

The Story – Moses Part 2

We are spending the year focusing upon the big stories of the bible and certainly one of the biggest is the story of Moses and the Exodus, the miraculous deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt. Turn to Exodus 3 and I want to quickly summarize part of the story of Moses and then try to point out a few really important pieces to this big story! Let me remind you again, the new reading guides are available as of this morning. I encourage you to follow along with us in the reading so the details are familiar to you.

Four hundred years after the Israelites came to Egypt to escape a famine, their descendants have been made slaves and servants in Egypt and things have grown very difficult for them. It is in these circumstances that God brings a deliverer in the man we know as Moses. We talked last Sunday about his birth. How he was raised by a daughter of Pharaoh. He had the finest of education and all the privilege of the royal family but he knew he was a Hebrew.

Exodus 2 records that Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moses intervened and killed the Egyptian. When Pharaoh found out what had happened, Moses fled for his life to an area called Midian, somewhere likely in the Sinai peninsula. While living there he met and married a woman named Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest and they had a son they named Gershom. For forty years Moses lived in Midian, tending the flock of Jethro, his father in law and it was there, out in the desert that God first spoke to him through a burning bush.

God told Moses he was calling him to return to Egypt and to tell the Pharaoh to let God's people go. God had heard their cry for deliverance and he had remembered the promise he had made to their father Abraham that after 400 years the people would return to the land given to Abraham. At last it was time! Moses argued with the voice he heard speaking from the burning bush, telling the voice he wasn't able or worthy to lead the people. "How can I lead all these people? And why should the Pharaoh listen to me? And who shall I say sent me?" God told Moses, "Tell them I AM sent you." When Moses said, "You know I have something of a speech problem, I'm really not your guy," God said, "I will have your brother Aaron go with you. Tell him what to say and he will say it for you. No more excuses. Get going."

Moses along with Aaron return to Egypt and find themselves in the palace of the Pharaoh, telling him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, 'Let my people go so they can worship me in the desert.'" Pharaoh says, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go." As a result of Pharaoh's

stubbornness, God sends ten different plagues against Egypt. First the Nile river turned to blood. We don't know if it was literal blood or if something turned the water red and thick. Regardless, the fish died, the river smelled like blood and they couldn't drink the water. Nevertheless, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go. Then came a plague of frogs. Frogs were everywhere so Pharaoh relented and said they could go but when Moses prayed and the frogs left, Pharaoh refused to let them go. The third plague brought gnats (or possibly mosquitos one source suggested. Either one would be too much for me!). Then came a plague of flies, biting flies perhaps, everywhere. Pharaoh says, 'Okay, I give. You can go' but when the flies leave, he changes his mind again. We are starting to see a pattern here aren't we? Then a plague killed the livestock of the Egyptians, but not the livestock of the Israelites. Then a plague of boils struck the men and the animals in Egypt. Then a plague of hail wiped out the crops and killed anything that tried to stand out in the fields. Then a plague of locusts destroyed what the hail hadn't destroyed. Then darkness came over the land for three days. The tenth and final plague fell on the firstborn son. Every first born son in the land was to die. However, God provided a means of protection, a means of redemption for the Israelites. After this final night when the firstborn sons died, Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt. The Egyptian people gave the Israelites gold and silver and clothing and urged them to go. 430 years to the day after the Israelites first came to Egypt, God delivered them and brought them out. God had kept his promise to Abraham and redeemed his people Israel! They were on their way to the promised land.

I think you can see why this is a big story, but let me point out a few key aspects. First of all, notice **The revelation of His name.** When Moses has this encounter with God and the burning bush, it is here that God reveals his name. The people knew him as the Almighty God, El Shaddai, as the God of their Fathers, but he reveals something about himself in this passage. When Moses asks "what shall I tell the people when they ask the name of the God who sent me, the Lord said, **"This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

Exodus 3:14 The Egyptians and the people of that day were used to the name of a deity describing something about them. God reveals himself as I AM, the God who is present and active, here and now. God reveals himself as the God who doesn't change. He is not becoming something else, he is not evolving, he is eternally and forever I AM. All that he was to Abraham and to their fathers he was to them and all that he will be to their children and to our children, he

is now! He is beyond us, transcendent. Even his name is beyond our understanding, but to know that he is present with us now, in this moment, and he will not change, he will remain forever the faithful and present God, that's good news! We learn this from Moses and the burning bush. Notice...

The showdown between Pharaoh and the God of Israel. Keep in mind that when we read this story, we have the past 4,000 years of Judeo/Christian history and we have the context of the bible story to help us understand this. The people in Egypt, both Egyptians and Israelites, did not. Moses showed up and said to the Israelites, "The God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sent me." They had faith, they believed, they knew God, but they didn't have all this history and context we have. They didn't know him like we know him. They hadn't seen miracles and acts of might. They didn't understand much about God's nature or character but they were about to learn he was the mighty God and he could be trusted.

Notice too, this was not a contest between Moses and Pharaoh, this was a contest between God and Pharaoh. The Egyptian's viewed the Pharaoh as an incarnation of the Sun god Ra. This Pharaoh thought he and the other gods of Egypt were more powerful than the God of the Israelites. After all, whoever this God of theirs was, they couldn't even see him! He had no image and he sure hadn't done much for the Israelites, after all they were slaves. **"Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.'" Exodus 5:2** He didn't know who this God of Israel was but he was about to learn and so were the Israelites. The Lord told Moses to tell his people, **"I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God."** Exodus 6:6-7 The Israelites were about to learn who this mighty God really was. They were going to learn about his character and his power and his omnipotence. They were going to learn about his compassion and mercy but also about his justice and his holiness. They were going to learn what it means to be the redeemed people of God. No one would ever forget what God did for his people as he led them out of Egypt. Notice....

This is a defining moment in Israel's history. 125 times in the Old Testament the Lord reminds the Israelites of how he brought them up out of Egypt and out of bondage. This is still one of the defining events in Israel's history, this and the holocaust. Not only did it define Israel

but it declared to all the nations of the earth something of who God is and what he intends to do. If you wonder if God intends to defend Israel today, you might want to take a look at Exodus.

By the seventh plague God said to Pharaoh, “I could have wiped you and your people from the face of the earth by now, however, knowing that you would refuse to let my people go, **“I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Exodus 9:16** This was a big story as God’s might and power and particularly his might and power in behalf of his people was made known to the whole world. God’s name was proclaimed throughout all the people of the earth after this.

Notice too that through all of these plagues, God offered the Pharaoh a way out. All he had to do was let God’s people go. He was warned what was coming each time. He was even given opportunity to encourage his people to seek shelter and get their livestock in before the hail stones fell, but Pharaoh’s pride and foolish anger kept him from repenting and asking for God’s mercy. Finally, Pharaoh sinned away his last chance for mercy. Notice...

The introduction of redemption through the blood of a lamb. When the final plague is announced, God provides the means of redemption for the Israelites. God said he would pass through Egypt about midnight and every firstborn son would die. However, God would make a distinction between those who obeyed him and prepared for this judgment and those who ignored him and refused to prepare. And what was the preparation? They were to take a year old lamb, a male without defect and they were to slaughter the lamb. They were to then roast the lamb, eat it with their family and any part left over they were to burn so that it was totally consumed as a sacrifice. They were to take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the sides and the top of the doorframe of their house. Here is what the Lord told Moses and the Israelites, **“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.” Exodus 12:12-13**

The Lord told them this would be a day they were to commemorate for all generations to come: the Lord’s Passover he called it, the day God “passed over” their house and spared them from judgment because he saw the blood of the lamb had been applied to their household. In Jewish households every year since, the Passover has been celebrated. Jesus celebrated the

Passover the night he was betrayed. In fact it was at the Passover meal that Jesus instituted the communion we celebrated this morning. Why is this so important to us as Christians?

Our Passover lamb is Jesus. There are so many parallels, so many shadows in the story of Moses and the Passover that point to Jesus, but let's just focus on the most obvious parallel. It was the blood of a lamb that was sacrificed and was applied to the door frame of the house so that when God saw the blood, he would pass over them. God's judgment was turned away when he saw the blood of the lamb had been applied. It was as if the sacrifice and the blood had atoned for and covered their sins.

In the New Testament, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb of God that was slain for us. He was and is the sacrifice that alone could atone for our sins. In the gospel, John the Baptist is baptizing people when he sees Jesus coming toward him and he cries out, "**Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" **John 1:29.** Jesus is the Lamb of God who by his sacrifice on the cross provides the means by which God's judgment against us and our sin is turned away. The apostle Paul declares, "**For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.**" **1 Corinthians 5:7** He is our Passover lamb. His life was given to redeem us from our sin. His blood was spilled on our behalf. We speak of his blood covering our sin. That's what it is, that just as surely as the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to the doorframe of the house in Egypt, the blood of Jesus can be applied to our heart and life by our faith in Christ. When God sees the blood applied to your life, when he sees that your sins have been covered by the blood of Jesus and his sacrifice, he will pass over you. His judgment, his wrath against us is turned away by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

We read the story and think, "those people, those first born sons, they were innocent. How could God let them all die?" The truth is, they weren't innocent. None of us are innocent. Like us, they had sinned. They rebelled against God. As a nation they were at that moment in rebellion against God, refusing to surrender to God's instruction and on that night of the Passover judgment came. The judgment of God against the sins of the Egyptians fell upon the firstborn in their household but the judgment against the sins of the Israelites fell not upon their firstborn, but upon the lamb.

Do you hear that? That's what the story of redemption is all about. Can you see yourself in this story? We've all sinned against God and against his instruction, his commands, sinning by our actions, our thoughts, by our very nature. Knowing His judgment will come, He offers

us salvation, a way of escape. He offers us redemption and salvation, not based upon our efforts or our good works but based upon his mercy, his sacrifice, his offering, his grace.

Judgment is coming. The Egyptians knew it, but Pharaoh wouldn't do anything about it. The Israelites knew it was coming, but they had an option, they could avail themselves of God's salvation plan and be spared. They had to make a choice.

Friends, judgment is coming. The bible says "It is appointed for us to die and after that, the judgment." We have an option. Wouldn't you like to know that your sins are forgiven? Wouldn't you like to know that the blood of Christ has been applied to your heart and life so that when the time comes for God's judgment, He will pass over you? His judgment will be turned away because of the blood of the Lamb. You can have that peace, that assurance today. The bible says, "**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" **I John 1:8-9** The bible says if we call upon the Lord in repentance and in faith, we will be saved. Will you call upon him? Will you surrender your life to him and live for him?

God told the people of Israel they were to commemorate this day of deliverance, this day the Lord led them out of slavery by celebrating the feast of Passover each year. When their children asked why they did this, God said tell them, "**I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.**" **Exodus 13:8**

Oh what the Lord has done for us. He has saved us and delivered us. We celebrated and proclaimed what the Lord did for us as we took communion early this morning. But it is to be more than a once a year ceremony for us, but a daily observance, a daily choice to live our lives as servants of the Lord because of what he has done for us. My sins have been forgiven, the punishment for my sins has been laid upon Jesus on the cross and I have been redeemed and set free. That's the story of redemption. It can be your story too if you will open your heart to Christ today! Are you ready to receive his salvation, his mercy, his grace?