

Lessons from Exodus 9 12-10-00

¹ The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.² So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"³ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"⁴ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."⁵ The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.⁷ And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" Ex 17:1-7 (NIV)

In our last visit to the journeying nation they had complained about not having the pots of meat like they had in Egypt. The LORD had patience with them and satisfied their need in quail and manna. We saw how the manna was a picture of Christ to come, who would meet all their spiritual need – the bread that came down from heaven. Now we find them at Rephidim, resting place, but they are facing the dilemma that they faced before – no water. Last time this happened they were in a bitter place – Marah – and there was water but it was not drinkable. God revealed Himself as The Lord that Heals. Now in this resting place there is no water.

At Elim – the last resting place there were springs. Water is the great need of all life. That is why scientists think there may have been life on Mars because of the evidence of ice. Life is not a spontaneous thing however much they wish it was, life is in the Son. How can you rest where the basic necessity of life is removed? The place may be perfect for resting but without water, you will die. Just as the manna was a picture of Jesus – so the water is a picture of the life giving Spirit of God. ³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. John 7:37-39 (NIV)

Without peace that comes from the Spirit of God living in you, the place created for rest will never be restful²¹ *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Isaiah 57:21 (KJV) When the Spirit of God opened my eyes to the fact that I was in a cult – in answer to the prayers of his people – I went to a place of rest. It was a deserted village high in the mountains of Japan. I thought surely I would find peace here. I took my Bible and tried to get a clear understanding of all the confusion that was in my life. I was there with Katrina for a time when she was just an infant. But even though I was in a restful place, I could not find rest. I needed the stream of living water – but my heart attitude was not entirely of faith. I was still clinging to my own desires. "Why is there no water in this place of

rest?" I thought. I had opened my spiritual eyes only as far as I was willing but God had more in mind.

Notice the people still have their eyes on Moses. He has told them already in the last two situations that he had nothing to do with it, it was all about God and his leading. They had not learned the lesson at Marah, so God is giving them a second test. When I teach the youth at Cornerstone I give tests to see if they got the main lessons from Scripture. I go over all the questions and answers the day before the test. I want them to retain, in their minds at least, the key points of what we are learning. Then after the test we go over it again. I'm just following God's way of dealing with us. They had a lesson at Marah, and God reminded them of the key points in the Desert of Sin, and now they are having a test at Rephidim.

What are the key points God is testing them on? 1. It is God that is leading them and testing them to see if they are trusting Him. 2. God provides all their needs. 3. All we need do is come to Him and ask and then obey what He tells us. How are they doing on this test? Notice the end of verse 2. They don't even have their names on the paper! They are giving the test back to God and saying, "no, You take the test! Here is our one question: Are You really here among us?" Can you for a moment try to grasp the heart of God with these babies? Ignoring all the patient instruction they have received to this point, they throw the test back in his face and say, "You're the One being tested! Prove you're here by giving us water!" Arrogant and defiant, proud and stubborn, they dare to challenge the One who walked before them through an ocean, who drops angel's food daily for them to eat. What kind of people are these? Ones like you and me. "What are you doing God leading me to a place of rest and not providing water?" "Look, here – I've got my Bible and I'm alone with You and still no living water! Are You really here? Then do what I'm asking!"

Give us water! They are crying so loud about Moses they can't ask and receive from God. "One day I was trying to feed my 2-month-old daughter, Crystal. She cried loudly and frantically, pausing just to breathe. If she would only be still, I thought, then I could feed her. Looking down at her in my arms, I wondered how often I cry out to God, hungry for spiritual food--but am too frantic to allow Him to satisfy my needs." -- Julie Collins, North Platte, NE. Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

Jesus was tempted to get ahead of God the Father. Matthew 4 - ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Matt 4:5-7 (NIV) Jesus only quoted half the verse, the rest of it says, "as you did at Massah."

That is this place right here that we are reading about in Exodus. Look at the parallel. IF you are the Son of God - IF the LORD is really among us THEN Keep me from smashing to pieces - give us water. What is happening is we are turning around and saying we aren't the ones being tested – God is! That is our human pride and Jesus cut right to the point and said to Satan – It is written, Don't test God! You take what your heavenly Father

is trying to show you and you turn it around and arrogantly throw it in his face and declare you will not take the test, but demand that God does and answer it according to your liking.

Excuse me, but I thought He was Sovereign Lord of the universe. I thought there is none like Him majestic in glory, awesome in power, beautiful in holiness. Who is the teacher and who is the student? Don't get so chummy with his grace and mercy that you start thinking you can deal with Him like He deals with you. He is testing to drive the point home and get it from your head into your heart so you can drink living water in this place of rest He has graciously given you. We throw it back at Him because we want what we want and we think we know how God should have acted. WOE!!! God resists the proud.

That is why later in Deut 6 Moses says, "Don't you ever do that again, don't tempt God like you did at Massah – which means testing. Who is taking the test? Verse 3 Why did you, Moses ... They all got the first question wrong. Who brought you to this place you are today? I hope we answer correctly! Many a church organization would chant a man's name. God help us, we are all men of like passion. Why do we want to give man so much credit?

The next question on the test is who supplies all your needs? The people (in verse 2) ask Moses for water. Who gives water? Can you bring water out of a rock? But Moses gets it right – He goes straight to God and asks, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Notice that Moses didn't put God to the test. He had learned earlier. He just asks how to respond and asks God to be aware how ugly they are getting. That is the correct response to the third question on the exam. What do you do when you have a need? Go to God and obey his leading. That is what Moses is doing here. In verse 5 God tells Moses how to respond. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Not Moses alone but the elders with him. They as a group go to the rock. It is not just Moses – it is all the leaders together. Even in the case of Moses God was trying to establish elders who helped to lead. These elders were part of the ones that died in the wilderness. They did not do their job when they came to entering the Promised Land – their job of encouraging the people to trust and obey the Lord. So God raised up the next generation of elders that did go in. And in Judges 2:7 the second generation of elders encouraged the people to stay faithful to the Lord. But when they died, Israel worshipped foreign gods.

The staff, which represents -the presence of God with them, strikes the Rock that is symbol of Christ. "We esteemed Him stricken by God, smitten by Him and afflicted." Jesus was smitten for you by the Father that you might have living water. Out gushed millions of gallons of water, enough for an entire nation. The sacrificial death of Jesus in our place opened a fountain of living water. ¹ "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; Isaiah 55:1 (NIV) ¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb Rev 22:1 (NIV) ¹⁷ The Spirit and

the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Rev 22:17 (NIV)
Jesus paid the price for you to drink freely of the water of life. He was smitten so that water could flow without cost to you but at great cost to Him.

In Numbers 20 they come back to this area and there is no water. The people pull the same quarrelling routine. Moses goes to God again and God tells him to take the rod and speak to the rock. But this time Moses fails the test. Remember the second question? Who provides all your needs? Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses says to the people, "must we (Moses and Aaron) bring water out of this rock for you? And he struck the rock twice.

Once Jesus was struck by God for you, he need never be stricken again. God struck Him once so that living water could flow, and once stricken if you ever had a need you only need speak to the rock and living water will flow again. But Moses marred this beautiful picture in two ways. By reinforcing their idea that it was Moses and not God – "must we bring" and then by disobeying what he had heard and striking the rock (Jesus) twice. Paul clearly tells us this rock is Christ: ³ They all ate the same spiritual food⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 1 Cor 10:3-4 (NIV)

Who brought you to where you are today? Who provides all your needs? What do you need to do when you have a need? Thou shalt not tempt the Lord as they did at Masah. If your not in a test now – you will be sometime soon for God tests his children. Know the answers in your heart. He was stricken for you so you could drink freely of the river of life. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come, Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Thirsty? Just ask and the water will flow.