

Moses' Error at Kadesh Trey Sullins

Who was Moses? Moses was a prophet of God, leader of the children of Israel, and mediator between God and the Israelites. He was a man of great importance, and even spoke face to face with God. Being so close to God, it is hard to think that he could sin, but like all men, Moses sinned. In Numbers 20, the story of Moses' great sin is found. Christians need to understand how Moses sinned so that they can avoid making similar mistakes like Moses made.

In order to understand what Moses did, Christians must first understand the account of what was happening around the time of chapter twenty. During the wilderness wandering, the children of Israel began to complain about a lack of water (Numbers 20:5). Because of these complaints, Moses and Aaron went to the Lord and fell on their faces to inquire what He wanted them to do (Numbers 20:6). The glory of the Lord appeared to Moses and Aaron and commanded them to go and speak to the rock and it will produce water (Numbers 20:7-8). Then Moses assembled the congregation before the rock and said "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock" (Numbers 20:10 NKJV)? After that, Moses struck the rock twice with his rod instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:11). Water then came out of the rock and children of Israel drank.

This great sin of Moses in this passage is two-part. First Moses was told to speak to the rock and the water would come forth, but Moses struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it. The sin here is Moses did not follow the direct command of God. He was given specific instructions to speak, yet he did not. The second sin is given in verse 12, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel." In his frustration over the complaining from Israel, Moses forgot to give God the glory and rather brought it to himself. In verse 10 Moses says, "Must we bring water out of this rock." Rather than saying "must God," Moses brought the attention and glory to himself by saying that he and Aaron would bring out the water. Moses did not hallow God. "Hallow" means to "honor as holy" (Oxford Press). Therefore, by taking the glory for himself Moses did not honor God at all. In Psalm 106:33, the author wrote "Because they rebelled against His spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips." Moses spoke quickly and did not give God the glory.

It was because of this sin that Moses was punished very heavily. Verse 12 says, "therefore, you will not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." God pronounced that Moses would not be the one to take the Israelites into the land of Canaan. If not for this sin, then Moses would have been able to lead Israel into Canaan and enter it himself. Later in Deuteronomy 24, Moses went up Mount Nebo and God showed him all the land that Israel was going to get. After seeing all this great land, Moses was not allowed to enter (Deuteronomy 34:4).

Christians can learn many things from this account of Moses. One lesson is Christians must do what God commands. Opposite from what Moses did in this text, God's people today must obey the commands and follow exactly what he says (1 Peter 2:21). Another lesson is, we must give God the glory in everything that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Moses forgot to give the glory to God, but Christians must not forget. God deserves all the glory, so certainly God's people must give Him this glory. A final lesson which is to be learned is our actions have consequences. After Moses disobeyed and took glory for himself, he was punished by God. People will also face

consequences for what they do. If a person does what is right and follows God, then they will be rewarded, but if a person does what is wrong, then they will be punished. Matthew 7:2 teaches that the consequences will be proportional to our actions.

The story of Moses' sin at Kadesh can teach Christians today many lessons about being a proper follower of God. With understanding of the actions Moses did, God's people can shape their lives to what the Bible teaches. Christians must obey exactly what God commands, give glory to God, and realize that their actions have consequences.