

As you may know, we have been talking about the Israelites in the wilderness with issues of **the water**.

This morning we will continue this subject with The Stricken Rock of Horeb in Exodus 17, please turn there.

In this passage, Exodus 17, the children of Israel march forward from the wilderness according to the command of the Lord, and they pitch their tents in a place called Rephidim.

Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, and there was **no water** for the people to drink.

Now we've seen it all!

We've seen too much water at the Red Sea in Exodus 14:9.

We have seen the wrong kind of water or the bitter waters of Marah in Exodus 15:23.

Now we have the test of no water in this passage.

The solution is always the same; no matter how we are tested, all of the solutions are found in Christ.

That is certainly true here where, once again, the solution that emerges is the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Every test is a glorious opportunity to trust the Lord in that hopeless situation and to further recognize the fact that we really are helpless.

In this manner, our helplessness actually becomes a source of encouragement to us.

Exodus 17:2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?”

Notice that the people, the sons of Israel, are arguing with Moses and rejecting his authority.

Notice the double standards of these emotional and legalistic believers.

On one hand, they have rejected the authority of their leader; but on the other hand, they are demanding that he give them water.

In other words, they now make a demand that is inconsistent with their rejection.

If the Jews reject the authority of Moses, why do they ascribe to him the supernatural power of providing water for 2 million people and their children?

You can see how irrational they are!

If they thought that Moses could manufacture water, then they should have accepted his authority, but they didn't.

Instead, what they do is -- they ascribe to Moses **a power that he does not possess while rejecting the very authority that he does possess!**

Moses can't give them water; he's just as helpless as they are.

The only difference -- is that Moses is a man of great spiritual strength.

Now remember who led them there; it was the Lord.

Here at Horeb, they will be reminded again about that greatest hour in the entire meritorious history of Deity, -- which was about to come upon the earth: ---- **the hour of the Cross.**

In fact, the Bible records the Cross as “**the hour**” as we read in the following verses:

/Matthew 26:45 Behold, **the hour** is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Luke 22:14 And when **the hour** had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him.

John 12:23 **The hour** has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.\

The Jews are exactly where the Lord wants them to be.

They are in the right place, and they are in the will of God.

However, right now, they are simply malfunctioning.

By the way, -- they don't ask for water; the original Hebrew text makes it clear that they demand it.

So how is the Cross going to fit into all of this?

Well, the Cross is the place where all arrogance, bitterness, cowardliness, and presumptuousness are forgiven.

We will see the grace of God pointing to the Cross instead of their failures.

The people had pressure from lack of water, but you must remember a very important principle: Moses doesn't have any water either.

He doesn't have a fountain in his tent where he could drink and then come out and talk to them.

He doesn't have any water, but notice that he isn't complaining.

Moses has the same pressure that they have; in fact, **he has more.**

Not only have they rejected his authority, but now they are also thinking about murdering him.

So what do we have here?

We have fear, worry, anxiety, anger, hatred, violence, and murder; these are all emotional sins.

What will be the solution?

The Cross of Christ!

Exodus 17:3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

The people, once again, slandered Moses and complained.

Inevitably, **believers who cannot function under faith-rest become very suspicious.**

When they asked Moses why he had brought them up from Egypt, they had assumed that Moses had a hidden, sinister reason for bringing them into the desert.

In other words, they are accusing Moses of a conspiracy.

In their irrationality, which comes from their emotional sins and their hysteria, they assign to Moses their very own motivation and their flaws.

They had started to conspire against him!

They are **arrogant, self-centered, and suspicious**; and yet, as we will see, **they are still loved by God.**

Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.”

Moses has evaluated and estimated the situation correctly.

He sees that their anger has turned to hatred, and he sees hatred motivating violence.

So what does he do?

He does what a good leader should do:

He uses the faith-rest drill; he talks to the Lord about it. He didn't panic like the people of Israel.

Leaders cannot afford to be frightened in a pressured situation.

One thing he doesn't try to do is justify himself before the people.

He is absolutely innocent, and he still doesn't try to justify or defend himself.

He makes no excuses to the people.

A lot of people never advance in the spiritual life because they're always trying to justify themselves in all interpersonal relationships.

People feel that they're strong if they can justify themselves to other people, but that's wrong!

There are people who always have to be right and can never be wrong because they are so occupied with themselves.

So notice that Moses did not react; instead of starting a confrontation with the people, instead of entering into self-justification, Moses goes to the Lord and states the facts.

Now the matter is entirely in the Lord's hands.

You see, there is nothing wrong with going to the Lord and telling him what is going on; **however, once you do, you have to leave it in His hands.**

So in Exodus 17:4, the people were picking up stones to kill Moses; and therefore **the Lord, in His matchless sense of humor and in His grace, is going to bring water for them out of a stone!**

Of course, the stone will be slightly larger than the ones they are picking up to kill Moses with.

The Lord will bring them water from **the rock of Horeb.**

Exodus 17:5 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.”

Notice that the Lord doesn't tell Moses to hide behind the rock but, rather, to go in front of the people; and this does not bother Moses at all.

He wasn't going to run away from them and look for a place to hide.

If you are in a position of leadership, **you don't run away**; ---- if you are afraid of anyone under your command, you have failed as a leader.

So with rocks in their hands, which were very real, and with the motivation of hatred that was also very real, the people are ready to kill Moses.

One time, they had thought that Moses was wonderful, but now they hate him.

That's one of the things all leaders must get used to.

The people that they lead may like them one day and hate them the next, but as leaders, they have to do their job unto the Lord.

Note also that Moses was to take the very staff that he had used at the Nile River and then move out.

This was to remind them, once again, of their past and of all things the Lord had already done for them; but as we will see, they had forgotten what He had done.

/Deuteronomy 32:18 “You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth”.

**Psalm 106:21 “They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt”. **

The Lord tells Moses to pass before the people and take with him some of the elders of Israel.

In other words, **Prayer time is over; action time has started!**

The existence of the elders indicates the principle of delegated authority.

Moses doesn't handle all the problems of Israel personally; he delegates responsibility.

No one can be a leader without delegating responsibility because all good leadership must have organization, which means delegating responsibility to others.

Exodus 17:6 “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

When the Lord said “I will stand before you,” it was a reference to the pillar of cloud. – This is typology.

The Lord Jesus Christ had led him to this spot, and Moses simply followed the cloud.

Horeb is the place where Moses saw the burning bush, so he is back on familiar ground.

The striking of the rock becomes very important.

/The staff represented the judgment of God, and the striking of the rock represents the Lord Jesus Christ being struck on the Cross.

**1Corinthians 10:4 “And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ”. **

So the lesson was that the Lord Jesus Christ would be judged for the sins of the entire world.

However, why was it used on this particular occasion at a place called Meribah, which means to murmur and to complain, to rebel?

It’s an interesting question:

It was used to **teach the Jews** that there was **provision to judge their sins and their failures at the Cross**, and as believers, they could **recover** from their murmuring and complaining ---- IF THEY CHOSE TO DO SO.

This is analogous to the water of salvation in Isaiah 55:1 and Revelation 22:17.

/Isaiah 55:1 “Ho! every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

**Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. **

We know from elsewhere in the Bible that the water did not sprinkle out, but rather, the water **gushed out**.

**/Psalm 78:20 “Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing”. **

The promise was that as Moses struck the rock, waters would gush forth that the people might drink.

The cry of the people had been “Is the Lord among us or not?”

So what more proof could be demonstrated?

We have a **solid rock** that was struck by a **fragile rod** and an **enormous stream of water bursting forth**, fresh and pure, enough for over two million people.

The people would be able to drink until they could drink no more, and this was done in the sight of the elders.

Here is another - fantastic picture - in the Old Testament that foreshadows the coming Messiah.

Our Lord spoke of this same principle, in **/John 7:37 “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink”**.

In **Luke 20:17 “What then is this that is written, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone?’”**\

However, the Rock was not only rejected; it was stricken.

**/Zechariah 13:7 For it is written, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” declares the Lord of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered”. **

It points to the same astounding fact: in the Cross of Christ, **healing streams of eternal life flow forth for all mankind.**

John wrote of how the Roman soldier took his spear and pierced the breast of the Lord,

**/John 19:34 “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out”. **

In fact, when the Bible comes to a close in the book of Revelation, we are to understand that all of history is moving toward this sublime consummation prefigured by the stricken Rock of Horeb.

/Revelation 22:1 “Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb”.\

The Lamb, we are told in Revelation 5, stands in the midst of the throne as one who has been slain; and now the water of life flows from the slain Lamb.

It is the stricken Rock from which the water flows.

One could stagger at the extent of the call with which the Bible closes.

There are no conditions but one, -- and that is **a willingness to come.**

Every person on the earth is invited.

None are too degraded, none are too wretched, none are too hopeless, and none are too sunken in sin; **no one is excluded.**

The entire sinful race is invited to come.

No conditions whatsoever but **a willingness to come and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The water flows forth from the stricken Rock for all and forever.

The things of the earth cannot quench our thirst; only the things of God can.

The **water still flows** from the wounded side of our **Savior, the stricken Rock.**

I would like to remind us about that and what better story to illustrate than:

The Rock Stricken Again—a Mistake on the Part of Moses

Please turn forward to Numbers 20 where we see once again -- the Israelites, as they come to Kadesh, -- are **without water.**

This passage shows us how -- the work that our Lord did on the cross was finished once and for all.

Once a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, they believe that the Lord went to the cross for them already and that they will never have to face that spiritual death that he took as our substitute.

When we fall out of fellowship as believers, we don't lose our salvation or go the cross and be judged again and again, --- no -- we simply talk to

God and we rebound and recover and get back in the plan of God for our lives.

Numbers 20:1-6 Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why then have you brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink." Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them;

Notice that -- this time, the Lord's command is not that Moses should take his rod and strike the rock that was before his eyes, but that he should merely speak unto the rock with the promise that it would give forth water so that the people and their animals might drink.

Numbers 20:7-8 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.”

However, Moses and Aaron gather the congregation together before the rock and then begin to **misrepresent the character and nature of God** to the people.

Please don't miss this.

Numbers 20:9-11 So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, “Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank.

Here is where the consequences for Israel's great leader are seemingly heartbreaking.

Moses was told that because he had struck the rock when he had been told simply to speak to the rock, he would not be permitted to bring the people into the land that the Lord would give them.

He would see the land of promise, but he would not be permitted to enter it.

He would stare at it from a distance and see Canaan's lovely hills and valleys and streams but never be permitted to set foot upon the land.

Numbers 20:12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as Holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

This was the verdict given by the Most High.

We know from what we read, in chapter 3 of the book of Deuteronomy, (please turn there) that Moses's heart was broken.

Deuteronomy 3:23-28 I also pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, "O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant. Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or

on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.” But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, “Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he shall give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.”

It is not hard to understand how much Moses deeply desired to go and see the good land of promise.

Humanly speaking, it would seem unfair that he would not be the man to lead the Israelites into the land that flowed with milk and honey, since he suffered greatly to get them there.

Moses begged the Lord so that he would be able to go, but the Lord would not hear him.

In fact, Moses was told to speak no more to the Lord concerning this matter, and so he did not enter.

Now the question arises—why?

Why was Moses's punishment so severe for striking the rock in an angry fashion when he was told simply to speak to the rock with the promise that the water would be given?

There is another great lesson here concerning the Cross.

It has something to do with the efficacy of the work of Christ on the Cross.

Moses had perverted the type and slaughtered the figure.

Moses had done a terrible thing in giving an erroneous view of the Cross with its once-and-for-all consummation of the infinitely glorious work of redemption.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a few New Testament verses that teach us that:

The Rock was to be struck only once and was not to be stricken again.

**/Romans 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **

**/Hebrews 9:24-26 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. **

**/Hebrews 10:10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. **