

(Exodus) Exodus 17:1-7

by J. Vernon McGee

The sermon explores the significance of the rock that provided water for the Israelites as a powerful symbol of Christ and the spiritual sustenance He offers to believers today.

Duration: 10:22

Scripture: Exodus 17:1-2, Exodus 17:4, Exodus 17:6-7, Numbers 20:8, Numbers 20:11

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of the smitten rock and its significance in relation to spiritual blessings. He emphasizes that although God has blessed us abundantly with spiritual blessings, many souls are still spiritually parched and in need of drink. The preacher draws parallels between the complaining of the children of Israel in the Bible and the tendency of people today to constantly find fault and complain. He highlights the importance of turning to Jesus, who is likened to the smitten rock, for salvation and the living waters that will quench our spiritual thirst.

Transcript

Now we come in this seventeenth chapter to the experience of the children of Israel thirsting and then the way that God provided water for them. I'll begin reading now at chapter 17, verse 1. And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Zion after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink.

And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? You see, the children of Israel were complaining everlastingly. They start murmuring again. God graciously meets their needs and then something else comes up and they begin to cry out, complain, find fault.

And Moses is getting a little impatient, I think, with them. I'm reading now verse 4. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. And Moses was, I think, willing at this time to turn his job over to somebody else.

He was pretty much put out with them, complaining and whining and finding fault. Today there are many churches just in this same spiritual condition, and they generally think they're in an excellent condition.

Now will you notice God's provision now for them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel, and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take it in thine hand, and go.

Remember now, that rod at the very beginning was to be a badge and seal of the authority and power of Moses. Now notice, Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

And he called the name of the place Massah, or Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not? Now this is the first experience here of the rock and the water that came from the rock. And I think that probably here at the very beginning, we need to ascertain what we're talking about. What does the rock represent? And we're not left here to guesswork or our own speculation or our own wisdom, but we are now not only dependent upon the Spirit of God, but He steps in and gives us the answer.

Now you'll recall that we turned before to the 1 Corinthians, the 10th chapter, and that there we saw the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea. And after that experience, we're told, verse 4, "...and did all drink," and by the way, it says, "...and did all eat the same spiritual meat." That's verse 3. That's manna. Now that manna was Christ, as we've seen, and John makes that clear.

But notice verse 4, "...and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." Now remember, all these things happened unto them, for examples, unto us. Now the bread they ate, manna, is a picture of Christ. He's the bread of life, but He's also the water of life.

And this rock, I think, is a beautiful picture of Christ, and it reveals here, in contrast to the unbelief of the people, you see they doubted God here, and the rock is a good solid foundation, but they were building on a butter foundation. They doubted God, they were leaning on cobwebs and broken reeds, and that small cloud of doubt was hiding the face of God from them. Now that rock's a beautiful picture of Christ.

You remember the psalmist said, "...lead me to the rock that is higher than I." That's Christ. And again, the psalmist said in Psalm 78, 35, "...and they remembered that God was their rock." And then the Lord Jesus said, "...upon this rock I will build my church." And that rock is Christ. And Peter says, "...the stone the builders rejected, the same has become the headstone of the corner." And no other foundation, Paul says, "...can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Now the Lord Jesus, as the hymn has it, is a rock in a weary land.

And though this is a marvelous picture of Him as the foundation, the one we rest upon, the church is built on Him, but it's the last place to go to drink, to get a drink of water. And I don't mean to be facetious, but you couldn't even get hard water from granite from a rock. It's like getting blood from a turnip or orange juice from a doorknob.

But look upon that rock and you can admire its sterling quality, its durability, and there are great lessons from it. Christ is the rock. You can test it, analyze it, but you can't drink it.

Jesus is a rock. But listen, friends, His beautiful life and all of His durability will not save you. His teaching will not redeem your soul.

His life and teachings are like polished marble engraved, and you can apply them to your life with carborundum or optician's rouge, but, my friend, it won't really save you. It may polish you a little. And He spoke of the fact that you could dash your foot against a stone, that He was that kind of rock, but that you can fall on that stone for salvation.

Now, there's no human effort to get water from the rock. The rock was smitten. That riven rock brought forth life-giving waters.

Jesus was crucified, and nothing short of that would save us. Not His life, but His death. And He came, and then He left, and He said, I'm not going to leave you orphans.

I'm coming to you. And He says, if I go, I'll send the Holy Spirit to you. And that flood was released on the day of Pentecost.

But this didn't end Israel's experience with the rock. When we get over to the Book of Numbers, we're going to find out they came back again and began to complain about no water. And Moses, at that time, he, you remember, smote the rock twice.

There are those that say he should just have smitten it once. No, that's not it. If you turn over to the 20th chapter of the Book of Numbers, read at verse 8, it says, speak to the rock.

The rock had already been smitten. And after Christ was crucified 1,900 years ago, it's not necessary for Him to be crucified. When He said it's finished, as He hung on the cross, it was finished.

And God is satisfied with what Jesus did for you. And the question is, are you satisfied? He died to save us, and that is all that God is asking. Well, there comes from that rock spiritual blessings today, and the fullness of blessings, and the waters are gushing forth to parched lips.

He's blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. The rock is smitten once, and there's flowing an abundance of water. The fountain is brimful.

The stream is bankful. The world is not able to contain it. But in spite of that, there are many men's souls that today are shriveled up, and their tongues are parched.

Millions are dying for want of spiritual drink. The channel is blocked. It's logged jammed by doubts.

It's corroded by sin. It's insulated by indifference. And it's damned by those today who profess to know Him but do not know Him.

I'm disturbed today. I'm disturbed today as I look about me. But friends, I ask you the question personally in particular.

Have you been to that smitten rock, and have you had a drink there? Have you taken the living waters? He says that if you drink of that water, you'll never thirst again. This is the picture that's given to us here.

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