

Is the Lord Among Us Or Not?

Ex. 17:1-7

Introduction:

1. There is an incident in Ex. 17 that is remembered throughout the history of the O.T. and into the New.
2. It was such an affront to God that all generations need to be reminded of it so that we do not commit the same offense.
3. This is the way Moses described what happened . . . (Reading of Ex. 17:1-7).
4. "They tested the Lord," and questioned, "Is the Lord among us or not?"
5. He had been with them in Egypt and had delivered them by the use of 10 plagues. He had been with and caused the Egyptians to give their possession when they left. He had been with them at the Red Sea parting the waters that they might cross on dry ground and then had destroyed the Egyptian military in the sea. He had been with them in the Wilderness of Shur providing them with sweet water to drink. He had been with them in the Wilderness of Sin when they were hungry. He provided manna and then quail to eat. He had lead them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
6. And now they are at Rephidim testing the Lord and asking, "Is the Lord among us or not!"
7. We read this account and find it hard to believe, but are we guilty of the same sin? Do you wonder sometimes whether the Lord is with you or not? Do you then test the Lord to see if He is really there?

Discussion:

- I. Such actions question the Lord's faithfulness.
 - A. Unbelieving doubt in the face of God's gracious provision may be the greatest of all insults.
 1. I read a story some time back about a young woman that was raised on a farm out west. Her dad was typical, I suppose of most farmers, devoted to working hard. He put in long hours, hard days. The days turned into years. His work was rewarded and he bought another farm. But his daughter always felt he did not spend enough time with her. Oh, he always provided her with what she needed. She had plenty to eat, always a comfortable place to stay. But it seemed to her that he always devoted himself too much to those farms and not enough to her. Today she was graduating from medical school. Ten long years she had worked and dad had just called to say there was an emergency on the third farm and there was no way he could get to her graduation ceremony on time. "Just another disappointment," she thought. He just did not understand what this graduation meant to her. She had worked so hard." But it was not so unusual. He had missed her softball game when they had won the state championship. He didn't make it to the play she was in in High School. She had the lead role. Some other farm emergency if she remembered correctly.

She walked across the stage that day her joy crushed by her dad's absence. He had arrived late. The graduation ceremony was beginning to break up when she saw him. She went through the formality of the greeting and the hug, angry because of his absence.

Her dad reached into his coat pocket and handed her an envelope. "Your graduation present," he said, "You see it has all been for you." Inside the envelope were deeds to all three farms made out to her." "I am sorry I was late, he said, "the attorney had a little trouble getting the paper work completed on time."

2. Can you imagine this young woman saying, "Yes, but if you really loved me you would have been here earlier?"
3. That's kinda like what Israel was doing.
- B. God had provided everything for her and now she was questioning his faithfulness.
 1. What ingratitude!
 2. What distrust in God's guidance!
 3. What an insult to the mission of Moses! Had God not sent him for their deliverance?
 4. What impatience in unbelief!
- C. The intensity of the insult evidenced by the repeated remembrance of it throughout Scripture.
 1. In Deut. 6:12-17.
 2. *Psa. 78:5-22.
 3. Psa. 95:7-10, esp. vs. 8-9.
 4. Psa. 105:26-42, esp. v. 41.
- D. Do you question the Lord's faithfulness? When you face adversity? Financial problems? Health issues? Family issues? Do you find yourself thinking, "If the Lord was really with me then He would do thus and so?"

II. Israel refused to trust the evidence of God's faithfulness.

- A. God had promised to take them into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. His intent was to dispossess the Canaanites and give the land to His people Israel.
- B. When the spies were sent into the land they concluded that it was everything God said that it was (Num. 13:25ff).
 1. They brought back a single cluster of grapes so big that they carried it on a pole between two men.
 2. They said, "The land certainly does flow with milk and honey."
 3. But they said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."
- C. Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb tried to encourage the people. "If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us: do not fear them." But the congregation said to stone them with stones.
- D. God had never failed on anything he had promised Israel. He had been faithful in every way. Every evidence of his faithfulness was clear, but still they refused to trust the

evidence.

- E. Moses pleaded for the people and the Lord pardoned them. But God said, "All the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it" (Num. 14:22-23).
1. Ten is the number of completeness in the O.T. and may not need to be taken literally here.
 2. Nevertheless, the Jewish rabbis identified ten specific times that Israel tested God.
 - 1) The instance here of complaint after the spies report. Do you doubt your entrance into what God has promised you?
 - 2) At the Red Sea when the Egyptians were after them they questioned God's faithfulness. "Were there no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Ex. 14:11, 12). Do you doubt your deliverance from enemies? The devil, death?
 - 3) Marah (Ex. 15:23). When you are thirsty do you doubt God's concern? Never been thirsty? Perhaps your focus is wrong. Are you thirsty for righteousness?
 - 4) Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:2). They were hungry and they grumbled. God provided manna. Are you hungering for righteousness and when God gives you His Son, the bread of life, do you walk away? He has given you the word of life. Will you neglect it?
 - 5) At Kadesh after God had given them the manna Moses said gather an omer apiece. Do not leave it until morning. Evidently they were questioning God's provision the next day because they tried to keep it over (Ex. 16:20). Do we question God's provision by our greed? Heb. 13:5-6.
 - 6) Also at Kadesh God told them to gather manna for two days on the sixth day. None would be provided on the Sabbath. But they went out expecting to gather on the Sabbath. Do we plan for the future day of the Lord on the basis of what God has said or are we saying everything will be like it has been (1 Thess. 5:1ff; 2 Pet. 3:4)?
 - 7) At Rephidim they questioned God's provision again when they had no water (Ex. 17:1).
 - 8) At Horeb (Ex. 32). Impatient with Moses extended time on Mt. Sinai. Do you become impatient with the Lord's time-table? Demand what you want when you want it?
 - 9) At Taberah (Num. 11:1) the people complained as those who complain of adversity.
 - 10) They had greedy desires and wept and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?" "There is nothing at all to look at except this manna." See Num. 11:4. Do you complain about what God has granted you to eat? Wear? Drive? Your place to live? Your husband? Your wife? Your family? Your country? Your life?

III. God was angered by these people. He was willing to forgive them. But because of their constant doubts, unbelief, and testing of his faithfulness they did not enter the promised rest (Num. 14:28ff).

- A. Heb. 3:7-11 reminds us of their hardness of heart and how they did not enter God's rest because of their testing Him.
- B. Heb. 3:15 says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me."
- C. Heb. 4:7 gains says, "If you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

Conclusion:

1. What about you?
2. Are you questioning the Lord's faithfulness?
3. Are you still testing Him even after He has sacrificed His son for you?
4. Are you so ungrateful as to complain about the provisions He has made for you?
5. Are you responding with gratitude and faithful service in reverence and awe? (Heb. 12:28).