

Who Is the Lord?!

Money has the power to blind us to what—and who—is really important in our lives. We need not be atheists to fall into its trap.

“And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go’” (Ex. 5:2).

“Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Prov. 30:8-9).



When Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh, they did so on the authority of a power higher than themselves: “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go’” (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh rejected both the demand and the authority behind it. “Who is the Lord?” was the defiant response of a man who answered to no one but himself.

Pharaoh rejected God, not because he had objectively studied the evidence and found it lacking, but because God represented a threat to his power. He was *Pharaoh*, the most powerful man in all of Egypt, perhaps in all the world. No one was going to dictate to him how to run his empire. It took a series of painful judgments to teach him who he was dealing with, and to change his mind about releasing Israel from bondage.

Scroll forward several hundred years. We know nothing about the author of Proverbs 30 (Agur the son of Jakeh, v. 1), but he was a wise man who had a sure grasp of human nature. He recognized that poverty and prosperity each comes with its own unique danger. The poor man is tempted to steal, thus profaning God, while the rich man is tempted, like Pharaoh, to deny God with a dismissive “Who is the Lord?” attitude.

The rich man’s hubris does not arise from his political control over an empire, but from a different form of power. Whatever problems he may encounter in his life, he can buy, bribe, or threaten others to get whatever he wants. His abundance provides a cushion that shields him from many of the hard edges of life that others must contend with. His wealth gives him an illusion of invincibility that mimics that of any tyrant. So when God comes along and demands changes in his life—such as embracing humility, generosity, compassion, and so on—he is not disposed to cooperate. “Who is the Lord?” is the motto of the man who has everything—and no need for God.

But like Pharaoh’s grip on his kingdom, the rich man’s prosperity is a fleeting thing. God has judgments He can bring into our lives that no amount of money can forestall. When those judgments hit—whether they be health concerns, economic collapse, family disintegration, political upheaval, or whatever—the man who has placed his confidence in his wealth will find himself lost and helpless. The same God who gave him his abundance can just as easily take it away. Who will save him then?

There is nothing inherently evil about money and prosperity. But when the Lord blesses us with material gain, we had better take a long, hard look at our relationship with God. Instead of asking “Who is the Lord?” we should be asking “Why has He given me this abundance?” The injunctions of Jesus and the apostles to “be generous and ready to share” (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Lk. 12:33-34; Eph. 4:28) are good advice for one who is willing to listen.

Pharaoh found out the hard way who the Lord is. We will too someday, if we fail to use our possessions wisely.

— David King