

THAT SPIRITUAL ROCK THAT FOLLOWED THEM

1 Corinthians 10:4

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Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of **that spiritual Rock that followed them**, and that Rock was Christ. NKJV

In our previous study on 1 Corinthians 10:4 the focus was on **“that rock was Christ.”**

We examined the typology of the rock as it is used in various ways in Scripture. The essence of the type is that the believer is safe as he is hidden in the cleft of the rock as the rock is the type of Jesus Christ.

That raised an obvious question about the nature of **that spiritual Rock that followed them**; how was that rock manifested to the Israelites? In what way did that rock follow them?

To begin we will refer to a commentary by Adam Clarke:

1 Corinthians 10:4

[The spiritual rock that followed them]

There is some difficulty in this verse. How could the rock follow them? It does not appear that the rock ever moved from the place where Moses struck it. But to solve this difficulty, it is said that rock here is put, by metonymy*, for the water of the rock; and that this water did follow them through the wilderness. This is more likely; but we have not direct proof of it. The ancient Jews, however, were of this opinion, and state that the streams followed them in all their journeyings, up the mountains, down the valleys, etc., etc.; and that when they came to encamp, the waters formed themselves into cisterns and pools; and that the rulers of the people guided them, by their staves, in rivulets to the different tribes and families. And this is the sense they give to [Num 21:17](#): Spring up, O well, etc.-

Others contend, that by the rock following them we are to understand their having carried of its waters with them on their journeyings. This we know is a common custom in these deserts to the present day and that the Greek verb *akoloutheo*, to follow, has this sense, Dr. Pearce has amply proved in his note at this place. The Jews suppose that the rock itself went with the Israelites, and was present with them in their thirty-eight stations.

Now, though of all the senses already given that of Dr. Pearce is the best, yet it does appear that the apostle does not speak about the rock itself, but of HIM whom it represented; namely, Christ: this was the Rock that followed them, and ministered to them; and this view of the subject is rendered more probable by what is said [1 Cor 10:9](#), that they tempted Christ, and were destroyed by serpents.

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* metonymy: a figure of speech where an object is used in the place of another; e.g. "White House can mean the President."

Let's see what John Gill says on this text: 1 Cor 10:4

Of that spiritual Rock that followed them; rather, literally, of a spiritual following Rock. This is explained

(1) as a mere figure of speech, in which the natural rock which Moses smote is left out of sight altogether; and

(2) as meaning that not the rock, but the water from the rock, followed after them in their wanderings ([Deut 9:21](#)). There can, however, be little or no doubt that St. Paul refers to the common Jewish Hagadah, that the actual material rock did follow the Israelites in their wanderings. The rabbis said that it was round, and rolled itself up like a swarm of bees, and that, when the tabernacle was pitched, this rock came and settled in its vestibule, and began to flow when the princes came to it and sang, "Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it" ([Num 21:17](#)). It does not, of course, follow from this allusion that St. Paul, or even the rabbis, believed their Hagadah *in other than a metaphorical sense*. Paul obviates the laying of any stress on the mere legend by the qualifying word, "a *spiritual* Rock." **And that Rock was Christ.**

Ver. 4. *And did all drink the same spiritual drink, etc.]*

By which is meant the water out of the rock, which was typical of the blood of Christ, which is drink indeed, and not figurative, as this was, for which reason it is called spiritual; or of the grace of Christ, often signified by water, both in the Old and New Testament; and is what Moses and the law could not give; for righteousness and life, grace and salvation, could never be had by the works of the law: and very unpromising it was, and is to carnal men, that these should come by a crucified Christ, as it was to the Israelites, that water, in such plenty, should gush out of the rock in Horeb; but as those waters did not flow from thence without the rock being stricken by the rod of Moses, so the communication of the blessings of grace from Christ is through his being smitten by divine justice with the rod of the law; through his being, stricken for the transgressions of his people, and and being made sin, and a curse of the law in their room and stead. And as those waters continued through the wilderness as a constant supply for them, so the grace of Christ is always sufficient for his people; a continual supply is afforded them; goodness and mercy follow them all the days of their lives: *for they drank, of that spiritual rock that followed them;* by which the apostle means not Christ himself, for he went before them as the angel of God's presence, but the rock that typified him; not that the rock itself removed out of its place, and went after them, **but the waters** out of the rock ran like rivers, and followed them in the wilderness wherever they went, for the space of eight and thirty years, or thereabout, and then were stopped, to make trial of their faith once more; this was at Kadesh when the rock was struck again, and gave forth its waters, which, as the continual raining of the manna, was a constant miracle wrought for them. And this sense of the apostle is entirely agreeable to the sentiments of the Jews, who say, that the Israelites had the well of water all the forty years....

Although I believe the sense of “the rock that followed them” to be the water from the rock that doesn’t answer the question of how does the water follow them?

Jim Gunn
March 19, 2014