



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Gospel of God

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Exodus 1:1-7

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1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. 6 Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 7 But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

(Pastor Prays)

Why did we choose the Book of Exodus? Exodus is the second book in the Old Testament. It is the story of God. In Exodus, you find the story of the gospel. You find a picture of what Christ has done for us, saving us and taking us out of slavery to sin. Why the Book of Exodus? Exodus is a book we need to hear. It is one we actually need to love. Why? Because Exodus tells us a lot of things by way of introduction. Let me give you a couple of things. Exodus tells us about a God who controls history. There, you have this unseen one who is controlling everything that is seen. God will not be mentioned until Exodus 1:20, but from the very beginning, you get the idea that God is in control. That is something you actually need. You need to know that he is in control. Why the Book of Exodus? Because this book tells us about a God that can be known. God has revealed himself. You don't have to sit back and wonder what God is like. Exodus tells us what God is like. Exodus reminds us of two ways that God reveals himself. The first one is in

general revelation. When you go outside, you'll see that the sky is blue, the grass is green, and the snow didn't fall. That's God in control. God has revealed himself in nature.

God has revealed himself specifically in his word, taking us to Christ. He actually can be known. In Exodus, you find out that God is holy. One of the themes that runs through this whole book is the holiness of God. When I say holy, what do I mean? I mean that there is no other like him. He is completely separate and unique. Exodus teaches us that God is holy. When we read the Book of Exodus, we find out that God is a God who actually does remember us; he hears the cry of his people, and he remembers. What does God remember about you? He remembers his promise to you in Jesus. He remembers his covenant that he made with you in Jesus. God remembers his people. If you are a son or daughter of God, he purchased you by the blood of Jesus. He has purchased you for himself. He remembers.

When you read this book of Exodus, you find out that God is a God who acts in salvation. He actually does something. He doesn't leave you where you are and invites you to come over here and find him. He comes after you when you were in rebellion and hated him. God is a God who acts in salvation. He pursues people. He doesn't leave us like we are when he converts us. When you put your faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, you become a changed man or a woman. He makes you different. God is a God who acts. You're going to learn that this year in the book of Exodus.

Why the book of Exodus? Because we find out here that this God is a God who judges sin. Exodus brings the heinousness, the foulness of sin, up to the forefront so we can look at it there, we see it. The book of Exodus will make sure that we understand the severity of sin so that we turn from that and we look to what Christ has done for us on the cross. Exodus is here to turn our chins to look toward Jesus. Exodus is a reminder of a God that not only hates sin but Exodus tells us that our God, the God of the Bible, is merciful to sinners. This book reminds us that God, although full of wrath and hatred of sin when he looks on us, he sees those he loves, and in Christ, he purchased us. That when you are in Christ, your repentance is received. When you repent of your sin, you turn from it; you are not rejected. God receives. He is patient with sinners. You need to be glad that God is patient with sinners. When you read the book of Exodus, you find out that God is actually merciful to sinners.

Why the book of Exodus? We go to the book of Exodus because it shows us a God who actually does speak to his people. Albert Mohler said it in his book: He is not silent. His words come from a fire, that he gives us direction and clarity. We can know him and know how to live. That he is a God who has spoken to us clearly in his son Jesus. He is a God who has spoken to us in the Bible. That's why Kyler started our service with the Bible. That's why I'm reading the Bible and introducing the Bible because here in this book, God actually does speak. We'll find that out this year.

This book shows us a God who is transcendent. He is a God who is above us. He is a God who cannot be experienced directly in his fullness by mortal men and women. We can't take all of God. That's why the Gospel of Jesus comes for us. And Jesus, the perfect God-man, becomes our mediator. Exodus takes us to Jesus because we need Jesus to get us to God. Exodus tells us that. Why the book of Exodus? Because Exodus tells us about a God who lives among his people. We will be introduced to the term Tabernacle. That's where God meets with his people. Exodus teaches us to look for that Tabernacle. The apostle John, when he wrote his gospel, he reached back into Exodus and got that word, Tabernacle. He tells us in John 1 that in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

So here's an introduction to Exodus. Exodus is a story. Or, more accurately, it is the continuation of a story. It is Part 2 in a five-part series that has been called the Pentateuch. It's five books. You know them as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Exodus is the second part in this five-part series. Exodus picked up the story of Genesis. In Genesis, there is the man named Abraham who begins God's people. Exodus picks it up and tells us of Abraham's descendants. Remember Abraham and Isaac, Jacob. Jacob's name will become Israel. Exodus tells us of Abraham's descendants and their time down in Egypt until they entered the promised land. That's what Exodus is, from the time of God's people in Egypt to right before the time they entered the promised land.

I'll give you a brief outline of the book of Exodus. It goes something like this. Chapter 1 covers about two to three centuries, 200, maybe 300 years. There are 22 verses in Chapter 1 that is going to cover several hundred years. Chapter 2 slows down a little bit. It is all about Moses. Chapter 2 takes us for 80 years. It's basically from the time he is born to the time he becomes a

pretty old man. He is a little past 80 when God actually starts using him. So, the first chapter is several 100 years, and the second chapter is 80 years. And then, from Chapter 3 to Chapter 40, it is about one year. It's when God takes his people out of Egypt and takes them into the desert, and there we have the saga of what God did with his people in the desert. Exodus opens up where Genesis left off. Exodus picked up the story and tells us how God's people got down to Egypt. You remember the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob had 12 children. Eleven of those boys got together and sold one named Joseph off into slavery. He was picked up by an Egyptian official named Potiphar. Potiphar had him for a little while until Potiphar's wife kept eyeballing Joseph. She was trying to tempt him, but Joseph didn't have any of that. He got put in jail, and he was forgotten until someone remembered he was able to interpret dreams and told Pharaoh. Pharaoh said, bring him to me. So Joseph came and interpreted the dream of Pharaoh, that told the story of the famine that was coming. Pharaoh said, If that's the case, I'm putting you in charge. Joseph became second only to Pharaoh. That's how this saga started. Because the famine that he told Pharaoh about would affect everybody in that region, including his brothers and his father named, Jacob. So Jacob would send his sons down to Egypt to get the grain that Joseph had, and Joseph recognized them. And through a series of events, is how they got down there in Egypt. And Exodus opens up with that story.

Egypt is a crisis for the people of God. The word exodus actually means a departure. The word doesn't show up until chapter 19. That's the first time you see the word Exodus.

The first line of the book of Exodus in Hebrew is: *And, these are the names...* This book is a story of freedom. It is the epic journey of being in slavery and then being taken from slavery into salvation. Exodus is the Old Testament gospel because it gives us the picture of us being slaves to sin and God coming to rescue us in the person of Jesus. If you were reading this in the original language, it would open up with the line that goes something like this: *And, these are the names*. The word is a continuation. It's a continuation of Genesis, which opens up and tells us how God worked in creation. Exodus opens up and says, *And*. Leviticus opens up with the word, *And*. Numbers and Deuteronomy open with the word, *And*. Each one of them are a continuation of this glorious story about God and his people. It is a glorious story about God and his people that reaches all the way to January the 12th, 2025. To me and to you. Exodus is

going to teach us a lot of things. Exodus is going to help us in this year. But as we get started with this introduction today, I want you to take heart. I want you to be encouraged. Because...

God Has Not Forgotten You

Do you think he has? Do you sense that you're not moving like you should? It's a good time, the beginning of the year, to be reminded that God has not forgotten you. So let's go through the seven verses, just very briefly, and then come back for some general application for this passage and for the book of Exodus as a whole.

Verse one. These are the names of the Sons of Israel. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob becomes Israel. Israel had twelve children. They all went down to Egypt. And then he lists who all went down. So it's eleven of them with their household, about 70 people in all. In verse five, we find out that Joseph is already in Egypt. It doesn't tell us how he got there. Verse 6 is transitional. Verse 6 tells us that Joseph died. He is covering a lot of time here. And all his brothers died. Verse 7 tells us the people of Israel, God's chosen people, were fruitful. They increased greatly. This sounds a lot like Genesis chapter one, the creation story. They were fruitful and increased greatly. They grew exceedingly strong. So, that the land was filled with hundreds of thousands of people from 70. So what are some of the applications we can make for this first passage and the book itself? Here's the first one, number one.

God is making a people for himself

When you read the Book of Genesis, there you have creation, and then you have fall. There's Cain and Abel. It goes into the flood. You have Noah. And after the flood, Noah comes out, and you hear this call for creation. After we meet Noah and Tower of Babel. Then, what you have is Abraham in Genesis 11. Then Abraham is the one that God chooses. From Abraham becomes Isaac and Isaac to Jacob. Jacob's name is changed to Israel. And Jacob's descendants become the people of God. He has chosen them, the twelve sons. You saw it in verses one through five, that group of people will multiply into hundreds of thousands, and God will go down and put his arms around that group of people. From all the people in the world, that group of people, he pulled them out for himself. God will save that group to himself.

God does that. He saves his people; he preserves his people. He provides for his people.

Brothers and sisters, that is a picture of the saving work of Christ as he builds his church. He comes to you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, pays for your sin, purchased you, and got you out of slavery. He pulled you to himself. You know, we celebrated a baptism today. It's a beautiful thing to see a couple of young men come to Christ and then be baptized. It's a picture of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And it is just an outward symbol of what you've professed. That baptism is the front door to the church you become a part of. It's the visible, tangible part of what you already were when you came to Christ. You become a part of the church. You'll notice when we take the Lord's Supper here, we'll invite all of those who put their faith in Jesus and followed through in baptism. We take the Lord's Supper because there are clearly those who are inside, who are in Christ. There are those who are outside. And the picture you have here is God has gone to save people to himself so that there are those who are his, and then those who are not his. And even now, God is saving people. When you were saved, he didn't just save you for your own good; he saved you for his glory. And even today, even right here at Hickory Grove, he's building his church. Through all of the ministries here at Hickory Grove, from the very youngest in Awana and then up to our students and our college students and young families, through our school, people are coming to Christ. Through the XChange Ministry, people are beating the power of addiction. It's the gospel, and he's doing that. Why? To make a people for himself. And you can be one of those by faith in what Christ has done. Put your faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are going to learn that in Exodus this year. There's another point that I think you will see through Exodus, number two.

God has his own timing

Sometimes, God's timing hits just right with our calendar, and it works out great. We're happy sometimes. But his timing has very little to do with our calendar. Let me show you where I get that. When you read the story, Chapter one covers several 100 years. Chapter two is 80 years. Chapter three through forty is one year. And when God saves his people, we'll find out that they had been down in captivity for 430 years. In chapter 2, Moses, who is not used by God until he gets past 80 years old - look, if you're older than 80, there's still hope. That is not the timetable you think about. Look at Joseph and all the time he spent down in the dungeon. Think about people who suffered for so long in Egypt. And you wonder, how long is this going to

take? Why does God do it that way? Why does he put us there? It's a reminder that God has his own timing, and he uses that for your own sanctification. He is doing something with you, knocking off the rough spots in your heart and teaching you to trust. We wait, and God teaches us to trust and to find contentment in Christ.

When you go back to Genesis chapter 46, you would hear God say to Jacob, go down to Egypt. Remember, Jacob is Israel. God is taking him to Egypt. God says, I am going to make you a great nation, and then I will bring you back again. And he doesn't do it for 400 years. What God started, he does that on his own time for his own purposes. Some of you have been praying for somebody for so long you've been praying and praying and praying. Ans you wonder, isn't God working? Why does he not move? I'm thinking about a couple in our church. You have probably seen it on social media, Rodney and Crystal Hughes. She's in a Colorado hospital in a coma and we are all praying. Why? Or some of you are waiting on something. Why have you not met someone to marry? What is God doing? I can't answer that. I can say God has his own timing, and he has you there so that you are to be faithful to the gospel. Be joyful in the Lord. Be a witness of verbal testimony of what God has done. Be growing in grace. And remember, Exodus teaches us that God has not forgotten you. God is making a people for himself. God has his own. Let me give you a third thing you'll find, number three.

God is working his plan even when we can't see it

Sometimes people will say, and I think they mean well, but they will say, Well, God is still writing your story. Like God has writer's block. He says, you know, I'll just take a walk around the block here and come back to it, to think through what am I going to write about her. God is not writing your story! God has written your story from the foundation of the world. He is a sovereign God who's in complete control. God has a plan, and he is working that plan.

Let me show you where I get that. It's in the title itself. It's in verse one when Moses writes, and these are the names. It's a continuous story. He reaches back to Genesis. He starts the story of Creation. God is good. He created us all in his image. And then the fall of Adam and Eve into sin and all of their children, which we are, Adam and Eve's children, all of their children are living in that sin until redemption comes. That is modeled by the exodus that points us to Jesus. Look, when you read the names, just think about the names: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. His name

becomes Israel. He has twelve sons. And just mentioned in this list is Judah. Christ will be the lion of the tribe of Judah. Think of God's plan when you see the language in verses six and seven. Think about God's plan when you read about pharaoh and what God tells him. Look, I've raised you up so I can show my glory. Or the plan that God has with the Passover. When we get there to the Passover, we have the beautiful picture of the blood of Christ that is shed so that the Angel of death passes over.

Let me pause here and say this is a really good Romans 8:28 spot. Do you know Romans 8:28? You should have that verse memorized. If you don't have it memorized, put it on an index card on the mirror in front of you in your bathroom. You can look at it when you're shaving, or you are getting ready. What does it say? *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* Brothers and sisters, God is doing 10 billion things right now in the universe, for his own glory, that are a part of his decree that is being worked out. God is working his plan even when you don't see it. There is a plan. It's not random. There is no coincidence. This is sometimes a smiling providence and it feels good and right. Sometimes, it's a hard providence, and it breaks our heart. But it's all providence. That's something we'll find out in Exodus. There's a fourth point, number four.

God gives us one short life

It's not very edifying, but it's true. God gives us one short life. You find that in verse six. It's written like this. ⁶ *Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.* It's short. This verse carries with it something that should inform your New Year's resolutions. Maybe one of your resolutions was to be more on time, and you're already late. This should help us think that through. I only have this one short life to live and I want to do something with it. This verse speaks of the certainty of death. I mean, it's good for you to not be morbidly obsessed with that but to think of it now and then. When you get to a certain age, you start being reminded of the certainty. I have something wrong with my leg right now. Every time I go down the steps in these hard bottom shoes, it hurts. I'm going to be preaching in some soft-bottom shoes pretty soon.

Look, I've been with Connie, so it's been three weeks since I had a chance to get to the barbershop. When you get over 50 years old and you go to the barbershop, it's more than just

cutting your hair. He takes those clippers and jams them in your ear and gets all the hair out of there. He'll take a comb and take your eyebrows and comb them up to cut them. I was shaving the other day, and I had a eyebrow come down in my eye. That's a reminder of the certainty of death. It is good for us to remember those things. It's not only that it's good for us to remember the nearness of God. There are broken-hearted men and women in this room right now, and Exodus tells us that God is near, that he's close to the broken-hearted. This reminds us of our need for Christ in the church. We do need Christ for our own personal salvation, but Christ has built the church for the congregation to be together, to care for one another, to walk with each other. This reminds us of our own mortality, of our need for discipleship, we need to grow deep. As these two young men are baptized today, I pray that they grow deep and strong in the Lord and useful to the gospel, to the Kingdom. This reminds us of our legacy. The legacy you're leaving should not be just for your name. The legacy is three things. It's the Gospel of Christ, your family, and the church. And this verse right here, in all of Exodus, reminds us that God gives us just one shot. I'm going to go on to the fifth point, number five.

God's mission is more important than any one of us

God's mission is more important than you. Well, that was kind of harsh. Let's read verses six and seven together so you can see the contrast. So you see the silent dropping off of one generation in verse six and the multiplication and coming up of another generation in verse seven. *⁶ Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷ But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.* So you have the original generation in verse six that is juxtaposed against verse 7. What does that tell us? We are reminded, and we are stewards of the gospel, and you only have it for a little bit. You manage it, and then you retire, and you go. We have his purpose, and his message, and his mission, just for a little while, to glorify God and Christ in the church. This message is the gospel of God found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And the mission is to win people to Christ, to make disciples. What's amazing is that the focus of Exodus is not Moses; it is not Joseph. They're going to be gone. It's not that generation. The focus is on God and his purpose.

If you ever go to London and to Westminster Abbey, and you wander around enough, you might find John Wesley's monument. And there on John Wesley's monument, it says, God

buries the workman, and he carries on the work. This is God's mission. God's mission is more important than one person. Let me give you a sixth point, number six.

God's ongoing creation points to recreation

That's why Exodus is the Old Testament gospel. When you read verse 7, you see it's packed with five verbs. Moses packed it full of every word he knew to explain how God's people multiplied. You see how it's written there for translating it? It would be like this. They grew, they were fruitful, they got powerful. They were more and more, and the land was filled with them. There's something else in verse 7. Most of the vocabulary of this verse harkens back to the creation story in Genesis. And I think Moses does that on purpose because he's reminding us that Israel itself, God's people, are the fulfillment of the creation commands. When God gave them in Genesis 1 and 2, we saw them again in Noah, be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. And this ongoing creation reminds us that God not only creates, he also recreates. That recreation comes to everyone who places your faith in Christ. Faith in Jesus as the substitute who lived perfectly, earning the righteousness that we can't, and at the cross takes the wrath of God in the place of sinners. God raises him from the dead as a first fruit, and any one of you who believes that Jesus died for you are recreated. What did Paul say in 2nd Corinthians 5:17? Paul said, ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* What did he say in Ephesians 2:10? Paul says, ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Exodus is the gospel of God, where we are reminded that God has not forgotten you.

(Pastor prays)