

**(Exod. 17:1-3)** - The people of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin and camped in Rephidim. There was no water to drink, and they again murmured against Moses. If we did not know something of the evil of the human heart as revealed to us from God's Word (the Scriptures - cf. *Jer. 17:9*) and from our own experience (*Rom. 7:24*), we would be at a loss to account for the unbelief and ingratitude of these people to God's goodness and faithfulness towards them. We might also think more highly of ourselves in imagining that we would do better than they. But God's Word is clear - "*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise*" (cf. *Rom. 3:9-12*). They had been powerfully and miraculously delivered from Egypt. They had seen the hand of God at the Red Sea. God had changed the bitter waters of Marah into sweet water to quench their thirst. They had been fed with quail and manna from heaven. Now, they are ready to stone Moses because they have no water. Once again, we learn from Israel a needed lesson, and that is the natural tendency of the sinful human heart to doubt God. We had rather trust in ourselves and lean to our own imagination, our own human resources and wisdom, than on the everlasting omnipotent arm of God. And, even though that as sinners saved by grace, God has given us a new heart and mind, we are still plagued with the heart of flesh.

The Israelites were anxious - "What shall we eat? What shall we drink?" These questions are natural to us, but they should not make us anxious so as to cause us to distrust the Lord. Christ dealt with this in *Matthew 6:25-34*. He said, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (*Matt. 6:33*). God-given faith answers these questions in the glory and grace of Almighty God. There is nothing that exceeds the wickedness of the human heart except the abounding grace of God. The only thing greater than our sin is God's grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ Who has saved us from our sins (*Rom. 5:20*). Someone once said, "Two things man has never fathomed - the depth of sin and the reality of the grace of God."

**(Exod. 17:4-6)** - The Lord commanded Moses to "Go out, take the elders with you and take your rod." This is the same rod Moses handed to Aaron with which he smote the Nile and turned it to blood. Then the Lord said, "*I will stand upon the rock in Horeb, and you shall smite the rock. There shall come water out of the rock. And the people shall drink.*" Here is another preincarnate appearance of Christ, probably in the pillar of cloud, standing upon this rock from which He would provide water for the people. The Apostle Paul spoke of this rock as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ - "**AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST**" (Read *1 Corinthians 10:1-4*). Notice in these verses that Paul called the manna "*SPIRITUAL meat*" and the rock a "*SPIRITUAL Rock*." The manna and the rock were both physical objects and served to promote the physical lives of the Israelites. There was no guarantee of spiritual life from these physical elements. Paul calls them "*spiritual*" because he is making a spiritual application of these for the Corinthian believers of how these things typified Christ the Bread of life and Christ our Rock from which we have the water of life. Consider how this rock typified our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the great salvation that God provides His spiritual people in and by Christ.

(1) The people thought that they would perish. In their eyes all hope was gone because they found no water to drink. Where there is no water, there is no life. This typifies our natural state and condition as fallen in Adam and as we are born spiritually dead and depraved in trespasses and sins. We are sinners by the fall, by birth, by nature, and by practice (*Rom. 3:23*). We have no spiritual water and no spiritual thirst for spiritual water because there is no spiritual life within us. But then, as the people of Israel realized their physical thirst and the fact there was no water to drink, God the Holy Spirit, at God's

appointed time, causes us to realize our spiritual thirst and the fact that in ourselves and in this world there is no hope for spiritual water and life. We are totally dependent upon God's grace in Christ to quench our spiritual thirst (*Psa. 61:1-2; Matt. 5:6; John 4:10-14*). The human well is dry, the religious well is dry. There is nothing that we can do and nothing the world of flesh can do to save our souls and quench our God-given thirst for righteousness.

(2) God provided a physical rock from which He gave the people physical water to quench their physical thirst. God has provided a spiritual Rock Who is Christ Jesus the Lord for His spiritual people (*Isa. 32:1-2*). Just as the physical rock probably looked the same as so many other rocks, the Lord Jesus Christ outwardly appeared as a mere man, "a tender plant, a root out of a dry ground," having "no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire Him" (*Isa. 53:2-3*). Without spiritual eyes, we could never see the glory and beauty of Christ as God manifest in the flesh Who alone is the water of life.

(3) Moses had to strike this rock with his rod, else no water would come out of it. This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ being smitten ONCE on the cross, producing the life-giving waters of salvation and righteousness for the people whom God had given to Him (*Heb. 10:10,14; 1 Pet. 3:18*). So, our Lord Jesus Christ was smitten, scourged, and crucified that His precious blood might flow forth for the redemption of our souls. He was "smitten of God and afflicted" by the just wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him (*Isa. 53:4, 10-12*). By His death came forth the very righteousness of God upon which God has justified all His people. His righteousness imputed to us is the only righteousness that will feed our spiritual hunger and quench our spiritual thirst.

(4) The rock was smitten for a rebellious people who deserved nothing but death. They were sinful, as we are; they were thirsty, as we are; they could do nothing about it, as we cannot. God had mercy upon them providing for their physical needs, as He has done for us providing for our spiritual needs. They were given physical water and life from the rock. We are given spiritual water and eternal life from Christ Who is our Rock. The rock yielded water abundantly. It required no purification by men, no effort to pipe it, only to drink of it freely.

(5) The rock followed them (*1 Cor. 10:4*). It is encouraging to know that the Rock, Christ Jesus, is with us from beginning to end (*Heb. 12:2*). He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (*Hebrews 13:5*). We begin with Him at the cross. We continue with Him through this life. We travel with Him right into heaven (*Psalms 23:4*). Christ our Rock is sure and steadfast (*Psalms 18:2-3*). He is the rock and foundation of the church and the water of life for the church (*Matt. 16:18*).

Some believe that this same rock actually rolled along with them in their wilderness wanderings and is the same rock that Moses, near the end of their journey, struck in *Numbers 20:1-12*. Others believe that these were two different rocks from which the Lord gave them water and which typified Christ in the same way. Christ is our fountain of life and the source of all grace through the wilderness of this world until we are brought to heavenly glory. The rock in *Exodus 17* typified the crucified Christ dying for the sins of His people, once for all. The rock in *Numbers 20:1-12* typifies the risen Christ as He accomplished righteousness for His people, and Who is seated on the throne of grace, to Whom we now, as believers, speak to and receive daily grace. At the end of the forty years (*Num. 20:11*), God commanded Moses to SPEAK to the rock (*Num. 20:8*), but Moses disobeyed and, in anger towards the people, struck the rock twice (*Num. 20:11*). This is why Moses was prevented from entering the Promised Land. He had misrepresented God before the people (*Num. 20:12*). Christ, our Rock of salvation, was struck with God's wrath ONCE to put away all the sins of His people and establish righteousness for them. To indicate in any way that it took more than His one sacrifice denies and dishonors God. We trust Christ and His ONE sacrifice to put away all our sins.