, their character, then the shallow promises and character of falsehood and habit of monetization of spiritual things by those magicians should reveal to you that they aren't genuine! Don't be stuck there. It's time to move on and seek the face of God for yourself.

It's true that God may direct you to a pastor/prophet who has His Spirit and operates under His leading who will join you in prayers and it will yield tremendous and permanent results; but it's also true that like in the case of the woman whose story we read, your healing and restoration can be a personal thing between you and God, Jesus acting as your mediator! All that will be required is your faith. You really don't have to be a victim or keep being a victim when you can be a victor!

FOUR

THE PLAGUE OF FROGS

As we looked into the plague of blood, it became obvious that although magicians can imitate miracles by producing false wonders, they cannot reverse the things that God has caused or allowed to happen. In the case of some of the plagues on Egypt, they added to the problem. And by the time we are done exploring the plague of frogs, we'd see one more way to tell the true servants of God from magicians.

The plague of frogs, recorded in Exodus 8:1-15, is the third miracle of Moses in Egypt, and second plague God rained on the land. This time, God commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh and repeat His command to him, and should he refuse to let Israel go free, Moses was to announce to him the consequence of his stubbornness and disobedience – the borders of Egypt will be smitten with frogs! Abundant frogs will come up out of the river and go into his house, bedchamber, on his bed, into the homes of his servants, upon his people, into their ovens and kneadingtroughs, upon him, his people and all his servants. But before the meeting with

Pharaoh, God reveals to Moses what Aaron must do to get the frogs out of the river. Aaron was to stretch forth the rod in his hand over the streams, rivers and ponds, and the frogs would come upon the land of Egypt.

Long story short, the meeting with Pharaoh did take place. Moses repeated God's words to Pharaoh; but the arrogant king was determined to continue in his stubbornness and disobedience. Then as commanded, Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and God's words which Moses, the prophet of God had said came true! The frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. As expected, Pharaoh's response again was to summon the magicians of Egypt. And like before they were able to imitate the miracle/plague through their enchantments. They brought forth frogs too upon the land of Egypt, and added to the problem. You would expect they should be able to stop the activities of the frogs, reduce their number by perhaps sending some back to the river, or even killing them all; but they could not do that, thus exacerbating the problem.

After having to deal with the frog invasion for a while, and upon the failure of the magicians of Egypt to rectify the situation, Pharaoh decided on two things: first was that the God of the Hebrews had power over their frog-god who had since the frog invasion ceased to be (considered) a blessing and was now a passive onlooker; and second, the magicians of

Egypt couldn't be depended upon for change! And what he does next proves it! He called for Moses and Aaron. He asks them to pray to the God of the Hebrews on his behalf! He wanted the frogs gone from him and his people! He said that if God does as he requests he would do as God requests – letting the people go that they may do sacrifice unto God.

Moses responded by giving Pharaoh a chance to choose when he should pray on his behalf for the destruction of the frogs which were roaming all over Egypt. Pharaoh chose the next day! Thereafter Moses gave his first solo prediction to Pharaoh! He tells him that in order to prove that there was no other One like the God of heaven, “tomorrow,” the day Pharaoh had chosen, he would pray on Pharaoh's behalf and the invasion of the frogs would cease; the frogs would be gone except of course the ones that remained in the river! Those ones weren't bothering anybody.

I call Moses' words to Pharaoh his first solo prediction because up until that time, Moses was repeating verbatim God's words. Here, he all by himself predicted a future occurrence without us reading that God commanded him to do so. Now, this is something we must pay attention to. Moses by then already had a reputation of being a Prophet of God. At this time of this prophetic utterance, his reputation was at stake. So far everything he had said had proven true; he had even been able to back them up with miracles. If by chance his predictions for the

next day failed to come true, then doubts would arise in Pharaoh's mind about whether the God of the Hebrews was really powerful – something he just started to consider and whether or not Moses was truly distinguished from the magicians of Egypt.

Moses might not have been commanded by God to make that prophetic utterance but I believe he was inspired by the Spirit of God to do so; and so his utterance was in alignment with God's will. Proof of this is that after Moses did cry out to God concerning the frogs, the Lord did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out of the houses, villages and fields, and they were gathered together upon heaps causing the land to stink. God retained His position as the Ultimate and Moses continued to be regarded as a true Prophet of God. Of course, Pharaoh didn't let the people go as yet; but that was no surprise to God who already knew Pharaoh's heart, nor to Moses who had already been informed by God about Pharaoh's behaviour.

HUMBLED TO PRAY

Earlier on I had mentioned that by the time we were done exploring this plague of frogs we would have seen a least one more way to discern a true Prophet of God from a magician. In case you missed it, I'd highlight one sign. It was in Pharaoh's request to Moses and Aaron and in Moses' response. I've

mentioned it before, but let's read it together directly from the Scriptures. It's recorded in verse 8.

"Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord."
KJV

Pharaoh in need of a solution had decided to turn to the God of the Hebrews, but not knowing how to approach Him, had asked Moses and Aaron to help him out. "*Intreat the Lord*," he had said. This word could be understood to mean he asked them to pray to God on his behalf, but it also reveals that he now believed that these men, Moses and Aaron who claim to be servants of God could really truly communicate with God. They could speak to Him not only for their own cause but on behalf of others, and they could hear from Him, even receive from Him on behalf of others, even if the case was special, like this one where God had caused something to happen and they wanted Him to stay His hand.

Someone is probably wondering if this means true Prophets of God take on the roles of intercessors? Yes, that's what that means; but there's more. Let's read Moses' response as recorded in verses 9-13.

“And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.”

Not only did Moses willingly pray to the Lord God on Pharaoh's behalf as Pharaoh had requested (for free), but the Scriptures also reveal that the Lord did according to the word of Moses on the day – the very day that Pharaoh himself had chosen, causing a turnaround to occur. God paid attention to Moses, made His power available and provided a permanent solution to the problem at hand; that, a miracle itself! By this God publicly endorsed Moses. Not like He hadn't before, but this time it was different because Moses (under the influence of God's Spirit) had declared that there would be an expiration of the plague the very next day, and it had happened.

Anyone can rise up tomorrow and claim to be true Prophets of God, meanwhile they are magicians. Anyone can claim God's ear is inclined to them and that they can prayerfully partner with you on your journey to healing, restoration and change; but the taste of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating. Whether or not God's ear is inclined to them, whether or not He would make His power available to them and bring about the change they are clamouring for, would be seen in whether or not He would do according to their word which they have declared, and in the time frame too, let's not forget that.

EMPTY BOASTS OF IMPOSTORS

Oh yes, these false Prophets who are really Magicians love time frames! They'd choose all manner of time frames, raise your hope, only to dash it into pieces, leading many to backslide. And I have many stories to tell about these 'prophets' and their time frames. On more than one occasion, unlike the situation between Pharaoh and Moses, I would be minding my business and certain members of the Church of God who are self-acclaimed prophets would approach me with a prophecy with time frames.

I remember one very vividly. I was very new to the faith by this I mean I was a new convert. This man, unprovoked, told me that on a specific day/date that year I would have encountered a certain change in

my life. Beloved, I believed him hook, line and sinker. I prayed about it, even took some drastic steps in getting ready for the said event. But that day came and went and nothing happened. I was so disappointed! And by the time that year was over, I was left with less than I had; all because of this prophecy. Till date, this horrid encounter remains in my 2015 Diary.

Another one was when I had grown in the faith for a while. My mum and I were visiting a church that was pastored by a family friend. I didn't know he too operated in the prophetic until that day. Anyway, after the service, he told me that by the end of that year, my status would have changed in a very specific way, the area he mentioned wasn't even an area I was praying about; but since he sounded so convincing and even described who God would send my way, I decided to give him a chance and believe him. Beloved, no change occurred. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Thankfully this time, even though I had believed and was praying about it, I didn't take any drastic steps. I simply waited. And when the day came and went without anything happening, I simply moved on. There was less disappointment this time; maybe because I had had the experience before. Till date, he is still pastoring a church and giving prophetic words. I haven't given him a chance to give me one anymore though.

Someone might say, what if these people you mentioned are truly called by God and gave a word they were convinced were inspired by God, and truly didn't set out to cause you pain? To this I would say, there are cases where someone called by God can give a word they are convinced are inspired by God; yes, but then because God's words are always true, when these declarations they made don't come true, we can be sure that they have been influenced by a lying spirit (an evil spirit), who is deceiving them and intent on leading others astray or into destruction; proving that they too have been compromised. Beloved, God is not an author of confusion.

What if God changed His mind, someone might say, like in the case of Jonah and the Ninevites? That's a good point. But it won't really be applicable in this context, would it? Let's read Jonah 3:1-10.

“And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least

of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”

In this case, God had commanded Jonah to proclaim judgment upon the people of Nineveh and it was supposed to begin at a specific time; yet the difference between the day of the proclamation and the beginning of the judgment gave room for repentance and forgiveness, both of which happened, causing a change in plans. In my case, there was a proclamation of good tidings. And no wilful or revealed sin that could have caused a hindrance. Why would God change His mind about blessing me in the said manner when I had not asked for those specific changes in the first place? But “He” had

proclaimed it and even added a date for its fulfilment. There's no reason why He would choose to hurt me in that manner. Except that He allowed the evil spirit to go on with the work of deceiving me so I would learn that even the devil can prophesy!

The point is, God is never flippant. He does what He says. And very importantly, preachers – if they are truly of God – should take warning never to ascribe to God what He had not authored or directed; doing so, you desecrate and impugn on God's integrity and holiness – something you should NEVER do! God's holiness and integrity are what essentially make Him God, different from man and all false gods. So, all those who delight in "God told me... Thus says the Lord..." should be aware of the danger of what they are saying, both on themselves and on those they deceive. To use God's name in vain is a serious sin!

FIVE

THE PLAGUE OF LICE

Pharaoh hadn't kept his word to let the people go after the expiration of the plague of frogs, even though this was no surprise to God and Moses. Pharaoh's deception didn't go unnoticed, and was not without consequences. God saw to that. In fact, this was part reason for the fourth miracle and third plague - the plague of lice, which is recorded in Exodus 8:16-19. Here's what happened.

OLD HABIT OF STUBBORNNESS

Pharaoh had gone back on his word; then the Lord spoke to Moses. There was to be another meeting with Pharaoh. Moses and Aaron would be there. Aaron was to stretch out his rod and smite the dust of the land and it would become lice throughout all the land of Egypt; this would also serve as a challenge to the insect-god of the Egyptians. Scriptures record that there was in fact a meeting, and Aaron did as the Lord had instructed through Moses, stretching out his hand with his rod and smiting the dust of the

earth; and just as God had predicted, it became lice on man, and on beast; there were lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh predictably responded by summoning the magicians of Egypt. And as usual they began to attempt to imitate the miracle/plague with their enchantments; but this time, God didn't permit it. Scriptures reveal that they could not; so the lice persisted upon man and beast. Some Bible scholars believe that it was actually gnats, not lice, that infested Egypt. If that be the case, you can imagine how annoying and not just painful the experience would have been.

The humiliated magicians of Egypt then turned to Pharaoh and made a weighty declaration. They said to Pharaoh, "*This is the finger of God,*" and by that they acknowledged the existence of God, and His power, which was clearly different from their dark occult powers, more superior and unlimited. These men had had their rods swallowed, they had not been able to reverse the plague of blood nor the plague of frogs; and now they couldn't even imitate the plague of lice not to talk of reversing it. They had had some time to think about it and had come to the conclusion they did.

Pharaoh on the other hand, despite what he saw, what he was beginning to know to be true, and despite what he was hearing from the magicians of Egypt, he

chose to continue in his stubbornness. This was to be expected as it had already been revealed by God.

GOD AS CREATOR OF LIFE

The plague of lice is so exciting to explore because, unlike the plagues before it, it not only provides us with a sign to tell a true Prophet apart from a magician, it also affords us a chance to read of the admittance of the magicians to being inferior, and by this I'm referring to the god(s) they served and the powers they claimed they had. Anyway, let's look a little closely into the sign that we've been given.

Upon God's command and following closely God's instruction, Aaron was able to perform a miracle the magicians of Egypt couldn't imitate with their enchantments: dust becoming lice. If we are fishing from shallow waters, we would easily come to the conclusion that there's no significance to this event and that it was simply a coincidence that God would choose this fourth miracle and third plague, the plague of lice, to be the one by which He distinguishes Himself and His true servants by simply not allowing the magicians to be able to imitate it. But is that all there is to it? Let's think about it.

The magicians had been able to make a rod give a very convincing illusion of a serpent, right? They had been able to change the colour of water too, even

though we weren't told if their coloured water had any poisonous effect or if it remained potable. They had also been able to call forth frogs out of their natural habitat to join in the frog invasion on land. But now when it came down to creating a living, breathing, full functioning thing out of nothing but the dust of the earth, a living organism that will live for more than a couple of minutes, they suddenly couldn't. Well, I put it to us that if not for God's backing, neither would Aaron, because creative miracles – specifically the ones that concern life and death, both realms belong to only the Creator, God Almighty.

In Genesis where the account of creation is recorded, we aren't told how lice came to be, but we do know who wore the title of Creator, and we have read about how He had used the dust of the ground to form man; but still man didn't become a living being until God had breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). It should be no surprise to us that the same God alone is able to use the dust of the earth to make lice or gnats; whichever, they were still living things! Creative miracles belong to God who is the Creator! Matters of life and death are God's territory too, and He will not share His glory with anyone, even if He at times allows His true servants to participate in the making of such miracles.

Speaking of dust and creative miracles, I'm reminded of Jesus, who as God by the way, in John 9, took dust, which is the material used in the creation of man, and used it to create something new and very functional. Let's read verse 1-7.

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”

Jesus gives us a glimpse of the creation of man in Genesis 2. And at other instances in His public ministry on earth, He not only does creative miracles but handled issues of life and death, even eventually dying and being resurrected by God Himself! It's all amazing really. But not only Jesus was able to do this, like in the case of God and Aaron, we see Jesus'

apostles too, at least some of them being able to use the power of God to work creative miracles such as raising the dead to life!

What I'm trying to say is, no one will truly be able to work any creative miracle – specifically relating to life and death except they be backed by God Himself. This is a sure way to distinguish prophets of God from magicians. But it doesn't mean they won't attempt to.

Today in our world it's not odd to hear someone claim to be able to make creative miracles happen: give life to the dead, heal broken limbs, lengthen them even etc. Some make these boasts as magicians and others as magicians disguised as prophets! I'm sure you must have come across one or two even if you've not been to one of them yourself. Personally, I haven't encountered any on a one-on-one basis, but I have watched and read about many! They claim to be prophets of God but operating with dark powers! They have large followings, hold miracle services where they perform false wonders and people who have genuine medical needs go there in search for God and healing.

In the crowd, you'd see the rich and the poor, old and young, male and female; all are invited and welcomed and none is spared of the lies. They are all going to be bamboozled. I use the word 'bamboozled' because the people in attendance will get something all right for attending; but it won't be

their healing though. It would be a show. They would watch as others are healed by the said prophet when in fact they are paid actors/actresses; they would even receive a “prophetic” word, a touch or even an instruction of what to do next; but they’ll never receive any healing. Not even if they believe, give all they have, attend the meetings over and over or even follow their instructions.

Why? It’s because these men and women aren’t backed by God! And sooner than later, their attendees realize the lies, at least when they don’t receive any healing, and there are others who discover it way later when the prophet is being exposed by God’s mercy and through divine revelation or an expose from some of their paid staff or volunteers etc.

Someone might ask, does God still do creative miracles today? The answer is an emphatic YES! He does, but when and how are entirely His prerogative. Same with who He uses to work those miracles. He however chooses from the pool of those who are genuinely called by Him to the office of a Prophet, and from even those who have no titles or occupy any leadership role in the church but are simply just His children and chosen vessels.

Another might ask, what if someone who is truly called of God attempts creative miracles like raising the dead, but fails? Does that mean he/she is a magician? Well, I admit there are complex situations like that where someone who is genuinely called by

God can of their own volition decide to hold a miracle service. But I tell you, if at that time, they are unable to work said miracles, you must begin to doubt them. I say this because many people are called by God indeed, but few are actually yielded to God's leading. And you shouldn't linger with those who aren't yielded to God's Spirit/leading.

Let's take note that it was upon God's command and via strict adherence to God's instructions that Aaron was able to do what he did; and I put it to you that it was via God's leading that the Apostles of Jesus did the ones they could too! And proof of this is that genuine miracles did happen! Meaning, God was in agreement with them. If you call for a miracle service and decide to manifest God's power without His approval, everyone will be disappointed, including the convener; and I will doubt you because this simply means there's rebellion in your life. Mind you, rebellion and witchcraft go hand in hand. It won't be far now when the said person will consult dark powers just so they are able to carry on with their own will whenever they want to.

In case you're hesitating to entertain doubt, beloved, you should know that there is nothing wrong with a little bit of doubt in the matters of discerning prophets and magicians. In fact, I tell you that doubt in this context can be healthy! I encourage you to doubt because a little hesitation on your part can be a vital key in keeping you spiritually free!

SIX

THE PLAGUE OF FLIES

The plague of lice was the first miracle the magicians of Egypt couldn't imitate but it wouldn't be the last. The plague of flies which is the fifth miracle and the fourth plague wasn't imitated by them as well. As a matter of fact, after the plague of lice and their acknowledgement of God, they had stepped aside, bowing out from the competition altogether! But that doesn't mean we stop learning, for there's a whole lot more to learn. Let's unravel the plague of flies and see what lessons there are for us to learn.

MORE PAIN FOR DEFYING GOD

The plague of flies is recorded in Exodus 8:20-32. While I'm not sure if by the time this plague started the plague of lice had expired, what we do know is that the plague of flies follows in quick succession and could still partly be God's judgment upon Pharaoh for his earlier deception even if, like I already mentioned, his stubbornness wasn't a surprise to God or to Moses.

Before the plague of flies commenced, God had instructed Moses to get up early in the morning to go meet with Pharaoh and reiterate His will to him for the umpteenth time, and also to proclaim the judgment for his refusal to obey; this time around, God was going to send swarms of flies upon Pharaoh, upon his servants, and upon his people. The flies would enter into Pharaoh's house(s) and the houses of the Egyptians! Even the ground will be covered with flies. But that won't be all when the plague commenced, the people of God, the Israelites who lived in the land of Goshen would be exempt from said plague! This would not only prove God's status as Lord in the midst of the earth (shaming the Egyptian gods depicted as flies) but would also distinguish His people from the Egyptians. And it would begin the next day. The next day would be the day after Moses would meet (again) with Pharaoh and Pharaoh would refuse to obey God.

Did it happen? Yes, everything happened. Moses went to meet with Pharaoh just as God commanded. He repeated God's will for His people and God's judgment upon Pharaoh should he refuse to obey, even the day the said judgment would commence. As expected, Pharaoh refuses to obey God. And the next day, the Lord did as He had said. He sent a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servant's houses, and into all the land of Egypt. Scriptures reveal the land was corrupted by reason of

the swarm of flies. Did Pharaoh blink and break character for a while? You bet he did. But before we continue with what happens next, let's take a minute to think about all we've read.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Did you notice that this time, unlike the previous times, God handled the miracle all by Himself as He had revealed to and through His prophet, Moses that He would? Let's take a stroll down memory lane, for the turning of rod into serpent. In that previous instance, Aaron had been somewhat involved in the miracle – he had had to cast down the rod. For the plague of blood, Aaron had been involved as well; he had taken the rod and stretched his hand upon the waters of Egypt. For the plague of frogs, Aaron had had to stretch forth his hand with the rod over the streams, rivers and ponds to cause the frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And for the plague of lice, Aaron had had to stretch out his hand with the rod to smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice. But for this plague of flies, both Moses and Aaron were not required to do anything, neither was the rod employed.

After proclaiming what God had said He would do, Moses and Aaron were to leave the rest to God. So, no rod, yet a miracle/plague occurred. If the magicians of Egypt had been on the scene, and still

in the competition like the other miracles they imitated, they would have attempted this one too by means of the enchantments they relied heavily on. What am I driving at, what I am hoping we can see clearly is another way to distinguish between a prophet and a magician.

A true prophet of God need only to repeat/utter God's word! It's potent enough to get God's will done! He/she doesn't need any physical object in hand all of the time, or any chant in mouth, or ritual to be done at all before a thing can be done! A simple "thus saith the Lord" should suffice. If God indeed said it, then His word (backed by Him) would perform that which He has said, and when He said it would happen! It is as simple as that, and really should be as simple as that.

Jesus demonstrates it too by how He worked miracles in the Scriptures. One example is the healing of the centurion's servant recorded in Matthew 8:5-13.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a

man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.”

Exercising the authority in His word alone, Jesus (considered by many to be a true Prophet of God, though He was much more than that because He is God) was able to work a miracle without physically meeting and seeing the servant that required healing, laying hands on him, chanting over him, or asking him to do a ritual over and over! And He did it for free too requiring only the faith of the Centurion! Take a minute to really think about this. And when you're done, you can continue reading.

ONLY ON GOD'S TERMS

Now, let's get back to Pharaoh. Like any sane human being, Pharaoh grew tired of the swarm of flies! And called for Moses and Aaron. It seemed as though he was ready to give in to God's demand. He tells them they could go with the people of Israel to sacrifice to their God, only they are to do it in the land, i.e., there in Egypt. But Moses said no in many words. He tells Pharaoh he knew how sacrificing animals was an abomination to the Egyptians who worshiped all manner of animals and who hated bloody sacrifices. If they made sacrifices in the land, no sooner had they started, the Egyptians would turn on them and stone them. But was Moses really only concerned about how the Egyptians would respond to them?

Moses however also informs Pharaoh how they would prefer to go about offering their sacrifice. After embarking on a three days' journey into the wilderness, they would make their sacrifices to God as He has commanded. Pharaoh agrees but again gives his own terms for the sacrifice; they could make their sacrifices to the Lord God in the wilderness but they weren't allowed to go very far away. He then tells Moses to go ahead and pray to God on his behalf, because he wanted the swarm of flies gone. Before Moses goes on to pray to God on behalf of Pharaoh, he warns him about being deceitful. Yet after Moses prays to God on behalf of Pharaoh and the swarm of

flies (and probably the remnant of lice) departed, remaining not even one. This too was a miracle. Yet, Pharaoh hardened his heart and wouldn't let the people go. Continuing thereby in his deceit towards the Lord God and His prophet.

Let's quickly revisit Exodus 3:18, *"And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God."* This Scripture is a portion of the conversation God had with Moses at the very beginning, before his return to Egypt.

During Moses' commission, God Himself had instructed him on what he was to say to Pharaoh. He was to tell Pharaoh that God wanted His people to go on a three-day journey out of Egypt into the wilderness in order to offer sacrifices unto Him. Now let's come back to Exodus 8:25-28.

"And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our

God, as he shall command us. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.”

What I want us to see is Pharaoh attempting to dictate the terms of worship to God’s prophet. He does so by saying the people should worship in the land. Knowing that that was completely against God’s plan (which was to deliver the people completely from the Egyptians) and also remembering God’s original command, Moses stands on God’s side, and repeats God’s command in the hearing of Pharaoh. God would be worshiped, but only on His own terms: away from Egypt. He wanted the people to leave the land, and leave the land they must and will if they were to offer any sacrifices at all.

Do you see it now? That, another way to discern God’s true prophet/servant from a magician disguising as a prophet is by what standards they choose to uphold. A true prophet of God would not compromise at all, especially when it comes to how God is to be worshiped. Whether it’s in the Old Testament or as later revealed in the New Testament sacrifices of devotion that were pleasing to God and were acceptable by Him, all had to be done in the way and manner He had commanded/revealed, His standards upheld, as anything else was simply not

pleasing or acceptable before Him. A true prophet will heed all these commands even when in a tight corner or in a race to meet a goal.

ABERRATION OF COMPROMISING MINISTERS

Nowadays we see people who claim to be true prophets of God – and I use this in a general sense of the word to mean servants of God – but have accepted and adopted standards that are lower than God's in His worship, leaving me wondering how anyone can really accept their claims of being truly sent by God! Don't we know that respecting God's standards is an essential part of worship, and if you don't respect God, there's no way you can successfully walk with Him?

Yet many Christians continue to go to such people and submit themselves to them, even join in their own version of how God should be worshiped. I tell you, if you fall into this category, it won't be long before you become a prey of these charlatans and end up being separated from God completely. I'm not proclaiming judgment on anyone, just stating the truth. Scriptures reveal that evil communication corrupts good manners, but also that a companion of fools shall be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverb 13:20).

The A part of Proverb 13:20 shows us a way to escape destruction. It says we are to walk with wise men so we can be wise! One way to do this is by observing servants of God who uphold God's true standards consistently, and choose to be in their company. Well, that's for those who are even familiar with God's standards. A lot of Christians don't even know what God's standards are. If you fall into this latter category, rather than seek out a company of wise people, my advice is that you first and foremost spend more time with the word of God- the Bible and through the help of the Holy Spirit become aware of what God's revealed standards are.

I can't in good faith close on this heading without even mentioning how God separated His people from the Egyptians by not allowing them to partake of the plague of flies. This would be the first time such separation will be mentioned, but not the last as we would soon discover. While I won't go too deep into it for the sake of the theme of this book, I would however say, it is important that we are reminded of how serious the consequences of being under the leadership of someone who is openly defying God can be. Once your eyes are open and you begin to see that someone is at loggerheads with God, it's best you remove yourself from that situation; separate yourself from them physically, and spiritually from their ideologies so that when the judgment arrives, which is usually a 'group' punishment, you won't be a partaker in it.

SEVEN

A VERY GRIEVOUS MURRAIN

Pharaoh had refused to learn from the consequences of his previous deception after the expiration of the plague of frogs, and had instead continued in it. God too wasn't relenting in teaching Pharaoh a lesson. This will be part reason for the sixth miracle and fifth plague. It's recorded in Exodus 9:1-7.

ECONOMIC LOSSES FOR STUBBORNNESS

Scriptures reveal that the Lord spoke to Moses, and instructed him to go to meet with Pharaoh and tell him His word. He was to let the people go, so they could serve Him. If he refused and held unto them still then His hand would be upon Pharaoh's cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep – Egypt's entire economy hit by a very grievous murrain. But the Israelites wouldn't partake in this judgment! No, God would exempt their cattle and none shall die from the plague.

The next day after Pharaoh's refusal would mark the commencement of the said plague. And Moses went to meet Pharaoh just as God had commanded to tell him all of God's word. Pharaoh refused to obey and the very next day, just as the Lord had said, the plague began! And all the cattle of Egypt died but of the cattle of the children of Israel, not even one was found dead!

How does Pharaoh respond? He doesn't call the magicians of Egypt; he had stopped doing that for a while now. Besides, the magicians themselves – of course, after being repeatedly defeated and embarrassed by the God of the Hebrews – had stopped being actively involved in the competition. And hearing of the safety of the Hebrews at Goshen, Pharaoh sends people to check if there was truly a distinction between the animals belonging to the Egyptians and the Israelites in the field. Those he sent return with news that indeed, there was a distinction, and not one of the cattle of the Israelites was found dead, proving to Pharaoh that this wasn't just some natural occurrence but God's prediction coming to pass! Yet upon hearing this news, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he still would not let the people go! But that's not all. This time, he doesn't call for Moses and Aaron either.

What can we learn from this?

Also notice that again, Moses and Aaron aren't allowed to participate in this plague, neither was the

rod used. This just backs up the first point made while we looked into the plague of the flies, that only a simple “thus saith the Lord,” meaning a word from God in the mouth of one sent by God carries enough authority to get the will of God done. It also endorses the true prophet/servant of God when what has been proclaimed happens at the appointed time. But beyond that, is there anything else? Yes, it’s important that we are furnished with another reason for this plague.

This very grievous murrain was an infectious disease that happened supernaturally. And only on the Egyptian’s cattle and select animals in the field. Bible scholars say this too was God’s way of establishing His ultimate power before the Egyptians who worshiped various animals. Among their array of gods were some with bullheads, some depicted as cows, rams, etc. With the commencement of the plague and the helplessness of the Egyptians gods while it persisted, God established His power as the Ultimate.

But that’s not all. If Pharaoh had called for the magicians, what would they have been called to do? In my opinion, it would have been at least one of four things, if not all. The first would be to imitate the miracle which they wouldn’t have been able to, as they hadn’t been able to imitate God’s miracles for some time now. The second might be to cause the plague to manifest upon the cattle and animals of the

Israelites, thereby removing a covering God had placed on them, but this too they would have been unable to do; for if God sets a boundary, who can shift it?

The third might be that they try to stay the hand of God before all the cattle and animal in the field die out so that work could continue in the fields; but that too they would have been unable to do, since, so far, only Moses could plead with God to stay His hand. And the fourth would have been that they would have attempted to resurrect the dead animals with their enchantments! This one is hilarious because who can make alive when God Himself has killed! Absolutely no one.

Anyway, of the four scenarios I mentioned to reiterate how powerless and helpless the magicians of Egypt really are before God, I'd like us to pay close attention to the second scenario. Before the commencement of the plague, Moses had declared God's intention to judge Pharaoh and the Egyptians in a specific way – the murrain, and in the same breath he had also declared that the children of Israel, like in the plague of flies, would be exempt from this judgment, meaning their cattle would be exempt! And on the appointed day, the next day, the Lord did both things simultaneously!

On one hand some people watched as their cattle and other animals in the field die; and on the other hand some people were active spectators, and not

partaking in the loss their counterparts were suffering. Isn't it amazing how these two different occurrences were happening at the same time? Isn't it amazing how two group of people were having two different experiences; one bad, and the other good?

Well, to me it is. It is so very amazing that it reveals a sign to discern a true prophet from a magician! Can you see it? I mean that God's word spoken through His prophet can be negative on some, and positive news on others depending on who it's directed at. I'll explain further.

Moses gave a negative prediction to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, while on the other hand, he gave a positive prediction to the Israelites. Let me share verses 1-6.

“Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain. And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel. And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. And

the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.”

Let's not forget that at that moment Pharaoh was rebelling against God; and he and his people were going to be judged for it. Meanwhile the Israelites were in need of major saving; their lot wasn't judgment, but a taste of what was to come when God finally separated them from the Egyptians unto Himself. And provided they continued to conform to His will, they are destined for continual salvation!

THE TRUE AND COMPLETE MINISTER

I wrote all of those so I could make a vital point: that one way to discern a true Prophet of God from a magician disguised as one is that God's prophet can be relied on to deliver God's true message! Whether they need to warn/ pronounce judgment on someone or group of people who are rebelling against God, or to encourage/declare God's mercy and deliverance upon those who are God's people and are aligned with Him, you'd always hear truth like that from them! Even Moses, who stammered, didn't hold back when it came to that truth, or any truth for that matter! So no excuses.

Have you ever met a prophet who only had good tidings to share? I know I have! In fact, I believe you have too! They are all over the place, especially in churches, but some appear to operate in the offices of lead pastors! Preaching only one message from God: Love.

Please, don't get me wrong. Preaching the good news of God's love is good; there's nothing wrong with it. But the issue lies with refusing to see and preach/teach that there are many sides to God. There's the side of love, and there's also the side of Him of judgment – because He is a righteous Judge – amongst many other sides! We do serve a multi-layered God, you know. So I insist that there's something wrong when someone supposedly sent by God is never inspired or sent by God to warn people of sin, or share with them the consequences of sin – especially when these people are known to be living in rebellion against God!

I should add that not only does this sign alone make me doubt the person who claims to be sent by God, but that said person would end up hindering people from reaching the point of repentance! Did you know that many a time hearing a warning from God or a pronouncement of the consequences of one's sin has been proven to create a healthy fear of God in people, a fear that many a time lead to repentance and reconciliation with God and realignment with His principles? We have to be very

careful not to be enablers of wrong things or stumbling blocks for people!

I say it lightly because I know some people are truly sent by God to speak, but strangely refuse to share any news people might perceive as negative for fear of persecution. If this is you, think about Moses, think about Jesus, think about Stephen. The list of those on God's side in the Scriptures who courageously spoke the truth even in the face of persecution are many! You won't be the only one; you'd in fact be in good company. So go ahead and do it. Yes, you might suffer for it, but your suffering won't be in vain. Endure the suffering. God will see to it that you are consoled, whether in this world or on the other side of eternity, and that people are positively influenced to some degree/measure by your word and deed.

That being said, have you met prophets who only had bad news to share? You can never hear them say anything good; they never have good tidings to share with anyone, especially those who are God's children and are in alignment with Him. I know I have come across one or two in church. And I have concluded that the reason for their behaviour is this: they judge based on their standards, not God's. Since they are very critical, they have really high and unreasonable standards that they expect others, but not themselves, to uphold; and if anyone dares not uphold their tenets, upon seeing them, they would

begin to predict brimstone and fire; none of which end up coming to pass, since God didn't send them on such errands. These ones too aren't true prophets of God, just misinformed Christians.

If you find yourself in a congregation, or under the leadership of a pastor, or in the company of a prophet who never touches on topics like sin, holiness or sanctification, nor mentions anything about the consequences of sin, my advice is that you separate yourself from such company until God reveals the right company to you. In the interim, spend time reading the Scriptures; there's so much you need to be informed about. Let God's word and His Holy Spirit furnish you with the right and complete information as well as equip you to live a life that has a healthy fear of God and His principles.

Also, if you find yourself in a congregation where it's always criticism, condemnation and a promise of judgment here and there, first off, I need to say how sorry I am that you've been abused this way! That is if you're really striving to please God. I advise you separate yourself from such a toxic space and spend time with God's word under the teaching of His Holy Spirit. It is important that you are encouraged and know that God rewards obedience, that amongst other good news I'm sure God has in store for you and can't wait to share with you.

EIGHT

THE PLAGUE OF BOILS

We rounded off on the very grievous murrain with Pharaoh's heart still hardened. But we learn that in quick succession, and with no warning at all this time, the seventh miracle and the sixth plague happened! It's recorded in Exodus 9:8-12.

Scriptures reveal that the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, instructing them to take handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and that Moses was to sprinkle it towards the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh, and it would become small dust in the land of Egypt, and it will be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man (women as well), and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded; they met with Pharaoh, took handfuls of ashes of the furnace, stood before Pharaoh and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

MAGICIANS IN SHAME

In a surprising mention, Scriptures also reveal that the magicians of Egypt were present but could not stand before Moses because of the boils. Yes, the boils were upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.

I'm sure someone's wondering what's going on. Well, the contest was still on; that's what's going on. God was still establishing His power as the Ultimate One before Pharaoh, before the magicians of Egypt, and the Egyptian populace; that, amongst other reasons previously shared. Like all the previous plagues, this too was a direct challenge against an Egyptian god/gods, firstly, towards the ones that were considered able to avert plagues.

Some Bible scholars seem to believe that God employed the use of ashes in this plague because usually human sacrifices are offered to these gods; and they end up as ashes. The ashes would normally signify that the offering had been accepted and threats of plague averted. So, by using the very thing that should signify the end of a plague to begin one, God clearly showed who was supreme over their god/gods. Also, it was a challenge towards the Egyptian god/gods who were believed to possess healing powers. They were proven to be powerless seeing they couldn't provide any relief for the Egyptians who were covered in boils.

Are you wondering why the magicians couldn't stand before Moses? Well, some Bible scholars believe it was because of the location of the boils on their body. Drawing reference from Deuteronomy 28:35, they say it was on their knees, legs and the soles of their feet. To this I'd say even before the plague of the boils they really couldn't stand before Moses even when they were on their feet since they were no match to him anyway, because he served and was sent and backed up by the one true and living God.

How did Pharaoh respond to this plague? As expected, his heart was hardened still; meaning, he persisted in his stubbornness and didn't give in to God's demands. Let's read that verse that mentions the magicians of Egypt. It's verse 11. *"And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians."* This is so revelatory, don't you agree? In case you're wondering what I'm getting at, allow me to refresh our memories again about the plagues.

From the very first miracle and first plague, the magicians of Egypt have been partaking in every negative occurrence caused by God on Egypt, even until now! Remember the rod turning into serpents? Well, they ended up losing their rods that day, as their rods - a symbol of their office, authority, or power were swallowed up. About the plague of blood, they too would have had rationed water to drink and had to deal with parched throats more

often than they would have liked! And the frogs? The abhorrent creatures would have invaded their houses and worship sites too. So too the lice. Tiny though the creatures were, delivered on the people in such mass, their bites would have overwhelmed the people causing so much pain and grief.

Then the swarm of flies! How could they have escaped those? They would have irritated them to no end, taking over every cranny of their houses! The murrain too. The magicians themselves must have lost a number of field animals too. All those pains and losses aside, there is now the plague of the boils. We clearly see that they are actively participating in it. The boils were on them and were so painful, even the magicians couldn't stand on their feet.

I'm sure many of us might not have considered that the magicians of Egypt were partaking in the plagues, right? That's why I say verse 11 is revelatory; because, now everyone who reads that verse would have to consider what most of us have overlooked and failed to consider. These men weren't exempt from the plagues, neither could they make their situations better or turn it around despite their depth of knowledge in the magic art. Their skills and the gods (demons) they served completely failed them. Unlike Moses the prophet of God who with the power of God could work miracles/plagues, and who after praying to God could reverse/halt the plagues and who, by the authority in his word which was

backed by God, provided a shield/covering for the people of God, so they wouldn't partake in (some, if not all) of the plagues!

POWERLESS MODERN MAGICIANS

You must now agree with me when I write that we already have another sign by which we can detect God's true prophets from magicians, right? Still unsure? Let me now further spell out the powerlessness of the magicians of Egypt the negative situations affecting their own lives and property are a sure way to prove that they weren't worth the hype or anyone's time and attention, let alone anyone's visitation and consultation.

Have you ever heard this proverb, "Physician heal thyself?" Well, it means at least two things in my own understanding. The first being that a physician has a reputation to uphold. And the second is that the way to uphold said reputation is by making sure that their medical practice by which they claim to be able to heal others must be potent enough for themselves when they become sick. The general idea is that a physician is to be considered more credible when they are able to do for themselves what they claim to be able to do for others. Now, the case of the magicians of Egypt is to be classified under this proverb and their inability to use their powers to improve their own situation should serve as billboard

with the message: *They're unable to offer any help to anyone much less the entire nation! So people should steer clear of them!*

How do we apply this? Usually, when someone claims to be a prophet (aka servant) of God, what this automatically means is that the person is claiming to be filled with the Spirit of God and able to speak inspired words and cause things to happen by the power of God, right? Now that they have given themselves a reputation, they must uphold that reputation; and one way to convince us of their authenticity is by the improvements we see in their own lives by reason of the presence of God and the power of God they claim is available and accessible to them. Do you get it? If they are unable to handle their own problems via God's leading and God's power, then we must consider them as fakes!

GOD'S TRUE SERVANTS

Now before you think I'm coming up with these ideas all by myself, you should know that scattered all over Scriptures are examples. Let's take one from the Old Testament and another from the new. For the Old Testament, let's use Elijah as an example; some significant things are recorded about his life in 1 Kings 17:1-16. It's a long read but necessary, and relays two instances where during a time of need Elijah, a true prophet of God, is sustained by the

leading of the Spirit of God and the workings of God's power!

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in

thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.”

Now for the second example, this time from the New Testament, I want so badly to use Jesus as an example, but just so we won't argue that it's because He is God, let's use Peter. Peter was an Apostle of Jesus. This incident is recorded in Acts 12:1-11, a similar lengthy read but again, necessary. Peter has been arrested and a death date set for him, not for any judicial process, as would be expected, but for his public and summary execution. But a miracle happened, and he is rescued, freed and preserved alive, all by God's doing.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out

of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.”

Can you see from both examples that you can't claim to be a prophet of God and God won't interfere and intervene in the affairs and problems of your life via His Spirit and power? It just isn't like God to abandon His own! He isn't one to just use someone who is submitted/yielded to Him and abandon them in their time of need.

Am I saying true prophets of God don't face challenges? Of course not. Even true prophets of God face challenges, like in the examples cited. Elijah was in need of provisions and Peter an apostle of Jesus could have died prematurely because a political figure was exercising power and authority over him. Both are real issues that God interfered in and solved.

Also, am I saying true prophets of God will have all their challenges solved by God? The answer is to a large extent yes. God will meet their needs whether basic physical needs or complex spiritual needs, and will handle their challenges as much as they are submitted to Him and yielded to His instructions. As for challenges not solved, like that of John the Baptist who ended up beheaded in prison, or Stephen who was stoned to death, and even Paul whose thorn in the flesh persisted, there's always a reason God allows such instances; and we know that God always has a good reason for everything He does, even if He

doesn't always reveal them; yet they themselves would know that the challenge that persists is allowed by Him and they are provided with the grace to deal with it. I am sure He will make sure they know.

And I know someone is wondering what we will make of magicians disguised as prophets with seemingly perfect lives! Please, let it not be that when we say someone has a perfect life, we are referring to their wealth. It's not odd to see a magician claiming to be a true prophet of God and having everything we wish we had, especially wealth. Such wealthy magicians are all over the place! Many have taken what's happening on the surface level to mean their lives are perfect. But I tell you, there's no human who doesn't have needs and who doesn't face a challenge. If it's not a physical/material one, then it would be a spiritual one; and that it hasn't manifested now doesn't mean it won't later. And their inability to get God to interfere and intervene in their situation or even supply them with sufficient grace to deal with the situation-even rise above it will be proof of whether they are genuine or not. Let me round off on this by advising you to read Psalm 73, written by Asaph; it's very revelatory! Here's an excerpt from the Psalm – verses 17-21.

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in

slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins."

THE PLAGUE OF HAIL

Pity the man (or woman) whose heart is hardened against the Lord God. Yes, Pharaoh was to be pitied for God wasn't done with him yet.

GOD REPEATS HIS WARNING

Following at the heel of the plague of boils was another plague, it's all recorded in Exodus 9:13-35 but it started as usual with God speaking to His faithful prophet Moses. The Lord commanded Moses to rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and repeat to him God's demand for the freedom of His people, a freedom that would afford them a chance to serve Him as they should. Moses was to inform Pharaoh of God's plans to send all His plagues upon Pharaoh's heart, upon his servants, and upon his people; and the reason is so they may know Him and realize there is none like Him in all the earth.

Moses was also to reveal more details about God's plan to Pharaoh, about stretching out His hand to

smite Pharaoh and his people with pestilence; and the end result would be to cut them off from the earth. Pharaoh was also to be informed about God's purpose for allowing him to assume the high position he occupies so His power could be shown and His name declared throughout all the earth. Next on the agenda, Moses was to then announce the eighth miracle and the seventh plague to Pharaoh – the plague of hail.

Since Pharaoh had exalted himself against God's people, refusing them their freedom, the very next day at about the time of the announcement, God was going to cause a very grievous hail to rain, such as hath not been in Egypt since its foundation until that time. He was better off to humble himself and take the only way out – obey God! If he didn't, God would send hail to fall on every cattle (that remained) and all that the Egyptians had in the field; for upon every man and beast that is found in the field, i.e. not taken home (indoors) shall the hail fall, and they shall die.

Moses did as God commanded by meeting with Pharaoh and repeating God's word to his hearing; and as usual Pharaoh's servants were there as spectators. The Scriptures reveal that amongst Pharaoh's servants who heard the announcement of the plague of hail and the way out offered by God were some that had come to fear the word of the Lord; and they did something surprising. They proved it by humbling themselves and actually

bringing home their cattle. They made sure their servants and their cattle were taken off the field and kept indoors. I'm sure they themselves stayed indoors too. There were others from amongst Pharaoh's servants who didn't regard the word of the Lord though. Those ones left their servants and their cattle in the field.

What then happened? The Lord spoke again to Moses. Telling him to stretch forth his hand toward heaven that there may be hail upon man, upon beast, and upon every herb of the field throughout the land of Egypt. Moses obeyed, stretching forth his rod toward heaven. Upon his obedience, the Lord sent thunder and hail! And the fire ran along upon the ground across Egypt! So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail. It was recorded as being very grievous, none quite like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

GOD'S PEOPLE SPARED

Were the children of Israel affected? Scriptural record says, the hail smote throughout the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; even the herb of the field was not spared (except the wheat and the rie), even trees of the field were broken too! But in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. So no, they were not affected. And Pharaoh must have known about it,

same with all the Egyptians. This time around Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron.

Did Pharaoh finally give in? Remember, in the beginning God had said Pharaoh wouldn't give in easily. Well, God doesn't lie, and is never wrong. If He tells you something directly or reveals it through His true prophets, you better believe it. Yes, Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron; he even tells them he had sinned in his past recalcitrance; he even declares that only the Lord deals righteously. He calls himself and his people wicked, and asks them (Moses and Aaron) to pray to God, to beg God on his behalf to stop the thunder and hails. He even promised to let the people go and not hold on to them any longer. But did he keep to his word?

After Pharaoh's theatrics – yes, theatrics it turned out to be by his continued rebellion afterwards – Moses assures him that as soon as he was gone out of the city, he would spread abroad his hands unto the Lord (perhaps in a posture of prayer) and the thunder shall cease neither will there be any more hail, and that this miracle (the expiration of the plague) would happen so that Pharaoh would know that the earth really is the Lord's (and doesn't belong to any of the Egyptian gods). Moses however didn't leave without mentioning that he knew that neither Pharaoh nor (the rest of his servants) would fear the Lord God. Moses being a man of integrity did as he had told Pharaoh, and the plague expired.

As predicted, Pharaoh continued in his deception; for when he saw that the rain, hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, both he and (some of) his servants. Pharaoh didn't let the children of Israel go as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

You may ask, why hail, and why was there fire mingled with the hail? Well, this was God's way of proving Himself once again, like He did previously with the other plagues. The Egyptians were a people who worshiped almost every form of nature! They worshiped the earth, water, fire and even the air! God using these objects of their worship against them and proved these elements of nature were all under His control. He was supreme, incomparable to anything, including the elements of nature. He is in a class of His own and with Him is ultimate power! Some Bible scholars believe this was God's way of challenging *Osiris*, the Egyptian god of crops and plentiful growth, since the plague really affected livestock, crops and trees.

THE CALL TO OBEDIENCE

Now that we've covered all that, let's focus on digging for signs. Did you observe anything while reading about the plagues? I hope you did. I did. But if you didn't, let me share with you one sign I noticed. It's true the magicians of Egypt weren't mentioned at all;

yet from what's revealed in this portion of Scripture that we've just finished exploring, there is a clear sign to discern between a true prophet of God and a magician disguising as one.

Did you notice anything different in the announcement of the plague of hail and the response to it? Verse 19 of the text reveals that there was something added that had not been before! Let's read it; *"Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die."* Here, the plague was announced, including the day and time it would commence. But that's not all, God had also issued a command that when obeyed, it would lead to preservation! It was like God was saying, humble yourself, believe Me, obey Me, and you, your servants and field animals will be preserved. What happened next? Verse 20 says, *"He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses."*

Aha! Do you see that? It's something previously unseen all the while Moses had been appearing before Pharaoh! All the while Moses and Aaron had been showing up, consistently repeating God's demands and working miracles, our eyes had been on Pharaoh. Yes, Pharaoh's heart had been hardened; but he wasn't the only one who had been on the scene.

His courtiers and servants were there too, especially the magicians. Apparently, they too had hardened their hearts. They ought to repent seeing all the wonders God had performed in Egypt. But, alas! They didn't.

The magicians of Egypt had been present even though they hadn't repented, judging by what they had been unable to do and what they saw God do through His true servants. They had acknowledged God and His power; but what about the servants of Pharaoh who had been around all along too? Permit me to say, a split had happened amongst them. Some had had their hearts softened over time! With every single *"thus saith the Lord"* they heard, and with every single miracle, plague they witnessed, their initially hardened hearts softened up, though hid from us until this point when it couldn't be hid anymore! And proof of this is how they respond to God's command – with fear, a healthy fear, reverence, respect! They humbled themselves, believed God's word completely and took the way out that He had provided for their preservation. Scriptures say they made their servants and their cattle flee into the houses! I'm sure they stayed indoors too.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF GOD'S TRUE PROPHETS

What am I trying to say? What I hope you see is the kind of positive influence a true prophet of God has

on those who find themselves in his/her company, regardless of how limited the interactions are sometimes. Moses a true prophet of God was a positive influence on the hearts of others. Not even only the Egyptians but generally, even for the Israelites who before Moses' commission weren't even really considering God, let alone worshiping Him as they ought to.

During these confrontations with Pharaoh, it was simply by the words he spoke on behalf of God, the works he did at God's command, his refusal to compromise, his integrity etc, that he was able to leave a positive mark on the people. Or didn't you know that servants of God are people of influence? Even those who aren't true servants of God but are disguising as one are also people of influence. The former is supposed to have a good effect on your heart towards God and on your behaviour, since they are submitted and yielded to God's spirit. And the latter? They produce a negative effect on your heart towards God and on your behaviour; it is so because they are under the influence of evil spirits who are perpetually in rebellion against God.

What was it that Jesus said about trees and fruits again? Let's read it in Matthew 7:15-23. *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;*

but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The corrupt trees, as Jesus describes, are false prophets. Though they disguise themselves by way of their clothing/dressing so we consider them as pious (as it is in some cases), they call upon the name of Jesus too, claim He is Lord over their lives, prophesy in His name, perform or staged temporal exorcisms and work false wonders they claim are by His power, but it's all a lie; their fruits faulty character, negative influences and all end up exposing them. Fruits are what trees produce. They are themselves seed-bearing structures of a plant. Either way, whether by observing the fruit produced or by dissecting the fruit to see the seed, the fruit is the one way to gain clarity about a tree. So if you're confused about a prophet before you, you'd have to be on the watch for their fruit! Sooner than later there would be flaws

visible in their character! Flaws that would reveal their well disguised rebellion against God, against His word and His will!

What about the people that interface with them, whether temporarily or consistently? They end up being influenced! The rebellion of those false prophets is replicated in their followers, since they swallow up their theology hook, line and sinker, copy their behaviour and customs, and even practice whatever they hear from them. You don't have to be possessed by the devil before you're influenced by him! He still gets to influence you based on the satanic prophet you're submitted to, listen to and obey, provided they are submitted and yielded to him. The devil deceives them! Being in possession of the souls and minds of those false prophets, he in turn uses them to get to you. Your being influenced and your conformity is one stage; the next stage is Satan possessing you too, thereby capturing your soul and mind!

Want to know if you are in your right senses or your mind has been hijacked? Start by asking yourself this question: What do I prioritize? And to that, is my highest priority God, His word and His will? If it's not, then you already know your answer.

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

After the plague of hail and its expiration came the plague of locusts, the ninth miracle and the eighth plague. It's recorded in Exodus 10:1-20. Let's read about what happened!

GOD'S MIRACLES FOR POSTERITY

The Lord spoke to Moses, commanding him to go to meet Pharaoh whose heart was hardened – not just his heart but the hearts of his servants too (this would mean some of them)! God tells Moses the meeting with Pharaoh (though repetitive) is so that He can have a chance to show His signs before Pharaoh. This time, not only that He introduces a new reason, He tells Moses He is doing this for the next generation of Israelites and the generation after them! The parents witnessing everything He is doing would pass on what they have seen Him do in Egypt on their behalf to their children and grandchildren! And that the children will come to know Him as Lord from their parents' lips.

Moses, obedient as ever, went along with Aaron to see Pharaoh. They tell him God's word, but first, addressed Pharaoh's pride before God, which was evident in his refusal to let God's people go that they may serve Him. God's demand didn't need to be repeated anymore; they simply announced God's next judgment should Pharaoh refuse to obey. The next plague was going to be locusts throughout the coasts of Egypt. They would cover the face of the earth (in Egypt) so much so that they wouldn't be able to see the face of the earth (the ground).

The locusts would also eat whatever is remaining (in the fields) that wasn't destroyed by the hail, even the tree which was out in the field. They would also invade Pharaoh's house as well as the houses of all his servants and all the Egyptians! It would be a one-of-a-kind invasion; not even their ancestors would have witnessed such an invasion. The announcement and warning delivered, Moses and Aaron leave Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's servants were there during this confrontation – sorry meeting. They heard all that Moses said. Then (some of the) servants, clearly scared, spoke to Pharaoh. They encouraged Pharaoh to see Moses as a snare and to let only the men of Israel go to serve the Lord God. Egypt had been destroyed enough (by this they referred to the plagues that had previously befallen them) and didn't need to suffer anymore plagues. Pharaoh considered the words of his servants, and summons Moses and

Aaron. He tells them they could go and serve the Lord God! Then he asks those who will be going, even though he already knew what Moses' answer would be, seeing that he had mentioned it in previous encounters. Moses reiterates that all of them (young, old, sons, daughters, flock, herds) would leave for the feast that they would hold in honour of God!

Pharaoh's response? A threat! Bold, yet foolish! Yes, he threatened that if Moses should attempt to leave with the little ones evil will befall him. If the little ones stayed, then so will their mothers, right? Then what he implied and later so clearly stated was that only the men could go and serve the Lord and return. And that being said, he commanded that Moses and Aaron be driven out of his presence. Pharaoh had refused to obey God, not Moses. He had threatened God whose demand Moses repeated, not Moses. And God responded to Pharaoh's disobedience and threat with the commencement of the plague that He had earlier mentioned, a plague which would again put to shame the Egyptian gods, whichever one was supposed to protect the land from locusts and the fields from destruction.

God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts to come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land and all that the hail left behind. Moses obeys. The result? The Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that

day, and all that night; and when it was morning (the next day), the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts were all over the land, resting in all the coasts of Egypt!

Scriptures describe the locust invasion as grievous, one of a kind, none like these before, and none ever like them after. They covered the face of the whole earth (in Egypt) and caused the land to be dark. They ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. The locusts made sure no green thing remained in the trees or in the herbs of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh then calls in haste for the men he had driven out of his presence, and in his usual fashion, went into full theatrical mode. He says he has sinned against the Lord God and them, asks for forgiveness (this one time) for his action and inaction, even calling it sin (this was the second time he was confessing his sin). He also asks them to pray to God; rather, beg God on his behalf, so God may take away death from him. Moses again, goes out from Pharaoh and prays/begs God on Pharaoh's behalf. And the Lord God turned a mighty strong west wind; and it took away the locusts and cast them into the Red sea so that there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt! This was a miracle in itself. Now, did Pharaoh give in after the expiration of the plague? No. He wouldn't let the children of Israel go. This again wouldn't be a surprise to God or even to Moses.

THE TENACITY OF GOD'S SERVANTS

At this juncture, I must commend Moses' tenacity which I have been observing for a while now! This man of God, this prophet of God sustained his obedience to God all of this while; he kept meeting with Pharaoh and repeating God's message to him despite Pharaoh's recalcitrance and disregard for God, His word and His will. Moses kept working miracles in the sight of Pharaoh whose heart hardened the more after each plague and its expiration. I could go on and on, but let's stop there. The point I'm trying to make is that we have another sign by which we can discern a true prophet from a magician.

From the moment Moses entered Egypt to the beginning of his interface with Pharaoh, up until now and even till they all eventually get to leave Egypt, Moses was consistent, consistent in the right way, doing the right things. To be consistent is to be unchanging in nature, for instance, in one's standard over time. Moses was consistent in his nature, in his obedience, and in his stance, i.e., the position he had taken in the matter between God and Pharaoh and in the message he delivered to him, even though he was yet to see his desired and shared goal with God accomplished.

Let's read Hebrews 13:8-9a. *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about*

with divers and strange doctrines....” Not only does this Scripture tell us about the consistency in God’s nature, it gives more detail by directing our focus to the consistency in God’s doctrine. God’s doctrine reveals His stance (standard) on various matters. A true prophet of God would not only have this consistent nature that God has, since he/she has God’s Spirit dwelling in them and leading them, they would also be in alignment with God’s standards, not changing based on the times or what’s acceptable and what could make them more “successful”. I hope you understand.

Today there’s a lot of inconsistencies amongst acclaimed ‘servants’ of God. One minute we seem to know where they stand, which is on the Lord’s side; the next minute we aren’t sure. One minute they say they are repeating God’s message to us, the next minute it’s their own message and their own ‘truths’ they are sharing, which are usually divers and strange doctrines. One minute they say they have a clear and shared goal with God, and we can believe this because their vision and mission statements align with God’s word and we see them adopt godly measures to achieve it; but after a while, when we check back, we see that they’ve watered down their standards and are adopting various methods, even despicable ones, in order to achieve what I will now call their own vision.

The day before writing this, I still listened to the interview of one acclaimed servant of God; and as I write this, I am observing the actions of a supposed servant of God. The inconsistency is wild! But thankfully, it's revealing – revealing to those who are patient and care to observe!

Please, register the signs we've covered so far as significant. Don't make excuses in your mind for anyone and so disregard the signs. To do that is to reject a lifeline when you're drifting away at sea or to throw away the keys to the prison cell that you're being led to and will be held up as captive.

THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS

Next on God's list of judgment is the plague of darkness; it's recorded in Exodus 10:21-29. This follows on the heel of the expiration of the plague of locusts, and came without any announcement to Pharaoh. To commence the tenth miracle and the ninth plague, the Lord commands Moses to stretch out his hand toward heaven that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, the kind that demands to be felt and couldn't be ignored. Moses obeys, and thick darkness came upon all the land of Egypt! It's duration being three days!

UNCOMMON DARKNESS IN EGYPT

Scriptures reveal how the Egyptians were affected; they couldn't see one another in the absence of sunlight. They couldn't rise (move about) from where they were! And to make sure they really felt it, the children of Israel had (sun)light in their dwellings. What a way to distinguish the Israelites as God's people! The Egyptian sun god, *Re/Ra* was shamed!

Pharaoh knew by whose hands such a terrible act had happened. He also knew the same God of the Hebrews responsible for the darkness could provide help; so he calls for Moses the Man of God and says to him that he could go and serve the Lord but, believe it or not, he introduces a condition, that the flocks and herds of Israel must stay behind. The little ones could go. This automatically meant the women could go too since they are the ones tending the little ones. But it was a meaningless demand, and unacceptable to any godly person.

For Moses, there was no such thing as partial obedience and little compromise. Obedience had to be full and compromise rejected completely. So Moses challenges Pharaoh's offer. They would need sacrifices and burnt offerings to be sacrificed unto the Lord God; for that reason, their cattle must go with them, not even a hoof will be left behind. Besides, they weren't completely sure of which of their animals God might require of them for sacrifice; so why risk leaving any behind!

Pharaoh listened to Moses quite all right but didn't give in, he wasn't about to lose all of the Israelites and their possessions in one day. So, again, he wouldn't let them go. When Pharaoh responds, he tells Moses to get away from him. Though he had been the one to summon Moses, he tells him to make sure he doesn't show himself to him again or else he would have him killed. Moses humbly responds that

Pharaoh had spoken well, and he would not appear before him again.

Though in chapter 10, the meeting supposedly ends there, by the time we touch on the next plague which is announced in the next chapter, that's chapter 11, we will see the real conclusion of Moses' meeting with Pharaoh. In the meantime, let's look closely into the working of the plague of darkness and its effect! It's recorded in verses 22-23;

“And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

God had worked a miracle and Moses had been a part of it. The plague of darkness now in place was not an enjoyable experience for the Egyptians who were thrown into thick darkness for three days. They couldn't see each other and so didn't bother moving about. We all know how frustrating a power cut can be; but I guess we can only imagine how having not even a ray of sun for three days would have felt. A horrid and frustrating experience, I'm sure. And to top it, the sojourners in their land, the Israelites, were having a completely different experience. They had sunlight! They could see each other, move about and get things done! It would have been all the more a

painful experience for the Egyptians knowing they were the only ones enduring the darkness.

GOD'S PROPHETS OF LIGHT

Where am I going with all this? I'm hoping we can connect the dots, to see how a true Prophet (servant) of God can and will be instrumental in one having light, perpetual light! And this light I speak of is not sunlight/daylight.

You see, although the Egyptians were just now experiencing thick darkness physically, truth is, they had always been under spiritual darkness due to their idolatry (they didn't know God or serve Him). Their priests/magicians didn't help matters either because they too were neck-deep in idolatry and other evil practices. As for the Israelites the case was different. The physical light they were enjoying reflected the spiritual light they already had through their relationship with God. For one, their ancestors had known God, encountered and experienced Him; they had served Him and God had cut a covenant with them. And it also helped that Moses was a true servant of God. As long as Moses remained in alignment with God, and the people listened and obeyed God's messages to them through Moses, they could be assured of walking perpetually in light – spiritual light. Having a connection with God

guaranteed answers for their basic physical and complex spiritual needs.

What is the state of the world we are in right now? Isaiah 60:2 reveals that there is darkness over the earth and gross darkness over the people! Not physical darkness, but gross (spiritual) darkness! Paul gives a clearer description of this spiritual darkness in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. And it's not just a three-day thing, but a perpetual one, except there's a divine intervention. Thankfully that divine intervention has come through the person of Jesus.

Jesus who is God says of Himself in John 8:12, "*I am the light of the world;*" informing us of the appearance of God's intervention in the chronic state of the world and its inhabitants. Then He goes on to say, "*He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" In this way He offers us a way to be recipients/partakers of the divine intervention of God. And in another gospel, the gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls those who take on that invitation and follow Him light. He says in Matthew 5:14, "*Ye are the light of the world.*" Oh, what progression! From being plunged into darkness and being under the influence of evil spirits to following Jesus who is Light as He leads us to God and transforms us into light-bearers!

But it doesn't end there. Our continual alignment with Jesus makes us useful in the world. We become witnesses of the true Light! Every true child of God

is now instrumental in God's plan of leading others to Himself. And out of these numerous children of God out there, some occupy offices that afford them a larger scale of influence! But whatever the scale of influence every true child of God is equipped to help others find their way to the true Light! And to encourage them to keep walking in it.

Therefore, it's all good when a non-believer or a believer encounters a true child of God/a true servant of God! For the non-believer, there's a chance of leaving darkness and being led into light; for the believer it's a promise of more encouragement to keep walking in light. But now imagine when a non-believer or believer encounters a person who professes to be a true child and true servant of God but isn't? For the non-believer it would be like the blind leading the blind; they are both fated to end up in a ditch. This can be understood more elaborately to mean hell fire – the destination of those who reject God during their lifetime. What about the believer? If the person lacks discernment, it could be as bad as losing your eye, and being plunged into darkness, or returning into something we've left and forfeiting our eternal reward in God. God forbid!

I hope the non-believers reading this becomes interested in leaving darkness and embracing God's intervention. And as for the believer reading this I hope you are reminded of how privileged you are, how useful you are, but also how much of a target

you are. Just because you're in the light doesn't mean the enemy of your soul won't try to lure you back into darkness! And one of the ways he does this is by raising up liars and magicians as false teachers, false preachers and false prophets to corrupt your eye! I mean your spiritual eye, your understanding.

Here is what you must do; take Apostle Paul's advice to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20-21 seriously. What did he say? *"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."* Yes, you and I must keep (i.e. guard relentlessly) the truth of the gospel and of the Christian faith that has been made available and accessible to us through the word of God. This truth, with its right interpretation, has been committed to us, we mustn't lose it by allowing it to be replaced with all the diverse false theology peddled these days; this will be for our own good and the good of others.

TWELVE

THE DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORNS

So far God had worked ten miracles and nine plagues in Egypt; and in the working of most, He involved His Prophet and servants, Moses and Aaron. But He wasn't done yet. In Exodus 11:1 He informs Moses He had one more plague to bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt. Though Pharaoh had not let Israel go yet, assuredly, God told Moses, that after the tenth plague, Pharaoh would not only let them go, he would thrust them out altogether!

PREPARE TO GO FREE

In the meantime, Moses was to deliver a message to the children of Israel. The Israelites were to borrow (best understood as ask and collect) from their neighbours (the Egyptians) jewels of silver and jewels of gold. This would be possible because God was going to give them favour in the sight of the Egyptians! Besides, it would also help that Moses had become very great in Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's

servants and in the sight of the people. I would think he had become great too in the sight of Pharaoh even if he might not admit it.

In Exodus 11:4-8, we learn the concluding parts of the final meeting between Moses and Pharaoh, a meeting that had commenced during the ninth plague, the plague of darkness recorded in Exodus 10. Here's what God told Moses to tell Pharaoh, that about midnight He would go out into the midst of Egypt and all firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first born of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the maidservant; even all firstborn of beasts shall die too. And as a result there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt! There had never been one like it nor shall there be any like it any more. But the children of Israel will be exempt! In fact, not a dog would move his tongue against man or beast in their camp. This, God said, would make them (the Egyptians) know that He the Lord has put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Moses delivered God's message to Pharaoh as God commanded, and didn't fail to also tell him that after the tenth plague, Pharaoh would send his servants to come to him and bow down themselves. They would also bring him message from Pharaoh saying he should get out (of Egypt), he and all the people that follow him (the children of Israel); then after that he would go out of Egypt (with his people). After delivering his message Moses went out from

Pharaoh in great anger, finally reaching his breaking point with the headstrong Pharaoh. But God spoke to Moses again, reminding him that Pharaoh wouldn't respond favourably to him and that too would serve its purpose, for God's wonders would be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

The account of the episode recorded in Exodus 12 is a thrilling climax – the exit of the children of Israel from Egypt. But first things first. God speaks to Moses and Aaron on different matters to be relayed to the children of Israel, ranging from their commemoration of the month of their exit from Egypt, to what must be done for their preservation that day when the tenth plague would commence which would involve a Passover lamb and the smearing of its blood on the two side posts and the upper door post of the houses where they'd eat the (roasted) Passover lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. He even touches on their level of preparedness while eating the meal! And that it should be done in haste. Next, God repeats the announcement of the tenth plague already made to Pharaoh with more details through Moses and Aaron to the children of Israel. The added detail was the significance of the blood of the Passover lamb.

In conclusion, God commands the children of Israel to make the event of that day a memorial, a feast to be kept throughout their generations! Thus the Passover was instituted along with instructions

on how it was to be celebrated. The feast of unleavened bread too.

After that, Moses called for the elders of Israel and gave them instructions concerning the passover lamb; it's killing and the application of its blood. He instructed them to stay indoors afterwards until the morning, with good reasons too. He didn't fail to relay all of God's other messages to them. Did the children of Israel obey? The answer is yes; they did. Scriptures reveal that they listened to Moses, then went away and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

PHARAOH'S FIRSTBORN DIES

In verses 29-38, God's word and His plan came to pass. At midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle (cattle represents their animals).

How did Pharaoh react? He reacted just as God had said, and just as Moses had predicted to Pharaoh that he would! At the death of his firstborn, Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, with all the Egyptians who had lost their firstborns, everyone wailing for their loss. There was a great cry in Egypt that night, for there was not a house where (there was a firstborn that) there was not one dead. And

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron telling them to rise up and get out from amongst the Egyptians; all the Israelites could go and serve the Lord as they have said. What about their animals? Pharaoh told them they could take their flocks and herds as they have said and leave! He even asked them to bless him!

Well, the Israelites didn't leave empty handed. Not only did they leave with their possessions, they followed God's command and spoiled the Egyptians! They left with jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment. And just like that, the impossible was made possible. In one day, the children of Israel left Egypt after years of slavery; journeying from Rameses to Succoth! Men, women, children, plus a mixed multitude (likely including some Egyptians), their flocks, herds and their cattle, all departed Egypt into freedom at last!

Moses and Aaron had on God's command, and with God's backing, performed many miracles in Egypt but this last plague, the death of the firstborns, had nothing to do with them or their rod. God handled it all by Himself. You may ask, why the death of the firstborns?

Well, God had called Israel His firstborn, and had fairly announced earlier on (Exodus 4:21-23) that if Pharaoh didn't let His firstborn go, Pharaoh would himself lose his own son, his firstborn. He had also announced it the second time like we read in Exodus 11:4-8. Yet, Pharaoh had continued in his

stubbornness and disobedience; and the result was the eventual death of the firstborns. A firstborn son meant a lot to any family. For instance, for Pharaoh it meant a successor; and for the other families a leader, one who would shoulder the family's responsibility. Thus, losing the firstborn would have been a huge blow, one that can cause Pharaoh's stubborn will to break like it did, even though it was momentarily. For soon afterwards, he was on the heels of God's people; this time though, he never returned! He chased them even through the parted Red sea (a notable, unrivalled miracle) to his own destruction. God calling Israel His firstborn not only revealed God's special tie with the people but also His hopes, and plans for them, things Pharaoh was clearly getting in the way of.

PRESERVATION THROUGH GOD'S SERVANTS

Back to Moses and Aaron, the true servants of God, they weren't allowed to participate in the plague of the death of the firstborns, but were furnished by God with information on the salvation of God's people, a message they relayed to the people, which, when they obeyed, resulted in their preservation or deliverance from harm, ruin and loss (See Exodus 12:3-13, 21-23). At the heart of the message they received was a lamb, a Passover lamb.

Today, God's true children and prophets (and servants) are furnished with the message of salvation from God, a message they themselves believe and do not withhold from sharing with the world. But unlike back then when the heart of that message was a Passover lamb (an animal), the heart of the message has been replaced with another Passover Lamb, the person of Jesus Christ, who came into the world, gave Himself up, let His blood be shed, was crucified, buried and resurrected that we may be saved (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Matthew 26:28). Let's read John 3:16-18.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This is from John's account of the gospel, it testifies that the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ is from God. The sinner needed to believe in the good news of Jesus (and as a result of that belief), confess his sins and renounce them, then he/she will be saved, i.e. delivered from their sin and its

consequences by Jesus' sacrifice, and have everlasting life, both now on earth and in eternity.

What I am getting at is that just as Moses and Aaron only provided the people of God with God's directives for salvation – the Passover lamb – without giving them any other way in which they could be saved from that dreadful occurrence of the death of firstborn, so a true prophet/ servant of God, like John Jesus's disciple and apostle, would only provide the people in the world with one way by which they can be saved, and it would be through the person of Jesus Christ! They wouldn't provide the people with any other way through which they can be saved or encourage that they follow different paths to God and salvation; because, the problem of being reconciled with God and obtaining salvation is something only Jesus can solve!

You may say, Isn't this common knowledge nowadays? Well, to this I'd say, you'd be surprised by what certain acclaimed 'servants' of God really believe and teach! For instance, I recently came across the interview of two very popular servants of God with mega churches, the first of the two I liked and respected so much, at least until recently when the affection and respect turned to pity. The change happened after my discovery. I discovered that the first 'servant' of God believed that there were several ways to God and therefore several ways to be saved!

I was stunned!

I remember watching in disbelief. This interview would have been seen by millions of people who liked and respected him too, people who he had a chance of witnessing to but who he was now leading in error! “Why would he say that?” I asked God out loud. I didn’t get any response; but I came to the conclusion that he was more interested in being accepted than offending anyone. I then researched many more interviews he granted, then it became clear what his priority was. I believe I had come to the right conclusion.

The second ‘servant’ of God wasn’t any different. He too believed and taught openly that there were many other ways to get to God and be saved. He even openly encouraged people that were clearly living in sin that they weren’t separated from God, and consoled the families of people who had lived a life of sin that their loved ones were united with God for all of eternity. These are just two examples; there are many more out there if you look closely! And if they can lie about how to get to God and be saved, what won’t they lie about? Steer clear of such charlatans!

SECTION III

PERSONS OF NOTE

Regarding Israel's captivity in Egypt, the plagues in Egypt, the person of Moses stands out as God's instrument of wonders and miracles, as by him the heathen nation of Egypt came to know about the true God of the Hebrews. We need a specific view at Moses. More broadly, the entire Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, the Character of Jesus Christ stands out as the central theme of the Holy Scriptures, revealing God as Sovereign and Supreme, and Himself as the Paschal Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. And as the doubters in Moses' day perished, so doubters and all who reject Christ today will lose their life in hell, except they quickly repent and believe in Jesus. He too, we need to see closely.

MOSES: A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS

Moses was a true Prophet of God; proof of this is seen in his call. He didn't call himself into that office; God did. God called him to proclaim His will to the children of Israel and to the Egyptians, Pharaoh especially. God also raised him up so he could partner with Him in His grand plan of delivering His people from centuries of captivity and servitude.

SUPERNATURAL UNION WITH GOD

Moses enjoyed a special relationship with God and God endowed him with various spiritual gifts! And some of the most astonishing miracles recorded in Scriptures God did through Moses. He also furnished Moses with His Law and Moses in turn became an inspired teacher to the people of God. Yet Moses was a mere mortal, a human being with weaknesses. He was not perfect; and just as the Scriptures contain records of the impressive things God accomplished with and through Moses, it also

contains records of Moses' weaknesses and errors. We'll be taking a close look at these Scripture portions so we can learn a thing or two from them. Let's get right to it.

1. **Before the Call** – Exodus 2:11-15.

“And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.”

Yes, Moses, the man God, called to be His representative and mouthpiece, was a man with a past. As the Scriptures reveal, at one time in Moses' life he saw an injustice happen right before his eyes; then overcome with emotion and filled with a desire

to right a wrong, he responded in a violent way, killed someone, an Egyptian. But he didn't stop there, he went ahead and also hid the slain man in the sand. I believe that means he buried him. Then, Moses unwilling to own up to his actions and face the consequences ran off at the thought of having to face Pharaoh's wrath.

Moses had a weakness, it was his temper. He struggled to keep his temper and failed like we read. His temper got the better of him and he became violent; it turned him into a murderer. Yet though the most conspicuous, uncontrolled anger wasn't Moses' only weakness, he was also a deceiver. For after killing the Egyptian, he buried him and went on living like nothing had happened. He continued to give a certain impression of himself until he found out his buried sin had been uncovered. Perhaps this was God's way of making sure that he was aware of his weaknesses and didn't continue to live a double life.

2. After the Call – Fast forward to Exodus 11:4-8.

“And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great

cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.”

Forty years after, Moses has returned to Egypt; but unlike the first Scripture we read, Moses was now more than a Hebrew-born Egyptian Prince, or even a refugee, husband and father, he was a Prophet of God with a reputation before the Israelites and even the Egyptians. Yet one thing remained, Moses’ weakness – his temper. At the end of his final meeting with Pharaoh, as the Scriptures reveal, Moses’ emotional state popped up. He walked out of Pharaoh’s court in a very bad temper!

Following the story, we know that Pharaoh wasn’t the easiest person to deal with. We also know that up until now, Moses’ temper had not been mentioned; so it’s safe to say, for it to have been mentioned at the tail end of his back and forth with Pharaoh, that Moses had reached his breaking point. In his struggle to keep his anger in check, he was close to losing the battle again. And we know from his past that if he

lost that battle what will ensue will be a series of negative choices. Let's also read Exodus 32:19-21.

“And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?”

Although we didn't cover this chapter in this book, should you continue to read on about Moses and the children of Israel, you're bound to read about this event. This event happens after Egypt. Upon his discovery of the people's sin, the Scriptures reveal that Moses' weakness surfaced again. In fact, the accurate description is that it “waxed hot” and unlike the time it did with Pharaoh and Moses walked out, this time, his temper moved him to act. He broke the tables that contained God's law which he had just received, then proceeded to burn the calf and ground the remains to powder. He scattered the powder upon the water and forced the children of Israel to drink it.

Many Bible scholars excuse the actions of Moses in this portion of Scriptures and the ones that follow. But I want us to take note of Moses' anger showing up still at opportune moments while he operated in

the office of a Prophet. This time, he gave in to it. See another occasion in Numbers 20:10-12.

“And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

God’s instruction as revealed in verse 8 of same chapter was for Moses to take the rod, and gather the assembly together, including himself and Aaron. Then Moses was to speak to, not smite, the rock, whether once or twice before their eyes, and then it would give them water to drink. But Moses, as revealed in the verses we read, was already frustrated with the people. Just by reading the first line of the Scripture above, you could detect the frustration in his tone. He called them rebels! And unfortunately his anger, left uncontrolled, reduced him to being a rebel himself, for in his frustration and anger towards the people, he smote the rock twice instead of speaking to it. And even though it did bring water for

the people, quenching their thirst, it would leave Moses with an unquenchable thirst- a desire to enter the promised land, a desire that will go unfulfilled.

Immediately the sin of disobedience/unbelief was committed by Moses, God declared His judgment upon him. He would be denied entry into the promised land. A judgment that God upheld even though Moses would have asked for forgiveness and God would have forgiven him. Although there are no records in the Scriptures of Moses asking for forgiveness for this sin, but we won't be wrong to assume he did judging by how he had interceded on behalf of Pharaoh and even the people when they sinned. Moses missed entering the promised land, but thankfully he didn't miss heaven.

MOSES WAS GREAT, BUT...

I took us through this route so that we can have a proper perspective of a true Prophet of God. In this book we have explored Moses' life; his call and some of his exploits, and someone, anyone might be tempted to put him on a pedestal. But I'd rather we don't, because it would only lead us into error. We need to see Moses through the right lens so we can see other true servants of God through the right lens as well. Here are a few things, I'd hate for us to miss:

- **Moses Had a Past:** And just like Moses did, many, if not all true Prophets and servants of God

that you'll meet, will be people with a past too. And just like Moses' past wasn't pretty, theirs won't be as well. It might not be as terrible as being a murderer; but it won't be something pleasant either. Know this and manage your expectations.

- **Moses Had Weaknesses:** Before the call to ministry, it was obvious to us that Moses had weaknesses, and that he perhaps was unaware of them. But that singular event-the slaying of the Egyptian and subsequent ones brought everything to light. In the same way, all of the true Prophets/servants of God you will meet will have weaknesses; they'd struggle with one thing or another. Some might be unaware of their weaknesses, and there'd be others who are aware of them. Moses' was uncontrolled anger, and he also had a tendency of being deceptive one time in his past. As our faces differ so our weaknesses differ.

- **Moses' Weakness Didn't Disappear After the Call:** Unfortunately, not all weaknesses disappear after you've encountered God or even because you've been called into ministry. It's important that we remember this bit of information about Moses so we don't by any means think that the people God uses are perfect people. These individuals have weaknesses and sometimes go through their entire lives with these weaknesses, struggling with them and even losing.

- **Moses Occasionally Lost the Struggle:** Twice

after the call, and despite Moses' close walk with God, he lost the struggle to his weakness of anger which moved him to act. Still it's important to note that it was a struggle, and losing the struggle wasn't habitual for Moses. Now I want to call our attention to something serious. There's a difference between a true servant of God who is struggling with a weakness and one who claims to be a servant of God and is lounging in a life of sin. Moses belonged to the former. There are many out there claiming to be true servants of God but living a double life; when you make the discovery, you must be very wary of them.

- **Moses Wasn't Above God's Discipline:** Pharaoh, though a mighty ruler, wasn't above God's punishment; and Moses, though God's true and loyal Prophet, wasn't above God's discipline either. While many might say God wasn't addressing Moses' anger via the discipline/judgment He meted out, well, I say if Moses' uncontrolled anger wasn't at play, there would have been no sin on Moses' part, and no discipline from God's part. Anyway, the point I am trying to make is, just like Moses was disciplined by God, no true Prophet sees themselves nor forces others to see them as people who can't be disciplined, whether by a committee or by God for their actions or inaction. So, beloved, don't look at any true servant of God who falls into sin as someone who should be excused just because they occupy the offices they do. They have to be held accountable.

As I round off this chapter, I want us to treat as very important the information I'm about to share next. And it is that God had a standard He expected Moses to strive to uphold; and when Moses fell short, not as with his occasional losing battle with anger, but this time more so in the unbelief which he displayed by smiting the rock twice rather than speaking to it, God disciplined him. What I want us to remember is that though a human with weaknesses, Moses was expected by God to be an epitome of sanctity!

Everyone who obeys God's call and operates in one office or another must bear this in mind and live with the consciousness that whether they ask or not ask people to look up to them, people will; so they are to strive to be good examples through and through!

JESUS: THE “MAN” GREATER THAN MOSES

Moses, despite his flaws, was a good example of a true Prophet of God, but Jesus is The Perfect example. He was more than a Prophet, though He was often referred to and widely accepted as a Prophet; and He also operated in the Prophetic during the course of His public ministry.

INSISTENCE ON GOD’S WILL

Like Moses, Jesus proclaimed God’s will and taught God’s word. He was no one’s successor and belonged to a class of His own. He introduced us to a new lifestyle and made various predictions, most of which have come true and all of which will eventually come true in due time. He was in union with God and enjoyed fellowship with God. Jesus operated in various spiritual gifts and worked many awesome miracles! Many Bible scholars believe Moses was a foreshadow of someone greater to come, and I share their thoughts. Moses indeed was a foreshadow of

Jesus who was greater and did come and will someday return.

All the marks of a true Prophet which Moses possessed Jesus displayed. Moses had a genuine calling by God. He wasn't self-sent, nor did He suddenly appear on the scene. Jesus' birth and ministry were long predicted by prophets of old under the influence of God's Spirit, and even announced by an angel to Mary, an ordinary woman who had the privilege of bearing Him in her womb. Like Moses, Jesus too was endorsed by God the Father. Moses turned the Nile into blood and could have reversed it if he had asked God, and Jesus not only turned water to wine but stopped a plague of blood, part of what proved that He had God's authority and power, something God proved too in the ministry of Moses at first through the plague of frogs. Moses could perform creative miracles as seen in the plague of lice (which Aaron performed upon Moses' words which were from God); and Jesus didn't lack for creative miracles in His ministry! They abound.

Though there were no lice being created, there were dead people raised to life, body parts given new life! One time Jesus even used the dust of the ground as material to heal the blind. Moses performed the plague of flies without depending on a rod, just as Jesus never led or encouraged the people to believe that His power had another source aside from God;

nor that His miracles depended exclusively on a conduit before it could manifest. Moses didn't delve into compromise, neither did Jesus! He didn't let the world dictate how God should be worshiped; instead, He taught the people how God longed and ought to be worshiped. Like in the grievous murrain with Moses, Jesus was known to speak the truth whatever it meant; whether bad news to those who were resisting God's word and will, or good news to those who were surrendered to Him.

Unlike the magicians of Egypt who couldn't heal themselves or provide healing for others, Moses was protected from painful boils, at the time of his death, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural forces abated. Same for Jesus. He was never ill, and was able to provide healing for the people via God's power. His physical and material needs were all met just as He was used by God to meet those of others. Moses had a positive influence on the hearts of those around him; so too Jesus. Those who walked and worked closely with Him, for as long as they remained yielded, always turned out better than they were before they met Jesus. Moses had a reputation for being on God's side and consistently rejecting compromise, Jesus was the same. He mentioned over and over whose side He was on, and proved it too by His actions and messages which remained consistent. Moses was instrumental in leading the people to the light and providing them with the accurate way to

freedom and salvation. And Jesus? He too revealed the Light to the people, Himself and showed them how to be saved, remain perpetually saved, and living and walking in their salvation.

JESUS LIKE NONE OTHER

Indeed, Jesus and Moses had many things in common. Right? Many things but not all things. While Moses was a hundred percent human only, Jesus was hundred percent human and hundred percent God. And because of this, though He was tempted in every manner like we are, like Moses was, He was completely without sin. This is one very vital reason why Jesus is greater than Moses. And it is this aspect, even though there are many other aspects, that we will very briefly look into. Let's read Hebrews 4:15 first.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Backing my point is the Scripture above. Though Jesus was part human, He had no weaknesses at all; and though He was tempted in every way as humans are, He didn't sin, making Him the perfect example – our model.

We explored Moses' life, his call and ministry up until a point; and we even used him as our example for the theme of this book. But what I want us to know is that, we might as well have looked closely into Jesus' ministry, for in His ministry He operated in the office of a prophet. If Moses' ministry provided us with signs through which we could recognize a true Prophet of God, Jesus' would provide us with more signs. And if Moses himself falls short of being a perfect example of what a true Prophet of God ought to be like, Jesus provides us with the perfect example.

Am I saying we should go on to study closely Jesus' ministry? Yes, that's what I'm endorsing. Go on your own personal journey with the Holy Spirit and your Bible. Examine closely Jesus' ministry and character and see what the real deal looks like. You will learn more than you could have asked for.

I'll round off by leaving you with a portion of Scripture, Hebrews 12:2.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The writer of Hebrews, remind us that the author of the Christian faith and perfecter of it is Jesus Christ. He wasn't just the Originator in words, but in

deeds also! Jesus lived what He taught, and finished strong and well! He is the one we ought to put on a pedestal, not Moses. We're to look up to ultimately Jesus, not Moses alone, as our source of truth. Jesus is our Perfect Example of everything true! To Him be praise and glory for ever! Amen!

BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



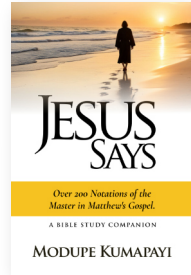
Letters In My Green Bag

A collection of ineffable, life-transforming ways to experience God.



God's Love Letter To You

A devotional guide.



Jesus Says

Over 200 notations of the Master in Matthew's gospel; a Bible study companion.



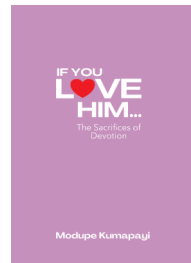
A Book For Dreamers

How dreamers transmute into achievers.



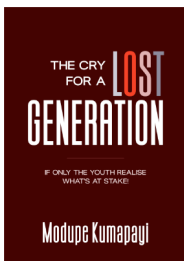
Take The Limits Off

A challenge to parents and guardians to release their wards to do what God wants and has ordained for each child.



If You Love Him...

A book that answers the question, What is God's love? And it presents the challenge, if you love God, then what?



The Cry for a Lost Generation

A book that offers immediate help for anyone seeking God now and seeking to do His will regardless of their past.



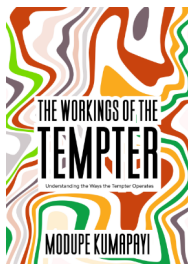
Dinah's Defilement Is Your Defilement

A dramatic retelling of Dinah's story. A book that offers you a claim: You can separate yourself unto God and live free of Satan's defilement.



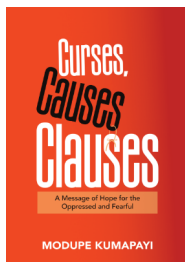
Prophet or Magician?

Prophet or Magician? Is a unique book, a mirror of sort, and reflects who God's true prophets are, and who impostors, charlatans, liars, false preachers are.



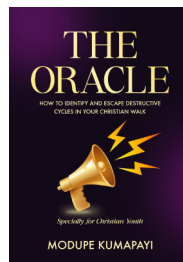
The Workings of the Tempter

The Workings of the Tempter is an unusual book; it retells Bible episodes of temptations and chronicles incidences of many who had fallen for the tempter's cunning ways of trapping those he lures into sin.



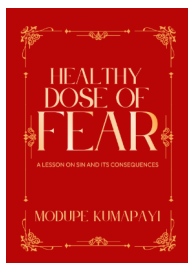
Curses, Causes and Clauses

Curses, Causes and Clauses is written to answer questions about curses, show you the way out of curses, and also teach you how to remain free from curses.



The Oracle

The Oracle reveals hidden truths about the Christian life. Opens the way to understanding why some Christians fell in the early church and how you can stand today and gain heaven at last.



Healthy Dose of Fear

Healthy Dose of Fear equips you to be a victorious, sin-overcoming, holy, upright, and heaven-assured child of God.

THE BOOK

If you have ever wondered why the true Christian life appears cloudy in many Christian circles today, it is because many impostors, like the magicians of Pharaoh in old time, are holding sway in many assemblies now, which, thankfully, does not mean true ministers and prophets of God are not available. A lot depends on how you can personally tell the difference. This book tells you how.

Prophet or Magician? is a unique book, a mirror of sort, and reflects who God's true prophets are, and who impostors, charlatans, liars, false preachers are. That there are magicians posing as ministers of God is a fact. But that you allow them to sink you in the ways of hell by their falsehood is something you share the blame. This book helps you to make the difference, and shows you how to escape the damnable heresies and enticing words of magicians posing as prophets of God. We all, you in particular, have a stake in this matter!

THE AUTHOR

MODUPE KUMAPAYI believes strongly that God has impressed upon her heart to share through her writings the knowledge she has gained in her walk with God and the insight she has been given in her study of God's Word. Her deepest desire is to arm people with the truth; and her greatest fulfilment comes from watching people thrive spiritually.