**The Gospel According to Moses**

**Exodus 1:1-7, Introduction**

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We start a series in the book of Exodus today called the Gospel According to Moses, by giving an overview, looking at the highlights of the story. Structurally, Exodus can be divided into two sections, chapters 1-18 describe God’s gracious redemption of his people in the Exodus while chapters 19-40 describe God’s gracious relationship with his people in covenant, his law and the tabernacle, God’s dwelling place among his people. My Big Idea is this, God makes himself known in mercy and justice, redemption and judgment.

**The Backdrop (1-4)**

Exodus opens up with Abraham’s family living in Egypt, picking up where Genesis ends. Genesis tells the story of God creating all things to display his glory and specifically creating humanity to enjoy his presence and his benevolent rule. Yet humanity rejected God's rule and care for them by violating their relationship. His justice demanded that he exile the now sinful Adam and Eve from his presence. Yet God mercifully promises a deliverer who will defeat sin and reconcile humanity to himself by faith. The promise of a deliverer progresses as God promises to bless the nations through Abraham. Genesis ends with Abraham's family in Egypt.

Exodus picks up the story 400 years later. God has blessed Israel, so they have multiplied and grown exceedingly strong, a reminder that God is fulfilling his promise to make Abraham’s descendants into a great nation and to bless the nations of the world through them. But this blessing comes with bitterness. Pharoah is threatened by their size so he enslaves them. Yet they continue to multiply so he commands his people to drown every Israelite baby boy that is born in the Nile river. Pharoah sees evil as a good thing, killing has become politically expedient. Yet God’s promise cannot be thwarted, and he raises up a deliverer. An Israelite gives birth to a son and when she can no longer hide him, puts him in a little homemade ark to float down the Nile. God turns evil upside down on itself as Pharaoh’s daughter finds him, has compassion on him, and defying her father’s order, raises him as her own son in Pharaoh's household. When Moses is 40 years old he kills an Egyptian for mistreating an Israelite then flees to the desert and finds a home and family in Midian. There he also has a crazy encounter with God in a burning bush and God calls him to be Israel’s deliverer, lead Israel out of slavery. Moses complains that he is inadequate, but God reassures him.

**The Conflict (5-18)**

Chapters 5 through 15 describe this great conflict between Moses and Pharaoh, between Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the gods of Egypt. The promise of deliverance is described as “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will *redeem* you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment (Exodus 6:6). Here is the first use of the word redeem which means to buy someone’s freedom from slavery. Moses goes before Pharaoh, the most powerful person in the world, demanding that he let Israel go. Pharaoh responds, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not **know** the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go (5:2). God says he will make himself known to Israel (6:7) in redemption and make himself known to Egypt by redeeming Israel (14:4) and destroying Egypt (14:8). God making himself known is the central theme in Exodus. Every human being will ultimately know the Lord by his mercy or his justice, his redemption or his judgement. Pharaoh is so offended by Moses request that he takes it out on Israel, making their enslavement harder and harsher. Discouraged, Moses goes back and tells God that this isn’t going to work but God reiterates his promise to deliver Israel.

Knowing that Pharaoh will refuse, God brings 10 plagues upon Egypt that are increasingly severe. In the final plague, God kills all the first born in Egypt. That might sound harsh, but remember God is just and is executing justice in judgement against an evil oppressor who sought to eradicate Israel by enslaving them and then murdering baby boys. Chapters 12 and 13 describe how God protects Israel from the 10th plague in the Passover meal. God told all Israel families to sacrifice a spotless lamb and smear its blood over the doorframes sparing their households when the angel of death passed over the land. God executed judgement on Egypt while extending mercy toward Israel. In response to the death of every firstborn male child in all of Egypt, Pharaoh demands that Israel leave yet changes his mind and comes after Israel. His own evil desires entrap him in God’s judgment. While Israel walks to freedom through the parting of the red sea, Pharaoh and his army die as the waters come crashing down. God redeemed Israel so they would know that he is the Lord (6:7) and God judged Egypt so they would know that he is the Lord (14:4). God exalts himself and reveals his glory in both mercy and redemption, justice and judgement.

Israel celebrates their deliverance with singing and dancing. Their song celebrates the Lord as Warrior king whose Kingdom reigns forever. Chapters 16 through 18 describe Israel wandering in the desert, tired, hungry, and lost so they start grumbling and long to return to Egypt. Israel too has a sinful and hard hearts. Sin is the universal human problem. God calls Israel to trust him to provide food and water in the wilderness (15-17). Moses tells his Father in law Jethro about all that God did to deliver Israel from Egypt. Jethro’s response is, now I **know** that the Lord is greater than all gods (18:11). Moses is a witness to God as a merciful Deliverer and Jethro believes and worships the true God.

**The Covenant (19-33)**

Chapter 19 is the transitional chapter with Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. When God's presence shows up it is so terrifying that Israel is fearful, afraid of God’s presence. Again, we are reminded of storyline of the bible. Before sin humanity enjoyed Gods’ presence but sin now creates fear in God’s presence (20:18). There God makes a covenant with Israel (20-24). Through the covenant God fulfills the promise to Abraham to restore God's blessing to the nations, sending a deliverer who will reconcile humanity to God so we can once again enjoy God’s presence. The law was to shape Israel as a light to the nations (20-23). Then in the next seven chapters God gives Moses a detailed blueprint for a portable tabernacle in which God would dwell among his people (25-32). Everything about the Tabernacle is to remind Israel of the garden of Eden, the place of God's presence and God’s good rule over his people. But even before Moses comes down the mountain with the ten commandments, Israel has already broken the first 2 commandments, do not make idols depicting God nor worship any idols (33). Moses breaks the 10 commandments on the ground as a picture of Israel breaking the covenant. God desires to judge Israel for their sin, but Moses intercedes, appealing to God’s character, his faithfulness to his promise, and to God’s reputation among the nations. What would the other nations think of him if he were to destroy Israel. So, God remains faithful to his promise and reputation knowing that it will cost him.

**The Tabernacle (34-40)**

Exodus ends the building of the Tabernacle (34-39) and in the final chapter (40) the tabernacle is erected. God's presence come down and his glory fills the temple. Moses tries to enter but cannot because this is God’s house and humans cannot just trounce up to his house without addressing their sinfulness. Leviticus picks up this theme and tells us that God requires a sacrifice for sin.

Life Group Questions:

1. What is the book of Exodus all about? Can you describe it in a sentence or two?
2. What are some of your favorite highlights of Exodus?
3. Have you had your own red sea or burning bush experience?
4. Pharaoh is a bad guy but so is Israel. What do they have in common and how is this illustrated?
5. What did Hebrews 3:12-14 warn us against an evil unbelieving heart?
6. Why did Israel struggle with unbelief after God so miraculously freed them from slavery?
7. What is the tabernacle all about?
8. How does the tabernacle point to and remind us of the Garden of Eden?
9. What does this teach us about following Jesus.