



*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

# DELIVERED TO AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP IN CHRIST

## Exodus 5:1-6:1 ESV

Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” But Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.” Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.” And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many,[a] and you make them rest from their burdens!”

The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’ Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’” So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”

Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, “Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people.” But he said, “You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’ Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks.” The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, “You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day.” They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; and they said to them, “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?”

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 4:12-13

1 John 3:13

John 3:16

Psalms 34:8

Romans 8:28

Psalms 10:1

Psalms 22:1

Psalms 44:24

Matthew 11:28

1 Peter 5:6-7

Numbers 23:19

Titus 1:2

Job 40

“When we cannot trace God’s hand, we must simply trust His heart.”

– Charles Spurgeon

“I utterly deny God to be the author of sin. He does not commit sin in willing that there be sin. God has established a world in which sin will indeed necessarily come to pass by His permission but not by his positive agency.”

– Jonathan Edwards

## BIG IDEA

The grace of God to us in Jesus Christ welcomes our authentic response to the hitches and hindrances in life yet we must always be prepared for His authentic response to our less than perfect moments of faith as we bend our lives to His lordship.

## OUTLINE

1. Hitches and Hinderances

2. Our Authentic Response

3. God’s Authentic Response

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“In the book of Exodus, God is the essential worker. The nature and intent of that divine work set the agenda for Moses’ work and through him, the work of God’s people. God’s initial call to Moses included an explanation of God’s work. This drove Moses to speak in the name of the Lord to Pharaoh saying, “Let my people go” (Exod. 5:1). Pharaoh’s rebuttal was not merely verbal; he oppressed the Israelites more harshly than before. By the end of this episode, even the Israelites themselves had turned against Moses (Exod. 5:20-21). It is at this crucial point that in response to Moses’ questioning God about the entire enterprise, God clarified the design of his work. It is important for all Christians to be clear about the scope of God’s work, because it helps us to understand what it means to pray for God’s kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).”

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/exodus-and-work/israel-in-egypt-exodus-111316/gods-work-of-redemption-for-israel-exodus-51-628>

## 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. Have you ever been on a vacation that should have been a “staycation” (a vacation that had so many hitches and hinderances that it would have been better to stay home)? What were your vacation plans? How did the plans get derailed? Who was leading? How did you and your people respond when things weren’t going as planned?

2. As Moses responded to God’s calling, what was the first hitch that he encountered? Why was it more than just a hitch for Moses personally? How did the people of Israel respond to Moses? When responding to a calling from God what should a Christian expect? What is our hope and how can we respond to hitches and hinderances?

3. Have you ever tried to help someone instead of helping their circumstances got worse? Moses’ first effort to help his people was not only a failure it had disastrous consequences for the Israelites. How does Moses process the failure with God? How can Moses’ dialogue with the Lord serve as model for you, when faced with fallout from doing what God asks you to do? What is your assurance and encouragement to total authenticity with the Lord in the face of blame-shifting and doubt?

4. Who are the folks in your life with whom you have gritty & gutsy conversation? How do these folks show up for you in your most authentic moments (do they listen well, ask questions for understanding, refuse to allow you to linger on things that aren’t true)? How do you respond when a friend speaks truths to you? Today’s passage and Job 40 are two of many examples from the Bible of authentic conversations between faithful people and the Lord. The Lord replied to Moses and to Job and He will reply to you. He loves you. Is your relationship with the Lord characterized by gritty & gutsy conversation or is it more one-dimensional (like a personal download)?

“Moses returns to Egypt and is now ready to carry out the task that God has specifically chosen for him. We expect a quick, cataclysmic end to Pharaoh’s destructive plan. But this is not what happens. In this section things get worse before they get better... things are clearly not working out as Moses anticipated.”

– Peter Enns

“At the center of the Psalmist’s response is a willingness to honestly pour out his heart to God, expressing to him exactly how he feels about apparent distances and injustice of life. Such lamenting is not the complaining of ancient Israel in the wilderness, because surrounding this complaint is the plea for God to act.”

– Mark Futato

“We dare not speak on God’s behalf to explain why He allowed these particular acts of evil to happen at this time to these persons and in this manner. Yet, at the same time, we dare not be silent when we should testify to the God of righteousness and love and justice who rules over all in omnipotence. Humility requires that we affirm all that the Bible teaches and go no further. There is much we do not understand.”

– Albert Mohler

***PRAISE TO JESUS-*** Praise the Lord who is your deliverer who has delivered you into an authentic relationship characterized by gritty and gutsy conversation. Praise the Lord who is your King who offers mercy and assurance to you in moments of blame and doubt. Praise the Lord who is your Father offering audience and freedom to speak at any and every moment. Praise Jesus who was always authentic with everyone including His Father in Heaven, and He obeyed; He bent His will to God’s so that through His blood, by His righteousness you can bend your will to the Lord as well.

***REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS-*** Today, listen to the message from Exodus 5, “The grace of God to us in Jesus Christ welcomes our authentic response to the hitches and hindrances in life yet we must always be prepared for His authentic response to our less than perfect moments of faith as we bend our lives to His lordship”. Confess and repent of occasions when you have not been authentic with the Lord. Confess and repent of the times when you have been authentic with the Lord, and He spoke clearly to what you needed to do and you didn’t bend your will to Him.

***CONSECRATION FOR JESUS-*** Today, embrace the grace of God to you in Jesus Christ and engage in authentic conversation with the Lord as you encounter hitches and hindrances, listen for His authentic response, and bend your life to His lordship.

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Talk with your children about how Pharaoh represents the sinful forces of evil in our world that seek to stop God's plan of redemption and deliverance. Ask your children what they find in today's passage that shows that Pharaoh is fighting against God's plan. Direct your children to verses 2 and 6-9. Also point out that Pharaoh's opposition to God flows from him not knowing God personally (verse 2).

2. Ask your children if the Israelites' situation got better or worse after Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh just as God commanded. Talk about how it got worse. Now ask them if this is what they thought would happen.

3. Ask your children how the Israelites reacted to Pharaoh making it more difficult for them to do their work. Talk with them about verses 20-21 and how the Israelites complained to Moses and how in verse 22 Moses complains to God.

4. Ask your children if they think that Pharaoh has stopped God's plan of deliverance. Ask them if that is even possible. Talk with them about what we learned about God's almighty power in God's self-revelation in Exodus 3-4. Talk about how knowing that God is Almighty, and His plans cannot be stopped is meant to give us peace and strength when things are not happening as we hoped they would in life. Make sure to talk about the assurance we are meant to get from Jesus' death and resurrection.

Scriptures for further study:

John 16:33

Romans 8:35-39

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Read Exodus 5:1-10. By what authority does Moses ask Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to go to worship their God? By what authority does Pharaoh make his decrees? What does Pharaoh's response to Moses' request reveal about Pharaoh's character?

2. When you obey God and things get harder, not better, how do you tend to react? What does this suggest about your affections?

3. In Exodus 5:15-22, the Israelites began to grumble after Pharaoh not only forbade them to leave, but also made their forced labor even harder. As we will see, such grumbling becomes a major theme of the entire book of Exodus and a characteristic of the people of Israel thereafter. If we are honest with ourselves, we too are prone to grumble in difficult situations. In what ways can our confidence in the Lord be revitalized through meditating on a passage such as this?

4. Think about who you fear when you fail. Think about who you're tempted to lie or exaggerate to in order to impress. Think about whose disapproval makes you feel crushed. That will indicate who you truly worship. Think about these things now---what do they indicate?

5. How does the Cross cause you to love Christ, and worship Him? How will you lift your eyes to the cross next time you are tempted to worship someone else and next time things get harder, not better?

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



## FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Pharaoh illustrates mankind in his sin and rebellion against God. Notice (in verse 2) that he declares both that he does not know the Lord and that he will not obey him. In our state of sin, and hardness of heart, we do not acknowledge God, nor do we desire to live for him. Not only is Pharaoh hard of heart, but he even doubles down on this hardness. This sad state of affairs is described in greater detail in Romans 1:18-25. If this is you, God calls you to repent. He desires that you trust in him and let him give you a completely new (softened) heart!

2. It must have taken incredible courage and faith for Moses to stand in front of the most powerful man on earth, and essentially ask him to give up his most treasured resource! We may never face anything quite this daunting in our lifetime, but when was the last time you stepped out in faith? When was the last time you actually had to trust God to give you the strength and courage to do what God asked of you? If so, reflect on the result.

3. Moses and Pharaoh are a picture of contrasts. One man thinks only of himself and cares little for the people under him. Moses is a reluctant leader, to be sure, but he ultimately spends his life serving, leading, and helping those under him. This is yet another ramification of the gospel. When God changes us and gives us a heart for him, along with that he also gives us a heart of love for others. How have you seen this dynamic play out in your own life or in the lives of others you have known?

4. When Moses and Aaron obeyed the Lord by going to Pharaoh, it initially ended up making things even worse for the Israelites, and the Israelite foremen were quick to express their anger at Moses and Aaron (verses 20-21). Sometimes it will be like this for us as well: doing the Lord's will may actually make things harder or more difficult for us. So, what encouragement do we need? First, just be prepared that obeying God's will does in fact make for hardships at times. The path of obedience is not always smooth. Second, trust in God's sovereign plan, even if it doesn't all make sense right now. Someone has said that faith is believing in advance what may only make sense in reverse.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 1:18-25