

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**C0621 – May 24, 2006 – Ex 17:1-7 – God's Provision Of Water**

**I. GOD'S PROVISION IN THE WILDERNESS (15:22-18:27)**

Last week, when the sons of Israel became thirsty YHWH provided water. When they hungered He provided manna and quail each morning and evening. This week, the sons of Israel thirst again and God graciously provides water from the rock and when war approaches God provides strength to win the Battle of Rephidim. Thus we learn about God's *presence with us*, His *provision for us*, and His *protection of us* in these historical events.

**C. The Provision of Water at Rephidim (17:1-7)**

**Exodus 17:1** Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.

**<sup>2</sup>** 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?"

**<sup>3</sup>** But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

**<sup>4</sup>** So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."

**<sup>5</sup>** 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.

**<sup>6</sup>** "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.

**<sup>7</sup> He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"**

v. 1. **the sons of Israel journeyed by stages**, that is, they performed several marches when they broke camp. These stages or marches were apparently **the command of the Lord**. And **they came and camped at Rephidim** but before this they had stopped for camp at Dophkah and Alush (Numb 33:12-14). The location of these places is uncertain. When they arrived at Rephidim **there was no water for the people to drink**. At Marah there had been bitter water, at Rephidim there was no water. “the supreme calamity of desert travelers befell them—complete lack of water” (Cassuto).

v. 2. **Therefore**, that is, as a result of their circumstances, seemingly beyond remedy, **the people quarreled with Moses**. They had grumbled to Moses at Marah but now they resort to quarrelling which signifies far greater frustration. It was to the point that they were about to **stone** Moses (cf v 4). Yet, according to **Moses**, to quarrel with him was the equivalent of testing the Lord. Why? Because Moses was the ‘servant of YHWH’—the highest title a mortal could receive in the OT. It meant Moses acted on behalf of God. For example, when Moses stretched out his hand at the Red Sea, God used it as His own (Isa 63:12). Thus, to quarrel with Moses was to test the Lord. God wanted them to wait and trust in His promised provision.

v. 3. **But the people’s thirst for water** overwhelmed their faith in the Lord, **and they grumbled against Moses**. Their **thirst** overpowered Moses’ biblical correction. Lack of food or water can cause us to act very rashly. Esau sold his birthright for a cup of soup! Their **thirst** only resulted in continued **grumbling against Moses**, and they **said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”** This is their third time they have accused Moses of taking them out of Egypt to kill them.

- “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to be killed by sword?” (14:11-12)
- “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to be killed by hunger?” (16:3)
- “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to be killed by thirst?” (17:3)

They are still not convinced that the Lord actually took them out of Egypt by His mighty hand. Perhaps this has all been done by Moses’ hand. They still assume that a “good” God would not lead them to a place of trouble, a place without water.

v. 4. **So, Moses** responded by crying **out to the Lord**. This is one of Moses' admirable traits. He often took his difficulties **to the Lord** and **he said, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."**

v. 5 **Then the LORD** answered with instructions. **Pass before the people** so that they can see you going out. **Take with you some of the elders of Israel** to serve as witnesses of the event. **Take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile**, the "rod of God" so that it will be clear that God is still with Moses to do miracles through him. This would boost the people's confidence in Moses, their leader.

v. 6. They were not at Mt Sinai yet but they were in the region of Horeb very near Mt Sinai. There YHWH would **stand before** Moses as his master and Moses as His servant would **strike the rock, and water would come out of it, that they people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.** The smitten rock beautifully portrays the death of Christ resulting in the free outflowing of redemption available for any and all to partake. "...let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 22:17). A similar event took place after Mt Sinai (Num. 20:13, 24; 27:14; Ps. 81:7; 106:32). In this second instance of water coming forth from a rock, Moses was commanded to speak to the rock and water would gush forth. But Moses disobeyed, striking the rock twice. As a result, God judged him for not believing the Lord and treating Him as holy and did not permit him to bring Israel into the land.

Christ was struck by death only once on the cross; and He is never to be struck again. Christ died once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God (1 Pt 3:18). He is not to be crucified in the sacrament of mass over and over again. Such is a blasphemy to God and His Christ. Christ died once for all and this is the message of the Book of Hebrews.

The OT Hebrew scholar, Merrill Unger said, "Water gushing out of the rock beautifully typifies Christ, the Giver of the Spirit" (John 7:37-39). The water would sustain their physical lives, the Spirit sustains our spiritual lives.

v. 7. Moses gave the place two names calling it Massah ('testing') because there the Israelites tested the Lord and Meribah<sup>i</sup> ('grumbling') because they grumbled against Moses. This would be akin to grumbling against your leaders (Heb 13:17).

<b>Massah</b>	<b>Meribah</b>
"Testing"	"Grumbling"

This incident is recollected throughout the entire OT as an example of a generation who hardened their hearts (Exod. 17:7; Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8; Ps. 95:8). Turn with me to Ps 95:8ff

**Psalm 95:8-11** Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> "When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. <sup>10</sup> "For forty years I loathed *that* generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. <sup>11</sup> "Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest."

Earlier it was Pharaoh and the Egyptians who had hardened their hearts and now Israel is walking in Pharaoh’s footsteps and we already know where that leads (see also 1 Sam 6:6). The specific way in which **they tested the LORD** was by **saying “Is the Lord among us, or not?”** Is God present? Yet the **LORD** had promised, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain” (Exod 3:12). They failed to believe this promise of God. The LORD also promised, “I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *for* a possession; I am the LORD” (Exod 6:8) and yet they failed to believe this promise of God.

“This second instance of complaining about lack of water was more serious than the first because God had provided good water for them earlier in the desert (15:25)” (Constable, 86).

### **Lessons to Learn from Massah and Meribah**

*First*, Israel wanted God to act as they dictated. How often do you think of God as a puppet whose strings you pull? That is not the God of the Bible. He is not under your control but you are under His control. God is faithful to provide for you as He did for the Israelites but when He provides is up to Him, not you. God will not be dictated to either by Pharaoh or the Israelites or you! He’s not a puppet. He’s a Person who loves and provides in His perfect timing. Your responsibility is to trust Him and wait for Him.

*Second*, Israel’s thirst for water overwhelmed their faith in the Lord. How often does the weight of your circumstances overwhelm your faith in the Lord? Remedy the situation by

building your faith. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Bible doctrine.

*Third*, Moses’ life-threatening circumstances drove him to cry out to God. When you enter difficult circumstances to whom do you cry out? Most of us vent toward a husband, wife, or friend. Is that really the right response? We may share our concerns and ask for prayer from others but shouldn’t our first response be like Moses: crying out to God in prayer?

*Fourth*, the Israelites tested the Lord even though they had seen His works. Do you test the Lord even though you have seen His works in your life? When we test the Lord it is truly a commentary on our spiritual deficiency for it demonstrates that we do not know the ways of the Lord.

*Fifth*, the Israelites eventually tested God to the point where His cup of anger reached the brim and He swore they would not enter His rest (Ps 95:8-11). As a believer, are you continually rebelling against God? If so, know that God is patient but that one day you may reach the point where God will not permit you to enter His rest. Such is a sad but true commentary in the lives of many Christians today.

*Sixth*, the Israelites knew the promises of God but they did not believe the promises of God. Do you know the promises of God? Do you believe the promises of God? Knowledge of the promises precedes our ability to believe the promises. The marvelous thing about the promises of God are that in each of them God is obligating Himself to you! He’s guaranteeing something to you! His promises are there for you to trust and enjoy. When you do not trust the promises of God you are testing Him. And the word says, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Dt 6:16). Even though God graciously rescued the Israelites at Rephidim (Ps 81:7) this was one of ten times Israel tested the Lord by not listening to His voice (cf Numb 14:22; Dt 33:8). As a result God would not let them enter the land. They would not enter into blessing. They possessed life but they would not enjoy the abundant life. The same is true for believers today. All believers possess eternal life but not all enter into the abundant life (John 10:10; 15:1-8). To enjoy the abundant life is conditioned upon appropriating God’s promises by faith.

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<sup>i</sup> The name Meribah (“place of strife”) is interesting since Israel means “strives with God” (Gen 32:28). As Israel strived with God so the sons of Israel strived with Moses.

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