

The Smitten Rock

“ALL OUR fathers were under the cloud, and ALL passed through the sea . . . and were ALL baptised . . . and did all eat . . . and did ALL drink” (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

In these five things, the Israelites all partook of God’s intimate favor and fellowship, but still He finally rejected them and scattered their carcasses in the wilderness. The Israelites had every reason to believe that they were a specially selected and favored group, but they had the bitter lesson to learn that as regards eternal salvation, God has no favorites. He is no respecter of persons. His ways are rigidly just and equal. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

“All our fathers were under the cloud.”

That is, the miraculous and specially provided cloud of God’s protection and guidance was spread over them all. Surely they could feel, “We are the chosen people.”

“And all passed through the sea.”

Here again a great miracle was openly performed on their behalf. Every one of them had the impressive personal experience of passing through that divinely provided channel of deliverance from bondage to freedom. This passage through the sea, with the water standing on both sides and the shielding cloud enveloping them above, Paul likens to baptism. And in this act Egypt—the world of sin—was left behind, and their former masters, the Egyptians—the old man of the flesh—were drowned in the cleansing baptismal waters.

WHAT IS PAUL TEACHING?

Let us bear in mind what Paul is driving at. He is saying that though all the Israelites partook of these things, yet the great majority were finally rejected and destroyed in the wilderness simply because—with special divine blessing and manifestations showered on them from every angle—they would not make the effort to rise above their natural, animal desires and way of life.

“And did all eat the same spiritual meat.”

Paul is drawing the parallel between THEIR spiritual food and drink, and the bread and wine of the Lord’s supper. The manna, we are told (Num. 11:8) was GROUND or BEATEN to make bread, just as the Passover lamb was SLAIN to provide the protecting blood, and the rock had to be SMITTEN to provide the life-giving water. In all these things we are reminded that in the great battle against the evil consequences of sin, our Leader had to give up his life under the most cruel and agonizing conditions. This is to teach and impress on us that the struggle for holiness and life is not a pleasant, easy pastime but a vitally serious thing which only a few have the wisdom to apply themselves to and follow through to the end.

“And did all drink the same spiritual drink.”

The manna and the water from the rock are called “spiritual” because they were specially provided by the Spirit of God and not by natural, human effort; and also because they typified the true spiritual meat and drink of the Word, and of the Word-made-flesh, by regular partaking of which we may (and must) be spiritually transformed, and finally reborn of Spirit-power.

SMITTEN BY THE ROD OF MOSES

Paul tells us here that the rock struck by Moses to provide water represented Christ. He was smitten by the rod, or Law, of Moses, in order to provide a way of life. He came under the curse of the Law and broke it open to free those held in bondage by the Law. And it was the Levites, the tribe of Moses the custodians of the Law, who smote him. They were the divinely-appointed “*rod of Moses*,” for they were the administrators of Moses’ Law, confirmed in this office by the ROD of the tribe of Levi being caused to blossom (Num. 17:8).

The incident of smiting the rock occurred at Rephidim, which was the last stop before reaching Mt. Sinai. Maps usually place it in the immediate Mt. Sinai region. The point is this. Paul says here that this rock “*followed them*.” What did he mean? The most reasonable meaning seems to be that the stream caused by the smiting of the rock followed them from Rephidim to Sinai, where they stayed a whole year. The smiting of the rock was a very significant and important event. It is reasonable that it is associated with their whole stay at Sinai, which was the most important year in their entire history.

THE BROOK FROM THE MOUNT

If this be the case, it gives added harmony and meaning to Moses’ action of grinding up the golden calf and casting the dust of it into the “*brook that descended out of the mount*,” and making the people drink it (Ex. 32:20; Deut. 9:21). The water of life from the Rock, defiled by the sin of the people, would have the same significance as the brazen serpent—sin’s flesh—lifted up to typify the nailing of the body of sin to the cross. In the one case the people had to drink, in the other to look with faith.

“He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38).

John immediately explains that Jesus referred to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which was dependent upon Jesus’ crucifixion and ascension. He says the Spirit was not given because Christ was not yet glorified. Jesus himself said—

“If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” (Jn. 16:7),

The Spirit-streams could not be poured forth until the Rock was smitten, just as the seals of the apocalyptic scroll could not be loosed until the Lamb was found worthy to loose them. The sacrificial death of Jesus, his glorious victory over, and destruction of, the sin-flesh-devil, was the great key that unlocked the treasures of spiritual blessing bound up in the Rock.

“He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:8).

There is another interesting aspect to the water-supplying rock. We are familiar with Jesus’ identification as the foundation-rock of the spiritual Temple—the rejected and smitten stone that was made head of the corner. Now the smitten rock, we are told was “in Horeb” (Ex. 17:6). The first time Horeb is mentioned it is called the “*Mountain of God*” (Ex. 3:1). Horeb is another name for Sinai.

LIVING WATERS FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD

So we can trace a parallel here between the old and new covenants—Sinai and Jerusalem. The rock was smitten in Mt. Horeb or Sinai, and the water of life came forth and sustained the people while the Law was being given to them and the FIRST Tabernacle was being built. This was the typical Mosaic shadow enacted at Sinai—the founding and organization of the NATURAL Israelitish Kingdom of God.

Similarly, the TRUE, anti-typical Rock was smitten at Mt. Moriah at Jerusalem. From this mountain—“*beginning at Jerusalem*” (Lk. 24:47)—the Spirit poured forth carrying the Gospel to the ends of the world. Furthermore, we are told that when the new Kingdom is set up, living waters—both literal and spiritual—will issue forth from here. At this mountain in the future, as at Sinai in the past, the Tabernacle of God—both literal and spiritual—will be built. Joel (3:18), Zechariah (14:8), and Ezekiel (47:1) all speak of the LITERAL streams that will come from the foundations of the Temple, and the river of water of life of the last chapter of Revelation gives the SPIRITUAL counterpart. And finally, through the Prophet like unto Moses, the new Law will go forth from this mountain to all the earth.

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