

Pass Over God's Amazing Grace Exodus 1-12

I love to read novels. It is fun to be transported to a time and place that you might have never been before and imagine the sights, sounds, smells, the characters and the story. Novels are in a way an escape from reality, especially in the way you can look ahead in the book to find out how things will end. I am horrible about doing that? How many of you cannot wait until the end of the book to find out what happens? When I find out then I go back and read the rest to find out how they got to that conclusion.

Reading just the New Testament around Easter is sort of the same thing, isn't it? We are having a peek at the conclusion and it may be that we don't know how we got to that place. For certain, there are echoes of the Old Testament all throughout the New Testament if you just keep your eyes open and look and especially if you have read the beginning of the story.

The story of Jesus' resurrection from the dead begins around 1500 years before the birth of Jesus. The Children of Israel were, as they so often were in a terrible situation. For hundreds of years they had enjoyed living among the riches of Egypt. Remember after Joseph made himself known to his brother he had them go get his father back in Palestine and bring him to Goshen. It was the choice part of Egypt. But now its 400 years later. The dynasty has changed in Egypt and there was a new Pharaoh and no one in Egypt even remembered Joseph, even though he had been second in the Kingdom, second only to Pharaoh himself.

The 400 years in Egypt had been very good to the Children of Israel. They had multiplied vigorously and had become a very large and powerful force in Egypt, so much so that the Egyptians began to feel threatened. They enslaved the people of God and made their lives miserable. They thought that by oppressing them, they would slow their growth, but the more they oppressed the Children of Israel, the more they multiplied.

The Bible tells us that the Egyptians used God's people ruthlessly. They found all kinds of hard labor to put on them. To slow their growth, the Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all the Hebrew baby boys as they were born but if they were girls let them live. The midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and let the little boys live. Pharaoh was so afraid of the Hebrews growth that he sent word to all his people that every boy that is born was to be killed but girls could live.

Moses parents could not bear to kill their baby son named Moses. They hid him for 3 months and then they formed a basket and set it afloat on the Nile. God guided that basket so that it ended up in the hands of Pharaoh's daughter who wanted to keep the child and rear him in Pharaoh's house. She needed a wet nurse for the baby and Moses' own sister offered to find a nurse for the child and she went to get their mother. What an incredible story of deliverance.

You know what happened next in the story. Moses grew up but knew that his people were the Hebrews. He saw one of his people being mistreated one day and so he killed the Egyptian guard and tried to hide his body in the sand but when he found out that he had been seen committing the act, he ran for his life to the wilderness. Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness. He married and learned how to be a shepherd and he was a very old man when he

came upon a burning bush. You remember how reluctant Moses was. He kept making excuses, but God kept urging him on. He finally flat out said to God, please send someone else. God was angry but he sent Moses brother Aaron to help him and he equipped him with a message and special powers. Moses was to go to the Pharaoh over all Egypt and demand that he let God's people go.

Well, as you remember, Pharaoh was not easily convinced. Moses and Aaron first went to God's people and showed them the miracles God had given them the power to perform and the people believed. Then it was on to Pharaoh. He demanded that he let God's people go. Pharaoh refused and made the work even harder for the Children of Israel, work almost impossible for them to do. In their frustration God's people cried out against Moses. But Moses went back to Pharaoh and demanded once again that he let the people go. He even did some of the miraculous signs that God gave him to perform but Pharaoh's magicians did the same signs. So God began a series of 10 plagues that he sent upon the Egyptians to convince them to change their hearts.

The first 4 were horrible—water into blood, frogs, gnats and flies. All the water in the Nile and all the water that came from the Nile turned into blood. It was incredible. The Egyptians had to dig along the Nile to find any drinkable water. Then came the frogs. There were frogs everywhere. In their houses, their bed, their cooking bowls, their ovens. But Pharaoh still would not let the people go. So God sent gnats all over the land. Gnats were all over every living thing. Up to this point the magicians of Egypt had been mimicking what Moses and Aaron had done but this time they couldn't. They said to Pharaoh, this must be the hand of God. But Pharaoh was

unmoved. He refused to let the people go. So God sent a plague of flies. Dense swarms of flies were everywhere in Egypt. They covered everything and ruined everything. This time, though, the plague did not harm Goshen, where the Children of Israel were living. Pharaoh still would not allow the people to go. His heart was hard.

God sent two more plagues. The first one was on the livestock. All the livestock of the Egyptians died—all of it, but again Goshen was spared. Pharaoh again would not yield so God sent a plague of festering boils that afflicted all the people and animals in Egypt. Pharaoh's officials were so horribly afflicted that they could not even stand up in the presence of Moses. Amazingly Pharaoh still would not allow the people to go.

God sent Moses to warn Pharaoh again. If he did not let the children of Israel go then God would send the full force of his plagues upon Egypt. It is hard to imagine anything much more devastating than what God has already sent but the next four were truly horrible. First God sends a horrible hail storm. He warns Egypt to remove all the livestock from the fields because the horrible hail would kill them all, men and animal. He wanted the Egyptians to know without a shadow of a doubt who was God.

Exodus 9:13-15 -

'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth.

The hail and lightening storm comes full force and destroys everything outside but Pharaoh still refused to let God's people go. So God sent a plague of locusts to devour what little was left after the hail storm. Pharaoh's officials pleaded with Pharaoh to let the people go since Egypt was now ruined. He tried to make a deal with the Moses that just the men would go. Moses refused and the plague came and Pharaoh once again hardened his heart.

The ninth plague was a preview of coming attractions in Egypt. The darkness that would come over all Egypt, except for Goshen, was so black and thick that you could almost feel it. The darkness lasted for three long days. It was just a prelude to the darkest night in the history of Egypt. Once again, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he refused to listen to Moses. Moses told Pharaoh that he would never see him again and he left. The Lord had told Moses that one more plague would be visited upon Egypt. All the firstborn son in all Egypt would be killed. Even the firstborn of all the cattle would die.

God tells Israel to get ready. Read with me the thrilling words.

Exodus 12:

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with

bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire—head, legs and inner parts. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

12 "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. 13 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.

14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD -a lasting ordinance.

What an incredible time this was. God is rescuing his people. There is no power under heaven that is greater than God! With God's mighty hand he will deliver his people from slavery and bring them to the Promised Land. It will be the resurrection of his people. They are free at last! It is Pass Over. It is life. It is not death time for them. It is time to truly live!

And for generations and generations to come this time would be remembered by God's people. It is their story because God will deliver them too. It is their story because they too are his people. It is their story because they too have been slaves. It is their story because God brings resurrection to life! **It is Pass Over. Death cannot touch God's people. It cannot.** They are safe because of their Father who loves them and who rescues them from evil and slavery.

Can you imagine that night, 1500 years later? Jesus of Nazareth gathered in that upper room in the city of Jerusalem one last time. It was Pass Over and it is hard to even imagine the emotions of Jesus as he remembered. You see he was there when Moses was born in a response

to the cry of God's people. He was there when Moses stood before the burning bush. He was there when the proud, conceited Pharaoh refused to let the people go. He was there when the lamb without blemish was killed and the blood was smeared on the doorposts. He was there. And how he must have trembled when he took that loaf and those cups and ate those bitter herbs and recounted the story of rescue and redemption that was 1500 years old, but now he adds a new ending. God is still here and he still redeems and he still rescues. God has supplied the lamb and that night the lamb would be betrayed and the next day would die. And God would see the blood and Pass Over.

No wonder Paul, filled with wonder penned these words.

I Corinthians 5

7Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul knows the significance of the Pass Over. It is the moment that all things change. The killing of the lamb, the application of the blood, the release of the slave, the prisoners are set free, and we are on our way to the Promised Land. It is a time to be new. It is a time to be different. It is not a time for all yeast and old ways and old slavery. It is spring time and all things are new. The winter has passed and new life is coming to the earth and we are on our way. We have Passed Over from death to life. The darkness is almost over and resurrection is on the way. It is time to change and prepare for our journey home, to the Land of Promise.