



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

MARCH 12, 2023

Delivered to Communion with God

Exodus 24:1-18 ESV

Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.”

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.”

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Scriptures for further study:

John 1:14-18

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Matthew 26:26-28

1 Timothy 2:5

Colossians 1:19-20

Hebrews 9:11-16

BIG IDEA: Because of the covenant secured through the sacrifice and mediation of Jesus, we may enjoy a loving communion with God through our faith in Him.

OUTLINE

1. Covenant Ceremony (Exodus 24:1-11)

- a. The Holiness of God
- b. The Covenant Mediator
- c. God's Word
- d. The Blood of the Covenant
- e. The Vision of God
- f. The Covenant Meal

2. The Glory of the LORD (Exodus 24:12-18)

3. Gospel Applications:

- a. Let us behold God and His redemption plan afresh.
- b. Let us be comforted by our communion with God.
- c. Let us be strengthened by our communion with God.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"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."

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- Alec Motyer

"Exodus 24 is a transitional passage that shows the great covenant confirmation ceremony. Israel has now received the Ten Commandments from God's own mouth, and Israel responds, now confirming for the third time that she would indeed embrace God in covenant, in obedience, and follow in His ways and be loyal to Him."

- Ligon Duncan

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 have communion with God? How does sin affect our communion with God? How does God restore our communion with Him?
2. What part(s) of the covenant ceremony from verses 1-11 stood out to you? Why? What did you learn about God from this covenant ceremony? What did you learn about yourself?
3. How is the glory of God described in verses 15-18? How would you describe or explain the glory of God? Look up Isaiah 43:7, Psalm 19:1, Romans 11:36, and 1 Corinthians 10:31. What did you learn about God’s glory in these verses?
4. How are you comforted knowing that through Jesus we have communion with God? How can you comfort someone else this week with the truth of our communion with God?
5. How are you strengthened by your communion with God? What are you facing this week where you need to draw on God for strength?

PRAISE TO JESUS- What from this passage causes you to praise God?
Share this with someone this week.

REPENTANCE THROUGH JESUS- What has the Holy Spirit brought to your mind from this passage of which you need to repent? Spend time this week praying to God about this.

CONSECRATION FOR JESUS- How has the Holy Spirit led you to consecrate or rededicate yourself to following Him in all areas of your life?

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Ask your children why they think that only Moses was allowed to go all the way up the mountain to be in God's presence (Exodus 24:1-2, 12-18). Make sure to talk about the holiness of God and how therefore that God cannot be in the presence of sinners. God selected Moses to be the mediator between Him and His people.
2. Ask your children to find the word covenant in this passage and then read those passages.
 - a. Ask your children what a covenant is. You will want to make sure that they understand that a covenant means that God is developing a formal relationship with His people. A covenant is more personal than a contract.
3. Ask your children why the blood was needed to enact this covenant between God and His people. Make sure to discuss our sinfulness and how God taught His people through His Law that blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin to be possible. Also talk about how this pointed forward to Jesus' death on the cross.
4. Pastor Ken discussed how this passage showed how God was making a way for us to be in communion with Him again. Ask your children what it means to be in communion with God. Ask them why it is such good news that God would allow us to be in communion with Him again.
 - a. Ask them how this passage pointed forward to God the Father sending the Son of God, Jesus, to be our mediator and our sacrifice to bring us into an eternal relationship with God.
5. Ask your children what they learned about God from this passage and what they learned about themselves. You will want to talk about how this shows God's love, grace, and mercy that God would set out a plan to bring us back into communion or relationship with Him again. Make sure to talk about how we would have no hope for this relationship with God without His grace and mercy shown to us primarily through Jesus.

Scriptures for further study:

1 Timothy 2:5

John 1:14-18

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 127:1-2

Psalm 104

Ephesians 5: 3, 12

Ephesians 5: 15-21

1. In Exodus 19:12-13, 21-22, 23:25, there are limits to how close Israel can come into the presence of God. What do those limits and being told to “worship from afar” in Exodus 24:1 communicate about God and man? What distinction do you notice in Exodus 24:2 and 12-18 between Israel and their mediator Moses? Why is this significant, and how does it point us to Jesus? Why is 1 Timothy 2:5 such good news?

2. In contrast to Israel’s experience in Exodus 24, what are we offered in Jesus according to Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 2:18, 3:12, and Hebrews 4:16?

3. What is the means by which Israel is allowed to enter into relationship and closer intimacy with God according to Exodus 24: 3-8? What promise is given in Zechariah 9:11 and Jeremiah 31:31-33? What is the means by which we may enter into a covenant relationship with God according to Luke 22:20, Hebrews 10:19, Romans 3:23-25? Why are these promises so hope-filled according to Hebrews 9:12-14?

4. In Exodus 24: 3-8, the authority of God is proclaimed, the people yield their wills to His authority, and blood is shed. What does Jesus proclaim, call for, and invite us to believe and celebrate in Mark 1:15?

5. How would you explain to someone why the ceremonial law (laws about the tabernacle, sacrifices, feasts, and festivals) and the civil law (legal precedents for Israel as a nation) are no longer binding on believers?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from The Lamb of God by Nancy Guthrie

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. The Bible often refers to something called a covenant, which could be defined as a formal, solemn, and binding promise or agreement between two parties, usually sealed in blood. Here we read that God had made a covenant with His people and then sprinkled the people with blood (verse 8). This verse clearly looks forward to the day when God would establish a new covenant with His people, but a covenant that would be established and guaranteed by the blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ. (See Luke 22:20)

Question: If God's Son would go so far as to shed His own blood for you, what does this say to you about how serious our sin is, but also how serious He is about having a relationship with you?

2. Earlier in Exodus (33:20), we learned that "no one can see God and live." But here in Exodus 24, God's leaders saw God and actually ate and drank with Him (verse 11), which suggest intimate fellowship and peace! This shows the extreme difference between those who are not in right relationship with God and those who are. The same was demonstrated during the Passover story: those who were in right relationship with God were protected, while the Egyptians faced God's judgment. Jesus himself made clear that there are only two outcomes for people: one is eternal life and the other is perishing (John 3:16).

Question: If you died today, which of these two starkly different outcomes would be your experience? Are you truly in right relationship with God, based upon whether you believe in Him and are covered in the blood of Jesus Christ?

3. When we "eat and drink with God" (verse 11), it is as if we are dining at God's table, and He is sharing his "food" with us. It suggests that we are now at peace with God. It also means we are at peace with others in the family of God who are at the table with us. (Both of these truths are pictured beautifully in the Lord's Supper or communion.) As a new believer, remember that God wants us to live at peace with others in the church, and to treat each other as brothers and sisters. Not only do we want to make sure that these relationships are not broken, we also (positively) want to do all that we can to build and deepen relationships.

Question: Is there anyone with whom you need to be reconciled?

Question: What next steps could you take to help develop and deepen relationships with others in the church?