



*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 23, 2022**

## **Exodus 14:5-31 ESV**

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baalzephon.

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 2:1-3

Ephesians 2:12

Romans 3:9-18

Psalm 46

Matthew 12:15-18

“Accordingly, when they actually saw the Egyptian chariotry coming at them and realized their helpless position (from a human point of view) as a poorly armed, untrained, unprepared army encamped with its back to the sea, they panicked...they thought the Egyptians were coming to kill them and did not believe God would rescue them.”

-Daniel Stuart

**BIG IDEA:** Because of the Father’s tender and tenacious love for His people, there will never be a moment in life where He is not fighting relentlessly for you as He turns dead ends into defining moments of His redemption in Jesus Christ.

## **OUTLINE**

1. Dead Ends

2. Divine Salvation

3. Greater Deliverance

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

“With statements that echo his words to Moses before the plagues, the Lord indicates that the coming events are governed by his power and purposes. Although the Lord tells Moses that he will get glory over Pharaoh, he does not tell him just how Israel will be delivered. Between the time of the plagues in Egypt and the journey to Sinai the events at the Red Sea show Moses as a maturing leader who trusts the word of the Lord as they also illustrate Israel’s need to do the same.”

-ESV 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. It appeared to the world when Vladimir Putin declared war on the Ukraine that they were at a dead end. It was a defining moment for Ukraine when they fought back against a world power like Russia. Spend some time recalling defining moments in your life.

2. Read Exodus 14:5-12. What words or phrases describe the perspective of the Israelites? How do you respond when your circumstances seem dire? What was the Israelites greatest “want” in their moment of fear? What was their greater “need”?

3. What was the Lord’s response to the Israelite’s “dead end”? Was there anything that Israelites could do to save themselves apart from God? What are the parallels between the need of the Israelites and the need of humanity today?

4. Is the takeaway from the message, “When you hit a dead end, ‘The Lord will fight for you...you have only to be silent’, and He will deliver you from the difficult circumstances?” Read Exodus 14:26-31. What has God accomplished through Jesus Christ who provides the pathway through hard circumstances and can turn dead ends into defining moments for you every time?

“We have missed the theological point of the story if we reduce its grand message to a number of moral lessons, such as ‘Be faithful in a tight fix, or, Don’t fear tough times, just be still and let God take care of you.’ Of course, these are good things to remember. But the Exodus story is not a pep talk to teach us that God will win our battles for us. Rather, it is an exclamation point to remind us that God has won the battle. All of our daily battles, which are real and matter to God, should be seen in this overarching context. This sort of theological grasp will keep us from calling any bad-hair day our personal Egypt and any person we don’t like our Pharaoh. The fact of the matter is that whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we must remember not that we are awaiting God’s deliverance, but that deliverance has already come, in Jesus Christ!”

–Peter Enns

“You are far worse than you realize.”

– Tim Keller

“When used of God, the word frequently emphasizes God’s acts in the sphere of history. These contexts stress one of the most basic concepts of OT theology, i.e. that God is not only transcendent, but he is also immanent in history, effecting his sovereign purpose.”

– Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

“Grace is the free, undeserved goodness and favor of God to mankind.”

–Matthew Henry

“God’s people were to remain in their places in silence, neither giving way to fear nor uttering battle cries, as they observed what the Lord would do for them. This is also the pattern for the ultimate deliverance God gives in Jesus Christ.”

- John Mackay

“Because the Israelites were still within the boundaries of Egypt throughout the time of these encampments there was ample opportunity for observation of their travels and activities by Egyptians in the vicinity. The Egyptians had a powerful and well-organized military with responsibility for keeping abreast of any activity on the nation’s borders, and it is hard to imagine that reports would not have been promptly sent to Pharaoh himself. All this constituted a divine ruse not to trap the Israelites by Pharaoh and his army.”

- Daniel Stuart

**PRAISE TO JESUS-** Today, praise God for your salvation through Jesus Christ. Praise God for His work on your behalf today which has secured everything you need to press through every dead end. Praise God for His Servant Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father and who is praying for you all the time.

**REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS-** Repent today of the ways that you have let a dead end or setback be the end and cause you to respond in fear. Repent of the times when you have failed to see the Father’s tender and tenacious love for you in the midst of a dead end.

**CONSECRATION FOR JESUS-** Consecrate yourself today to receive the tender love of God for you and live each moment of your life trusting in the work of God through His servant Jesus who is relentlessly fighting for you. He will turn dead ends into defining moments of redemption in Jesus Christ

“Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Everyone lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid hell, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.”

- Jonathan Edwards

“It is grace at the beginning, and grace at the end. So that when you and I come to lie upon our death beds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us there is the thing that helped us in the beginning. Not what we have been, not what we have done, but the Grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with grace. Grace wondrous grace. By the grace of God I am what I am. Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.”

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Remind your children of the Lord guiding the Israelites by the pillar of cloud in the day and the pillar of fire by night in last week's reading and this week's (Exodus 13:21-22 and 14:19-20). His presence was meant to comfort them and give them courage.

Read Exodus 14:10-13 and ask your children how the Israelites reacted to seeing the Egyptian army pursuing and trapping them next to the Red Sea. Talk about how they doubted and were scared.

2. Ask your children how Moses responded to the Israelites doubt and fear in Exodus 14:13-14. Talk about how Moses told them how God would save and fight for them.

3. Ask your children if they know what a miracle is. Talk about how it is something only God can do because He is Almighty. If your children are older, then teach them about the word "supernatural".

- a. Ask your children what miracle God performed through Moses that allowed the Israelites to escape. Talk about how He parted the Red Sea and allowed the Israelites to walk to the other side.
- b. Ask your children to look at Exodus 14:22 and 29 and point out that the Israelites walked on dry ground in the midst of the Red Sea. Ask them how they would feel if they were the Israelites. If you have ever been to an aquarium as a family such as in Atlanta or Chattanooga, then talk about how you can see the fish and wonder with your children if the Israelites could see fish in the Red Sea.

4. Read verse 31 and ask them what the Israelites saw that day and how they reacted. Make sure to talk about how they saw the "great power of God" and how they "feared the LORD". Tell them about how fearing the LORD means that we have an awe and reverence for Him, which leads us to worship Him. The fear of the LORD is not a terror such we get from a ghost story.

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 28:20

Romans 8:31

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Why is it good that God acts for the sake of His name, rather than in response to our merit?
2. What, according to Exodus 14:13-14, is God's part and the Israelites' part in the victory over the Egyptians that they will experience at the Red Sea?
3. How do you see the theme of salvation through judgement continuing to show up in this chapter and previous ones?
4. Hebrews 11:29 refers to the faith of Moses in connection with the crossing of the Red Sea. What other incidents in the life of Moses are referred to in Hebrews 11? How does faith help us in difficult circumstances?
5. How did imagining the walls of water collapsing in, and seeing that this is what Jesus stepped into at the cross, make you feel about him?

\*\*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. Once again, this episode illustrates the power and beauty of the gospel. If the Passover was a picture of the cross of Calvary, then the crossing of the Red Sea is a picture of Easter. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we too receive new life, and we are born again. Even the idea of the Israelites walking through water could be a picture of our Christian baptism which signifies our washing and cleansing of sin through Christ.

2. With the Egyptians coming at them from behind, and the Red Sea right in front of them, the Israelites feel stuck, and they become afraid. But Moses encourages them to “stand firm” (verse 13), and assures them, “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (verse 14). What a great reminder of how the gospel works. We cannot do anything to rescue ourselves. God does all the saving for us; He fights for us. Our only job is to “be still” and trust in God’s mighty work of grace to save us.

3. As a new believer, just anticipate that there will be times when following God is difficult or costly. We need to be cautioned. Notice here that the Israelites even decided that it would have been better to remain in slavery in Egypt than to follow God’s plan for their lives. And that may become our own temptation as well. But this is a distortion of perspective. Your life before Christ was a life of slavery and it is never desirable to return to that. Even though following God’s will may be challenging at times, trusting and obeying God is the only way to go, and it is the only way to experience abundant life. Make sure to be in regular fellowship with other believers in the church, who will encourage you in your struggles and help you to keep trusting in God.