

Exodus 17

Read Exodus 17:1-7 : This and other chapters in Exodus provide a backdrop to many New Testament teachings. Paul was a student of scripture. He tried to find how the Old Testament related to the New Testament. This chapter is full of usable imagery relating to the work of Christ.

In general, we can say that God was hovering and protecting his people (like the cloud) as they left Egypt and as they wandered in the desert. Cloud cover in the desert is a big deal, and very rare. God miraculously provided for all of their needs, while challenging them to look to him for help. The ultimate reason for this story, beyond the immediate situation at hand, was the eventual work of Jesus Christ.

Exodus has multiple events where there seemed to be a water shortage in the desert. It is miraculous that 3 million people and their livestock could find water and food for 40 years in the desert. In this case, they grumbled against Moses, which essentially grumbling against God. The place was named Massah and Meribah, meaning testing and quarrelling.

God told Moses to take his rod and strike the rock of Horeb and water will come out. This seems like a miracle; but it speaks to something bigger. Jesus was struck on the cross. When he was pierced, water and blood came out of his side. His death, signified by that water accumulated in his pericardial sack, accomplished our salvation. His death paid for our sins.

Similarly, the manna they ate is compared to Jesus, the bread of life. When we take him in to gain life and strength (like food) we become more like him. The Jews teach that you become like whoever you eat with, since the food breaks down and becomes the elements of our replacement cells, etc.. We already talked about how the Red Sea crossing represented how baptism with our good shepherd is like the death of this world's version of us, and out of the water comes a follower of Christ.

Another take on the book of Exodus is that God gave them all of these miracles, but it was of no lasting impact. They never became grateful or trusted in God. The moral of the story is that God does miraculous things for us every day; but we have become accustomed to this grace and callous. If his goodness towards us does not change our hearts, we will perish outside of the place of his promises and abundance.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea; ² and they all

were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ and they all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased; for their dead bodies were spread out in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they indeed craved them. ⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Nor are we to commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor are we to put the Lord to the test, as some of them^l did, and were killed by the snakes. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them^l did, and were killed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let the one who thinks he stands watch out that he does not fall. (1 Corinthians 10)

Read Exodus 17:8-16: The story of Amalek has multiple takeaways. Amalek pounced on Israel and tried to kill them without provocation. Amalek was the grandson of Esau. Esau represents the people of the flesh. Jacob represents the people of the spirit. The people of the flesh will always attack the people of the Spirit. We see that today, in our highly polarized society. Our battle is not against a particular people. It is against the fleshly nature in all of us. We have to be swift and ruthless to deal with sinful passions that arise in all of us; otherwise our masochistic passions will spring on us at places and times of vulnerability and weakness to take us captive and ruin our lives.

¹⁷ "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you came out of Egypt, ¹⁸ how he confronted you on the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. ¹⁹ So it shall come about, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, that you shall wipe out the mention of the name Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget. (Deuteronomy 25)