



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 3:13-22 ESV

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’ And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

BIG IDEA

Because of God's eternal and covenant-making character, then by faith in Jesus, He may deliver us from our slavery to sin and deliver us to eternal life and grant us strength for our faith journey.

OUTLINE

1. The Eternal, Self-Existent Deliverer

2. The Covenant-Making Deliverer

3. Gospel Reminders:

- a. God is in control of all things and invites us to rest in Him.
- b. God has provided for our salvation; therefore, He will provide all we need for our faith journey.
- c. God's plan of redemption includes His people.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"The God who makes himself known is a God who shows himself to be unimaginably powerful and unrelentingly compassionate...and those two things held together are what we see in God delivering his people with a strong right arm and great mercy as he remembers the promises...the God who makes himself known is the God who always keeps his word." - Kevin DeYoung

"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...The ultimate goal is for God's people to know him in a fuller, personal fashion. The key experience in salvation is that of knowing the LORD – itself one of the main themes of Exodus." - Mackay, *Exodus*, 9, 12.

Scriptures for further study:

John 8:56-58

2 Peter 1: 3-4

Romans 8:32

John 14:16-18

Ephesians 4:11-16

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- Peter Enns,
NIVAC, 25.

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. What part of God’s character stood out to you from our passage? Why? How can this characteristic of God change your perspective on a situation in your life?
2. Does the fact that God is eternal and self-existent frighten or comfort you? Why? What are the implications for your life of this characteristic of God? What does this characteristic of God teach you about yourself?
3. Since God revealed Himself to be a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, how does this affect your life today? How does Jesus’ self-revelation in John 8:58 that He is the “I AM” impact your faith journey?
4. Which of the Gospel Reminders encouraged you the most? Why? Which of the Gospel Reminders challenged you the most? Why?
5. How did this week’s passage and sermon cause you to praise Jesus? How did it lead you to repent? How did it lead you to consecrate yourself for Jesus?

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Scriptures for further study:

John 8:56-58

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Luke 22:20

1 Thessalonians 5:24

1. To set the context for this passage, read Exodus 3:1-12. Ask your children how they would feel if they walked up to a bush that was burning but is not burning up.

- a. Ask them why God told Moses to take off his sandals in verse 5. Talk with your children about God's holiness and how God was reminding Moses that he is sinful and not holy.
- b. Ask them what they learned from the passage about how Moses felt about God wanting to use him as a part of His plan to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Talk with them about Moses' reluctance that we find in verse 11.
- c. Ask them how God answered Moses in verse 12. Talk with them about God's promise to be with Moses.

2. The main part of our passage is God's self-revelation of His name that tells us about His character.

- a. Ask your children how they get to know another child that they don't know, maybe a child in school or at church. Talk with them about how that other child has to tell you something about themselves or else you will not be able to learn a lot about them.
- b. The same goes for God. We can only know Him personally by His revelation of Himself to us like He has done through the Bible.
- c. Ask your children what we learn about God through His name of "I AM WHO I AM" or "I AM". Talk with them about how that tells us that God is eternal. He has no beginning or end.

3. This name ("I AM" or "I AM WHO I AM") is God's special covenant name and in verse 15 it is listed as "LORD". The Hebrew word is related to "I AM". This is sometimes translated as Yahweh. Moses further explains that the LORD or Yahweh is "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob".

- a. Ask your children if they know what a covenant is. Talk with them about how it is a relationship or agreement between two parties. Let them know that a marriage is an example of a covenant relationship.
- b. Talk with your children about how God has revealed Himself to be a God of relationship and through His covenants He forms His people.
- c. Ask your children if they know what promises God has made in His new covenant through Jesus. Talk with them about how we are promised eternal life through faith in Jesus. God is also promises to be with us forever by sending each believer the Holy Spirit.

FOR STUDENTS

1. Which aspect of God's nature as "I AM WHO I AM" most thrills you today? Does your view of who he is need to change in any way?
2. Is there any problem you're facing in which the solution to the problem might be you? How might God be "sending" you today?
3. To what extent do you allow your identity –what gives you confidence, and how you feel about yourself—to be founded on the truth that God says, "I am with you"? When is believing this truth hardest for you? How might remembering God's "I am with you" help you in those times or circumstances?
4. Which aspect of God's nature most excited you or comforted you as you read this section?
5. What causes you to doubt God's promises? How does his name help you to counter those doubts?
6. Imagine you had three sentences in which to explain who God is to someone. Basing your answer on Exodus 3, what would you say?

***Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Exodus for You by Tim Chester .*

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. To truly know any person, that person would need to reveal himself to you. This is true of God as well. To truly know him, he must tell you all about himself and what he is like. Otherwise, our notions about God are vague; or worse, we end up making him in our image! Here, God is revealing his “name,” which is to say, his essential character. The Bible is God’s self-revelation. This is why it is so important that you read the Bible and learn who God really is based upon what he reveals to us in his word.

2. Here God describes himself as the great “I Am.” This is to say: he is self-existent (i.e., not dependent on anything/anyone else for his existence); he is creator and sustainer of all things; he is immutable/unchanging; he is eternal; and he is also assuring us here that he will always be present with us. How does knowing all of these truths change or shape your sense of reverence for God? How would being in relationship with such a God give you great comfort, assurance, and stability?

3. God tells Moses to proclaim to the Israelites, as well as to Pharaoh, that he has come in the name of the one who is “I Am.” Once we know God ourselves, we are in a position to tell others about him. Not all of us are called to be great leaders like Moses, but all of us are called to tell others about our amazing God. If you are a new believer, don’t think that you don’t know enough to tell others about the Lord. If you are a believer, then you have a personal relationship with Christ, and you are qualified to share him with others. In fact, new believers often prove to be the most effective evangelists of all!

4. Once the Israelites would be delivered from Egypt, God declared that they would worship him (3:12), and “offer sacrifices to the Lord our God” (3:18). This is a picture of our lives as well. God does not just deliver us from sin, he also calls us into a life of worship. God saves us in order that we might “declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). God doesn’t just want to save you from sin, he wants you and me to become worshippers; indeed, people who will glorify him with our lives and worship him forever!

5. To Pharaoh, and to the people of Egypt, the Hebrews were a people who held little real value. And yet God is pleased to call himself the “God of the Hebrews” (3:18)? What does it say about God that he chooses to identify with those who are often considered to be invaluable in the eyes of the world? (Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29) How does this encourage you to think about yourself? How should this encourage all of us to look at others around us?

6. Not only did God promise to deliver the Israelites from the hand of Egypt, but in the process the Israelites would even plunder the Egyptians and then use that very plunder later to build a tabernacle to worship the God who had delivered them from these same Egyptians. Talk about a stunning reversal of fortunes! Talk about a total and complete victory! But this is what Christ has done for us: not only saving us from sin and death but making us “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37ff) over anything that might come against us.

Scriptures for further study:

- John 8:58—here Jesus identifies himself as the “I Am.” What is Jesus clearly stating about himself? The most important question you can ever answer is Jesus’ question: Who do you say that I am?
- Matthew 16:15 How do you answer?!