**THE FAILURE AT THE ROCK**

Sunday School Lesson 17

*Wandering in the Wilderness*

Numbers 20

5/4/2025

**Lesson Review:** After the failure with the spies, a man named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ decided that he was going to attempt to lead a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. He planned to take advantage of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people. It’s important to note the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Korah’s rebellion. Israel had just experienced catastrophic \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and they had no hope for the immediate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Korah won over the people by offering them misguided \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He proclaimed their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Korah also claimed authority with men who were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ but also \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He found 250 well-known leaders of the tribes to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ him in his rebellion. These princes had already shown themselves to be defiant of God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Korah’s two main followers especially showed their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against God and Moses. Korah mirrored Aaron’s attack by claiming \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Korah recognized his right to dominion. He thought he was worthy enough to offer direct \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God. Korah’s rebellion against Aaron highlights the principle of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Finally, Korah’s rebellion accomplished nothing but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He was directly responsible for the death of himself, his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and his immediate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He was also indirectly responsible for the largest \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ among Israel to that point in the wilderness. For today’s lesson, we will be moving thirty-eight years forward to the last year of Israel’s time in the wilderness. Sadly, it starts with complaining, failure, and death.

1. **DESPITE LEADING A NEW GENERATION, MOSES STILL HAD TO FACE THE SAME ISSUES.**
2. **Notice that the Israelites were confronted with a similar issue – a lack of water in the wilderness.** *Numbers 20:1 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. 2a And there was no water for the congregation:* Though decades had passed since the first time the Israelites lacked water in the wilderness, Moses found himself right back where he started. He was dealing with a thirsty and needy people in a barren land. Even with a new generation now standing in place of their parents, the conditions of the wilderness had not changed. This highlights an important truth: time may move forward, and people may change, but certain trials have a way of repeating themselves. Leadership often involves cycling through familiar challenges, not because of poor direction, but because God continues to test and refine His people, even across generations.
3. **Notice that the new generation of Israelites had the same complaining response to their problems.** *Numbers 20:2b and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? 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.* Though this was a new generation that had been raised in the wilderness, their response to difficulty was tragically familiar. Like their fathers, they quickly turned to complaint and accusation. Instead of humbling themselves or recalling God’s faithful provision, they attacked Moses and Aaron, even wishing they had died in past judgments. Their complaints weren’t just emotional. They were exaggerated, irrational, and filled with ingratitude.
4. **THE LORD GAVE MOSES A FAMILIAR BUT DIFFERENT SOLUTION TO THEIR WATER NEED.**
5. **Notice that the Lord planned to bring forth water from a rock again to quench the thirst of Israel.** *Numbers 20:7 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 8b 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.* Once again, Israel was in need, and once again, God was ready to meet that need with supernatural provision. Just as He had done nearly forty years earlier at Rephidim, the Lord chose to bring water out of a rock. This repeated miracle reminded Israel that God never changes in His power or in His care for His people. The people may have forgotten, but God hadn’t. He was still able and willing to provide water in the wilderness.
6. **Notice that Moses only needed to speak to the rock. It did not need to be hit again.** *Numbers 20:8a Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes;* Unlike the first time when Moses had been commanded to strike the rock, this time God gave a gentler, more reverent instruction. Moses only needed to speak to the rock. The miracle would be just as powerful, but the method was meant to be different. Why? God was not just meeting a physical need; He was teaching a spiritual lesson. The rock had already been struck once, just as Christ would be smitten once for our sins (1 Corinthians 10:4; Hebrews 9:28). Now the provision would come not through force but through faith and obedience. All Moses had to do was speak, publicly and calmly, trusting that God's Word was enough. Moses was no longer a young leader. He was likely used to doing things a certain way. He probably thought about what happened the last time they needed water. Perhaps, that led him to do what he had done before.
7. **MOSES HAD A BAD FAILURE BECAUSE OF A LACK OF FAITH AND A LOT OF FRUSTRATION.**
8. **Notice that the Lord rebuked Moses for his lack of faith.** *Numbers 20:12a And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel,* The Lord makes it plain that the main issue with what Moses had done was with Moses’ lack of faith. Was it that he did not believe that water could come from the rock? No, I don’t believe this was it. Instead, it must be one of three things. First, he might not have believed that water would come out so easily for such a rebellious people. Second, he might have simply struggled with the way that God wanted it done. Often, it’s easy for a believer to trust that God can do something, but it’s harder to trust the WAY that He does it. Alternatively, it may be that Moses had lost faith in ever reaching the Promised Land. After all, this encounter would have felt to him like starting over again. Would God let this new generation enter the Promised Land? There could have been some hopelessness.
9. **Notice that Moses’ frustration caused him to act and speak foolishly. He took credit for the water and begrudged the provision of the Lord for the people.** *Numbers 20:10 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? 11a And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice:* Years of leading a stiff-necked people had worn Moses down, and in this moment, frustration overtook his faith. Instead of reflecting God’s grace, he lashed out in anger. He called the people rebels, struck the rock twice in rage, and spoke as if he and Aaron were the ones providing the miracle. “Must we fetch you water?” In doing so, Moses not only disobeyed God’s instructions; he also misrepresented God’s heart. Rather than showcasing a God who patiently provides, Moses presented a God who is angry and reluctant. This public outburst not only robbed God of glory, but also undermined Moses’ testimony as the faithful and steady leader of Israel.
10. **MOSES AND AARON BOTH SUFFERED A SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR THIS FAILURE.**
11. **Notice that Aaron failed as the spiritual leader and adviser for Moses, and the Lord decided that it was time for a change in the position.** *Numbers 20:* *23 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, 24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.* Though Moses took the lead in disobeying God's command, Aaron stood by in silence when he should have spoken up. As the high priest, Aaron had the spiritual responsibility to help preserve holiness and obedience in moments of tension, but here he offered no correction, no counsel, and no restraint. For that reason, God removed him from his office and from the opportunity to enter the land. His death on Mount Hor was not merely the end of a life, but a visible demonstration to all of Israel that even the highest leadership is not exempt from God's standards. Silent compromise is just as dangerous as vocal rebellion or disobedience.
12. **Notice that the public nature of Moses’ failure led to the Lord barring him from the Promised Land.** *Numbers 20:12b therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. 13 This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.* God’s decision to bar Moses from entering the Promised Land may seem severe at first, but it was rooted in the weight of leadership. Moses’ actions weren’t just personal. They were public. In front of the entire congregation, he misrepresented the character of God and failed to honor Him as holy. This underscores the truth that leaders don’t just bear responsibility for what they do; they also shape how others see God. Though Moses remained God’s servant and was forgiven, the consequence still stood.