

### Water from the Rock and the Defeat of Amalek

#### Exodus 17

Exodus 17 – *“Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> 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 the Lord?” <sup>3</sup> 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?”*

*<sup>4</sup> So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” <sup>5</sup> And the Lord 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”*

*<sup>8</sup> Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” <sup>10</sup> So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup> And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. <sup>12</sup> But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. <sup>13</sup> So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” <sup>15</sup> And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; <sup>16</sup> for he said, “Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”*

#### Background Notes

In Exodus 14 we had the great miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. In Exodus 15 we had the Song of Moses and the Children of Israel in celebration of their crossing the Red Sea, the miracle of the bitter waters made sweet at Marah, and the refreshing stop at the oasis of Elim. In Exodus 16 we saw the giving of the manna and the institution of the Sabbath.

In Exodus 17 we have the miracle of water from the smitten rock. According to verse 1, this event took place at Rephidim. We don't know exactly where Rephidim is, but verse 16 it appears that it was in the vicinity of Mount Horeb. Several cross-references reveal that Mount Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai, "the mountain of God," but even the exact location of Mount Sinai is still in question. In any case, this was where the miracle took place.

The Israelites were certainly not on their best behavior in verses 2 and 4. Moses named this place Massah and Meribah, meaning testing and quarrelling. Notice that to complain is to test the Lord that is to challenge and try His patience. I trust that we don't test the Lord. Think about this the next time you complain. Water flowed from the rock when Moses struck the rock with his rod. Once again we see the grace of God to His people in this miracle. In His grace, God provided water for His complaining people.

Moses was to strike a certain rock and thirst-quenching, life-giving water would flow from this rock. Was this a miracle, or did God just show Moses a rock that was blocking some water behind it, and Moses released this dammed up water by striking the rock? Quenching the thirst of a couple million people would take a lot of water, and if the water had been right there behind the rock, Moses just have had to move the rocks so it would flow. I think it would have been obvious that this was not a miracle.

Water from the rock was a miracle, because the same thing happened again in Numbers 20, near the end of the forty years of wandering. This was obviously a different rock at a different location. But now the question: Why did God choose *this way* to provide water for the Israelites? He could have sent rain, right? He provided manna from heaven for His people, so why not water from heaven? God chose to provide water this way because of the spiritual picture involved in this miracle.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The water from the rock is a spiritual picture of the water of the Holy Spirit.

We know that we have a spiritual picture here because of what we read in I Corinthians 10:1-4. Verse 4 says that the Israelites drank spiritual water from the spiritual rock of Christ. Now, this does not mean that the water in the wilderness was not real H<sub>2</sub>O and the rock was not a real rock! The point is that the rock and the water are spiritual pictures of the live-giving water that is available through Jesus Christ, the Solid Rock.

I Corinthians 10:11 says that all the events in the wilderness happened to the children of Israel as examples for us. The Greek word that's used here for examples is *types*. A *type* is a spiritual picture. The spiritual picture we have here is water from the smitten rock. Do you see the spiritual picture? On the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ was struck with the judgment of God against our sins so that we could have the water of life. And specifically, the water is not just eternal life, but the Holy Spirit who empowers this life.

In John 7:37-39 our Lord said, “...*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive....*” Our Lord Jesus promised to give this living water to the woman of Samaria if she would turn to Him as the Messiah. The same promise is available to everyone today. Have you come to Jesus Christ, the smitten Rock, to quench your spiritual thirst? The water from the rock is a spiritual picture of the water of the Holy Spirit.

## **2. The war with Amalek is a spiritual picture of the war with the flesh.**

In verse 10 we have the first mention of Joshua. Joshua was to become the replacement for Moses, and he would lead the Israelites in the conquest of the Promised Land. Notice that God was preparing and training Joshua for the conquest in this battle with Amalek. Who was Amalek? The Amalekites were a fierce nomadic tribe that lived in the region of the Dead Sea. They were descendants of Esau, and this helps us understand the spiritual picture that we have here. Hebrews 12:16 says that Esau was a godless and immoral person. Esau was a man who lived “after the flesh.”

When we use the term “flesh” here, we mean the sinful nature that we still possess, even as believers. Most believers would never dare to say that they no longer sin, or that they no longer have a problem with sin! We sin because of the flesh, or the sinful nature, that we still have in this life -- even though we're saved and have divine life and a new nature as well. Galatians 5:16-17 was written to believers: “... *walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another so that you do not do the things that you wish.*” This constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit is pictured here in Exodus 17 in the war with Amalek.

Verse 16 tells us that Amalek was not destroyed. As war continued between Amalek and Israel from generation to generation, so throughout our Christian lives we will be at war with the flesh. Praise the Lord, the war is over when we get to heaven! We will have our resurrected bodies that will be sinless!

Notice the extended *type* that we have in Exodus 17. In Exodus 16 we saw the provision of the manna, a spiritual picture of Jesus Christ, the true Bread of Life. In the first half of Exodus 17 we saw the life-giving water from the smitten rock, a picture of the Holy Spirit who was given as a result of Christ's work on the cross, and who now empowers our new life in Christ. In the second half of Exodus 17 we have a spiritual picture of what will take place in every believer's life – war between the flesh and the Spirit, as we have just read in Galatians 5:16-17. In addition, read the last section of Romans 7 where we see Paul's description of this on-going warfare in his own life as a believer.

What is the key to victory in this war with the flesh? I think we see several principles of victory in the spiritual picture that God has given us here in Exodus 17.

1. Recognize that the Lord is on high, making intercession for us.

We see this principle in Moses on the mountain lifting up his hands over Israel's army that is involved in the fight in the valley below him. Moses, as the leader of God's people, is a picture of Jesus Christ, who is our Leader. He is in heaven now making intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

2. Realize the importance of prayer.

Moses, with upraised hands on the mountain, is not only a picture of Christ, but also emphasizes the importance of prayer in spiritual warfare. Remember the spiritual armor passage in Ephesians 6? We are commanded to pray at all times for all the saints.

3. Fight with the Sword of the Spirit.

Verse 13 says, "So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." I don't think it is over-spiritualization to see the sword of the Spirit in this picture. The Holy Spirit who lives in us wars against the flesh. He fills our mind with the Word of God so that we are strengthened in the Lord, and He even brings specific verses to mind, which oppose the mind of the flesh. But remember, you must know the Word of God so that you can use the sword of the Spirit in spiritual battle!

The war with Amalek is a spiritual picture of the war with the flesh.

## **Practical Application:**

### **You can be a Hur!**

*"When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up... so that his hands remained steady until sunset. Thus Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword" (v12-13).*

Who was Hur? According to Jewish tradition, Hur was the husband of Miriam, and thus the brother-in-law of Moses and Aaron. However, we can't be sure. But Hur and Aaron supported Moses' upraised arms. If Moses' arms dropped, Israel started to lose the battle.

Do you see the application? Hur was not a Joshua or a Moses, but he played a very important role here. It's very important to support our spiritual leaders, and to help them by shouldering some responsibility. By all means, give yourself to prayer concerning the Lord's work. Praying for and supporting our leaders are very important areas of service. Every believer who is walking with the Lord can do it!

So, if you're thinking you're unimportant – you're not! You can be a Hur!