

# Israel Rebelled Against God

By Tom Hill

**Bible Text:** Exodus 14:10-12

**Master Ministries International, Inc.**

2700 Marfitt Road, #315

East Lansing, MI 48823-6338

Website: <http://www.masterministries.org/>

Online Sermons: <http://masterministries.sermonaudio.com>

Over and over again in the Bible, the Holy Spirit used the Children of Israel as an example for the Church of Jesus Christ and believers. Specifically, the Spirit recounted in detail their exodus from Egypt and their journey to the promised land.

From this record, God utilized their failures as a warning and their successes as a pattern for believers to heed. Most often, however, He spoke of their frequent failures and how they grieved Him.

The Spirit expressly had this in mind when He authored 1 Corinthians 10:11:

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The Scriptures frequently mention the failures of the Children of Israel in exactly this fashion. The Biblical record details their sin and points to it as an example. It speaks of their example as one to avoid, not to copy. It gives warning and admonition to the Church for correction and instruction in righteousness.

This article will take one of those examples and use it in this fashion: to explain their sin; to warn believers of sin in their lives; and to spur the children of God unto repentance and practical holiness.

In Exodus 14, the Word of God describes the first difficulty of the Israelites upon their flight from Egypt. God had delivered them from their oppressors and led them to the Red Sea.

As they encamped there, they saw the Egyptian army pursuing after them. They definitely faced a problem. The mountains and the Red Sea blocked their only ways of escape. The Spirit recorded their conduct in Exodus 14:10-12:

"And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. {11} And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? {12} Is not this the word that we did tell thee

in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

From this passage, I want to examine with you Israel's sin against God in this situation, the sin of rebellion. I pray that the Holy Spirit will clarify for you the truth, convict you of its presence in your life, and correct you to bring about spiritual repentance, revival, and renewal in you that will revolutionize and transform your life.

### **Fallacies about their behavior**

Perhaps you notice, as I do, the increasing number of bumper stickers that proclaim, "Challenge everything," or "Question authority." The world, and sadly too often the Church of Jesus Christ, exalts such behavior and elevates it to a standard of excellence. Its proponents say it gives evidence of intelligence and independence. It identifies freedom, they say.

Those who would approach this passage of Scripture with that attitude would praise the Israelites for standing up for themselves. They would applaud the Israelites' statement to Moses. They would support the Israelites in their statement of concern given to Moses.

As evidence for their conclusions, they would point to the impossibility of the situation facing the Children of Israel. After all, the mountains and the Red Sea trapped them with no way of escape. They had no weapons with which to defend themselves. In fact, they lacked a formal army. The long years of suffering servitude had broken their spirits. Further, they had first hand experience with the cruelty of the Egyptians.

It all sounds very convincing. The human mind is capable of manifold rationalization. The excuses we propose for our sins always sound reasonable. Yet, if the Church of Jesus Christ would walk with God, She must learn to view matters as God sees them. In this specific instance, the Children of Israel failed miserably. To learn from their example, we will now examine their course of action from God's point of view.

### **Facts of their sin**

From God's point of view, they acted in an inexcusable fashion. As God began to deliver them from oppression, they had multiple opportunities to view God's mighty power on their behalf. On 10 occasions, God intervened in Egypt's activities with supernatural displays of might. In time He delivered His people with a mighty hand.

In addition, the Israelites saw God fulfill His promise to their forefathers He heard their cries of anguish in Egypt and sent them a deliverer. His faithfulness pointed toward their ultimate arrival in the promised land, according to His word to them.

Further, God revealed His divine providence toward them. He provided a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night to protect and direct them in their journey. Surely, such a God would not forsake His people.

Yet the Scriptures have clearly described the sin of Israel at the Red Sea. When they saw the advancing Egyptians, they rebelled against the One Who had shown Himself strong on their behalf. Their rebellion against God revealed itself in two ways.

Initially, they chose fear for their lives instead of faith in God. In verse 10, it has described the Children of Israel as sore afraid. They counted themselves as dead men. They could not envision any other conclusion. In their distress, the Israelites failed to show faith in God.

In their response, they contended with God and opposed Him. They showed themselves obstinate and unmanageable. They did not respond to God's dealings with them.

Clearly, the Children of Israel looked to their circumstances instead of God. Their sin caused them to magnify the enemy and minimize God. They took count of their meager abilities against their foe and found them wanting. Indeed, the situation seemed hopeless.

Admittedly, they faced a dilemma. Yet, they showed no faith in God, even though He had frequently shown Himself strong on their behalf. They had every reason to believe God and not to fear. Yet they did not. Instead, they rebelled against God in fear.

Additionally, God's chosen people cried to God in complaint instead of calling to Him in faith. Again verse 10 has recited their retort in these words: "...they cried out to the Lord."

At first glance, it appears that they prayed to God. In fact, the Bible often describes David and others as praying in this fashion. But, the meaning of this particular word differs from that common use.

Instead, the word translated here "cried" describes a cry in complaint. In other words, the Israelites clamored to God in despair and distress. They lamented their problem. Their cry to God did not express a call to Him in faith or hope of aid. In fact, it revealed just the opposite.

In these two ways, God's chosen people rebelled against God. They contended with Him in fear and complaint. In this first of their tests, they proved themselves resistant to God's dealings with them.

In fact, the Scriptures have confirmed these conclusions of their behavior. God's word has recorded in Deuteronomy 9:7:

"Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD."

In this setting, Moses reminded the Israelites of their past to prepare them for their entrance into the promised land. In particular, he pointed out two things. He spoke of them as "...rebellious against the Lord..." since the day they left Egypt.

From the beginning of their exodus, rebellion dwelled their hearts. It showed itself immediately in their reactions to the obstacle they met at the Red Sea. They failed to trust God, and they cried to Him in complaint. This passage also clearly identified God's reaction to the sin of His people. It provoked Him to anger. Many times, the sinful practices of the Israelites provoked Him to anger. They grieved Him with their frequent sin.

At this time, however, God graciously and mercifully overcame their problems, in spite of their sin. But ultimately, God withdrew His hand from them and slew them in the wilderness. This generation did not enter into the Promised Land because of their sin.

### **Function of their example**

As indicated at the start of this article, the Holy Spirit intends the example of the Israelites to warn and admonish believers today. What does He desire this example from the Children of Israel to accomplish in your life today?

The Spirit intends to clarify for you the truth about the sin of rebellion and its expression in your life. It grieves Him and seriously limits His work in your life.

The Spirit wants to use it to convict you of sin. Where has the Holy Spirit identified in your life a way in which you have followed their pattern? Have you viewed the changing circumstances in your life with fear rather than by looking to God? Have you become overwhelmed by the enormity of your weakness to cope with them or to resolve your dilemmas? Have you failed to trust God to show Himself strong on your behalf?

In the midst of your distresses, have you cried out to God in complaint instead of hope and faith? Has the example of the Israelites become your familiar pattern, too? Has your heart rebellion against God expressed itself in your life, as it did with Israel?

Has the Spirit found you faithless or faithful? Did He find you innocent or guilty? Even as the sin of Israel provoked God, so the sin of rebellion in God's people grieves the Holy Spirit today. He disapproves of it and removes His glorious presence in the face of it.

When God's people sin, they quench the Spirit's work among them and rob Him of His rightful place. It degrades His character. I pray that the Spirit has shown you your true condition before God and how it grieves Him.

This instance in the life of Israel flatly contradicts the fallacies of the world. Rebellion does not indicate a standard of excellence nor an evidence of intelligence. The example of the Children of Israel gives the Church today an example to avoid. It shows evil practices to shun.

With their sin as an example, the Holy Spirit wants to conform your thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and practices to God's word. From their pattern, He clearly describes rebellious behavior. Then it exhorts believers to mold and shape their lives according to God's desires. He commands the child of God in Ephesians 4:30:

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God..."

What changes does the Holy Spirit require in your life today as a result of these truths?

He wants you to realize the refuge of lies which you may use to hide your sin. Too often Christians use phrases like "I didn't do anything wrong," or "Everybody else does it" to excuse their true condition.

Make no excuses. Do not defend your actions nor justify them. Minimizing your sin results in delays. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

He desires you to recognize that your sin has consequences. You are accountable to God for your sin. It grieves Him and quenches His work in your life.

He wants you to repent from sin that He might pour out His glorious presence upon you. It begins with a proper recognition of your sin, without compromise and without concealment. The sorrow and shame of your sin brings you to hate it and confess it detail to God. As a result, you will turn from it to cleansing and forgiveness from your Advocate, Jesus Christ. Relief will flood your soul.

Sadly, the Israelites never recognized their sin against God. Thus, they never repented and turned from it. They accepted His grace and mercy as an evidence of approval. Use their failure as a warning and admonition to you as in.

1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now all these things happened unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition..."

I pray that you will experience the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life today. I pray that He will bring you to repent of your sin. I pray that the Holy Spirit will apply these Biblical truths in your life and that you will find relief through the blood of Jesus Christ. I pray that the Holy Spirit will come to you in grace and bring a spiritual transformation in your life today.