

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST

EXODUS 17:5-6 • TV210A

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Exodus 17:5-6

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

If you have a Bible, I would like for you to open it to the **Book of Exodus**. I am going to read two verses of Scripture from the **Book of Exodus, Chapter 17**.

Now, this morning, this is going to be a very special message. It is one that if you will hear it and the Lord is pleased to give you understanding of this message, it may be that it will open up many other Old Testament passages of Scripture and connect them with New Testament preaching.

My subject this morning is entitled **“THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.”**

Some of you are familiar with that term in **1 Corinthians** where Paul wrote *“that rock was Christ.”* He is referring back to the story found in **Exodus 17:5 and 6**. If you will, take your Bible and go back to **Exodus 17: verses 5 and 6** and let me read just a couple of verses:

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The Lord said unto Moses, *“Go on before the people and take with thee of the elders of Israel and the rod wherewith thou smotest the sea. Take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb and thou shalt smite the rock and there shall come water out of the rock that the people may drink.”*

The people of Israel had been delivered from Egypt. God had graciously, mercifully, and miraculously, delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh. God had brought them through the Red Sea and God had fed them with the bread from heaven.

Now they came to a certain place in the wilderness and they pitched their tents. This is what the Scripture says in **verses 1 and 2 of Exodus 17**; *“there was no water there.”*

Instead of believing God, the Lord God had certainly blessed these people. He had brought them out of Egypt. He led them through the Red Sea. He had fed them with bread from heaven.

Instead of believing God and looking to God the people began to murmur against Moses and they said; *“Give us water. Have you brought us all the way out here in the wilderness to die of thirst? Get water for us. It had been better if we had stayed in Egypt.”*

They threatened to stone Moses. Isn't that incredible? It is amazing and unbelievable. These people who had seen the hand of God in so many ways, yet here they are murmuring and complaining and even threatening to stone Moses.

You know, if we didn't know something of the evil and the depravity of the human heart, this would be difficult to understand. It would be difficult to account for the ingratitude, unbelief, and greed of these people.

Had not God freed them just a short time before that? They had been in slavery for 400 years. God had miraculously delivered them. Had not God shown them His power and His protection at the Red Sea, destroying the army of Pharaoh in delivering them? Had not God fed them and clothed them and now they are ready to stone Moses simply because there is no water to drink?

Oh the evil of the human heart! There is nothing that exceeds the evil of the human heart, the ingratitude, the sin and unbelief of the human heart, nothing! In fact, the prophet said; *“the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*

There is one thing that I learned from these people in the wilderness and that is the unbarring tendency of the human heart to doubt God, no matter what we have experienced in the past. No matter what we have received in the past, no matter the blessings and mercies from the hand of God; the smallest cloud of trouble is sufficient to hide from us the face of God.

The smallest cloud of trouble; it doesn't matter, all of the blessings of the past, God's provisions, God's protection, and God's blessings. The smallest cloud is sufficient to hide from us the face of Almighty God.

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We had rather lean upon the cobweb of human resources, something we can see, something we can feel, and something we can touch. We had rather lean upon that which appeals to the senses than trust the everlasting arm of God Almighty.

The evil heart of unbelief is always ready to depart from the living God. That is what Paul warned us about in Hebrews. He told us about these people, this nation of Israel in the wilderness. He said to the church; *“take heed brethren, lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief.”*

Well, they came to this place and they pitched their tents. There was no water to drink. The old questions arose, the age-old questions, *“what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and what shall we wear?”*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said; *“after these things do the heathen seek,”* but true faith has a brief answer for all of these questions, *“what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and what shall we wear?”*

True faith has a brief answer for all of these questions, a confident, comprehensive answer, and that answer is God; *“my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.”*

“The heathen, said; *“what shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we wear?”* Our Lord said; *“your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.”*

But the people murmured. They said, *“Get us water to drink.”* They threatened Moses and they doubted God. They were filled with unbelief and Moses turned to the Lord God and he said; *“what shall I do?”*

God told him, (listen now to the directions from God); our God says, *“go take the elders with you and take the rod wherewith you smote the sea and I will stand upon the rock in Horeb and you shall take your rod and smite that rock and water will come out of the rock and the people shall drink.”*

Most people who teach the Bible or read the Bible leave all of that right there. They talk about the miracle of the rock giving forth water, the people drinking, and all of this kind of thing.

I ask this question today; what makes this event so special? What is significant about this rock? God, very specifically and definitely, gave some directions to Moses and at the end of this message I will show you something from the Scriptures about this rock where Moses violated the commandment of God.

God said, *“Moses, you take your rod and the elders with you. You go to this rock and I will stand on this rock. You smite it and water will come out of the rock sufficient for the people to be well satisfied.”*

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What makes this rock so significant? What makes it so special? Why did God devote so much Scripture to this rock and to this particular episode here?

Well, Paul sums up the answer in four words in **1 Corinthians 10: 4**, *“that Rock was Christ.”*

Just as in Abel’s sacrifice, the blood which Abel put upon the altar, it was a picture of Christ.

Noah’s Ark is not just a ship made of wood which rescued some people from the flood, although it did, but that Ark is Christ.

In the Passover Lamb, that lamb slain is Christ.

There was the manna from heaven. Christ said, *“I am the true bread from heaven.”*

The brazen serpent lifted up, the serpent which was made of brass in the likeness of those fiery serpents that had bitten the people; that serpent was a picture of Christ lifted up.

God shows this in all these things, especially in this rock. Paul says definitely; *“that rock was Christ.”* God chose in this Rock, the person, work, and power, of His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord, our Saviour, our Redeemer. Christ said, *“I am the bread of life; I am the water of life.”* That rock was Christ.

Now; in the time that I have, I hope that I get through this entire outline. I want to point out to you six things from this passage of Scripture, six things that are applicable to you and to me right now.

First of all: There is a need, just as in the case of Israel, there was a need.

These people were in a wilderness. These people were in a dry land. These people were in a place where there was no water. The Scripture plainly says, *“There was no water there;”* no water to drink means no life.

Is this not our condition? You might say that we have plenty of water. I am talking about spiritual water. We are living in a dry and thirsty land just as David described in **Psalms 63** when he said; *“O God Thou art my God. Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in this dry and thirsty land where no water is.”*

On another occasion David said; *“as the deer thirsteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, the living God.”*

We are like Ezekiel’s bones; we are very many and we are very dry. It is a dry and thirsty land. It is a famine-infested land. We are bleached and have barren bones with no life. The human well is dry; there is no water there.

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You can go to human wisdom, human teaching, and human thoughts, and there is no water there. There is no spiritual water there. The religious well is dry. All you find in the religious well today is wildfire, enthusiasm, or the dust of tradition and doctrine.

The philosophers well is dry. It is the same old rhetoric, the same old debates and the same old arguments. I ask in this dry and thirsty land; is there any spiritual water to be found? Is there any help? That is what Moses said, *“God, what shall we do?”*

This is a dry land in which there is no water; there is no source of water anywhere. Where can we find water to drink?

Second: Thank God, there is a rock.

God said to Moses; *“Go to the rock;”* there is a rock. The hymn writer said:

**“There is a rock in this weary land
Its shadows fall on the burning sand
Inviting pilgrims as they pass
To seek a drink in the wilderness.”**

Our Lord said, *“Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst again.”*

There is a Rock and that Rock is Christ. For our God said to Moses; *“I will stand upon that rock.”* That Rock is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the key to that type; here is the key to this picture. Here is the key to this picture of our Lord Jesus Christ; *“I will stand on that rock.”*

“God was in Christ.” That is what the angel said to Joseph; *“thou shalt call His name Emmanuel which is being interpreted, God with us.”*

You say, “That rock is Christ?” Why, in appearance it is only a rock, like so many other rocks. My friend; without eyes of faith you cannot see His glory. Without eyes of faith you cannot see the indwelling Christ in that man born of Mary.

Isaiah said, *“There is no beauty, that we should desire Him. There is no comeliness. We hid as it were our faces from Him.”* They said, “Is not this the carpenter?” How can you be God; you are only a man.”

Look at the tabernacle, a tent like any other tent. If you had been far upon a mountain looking down on the camp of Israel and you had seen all of these tents made out of badger skin and that tabernacle in the middle of it, you would say; “well, that’s just another tent.” Oh my friend; God is in that tent.

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You look at this rock and you say, "That's only a rock;" but this Rock was Christ. God was in this Rock.

You look at the man Jesus of Nazareth and you might say, "He's only a man." I know, but God is in that man. God said, "*Moses you go to the rock; I will stand on that rock.*" "I will be in that rock. No other rock around here has the presence of God. I will be in that rock." Do you see that?

There are two things; now remember, first, there is a need.

It is a dry land and it is a thirsty land where no water is. You will not find any. The human well is dry. The religious well is dry. The philosopher's well is dry. Human wisdom is dry. Everything is dry.

But, there is a Rock and that is God's Rock. That is God's appointed, God's selected, and God's anointed Rock. God said, "*I will stand on that rock.*" Do you see what I am saying?

Third: All right; the Rock was smitten.

God said, "*Moses; take your rod, the rod with which you smote the sea, and smite the rock.*" Listen to me; there was a rock, there was a need, and there was a rock but still no water.

The rock has to be smitten. Moses could have walked around the rock. He could have measured the rock. He could have talked about the rock. He could have pointed to the rock. He could have made slide-pictures of the rock and showed them everywhere, but there was still no water.

That rock must be smitten. God said, "*Moses; smite the rock.*" My friends; that Rock was Christ. Moses' rod represents the Law. Moses' rod represents justice. Moses' rod represents the wrath of God.

Our rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, must be smitten of God and afflicted. Jesus Christ, that Rock, in this dry and thirsty land was born of Mary. If He had lived on this earth, He could have never saved anybody. There would have been no refreshing water. There would have been no living water from Him.

Just as the rock in the wilderness, our Lord Jesus Christ must be smitten. The Scripture says, "*Smitten of God and afflicted.*" You see Him scourged. You see Him crowned with thorns. You see Him taken to Golgotha's Hill and nailed to a cross.

You see the spear and the hand of the soldier pierce His side, and from that smitten side, comes blood and water. There is blood to atone and water to cleanse.

You can get as technical as you want to. You can get as liberal as you want to. You can get whatever you want to but the message is clear:

"There is a fountain filled with blood

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**Drawn from Emanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.**

**The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain, (that fountain of blood and that fountain of water), in his day
There may I, though vile as He
Wash all my sins away."**

"He was wounded for my transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities. The chastisement of my peace was upon Him. With His stripes I am healed." The Rock must be smitten.

Are you with me? This is a picture that God gave in the Old Testament of the person and work of Christ, of the redemptive work of Christ.

Israel is a picture of the true church. Israel is the church in the wilderness. If you want to find out what God is doing, find out what God has done.

If you want to find out what God is going to do; find out what God has done. He said, *"I am the Lord; I change not. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*

That Rock was Christ. It couldn't be clearer. Are you not interested? You can read the story of the Rock and Paul said, *"That Rock was Christ,"* four words. *"That Rock that followed them was Christ."*

The need was there. The Rock was there but it must be smitten. It was smitten and out came the water.

Fourth: That Rock was smitten for a purpose.

That rock was smitten for a purpose; it was not to show off God's power. It was not to show off God's might or strength. That rock was smitten to give water to a thirsty people, a helpless people, an impotent people, and a people who were dying of thirst. That is why the rock was smitten; it was smitten for that purpose.

There is no need to apologize for Israel. There is no need to dress them up; they were a guilty, greedy, murmuring, sinful, rebellious, people. That is all they were; they weren't anything else.

So are we, *"there is none good, no not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God."* We are just like Israel.

We are a race of murmurers, rebels and unbelievers, or whatever you want to say about us. *"But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

There is a well of water, and a Rock smitten of God:

**“There is a well in a desert plain
Its waters call with increasing strain
Ho, every thirsty, sin-sick, soul
Come freely drink and thou shalt be whole.”**

Our Lord died for a purpose. *“This is a faithful saying; Jesus Christ came into the world,”* not to just be an example and not just to show the goodness of God. *“He came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”*

He was smitten that from Him might flow the water of life. He was smitten that from Him might flow the cleansing flood. He was smitten that from Him we might receive the mercy of God.

You can stand out in the desert and you say, “Here’s water, here’s a rock, here’s water.” A fellow may say, “Well; I’m not thirsty.” You say, “Well, I’m not talking to you; I am talking to thirsty people.” *“Ho everyone that thirsteth; come to the water.”*

Every invitation our Lord ever gave had on that invitation, a requirement. He said, *“Are you laboring and heavy laden? Come to me. Are you thirsty? Come to me. Are you sins as scarlet? Come to me.”*

He always addressed His offer of water to thirsty people. Are you hungry? The bread is for the hungry. Someone said, “Well; I don’t have time right now.” Well, if you were thirsty you would have time. If you were really thirsty you would have time.

I am talking to those who thirst. This water flows freely for those who thirst. It is for a sinful people. *“Our Lord came not to call the righteous but sinners.”* The righteous aren’t thirsty. It is sinner’s that are thirsty.

The songwriter says:

**“Come ye thirsty; come and welcome
God’s free bounty; be glorified
True belief and true repentance
Every grace that brings you nigh.
Without money come to Jesus and buy.”**

Fifth: That rock yielded pure water in sufficiency and in abundance.

This is important. There was a need. It couldn’t be met any other way than by the power of God and by the hand of God. God provided the rock but that rock must be smitten.

You see; *“God must be just and justifier.”* That rock must be smitten. *“Christ was wounded for our transgressions.”* That Rock was smitten for a purpose, to give water, to give life, to give hope to a hopeless, helpless, people.

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Now then; that rock yields pure water in sufficiency and great abundance for all who want it. There was plenty for all who wanted to drink; it was free. There was no rationing of water.

I remember back in World War II that we had certain rationing programs for things such as gasoline. You had to have cards to buy gasoline. There wasn't much sugar, so you had to have a card to buy sugar. There was not an abundance, there was not a sufficient supply, so things were rationed.

Let me tell you this, the blood of Christ is sufficient, the death of Christ is sufficient to save ten million worlds. It is sufficient to save all who come. *"He is able to save to the uttermost, them that come to God by Him."*

There is no lack in the blood of Christ. There is no lack in the death of Christ. There is no lack in the sacrifice of Christ. All that you need is met in Him.

There was plenty of water. Come on; everybody that is thirsty, drink, drink your fill. The table is spread. Come just as you are. It is free no matter how sinful you are. The rock was smitten for thirsty people and Christ was smitten for sinners.

Now watch this; that water didn't need anything to purify it; it was pure itself.

It didn't need any works of men to purify it. The Law cannot purify the water of life. It needed no purification. It didn't require any work to pipe it to the people.

People will say, "Well; the water is there and we are here but faith is the pipe, baptism is the pipe, and church membership is the pipe." God doesn't need any pipes; the water is free. It is flowing free. It ran out in a wide stream. Anybody that wanted a drink, all they had to do was just drink.

"His grace is sufficient." In Christ, *"we have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him and we are complete in Him."* It is sufficient for all who want it.

There is no lack, there is no want, and there is no shortage in the power of Christ to save the chief of sinners. That is what Paul said; *"He came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief."*

Sixth: Listen carefully; and the Scripture plainly says; *"that Rock followed them."*

That Rock was Christ and Paul says in **1 Corinthians 10:4**, *"That Rock followed them."* I believe in their entire journey through the wilderness to Canaan. I can't explain that except to say this; the Lord Jesus Christ said of His people, (and all of this is a picture and type of our relationship with Him), *"I will never leave you; I'll never forsake you. Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the earth."*

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I am going to pitch my tent beside that Rock and that Rock will follow me *“all the days of my life.”* That is what David said in **Psalm 23**; *“surely mercy and goodness, goodness and mercy, shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

Here is something in closing:

Several years later, months, or whenever, the people thirsted again. God told Moses, *“Speak to the rock.”* And Moses got angry. He went out there to the rock and he got angry with the people; he got so angry and he just blessed them out.

They were murmuring and complaining. I understand a little bit of his anger. He got angry with the people and he said, *“Must I get water from this rock for you rebels?”*

He drew back his staff and smote the rock. He smote it again and the water came out. The people drank. God called Moses over and said, *“Moses; you didn’t sanctify me in the eyes of the people.”*

Now; *“The first time I told you to smite the rock and you smote it and it gave forth water. This time I said, speak to the rock.”* The rock doesn’t have to be smitten again. But Moses smote it; *and the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”* (**Number 20: 12**).

Listen my friend; Christ never needs to be crucified again. He never needs to be smitten again. *“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”*

All we do is call on the name of the Lord. We do not crucify Him in the mass. We don’t crucify Him in the sacraments. We don’t put Him on the cross again; He has died, buried, rose again, and ascended to the right hand of God.

He said, *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* That Rock was Christ!