

Paul's Take on an Old Story

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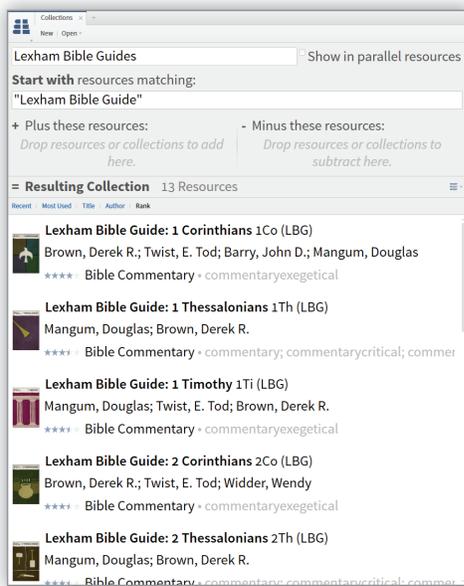
I remember the day I discovered the answer key in the back of my math book. For five glorious minutes, I was elated—until my teacher told me I had to show my work. The Bible is a lot like that old math book.

Many of the stories in the front half of the Bible (the Old Testament) seem interesting but not relevant to my life. I can find answers in the back of the book (the New Testament), but I need to “do the work” to really understand how they connect to my life.

The book of Exodus is a great example. I sometimes have trouble seeing how the stories in this book relate to me until I get to the back of the book. Let's look at one story in Exodus that's revisited in Paul's letters.

Step 1: Search Paul's letters for the exodus story.

Paul was a devout Jew. He knew the stories surrounding the exodus and refers to them in his letters. To better understand these references, let's consult the *Lexham Bible Guides: Paul's Letters Collection* in Logos Bible Software. This 13-volume collection summarizes major research and issues in Paul's letters and annotates those perspectives.



Screenshot of Logos Bible Software. This collection features *Lexham Bible Guides: Paul Collection*. Learn more about these resources at Logos.com/BSMSavings

To begin, I first click “Tools > Collections.” I then enter “Lexham Bible Guide” (using quotation marks), so Logos will collect all the Lexham Bible Guides into one group. Now I can search for “Exodus” in the whole Bible Guides collection at once.

“Exodus” is mentioned 60 times in 35 different sections in the *Lexham Bible Guides: Paul's Letters Collection*. Scrolling through these results, I find the heading “The Rock Was Christ” in the volume on 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul draws a parallel between Jesus and the rock that Moses struck in Exodus 17:6. I'm familiar with this passage, but I've never stopped to consider what Paul is saying about this event.

Step 2: Dig around in the resources.

After giving an overview of the passage, *Lexham Bible Guide: 1 Corinthians* offers a structural outline followed by an explanation of how the passage relates to the rest of the book and the rest of the Bible (or biblical canon). The “Issues at a Glance” section looks at complex issues in the text, highlighting multiple perspectives and approaches. In this section, I find “The Rock Was Christ.” Here Derek R. Brown, citing Anthony Thiselton's commentary, discusses different interpretations of the phrase, “the rock was Christ”:

(1) the rock *is* the actual preexistent Christ (the “realistic” view); (2) the rock and Christ refer to “identical” events; (3) the rock and Christ are parallel, but also different; (4) the rock *stands for* Christ (the “symbolic” view); and (5) the rock *points to* the Christian reality (the “typological” view).¹

The volume summarizes 13 different commentators' views on the passage. Ciampa and Rosner claim that Paul's identification of the rock with Christ is based on “a rich Jewish exegetical tradition,”² while Barnett's take notes that “Christ existed prior to His incarnation and served as the source of life for the Israelites in the wilderness.”³ Richard B. Hayes' cautions against pressing Paul's metaphor to an absurd level of detail by questioning “whether Christ was igneous, metamorphic, or sedimentary.”⁴ This reminds me to carefully weigh interpretations.

Step 3: Read. Think. Repeat.

As I study all the thoughts on this passage, I am increasingly impressed with God's care for his people in the wilderness and how he cares for me in Christ. In this passage, Paul shows us Jesus' deliverance offered in a fascinating way: Just as Moses struck the rock, bringing forth life-giving water for the Israelites, Jesus was struck to give me life. [B](#)

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¹ Derek R. Brown with E. Tod Twist, *1 Corinthians* (ed. John D. Barry and Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Guide, Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), 1 Cor 10:4.

² *Ibid.* | ³ *Ibid.* | ⁴ *Ibid.*