

Exodus 17:1-6 (G. Gardner) 71424

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Exodus 17:1-6 and Numbers 20:1-11 (17:1-6)

It is very important for us to keep to all the words of Scripture. Because, being God's word, every one is accurate, pure and tried; and it is hazardous to leave out, or overlook, any, however apparently unimportant, for doing so may lead to serious results. God never repeats Himself in the way that we do often, and where He gives an account twice over it is with a different aim. Unbelief says, Moses was inaccurate in these two accounts. We bow and own God's goodness in giving both. Not seeing the two truths brought out in these types leads to much of the confusion around, i.e. the distinction between the Lord's work for us and His present work in us, the difference between the sacrifice and the priest. As guilty sinners we need a Sacrifice; as needy saints we want a Priest.

Israel, as we are, was in a "dry and thirsty land," and they required water, they needed life. There is no life for the sinner unless the judgment of God—the wages of sin—is spent on some one, and if these dying 600,000 are to have life it must be through that which typified the judicial rod of God smiting His beloved Son. Moses was told to take his rod—that rod which had been given him in the place of judgment, and with that rod to smite the rock. It told of the judgment of God falling—not on the sinful, murmuring people, but—on Christ, when on the cross made sin for us. The Rock bore the strokes due to them, and from the riven Rock the waters flowed—the living waters. "The gift of God is eternal life" —life beyond death and judgment, life flowing for all who will drink of its streams.

But there is more even than this. The Holy Spirit has come down, and the believer possesses not only life, but life abundantly in the power of the Holy Ghost, "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Do you ask, Whither does it go? To its source—Christ in glory. But, before I pass on to the later of these two accounts, I would say, that while truly we have eternal life now, we do not lose while down here the old nature, which we have of the first Adam. We have, however, a new nature, as it is said, "made partakers of a divine nature" —being born again of water (the word of God) and Spirit. These two natures continue side by side, and the old remains as corrupt as ever, but God has condemned it in the cross of Christ. So when we turn to the account in Numbers 20, many years afterward, we find the same murmurings, etc., as before. What is the remedy? A fresh sprinkling of the blood, a fresh salvation? No. Such a thought is a gross dishonor to the finished and everlasting work of the Lord Jesus—completed once for all, one only sacrifice. It is remarkable that the scripture which dwells so much on this one offering (Hebrews 9) is the one which contains the wind up of men. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment." Numbers 20 begins with a very different state of circumstances to that in Exodus 17. Miriam, who had led their song and dance on the shores of the Red Sea, is now dead—the freshness and brightness of early days may be gone, yet God is the same. And they ought, after all their experiences, to have known it. Had He not given them something fresh in chap. 17? The rod of Moses had been replaced by the rod of Aaron, and this is most important. They had murmured against the sovereignty of God in the matter of the priesthood, and He had been very wroth and judged them accordingly. Yet in their midst He had wrought new thing. The rod of Aaron, budding, blossoming, and bearing fruit, is laid up before Jehovah. Christ in His priesthood proved to be the chosen One by the buds and blossoms and fruits of His holy life in this world's night—living now in the power of what He is as our great High Priest. In Hebrews 4, which looks at us as in the wilderness going on to the rest before us, we have two things by the way—the word of God and the great High Priest.

And Jehovah tells Moses to take "the rod" not "his rod," but the rod that had budded, etc.—and to speak, with that before him, to the rock. Moses does indeed take "the rod," but, instead of "speaking to," he smites, the rock twice with "his rod," and so, in his unbelief, failed to sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the children of Israel. Instead of being occupied with "the rod" of Aaron, in all its beauty of living vigor and fruitfulness, taken by divine command from "before Jehovah," he looks at the rebellious people and addresses them. Don't we often do the same? Alas, that it should be so! But all he needed was to present Jehovah's rod and "speak," and the waters should flow out. The Rock already smitten (Exodus 17) must not be smitten again. Moses' rod had done its work. But Christ, having "once suffered for sins," now lives on high, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," in the power of priestly grace to intercede for His needy people here below. Having such a "great High Priest," may we be kept from failing of the grace of God. G. G.