

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL GOD DELIVERS GOD THE REDEEMER

The Redeemer Judges and Saves

David Jeremiah recently spoke about one of his church's past Christmas programs. In the program, they connected the manger to the cross. He was surprised to receive 12 letters from people chiding him for connecting the cross to the Christmas story. Obviously, those folks were missing the point of why Jesus came to earth. The manger in Bethlehem is most certainly connected to the cross of Calvary. The baby Jesus grew into the man who would shed His innocent blood for the sins of the world. This lesson on the Sunday after Christmas looks into an Old Testament event that also connects to the cross.

We read the words of John the Baptist in **John 1:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John "made the connection" that the One who had been born in a manger in Bethlehem would become the Passover Lamb as pictured in Exodus.*

In the events that occurred in the Old Testament Passover story, we find both a picture of God's judgment and a picture of God's great salvation! We see the severity of God's judgment as He warns and then unleashes His judgment upon the Egyptians. We see the beauty of His salvation as He provides a way to save Israel by using the blood of a lamb.

God warns of impending judgment.

Read Exodus 11:4-8 (ESV) ⁴ *So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.' ⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.*

As we read of how the LORD warned the Pharaoh of impending judgment through Moses, let's consider how the Redeemer of all the earth always does one of two things – He either judges us or He saves us. The choice is ours. When the slave, Joseph, interpreted the dream of another Pharaoh, a dream that foretold of an impending famine in all the land, not just Egypt, that Pharaoh believed the Word of the LORD and all of Egypt as well as the family of Jacob were saved. Now, 400 years later, the Pharaoh of Moses' time did not believe the Word of God regarding impending judgment and his hardened heart towards God's Word was the very thing that brought judgment upon the entire land.

In most cultures, firstborn sons are considered special, and in Egypt, they were considered sacred. The LORD considered the nation of Israel His firstborn. **Exodus 4:22-23 (ESV)** ²² *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,’²³ and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’*

The Pharaoh had tried to kill the Jewish male babies, and his officers had brutally mistreated the Jewish slaves. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ *‘Judge not, that you be not judged.’² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*

There are numerous pictures in scripture of *the measure you use it will be measured to you*. Jacob lied to his father Isaac and years later, Jacob's sons lied to him. David committed adultery and had the woman's husband murdered, and David's daughter was raped and two of his sons were murdered. Haman built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai, but it was Haman who was hanged there instead. **Galatians 6:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

Pharaoh had already been given nine specific opportunities of obeying God’s command to let His people go under less severe afflictions. Nine times Pharaoh had refused the call to *let my people go*. The previous plagues gave Pharaoh an opportunity of doing freely what he would now do under severe judgment.

We like Pharaoh are given the choice of God’s judgment or God’s great salvation. **Romans 6:23 (ESV)** ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* I will say it again! The choice is ours!

Moses was angry with Pharaoh. His was a holy indignation. Everything terrible that God through Moses had promised Pharaoh had come true. Moses undoubtedly thought that Pharaoh would care enough about the firstborn of Egypt to be obedient this time. Moses did not want the firstborn of Egypt to die. We like Moses know of God’s impending judgment. Do we care enough to tell a lost and dying world about the Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world? We must tell them even when they won’t believe. Jesus was still willing to die for the sins of the world knowing there were many who would never believe. Jesus said in **Luke 16:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *... ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’*

God offers protection through a perfect sacrifice.

Read Exodus 12:1-13 (ESV) ¹ *The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,² ‘This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.’³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb ...⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according ... to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.⁷*
‘Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in

which they eat it. ⁸ *They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.* ⁹ ... ¹¹ *In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.* ¹² *For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.* ¹³ *The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.*

As we consider the events leading up to the night of coming judgment, we notice that there was preparation period. The event was so significant in the lives of the descendents of Abraham, that their calendar was to be changed because of it. Several centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus, a new calendar was implemented to mark the birth of Jesus Christ as the dividing point in world history. Small mistakes were later discovered in their calculations of Jesus' actual birth. However, when you see the calendar designation A.D. (anno domini) know that it means "in the year of our Lord." **Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The term Passover is a word play in both English and Hebrew. For those whose houses were marked with blood, the death angel would "pass over." There are three parts to the Passover. (1) The killing and eating of the lamb. (2) The sprinkling of the blood upon the doorposts which was particular to the first Passover. (3) The feast of unleavened bread for seven days after.

After the lamb's blood was shed and applied, the people were directed to *eat the lambs.* **2 Peter 3:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...* We cannot grow in our relationship with Christ without being nourished by His Word. **John 6:35 (ESV)** ³⁵ *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

Bitter herbs symbolize the bitter experiences of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt. The Lamb of God tasted the bitter cup for all of us. **John 19:29-30 (ESV)** ²⁹ *A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.* ³⁰ *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

The Passover was also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (**Exodus 23:15**). Unleavened bread reflected the fact that the people had no time to put yeast in their bread before their hasty departure from Egypt. Leaven (we call it yeast today) is a picture of sin. **Matthew 16:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

Eating the Passover feast while dressed for travel (and probably standing) was a sign of the Hebrews' faith. Although they were not yet free, they were to prepare themselves because God had said He would lead them out of Egypt. Their preparation was an act of faith. **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

Just like the blood on the doorpost on the night of the Passover, the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross **will not** save a soul from death unless it is **applied** - *When I see the blood, I will pass over you.* God gives us a crystal clear picture of how He saves a soul. Death was promised because of sin to Adam and Eve but God says, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*" What is the difference between eternal life and eternal death? It is the blood – the blood of Jesus. Jesus said on the night before His crucifixion in **Matthew 26:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ *for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

God's judgment is severe and His mercy is great.

Read Exodus 12:29-32 (ESV) ²⁹ *At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.* ³⁰ *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.* ³¹ *Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said.* ³² *Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"*

The Egyptians believed that the firstborn of both man and beast belonged to the gods of Egypt. Now, the true God of heaven and earth had claimed the firstfruits of the Egyptian gods – man and animal.

What a contrast on that night! There was feasting and expectation in the houses of Israel while mourning came to the houses of Egypt! There is always a great contrast between those who have the blood of the Lamb covering their hearts to those who do not. It is the difference between life and death. Jesus said in **Matthew 8:11-12 (ESV)** ¹¹ *I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,* ¹² *while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The LORD had told Moses what would happen. Moses told Pharaoh and Pharaoh did not believe it. But just because Pharaoh did not believe the Word of the LORD's judgment, did not keep judgment from coming. The LORD had promised Abraham in **Genesis 15:13-14 (ESV)** ¹³ *... Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.* ¹⁴ *But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.* God Almighty keeps His promises. He has promised to judge. He has promise to deliver! Choose to be covered by His blood and live forever!