



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

November 6, 2022

FROM GRUMBLING TO GRATITUDE

Exodus 16:1-36 NIV

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’S hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt and in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.” Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD for he has heard your grumbling.’” While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. The LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’” That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’” The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed. Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.” However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’” So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.” Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” So the people rested on the seventh day. The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’” So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.” As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan. (An omer is one-tenth of an ephah.)

Scriptures for further study:

Philippians 4:4

Psalms 78:17-18, 30

Deuteronomy 8:3

Matthew 8:4

John 6:26-27

BIG IDEA: We move from grumbling to gratitude when we understand how much God graciously gives.

OUTLINE

1. Growing in Understanding(Exodus 16:8,12)

2. Grumbling

A. Grumbling ____ our thinking (Exodus 16:3)

B. Grumbling distorts_____ (Exodus 16:3)

C. Grumbling is _____ (Exodus 16:8)

D. Grumbling has_____

E. Grumbling requires_____

3. Gratitude (Exodus 16:4; Psalm 107)

4. God Graciously Gives

A. T_____

B. T_____ (Exodus 16:21ff)

C. T_____ (Exodus 16:4)

D. T_____ (John 6)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“The Israelites camped by the springs of Elim for several weeks, lingering under the palm trees and taking long drinks of cool water. Then it was time to move on. They were on a spiritual journey, a journey that reveals the pattern of the Christian life. Although there are times of refreshing, usually they do not last for long. Soon it is time to head back into the desert — the place of testing and spiritual growth.

"The word 'grumbling' hardly does the Israelites justice. The Hebrew word was 'not designed to express a disgruntled complaint. Quite the contrary, it describe[d] an open rebellion.' When the people murmured against Moses, it was mutiny against Almighty God. They were repudiating their relationship with him. In fact, they wished that they were dead (Exod. 16:3). The way they figured, if they were going to die anyway, it would have been better to die back in Egypt. Starving in the desert was a fate worse than death. In effect, they were saying that they wished they had never been saved."

-Philip Graham Ryken

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 does it mean to “grumble”? If grumbling is a symptom of a disease, what is the disease? What is gratitude? How can gratitude be a treatment for grumbling? Is gratitude the treatment or the cure?
2. Most stories have an epic hero and a whiner. The best stories are those where the whiner becomes the epic hero. Can you think of characters from television or movies who are famous for whining? How do you respond to those characters? Are you sympathetic or intolerant? What circumstances bring out the whiner in you?
3. How did God respond to the grumbling of the Israelites? Did God provide for the Israelites because they complained? What was the Lord’s reason for providing for the Israelites (vs. 9-10)? In what ways might the Lord be using your circumstances to show you the reality of His character?
4. The manna was provision from God for His people, but it was also meant to serve as an essential lesson to the people (Deuteronomy 8:3). What was the lesson? Jesus quoted the words from Deuteronomy 8:3 in John 6. How was the manna a sign pointing to Jesus? In light of this lesson, how might this be a reason for gratitude?

PRAISE TO JESUS- Praise God that He often gives despite grumbling for his glory and our good. Praise Jesus for the ways that He has provided for you. Praise Jesus that He does not hold your grumbling against you. Praise God for the provision of your Savior who took the blame for your grumbling and suffered the penalty of death so that His contentment in His Father can be yours.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Repent today for grumbling against God. Repent for allowing your circumstances to blur your ability to see God's plan and provision for you in those moments. Repent for judging or being harsh toward someone who was grumbling in a hardship. Repent of the times when you weren't grateful for the Lord's gifts to you.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- Remember the promises of God and be grateful. Commit to pausing and praying before responding to a circumstance with grumbling. Rededicate your heart and mind to maintaining a posture of gratitude.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Ask your children what the Israelites complained about in today's passage. Make sure they look at verses 2-3. The Israelites complained because they were hungry and didn't have any food to eat.

- a. Ask your children to imagine if you all go on vacation, but when you arrive all the restaurants and grocery stores are closed, which means that you don't have any food. Ask them how they would feel and how they would react.
- b. Ask your children what the Israelites could have done instead of complaining and grumbling. Make sure to talk with them about how they could've asked God for food since He already miraculously saved them from the Egyptians by parting the Red Sea.

2. Ask your children if they know what mercy means. You will want to talk with them about how mercy is not getting the punishment that you deserve.

- a. Ask them to read verses 6-9 and ask them to tell you who the Israelites sinned against when they complained.
- b. Instead of getting punished for their sin of complaining, God shows them mercy. Ask them how God was merciful to the Israelites. Talk with them about how God did not punish the Israelites and He gave them food.

3. Ask your children what the Israelites called the bread that God sent from heaven. Make sure they read verse 31 to see that the Israelites called the bread manna.

- a. Ask them how much manna God instructed the Israelites to gather each day and ask them what would happen to the extra manna if they gathered too much. Make sure to talk about how God provided enough manna for one day and that if any extra manna was collected to save for future days, then it would spoil.

4. Ask your children if they know what the Sabbath is and what did God did and did not want His people to do on the Sabbath. Then ask them how God honored the Sabbath in how He gave the manna to the Israelites. You will want to talk with them about how God allowed the Israelites to gather twice as much manna the day before the Sabbath.

Scriptures for further study:

John 6:31-40

Matthew 6:9-13

Deuteronomy 8:3

FOR STUDENTS

1. How do you need to learn the lesson of the manna?
2. Read John 6:1-13, 22-59. What further purpose can we see in Israel's history for the provision of manna, which comes to light in this passage?
3. Compare Exodus 16:4 with Deuteronomy 8: 3. What does this reveal about God's purpose for feeding his people with manna for forty years?
4. When do you grumble, and why? What does it say about your view of, and faith in, God? How seriously do you take it?
5. Are you able to rest? What does this suggest about your view of, and faith in, God? What will help you to rest well?

**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. A great professor, author, and apologist named C. S. Lewis once made the analogy that if our stomach feels hunger pains, this is because there is something out there that is supposed to go in it, namely food. Likewise, if our heart feels hunger pains, it suggests that there is something “out there” that is supposed to fill it. And that something is God. He is what your heart has always hungered and longed for.

2. When you become a believer, you may, like the Israelites here, be tempted to want to go back to your former ways, thinking it to be preferable. But our old ways were nothing but slavery and bondage. Know and believe that you have now been set free to a new and better life in Jesus Christ.

3. The manna here in our story is a picture of the true manna, or “bread,” that is Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed this about himself in John’s Gospel, chapter 6. Read this passage for yourself. Note the ways in which the “bread” Jesus offers is superior to manna (see especially verses 35, 49-51, 58). [See also John 4:13-14 in which Jesus also talks about living “water” as representing Himself and the eternal life he offers.]

4. The Israelites still have a lot to learn about God as a faithful provider. But one of the things that distinguishes a believer from a non-believer, is learning to trust God to provide (see Matthew 6:31-33). What are some areas of your life where you need to ask God to show you how to trust Him more?

5. One lesson God wants to teach the Israelites early on is how to observe the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest. Why do you think this would be a vital spiritual practice for you to learn early on?

Scriptures for further study:

John 6:35

John 6: 49-51

John 6:58

John 4:13-14

Matt.6:31-33