

SPEAK TO THE ROCK
Numbers 20:1-13

Intro: The stories connected with the journey of the children of Israel in their move from Egypt to Canaan are rich in spiritual meaning for us today. Much of this involves us in typology: patterns, or illustrations, of some divine truth.

The "Rock" is a familiar illustration of God. God is called the Rock in Deut. 32:4, in the song God gave to Moses to teach the children of Israel.

Christ is the spiritual Rock mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:4.

The Rock was a fortress which protected the people in times of war. It was a place to hide from storms. Sometimes water was to be found coming out of springs in the rocks, but obviously that was not the case in Num. 20 or there would have been no need to speak to the rock.

Thus, the Rock was a type--a type of God and a type of God. Its grandeur, its firmness and immovability, its unchanging character, all represent what the Lord's people find in the Lord.

— Notice in our text:

- I. THE COMPLAINT OF THE PEOPLE (Num. 20:2-5).
- II. THE CONCERN OF MOSES AND AARON (Num. 20:6).
- III. THE COMPASSION OF THE LORD (Num. 20:7, 8).
- IV. THE ANGER OF MOSES (Num. 20:9-11).

What an illustration of Jas. 1:19, 20,
Wherefore, my beloved brethren,
let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak,
slow to wrath:
For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness
of God.

Moses was guilty of rebellion against God, and of failing to sanctify the Lord in the presence of the Israelites.

Consequently the account ends with . . .

- V. GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON MOSES (Num. 20:12, 13).

Concl: What are the lessons to be learned from this account?

Let me mention two: one doctrinal; the other practical.

- 1) For the doctrinal lesson we need to compare this account with Ex. 17:1-7.

What was the type, the picture, there?

— Cf. Isa. 53:4, 5,
Sure he hath borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God,
and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.

There can only be one Cross, one death of the Saviour.
There needs to be no more. Cf. Heb. 9:24-28; 1 Pet. 3:18.

Thus, even the actions of Old Testament saints were often filled with spiritual significance and divine truth. God would not tolerate a broken picture.

- 2) The practical lesson has to do with prayer.

— Speaking to the rock was a picture of intercessory prayer. That was all that the Lord told Moses to do. Whether Moses thought it sufficient or not, it was what the Lord told him to do. But he disobeyed! Perhaps he felt that the other had worked before, and so it would be best to stay with what he had done before. And the water came out, not because of Moses obedience, but because of the mercy of God.

Cf. the story in Mark 9:14-29, ending with the statement in v. 29.

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the CIM, used to say, that it was necessary for our usefulness to learn "to move man through God by prayer alone." Cf. Hudson Taylor in the Early Years, p. 135.

And it is important to see that this was not the way in which God started out with Moses. But how important it was that the children of Israel see God "sanctified," set apart as different from all other gods.

— Cf. Psa. 18:31,
For who is God save the Lord?
or who is a rock save our God?

May we be learning the lesson that to speak to the Rock is enough!