EXODUS

Chapter 9

*The Plague on Livestock*

**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.” 2 If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, 3 the hand of the Lord will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field—on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats. 4 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.’ ” 5 The Lord set a time and said, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this in the land.” 6 And the next day the Lord did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. 7 Pharaoh sent men to investigate 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.**

**9:2** Moses highlighted Pharaoh’s obstinate resistance. (TLSB)

**9:3** *hand of the Lord*. See note on 8:19. (CSB)

*terrible plague on your livestock.* The flies of the fourth plague (see note on 8:21) probably carried the anthrax bacteria (see note on 8:13) that would now infect the animals, which had been brought into the fields again as the floodwaters subsided. The Egyptians worshiped many animals and animal-headed deities, including the bull-gods Apis and Mnevis, the cow-god Hathor and the ram-god Khnum. Thus Egyptian religion is again rebuked and ridiculed (see note on 7:19). (CSB)

Usually translated “pestilence” (5:3), it is any infectious outbreak. The Eng term came to describe all 10 wonders by which God struck the Egyptians. *upon* … *livestock*. Possibly murrain, similar to anthrax, which could affect the grazing cattle and other domestic animals, destroying the wealth of the Egyptians. God could have used the flies (8:21) to carry the bacteria now infecting the animals. (TLSB)

**9:4** *distinction.* See note on 8:22. (CSB)

**9:5** *the Lord* *set a time*. To this plague, God adds a warning and a time for the Egyptians to respond. They could rescue their animals by trusting the Lord’s word and segregating their livestock from animals in the fields (cf v 20). The protected cattle survived (vv 19–21). (TLSB)

*Tomorrow.* To give those Egyptians who feared God time to bring their livestock in from the fields and out of danger (see also v. 20). (CSB)

**9:6** *All the livestock of the Egyptians died.* That is, all that were left out in the fields. Protected livestock remained alive (see vv. 19–21). (CSB)

Those in the field (cf vv 3, 19). The sin of one man who thought he was a “god” had not only personal but also communal repercussions. Herds and flocks were equivalent to wealth. (TLSB)

**9:7** *sent*. Confidential messengers confirmed that the cattle of the Israelites had been spared. (TLSB)

*heart of Pharaoh was hardened*. Threat, promise, judgment, and mercy made no impression on him (cf Ps 51). (TLSB)

**9:1–7** Despite the number of times Pharaoh goes through the cycle of sin, oppression, regret, and deliverance, God will not be mocked. God deals another detrimental blow to the Egyptian religious and economic systems. By God’s grace, Israel is delivered from temporal judgment and destruction. The Lamb of God delivers us from sin, death, and the devil through His atoning blood. • Heavenly Father, many smile when Your precious Word of Law and Gospel is condemned. Many hear of redeeming grace in Your Son, Jesus Christ, and rail against Him in thought, word, and deed. Protect us as we bear witness to all who are hardened to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Boils*

**8 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. 9 It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land.” 10 So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. 11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. 12 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses.**

**9:8–10** Soot blew like dust over the land, and God used it to make boils break out on people and animals. (TLSB)

**9:8** *Take … soot … toss it into the air.* Perhaps symbolizing either the widespread extent of the plague of boils or their black coloration. (CSB)

f*urnace.* Possibly a kiln for firing bricks, the symbol of Israel’s bondage (see 1:14; 5:7–19). The same word is used in Ge 19:28 as a simile for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (CSB)

Smelting furnace or limekiln for firing the bricks the Israelites were forced to produce (1:14; 5:7–19). The kiln is now an instrument of chastisement against the Egyptians. (TLSB)

**9:9** *boils.* Probably skin anthrax (a variety of the plague that struck the livestock in vv. 1–7), a black, burning abscess that develops into a pustule. (CSB)

Skin swollen in abscesses and blisters as a result of disease. (TLSB)

*men and animals.* The plague on the livestock now extended to other animals as well as to the people of Egypt. (CSB)

**9:11** *magicians could not stand.* The “boils of Egypt” (Dt 28:27) seriously affected the knees and legs (see Dt 28:35). (CSB)

Boils and pustule abscesses seriously affected leg and joint movement (cf Dt 28:35). (TLSB)

**9:12** *the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.* See note on 4:21. (CSB)

The Lord confirmed Pharaoh in his persistent unbelief. “Even Pharaoh perished in this way. (Of whom it is written [in Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17], ‘But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you My power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.’) This was not because God had begrudged him salvation or because it had been His good pleasure that Pharaoh should be damned and lost. For God is not willing that any should perish [2 Peter 3:9]; ‘[He also has] no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live’ (Ezekiel 33:11)” (FC SD XI 84). (TLSB)

*them*. Pharaoh’s counselors. (TLSB)

**9:8–12** The magicians collapse under the Lord’s chastisement; both people and animals are smitten by painful skin abscesses. The Lord again distinguishes His people in this plague by sparing the Israelites and their animals. The blessings God gives us should extend beyond us to bless even our animals! If the Lord shows such mercy to sheep, how much more shall He show mercy toward you? His Gospel rescues us from sin, death, and the devil. • Dear Father in heaven, You saved me by grace through faith in Christ, Your Son. As long as this corrupt nature clings to me like a dead corpse, teach me to say, “Forgive me, for I am a wretched sinner worthy of punishment.” Free me, O Lord, for I am helpless without You. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Hail*

**13 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, confront 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, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go. 18 Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. 19 Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.’ ”20 Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. 21 But those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field. 22 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.” 23 When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; 24 hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. 25 Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. 26 The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were. 27 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. “This time I have sinned,” he said to them. “The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. 28 Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t have to stay any longer.” 29 Moses replied, “When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the Lord. The thunder will stop and there will be no more hail, so you may know that the earth is the Lord’s. 30 But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the Lord God.” 31 (The flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. 32 The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later.) 33 Then Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the Lord; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land. 34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. 35 So Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had said through Moses.**

**9:13–10:29** These three preparatory plagues will be exponentially greater than the previous one and will prepare Pharaoh for the final plague of judgment. God did not destroy Pharaoh with just one act of judgment in order that (1) Pharaoh might glorify God, and (2) the name of the Lord might be declared to the ends of His kingdom. (TLSB)

**9:14** *this time I will send all My plagues*. Difference of degree. Previous plagues (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, and boils) failed to touch the hard heart of Pharaoh. (TLSB)

**9:16** *I have raised you up*. Kings reign by God’s permission. (TLSB)

Paul quotes this verse as an outstanding illustration of the sovereignty and mercy of God (see Ro 9:17). (CSB)

**9:17** *still exalting yourself*. Though the Lord had distinguished Israel, Pharaoh’s attitude toward them had not changed. (TLSB)

**9:18** *I will send … hailstorm.* The flooding of the Nile (the probable occasion of the first six plagues) came to an end late in the fall. The hailstorm is thus in the proper chronological position, taking place in January or February when the flax and barley were in flower but the wheat and spelt had not yet germinated (see vv. 31–32). (CSB)

Hail of great size in awful volleys, accompanied by thunder and fire (lightning; v 23). (TLSB)

**9:19–21** See note on v. 6. (CSB)

**9:20** *whoever feared*. Some of Pharaoh’s servants had come to believe Moses. (TLSB)

*livestock into the houses*. A sign of divine mercy and rescue. Herds of cattle were turned out to pasture between Jan and Apr, so this plague would have killed range cattle. Other plagues threatened the livestock as well. (TLSB)

**9:21** Those who ignored God’s warning would reap the prophesied judgment (vv 22–26). (TLSB)

**9:24** *fire* *flashing*. Lightning intensified the threat (cf Ezk 1:4). (TLSB)

**9:25** *every plant*. Probably occurred in Jan or Feb, when the flax and barley were in flower but the wheat and emmer had not yet germinated (vv 31–33). (TLSB)

**9:27** *This time I have sinned.* For the first time the pharaoh acknowledges his sinfulness and perceives its devastating results. (CSB)

The supernatural aspect of this plague, esp the terrible violence of the hailstorm, made a stronger impression upon Pharaoh than the previous plagues. Pharaoh finally admitted limited guilt. (TLSB)

**9:29** *spread out my hands.* See 1Ki 8:22, 38, 54; 2Ch 6:12–13, 29; Ezr 9:5; Ps 44:20; 88:9; 143:6; Isa 1:15; 1Ti 2:8. Statues of men praying with hands upraised have been found by archaeologists at several ancient sites in the Middle East. (CSB)

**9:30** *Lord God.* See note on Ge 2:4. (CSB)

**9:31–32** See note on v. 18. (CSB)

**9:31** *flax and the barley were struck down*. Not yet ripe but in ear and in blossom. (TLSB)

*flax*. Used for Egyptian linen; a valuable crop. (TLSB)

**9:32** *spelt.* Grains of spelt, a member of the grass family allied to wheat, have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Although inferior to wheat, it grows well in poorer and drier soil. (CSB)

*Wheat and the emmer*. Grain for making bread. (TLSB)

**9:13–35** Pharaoh mocks God with false repentance, but the Lord is unmoved. Sinners cannot bargain with God by conceding some of their sins or by amending behaviors. God sees through it all. Like the thief on the cross, we do not appeal to mockery but instead call on God’s mercy. Jesus is always ready to forgive. • O Lord Christ, I am the worst evil; You are the highest good. But You took my sin and gave me Your righteousness. I am led to this confession through Your Law and Gospel-promises. O faithful God, my merciful Redeemer, grant that I trust in You alone. Amen. (TLSB)