

Living Water

Exodus 17:1-7

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Introduction:

Over the course of this year we have been traveling through the Old Testament and seeing Jesus. We have seen him through types, through shadows, and even through Christophonies at times. Today we will see him both typologically and as a Christophony as we join the Israelites at Rephidim.

During this journey through the Old Testament I have been reminded of the complex nature of God's sovereignty and providence. It amazes me to see how God deals on an individual bases, as with Moses, and on a corporate level, as with the nation of Israel, and while simultaneously dealing with all the nations of the earth. In some sense and to some degree everything God does affects every human being at the same time. We see that in the Scriptures and we still see that happening today. God will always work out his plan and purpose and nothing can stop him.

We trust that he has a great purpose for our text this morning. He told us through the prophet Isaiah *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it"* (55:10-11).

Let's pray for that purpose now.

Our goal is simple. We are going to try and understand the event that took place in Exodus 17, and then we will interpret it by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, and then we will attempt to apply it. By God's grace hopefully we will all leave here changed by it for the better.

1. Understanding the Event

This event unfolds in four stages or scenes. We will discuss the first three now and the fourth one when we apply the event. The first scene is the changing of their camp location.

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the

commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

- Approximately six weeks have passed since the dividing of the Red Sea. Since then they have camped at Marah, Elim, The Wilderness of Sin (has nothing to do with sin), Dophkah, Alush, and have now landed in Rephidim. Recorded in Numbers 33.
- The two most interesting aspects of this report are that their journey was “according to the commandment of the Lord” and that there was no water for the people to drink in Rephidim.
- Would God lead his people into a place where there was no water to drink? That certainly seems like a poor leadership decision according to the wisdom of man. But...
 - *Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
 - There are times when God does lead his people into places where there is no water or food, but with the intent to bring about the greatest good for his people and his own glory.
- Some of you are now living in a land with no water and are thirsting to death. God led you here either through his active will or through his passive will. In other words, he didn't force you to be there but certainly allowed it to happen. Either way its no accident. We are going to see the purpose and necessary response in a bit but first, lets look at the wrong response in the next scene.

2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” 3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

- Progression from grumbling (murmur or complain) in chapter 16 to quarreling (strive against, argue earnestly) in 17. They even progress to the point of almost stoning Moses (4). This could be due to the progression of intensity between hunger and thirst. You can live up to an average of 2 months without food but only 3 days without water.
- Its understandable that they would be grouchy. They're thirsty. But, it is not acceptable to turn on their leader when they are well aware that he is trying to be a godly leader following the leading of the Lord. After experiencing everything they've been through, they should have known that God was the One leading and providing.
- To oppose the Lord's chosen leaders is to oppose God himself. Moses said, **“Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?”** As if to say they are one and the same. We know that God chooses leaders (elders) in most cases. He calls them and gifts them to accomplish his purpose for his people. These leaders are endowed with a certain level of authority to make decisions and speak on the Lord's behalf (nothing outside of scripture of course). We know that Hebrews 13 tells us to imitate those who speak the Word of God to us (7) and to obey and submit to them because they are tasked with keeping watch over your souls and will have to give an account for it (17). However, let me say this, that does not give any man a license to physically, emotionally, sexually,

spiritually, or theologically abuse anyone. Every leader in the church should be held to the same standard of accountability as anyone else and that standard is the Bible. In fact, James tells us that those who are charged to teach are held to a higher standard. You are not required to submit to anything a leader commands of you or expects of you that is not biblical.

- Having said that, submit to and obey your leaders as long as they are submitting to and obeying the Word of God. Grumbling or quarreling with them is grumbling or quarreling with God. That is a sign of testing God and distrusting him.

Israel's Sin:

- They argued and questioned God's chosen leader, which we just learned is an attack on God himself. They even accused Moses/God of wanting to murder them, their children, and their livestock. In verse 7 they questioned whether or not God was even with them at all. Israel's sin was UNBELIEF. In spite of everything they have seen with their own eyes, they still refuse to believe that God is present, sovereign, and good.

So, its no wonder that in scene 3 Moses cries out to the Lord for help.

4 So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- So Moses, being a godly leader does the right thing; he takes it to the Lord in prayer.

- And the Lord answers: ***“Pass on before the people,*** (Make a public spectacle out of it. Get their attention. ***taking with you some of the elders of Israel,*** (Not sure if they were grumblers or not but they were chosen to serve as witnesses according to verse 6. I think its because God/Christ appeared only to Moses and the elders and the elders would have given eyewitness testimony to the people) ***and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.*** (There must be some level of irony here with the staff. The staff was a symbol of judgment and wrath toward Egypt thus far. This is made clear by God’s reminder to Moses that it was just used to smite the Egyptians but turning the Nile into blood. I believe God knew the Israelites’ hearts would have sunk seeing Moses carrying the staff thinking that perhaps God’s patience had run its course and they were about to face his judgment. I also believe not a single Israelite would have been arguing at this point. They knew what they had done and they knew they would deserve every ounce of fury the Lord could have poured out on them that day. They knew he would have been perfectly justified.) ***BUT GOD...6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.***
- Instead of consuming the Israelites in his wrath, God instead decided to come down and visit them in person through Moses and the elders. This is where Jesus entered the picture. I believe this is a Christophony, a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ. Here are the pivotal aspects of this event that we need to contemplate.
 - God stands before the people as if to be on trial standing in the place of the accused
 - By standing on the rock Jesus is associating himself with it.

- God ordered the striking of the Rock
- The rock was struck with the staff and water came out of it.
- Instead of striking the people who deserved it, God struck the rock instead. The Rock was wounded, the people drank.

2. Interpreting the Event

This event was one of the greatest gospel sermons ever preached. The author of Hebrews says that, “Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later” (3:5). This is a reference to the Gospel fulfilled in the New Testament. I’m speaking these things today. Let me show you how:

- Everyone is born an Israelite. They were unbelieving, distrusting, and ungrateful sinners who chose to suppress the truth about God that they saw with their own eyes and exchange it for a lie (that God actually wanted to kill them). So are we. *Romans 3:10-18* “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” David tells us in *Psalms 51:5* Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. The Israelites in the wilderness represent every person who has ever been born. Because we are all born into sin, every human deserves to be punished by our holy Creator. All sin is an offense against Him. David also says in *Psalms 51:4* Against you, you only, have I sinned and done

what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

- Just as God came down in bodily form into the wilderness and stood on that rock, He took on flesh and came down in the bodily form of Jesus of Nazareth and was nailed on the cross. And, Just as that rock was struck by the command of God, Jesus himself was struck by the command of the Father through the hands of sinful man (Acts 2:22-23). Just as water flowed out of the rock in the wilderness to sustain the life of sinful Israelites, living water flows out of Jesus on the cross to give eternal life to all who believe.

3. Applying the Event

7 And he called the name of the place Massah (means testing) and Meribah (means quarreling) , because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

- What was Moses doing? He was memorializing Israel’s rebellion and unbelief. He memorialized their failure to receive the Lord through faith, so you won’t. The author of Hebrews (7-12) says, Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’*

*As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’”*

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

Don't be like them.

Closing:

I want to close with a word to three different people groups:

First, Christians who are living in a land with no water because God has led you there. Not because of anything you did, but simply because God led you there. You may not understand why your'e there yet or exactly the purpose for being there, but know this for certain; God is sovereign. It is not by accident that you are there and God is there with you. He is at work, he is working all things for your good and his glory, he loves you, he cares for you, and you will gain immensely through this experience. Don't lose hope and remain faithful. Remember the marvelous things he has done throughout the Scriptures and in your life and hold tight, your'e almost home.

Second, to Christians here who are living in a waterless land not because God put you there but because God allowed you to get there through your own sin. Remember Psalm 103:8-14

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
 He will not always chide,
 nor will he keep his anger forever.
 He does not deal with us according to our sins,
 nor repay us according to our iniquities.
 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
 as far as the east is from the west,
 so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
 As a father shows compassion to his children,*

*so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.*

Hold on to the promise of 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Repent and come home. The Lord has prepared a steak for you and all your brothers and sisters are bringing the sides. We are not waiting to punish you, we are waiting eagerly to celebrate your return with the Lord himself and all the hosts of heaven.

Lastly, a word to anyone who is not a truly born again believer.

John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, ..

John 4:7-14 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that

I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Gospel

CG Discussion Questions

1. Begin by reading the text Exodus 17:1-7.
2. What is the the thing that sticks out most to you in verse one?
3. In the sermon the question was asked, "Would God lead his people to a place where there is no water to drink?" How would you answer that question to an unbeliever?
4. According to verse two, how is quarreling with Moses equal to testing God? In what ways do you think this applies to the relationship between church leaders and its members today?
5. In verse three, the Israelites accuse Moses of wanting to murder them, their children, and their livestock with thirst. What does this accusation say about their hearts?
6. What is at the heart of Israel's rebellion? In other words, what is Israel's ultimate sin? And, what was the result of that sin for them? Unbelief and unable to enter the Promised land.
7. According to the beginning of verse four, how did Moses respond to this dilemma?
8. Retrace God's instructions to Noah, and discuss the significance of each step? (Pass before the people, take elders, take staff, and strike rock)
9. Where and how do we see Jesus in this event?
10. How did this event foreshadow the gospel?
11. According to verse seven, what is the significance of memorializing Israel's failure?

Daily Devotions - July 17-21

Monday the 17th (Read Exodus 17:1-7) In verse one of our passage, it says that God led Israel into the wilderness of Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. Can you remember a time where you felt as though God had led you to a place where there was no water for you to drink spiritually? How did you respond in the midst of that time? What was the outcome of that particular event? Recall all the things you believe God accomplished in you through that particular event.

Tuesday the 18th (Read Exodus 17:1-7) In this passage, Israel quarreled and grumbled against Moses. Moses points out to them that to do so is to test the Lord. Can you recall a time when you questioned church leadership only to find out overtime that they were following the Lord's leadership. Read and meditate on the significance of Isaiah 55:8-9 as it relates to this topic.

Wednesday the 19th (Read Exodus 17:1-7) when dissension arose between Moses and the Israelites, he did not attempt to take them on in a fight. Instead, he chose to go to the Lord in prayer. Spend this devotional time in prayer this morning asking the Lord on how you should correctly deal with all of the conflict in your life. When you finish praying, read and reflect on Psalm 18:1-6.

Thursday the 20th (Read Exodus 17:1-7) In the sermon this week the comment was made, "this event was one of the greatest gospel sermons ever preached to the world." Spend some time contemplating all the different ways in which this event reflects the gospel.

Friday the 21st (Read Exodus 17:1-7) At the conclusion of this event, Moses memorializes Israel's failures. Read Hebrews 3:7-14 and spend some time, contemplating the significance of why Moses would have done this.