

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL GOD DELIVERS

## *God the Redeemer – Worthy of Praise*

It is appropriate that we begin our first lesson of the new year with a familiar Bible story that reminds us that our Redeemer is worthy of praise. The ultimate goal of the Gospel Project – Chronological lessons is to help us visualize the continuing pictures found throughout the Old Testament leading us to Jesus the Messiah in the New Testament.

When we take pictures with our smartphones, we see the images immediately. However, when we upload those photos to our computers or tablets, we get a clearer view of the pictures – sometimes the snapshot is not as good as we thought – sometimes the picture is even more delightful. “More delightful” is how I describe the picture of the Israelites’ miraculous crossing of the Red Sea when we “enlarge the view!”

The first detail we see in the picture is that God is worthy of praise for His guidance!

**Read Exodus 13:17-22 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.”* <sup>18</sup> *But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.* <sup>19</sup> *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.”* <sup>20</sup> *And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.* <sup>21</sup> *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.* <sup>22</sup> *The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.*

There were two ways from Egypt to Canaan. One was a short cut from the north of Egypt to the south of Canaan, perhaps about four or five days' journey; the other, going through the wilderness was much farther, and the “long way around” was the way God chose to lead his people.

As we look more closely at the picture, we find various reasons why the LORD led them through the wilderness by the Red Sea. The most immediate reason was that the Egyptians who were soon to follow would be drowned in the sea while the Israelites would be saved in the same place. **Romans 8:28 (ESV)** <sup>28</sup> *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Also, it involved a matter of Moses keeping his word to the Egyptians. The LORD had told Moses to request of Pharaoh to allow the people to worship at Mt. Horeb. This route would lead them there. **1 John 2:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected...* God’s children should be “people of His Word” and truthful in all that we do.

Another reason was going the shortest route would have brought the Israelites immediately into the land of the Philistines and the Israelites were not yet prepared for battle. Verse 18 tells us that they left Egypt in battle formation but the LORD knew they were not yet equipped to fight. **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* This is a reminder to us that “God’s timing” is everything.

Moses’ taking of Joseph’s bones to honor Joseph’s ancient request is a picture of how God keeps His promises over the long-term. Joseph knew the promise given to Abraham that the Israelites would return to Canaan after 400 years. God’s promises are not always fulfilled in our lifetime but we can trust He will keep His promises. Yes, Moses honored Joseph’s request to take Joseph’s bones from Egypt with the intent of burying those bones himself but it would be Joshua who much later would have that privilege. **Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.*

Let’s look more closely into the picture – *the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.* Notice that the same pillar of support that brought light to the Israelites brought darkness upon the Egyptians. We read of the cloud in **Exodus 14:20 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> *coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.* The cloud being light to one and darkness to the other reminds me of **1 Corinthians 1:23-24 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,* <sup>24</sup> *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* When we look at “Old Testament pictures” we often see glorious pictures of the Presence of God with His people. Do not be satisfied with looking at the “pictures” of the Presence of God with others. If you have invited Christ into your heart, make 2016 the year to be more keenly aware than ever of His Presence **IN** you. **Colossians 1:27 (ESV)** <sup>27</sup> *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* AND **John 14:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

God is worthy of praise for His glory is a beautiful picture and becomes even more beautiful the more we enlarge it.

**Read Exodus 14:1-14 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *Then the LORD said to Moses,* <sup>2</sup> *“Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp... between Migdol and the sea... ”* <sup>3</sup> *For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’* <sup>4</sup> *And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.”* *And they did so.* <sup>5</sup> *When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”* <sup>6</sup> *So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him,* <sup>7</sup> *... and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.* <sup>9</sup> *The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea...*  <sup>10</sup> *When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD.* <sup>11</sup> *They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no*

*graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?*<sup>12</sup> *Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”*<sup>13</sup> *And Moses said to the people, “**Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.*<sup>14</sup> *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”*

The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is mentioned on several occasions throughout the narrative and it is only natural to wonder why would God harden someone’s heart. Does this mean that God took a nice young Egyptian Pharaoh and turned him into a heartless monster? No! God does not change the free will He gives to each of us; however He is a discerner of our hearts (**Hebrews 4:12**). In Pharaoh’s situation, Jehovah used this ruthless leader’s heart to ultimately bring good to His people and glory to God although that was certainly not the intent of Pharaoh’s heart. J. Vernon McGee explains that when the Scriptures say that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, it means that God forced Pharaoh to make the decisions that were already in his heart to do. Be aware: Yahweh’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart stands as a warning to all who would seek to do their own will rather than the will of Almighty God.

When we look at the reaction of the Israelites to the approaching Egyptian army, theirs is a response that we understand – they turned to the LORD and in the same breath began complaining. Even though we understand the people’s reaction, we do well to learn to avoid it. The Israelites had just experienced the power of the LORD when the death angel passed over all of their firstborn but they quickly turned to grumbling and complaining when the next disaster came instead of trusting God. This grumbling heart was an attitude that never disappeared in this generation of people. **Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)**<sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*<sup>6</sup> *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

In Moses, we see a beautiful response to a complaining people and we see Moses’ response pictured elsewhere in scripture:

(1) *Fear not* – **2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)**<sup>7</sup> *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

(2) *Stand firm* – **Galatians 5:1 (ESV)**<sup>1</sup> *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

(3) *See the salvation of the LORD* – **Lamentations 3:26 (ESV)**<sup>26</sup> *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

And our last picture today is that God is worthy of praise for His deliverance.

**Read Exodus 14:21-31 (ESV)**<sup>21</sup> *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.*<sup>22</sup> *And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*<sup>23</sup> *The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh’s horses,*

his chariots, and his horsemen.<sup>24</sup> And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic,<sup>25</sup> clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”<sup>26</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.”<sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.<sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.<sup>29</sup> But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.<sup>30</sup> Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.<sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

The Israelites walking through two walls of water with the Egyptian army pursuing them reminds of the word of Isaiah found in **Isaiah 30:21 (ESV)**<sup>21</sup> *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.*

There are those who would like nothing better than to explain away the miracle of the Israelites walking on dry land in the middle of the Red Sea. It is not the purpose of this lesson to convince you that it occurred. It is your choice to believe or not to believe. As for me, God said it, I believe it and that settles it. I also believe what Stephen the first Christian martyr said as he was being stoned: **Acts 7:56 (ESV)**<sup>56</sup> *And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”* And I believe what Jesus said regarding Himself in **Mark 13:26 (ESV)**<sup>26</sup> *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.*

Moses was a servant of God and through that service Moses became a deliverer for the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. In doing the LORD’s will, Moses the deliverer became an Old Testament picture of the promised Messiah who would be born to the virgin Mary for the purpose of delivering His people from our sins. **Matthew 1:21 (ESV)**<sup>21</sup> *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

After the children of Israel stood on the bank with their enemies defeated, Moses wrote a song of praise. He said in part: **Exodus 15:2 (ESV)**<sup>2</sup> *The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.* Moses’ song is known as the Song of the Redeemed. When I think of the Song of the Redeemed, I am reminded of the words of **Psalms 107:2 (ESV)**<sup>2</sup> *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble.*

Music is God’s gift to us as a way to praise Him. Our Redeemer is worthy of our praise and that reminds me of the words of a hymn penned by Fanny Crosby: Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am.