

Text: Exodus 14:15-31

Title: "God's salvation cannot fail"

Time: 11/15/20 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Conventional Egyptology has a difficult time accepting the account before us as historical because of its description of a supernatural event. The religious conviction called *scientific determinism* believes that all real events of history were natural phenomena and that whatever is supernatural in the record of the past is merely legend. The first definition of the term given by Thefreedictionary.com is "the doctrine that all facts and events result from the operation of natural laws."

That is a good definition, but I would add to it a bit. I think a more complete definition would be "*scientific determinism* is the religious faith in the doctrine that all facts and events result from the operation of natural laws." This religious faith contrasts the Christian faith, which responds this way: "Christianity includes the religious faith in the doctrine that all natural laws were created supernaturally by the God of the Bible who can do with them as He desires, including interrupting them with supernatural miracles."

So it is for religious-faith reasons that conventional Egyptologists have difficulty with the idea that the history of this passage really happened, and it is for religious-faith reasons that Christians do not. But there is a related detail of Egyptian history that naturalists have had much difficulty explaining. Conventional Egyptology believes that, unlike its warring neighbors of the ancient Middle East, Egypt did not have chariots until they were introduced by the Hyksos invasion at the end of the Middle Kingdom. They believe this, in part, because when the Egyptians expelled

the Hyksos, they did so without chariots according to the second stela of Kamose, which describes his marine attacks on the Hyksos.

In 2013 the news site Archeology.org reported on a 2008 re-discovery in the Egyptian History Museum of the leather parts of a chariot (called *the Tano leather*). The report described them this way: “The extremely rare, embellished leather pieces represent all of the parts of an Old Kingdom royal chariot” [<https://www.archaeology.org/news/839-130502-egypt-chariot-leather>; 11/12/2020]. Nevertheless, those working on the leather parts presented a paper at a 2012 chariot conference in Cairo that said that the leather could not be older than the New Kingdom (18th Dynasty) because of “historical and pictorial evidence.”

So Egyptology wrestles with Egypt’s chariot mystery. Why did their enemies have them, but they did not? Did we find Old Kingdom chariot leather in 2008, or did we not? I messaged the Egyptologist working on this leather for an update on his findings but have not heard back from him yet.

But why would Egypt not have the chariots her enemies did? If she had them, why would there be so little pictorial evidence of this? What if she had them and they were all destroyed the way our passage says they were? What if whatever pictorial evidence existed for them prior to the events of this passage became reminders of a national disaster that no one in Egypt wanted to be reminded of? What if, after all the chariots were destroyed by God in the Red Sea, all the pictures of chariots were destroyed by the Egyptians to erase this memory?

Well, if these things are true, then the Egyptological chariot mystery is solved. Simply put, if the exodus happened prior

to the Hyksos invasion, the Bible explains why there is so little evidence that Egypt had the weapon that all her neighbors relied on so heavily. I am, of course, no Egyptologist. I am just a guy who believes his Bible. To me, this just seems to be one more Egyptian mystery solved by the new chronology of Egyptologists like David Rohl, one that directly supports the historicity of the biblical account.

As important as evidence for the historicity of this passage is, Christ and the authors of both the Old and New Testaments took its historicity for granted, as everyone who claims the label *Christian* must. Ps.66:6, "He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him." Ps. 74:13, "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength." Ps. 78:13, "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap." Ps. 106:9, "He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness." Ps. 136:13-15, "To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever." Heb. 11:29, "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."

Clearly, the Lord would have us read this account under that same assumption this morning, that this really did happen, for there is evidence of a much more important kind here – evidence that God's salvation cannot fail. This account gives us four pieces of evidence, which confirm for us truth for our needy hearts: God's salvation cannot fail.

I. God split the sea, so His salvation cannot fail (vv. 15-16, 21-22).

Illustration: An old Chinese proverb teaches that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

Application: The Lord has instructed Israel to fear not, stand still, and see God's salvation (v. 13). They were doing their best to do that in verse 15. Even Moses could not quite hold his peace just yet, for as the enemy comes closer and closer and the situation becomes more and more desperate, this leader is crying to His God for deliverance.

The Lord's answer comes. He tells Moses that the time for praying is over, and the time for moving forward has come. Israel is supposed to move forward with no place to go. But God has an answer for this confusion as well. He tells Moses to do three things that would provide a place to go: lift up his rod; stretch out his hand; and split the Gulf of Suez.

Now there are three commands here, but the first two are quite different than the last of the three. Moses can lift his rod. It is not that heavy. He can stretch out his hand. He suffers from no paralysis. But split the sea? Yes, he must do that too, but not without God's supernatural intervention. God sends a wind from the east that produces walls in the Gulf of Suez on either side of Israel's way of escape. God gives Israel and Moses something to do – move forward, lift the rod, stretch out the hand; but only He could do what really needed to be done – split the sea. And yet, had Israel and Moses refused to do their part, we cannot say that the sea would have split.

Even so, in God's work of salvation in and through us this morning, the Lord tells us to not only cry out to Him, but also to obey Him. We have some things to do, none of which can do the miracle we really need, but still we must do them. We are to be faithful local church members; we are to assemble; we are to share the gospel with the lost; we are

to flee idolatry and take up our cross daily, with open Book and bent knee. But still after all of this, there must be a splitting of the sea. There must be the supernatural work of God that produces salvation, or no man will be saved. No one looks back on this passage and says, "Wow — did you see how Moses picked up his stick and stretched his arm?" The Lord gets all the glory in His unfailing work of salvation.

That is what God means when He tells Israel, "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." God's salvation is complete without us, but in order for us to experience its path of deliverance, we must move forward in repentance and faith. We must obey the gospel, and then God splits our seas. What can possibly keep us from moving forward in faith in this way?

C. H. McIntosh put his answer this way: "There is no uncertainty when God makes a way for us; but every self-devised path must prove a path of doubt and hesitation. The unregenerate man may move along with great apparent firmness and decision in his own ways; but one of the most distinct elements in the new creation is self-distrust, and the element which answers thereto is confidence in God. It is when our eyes have seen God's salvation that we can walk therein; but this can never be distinctly seen until we have been brought to the end of our own poor doings" (2.183).

Have you been brought to the end of your own poor doings? Do you see that God split a way through the dark seas of your Egypt? You cannot part the seas, but are you picking up your staff and stretching out your hand? God now says, "Move forward." Will you go? Will you obey Christ? God splits the seas for those who obey Him. His salvation cannot fail.

II. God hardened the Egyptians, so His salvation cannot fail (vv. 17-18, 23).

Application: We read of the hardened heart 20 times in the book of Exodus. This is the very last such reference. Of the previous 19 times, 18 are about Pharaoh and one is about his servants. Now for the first time, God says He is going to harden the heart of the Egyptians. When the Egyptians charge against Israel with their gnashing teeth, vehement hatred, and murderous intent, the Lord wants Israel to remember one simple thing – “It is I, behold, I . . .” (v. 17). When men reject God, His work of salvation has not failed.

The purpose of God’s work of salvation is not that the Egyptians be saved. God’s purpose is a greater one – that the Savior would be honored by everyone and that everyone would know that He is God. That purpose is not going to fail. It was a blessing to Israel and the mixed multitude who followed Him out of Egypt, and it was a curse to the Egyptians, who first hardened their own heart with God hardening them after. The purpose did not fail. It was God who hardened the Egyptians, so His salvation cannot fail.

III. God used the pillar, so His salvation cannot fail (vv. 19-20, 24-28).

Application: There are three names for the same thing here – the angel of God (v. 19), the pillar of cloud and fire, and the Lord (v. 24). The Old Testament refers to the angel of the Lord as both distinct from or “with” the Lord and as the same as the Lord. He reminds us of the Son of God, whom John tells us was both “with God” and “was God” (1:1). This pillar is a preincarnate appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity, God’s Son who became Jesus Christ.

And so it is no surprise that we see Him protecting His people from their enemies (Ps. 23:1). The night is dark. Israel escapes though the split sea on dry land. Giving them time to do so is the protective pillar, which not only illuminates the way of salvation for Israel, but also blinds Egypt to it. Israel uses the path through the sea on God's terms; Egypt tries to do so on their own terms, and the God who made the way looked down from the pillar in judgment.

Beware of pretending to follow Christ on your own terms. The path that God has provided in Christ must be traversed on God's terms. Those are simple - make sure you are on the right side of the pillar. When God shows you the way of salvation and you can see it - trust and obey.

IV. God caused Israel to see and believe, so His salvation cannot fail (vv. 29-31).

Application: C. H. McIntosh summed up this conclusion very well: "The fears of [Israel] and the boastings of [Egypt] had both alike been proved utterly groundless; Jehovah's glorious work had annihilated both the one and the other."

What shall God's glorious work of salvation do for you and I this morning? In the end, shall it annihilate all our fears or destroy all our boastings? Having seen that God's salvation never fails, will we, though trembling and fearful, believe, or shall we continue in the boastings of our ever hardening unbelief?

Conclusion: Another New Testament passage that assumes the historicity of these events is 1 Cor. 10:1-2, where the Apostle Paul describes how Israel was baptized into Moses with the pillar and in the sea.

As we learned last week from Hebrews 3, Moses is a type of Christ. Christ is our Moses, and His tomb and His resurrection are our baptism. Rom. 6:3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

To die with Christ, to be raised with Christ, and to begin to walk in newness of life with Christ is God's mighty work of salvation, and it never fails. Do you have this newness of life? We must believe on Christ, our Moses, and on the Lord who sent Him to die for our sins at Calvary in order to receive this newness of life. He split open a way in the sea of death's tomb for a salvation from sin that cannot fail. Will you follow the Lord for this way of salvation today? If you will, tell Him you will.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching