

Water from the Rock & The Amalekites Defeated

Exodus Chapter 17

Read Exodus 17:1-7 – “Water from the Rock”

v.1-3 - Water was a real problem and the people were rightly concerned. However given their recent experience with (1) the plagues, (2) the Passover, (3) the parting of the Red Sea, (4) being led by a pillar of fire /cloud from God (5) and miraculous provisions of quail and sweetened manna every day should have built their faith. How quickly the Israelites doubted the grace and providing care of God. And sadly, how often do we react just like these Israelites?

v.5-6 – In contrast, Moses acted in remembrance of God’s faithfulness. In human reasoning, this plan made no sense. However when Moses took the staff in his hand he did so with a confident remembrance of the power of God. By instructing Moses to use the staff, God allowed the people to see a visible demonstration of God’s power working through Moses. Similar examples of God telling Moses to use the staff: 4:4, 7:10, 7:20, 8:5, 8:16, 9:23, 10:13, 14:16

Looking forward: Read Numbers 20:7-12. After the people again grumble over the absence of water, Moses is told by God: “*Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.*” Moses instead struck the rock twice with his staff. The Lord tells Moses “*Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.*” This judgment remained firm: neither Moses nor Aaron is permitted to enter the Promised Land. Why did God view Moses’ action in this way?

Read 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13 – “Avoid Israel’s Bad Example”

v.1-5 - This passage recalls the sustaining hand of God to the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt and their time in the wilderness. Despite all these blessings and spiritual privileges, the Israelites repeatedly grumbled against God. Because of this, God did not allow these people to enter into the Promised Land. Because of their own disobedience and rebellion, they never received the true blessing that God had for them (a land flowing with milk and honey – Exodus 3:8). Only two men from the generation which left Egypt entered the Promised Land (Joshua and Caleb).

v.6-10 – As we continue reading Exodus and Numbers, we must learn from the example of Israel’s failure in the wilderness. The people failed to keep their focus on God and they started giving themselves to sexual immorality and idolatry (as in Exodus 32:1-7 and Numbers 25:1-3). At one point because of their consistent grumbling God brought venomous snakes among the people (Numbers 21:4-9).

v.11-13 - We who have this record of Israel’s self-centeredness are without excuse. For a Christian to be on guard against the temptation of selfishness or self-pity, he must first understand he is vulnerable. The one who thinks he is standing firm will not be on guard against this temptation. But if we resolve to rely on God and not ourselves, and to proclaim “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord,” He will help us through until that day when we see Him face to face.

Read Exodus 17:8-16 – “The Amalekites Defeated”

This is the first encounter by the Israelites with an enemy.

v.8- The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12). They were a fierce nomadic tribe that lived in the desert region near the Red Sea. They conducted frequent raids on settlements and carried off the plunder; They killed for pleasure. One of the greatest insults in the Israelite culture was to call someone “*a friend of Amalek*”.

v.9 – Here we meet Joshua for the first time. Joshua is the name given Hoshea son of Nun. Hoshea means “salvation.” Joshua means “the Lord Saves.” The greek form of Joshua is “Jesus.” Joshua will later lead God’s people victoriously into the Promised Land (Joshua 11:23).

v.11-13 – We might call this intercessory prayer. Moses’ prayer must have sounded something like this:

“*Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.*” – Psalm 28:2

As in the act of striking the rock, Moses’ gesture is visible to the people. The job of supporting the battle in prayer was difficult and Moses could not do it by himself. He needed others to come alongside him side and strengthen him in prayer.

v.14 – Once again the Lord instructs that His mighty works be remembered; and particularly by His people’s future leader.