

Wilderness Gleanings 5 - The Smitten Rock at Horeb

The Spirit of Christ indwelling and filling the redeemed

Exodus 17:1-7: “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 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. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?”

Here again the people murmured against Moses and the Lord. It is not now a case of “bitter water” but of “no water,” that which is vital to the *outflow of life*. That rod which was used in the execution of God’s judgment and redeeming power at the Red Sea now smites the rock and water flows from it in abundance refreshing the dry land. God stood before Moses at the rock and His presence resulted in a blessed provision. “He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river” (Ps 105:41).

Practical application:

1. At Marra the redeemed typically experience the **bitterness** of the wilderness and *separation*. We have Christ in His sweetening priestly work.
2. In the wilderness of Sin we experience the **barrenness** of the wilderness with its *deprivation*. We feed on Christ come down as the true manna from heaven.
3. At Rephidim (Horeb) we experience the **bereft** nature of the wilderness – its *destitution and poverty*. There is nothing *to take in* and so nothing *to flow out*.
4. So we have the promise and provision of the Redeemer:
“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”
5. The barrenness of the wilderness is answered in John 6 in the Person of Christ as the true manna come down from heaven. It brings before us the *crucifixion* of Christ.
6. The bereft nature of the wilderness is answered in John 7 in the Person of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven and indwelling the believer upon the promise of Christ.
7. This blessed provision of the Spirit brings before us the *result* of Christ’s crucifixion and glorification.
“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4).
8. He was smitten in judgment in order that the Spirit could indwell and sustain the redeemed in their journey in the arid wilderness.¹

¹ The smiting of the rock on this occasion (Ex 17) took place in the second year after leaving Egypt. The smiting of the rock in Numbers 20 (which was done in error) took place towards the end of the wilderness journey. The rock in the first case

typifies Christ smitten under divine judgment; in the second, the rock typifies Christ in exaltation (by which we see the nature of Moses' error).