



Exodus 17:1 7

The Rock

Israel's wandering in the desert was a trial of faith. Yahweh was teaching them to trust Him alone for all their needs. It was a slow and painful learning process.

WATER FROM THE ROCK

Exodus chapter seventeen is another of those hard learning experiences. Israel was camped at Rephidim, "and there was no water for the people to drink" (v. 1). God had already miraculously provided them with meat, manna and sweet water. Could He not provide in a marvelous way again? Will He not demonstrate His love for them? Why is it hard for them to believe that the LORD wants His best for them? The situation got so bad that Moses named the place Massah (meaning, "to try, to tempt, trial, temptation") and Meribah (meaning "to chide, quarrel, strife or contention"). They were testing and quarreling children. The people of Israel "tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'" Sure He was! They had a constant reminder of Yahweh's presence in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. How could they possibly fail to know He was there and He cared for them?

Grumbling people

The people began grumbling and fighting with Moses. "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?" (v. 2). They kept it up: "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (v. 3). It got so bad that the people were getting ready to stone Moses when he prayed to Yahweh (v. 4). Moses was desperate. He "cried out to the LORD."

God's provision

"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. 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" (vv. 5-6).

This "staff of God" is the one Moses used to strike the waters of the Nile and turned the water to blood (7:20). The staff was a symbol of power. By holding it in his hand Moses was demonstrating dependence and trust in

holding it in his hand Moses was demonstrating dependence and trust in God. There was no magic in Moses staff. The power lay in God's presence with His chosen leaders. God provided the water.

CHRIST THE ROCK

The apostle Paul used this powerful story of God providing water in the wilderness as an illustration in the Christian's life. Just as the Israelites had all experienced guidance, protection and the presence of God under the *Shekinah* cloud of glory, the believer in Christ has also been blessed. This mystic cloud was the symbol of the presence of the Lord with the people. The Corinthian believers too, were miraculously delivered by God's grace, and were baptized into the body of Christ.

God's provision in Christ

Israel received the manna and the Christians have received the bread of heaven and the water of life. God is generous with His saving grace.

All of these spiritual privileges did not keep Israel from falling into sin. Not all of the great spiritual blessings we have received from Christ keep us from drifting into sin. Just like Israel, we have a responsibility to obey Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1 6, Paul tells us the Israelites had continual access to the supernatural source of supply of water and food. A. T. Robertson says, "The rabbis had a legend that the water actually followed the Israelites for forty years, in one form a fragment of rock fifteen feet high that followed the people and gushed out water."

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved" (1 Corinthians 10:1-6).

Spiritual drink is supernatural

Paul calls the water a "spiritual drink" enjoyed by Israel in the desert. He definitely states here the preexistence of Christ in symbolic form. The apostle makes it clear that Christ was the source of this supernatural water that saved the Israelites from perishing at Rephidim. The provision of water from the rock is seen at the beginning of the wilderness journey (17:1-7) and again near the ending of their wanderings when Moses sinned in a fit of anger by hitting the rock twice (Num. 20:1-13). Paul drew the conclusion that Christ had "followed them" around in the wilderness providing water. All of the Israelites in the wilderness ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink. They were drinking from a spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was the Christ.

He is also the source of supernatural water for Christians (cf. John 4:10-14). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I

at Jacob's well, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." He is the constant source of supply of spiritual drink and spiritual food for believers today. However, it was provided only after Jesus was struck by the fiery wrath of God on the cross. The Holy Spirit came from that smitten Rock to dwell in all believers.

At the last day of the feast of the Tabernacles Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

Baptism of the Spirit

Perhaps the apostle Paul had these words of Jesus in mind when he wrote to the Corinthian believers: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The reference is to a definite act in the past, the inward experience of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized into the body of Christ. Water baptism is a beautiful symbol of what has already taken place in the believer when he was born again. The baptism of the Spirit occurs at conversion when the Spirit enters the believing sinner, gives him new life, and makes his body the temple of God. *All* believers have experienced this once-for-all baptism. It took place at the same time you were born again. The moment you believed on Christ you were baptized in the Spirit.

Filling of the Spirit

The "filling of the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18ff) has to do with the Spirit's control of our lives. To be *filled by* something means "to be controlled by" it. Believers are *commanded* to be filled, and we can be if we confess known sin, yield all to Christ and ask Him for the Spirit's filling. This is a repeated experience, for we constantly need to be filled with spiritual power if we are to overcome sin and glorify Christ. We belong to the body of Christ from the moment we were baptized by the Spirit. We were placed in the body of Christ, and now our bodies belong to Christ by the filling or control of the Spirit.

The evidence of the Spirit's baptism at conversion is the inner witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:14-16). All of the believers in the Corinthian church had been baptized by the Spirit, but not all of them spoke in tongues or performed miraculous signs (1 Cor. 12:30). The Spirit's filling gives power for witnessing (Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:19ff) and Christ-likeness (Galatians 5:22-26).

Because of the gift of the Spirit, which is received at conversion, we are all members of the body of Christ. We have received the spiritual water that flows from the Rock. Let us constantly draw from that spiritual life He gives.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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