

PHARAOH AND THE PHARISEES

A Comparative Study

By Jon Ikin

The Lord Jesus Christ is *The Prophet like Moses* (Deut.18:15-22) as our article by that title tries to illustrate. As an appendix to that study this article explores the amazing comparisons between Pharaoh - the great enemy of Moses - and the Pharisees, the great enemies of our Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry.

1. It is strange that in English there is a similarity in their names: ‘Phar-oah’ and ‘Phar-isee.’

2. Just as Pharaoh kept the Children of Israel in physical bondage, so the Pharisees kept the Children of Israel in spiritual bondage. As the Lord Jesus said, “*For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*” (Matt.23:4). Notice, the Pharisees did nothing to help the people, just as Pharaoh did nothing to help the people, telling them to find their own straw (Ex.5:7).

3. The Children of Israel were labouring and heavy laden under Pharaoh (Exodus 2:23). So also were the generation of Israel in Jesus’ day under the Pharisees rules and regulations. This is why the Lord Jesus said, “*Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...*” (Matt.11:28). He was calling for an ‘exodus’ from Pharisaical-Judaism to Himself, where they could find deliverance from their labouring. It is also interesting to note that He goes on in the next verse to say that He is “meek” – a particular characteristic of Moses (Num.12:3).

4. Pharaoh had a hard heart which made Moses angry (Ex 11:8-10) and the Pharisees had hard hearts which made Jesus angry (Mk 3:5-6).

5. Pharaoh’s magicians could perform *some* of the Mosaic miracles, and the ‘sons of the Pharisees’ could also cast out *some* devils, according to Jesus (Matt.12:27).

6. In Ezekiel the Lord said He would cut down Pharaoh like a tree, and scatter the Egyptians among the nations (Ezk.30:20-31:18). The same fate was prophesied against the Pharisees by John the Baptist (Matt.3:7-10) and the Lord Jesus (7:19). This was a clear reference to the judgment of AD 70 when Jerusalem was burnt with fire and the nation scattered in the Diaspora.

7. Pharaoh's magicians recognised the miraculous power of Moses was "*the finger of God,*" (Ex.8:19). Likewise Jesus told the Pharisees that He cast out devils by "*the finger of God,*" (Luke 11:20).

8. Pharaoh and the Egyptians ate bread with yeast (in contrast to the unleavened bread of the Israelites), and the Lord Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the "yeast/ leaven of the Pharisees," (Matt.16:6).

9. The Pharaoh's are known in history for being great tomb builders (Tutankhamen etc) – and so were the Pharisees! Listen to the words of Jesus: "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.*" (Matt.23:29).

10. Moses said to Pharaoh, "*You shall see me no more...*" (Ex.10:29); Jesus said to the Pharisees, "*You shall see me no more...*" (Matt.23:29).

11. Moses left Egypt desolate - Exodus 10:7; Jesus said that He left Jerusalem (the centre of the Pharisees) desolate – Matt.23:37-38.

.12. To deliver the Children of Israel from their physical bondage God sent darkness on the land and killed the firstborn sons of Egypt at the time of the Passover; to deliver the Children of Israel from their spiritual bondage God sent darkness on the land and allowed *His* firstborn Son to be killed at the time of the Passover. In both cases, believing Jews and Gentiles were saved by faith in the blood of the Lamb.

13. After the Children of Israel were delivered from Egypt Pharaoh sent his armies to try and recapture them and restore them to their bondage (Ex.14:5f). After the

deliverance of Calvary and the birth of the church at Pentecost the Pharisees tried to get the believers back into bondage again (see Acts 15 & Galatians).

14. Moses did miraculous signs before Pharaoh, but he wouldn't believe; Jesus did miraculous signs before the Pharisees, but they wouldn't believe (John 12:37). It is interesting to note that both of them did miracles involving leprosy (Ex.4:6-7 & Matt.8:1-4).

15. The Lord Jesus said that the Pharisees were hypocrites (Luke 12:1 & Matt.23) – saying one thing and doing another. Pharaoh before them also acted in hypocrisy to Moses, saying that the people could go and then changing his mind when the plagues had been removed.

16. Pharaoh burdened the Children of Israel with work *so that they could not listen to Moses (Ex.5:9).* The Pharisees of Jesus' day seemed to do a similar thing with their rules and regulations (Mt.15:3-8). Even to this day the Jewish people are burdened with so much literature that some also neglect the Scriptures. In both cases Satan's strategy has been the same: keep them from the Word of God so that they will remain in bondage. Let us pray for them. Let us also take care of our own souls. *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1).*

Jon Ikin, 2018

(Originally produced as a leaflet under the same name)