

MOSES & THE ROCK

INTRODUCTION

- A. **Romans 15:4** *“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”*

The Old Testament is valuable to us for our learning

- B. **Numbers 20:1-13** *“The children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: ‘If only we had died when our brethren died before Jehovah! Why have you brought up the assembly of Jehovah into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.’ So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of Jehovah appeared to them. Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.’ So Moses took the rod from before Jehovah as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, ‘Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?’ Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this*

assembly into the land which I have given them.’ This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with Jehovah, and He was hallowed among them.”

Much can be learned from the story of Moses and the rock of Meribah.

I. GOD’S LAW MAY CHANGE

- A. Exodus 17:1-7** *“All the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of Jehovah, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, ‘Give us water, that we may drink.’ So Moses said to them, ‘Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt Jehovah?’ And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, ‘Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’ So Moses cried out to Jehovah, saying, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!’ And Jehovah said to Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in 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. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted Jehovah, saying, ‘Is Jehovah among us or not?’”*

On a prior occasion, God instructed Moses to **strike** the rock to produce water.

- B. Numbers 20:7-8** *“Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.’”*

Later, He told Moses to **speak** to the rock to produce water. God's law for receiving water from rocks changed.

- C. **Hebrews 7:12** *"For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law."*

A change has occurred from the Old Testament to the New. What God required of Moses at one time was unacceptable later. Similarly, what God required of Moses is not what He requires of us.

II. SUBSTITUTION OF GOD'S WILL IS REBELLION

Moses substituted striking for speaking, which may seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but it brought severe consequences.

- A. **Numbers 20:24** *"Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah."*

Numbers 27:12-14 *"Jehovah said to Moses: 'Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.' (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)"*

Moses was guilty of rebellion.

- B. **Isaiah 55:8-9** *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'"*

Proverbs 14:12 *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."*

God's ways must be respected.

III. THE END DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS

- A. **Numbers 20:10-11** *“Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, ‘Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?’ Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.”*

Moses’ action brought results.

- B. God may let us temporarily prosper from our mistakes, but will ultimately hold us accountable for them.

IV. FAILURE TO GLORIFY GOD IS SINFUL

- A. **Numbers 20:12** *“Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.’”*

Moses took credit where God deserved the glory. God called this failing to hallow Him.

- B. **1st Peter 5:5-6** *“All of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”*

We should let God do all the exalting.

V. SPEECH MATTERS

- A. **Psalms 106:32-33** *“They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.”*

Moses “spoke rashly with his lips.”

- B. **James 3:2-8** *“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.”*

Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

Our speech must be controlled.

VI. DISOBEDIENCE PREVENTS ENTRANCE TO THE PROMISED LAND

- A. Deuteronomy 32:48-52** *"Jehovah spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: 'Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.'"*

Moses' insubordination kept him from the land of promise.

- B. Hebrews 11:8-10** *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

The promised land of Canaan foreshadowed the ultimate destination of heaven.

- C. **Hebrews 5:8-9** *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*

No one is so great they can skirt obedience; even Jesus obeyed the Father. Our salvation depends on obedience to Jesus.

VII. LEADERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE CAN GO ASTRAY

- A. **John 1:17** *"The law was given through Moses."*

Moses was the leader of God's people, yet Moses sinned. Leaders are not infallible.

- B. **Galatians 2:11-14** *"When Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blame."*

1st Timothy 5:17-20 *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."*

Even leaders within the church can be subject to rebuke.

CONCLUSION

- A. **1st Corinthians 10:1-11** *"Brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'*

Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

The mistakes of our ancient brethren should be the source of our knowledge (6, 11).

- B.** **John 4:13-14** *“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

The Rock we need today is Christ (1st Corinthians 10:4), for He can provide the water of Life. Come drink of that water!