

BIBLE STORY: THE WATER FROM THE ROCK

Exodus 17:1-7

Central Thoughts

- The LORD kept His promise to provide salvation for the children of Israel despite their rebellion, impenitence, and unbelief toward Him.
- Christ was the Rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness to satisfy their thirst.
- As the Rock was struck so that water flowed out, so Christ would be struck upon the cross that we might receive salvation through His body and blood in Holy Baptism and in the Lord's Supper.
- Impenitence and unbelief reject the benefits of the Lord's Supper.
- Repentant faith receives the blessing of "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation" that Jesus' offers us in His true body and blood.

Discussion Questions

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY: The children of Israel had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. According to the Promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the LORD raised up the Prophet Moses to deliver Israel from slavery. After the LORD's judgment was delivered against Pharaoh and the Egyptians through the ten plagues, the LORD redeemed them from slavery through the blood of the Passover Lamb. They set out from Egypt in freedom, through the wilderness, to worship the LORD at Mount Sinai in the land of Midian. On their journey through the wilderness toward Midian, they turned south and camped at the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba on the Sinai Peninsula). Convinced that they were confused and now trapped in Egyptian territory, Pharaoh's heart was hardened again, and he pursued the Children of Israel. With the Egyptian army behind them, rock cliffs on either side of them, and the Red Sea before them, they appeared trapped with no way of escape. They cried out to the LORD in despair! The Lord answered them, "Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today...the LORD will fight for you and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:13a, 14). Though they were filled with doubt and fear, the LORD divided the Red Sea and Moses led the children of Israel to safety through the water on dry ground. The Egyptians were drowned, and Israel received the salvation of the LORD. They celebrated the LORD's deliverance, but they soon grumbled about the hardships of their sojourn through the wilderness. They complained about food, and the LORD provided manna from heaven. They feared they would die of thirst, and the LORD provided water from the Rock. Despite numerous displays of strife and contention directed against the Lord, He was faithful to His promise to them.

What did the children of Israel discover when they camped in Rephidim?

They had no water to drink.

How did the children of Israel respond to the lack of water?

They contended with Moses and put the LORD to the test, saying, "Give us water, that we may drink!"

Of what did they accuse Moses and the LORD of doing?

They accused Moses and the LORD of bringing them out in the wilderness to kill them and their livestock with thirst.

What did their murmuring against the LORD and Moses show?

They were filled with unbelief. They doubted that the LORD would provide for them on their wilderness journey. They accused God of not loving them.

What did Moses ask the LORD?

"What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

Did the Lord respond to Moses' prayer by destroying the children of Israel for their faithlessness, or by showing them mercy?

Though they did not deserve it, the LORD showed them mercy and provided water for them from the Rock. He was faithful to His promise of salvation.

What did the Lord instruct Moses to do?

He was to go before the people, assemble some of the elders of Israel to witness what the LORD called him to do, and he was to take the rod of the Lord in his hand and strike the Rock.

What did the Lord promise Moses that He would do?

The LORD promised that He would be present with Moses and would stand before Moses on the Rock and cause water to flow forth from the Rock that was struck with the LORD's staff to satisfy their thirst with water from the Rock.

What did Moses call the place where the water flowed from the Rock?

He called it Massah ("tempted") and Meribah ("contention"), because the children of Israel "tested" the LORD by asking, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Was the LORD present with His rebellious people?

The LORD was present for them in the water from the Rock, not to destroy them, but to save them from their sins of unbelief and rebellion against Him.

What does the Apostle Paul teach us about the Old Testament account of the water from the Rock (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-5)?

The Rock that followed them was Christ. As the LORD was present with them for their salvation, so He is present with us in Baptism and in the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper Jesus' gives us His body and blood to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst by His forgiveness.

What does Moses' striking of the Rock signify?

It signified that Jesus, the Rock of our salvation, would be struck upon the cross with God's judgment, with the punishment that we deserved, so that we could be saved.

What flowed out of Jesus' side when He was struck with the spear on Good Friday (See John 19:34-35)?

The blood and water of Jesus that paid for our sins and gave us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation (See the Small Catechism concerning the benefits of the Sacrament of the Altar).

What does the water from the Rock in the Old Testament teach us about the Lord's Supper in the New Testament?

It teaches us that just as the LORD was present with the children of Israel in the Old Testament, so He is truly with us in the New Testament, giving us to eat of His body and to drink of His blood.

Of what does the Apostle Paul warn us in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5?

Using the children of Israel as an example, he warns us against receiving the Lord's Supper in impenitence and unbelief.

How are we to receive the Lord's body and blood?

With repentant faith, confessing our sins, and clinging to the promise of salvation in His body and blood. "He is worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Small Catechism: Who receives this Sacrament worthily?)

Meditation on the Bible Story

Despite our unbelief and rebellion against God, He acts for our salvation in the person of His Son. Jesus is the Rock of our salvation. Christ was present in the Rock that gave Israel drink in the Old Testament, and He is truly present with us in His body and blood today in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. By the example of the Lord's dealings with the children of Israel in the Old Testament we are taught both the lesson of God's faithfulness to His promises of salvation, but also our need for contrition and repentance to receive the benefits of His saving acts. We are called to approach the Lord's Supper as repentant sinners, confessing our sins to the Lord, letting go of the sins of others against us, and with a faith that believes that Jesus is truly present in the Lord's Supper with His body and blood for our salvation. We are truly worthy and well prepared if we have faith in these words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins...for those words require all hearts to believe."

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord Jesus, You are the Rock of our Salvation. As water flowed out of the Rock in the wilderness to satisfy the spiritual thirst of the children of Israel, so teach us to hunger and thirst in repentant faith for Your body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Deliver us from every form of rebellion against You and prepare our hearts to receive Your body and blood in true faith. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.



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