



*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

**JANUARY 8, 2023**

**DELIVERED TO GOSPEL HOLINESS**

**Exodus 19:1-9 ESV**

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

Scriptures for further study:

Exodus 5:1

Exodus 6:7

1 Peter 2:9

Exodus 19:12

1 Peter 3:18

1 Timothy 2:5

1 Peter 1:15

“When it is time for the young birds to leave the eyrie and learn to fly, the eagle stirs up the nest, but does not abandon her young. If they experience difficulties, the mother bird swoops down below and lifts them on its wings back to safety. The LORD has shown similar tenderness and watchfulness when he had delivered Israel and guided them as they travelled from Egypt to Sinai. Their immediate history displayed love and care for His people.”

- John Mackay

**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. God's Claim
  - a. Compassionate claim
  - b. Covenant claim
  - c. Privileged claim

2. God's Call

3. God's Mediator

“Up until Exodus 19:1-9, the setting for the Exodus journey has been Egypt. The remainder of our journey through Exodus will take place in Sinai. In today's passage, Israel arrives at Sinai, where the rest of the events of Exodus will take place and where the Lord will reveal his covenant through Moses. Chapter 19 focuses on the instructions that the Lord gives to Moses in order to prepare Israel for his presence at Mount Sinai.

ESV Study Bible - R.C. Sproul

## 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 is the dead-give away that someone is on the job for UPS? What businesses are distinguished from the competition in their industry exclusively by the unique way that they treat their customers? What are the similarities and differences between representing a company as an employee and representing God as his chosen people?

2. How does God’s love for the world differ from His love for His people?

3. What does it look like for us today to be holy priests?

4. How did Jesus Christ change how we relate to God? What changed in the manner and modes with which the Israelites related to God versus how we relate to God? Why does this matter?

“The Israelites are not to keep the law in order for God to save them. They have already been saved; God has brought them out of Egypt. The law he now gives is the subsequent stage in Israel’s developing relationship with God. It is what is expected of a people already redeemed.”

- Peter Enns

“God would maintain his light in the world through Israel until He would send His son into the world to be its light and salvation. The light of Israel would be maintained by hedging the nation about with many restrictions so that they would not be infiltrated and subverted by the influences of the surrounding nations. In this way as the ‘holy,’ that is, the ‘set apart,’ nation they would be a servant nation whose task was to reflect the divine world in the ordinary world of mankind.”

- John Mackay

“God desired in this way to teach his people the seriousness of dealing with him. The mountain was his mountain and thus was holy. Although people specially prepared and consecrated to encounter God may approach him more closely, they could not interact with him directly. If an earthly king required approaching with the greatest of care, should not the King of Kings be honored even more carefully and respectfully?”

- Daniel Stuart

“Ever since the fall of humanity, sinners have been unable to approach God without going through a mediator.”

- R.C. Sproul

***PRAISE TO JESUS-*** Spend some time today exalting the greatness of God’s claim of you in Jesus Christ for the better mediator who doesn’t just bring us near but up close and personal.

***REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS-*** Repent of the many times where we have treated this up close and personal relationship as ordinary.

***CONSECRATION FOR JESUS-*** We have been claimed by God, we are treasured by God, we have an up close and personal relationship with God which is beyond extraordinary in worth, and benefit beyond the wildest dreams of the Israelites through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. Let us be consecrated as representatives of God to the world by walking in holiness which flows from His glorious grace and covenant faithfulness.

“Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy. The Bible never says that God is love, love, love; or mercy, mercy, mercy; or wrath, wrath, wrath; or justice, justice, justice. It does say that he is holy, holy, holy, that the whole earth is full of His glory.”

- R.C. Sproul

“God’s name is qualified by the adjective ‘holy’ in the Old Testament more often than all other qualities or attributes combined.”

- Sam Storms

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. In Exodus 19:1-6 the LORD prepares Moses for the giving of His Law. It is important to understand the order and movement of God's grace in these verses.

- a. Ask your children what the order is from verses 4-6 of the covenant requirements, God's redemption and saving of His people from Egypt, and God's reward to His people. Talk about how the redemption came first, then the giving of the covenant requirements, and finally God talks of the covenant rewards and new identity.
- b. If you have older children, then ask them why this order might be important. You will want to talk with them about how in our sinful state that we need God's saving work in our lives first before we can follow His covenant law.

2. In verses 5 and 6 the LORD said that His people would be three things to Him. Ask your children what those three things are. Make sure they see that the LORD said His people would be His treasured possession, kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

- a. Ask your children what is a treasured possession that they have. Maybe it is a special doll or a pet or a Lego set. Ask your children what it means to be God's treasured or special possession.
- b. Ask your children what it means to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Make sure to talk about how we are to represent God to the people of the world and that we are set apart for God's work in the world.

3. From Exodus 19:9 ask your children why God spoke to Moses so the people could hear. You will want to point out from verse 9 that the LORD said that He wanted the people to trust in Moses' leadership.

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 2:9

Ephesians 1:18

Revelation 1:6

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Read Exodus 19:1-4. God is about to give Israel his law. What is the foundation he lays in these first verses for commanding obedience to his law?
2. According to Exodus 19:5-6, what is God's purpose in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and in giving them his law?
3. Try to imagine what it must have looked like, sounded like, and felt like, to stand at the foot of Mount Sinai when God came down on the mountain in cloud, fire and thunder, and the entire mountain trembled. Can you think of any movie scenes or personal experiences that might resemble the sight, sound, or feel of it?
4. How have you experienced the blessing of living under God's rule, rather than your own?
5. Remembering that Exodus is telling us not only the story of the salvation of Israel from slavery in Egypt but also the story of our salvation from sin, what can we learn from this order of events: the people were saved and were made God's treasured possession, and then they were given the law?
6. Why did God rescue you? And how is that being shown in the way you think about, feel about, and go about your life?

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



## FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Finally, after three months, the Israelites have now arrived at the mountain. This had been the goal all along. Not just that God would bring them out of Egypt but that he would now establish with them a covenant relationship. Likewise, God desires not just to lead us out of slavery to sin and death, but to give us a new life altogether. It is not just what he saves us from, but what he desires to save us for.

2. In our culture today, people often define themselves by their own self-chosen identities, which are inevitably either false, or man-centered, or seriously narrow or shallow. How do you define your identity? Notice here some of the ways God defines us as believers: we are those who are treasured, dearly loved, carried on eagles' wings (a beautiful picture of God's grace), and chosen (verse 5). Our identity should always be based on God's definition, and how he sees us.

3. The people of God are called to be holy and obedient to God. But it is important to note that this is not a prerequisite in order for them to qualify for God's choosing them. It is always the grace of God and not our merit that is the ground for our salvation. (See also Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

4. Our relationship with God is first and foremost based on his choosing and his grace. But the terms of our covenant relationship with God includes being a people committed to him and obedient to his will as a response to his prior work of saving grace. Specifically, God's people are to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. (See also 1 Peter 2:9).

a. To be a priest is to live our lives wholly to serve God. This means we not only have a personal relationship with him, but we also bear responsibility to represent God to others, and to represent others to God. In practical terms, this would involve witnessing to others about God, and also praying to God on behalf of others. What are some ways you can be more faithful in these areas?

b. To be holy is to live a life that is set apart and distinctly different from others. You might say that God's desire was not just to get the Israelites out of Egypt, but to get the "Egypt" out of the Israelites! But do not confuse living separated from the world morally with living separated from the world in terms of personal proximity. We are not to be "of" the world, but we are most definitely to be "in" it. God has chosen us in order that we might reflect his nature and live out his purposes in the world.