I. Introduction – BACKGROUND

a. The Exodus

b. The Wanderings
   a. The failure at Kadesh-Barnea
   b. The punishment declared
      1. None of those 20 years and older when they came out of Egypt will enter the Promised Land except Joshua and Caleb
         “your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected.” (Numbers 14:29–30, ESV)
      2. There were 603,550, just counting the men who were not Levites (Num. 1:47)
         “So all those listed of the people of Israel, by their fathers’ houses, from twenty years old and upward, every man able to go to war in Israel— all those listed were 603,550.” (Numbers 1:45–46, ESV)
   c. Doing the math
1. If there were as many women as men, then there were over 1,200,000 adult Israelites on whom this judgment was pronounced.

2. They were to wander for forty years until all of these people died.

3. I asked our 4-6th graders, how many people had to die every day, for all of them to die in 40 years:
   i. We did the math....
   ii. For 1,207,100 people to die in 40 years
   iii. More than 80 people had to die every day, on average
   iv. That is a LOT of funerals, especially when you are travelling from place to place.

4. When we say sin brings about death, the refusal of Israel to enter the Promised Land on God’s schedule is one of the most striking examples of it. And they lived and died with that reality for forty years.
   a. When we get to Numbers 20
      a. We are nearing the end of the wilderness wanderings
      b. And finally, one of the brightest lights in Israel is extinguished — Miriam, the brother of Moses
      c. Not long after, the Israelites have their faith tested by traveling through a waterless area of the wilderness
      d. They are tested with temptation, and fall prey to sin.
Numbers 20:2 -5 (ESV)

2 Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! 4 Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? 5 And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

The Problem
Numbers 20:6–8 (ESV)

6 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, 7 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 8 “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.”
The Solution Implemented (Almost!)

Numbers 20:9–11 (ESV)

9 And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. 10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” 11 And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.
Numbers 20:12–13 (ESV)

12 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” 13 These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the LORD, and through them he showed himself holy.
Moses’ Sin

- May seem very small in comparison to God’s reaction
In Defense of Moses

- Hadn’t God told Moses to strike the rock at Rephidim in order to produce water? (Ex. 17:5-6)
Exodus 17:5–6 (ESV)

5 And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- The people were almost to Mt. Sinai
- They began complaining about the lack of water with almost the same words as in Number 20
- Moses is afraid they are going to stone him and asks God for help
- God tells him to strike the rock with his rod, and water comes out.
In Defense of Moses

• Hadn’t God told Moses to strike the rock at Rephidim in order to produce water? (Ex. 17:5-6)
• Hadn’t God told Moses to take the rod with him?

• Did God expect him to take the rod and not use it?
### In Defense of Moses

- Hadn’t God told Moses to strike the rock at Rephidim in order to produce water? (Ex. 17:5-6)
- Hadn’t God told Moses to take the rod with him?
- The Israelites WERE rebels

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- The were just as rebellious as they had been nearly 40 years previously, if not more so
- They had seen God provide water miraculously over and over and over again
In Defense of Moses

• Hadn’t God told Moses to strike the rock at Rephidim in order to produce water? (Ex. 17:5-6)
• Hadn’t God told Moses to take the rod with him?
• The Israelites WERE rebels
• Moses and Aaron DID have to bring water from the rock for them

• God had told Moses and Aaron, “you will bring water out of the rock for them” (Num. 20:8)
Moses’ Sin

- May seem very small in comparison to God’s reaction
- Caused him to exalt himself instead of God

“Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?”
Moses’ Sin

- May seem very small in comparison to God’s reaction
- Caused him to exalt himself instead of God
- Demonstrated itself in rash speech – Ps. 106:32-33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 106:32–33 (ESV)</th>
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<tr>
<td>32 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, 33 for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips.</td>
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This Psalm recounts many of the major events of the Exodus and praises God's power and faithfulness in bringing them through the wilderness to the Promised land.
Moses’ Sin

- May seem very small in comparison to God’s reaction
- Caused him to exalt himself instead of God
- Demonstrated itself in rash speech – Ps. 106:32-33
- Spoiled what should have been a demonstration of God’s grace, holiness, and power
Deuteronomy 32:48–52 (ESV)

48 That very day the LORD spoke to Moses, 49 “Go up ...Mount Nebo ... 50 And die ..., 51 because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel. 52 For you shall see the land before you, but you shall not go there, into the land that I am giving to the people of Israel.”
Numbers 27:14 (ESV)

14 “…you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.”
God showed mercy

- By giving water in spite of Moses, Aaron and the people’s rebellion
- By giving Moses a second chance (after the first strike of the rock) to fix it

Moses’ Sin

- May seem very small in comparison to God’s reaction
- Caused him to exalt himself instead of God
- Demonstrated itself in rash speech – Ps. 106:32-33
- Spoiled what should have been a demonstration of God’s grace, holiness, and power
- Resulted in disobedience to God’s direct command
There is a connection between Jesus and the Bible story we have been examining in this lesson. The apostle Paul points this out in 1 Cor. 10
There was a Jewish legend that the rock that gave water at mount Sinai actually followed the Israelites from place to place. If that were the case, they never would have thirsted again. But there was a kernel of truth to that fable that Paul points out in this passage. The water didn’t come from a lump of minerals, it came from an Almighty, Gracious, Loving God, Who never left them nor forsook them. We also see that Christ was a participant in the history of redemption long before He came to live as a man on this earth. What was He doing? Providing the water of life to God’s people. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever.
Jesus – The Rock Cleft for Me

- Paul makes the connection – 1 Cor. 10:1-5
- He was and is the source of the water of life
John 4:10–15 (ESV)

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”… 13 …“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
Jesus – The Rock Cleft for Me

- Paul makes the connection – 1 Cor. 10:1-5
- He was and is the source of the water of life
- He was and is a spiritual rock
1 Peter 2:6–8 (ESV)

6 For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.
Jesus – The Rock Cleft for Me

- Paul makes the connection – 1 Cor. 10:1-5
- He was and is the source of the water of life
- He was and is a spiritual rock
- He was struck once to yield His living water
John 19:31–36 (ESV)

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ... 36 For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”
Jesus – The Rock Cleft for Me

- Paul makes the connection – 1 Cor. 10:1-5
- He was and is the source of the water of life
- He was and is a spiritual rock
- He was struck once to yield His living water
- But He ought not be struck again, since the water of life is now available for the asking
Christ is our Passover Sacrifice

1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)
7 ...For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Exodus 12:43–46 (ESV)
43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: ... 46 It shall be eaten in one house; ... and you shall not break any of its bones.
Hebrews 9:24–28 (ESV)

24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.
Hebrews 10:11–13 (ESV)

11 ... every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.
Jesus – The Rock Cleft for Me

- Paul makes the connection – 1 Cor. 10:1-5
- He was and is the source of the water of life
- He was and is a spiritual rock
- He was struck once to yield His living water
- But He ought not be struck again, since the water of life is now available for the asking

This, in my mind, is why God did not tell Moses to strike the rock at Meribah. The rock had to be struck at Mt. Sinai in order to yield its life-giving water. But once it had been struck, it was ready to yield its abundant and gracious supply at just a word. That rock was intended to be a portrayal of the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ. Moses’ distress, impatience, and bitterness caused him to strike the rock again, bringing judgment on himself and obscuring the picture of God’s divine grace. As Christians, we are cleansed by Jesus blood. He had to be sacrificed to make that possible, but we, like Moses and the Israelites end up needing that forgiveness over and over again. Is God like Moses, bitterly rebuking us before grudgingly offering us grace? Praise God, no! He is always ready to abundantly forgive as we turn to him in repentance, literally at just a word from us.
Hebrews 6:4–6 (ESV)

4 ... those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 
5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 
6 and then have fallen away, ... are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

We can do what ought not be done, by rejecting our relationship with Jesus and turning away from Him. We crucify Him once again for ourselves.
In the Desert of Sorrow and Sin

In the desert of sorrow and sin,
    Lo! I faint as I journey along;
With the warfare without and within,
    See my strength and my hope nearly gone.

In my weakness I turn to the fount,
    From the Rock that was smitten for me;
And I drink, and I joyfully count
    All my trials a blessing to be.

O Thou God of compassion, I pray,
    Let me ever abide in Thy sight;
Let me drink of the fount day by day,
    Till I join Thee in mansions of light.

I thirst, let me drink,
    Of the life-giving stream let me drink;
'Tis the Rock, cleft for me,
    'Tis the water, the water of life.
Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.
Hebrews 10:19–23 (ESV)

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.