

TWO ROCKS

PART III

Significance of Moses' Action in Exodus, Numbers

By Arlen L. Chitwood

“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” (Ex. 17:6).

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts to drink.

And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also” (Num. 20:7, 8, 11).

The rock brought into view toward the end of Moses' ministry was *not* to be struck, as the first rock seen near the beginning of his ministry. Rather, God clearly commanded Moses *to speak* to this rock. And through this process — *speaking to the rock* rather than striking the rock — it would give forth water.

And note the place which the striking of this rock occupies in Scripture. It is set immediately following the type dealing with an Israelite touching a dead body and being unclean.

The account of uncleanness through contact with a dead body is seen in chapter nineteen; and the account of Moses striking the rock near the end of his ministry, in violation of God's command to “speak

to the rock,” is in the next chapter, chapter twenty.

Then, something additional is also seen in this section of Scripture. In chapter twenty-one there is the account of Moses placing a brazen serpent on a pole for all those who had been bitten by serpents (because of sin) to see (vv. 5ff). And Christ, in John 3:14, called attention to this type and associated it with His being lifted up at Calvary. It was *look and live* in the type, and it is *look and live* in the antitype.

But the type goes beyond that and really deals more centrally with another issue. Those in the type who were dying because of the snake bites were individuals who had previously appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs, whether in Egypt or during the intervening forty years when the yearly feast was kept (note that events in these chapters occur near the end of this forty-year period). Thus, the type really deals centrally with the saved rather than with the unsaved, though it can be used relative to the unsaved.

Any part of the Word of God always has a primary interpretation; but any part, invariably, also has secondary applications as well. And the account of sin in the camp of Israel in Numbers chapter twenty-one is one of the numerous such instances in Scripture.

The reference to the brazen serpent being placed on a pole and lifted up can only refer to *one thing* — *Christ being placed on the Cross and lifted up*. But beyond that matters begin to broaden. There is a preaching of the Cross for *the unsaved* (I Cor. 2:2; 15:3), and there is a preaching of the Cross for *the saved* (I Cor. 1:18; cf. Matt. 16:24ff).

Because of Christ's finished work at Calvary — *dying as the Paschal Lamb, shedding His blood* — unsaved man, “dead in trespasses and sins,” *can look and live* (realize the salvation of his spirit). He can be eternally saved.

And because this same blood is presently on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary, with *Christ exercising the office of High Priest*, saved man — one who has “passed from death unto life,” but becomes unclean through sin — *can look and live* (ultimately realizing the salvation of his soul). He can be cleansed from defilement encountered during his pilgrim walk, realizing the goal of a calling beyond his presently possessed eternal salvation — that of ultimately occu-

pying a position as co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.

This whole section in the Book of Numbers (chs. 19-21) has to do with *disobedience, rejection, and death, with life (through obedience)* seen to follow.

In chapter nineteen there is *uncleanness and death (uncleanness wrought through contact with a dead body)*, in chapter twenty there is *disobedience* through striking the second rock, and in chapter twenty-one *disobedience* is again seen through the people speaking “against God, and against Moses” (v. 5).

But *life* can follow beyond the disobedience, rejection, and death. Provision has been made through the One having been lifted up. As in the type, so in the antitype — it is *look and live*.

All of this ties together, dealing with the same matter. One facet is seen in chapter nineteen, another facet is seen in chapter twenty, and another facet is seen in chapter twenty-one. This is a case of three different successive types presenting different facets of the same picture and shedding light on one another.

And that is the way matters exist in Biblical interpretation.

Scripture has been structured a certain way; and, in order to correctly understand and grasp God's revelation to man, IT HAS TO BE viewed and studied after the manner in which God gave it to man.

Alternate means for correctly grasping and understanding the Word of God NO MORE EXIST than do alternate means exist for salvation.

Moses striking the rock in Num. 20:11, in direct disobedience to God's command, both textually and contextually, can only foreshadow Israel's crucifixion of her Messiah. But something is in view about the crucifixion which is *completely different* than that revealed by Moses striking the rock in Ex. 17:6. And this can easily be seen through comparing the type with the antitype.

Two Different Words, Two Different Rocks

Two different Hebrew words are used for “rock” in Ex. 17:6 and Num. 20:8, 11. Both words mean “rock,” but the word used in Numbers, drawing from

the root form of the word, carries a thought which the word used in Exodus doesn't carry. The word used in Numbers carries the thought of "height," or "elevation," something not seen at all in the Hebrew word used for "rock" in Exodus.

The rock in Exodus which Moses struck depicts Christ as *the lowly One, the suffering Servant, the One Who would be struck and die*. But the rock which Moses struck in Numbers, carrying the thought of "height" or "elevation," depicts Christ as *the exalted One, the One Who would rule and reign*.

This whole overall thought was at the heart of John the Baptist's question in Matt. 11:3:

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

(Because both *a suffering* and *a reigning* Messiah are seen in the O.T., many Jews of John's day, attempting to reconcile these two lines of prophecy concerning their Messiah [how their Messiah could both suffer and reign], looked for two Messiahs to appear — one from the house of Joseph, who would suffer and die; and another from the house of David, who would rule and reign. John's question seems to allude to this thought, prevalent in his day.)

Christ's response though clearly revealed which rock in the Old Testament was in view. It was the one in Numbers, for *the signs which He was performing (vv. 4-6) had to do with the exalted One and His Kingdom, not with the lowly One and Calvary*.

Christ was born King, He offered the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, and it was in *a regal capacity* that He was rejected, tried by Pilate, and crucified. He presented Himself to Israel as *the Rock in Numbers*, not as the Rock in Exodus (Matt. 2:2; 4:17; 21:38; 22:2-7).

When Pilate brought Jesus forth to the Jewish people, having found "no fault" in Him, he announced to them, "Behold your King." And the caption which Pilate placed above His head at the time of the crucifixion read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37; John 18:33-38; 19:14).

(For information on "signs" in Scripture, particularly as they appeared in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, refer to the author's books, SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL and FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES.)

Israel, as Moses in Numbers, not only struck the Rock which had to do with "height," "elevation," but Israel, as Moses, also struck this Rock *in direct disobedience* to God's command. And, as Moses struck the rock *twice* in his day, so did Israel strike the Rock 1,500 years later in *the same dual, disobedient manner*.

The Jewish people, though they struck Christ in the antitype of the Rock in Numbers, they, in the process, struck Him in the antitype of the Rock in Exodus as well. *They not only slew their King, but they also slew the Paschal Lamb (John 1:29) — an act for which no condemnation could ever be leveled against the nation*.

And to insure their King's crucifixion, they even went so far as to claim allegiance to a pagan Gentile ruler — "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

And as Moses was denied entrance into the land for his act in the type, the same thing is seen relative to Israel in the antitype. Because of Israel's rejection of the proffered kingdom, their rejection of the nation's King, and their slaying the One Whom they knew to be "the heir," the kingdom was taken from Israel (Matt. 21:38-43).

Thus...

Thus, the fact remains. Christ presented Himself to Israel as the nation's Deliverer in relation *to regal activities*, not in relation to activities surrounding Calvary. And it was in *this capacity* that Israel struck the Rock. They slew their *King*, though, in the process, they also slew *the Lamb*.

Moses struck the rock in Exodus at the very beginning of God's dealings with the nation. The Jewish people had slain the paschal lambs in Egypt. And Moses striking the rock near the beginning of his ministry, shortly after the Israelites had left Egypt, would correspond to and reflect back on the previous slaying of the paschal lambs in Egypt and that foreshadowed through the slaying of these lambs (Christ's finished work at Calvary, 1,500 years later, dying as the Paschal Lamb).

Then, Moses struck the rock in Numbers near the end of the time God used him to lead the nation. And this also reflected back on that seen through the striking of the first rock (the previous death of the paschal lambs in Egypt, again foreshadowing Christ's finished work at Calvary 1,500 years later).

The correctness of the previous is seen in the fact that "water" issued forth from both rocks when struck, and Scripture specifically calls attention *to water issuing forth abundantly* when the rock in Numbers was struck. The only way this could possibly occur is seeing the striking of the second rock (done in disobedience) reflect back on that foreshadowed by the striking of the first rock (done in obedience).

And the reason for water issuing forth abundantly when the second rock was struck, though done in disobedience, can easily be seen in the antitype. The Jewish people 1,500 years later, in disobedience, struck this second Rock (the Rock having to do with height, elevation, regality); and, in the process, in obedience, they struck the first Rock as well. And God allowed the water to flow abundantly, exactly as seen in the type.

There is a Jewish Saviour from Whom water will *abundantly flow forth for all who look to the One Who has been lifted up*, seen in Num. 21:8, 9; John 12:32. It was *look and live* in the type, and it is *look and live* in the antitype, not only relative to Christ's past finished work at Calvary but relative to His continuing work in the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest.

Thus, the consequences of this action by Moses in the type, and by Israel 1,500 years later in the antitype, is another matter entirely, which moves beyond that seen in the striking of the first rock.

Moses paid dearly for his actions, and the Jewish people are presently paying dearly for theirs.

But the whole of the matter involves things completely within God's sovereign control, through which He will ultimately work out His plans and purposes regarding all things surrounding His Son's coming reign over the earth.

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