



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 Capital Campaign Series: Jan. 22nd-Feb. 12th

Pause for DNOW: February 19th

Pause for Missions Sunday: March 26th

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

FEBRUARY 26, 2023

Exodus 22:18-23:9 ESV

"You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

"Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

"Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction.

"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

"If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

"You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

"You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

"You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

"If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

"You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."

Scriptures for further study:

Exodus 2:25

Exodus 3:7-10

Colossians 3:5

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Matthew 25:45

Exodus 13:11-13

Romans 12:1-2

BIG IDEA: Because of God's full redemption in Jesus Christ, let our extravagant mercy, grace, and holiness in the Spirit permeate and transcend all social contexts and relationships.

OUTLINE

1. Fullness of Relationship

2. Social Context and Relationships

- a. with evil people
- b. with the disadvantaged
- c. with God
- d. with our enemies

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"God's redeemed people have heard him speak as he gave them the Ten Commandments. Now Moses returns up the mountain in order to receive more specific application of the moral law in the detailed legislation that would guide Israel's life. We must remember that God's gracious redemption of his people preceded the regulation of their lives: God's people would not secure salvation by keeping the law; rather, because they were already God's people, they were to obey him. And as they lived in this way, order, civility, and charity would be the character of their life together."

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. Have you ever grown tomatoes or had a friend or family member that did? As soon as they ripen they get shared with everybody! What is it about tomatoes that folks love? Are there also health benefits? From the Big Idea, what are three fruits of the Holy Spirit that are the result of God’s full redemption in Jesus Christ? How can this abundant fruit in us, shape how we approach the dailies of life together with our church family and with sojourners?

2. What is a “sojourner” in the context of today’s passage? Why is it significant that verses 22:21 and 23:9 are “bookends” around a passage which is predominately describing social and religious laws? God’s care for his people regulating how people are to interact in different social contexts or relationships.

3. What are the four relationships addressed in the passage? What are the New Testament versions of these regulations? How have you applied one of these regulations to own life and seen the benefit of it?

“This prohibition against being yoked together with unbelievers has broader application in situations where significant control over one’s actions would be willingly yielded to an unbeliever through voluntary partnership (such as in marriage or the submission of disputes between Christians to secular courts). However, neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer ever instructed the church not associate with unbelievers at all. We are told not to be ‘yoked together’ with them in such a way that they share significantly in the direction and outcome of our activities.”

- Spirit of Reformation
Study Bible

“If the church does not identify with the marginalized, it will itself be marginalized. This is God’s poetic justice.”

– Tim Keller

“Paul begins by making it clear that in view of the wonderful salvation of which he has been writing believers must respond with wholehearted commitment. Being the servants of a God who loves like that means that the whole life is to be lived in service to God.”

- Leon Morris

“The Scriptures repeatedly enjoin benevolence towards one’s opponents.”

- John Mackay

PRAISE TO JESUS- Offer praise to Jesus for the fact that at one time you were a sojourner whom he pursued, gave faith to believe, and redeemed, and now you are not a sojourner but an heir of the Kingdom of God and a vital part of God’s family. Praise Jesus for the fruit of God’s redemption in your life; mercy, grace, and holiness have been extravagantly lavished on you. Praise God that his desire for us to relate to others, and to Him, is such that he regulates how we should do this; he does not leave us to chance.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- Repent through Jesus of the ways that you have flirted with sin by committing more time and attention to relationship with others, with social media, exercise, work, and anything else rather than your relationship with God. Repent of the evil that you validate by following it, or let it influence your actions and attitudes. Repent of how you have failed to help the disadvantaged.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- As one redeemed, full of the mercy and grace, consecrate to Jesus wholehearted commitment to be servant of a God who lives out of the realities of your wonderful salvation and from that, offer your whole life to be lived in service to God.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. It has been a few weeks since we have been in Exodus, it would be good to review with your children.

- a. Remind them about how God miraculously saved the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. Read Exodus 19:1-6 and 20:1-2.
- b. Talk with them about the importance of understanding that God's saving work comes before the giving of the Law.

2. Ask your children if they know what Jesus said were the two great commandments. You will want to make sure they understand that the two great commandments or how Jesus summarized the Law were to love God and to love others.

- a. You will want to mention that today's passage is part of the Law that details how to love others.
- b. Make sure to remind your children how God's Law is for our benefit and to give glory to God.

3. Read the first part of Exodus 22:31. In the ESV it says, "You shall be consecrated to me." In other translations such as the NASB, NIV, and NLT, it says that God's people are to be holy.

- a. Ask your children what it means to be holy or consecrated to God. Talk with them about how part of the meaning is that we are to be set apart for God's special use. Talk with them about things at your house that are set apart for special use such as fine china or special decorations for different times of the year. Mention how God wants us as His people to live in such a way that we reflect God's holiness to the world. Make sure to say that we can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit and now of our own power.

4. Make sure to talk about the application of this passage for us since we live after Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. God has saved His people from the slavery to sin and from the power of sin. Therefore, He has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can live for His glory.

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 2:8-10,

1 Peter 1:15-16

FOR STUDENTS

1. Exodus 21:1-23:9 contains basic guidelines for living in community as a just society while also calling the people to live as those who are set apart to the Lord. The civil law provided a series of legal precedents that illustrated basic legal principles drawn from the Ten Commandments. Skim this section and list several general categories or issues these ordinances address.

2. When we are measured against God's law as fulfilled and embodied in Christ, the verdict is we fail. Read 1 Corinthians 1:31 and reflect on what we can remember every time we break God's law. Who do we boast in and why? How is knowing that Jesus perfectly obeyed God's will for you good news for you?

3. There are several laws in this section that have a high price and punishment for worshiping other gods and for impure sexual activity. Why is it hard to stay faithful and pure in our society today? What are ways to be more faithful and purer?

4. In verses 21-27, God gives laws that are to protect the most vulnerable: the poor, the immigrants, the orphans and the widows because he will see and hear their cries. What do these laws show about God's character?

5. What are some ways that we demonstrate to the watching world around us that we are set apart and different as Jesus followers?

6. When was the last time you made things right with someone you wronged? When was the last time you showed mercy to someone in need?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. In these verses (and surrounding material), we have a more detailed expansion of God's covenant law as it relates to civil, criminal, and ceremonial aspects of life. Some of these laws will no doubt strike us as peculiar or even archaic. But don't miss the larger point, which can be found in verse 22:31: "You are to be my holy people." (See also Leviticus 11:44-45) God wanted his people, both then and now, to be those who are set apart, who live in holiness as God is holy, and who consecrate themselves to the Lord, and not just in one area of life but in all areas of life.

2. Sometimes when non-believers read the Bible, and particularly passages like this one, they conclude that it seems extreme or harsh. But we must keep in mind that given the Ancient Near Eastern culture of that time, these biblical laws actually represented a great advancement in human rights, dignity for slaves, women, and children, and justice for the poor). We even see God's law calling for people to love their enemies (verse 23:4), which anticipates Jesus's own teaching about these matters centuries later.

3. Many of us have a tendency to focus on certain types of sin—which are often the more glaring sins, like sexual immorality—as being so much worse than others. But this passage helpfully reminds us that we are to be concerned about (and to be holy) when it comes to every area of life: treatment of those less fortunate, removing idols, use of money, use of our tongues, helping others in need, doing justice in the courts, etc. Let us examine our own lives and realize that God is seeking holiness in all areas of our lives, private and public, inward and outward.

4. When we think about holiness, we often think in terms of "do not." And certainly, there are those things that we should not do. But when we read these verses, we also see, positively, what God would have us to do: 1) show concern for fairness and justice, 2) be compassionate toward the poor and oppressed, 3) offer ourselves and resources to God. Holiness is not simply the avoiding of sin, but the doing of justice and righteousness. (Read and reflect on Matthew 25:34-40).