



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

October 2, 2022

DELIVERED TO GOSPEL SATISFACTION

Exodus 7:14-25

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.”’” And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Scriptures for further study:

Genesis 6:5

Deuteronomy 6:5

1 Samuel 16:7

Matthew 5:8

Proverbs 4:23

Matthew 28:16-17

John 6:35

Matthew 6:21

“Every aspect of life in Egypt depended on the river – the Nile provided food and resources, land for agriculture, a means of travel, and was critical in the transportation of materials for building projects and other large-scale endeavors.

It was a critical lifeline that literally brought life to the desert.”

–Lisa Haney

BIG IDEA

If today you find your heart devastated or disappointed by things you thought had power to bring life and peace but failed, good! It's really the LORD crippling false gods by His sovereign power in order to magnify the soul satisfying redemption of His Son.

OUTLINE

1. Heart Problems
2. Idol Destruction
3. Soul Satisfaction

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“The first plague, water turned into blood, serves as a pattern for many of the rest: “the LORD said to Moses” is followed by a description of the plague; the plague happens; Moses interacts with Pharaoh; and we are given commentary on the state of Pharaoh’s heart. So here: the Lord speaks to Moses (v. 14); the plague is described (vv. 15–19); the plague happens (vv. 20–21); there is interaction with Pharaoh (v. 22a); and commentary on Pharaoh’s heart follows (vv. 22b–24). Note again God’s purpose in these plagues: “By this you shall know that I am the LORD” (v. 17). God gains a name for himself as the sovereign King glorified in judgment and salvation.”

–ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

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. During the recent gas price hike, did you find yourself pulling into a gas station because of the price of gas listed on their sign, only to find the cost per gallon was the cash price or the price for special customers? Or have you ever waited and waited to purchase because you wanted to be sure it would do all the things you wanted it to do, and still when you got it, it underperformed or even didn't work? In moments of unmet hope or unfulfilled expectation what is going on in your heart?

2. What is the primary way you can guard your heart (refer to the Scriptures for additional study)? And how does that relate to Exodus 7?

3. Are you in a place where you are currently suffering devastation or destruction in some aspect of your life? How might God be using this moment or season to draw your heart to a place where it is more satisfied in who God is and what He is doing?

4. Was there a time when you had to rely on someone else? How did that feel? What aspect of your self-sufficiency are you unwilling to relinquish? Is God kindly deconstructing your sense of self-satisfaction? How are you responding to this invitation to leave the desert of self-sufficiency in exchange for a heart which is full and satisfied in Christ alone?

“There is no book in the world in which the heart is so prominent as Holy Scripture; in the Bible intellect and will are decidedly in the background, whereas the heart is in the foreground... all the essential actions, thoughts, and function which constitute life come forth out of the heart, which for that reason is to be guarded with all diligence, as the source and center of life.”

-Herman Bavink

“The human heart is a perpetual idol factory.”

- John Calvin

“What we have in the plagues is divinely instituted and controlled events that were so structured as to display conclusively that the Lord is in control of all the forces of the world he has created...the plagues ultimately expose the emptiness of Egypt...these words were written for succeeding generations of Israelites...in many of the plagues we see deities being challenged, and in the final devastating blow the impotence of them all is revealed...what is at stake is recognition of the power and supremacy of the LORD...Egypt was very attractive...these plagues were needed to induce God’s people of His greatness and glory and thus to leave Egypt behind.”

– John Mackay

PRAISE TO JESUS- Praise Jesus who is your deliverer for showing you through destruction, brokenness, and emptiness the illusion of the Egypt(s) in your life so that you can leave the deserts of idolatry for a mountain of heart and soul satisfaction.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Confess and repent of the sinful ways that you handled dissatisfaction, destruction, loss, and emptiness in the past because you failed to see the loving and purposeful discipline of God.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- From John 4:34 we read, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” Christ’s satisfaction in His Father is yours through his blood, given to you. Jesus Christ has delivered you from Egypt to a place where your heart believes more in the supremacy of His might, provision, and relationship! Today and everyday embrace Christ’s satisfaction which comes through worshipping Him alone.

“Nothing makes God more supreme and more central than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing – not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends – is going to bring satisfaction to their aching hearts besides God. This conviction breeds a people who passionately long for God on Sunday morning. They are not confused about why they are here. They do not see songs and prayers and sermons as mere traditions or mere duties. They see them as means of getting to God or God getting to them for more of His fullness.”

– John Piper

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. We have reached the part in the Exodus story when the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh has begun with the first of the ten plagues. Remind your children that God's purpose in these plagues is to show Himself as the All-powerful One and the Deliverer of His people. A key verse to point out to your children is verse 17 where the Lord says "By this you shall know that I am the LORD". The plagues that God brings were meant to show that He alone is God.

2. Ask your children how they would feel if they were swimming in the lake or ocean and suddenly the water turned into blood and the smell of dead fish was everywhere. Give them a chance to wrestle with how startling and scary this had to be for the Egyptians.

3. Ask your children if they remember the different places where God turned the water into blood. See how many places they remember before directing them to look for the answers in verse 19.

a. Ask your children why they think God turned water into blood in so many places, especially in the vessels/bowls of wood and vessels/jars of stone. Talk about how God's purpose for the plagues was to make sure all knew that He was the LORD Almighty. Therefore, He wanted all to know that this plague was a miracle and not a trick such as dumping reed dye in the Nile River.

4. Ask your children what Pharaoh's response was to this plague and ask them why they think he had this reaction based on verse 22. Talk with them about how the Egyptian magicians used "secret arts" or trickery and that convinced Pharaoh to keep his heart hardened against the LORD and the Hebrews.

a. If you have older children, then ask them why they think some people respond positively and others don't to God's Word. Talk with them about how our sinful hearts work against us, so we need God the Holy Spirit to help us believe and to help us grow in our faith.

b. Take time to pray for your family to have open hearts by the Spirit to God's Word.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 1:25

Mark 4:1-9

Mark 4:13-20

John 3:3

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. While it is hard for us to understand as well as to accept, the Bible makes clear that Pharaoh hardened his heart and also that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. What are the implications in this for us in regard to how we respond when we hear God’s Word?
3. “Before our God, all other gods are powerless, all pretenders are defeated, all blasphemers are silenced.” How will you live in light of this truth today?
4. Many people have a hard time with Old Testament stories in which they think God appears vengeful and unyielding. Do you think that is the case in his dealings with Egypt? Does this God seem different to you from the God who became flesh in Jesus Christ? Why or why not?
5. Many people like the idea of a God who saves but are uncomfortable with a God who judges. Yet the reality is that God saves through judgement. What do you think the phrase “salvation through judgement” means, and where are some places you see this pattern in Scripture?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from *The Lamb of God* by Nancy Guthrie and *Exodus for You* by Tim Chester

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. I once heard a famous Christian apologist ask his skeptical audience: even if I did manage to persuade you through many convincing proofs that God exists, would you believe in him even then? His point, I think, is that it is not a matter of whether God has made himself believable, but rather that our hearts refuse to believe. It's not that we just can't believe, it's that we just won't believe. And Pharaoh "did not take even this to heart." (v.23) What about you? Do you believe in God, and would you give your life to him? If not, what is the true reason you do not yield?

2 One of God's purposes in rescuing the Hebrew people was to demonstrate his covenant faithfulness and steadfast love. But later (in Exodus 9:16), we also learn that God's purpose was that he might show his power and that his name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Certainly, as we think about our own salvation, we remember that God rescued us out of love for us. But first and foremost, we must remember that he did so for the sake of his own great name and glory. Meditate on this truth: that what God does he does primarily for his glory; but what he does for his glory also works out for our own good!

3. Repeatedly God declares that he will bring Israel out of Egypt so that they may worship God in the desert. (7:16) It is not just that God wants to deliver them from slavery in Egypt; he also desires to deliver them to a life of worship. As you reflect on your own salvation, consider not only what he has saved you from, but what he has saved you to, and what he has saved you for! Ultimately, he has set you free to worship and glorify him.