

# Exodus Chapter 17 v 1 - 7

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you've got a Bible to hand, then if you'd like to turn to Exodus in chapter 17, where Lawrence read for us a few moments ago, that's page 75 in the Red Church Bible.

We're going to continue our journey with the people of Israel in the desert, and we come to this place in chapter 17.

Just the other week, we saw how God had led them through the Red Sea and delivered them from their enemies, the Egyptians who were pursuing them, to capture them or to kill them.

We saw how God had provided for them the manna, that bread from heaven, to feed them while they were there. And now we come to this particular event in the life of God's people.

There's many things that we take for granted, of course, here living in the UK. Many things, of course, which really motivate and draw people from places like Syria and other countries to want to be in the UK.

[ 1 : 05 ] A national health service that cares for us. Good education for our children. A democracy and an elected government. Many other things as well, but probably the one thing that we take most for granted living in the UK is that we can just turn on the tap and get good, clean drinking water.

For millions of people, as you know, worldwide, that is not the case. Water doesn't come easy for them. In many parts of the world, women, usually it's them, have to walk maybe several miles just to fetch some water to provide for their family.

The tragedy is, of course, that having spent so much time in walking for that water and gaining that water, the water itself is often dirty, polluted, unsafe to drink.

And so the daily burden of collecting water prevents women from working and providing for their family or educating or sending their children to school. It brings diseases, diarrhea, dysentery.

And so there are many thousands who die every day simply for the lack of good water. We have a great deal to thank God for and very little to complain about.

[ 2 : 28 ] Yet, like the Israelites who we read about here in chapter 17, they had a great deal to be thankful to God for. As I mentioned, he'd brought them through the Red Sea, where he delivered them from slavery, where they'd been there 400 years.

He'd brought them out into that place in the desert. He'd provided for them food from heaven. We saw a couple of weeks ago when they had needed water, he'd provided for them and turned the bitter springs of Marah into the sweet waters of refreshment.

And yet, when we start verse 17, though they'd been receiving God's provision for a month or so of this manner, every day they went out, every day it was there for them, apart from the Sabbath, and God had given them twice as much on the day before.

Here they are again complaining. They'd seen God's goodness. They'd seen his blessing. They'd seen his loving kindness. They had so much to thank him for.

But here they are complaining. Well, they needed water, didn't they? As we saw, and we spoke with the children. Everybody needs water. Life is essential to water.

[ 3 : 36 ] Water is essential to life, not just in the heat of the desert, but wherever we live. We need it for ourselves and for, as they saw there, livestock and animals.

And so in their complaining, in their grumbling, we're told there, verse 3, the people were thirsty for water, they grumbled. And of course, they immediately turned to poor old Moses. He's always the butt of the grumbling, the murmuring, the complaining.

They ask him for the impossible. Verse 2, give us water to drink. Where's Moses going to find water from in the desert? They turn to him. They expect him to provide for them and to give them what they lack.

In fact, they begin to get so impatient with poor Moses that he is afraid. Verse 4, they're almost ready to stone me, almost ready to kill me, because they blame me for them not having water. Moses, who had led them and provided for them as God's instrument, God's servant. And so again, what does Moses do? He does what he did before.

[ 4 : 42 ] He turns to God in prayer. He does the right thing, the thing, of course, that they should have done, the thing that we should do. He turns to them in prayer. And God patiently, graciously answers their prayer, doesn't he?

As he'd done again and again. He provides them and the people in this miraculous way, this time water from the rock. Strike the rock, verse 6, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. Moses did this in the sight of the people of Israel. And we can conclude, rightly, that they all drank. The livestock were provided. It wasn't some tiny little spring, clearly. We've got 2 million people. How many hundred thousand livestock? Great, gushing rivers of water provided. And of course, what this goes to prove is that, again, the Israelites did not trust God. They weren't thankful for what he'd done. They'd not learned from the previous occasions again and again when he'd provided for them and blessed them and given them so many things. They still did not trust him.

[ 5 : 47 ] And verse 7 is very interesting because at the end we have, in one sense, their conclusion, their question, which really stems from and is the root of all that they say.

Is the Lord among us or not? In other words, where's God? Where's God? Is he here? Is he among us? Is he with us or not? They doubted God's presence.

But how could they do that? How could they do that when they had such an obvious signs of his presence? As we've seen the manna, the leading through the Red Sea.

In fact, they also had, as we know, this great pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. All the time, a symbol of God's presence with them. Really, they were doubting God cared about them.

He's abandoned us. He's brought us into the desert and he's abandoned us. He's left us. He's forsaken us. He's not for us anymore. Seems a very strange question for them to ask.

[ 6 : 48 ] As I say, in spite of all the evidence, which was to the contrary. And yet, don't we see here, once more, a reflection, a reflection of ourselves. When God leads us into a desert place, into a time of difficulty, when trials and troubles come.

But not only then, there are times when we ask, where are you, Lord? Where are you? Where are you in this place? Have you left me? Have you forsaken me?

Have you given up on me? Are you with me or not? The answer that God gives them to their question, of course, is that he provides for them proof that he is with them.

Provides them proof by giving them water. He provides proof that it is him who is doing it. After all, God could have provided water in so many different ways, couldn't he?

Seems a strange thing for him to do, to give them water from a rock. God could have just simply made it rain. That would be simple enough, wouldn't it? See the flash floods that take place in dry places.

[ 7 : 51 ] I mean, this is the God, of course, who sent the flood for Noah, which was so much rain that lasted for 40 days and 40 nights. God could have sent them enough rain.

They might even have believed they lived in England. But God didn't do that. He could have, of course, led Moses and said to Moses, dig a well, just as he told Isaac to dig a well in Genesis 26. That would have been another answer. God could have even led Moses and the people to a well that was already established, an oasis place, as he did for Hagar in Genesis 21 when she ran away.

But God didn't do any of those things. He didn't do anything like that. He did something quite extraordinary, something out of the ordinary. He brought water out of solid rock.

A miracle that he actually repeats for the people 40 years later. You can read about it in Numbers chapter 20. For the first of two occasions he does this. Water from the rock.

[ 8 : 51 ] So why? Why does God do this? One of the things we should always do, dear friends, when we read the Bible, is always ask questions of the Bible. The Bible is not to be put aside where we don't ask questions of it.

But the trouble is that many people ask the wrong questions of the Bible. The right question to ask is this. Why is God doing this? Why is Jesus acting in this way? Why has this happened?

Because God wants us to ask those questions because he wants us to know the answer to them. We're to read the Bible with questioning, inquiring minds.

Because when we do that, then we'll dig deeper and we'll find wonderful, wonderful answers as we do, I hope, we'll find here. The most obvious answer, of course, is what I've said.

God wanted them to know that he was with them. That's why he did it. Moses couldn't bring water from a rock. I mean, you know, we've heard of tax men getting blood from a stone, but Moses wasn't a tax man.

[ 9 : 52 ] And he wasn't getting blood, he was getting water from a stone. No, it wasn't Moses who'd given them this water. It was clearly God. They'd turn to Moses and ask, Moses, give us water, stupidly, thinking that some reason he could do it.

But the reality was, just as he couldn't provide food for them, just as he couldn't do anything for them, he couldn't provide them with water. No, they needed to know that it was God. They needed to know for sure.

And God wanted them to be certain of the fact that he was with them, he hadn't left them, and that he was the one who was meeting their needs. We tend to follow after the pattern of these people so closely, it's spooky.

No, the word of God is so real and relevant. Don't we turn to other people when things go wrong? Isn't there a tendency for us to look to others, maybe to blame others, rather than the Lord?

To look to them to give us a solution? We look to people to provide for our needs. We expect them to have the answers. We go to Google and we look for the answer to the problem that we're facing, and they're all the time forgetting to look to God.

[ 11 : 05 ] God was wanting to stir up in the people faith. That's always been his desire. He wanted them to trust him. He wanted them to believe in him. That's what he wants for us. He wants us simply to trust him.

The answer to all our problems, the answer to all our questions is this, to trust him. But on that night before Jesus died, as he spoke to his disciples, in all their upset and concern after he told them he was leaving them, he simply said, Trust in God.

Trust in me. It's the answer. You don't need. It's not complicated. It's not rocket science. God wanted them to trust him. And he was seeking to stir up their faith in him.

It should be very apparent to them now, after God performing yet another miracle, that he is for them. He is with them. But I believe that's only half the answer to why has God done this.

As I said, God could have provided water in all sorts of different ways. So how are we to understand this rock which was struck and from which water flowed? Again, one of the things that we do when we come to the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, is we say, Well, if we don't quite understand this, we need to go to the New Testament.

[ 12 : 24 ] The New Testament, as you all know, is the Old Testament revealed. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. We need both testaments. We're not New Testament Christians.

Sorry, we're not. We are biblical Christians, Bible Christians. The Old and the New refer to the God in whom we've put our faith. And so if we want to understand, then one of the ways we do that is to look at the New Testament.

And here, in 1 Corinthians, in the New Testament, chapter 10, is an insight to us as to why God brought water from that rock. Just listen to these words.

1 Corinthians 10, the first four verses. I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all drank, sorry, they all ate the same spiritual food, that's the manner, and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

[ 13 : 34 ] Isn't that interesting? That rock was Christ. Paul's making an amazing statement, isn't he? He's saying that the reason that the water flowed from the rock was not only to show that God was with them, but to point us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That rock is a signpost, is a picture, is an illustration of Jesus. Why should he say that? Well, first of all, of course, we know that Jesus again and again is pictured as the one and speaks of himself as the one who provides spiritual, living water.

In John chapter 4, when he met a woman at the well, that Samaritan woman, he says to her, Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

And he begins to tell her about how she needs to put her faith and trust in him, that he is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. Later on in John 7, this is the verses we read with the children earlier on. In a very large public gathering, in a feast, he invites his hearers that if they thirst, they should come to him and drink. For he explains, Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within them.

[14:56] See, this is the very heart of the gospel. This is the very heart of the good news that men and women need to hear. That Jesus is the one who is able to provide for them living water, life-giving water, spiritual water.

And he's the only one who can give that water, which quenches the thirst caused by sin. We live in a thirsty world.

Not just physically, because we spoke about those people who have such great difficulty getting water. But wherever we go, we find men and women who are thirsty. Who are seeking to quench their thirst in so many ways.

A thirst created by sin. That rebellion against God. That seeking to please ourselves. There's all manner of artificial drinks on the market.

There's the fizziness and the fizzy pop of materialism. If you have money. If you have possessions. It gives you a bit of a fizz. It lifts you up for a moment. Then of course there's the bubbly champagne of physical relationships.

[16:08] There's the booze of excess pleasures. And there's all sorts of wines and spirits that offer thirst-quenching satisfaction, but only leave people hungover and their thirst still remaining.

We're living in a world of thirsty people who cannot be quenched by anything that this world has to offer. The fact is that our souls are bone dry.

Our souls are crying out for spiritual refreshment. Men and women are dying for a drink of living water. But the sadness is that again and again they look to other people.

They look to things. They look to themselves. And they will not look to and turn to the only one who can supply that spiritual living water.

The question to you and I this morning is simply this. Will you come to the rock which gives abundant, eternal quenching for your soul?

[17:25] It's Jesus who is the rock. The rock that we read of here in Exodus 17.

But there's something as well, isn't there? We know it's the rock not only because he's the one who promises to give us living water. Not only because Paul points to him and say he's the rock. That wherever they went, he was there to provide for them.

Both there in Exodus and later in Numbers. But especially we see something quite extraordinary in the way the water was brought from the rock.

Notice what God says to Moses. He says, take your staff, strike the rock, hit it. Later on in Numbers 20, God actually tells Moses just to speak to the rock.

But that's another story. But here he is told to strike the rock. And as he struck the rock, the water will come out of it for the people to drink.

[18:28] Why? Why again did God say to Moses, strike it? Why again? Wasn't he just say, speak to it? Why didn't he just point the people to it? Why didn't God just bring the water?

Because again it's pointing us to Jesus. The spiritual rock. The spiritual rock from whom flows living water. And the only way that that living water could ever flow to you and I was that first of all Christ was struck with a mighty blow.

Isaiah 53. Isaiah 4 tells what would happen to Jesus at his crucifixion. At his death when he was struck down. 53.

Isaiah. Surely he. Surely he. This is speaking of Christ, of Jesus. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God.

Stricken by him and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him.

[19:34] And by his wounds we are healed. The reason why the rock was struck was to point us to Jesus and to his suffering and death upon the cross for us.

To realize that for God to release those life-giving waters to bring to us eternal life and soul quenching. Someone had to suffer.

A mighty blow. A blow that God would bring against the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes it was the Romans who crucified. Yes it was the religious leaders who called for his death.

But we know the Bible tells us that he was crushed by God. Later on in Isaiah 53. It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin. For on the cross God poured out his anger against your sin and mine. On the cross God struck Christ with the strike and with the blow that your sin and mine deserved.

[ 20 : 40 ] In one sense instead of offering our backs to the punishment for sin. Christ offered his own. You see we could never drink from the clear waters of forgiveness.

Until Christ had first been pierced for our transgressions. We would never have been able to chase the sweet assurance of God's love. Except that his only begotten son was crushed for our iniquities. We would have been forever parched for want of peace within. If Christ had not in our place received in his body and soul the punishment we've deserved.

The wounds that he bore upon his back. Are the wounds that alone bring us the healing of our souls. There's no other way to be saved from the desert of sin.

Except that Jesus the everlasting rock. The faithful unchanging dependable one. The solid son of God. Is broken open for us.

[ 21 : 45 ] That from his very side. There should flow streams of life giving water. Where are you looking.

For that which refreshes. Are you trusting in your own resources. Your own intellect. Your own goodness. Your own religion.

Your own strength. Are you looking to others. And saying to them give me a drink. Quench my thirst.

Or are you coming to Christ. Because all who come to him. And drink. Will never thirst again.

All who come to Christ. In whatever desert they find themselves. Will drink. Of life giving. Soul quenching streams. Jesus said if anyone thirst.

[ 22 : 46 ] Let him come to me and drink. So the question is this. Are you thirsty. This morning. Are you really thirsty. Not for money.

Not for power. Those are all the substitutes. That we think are the things that will satisfy. That we think are the things. That will give us. A quenching drink. Not pleasure.

Not possessions. Not even are you thirsty. Not even are you thirsty for peace. Or contentment. Or satisfaction. Those things are the byproduct.

Of drinking from the living fountain. Of Jesus Christ. To be thirsty. Means to thirst for what. Jesus spoke about. In that sermon on the mount.

He made this promise amongst many. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for. For righteousness. And they will be filled. What does that mean? It means to be thirsty.

[ 23 : 46 ] To be right with God. To long to know his friendship. To long to be free from. That sin and guilt. Which has separated us from him.

It's to feel in that awfulness. Of the weight and the burden. Of our past. It's to have that bitterness. In our mouths. That taste of shame.

That longing to be cleansed. That thirsting. To be right. Is that something. Of your heart and soul? Something of your desire? Is that true of you today? More than anything else. I long to be. Right with God. And be at peace with him.

That's the thirsting that Jesus quenches. Yes. From that thirsting. And from that quenching stream. Come all the rest. Comes the joy. Comes the peace. Comes the satisfaction.

[ 24 : 44 ] Comes the delight. Comes the meaning. And contentment of life. But it all begins with thirsting. For righteousness. Let me ask you.

If you are thirsty dear friend. What are you waiting for? If you are thirsty. To be right with God. Then come to Christ. He's made that invitation. Hasn't he? He said. Whoever believes in me.

Whoever drinks the water I give. If somebody was to offer you a glass of water. And you were parched.

You wouldn't wait to drink it. You wouldn't put it to one side. But you'd gladly devour it. You'd gladly take that glass. You'd gladly take that water. And you'd drink it down to the depths.

Because the thirst needs to be quenched there and then. Don't delay. Don't put off. What you know needs to be done now. Don't continue to live with that thirst.

[ 25 : 44 ] With that parched and dry soul. With that emptiness. Don't continue to look to those things which only give you a hangover. And never truly satisfy.

Come to Jesus Christ. Turning from your sin. Turning from the things that have only robbed you. And dehydrated you spiritually. Come and you will find in him a full provision. That rock was not just a stream. As I said. Two million people. Tens of thousands of animals. All drank from that rock. And their thirst was quenched. There's enough for you. Whoever you are. Whatever you like. Whatever your sins. You don't need to thirst anymore. But you can drink every single day. Of his living waters. Refreshment. Guaranteed. The invitation of Jesus stands. [ 26 : 57 ] The offer of life-giving water remains. That anyone who is thirsty. Come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me. Rivers of living water. Will flow. From within them. Let's sing our final hymn. This morning. It's 579. 579. When I heard the voice of Jesus say. I wonder. Have you heard him speaking to you? Not my voice. But his inner voice. Saying come to me. Then make this hymn. Your response. As you come and drink. With faith. Of Christ. 579. 579. 579. Come to me. [ 28 : 10 ] All you who are weary. And burdened. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. For I am gentle. And humble of heart. And you will find rest. For your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden. Is light. Says the Lord. Amen.