



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 13, 2022

DELIVERED TO FAITH SOLUTIONS

Exodus 17:1-7 ESV

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:32

Ephesians 1:3

Mark 5:36

“Most men would rather deny a hard truth than face it.”
- George Martin

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

BIG IDEA: If the Father struck His own Son so that every spiritual blessing might flood your heart, then today's seemingly impossible pathway forward is an opportunity by grace to walk in the Spirit knowing He was ready with faith solutions long before the problem ever arose.

OUTLINE

1. The Hardening of the Heart
2. God's Gloriously Graceful Heart
3. The Heart that Believes

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Rephidim means “resting place.” As resting places go, it was a major disappointment. However, by now the Israelites ought to have known how to handle this kind of situation. They should have gathered for prayer and then waited for God to provide. Instead they did what they usually did, which was to complain. It was so dry and hot that they were afraid of dying by dehydration. “So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink’” (v. 2a).”
-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. Have you ever been in an Escape Room where you couldn’t find the solution to get out or been trapped inside a broken elevator or stuck on a runway in an airplane that had mechanical difficulties? What did that feel like? How did you respond? What did deliverance look like?
2. Read Exodus 7:1-3, 7. Imagine a Family Feud category, “Things a good friend needs to tell their friend that they will refuse to believe.” What are some truths that you might struggle to hear? About what reality were the Israelites in denial?
3. Read Exodus 17:4-6. Is there something specifically that you did at work, or to a friend or family member that you deserved a severe consequence for, but you received grace instead? Who are the people in your life who deserve punishment, but God is calling you to be a vessel of grace towards them instead?
4. Read Exodus 17:2, 6. How do people tend to respond when circumstances seem overwhelming or impossible? Is there someone you know who is stuck in what seems to be an impossible situation? What are their fears? What hope or help might faith in God bring? What will you do the next time a seemingly impossible situation arises in your life?

“The people’s stance is unbelievable! They had been given their freedom...their needs miraculously and abundantly met – yet they ask, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ This was an Egyptian-like (or should we say Pharaonic) stance of refusing to admit the obvious in spite of overwhelming and repeated testimony.”

-John Mackay

“Each of us may be sure that if God sends us on stony paths He will provide us with strong shoes, and He will not send us out on any journey for which He does not equip us well.”

-Alexander MacLaren

“God’s grace is His active favor bestowing the greatest gifts upon those who have deserved the greatest punishment.”

- William Hendrickson

PRAISE TO JESUS- Reflect on Ephesians 1:3. Praise Jesus Christ who is the son of God. He is the bright morning star, the pearl of great price, the rose of Sharon. He, along with the Father and the Spirit, are the most beautiful and glorious things in all of creation. Praise Christ, that though he was betrayed, maligned, spat upon, despised, humiliated, beaten and killed, He did not take up a stick to make a people bleed; instead, at the crucifixion, Jesus carried the stick He would later die on. He picked it up and carried it and then willingly died on this staff of grace to take on the greatest of punishments in order that in Him we might experience the greatest of goods. The Father struck His son in order that every spiritual blessing might flow to us. Praise Christ, for this is Grace!

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Read Romans 8:31-35. Seek forgiveness for failing to believe the good news of the Gospel as it is reflected in Romans 8. If God did not spare his own Son for our sake, He will undeniably make sure your needs are met according to His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- The Father struck His own Son so that every spiritual blessing might flood your heart. Consecrate yourself for Christ to believe that the seemingly impossible pathway before you is an opportunity by grace to walk in the Spirit, knowing He prepared faith solutions for you long before the problem ever arose.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Ask your children why the Israelites complained to Moses in verses 1-7. Talk with them about how the Israelites complained because there was no water. Make sure they understand that the Israelites really complained against God and not Moses (see verses 2 and 7 where we read that they tested the Lord).

- a. If you have older children, then ask them why they think that Israelites so quickly complained when their circumstances turned difficult. Talk with them about how our sin causes us to doubt or forget God's love and faithfulness to us.

2. Ask your children how God reacted to the complaints of the Israelites. Did He punish the Israelites? Point them to verses 5-6 and talk about how God showed mercy to the Israelites by standing on the rock and told Moses to strike the rock to provide water.

- a. Read 1 Corinthians 10:4 and ask your children to whom the rock pointed. Talk with them how "the Rock was Christ" and how He saves and sustain us.

3. Ask your children about the battle scene in verses 8-16 and ask what makes this battle unique. Make sure to talk about how Moses helped the Israelites by holding up the staff of God to represent God's power for victory.

- a. Ask them what Moses was doing when the Israelites prevailed in the battle and what he did when they were losing. Talk with them about how the Israelites prevailed when Moses had his hands up.
- b. Ask them who helped Moses and how they helped him. Point them to verse 12. Talk about how Moses needed help to hold his hands up.
- c. Remind your children that the Christian life is not meant to be lived alone. God gives us our family and our church so that we can support each other.

Scriptures for further study:

John 4:13-14

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Romans 12: 3-8

FOR STUDENTS

1. What kinds of things are you facing, or have you faced, that felt like the weight of them would simply break you? How did God provide others to walk with you and carry the weight?

2. What kinds of situations have required you to play the role of Moses on behalf of someone else in the battles they face? How do you stand strong and overcome when there seems no end in sight and the weight of it is wearing you out?

3. Who are the Amalekites and what does the scripture tell us about them? Read Genesis 36:12 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19. What is the significance to the timing and location of this attack?

4. What were Moses' plans to win the battle? What do we know about Moses' staff (see Exodus 4:20), and what else has Moses done with the staff? What was the correlation between Moses holding the staff above His head and the Israelites winning the battle?

5. Are you surprised when the world hates you? Or do you seek to make sure as a priority that the world never hates you? How does Exodus 17 both reshape your expectations and challenge your behavior?

**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. We will all have learned by now that the Book of Exodus always points to the even greater story of deliverance and redemption that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Our passage today is no different. The water that comes from the rock is first of all literal water that meets the physical needs of a thirsty people living in hot and desperate wilderness conditions. But the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 10:4) also declares that this “water” in this passage is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the one who satisfies our thirsty hearts and meets all our deepest spiritual needs. Read also John 4:13-14 in which Jesus refers to himself as true living water.

2. Once more we see the Israelites quarreling and grumbling about their circumstances. And once more, Moses informs them that their complaining is ultimately directed against God. But if this passage shows us anything, it is that despite their attitude, God still cares about their needs, and He is faithful to provide. Based on this passage, let me offer three recommendations: 1) we must refrain from a grumbling attitude; 2) if we do have real needs, we should humbly submit our requests to God and trust that He will care for us; 3) spend some time today and this week just thanking God for all the many ways He has already blessed you.

3. The story of the Israelites winning the battle against the Amalekites is another powerful picture of what God in Christ has done for us. Just as Moses lifted up his hands in prayer for victory, so did Jesus stretch out and lift up his arms on a cross to die for us, even praying as he did so, saying, “Father forgive them.”

4. Verses 8-16 are also meant to be a lesson for us, and an encouragement to our own prayer life. As a new believer, God desires for you to learn how to pray. We pray first and foremost because this is one of the ways you will be drawn closer to God. We pray also because life is a battle, and ultimately it is a spiritual battle against the forces of darkness (see Ephesians 6:12) and prayer is one of our weapons. We also learn from this passage the importance of praying for others. In prayer we are lifting up not only our own concerns but also the concerns and life battles of others. Finally, it will be good for you to spend time not only praying for others but also praying with other believers. The joy and discipline of prayer is, and will be, critical to your spiritual life.