



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

September 18, 2022

DELIVERED TO BELIEF AND HOPE IN CHRIST

Exodus 6:2-13 ESV

God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’” Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. So the Lord said to Moses, “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” But Moses said to the Lord, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?” But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:15

Ephesians 4:22-24

Matthew 28:20

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Psalm 138:7

Romans 6:22

1 Peter 2:16

“Belonging to Christ involves repudiating an old life and embracing a new. The image is that of taking off frayed clothes and putting on a fresh set. We respond to God’s grace and seize upon this new life to make it our own. While the old form of existence in Adam was subject to corruption, the new one in Christ is continually being made new.”

The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible

BIG IDEA

May the Spirit empower us today to put off the old shackles of doubt and despair as we believe again in the Son who has brought down his mighty hand upon death and its destructive tentacles in order to free us to a life of joyful slavery to the glory of God.

OUTLINE

1. Doubt and Despair
2. The God of Angel Armies
3. Delivered from Slavery to Slavery

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

(“Ex. 5:1–7:7) Moses and Aaron: Initial Request. This section describes Moses’ and Aaron’s initial audience and request before Pharaoh (5:1–21) and the Lord’s promises and encouragement in light of the response (5:22–6:9; 7:1–7). It also includes a genealogy of Moses and Aaron that records their particular antecedents in light of the roles that they will fill when Israel is brought out of Egypt (6:10–30).”

- ESV Study Bible

What does “God almighty” literally mean?

The Hebrew word translated here as “God almighty” literally means God of the mountain. You see there was a belief in the ancient near eastern culture that the gods dwelled on top of mountains. That belief eventually infiltrated Greek culture, which is why the Greeks believed the gods dwelled on top of Mount Olympus.

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 animal has “tentacles”? What purpose do the tentacles serve? How does the animal use the tentacles to accomplish its purposes? In what way can death have tentacles?

2. What did “harsh” mean to the Israelites? What did it look like for the Israelites and Moses to be “broken”? What does your doubt and despair look like? Is there someone in your life who is in a season of doubt and despair? What gospel hope does Jesus offer those suffering under a “harsh” yoke?

3. How did God’s revelation of himself to Abraham and Isaac differ from his self-revelation to Moses and the people of Israel? Why is this specific revelation so important to Moses and to the Israelites at this moment in their history? The phrase “I am the Lord...God Almighty” means that “God in his passion comes to fight for His people to deliver them from Egypt. Can you recall a time in your life when you saw God fight for you? (Romans 6:9-14, Ephesians 1:15-23). Do you need to remember a time of God’s faithfulness and provision in this moment in your life? Is there someone whose faith’s you can bolster by coming along side of them and looking to the God of Heaven’s Armies?

4. How does the rule and reign of Pharaoh differ from God’s lordship? What is the picture of freedom which God had in mind for the Israelites? What is the societal definition of freedom? What are the benefits of the freedom society is envisioning? What is the reality of that freedom? What benefits does freedom in Christ afford? How are these benefits enjoyed to the fullest?

“This is a military metaphor, referring to God as a Warrior. I believe that this intended to reveal to Moses and to Israel that the ‘God of the Mountain’ is now going to come down and fight on behalf of his people.”

-Richard Pratt

““The book of Exodus is not about liberation in general or about political and religious freedom in particular, but about the deliverance from bad servitude to good servitude. The Israelites served Pharaoh but were called by God to serve him instead.”

- Daniel Stuart

“We are never free.
Everybody in the
world is either a slave
to sin and Satan or
else a slave to Christ.”
– Martin Lloyd-Jones

“One of the greatest
rewards that we ever
receive for serving
God is the permission
to continue serving
Him for eternity.”
– Charles Spurgeon

PRAISE TO JESUS- Today praise the One who continues to be an ever-present King who is with you in your battles fighting with you and fighting for you.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Today confess and repent for the many times that when you, like the Hebrew people, have allowed your circumstances to overshadow God’s promises and passion to you in Jesus.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- Rededicate ourselves to the incredible privilege of being a slave to Christ and the great freedom and joy that brings to our lives both now and throughout eternity.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Remind your children of what happened at the end of Exodus 5. Read Exodus 5:22 and talk with them about how Moses expressed frustration and doubts to God about His plan of deliverance since it was not going well thus far. Talk about a time in your life when things were not going well and talk about how you reacted.

2. Ask your children what we learn about God in verses 2-5. Make sure to talk with them about how God is a God who keeps His covenant promises with His people. If they don't know what the word faithfulness means, then talk with them about what that means. Ask them if God remains faithful today. Make sure to talk about how God never changes and still keeps His promises.

3. Ask your children what God promises to do in verses 6-8. Talk with them about how God will not only save His people from their slavery in Egypt but will also have a special relationship with the Israelites as His people and will give them the Promised Land.

a. Ask your children from what God saves us and to what He saves us.

Make sure to talk about how we are saved from our slavery to sin and saved to a special relationship to God as His adopted children. We are also promised to be with God forever in the new heavens and new earth after Jesus returns.

4. Ask your children how the Israelites responded in verse 9 to Moses' good news from God. Make sure to point out to your children that the suffering of the Israelites led them to not hear the good news that Moses announced. Talk with them about how that could happen to us when we face struggles. Take time to pray for your family to be guided by the Holy Spirit to see God's plan for them and to feel His constant presence with them.

Scriptures for further study:

1 John 1:8-9

1 Thessalonians 5:24,

John 8:31-36

FOR STUDENTS

1. What do we lose if we think only about what God has redeemed us from, and never remember what he has redeemed us for?

2. Do you ever find yourself thinking, in effect, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?” When, and with what consequences?

3. Look at the following verses: Nehemiah 1:10, Psalm 107:2, Isaiah 62:12, Jeremiah 31:11. What word is common to them? How are God’s people characterized in the Bible?

4. What reason did God give for hardening Pharaoh’s heart?

5. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would resist the request of Moses and Aaron. What were they to do to prove their authority?

6. In what ways do people resist God and His authority today?

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

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Moses struggles with the initial results of following God's plan: it is causing trouble for the people, there has been no deliverance or rescue, and Moses has become the bad guy. This causes Moses to raise some honest questions to the Lord. But this passage, along with many others (particularly the Psalms), would encourage us to go ahead and ask those questions. There is no hint here that God is upset with Moses for raising these concerns. While God is holy, he is also someone we can approach with our questions, doubts, and feelings. You have permission to ask your heartfelt, honest questions.

2. Note that God's basic answer to Moses' questions is the reminder that "I am the Lord" (a phrase that is repeated several times). God wants us to frame our questions in the context of who he is and what he like. Notice some of the ways God describes himself. He is faithful to his long-standing covenant, he is strong, he is a personal God, he is a compassionate God who hears our groaning, and he is the God who promises to bless us. How would reminding yourself of these qualities of God help you reshape the way you are looking at your current struggles and circumstances?

3. God's second answer to Moses is to remind him of all the things God will do. Some have called these statements the 7 "I wills" of redemption: I will bring you out, I will rescue you from bondage, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, I will take you as my people, I will be your God, I will bring you into the land which I swore to give, and I will give it to you as a heritage. We also should consider how the extravagant promises of God far outweigh our current struggles. (See also 2 Corinthians 4:17).

4. Whereas before, God had not fully revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now he has revealed himself as "the Lord." (6:2-3) He also states that "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God." In the same way, God wants us to know him personally and deeply, and to be the God who takes you as his own. This he has done supremely by revealing himself personally through his Son, Jesus Christ, and taking you (adopting you) as his own. Do you desire such a close and personal relationship with him?