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# “Open Church – Open Bible

Min. Marossa Davis

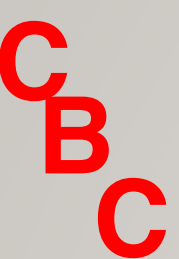


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# Sunday Church School

## NOVEMBER 28, 2021

“ Water from the Rock”  
Numbers 20: 1-13



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“ Water from the Rock”  
Numbers 20:1-13 (KJV)

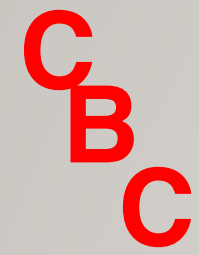
**v. 1. Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.**

v. 2. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

**v. 3. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!”**

v. 4. And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

**v. 5. And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.**



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“ Water from the Rock”  
Numbers 20:1-13 (KJV)

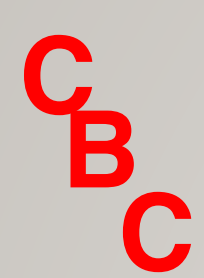
**v. 6. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.**

v. 7. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**v. 8. 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 drink.**

v. 9. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

**v.10. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?**



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**v. 11. 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.**

v. 12. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

**v. 13. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.”**

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**Failure to obey God** always has consequences, regardless of how faithful others may perceive us to be. A lifetime of faithfulness does not give us a pass to indulge in occasional disobedience.

**Failure to obey God does not mean** that He no longer loves us. However, disobedience does invite discipline. In this week’s lesson, we will see that this was true even for Moses, for God held him to the same standard He held every member of the nation of Israel.

**Moses was a divinely called and equipped leader** who had a unique relationship with God. As such, he especially was expected to carefully obey everything God commanded him. Moses was not immune from being disciplined for disobeying God’s instructions. As great a man as he was he was not God’s equal in any way. Like us, he was expected to be an obedient servant of the Lord who simply and fully did what God called him to do.



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## TODAY’S AIM

**FACTS:** to observe once again God’s faithfulness to a people who were largely faithless.

**PRINCIPLE:** to remind us that the Lord can be trusted to provide what is needed in any and every circumstance we encounter.

**APPLICATION:** to grow in our faith by reviewing God’s faithful dealings with Moses and His people, even when both failed the Lord.

## LESSON OUTLINE

- |                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| I. NATIONAL SADNESS        | NUMBERS 20: 1     |
| II. NATIONAL CRISIS        | NUMBERS 20: 2-9   |
| III. PERSONAL DISOBEDIENCE | NUMBERS 20: 10-13 |



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“ Water from the Rock ”

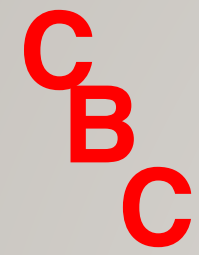
## I. NATIONAL SADNESS

**NUMBERS 20: 1**

**The children of Israel were nearing the end** of their wilderness wanderings. They had come to the wilderness of Zin. This was the first area inspected by the twelve spies and was just north of Kadesh ( cf. 13:21, 26 ), where the people were once again encamped after four decades of wandering.

**It had been a long time since the negative report** of the ten rebellious spies set off a calamitous turn of events that led to the years of wandering through the wilderness. The generation that had turned against God had now nearly all died off in the wilderness, and the new generation would now take possession of the Promised Land. The death of Aaron at the end of this chapter is further indication that we are at the end of the forty year sojourn ( 20: 27-28 ).

**A sad moment for Israel came** as they stood on the brink of the wilderness of Zin at Kadesh when Miriam, the sister of Moses, died. Her obituary is admittedly quite simple, but it was undoubtedly a profound moment.



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**Miriam was a leader in Israel** ( cf. Mic. 6:4 ). She was the sister of Moses, the divinely chosen leader and intercessor of Israel, **and** of Aaron, Israel’s first high priest. She was also a songstress and prophetess ( cf. Ex. 15: 20-21 ). Even as a youth she showed great compassion and courage when she was assigned to look out for her baby brother Moses, whom their mother placed in a basket and set adrift on the river. When he was found by Pharaoh’s daughter , Miriam arranged for his mother to serve as his nurse ( cf. 2:1-10 ).

**The death of Miriam shows us that there is no favoritism with God.** When God said that those who were twenty and older at the time of the earlier rebellion at Kadesh would die in the wilderness, Miriam was not excluded ( cf. Num. 14:28-30 ). Despite being a leader and the sister of Israel’s two most influential men, she would never see the Promised Land.

**Miriam’s experience is a reminder** that while in Christ we are saved from

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the eternal penalty of sin, our sinful actions can still carry temporal consequences. Miriam was a genuine follower of the Lord, but there were consequences for her rebellion against Moses ( cf. 12:1-5 ). Her opposition to God’s chosen leader could not be overlooked. Following the Lord does not mean we are somehow unaccountable for our actions; it means we are all the more accountable for what we do. Moses would soon face this truth in his own life.

## II. NATIONAL CRISIS

## NUMBERS 20: 2-9

**The Zin wilderness was a dry place** where water was scarce. Now, in the familiar setting of Kadesh, they found the water supply there dried up as well. This was a problem they had faced almost forty years earlier, and their reaction this time was the same as it had been then. They met the situation with anger and unbelief, despite the precedent God had set for them many years before by providing water from the rock at Rephidim ( cf. Ex.17: 1-7 ) .



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**They people raised their voices** against Moses and Aaron in rage and stated that it would have been better for them to have died along with their brothers before the Lord. This may refer specifically to those who died in Korah’s revolt ( Num. 16:32, 35 ), though others had died in God’s judgments along the way ( cf. 11:33; 14: 36-37; 16:49 ). God had repeatedly spared the nation as a whole because of Moses’ intercession ( cf. Ex. 32: 9-14; Num. 14:11-20; 16: 20-22). Yet, tragically, here they were again provoking the Lord and complaining against the man ( Moses ) who was constantly praying for them.

**It is absolutely striking that the people were saying** that being killed like Korah and other rebels was preferable to standing on the brink of entering the Promised Land. The Israelites never showed a substantial, ongoing faith in the Lord that He would see them through their hardships and do what He had promised. It is important to always trust in the Lord, regardless of what our circumstances may tell us.

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**The people asked Moses why he brought them** into a wilderness that would surely end up being their graveyard . What good was the Promised Land to them if they died before taking possession of it?

**The people were so certain that they** and their livestock were going to die that they could see no other possible outcome. They never asked Moses to pray for them. They never sought God’s intervention. They looked only at the situation and then assumed the worst.

**Let us be clear about one thing.** The need for water was very real. Everywhere they looked was arid. There was no visible water supply around them. There was no water to drink and they desperately needed it. Nothing written here should be taken to diminish the need the Israelites had. However, the one thing they lacked besides water was the one thing that would carry them through : **faith**. The severity of the problem was no excuse for not seeking and trusting God.



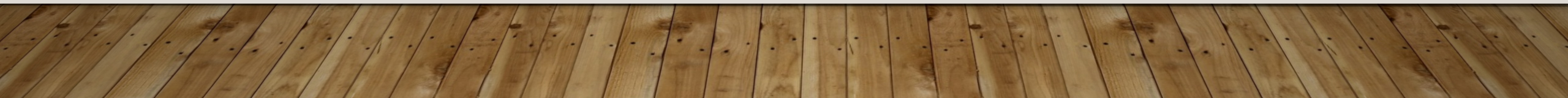
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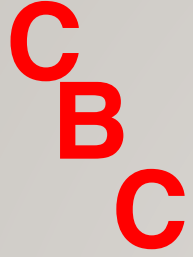
“ Water from the Rock ”

**The people referred to the wilderness of Zin** as an ‘evil’ , or bad place. Again, they expressed their desire to have stayed in Egypt, which they did not acknowledge as evil in spite of the many generations of slavery that they had endured there. It is stunning that they trusted in the previous slave drivers, known for their cruelty, to provide for them but did not trust God who was abundantly merciful to them.

**When the Israelites looked around at the surroundings of Zin**, they saw no fruit or water. There was nothing from the land to eat or drink. What they failed to realize was that Zin was a **stopping place, not a dwelling place!** God did not intend to leave them there. It was necessary, however, for them to pass through.

**If we want to get to where God is leading us**, we must be prepared to





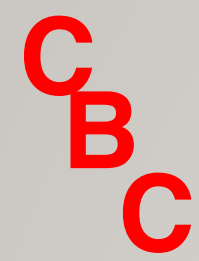
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go through a few valleys and deserts. There are valuable lessons to be learned in these places. We learn to trust God and cling closely to Him in the desert. He will provide for us and care for us, and we can rest assured that He will bring us through. The desert is a **temporary** place, and God will not abandon us there. He will give us water where there is no water and food where there is no food . He will care for our every need.

**After hearing the people grumble** against them once again, Moses and Aaron turned from the assembled crowd to the entrance of the tabernacle. There they fell on their faces before the Lord as they had done numerous times before. How wonderful it would have been if the entire congregation had joined them in falling before the Lord in faith rather than complain in despair.

**To be on our faces before the Lord** is to be in a place of reverent submission. Moses and Aaron knew they were helpless without God, and they simply fell before Him. Before they could say a word, the glory of the Lord appeared, and God spoke to them.



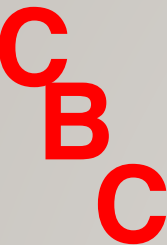
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## “ Water from the Rock ”

**God told Moses to take the rod, or staff,** he had and hold it in his hand while speaking to the rock that was before the people. The staff was a symbol of authority Moses had used on numerous occasions to effect God’s miracles ( cf. Ex. 4: 17; 7: 19-20; 14: 15:22 ). It was not to be used for anything in this instance except for to show authority.

**The next instruction was to gather the people.** The provision of water from the Lord was going to be demonstrated in front of them so they would see that it was once again God working through Moses to provide for the people.

**The final command was then for Moses and Aaron to tell the rock** to bring forth water. This order was different from the one given at Rephidim, where Moses was told to strike the rock with his staff ( Ex. 17:6 ). This time he was told to simply speak to the rock without striking it. When he did so, God would bring forth enough water from the rock to provide for all the people, as well as their livestock. Moses took the staff as God commanded him and set out to care for the needs of the people.



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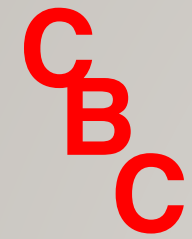
## III. PERSONAL DISOBEDIENCE

## NUMBERS 20: 10-13

**Moses and Aaron gathered the people** together at the rock, and then Moses burst out in an uncharacteristic outburst of anger. His frustration boiled over, and he no longer contained his resentment toward the people.

**Calling the people rebels**, Moses included himself along with God as one who would bring forth water. Notice that nowhere did God instruct Moses to speak to the people. Rather, He told him to speak to the rock. God was perfectly capable of dealing with the people in their rebellion; His purpose for Moses was to provide for the people, not lecture them or rebuke them.

**Moses’ pride got the best of him** as he talked down to the people in anger. Infuriated with their incessant insubordination, he took his staff and twice struck the rock with it. God had told him to strike the rock before, at Rephidim, but here He told Moses simply to speak to it. Moses took matters in his own hands, though , and hit the rock instead.



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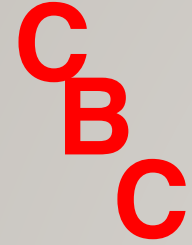
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**Water came immediately gushing out of the rock**, and the people drank to their full. They also had plenty to give to their livestock. Despite His servant’s pride and disobedience, God still provided for His people. The Lord’s provision did not depend on the people’s perfection. The children of Israel were rebellious, and Moses was angry and prideful in this instance, yet God took care of them anyway.

**This does not mean, however, that the way we live is unimportant.** Disobedience brings heavy consequences that can be avoided altogether if we simply do as God tells us. However, His love is not based on how well or consistently we act. It is reassuring to us that although the people of Israel were ungrateful and Moses was arrogant, God remained faithful to His word and cared for His people.

**God was angry with Moses and Aaron** because they did not represent him appropriately before the people.

**Some have asserted that Moses** was prevented from entering the



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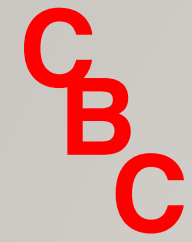
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Promised Land merely because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. That was the outward act of disobedience, to be sure, but God was more concerned with the **motive** behind it. Moses apparently did not believe God was going to do what He promised and achieve His purpose in this instance apart from using Moses’ staff and rebuke, so he angrily struck the rock.

**Acting out of anger** almost always leads to more problems, because the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God ( Jas. 1:20 ) Moses’ attitude was the root problem in this case, not simply the fact he hit the rock.

**Because of their unbelief**, God declared that neither Moses nor Aaron would enter the Promised Land. Just as the older generation of Israelites that left Egypt would not receive this blessing of God, neither would the two leaders.

**The water here was named Meribah**, which means ‘quarreling’ . The people quarreled with the Lord, yet the Lord showed them that He is still holy



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and their continued ingratitude did not keep Him from doing as He had promised. God keeps His word because **He is holy**, not because we are good.

**Moses is an example for us today** of the importance of daily, disciplined living and the need for constant reliance upon the Holy Spirit. Through many crises, Moses demonstrated unwavering faith in God and love for the people. Here, he showed neither, and it cost him. Let us follow the Lord in faith and love, serving Him and others every day.

**Numbers 20:1-13 is the conclusion** of multiple narrative accounts this quarter that teach God’s faithfulness in the face of human doubt

**The congregation of Israel failed the Lord**; the leadership of Israel failed; Moses and Aaron and Miriam failed. Through it all, the Lord remained faithful to His people and the promises He had made to them. The very fact that God’s people would still be able to enter the Promised Land was itself an amazing testimony to the Lord’s grace, mercy and patience.



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**It should give us great comfort to know** that even when we commit the same sins repeatedly, God is patient with us , wanting us to **repent**. He is slow to anger and abounds in steadfast love. ( Ps. 103:8 )

**Moses , Aaron and Miriam** held central roles in Jewish history. Although each of them demonstrated their humanity by making mistakes, God still used them to advance His plan. The stories of their lives teach us that God uses imperfect people to do the miraculous. Their lives should inspire us to follow God’s plan.

**Let us always remember that** that the longer we have served the Lord faithfully, the more faithfulness God expects from us. Jesus puts it this way: “ Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required “ ( Luke 12:48) May we remember that our faithful service should never be viewed as license to disobey God or try to take God’s glory for ourselves. Moses, above all others, knew the cost of disobeying God. But in his anger, he did not revere the Lord as he should have. As we grow in our faith, we gain more knowledge about how to

The logo consists of three red, stylized letters: 'C', 'B', and 'C', arranged vertically and slightly overlapping. The top 'C' is the largest, the middle 'B' is smaller, and the bottom 'C' is the same size as the middle 'B'.

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## “ Water from the Rock”

honor God. We are judged on the condition of our hearts towards Him, even if our disobedience does not seem severe to the outside world. When Moses struck the rock, he let his frustration with the Israelites become more important than serving God.

**In spite of Moses’ sin**, God still used him to bless His people. When we do not perfectly submit to God, He is still merciful to us and often uses us for His work anyway, but there are always consequences. We must check our motives to ensure we are following the Lord wholeheartedly.

**Faithfulness to God does not give us a free pass to sin**, even occasionally. All sin is sin and sin is deadly. Thankfully, Christ suffered and died to pay for each one we will ever commit.

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## Practical Points

1. Use your testimony to witness to your children so they do not make the same mistakes as you ( Numbers 20:1-2 ).
2. Do not blame the Lord for His chastisements; take responsibility for your sins and learn from them ( v. 3 ).
3. When God leads you into an uncomfortable situation, you should praise Him for the things He has delivered you from ( vs. 4-5 ).
4. God would be right to punish us for our sins, but instead He often chooses to bless us; remember this ( vs. 6-8 ).
5. We must not only follow the Lord’s commands, but we should follow them with a pure heart ( vs. 9-10 ).
6. Including when it is due to an angry impulse, disobedience is sin ( vs. 11-13 ).

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## “ Water from the Rock ” Questions For Reflection

1. What was God most concerned about with Moses’ disobedience?
2. Why is it that we often look back fondly at the sins of our past?  
What does this say about our hearts?
3. How can complaining shape the way we feel about God ( cf. Phil 2:14-15 )?
4. How do we often not realize that we are striving with the Lord when we fight with other people in our lives ?

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