

LESSON 8



MOSES DISHONORS GOD

Scripture Text: Numbers 20:1-13

Today we find the Israelites on the very border of Canaan. They have not yet learned that their murmuring against Moses, their God-called leader, brings the wrath of God and His judgment down upon them. Here we find them placing blame upon Moses, once again, for their lack of water.

If we feel surprised that Moses could slip as he did, we have to remember that he was human, and human nature is weak and faulty. Does anyone in this life get to the place where he cannot fail? God did not excuse Moses of the provocation, but He forgave him. Repentance must come first. No sin is necessary or unavoidable. God has provided a way of escape with every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

MEMORY VERSE: *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. —1 Corinthians 10:12*

A Dry and Thirsty Land

Numbers 20:1-5 There was no water, for this was desert land. These people or their parents had met the same problem before. God had supplied the need then, but they failed to look to Him now. Instead, they complained—**chode with Moses**. They blamed these godly men for their lack of water. They voiced wicked and rash wishes — **Would God that we had died when our brethren died**. They had quickly forgotten that this attitude brought the wrath of God down on the generation before them. They despised God's way — **Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt?** They once again had confused values—called it **this evil place**, implying Egypt was better. The temporary and the material things had blinded them, causing them to be unable to see the permanent and the spiritual things.

God Answered Prayer

Numbers 20:6-8 Moses and Aaron went . . . unto the door of the tabernacle . . . and they fell upon their faces. They went to God's appointed place and humbly, reverently, and earnestly called upon Him. To show them He saw and heard, **the glory of the Lord appeared unto them**. Sometimes the Lord made His glory visible in warning, sometimes in approval, but always it meant His presence. We cannot have God's glory individually or collectively without having His presence. If God is not there, neither will His glory be present. Surely, this meant approval of Moses and Aaron at this time.

The Lord told them what to do. **Take the rod**—a type of the Word and power of God. They were to gather the people, and **speak ye unto the rock before their eyes**. That was all. The result would be enough **water out of the rock** for all of the people and their animals. If we will take the rod and speak to the Rock before men, He will still furnish water as needed in this modern dry land. That rock was a type of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). Only from HIM flows the water that will satisfy thirsty souls. We live in a very dry and thirsty land, spiritually speaking. Jesus is the water of life.

Moses and Aaron Respond

Numbers 20:9-11 Moses took the rod from before the Lord—evidently, it was kept close by at all times. They **gathered the congregation together before the rock**. So far, they were obedient. The next step was to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses spoke to the people, **Hear now, ye rebels**—here was anger, impatience, defiance, Moses' way of doing it, not God's plan. **Must we fetch you water?** Here was exaltation of himself as the one able to bring this miracle. Then **with his rod he smote the rock twice**. What was so wrong with Moses' act? Here was plain disobedience. He was not told to strike or even to touch the rock. He was not told to turn his wrath on the people.

Moses was not to smite the rock because the rock was a type of Christ, and Christ was to die only once (Romans 6:9-10). A rock had been struck once (Exodus 17:6), a type of Christ's death, and water came out, a type of salvation issuing from Christ. As Christ was not to die again, so the rock was not to be struck again. A few words were sufficient to bring the life-giving water, just as all who ask will be given the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). When Moses struck the rock, he violated the type.

All Sin Brings Punishment

Numbers 20:12-13 The Lord spake . . . ye shall not bring this congregation into the land—Canaan. Why so great a punishment? **Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel . . .** God not only counted Moses' action as unbelief, but He labeled it rebellion (Numbers 27:14). He did not give the Lord His rightful place. His action did not sanctify the Lord in the eyes of Israel.

The place was called **the water of Meribah**—chiding—because of the people's sinful faultfinding. Similar chiding had once before been given the same name (Exodus 17:7). **He**—the Lord—**was sanctified in them**. Not by their actions, but by His own manifestation of His miracle power and His mercy and by upholding His honor in the punishment of Moses and Aaron. Yes, even Moses and Aaron had to suffer the punishment for their sin. (See also Numbers 20:23-24; 27:12-14.) God did not excuse sin in them, and He will not overlook sin in any of us.

Few have reached as high a position before God as Moses held. Did God consider this? No! Neither did He consider Moses' faithfulness before or the many hard trials he had endured when He judged him for this sin. God does not weigh our good and our bad deeds against each other. Each sin is judged by itself. Read Ezekiel 33:12-16. Moses sinned, and he returned to God's favor only by repenting. Moses was forgiven, we know (Matthew 17:3). Moses and Aaron did not get by. Neither will any one of us, except we repent. We serve a compassionate and merciful God and Savior.

JUST A THOUGHT

The behavior of some children suggests that their parents embarked on the Sea of Matrimony without a paddle.