

## The Fifth Plague: Murrain Exodus 9:1-7

Murrain is livestock disease (anthrax?). At the time of the Exodus this plague affected almost every kind of farm animal. The god associated with livestock, but especially cattle, was *Apis* (the bull). *Apis* was believed to be a mediator with other gods, and an expression of the king (the bull was associated with fertility and strength). The Israelites were clearly attached to *Apis*, as seen later when they demanded a visible form of Yahweh (Ex. 32:1-5) and produced the golden calf while Moses was with the Lord on Mount Horeb. In today's passage the gods of livestock prove impotent & useless.

### I. Yahweh's Revised Identity

- A. Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, is also the God of the "far-off" Hebrews and of all men.
- B. *Hebrew* refers to Eber, descendant of Shem, so also to people from beyond the Euphrates.
- C. The Shemites (Semites) were the clan of Noah chosen to bless the whole earth. (Messiah)
- D. Pharaoh was dealing with much broader issues that he could ever realize?
- E. Yahweh is Protector of all the faithful and Destroyer of all His enemies.

### II. A New Construct for Pharaoh's Sin

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You do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those

are entering to go in. (Matthew 23:13)

- A. Pharaoh's refusal to obey the true God had already harmed Egypt (1<sup>st</sup> 4 plagues).
- B. God upbraids him for obstructing the worship of the Lord with its mediation of sin.
- C. The sacrifices temporarily did the work that Christ would do permanently.
- D. The devil tried to block the way, even as God was taking His people to Himself.
- E. It is bad enough to disobey the Lord but worse to "hold back" His penitent ones.

### III. The Tragic Loss of Herds and Flocks

- A. Once again God exempts the Israelites, the animals being both for farm and for sacrifice.
- B. And once again the existence of Egypt is threatened by an agricultural disaster.
- C. Ironically, the Israelites under Joseph had increased and husbanded the livestock of Egypt.
- D. Now a God's gift of productivity and wealth was about to disappear.
- E. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, according to His grace & justice. (Genesis 9:3)

### IV. Indisputable Evidence and an Unmoved Pharaoh

- A. Pharaoh goes to see for himself that Israelite animals live, while Egypt's die.
- B. The evidence is indisputable: Yahweh is on the side of the Hebrews, and his side is doomed.
- C. The hearts of the unregenerate are as hard as stone and only grace and soften them.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

- D. Five more plagues will come before Pharaoh relents, and even then curses his fate.
- E. There are none so blind as those who will not see, but God gives sight to the blind.  
And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. (Mark 10:51)