



*The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, John Martin, 1823

**About the artist and painting:** The English Romantic painter John Martin was no stranger to death and despair. Out of the 13 children born to his mother and father, John was one of only 6 that survived childhood. He grew up in poverty, the son of a farm laborer. In 1813, John lost his grandmother, mother, father, and youngest son all in the same year. Despite his popular appeal to English society, he was never really celebrated much less even accepted by the art community. Yet he was somewhat of a revolutionary by choosing to paint very fantastic, biblical scenes and landscapes. One can't help but think John looked to the extraordinary aspects of the bible to deal with the harsh realities of life in a broken world.

His 1823 work, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, helps to capture the deliverance theme so prevalent in the Book of Exodus. In the painting you have these mighty structures of Pharaoh's palace, city, and pyramids all displayed in their grandeur. In Moses' day this represented to God's people Pharaoh's power and oppression towards them as he ruthlessly made their lives harsh. Yet God is breaking into these circumstances, "showing up" to bring about His deliverance. In this painting, over and above the Egyptian structures is something more magnificent, the storm of God: thunder, hail, and fire being poured down upon the oppressor and persecutor of His people. And your eye is drawn to the man standing on the left side of the painting, Moses, with outstretched arms looking to the LORD and His deliverance.

## **The purpose of Exodus:**

“The original purpose of Exodus was theological, to teach God’s people about himself and their relationship to him.” - Peter Enns, NIVAC, 25.

“Exodus is about a man, Moses. He is central to the narrative in a way in which no single character, not even Abraham, dominates Genesis...Exodus is about a nation, Israel, moving from slavery in Egypt into freedom...but ultimately Exodus is about God, about the God of the covenant who has instituted a new relationship between himself and those whom he has called to be his people.”  
- John Mackay, Exodus, 9.

“The whole story of Exodus is a covenant narrative. The God who pledged himself to Abraham and his descendants remained the faithful God. He had made promises and intended to honor them, and when his moment came, honor them he did...in a word, Exodus cannot be described simply as the book of the holiness of the Lord, nor simply as the book of the presence of the Lord, but as the book of the holy God present in all his holiness at the heart of his people’s life, their provident savior and friend, who makes provision whereby they, in all their unworthiness, may live safely with him.” - Alec Motyer, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Exodus*, 20, 23.

The setting for Exodus 1:1-2:25 is Israel in Egypt. The opening section sets the stage for the rest of the book by describing: the connection to the narrative of Genesis (Ex. 1:1–7), the oppression that has arisen under a new pharaoh (1:8–22), the preservation of Moses at birth (2:1–10) and later in Midian (2:11–22), and the declaration of God’s intimate knowledge of Israel’s suffering and God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (2:23–25).

## **Exodus is a journey in two parts.**

Part One: Egypt Exodus 1-15 Aug. 7th – Oct. 30th

Part Two: Sinai Exodus 16-18 Nov. 6th – Nov. 20th

*Pause for Advent: Nov. 27th – Dec. 18th*

Part Two Cont. Sinai Exodus 19 - 39 Jan. 8th – June 25th

*Pause for Missions Sunday: February 5th*

*Pause for DNOW: February 19th*

## **Resources for further study:**

*Exodus: A Mentors Commentary* by John Mackay

*Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*  
(Volume 2) (The New American Commentary) by Douglas Stuart

## SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

### Exodus 2:11-22 ESV

One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

## **BIG IDEA**

The more I see and savor the ultimate deliverer Jesus Christ and His method of deliverance, the more poised I am to effectively identify with and enter into the life burdens and sin sufferings of my neighbor.

## **OUTLINE**

1. The Sufferings of our Neighbor
2. Responding to the Sufferings of our Neighbor
3. Jesus: Our Deliverer, Model, and Motivation

***Praise to Jesus*** - Praise to Jesus – Praise God for Jesus who humbled himself to enter your greatest sin suffering and delivered you from the dominion of darkness and into His kingdom of light and life. Praise the Holy Spirit who continues to conform you to the image of One who compels us to comfort those who are afflicted with the comfort we received in Jesus.

***Confession through Jesus*** - Confess that all too often we live a self-absorbed life, a life in “Pharaoh’s palace”, while millions around us are burdened and oppressed by life in a broken world. Repent of the many ways we have failed to respond to the Gospel by showing up in the lives of those who are hurting.

***Consecration for Jesus*** - Rededicate yourself to believe that the Gospel not only brings comfort but compels you to be an extension of His comfort and compassion to others.

Scriptures for further study:

Galatians 6:2,10

Leviticus 19:18

1 Thessalonians 5:15

Philippians 2:6-8

John 1:11-12

Matthew 25:31-40

## DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Think of a time when you reached out to carry a burden or stepped into the suffering of someone else. What worked? What didn't? Think of a time when someone offered to carry a burden or step into your own suffering. What worked? What didn't?
2. Describe the major events which took place in Moses' life from passage. What was the beauty behind the murder and covert burial of the Egyptian? Whose burdens and sufferings are Christians called to carry or relieve? What passages in the Bible point to this?
3. Who else did Moses help? Where was he at that time? Why does it matter who Moses helped and where he was? In what ways is Moses acting like a redeemer and shepherd? What are the two responses Moses gets for trying to love his neighbor? How does this passage confront us?
4. How are the lives of Moses and Jesus similar? Jesus modeled how to carry the burden of another (Refer to John 4. What is significant about the gender and history of the person, and what is important about the location of this event? How did Jesus carry a burden? Was Jesus' offer of help immediately received?) Jesus modeled how to step into the sufferings of others (Refer to John 8. What is significant about the location of the miracle? Was Jesus asked for help?) The result of Jesus' intervention was deliverance! This is the good news. This is the Gospel. Because Jesus carried burdens and stepped into the sufferings of others, we can too. Because the righteousness of Christ has been credited to us by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we can carry burdens and step into suffering. And we can point the one who is suffering to our Deliverer who is the one who can deliver the burdened and suffering. Have you let Jesus carry a burden for you? Have you let Jesus step into your suffering? What does it mean for a Christian to reject the needs of poor and marginalized or a fellow church member?

“Humility should not be a Christian virtue that is worthy of special mention, as if some Christians possess this trait while others do not. Rather, humility is at the center of the character of one who knows Christ and is known by him. It is not a word that describes a “super-Christian,” but a quality that is supposed to be a distinguishing characteristic of all Christians.”

– Peter Enns

“As the Israelites looked at Moses, they saw God's appointed deliverer, and as they thought about what he had done (both his achievements and his failures) they were being guided forward in their thoughts to anticipate the coming of the ultimate deliverer, who is Jesus Christ. He is the one who shares in none of Moses' faults and who by his perfect work is able to accomplish lasting and complete deliverance for his people.”

– John Mackay

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Scriptures for further study:

Acts 7:20-29

Hebrews 11:23-27

1. Make sure to describe the context for today's passage. God's people, the Israelites, are slaves in Egypt. But Moses, an Israelite, was raised in the palace of Pharaoh. Ask your children how they would feel if they were raised in such a great place like a palace while your family is in such a tough place.
2. From Exodus 2:11, ask your children why Moses tried to help the Israelite. Talk with them about how Moses saw the burden of the Israelites and how that was good. Then talk about what Moses did in Exodus 2:12 and whether that was a good reaction or not.
3. Ask your children why Moses ran away from Egypt in Exodus 2:15. Talk about how Pharaoh found out what Moses did and wanted to kill Moses. Ask them how Moses might have felt when he left Egypt.
4. Ask your children about whether Moses did the right thing in helping the daughters of Reuel. Talk about how Moses once again saw someone in need and helped them. Ask them how God might use this personality of Moses later in the Exodus story.
5. Ask your children what burden God saw in us with our sin and what He did about it. Talk with them about how He sent Jesus to die for our sins on the cross. Read John 3:16 together.

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Looking back at the beginning and the ongoing experience of your Christian life, how have you found yourself identifying as a “sojourner in a foreign land”?
2. How does knowing the end of the story—God's victory and re-creation--- enable you to live positively and excitedly as you experience the battle of the Christian life now?
3. Can the action of Moses in slaying the Egyptian be justified? What does this incident tell us about the way God overrules our faults to fulfil his purposes?
4. How has God prepared you for ministry? Have you learned your most valuable lessons in a “palace” or a “desert” or a “wilderness”?
5. In what way is God’s gracious mission in Jesus Christ also seen in the book of Exodus?

*\*Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary on Exodus by Tony Merida and Exodus for You by Tim Chester .*

## FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Do you ever feel like your sin disqualifies you from serving God? Take heart: the Moses story demonstrates that God by his grace qualifies us for service and uses broken people like you and me. Listen to author Tim Chester: “Noah was a drunkard. Jacob was a cheat. Moses was a murderer. Gideon was a coward. David was an adulterer. Jeremiah was a depressive. Matthew was a traitor. James and John were hotheads. Simon the Zealot was a terrorist. Peter was all talk. Paul was a persecutor of God’s people. And then there’s Samson. Every act of deliverance that Samson undertook started with his uncontrolled lust.” By all means, ask God to forgive you of your sin, and trust in Christ’s righteousness. But take heart that he can and will use your life as a blessing to other sinners, whom you can also point to Christ

2. This passage tells of two episodes in Moses’ life that have the same theme. In both episodes, we see Moses identifying with people who are being mistreated, and then Moses endeavoring to deliver them from their oppression. Can you see how this offers us a wonderful picture of Christ Jesus? Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus sympathizes with us. And Hebrews 2:17-18 tells us that in his mercy he delivers us from our sin and helps us in our need.

3. Moses names his son Gershom, which means “I have become an alien in a foreign land.” Moses probably feels lonely or out of place at this point. He feels like he is far from home. In some ways, this is the way our own hearts feel here on earth. We sense somehow that we are strangers in a foreign land. But this unsettledness is a good reminder to us that we are made for another place and headed one day to another home. That home is with Christ in heaven. This is what your heart is truly longing for.

4. Moses will spend the next forty years living in Midian and working as a shepherd. He must have felt at times like his life had no great purpose. And yet, God would use these years to teach him and to prepare him for the great assignment of shepherding God’s people in the wilderness and taking them to the threshold of the promised land. Are you discouraged right now? Do you wonder why God has you where you are at the moment? Trust in the Lord and in his providence. Surely, he is at work in your life right now, and he is most likely preparing you and shaping you for your next assignment.