

## In the Hands of the Lord God Almighty | The Plagues of Egypt #5: Livestock | Exodus 9:1-7

*Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! For you have established your glory in the heavens. Through the mouths of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your hands and fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Yet, you have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

If the economy continues to crumble and you must use good old-fashioned ingenuity and creativity to make a living, don't think about becoming a doctor, lawyer or such. Don't think about being a butcher, or a baker, or a candlestick maker. All you need to do is (a) recall all of those children songs that get stuck in your ear canals and remain there for the rest of your natural life (b) have the courage to video yourself singing them with the hand motions; (c) and then find the spot right in between the guy selling watermelons and the one selling boiled peanuts on the side of the road and – viola – your financial tribulations would be solved in a matter of hours. I would do it in a heartbeat. And song #3 on Derrick's Delightful Dandy's Album would be inspired by my daughter's preschool days: "Well you knock knock knock and I say 'come in.'" You open the door, and you take a big spin. You slap your heels, and you slap your knees. Why don't you do the head and shoulders with me? Heads, shoulders, knees, and toes. Knees and toes. And eyes and ears and mouth and nose. Heads, shoulders, knees, and toes. Song #2 would serve as the demonstrative proof that Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity is a bona fide medical condition that starts in childhood: "you put your right-hand in. You put your right-hand out. You put your right-hand in and you shake it all about. You do the Hokey Pokey, and you turn yourself around. That's what it's all about!" And song #1 would remind us all what we are prone to forget in times of crisis and tribulation: "He's got the whole world in his hands. He's got the whole world in His hands."

In your childhood and mine, we got our hands dirty quite often. When we did, we knew we better get them all washed up before Ole Momma McDonald saw them. If we didn't, we could be sure that we were going to be singing "e i e i o" all way home in route to the kitchen sink. But God's hands are so different from ours. Ours get dirty. But His are clean and pure. Our hands get tired. But His hands never rest, nor do they slumber. Our toil because of the fall. But His hands rest because it is finished. What's amazing about the plague before us today - the fifth one, the Plague of Livestock – is this: God's hands orchestrate it all. I want you to remember that and don't forget it. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever. Here's why: The narratives of the plagues are like pieces to a puzzle. The picture becomes clearer as each piece gets attached to another. In the preceding message on plague #4 – the Plague of Flies – we attached it to the first three and saw the picture of the land of Goshen: a place of divine protection. Today, as we attach piece #5 to the other four, we'll see a clearer picture not just of how his hands work in our lives, but how they work in our Egypt, which is our world. So today my objective is very simple: it is to tell you what you are confessing to God when you sing to him "He's got the whole world in his hands." To do that, please turn with me to Exodus 9:1-7.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me."<sup>2</sup> If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back,<sup>3</sup> the hand of the Lord will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field—on your horses, donkeys and camels and on your cattle, sheep and goats.<sup>4</sup> But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die."<sup>5</sup> The Lord set a time and said, "Tomorrow the Lord will do this in the land."<sup>6</sup> And the next day the Lord did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died.<sup>7</sup> Pharaoh investigated and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding, and he would not let the people go.*

### What You Confess When You Sing "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

#### 1. He's got a plan for those who sing it with conviction.

- **Momma Elephant** – (1) We've all heard of momma bear protecting her cubs; (2) But I'm surprised we don't use the colloquial phrase "momma elephant" when we want to speak about our God given instinct to protect what is ours; (3) African Elephants are the most protective species on the planet; (4) If momma elephant dies, the rest of the herd takes the nurturing of her offspring as

their personal obligation; (5) If momma elephant is still alive, she will use her massive trunk to rescue her children from danger; (6) And, Lord, help any lion, tiger, or bear – oh my – who threatens them. She will use her massive trunk to give them a very bad day and shatter those forces that resist her offspring's rescue.

- **Main Idea of the Point:** God demonstrates that his hands are for us (i.e., believers) by orchestrating events in our lives for the purpose of our redemption. In God's mind, redemption involves two specific things: rescue and shattering the forces that resist that rescue. For they must be torn down if His people are to be safe and free.
- **Main Textual Emphasis:** "But the Lord will make a distinction..." (v4) // "the hand of the Lord will bring a terrible plague..." (v3)
- **Main Teaching Point: Two Specific Ways God Works in a Hostile World with Christians:** (1) Rescue (v4): It comes first by God pointing them out to Pharaoh and distinguishing them from the Egyptians. It will come last in the last plague through a purchase: the blood of the Passover lamb. This distinguishing through a purchase now becomes more central to the story than the tribulations themselves. (2) Shattering resistance to the forces that resist that rescue (v3). God's not only in the process of distinguishing through a purchase but destroying the powers of darkness that get in the way of that rescue. In other words, he's tearing down the strongholds of Satan. (3) Both of those concepts denote the biblical concept of redemption, not just "salvation from bondage"
- **App:** The hands of God not only save, but they also engage in a fight for you. For the towers of darkness must be torn down if his people are to be free to worship in the wilderness. That's what He's up to in your life right now. And it will happen in our world. Just stand in awe of the greatness of God when it happens.

## 2. He's got a plan for those who sing it with contempt.

- **Family Gatherings and the Family Member Who Doesn't Say Much** – (1) Everybody has a family member who doesn't speak as much as some of the other family members. But when they do, friend, you will listen. (2) The whole Brady Bunch comes to Grandma and Grandpa's house. (3) On one side of the room, the guys are yelling at the television because the Miami Dolphins have just lost another game. (4) On the other side, the ladies are gossiping about Miss Molly Mistletoe's overpriced hair perm. (5) On the other side, the kids are complaining because they want to go swimming and it hasn't been 30 minutes since lunch. (6) And there sits grandpa in his chair and he's finally had enough: with a cutting hand motion. He speaks in a loud voice: "enough."
- **Main Idea of the Point:** God demonstrates that his hands are against his enemies through a one-way conversation with an advance warning.
- **Main Textual Emphasis:** "This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews says (v1) // "...on the livestock in your field" (v3)
- **Main Teaching Point: When God Interrupts a World that Stands in Contempt:** (1) He speaks clearly (v1): Moses says "this is what the Lord says. That is to say "thus saith the Lord." This is the first time in the Bible that prophetic marker is used. It will occur 1,900 more times in the Bible. But not before here. As bad as scenes have been in Genesis, the first time it is used is in relation to a nation hostile to God and his plans: Egypt. (2) He speaks with mercy (v3): When God, through Moses, tells Pharaoh what he will do if Pharaoh doesn't yield, he gives him warning in advance about what will happen. (3) And he gave Pharaoh a choice (v3) in the warning: God said he would do it to the livestock in the field. Thereby, implying that if his warning is heeded and they take livestock out of the field, they would be safe.
- **App:** God's plan is that none should perish. What makes him truly different from us and worth our worship is that God extends the invitation to the worst of the worst; even when they absolutely deserve condemnation. But make no mistake, when he interrupts like that in the world, judgment will surely happen if people refuse to take the livestock safely inside.

## 3. He's got a plan for those who sing it with a crown.

- **Hands at the Orchestra:** (1) Watching an orchestra perform live is an amazing thing. (2) In one section, the percussionists are moving their hands up and down so fast they look like a piston from a Ford Mustang. (3) In another section, the violinists move their hands on the unfretted strings with the precision of a vascular surgeon. (4) In another section, the saxophonists run scales with their hands while their breath injects life into their instrument. (5) But the most important person in the orchestra isn't the main drummer, the main violinist, or the main trumpeter. It's the conductor. Sometimes with grace and sometimes with tremendous passion and force, the conductor lets the musicians know who can play and who can't. All with the movement of just his hands.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** God demonstrates that his hands are mightier than those of the kings from kingdoms of this earth when he informs them that they can only play at his discretion.
- **Main Textual Emphasis:** "on your horses, donkeys and camels and on your cattle, sheep and goats" (v3)

- **Main Teaching Point: How God Goes About Toppling an Empire:** (1) Livestock were symbols of power in Egypt: The god(s) Ra and Hesat were thought to provide the milk to sustain life itself. That's why Pharaoh's like King Tut wore bull symbols with great pride (imagery we see in artifacts today). (2) They were also assets of great wealth – wealth measured by livestock in the ancient world; long before Yellowstone was ever filmed. (3) They were also instruments of transportation in the ancient world to carry goods from place to place. (4) They were also main sources for protein, something rare to find without animals in the deserts of Egypt. (5) This plague designed to absolutely cripple them; to let them know they were not in power. To let them know that he could – by just saying “thus saith the Lord” – cripple every aspect of their way of life: transportation, food, everything...gone with a word.
- **App:** I am the Lord...I will share my glory with no one. All of the great empires of the past have come and gone. Only Christ will remain. So blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. And cursed is the one whose isn't.

#### 4. He's got a plan for those who sing it in the time to come.

- **The New Fashion Trend Setter In Men's Clothing:** (1) I've noticed that among men, the new fashion setter for men's clothing isn't Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, or Nautica. (2) Nor is it items that are on sale at Dillard's, Macys, Belk, or JC Penny's. (3) Instead, it is whatever is on the tables at Sam's Club. (4) A week ago, my wife bought me a Member's Mark Raincoat. To which I said: “I don't need a Member's Mark Raincoat because it hasn't rained in ages.” (4) Yesterday, I was sure glad she bought me that trendsetting Member's Mark raincoat.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** God demonstrates that his hands are sufficient by providing for us today of what we are going to need tomorrow.
- **Main Textual Emphasis:** “so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die” (v4)
- **Main Teaching Point: Timing of Gods Provision in Light of the Passover Plague to Come:** (1) In the first three plagues, Israel went through what the Egyptians went through. (2) In the fourth plague, Goshen is introduced: a place of refuge. (3) Here, Israel's livestock are spared. (4) But in Plague 10, the Lord is going to require a sacrifice from livestock. (3) Had this plague occurred in 1-3, they would have had no livestock for a sacrifice because the Israelites shared in the Egyptians tribulations. (4) But in this one, he spares Israel's livestock because He knew they needed the best of the livestock for the sacrifice of Passover coming in the future.
- **App:** God is in the process of supplying you with what you need right now for what is coming in the future. You may not know what that is. But God does. So only trust Him. Only trust Him. Only trust Him now. He will save you. He will save you. He will save you know. For He has the whole world in His hands.