

"FROM THE WILDERNESS TO THE PROMISED LAND"

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KESSID

SCRIPTURE + SPIRIT

God prepares us for the Promised Land by taking us through the Wilderness.

(VS) Exodus 33:3 – Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

Moses understood what it meant if God was not with them, so he intervened on their behalf.

(VS) Exodus 33:15-16 – Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

Part 1 - The Wilderness

What is the definition of "Wilderness?" According to the online dictionary...

- A tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings
- An area essentially undisturbed by human activity.
- An empty or pathless area or region
- A bewildering situation.

Why do we see the Wilderness as hard?

- Unknown
- Rough Terrain
- Basic Needs at Risk – food & water & clothing
- Enemy Attacks
- Discomfort
- Fear

What we define as "bad" or a place to avoid - can actually be that place where...

- God prepares us for something bigger
- Personally meets with us
- And moves us from where we are, into the place where He wants us to be.

In the Wilderness:

- God Prepares Us
 - God Meets Us
 - God Moves Us
- The wilderness is a time of preparation. It's a time of getting to know God better. It's a time of moving away from one thing and towards another.
 - Throughout the Bible, God used the wilderness to impact the lives of His followers. Look at just a few of the other people from the Bible who had their own wilderness experiences:
 - **Elijah** ran in fear for his life into the wilderness, and it was there that God met his needs and revealed Himself to Elijah and gave him instructions about what was next:
 - **John the Baptist** – Began his ministry in the Wilderness. His wilderness was not an uninhabited place, but rather the lightly populated place where he grew up. We might call it "out in the country" today. God used the outskirts of society to begin preparing the way for the coming Messiah.
 - **Jesus** – Transitioned from his life as a carpenter and prepared for his ministry in the wilderness where he went to be tested.

Part 2 - See What God Will Do

(VS) Exodus 13:17-18 (NKJV) – Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

- Let's go back to the Israelites as they headed out of slavery and began their journey in the wilderness. Right off the bat, God declared that He wasn't going to take them the most direct and shortest route through the wilderness, which I know if I was one of the Israelites of that time, I would have chosen the shortcut. Based on what we've already talked about, I would want to get out of the wilderness as quickly as possible.
- Instead, God directed the people through the Wilderness of the Red Sea - from what I understand, was hundreds of miles further.

Here are a some of the reasons I've concluded as to why God took them the long way around...

Prepare them as an army.

The Hebrews had been slaves for 430 years. That was all they knew. Their young men were not trained in battle maneuvers, they were trained how to serve and make bricks and build pyramids. As they moved through the wilderness, they were going to face enemies. And God told them that they would have to conquer the Promised Land when they reached it. The people were not ready. The wilderness was a time of preparation for what was to come.

My question to you is this - what is God preparing you for during this time?

Unite them as a people and a Nation with God as their leader.

(VS) Exodus 6:7 (NKJV) – I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

- God used the time in the wilderness to set them up with laws and guidance. Not only did they receive the 10 Commandments. There were laws for just about every aspect of life and society.

Prevent them from running back into slavery.

- We already read in Exodus 13:17 that God knew that if the Israelites faced their enemy, right off the bat, they turn tail and run back to Egypt and into slavery.
- Every time life got tough in the Wilderness, the first thing the Israelites did was complain to Moses and suggest that they were better off as slaves in Egypt. Here's just one example.

(VS) Exodus 14:11-12 – 11 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

- If you take an honest look at your life, what areas would you admit that you are a slave to? And why do we find ourselves so quick to return to that slavery?

To show them what He could do

- Throughout the wilderness, God showed the people what He was capable. He proved it to them over and over.
- God assured His people that:
 - He would release them
 - He would lead them
 - He would fight for them
 - He would provide for them
- The wilderness is that place where we come to the end of ourselves and our abilities and must rely totally on God.
- Can you think of a time this past year when God showed you what he can do and that you can trust him?

Part 3 :The Promised Land

- They finally reached the border of the Promised Land. It was the destination they had longed for and endured much to have a land that they could call their own. In the Old Testament, it was a physical portion of land called Canaan. God made a covenant with Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham and promised the land to him and his descendants.

(VS) Genesis 12:1-3 – Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- When the Israelites finally reached the outskirts of their Promised Land God instructed Moses to send 12 spies into the land. In Numbers 13:17-20, Moses told them to find the answers to these questions:
 - See what the land is like?
 - What are the people like, strong or weak, few or many?
 - Is the land good or bad?
 - Are the cities unwallled or fortified?
 - Is the soil good or poor?
 - Are there trees or not? Bring back some fruit.
- When the spies returned to Moses and all the people, they gave 2 slightly different reports; 10 of them declared:
 - The land does flow with milk and honey - see this fruit!
 - The people are powerful
 - The cities are very large and fortified
 - Even descendants of Anak, which are giants
 - Their enemies were there - “We cannot take them.”
 - “The land we explored devours those living in it”
- Aaron and Caleb said this:
 - The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good
 - If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land and will give it to us.
 - Do not rebel against the Lord
 - Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them.
 - The Lord is with us, do not be afraid of them.
- Sadly, the mass of people chose to believe the 10 spies and reject what Caleb and Joshua said. They forgot to trust God. They forgot all that He had proved in the wilderness.
- As Christians, we tend to believe that when we are where God wants us to be then life should be smoother – doors fly open, while others slam shut – supposedly guiding us on the easiest, most direct path - certainly not taking us the long way around and into the wilderness.
- For that matter, what is our Promised Land today? Here’s my theory... Just as God made a covenant with Abraham, He made a covenant with us through His son, Jesus Christ.

(VS) John 3:16 (ESV) – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- In Jesus we find salvation and not only eternal life in Heaven, but abundant life here on earth. I believe our Promised Land is allowing Jesus to take over the territory of our hearts. We are not going through the wilderness or a pandemic alone.

(VS) Romans 8:38-39 (ESV): *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(VS) John 10:10 (2nd half of verse) – *"...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."*

- One of the commentaries I read said this about his portion of the verse:

"Life has the future in its arms. Life propagates new life. Life has untold capacities about it - beauty, fragrance, strength, growth, variety, reproduction, resistance to death, continuity, eternity. In the Logos is life - and Christ came to give it!"
– Pulpit Commentary

If we sent spies into 2021, these are some questions we might want them to answer:

- When will the pandemic end?
- What's going to happen with our leadership?
- Will we be able to gather?
- Will there be more riots and social unrest?
- When will life return to normal?

When our 2021 spies return from their scouting mission, I think they'd give us this report:

- The year is good. It flows with milk and honey, abundance, and health.
- The year is filled with giants, uncertainty, and illness.

And, they'd be right. So here's the question for you to ponder:

- Are you going to live by this claim, "We cannot take it. This year will devour all those living in it."
- Or this claim: "Do not be afraid because Jesus is with us."
- God has taken us through the wilderness of 2020 for a reason. I can't say if 2021 the Promised Land, but we have certainly put a lot of hope in it.
- This is what I do know - Jesus will be with us through it all. We don't have to go at it alone and be stiff-necked people. 2021 is a land flowing with milk and honey, and it's a land filled with giants.

And with God, we can take them.