



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 25, 2022

I AM THE LORD

Exodus 6:28-7:13

On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the Lord said to Moses, "I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." But Moses said to the Lord, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"

Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

And the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them." Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 95

Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Exodus 5:2, 7:17,

8:10 & 22, 14:4, 18

BIG IDEA

God alone is Lord, and he calls upon us first to believe in him, and second, to live out our calling to serve him and represent him to others.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

2. No Contest

3. Called to Salvation

4. Called to Serve

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"What's Happening Here? After Moses's worst fears are realized, God reassures him (in language that sounds strangely familiar) that things will work out and the second audience with Pharaoh will turn out differently. The writer inserts a genealogy into this scene; this might be a bit of a buzz kill for us, but for him, it provides crucial information for what is to come.

A Needed Pep Talk Let's cut to the chase. This entire section, Exodus 6:2–7:13, reads like a repeat of 3:1–6:1. In both sections: God reveals the divine name Yahweh to Moses (6:2, see 3:13–15); God announces that God has heard Israel's misery (6:5, see 3:7–9), and tells Moses what he is to say to the Israelites (6:6–8; see most of 3:13–4:17) and to Pharaoh (6:11, 6:28–7:2; see 3:18, 4:22); Moses complains that he is a "poor speaker" (6:12, 30; see 4:10); Aaron will be Moses's mouthpiece (7:1–2; see 4:14–16)."

- Pete Enns, Exodus for Normal People

Resource:

Enns, Peter. Exodus for Normal People: A Guide to the Story—and History—of the Second Book of the Bible (The Bible for Normal People) (p. 59). The Bible for Normal People. Kindle Edition.

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. Was there ever a time when you didn't know God existed? The phrase “In God We Trust”, was adopted as our nation's motto in 1956. We know that God of the Bible is the “God” referenced in our motto. But what if you had just moved to the US and had never heard about gods much less a God. If a Christian were to explain to you who God is how might you respond to that?

2. What is the difference between the snake which was created from Aaron's staff and the snake which the Egyptian magicians created? What did God want to make clear to Pharaoh and to the Israelites by this demonstration. What can you learn about God's character from this narrative (refer to Psalm 24:1)?

3. If Exodus 7:3-5 sounds familiar that's because the narrative between God, Moses and Aaron was first introduced in Exodus 4:21. What is the reason that Pharaoh's heart is hard (Exodus 7:5)? Did Israel “deserve” mercy and deliverance from God? What made the Israelites different than the Egyptians? Do you deserve mercy and deliverance from God? How can this understanding fortify your conviction of God's saving work in your life (Romans 9:14-23)?

4. Was there ever a project that not only didn't go as planned it was a disaster? How did this effect your confidence? According to the ESV Study Bible, Exodus 6:10 – 7:7 is the “recommissioning” of Moses. Moses argues that his failure as a deliverer is the result of “uncircumcised lips”. God reminds Moses again that He will be his lips as Moses speaks “all that I command”. Despite his failure and repeated excuses God sends Moses back the work He had given him to do. And God assures Moses that He will be with him. How can this help you move towards doubts and failures?

PRAISE TO JESUS- Our God is the Lord! “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the sea and established it upon the rivers.” (ESV) Psalm 24:1. Today praise the Lord that his is a covenant keeping God. Praise him because he is faithful to his promises and to his faithless, and doubtful people.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Repent of the times that you have let your doubts and failures cause you to turn in on yourself away from God. Repent of the ways that you have let present circumstances cause you to fear and or back away from what God has called you to do. (Refer to Romans 8 for assurance of pardon).

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- You have been united to Christ, his work of grace in your life is assured (redemption). Christ has secured the eternal love of the heavenly Father for you (relationship). You will be brought to heaven, in spite of all your sin and failure (rest). (Adapted from ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible). Walk in the redemption, relationship, and rest purchased for you by the blood of Jesus Christ and declare his love in the places where he has given you to work.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. An important phrase in this passage and throughout the book of Exodus is that God wants everyone to “know that I am the LORD” (Exodus 7:6). Ask your children what that means. You will want to make sure that your children understand that He is LORD because He is almighty and in control of all things. You will also want to point out that LORD (with all capital letters) is God’s special covenant name (see Exodus 3:14-15). Therefore, God wants us to know that He is in control and keeps His covenant promises.

a. Ask your children how knowing that God is the LORD brings us peace and joy.

2. From Exodus 7:8-12, ask your children how we learn that God is more powerful than all things.

3. Another important phrase in this passage and in Exodus is a “hard heart”. Ask your children if they know what that means.

a. An activity to teach this would be without your children knowing to get some rocks and put them in a bag. Then take another bag and put in cotton balls. Then have your children close their eyes and put their hands in each bag and try to guess what is in each bag. Explain to your children that our hearts are either hard and rebellious against God or our hearts are soft and loving to God. Sin hardens our heart to God and therefore we need Jesus through the Holy Spirit to soften our sinful hearts. Pray for that for your family.

Scriptures for further study:

Philippians 2:5-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 3:14-21

FOR STUDENTS

1. Do you ever find yourself thinking, in effect, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him”? When, and with what consequences?
2. Pharaoh is a case study in sin’s deceit. Do you recognize the same deceit working in your life in some way? Do you need to get help, and what steps will you take to get it?
3. Why is “Who is your God?” the most important question you (or anyone) will ever answer?
4. What serves some people as “gods” today?
5. Which gods are you most tempted to worship instead of the one, true God?

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

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Pharaoh sees himself as divine. While this may be somewhat extreme, this is essentially the posture all of us take when we are sinners: thinking ourselves to be “like God” (Genesis 3:5), calling our own shots, asserting our own self-importance, living for ourselves. Be honest, and ask yourself if God alone is really your Lord, or whether you are usurping that role for yourself?

2. God calls us not to harden our hearts (as Pharaoh did) but to believe in him and ask him for a totally new and softened heart instead. Would you submit your heart (which is to say your whole life!) to him today?

3. God is not only Savior of our hearts, but Lord of our lives, who calls us to offer ourselves totally to his service. As a new believer, in what ways do you think God is calling you to serve him? What are some ways God has uniquely called and gifted you to do so?

4. As a Christian, we represent Christ to others. While we must ask God to help us with this (because we ourselves are inadequate), nonetheless, who are some people in your life that you are pointing to Christ? Are they seeing Christ in you?