

The Wilderness

Purpose: to help our church understand that we are in a similar place as the children of Israel “The Wilderness” and must be careful not to make the mistakes that they did.

So, the children of Israel are finally free from bondage and slavery. What happens next?

Exo 15:22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

God led them into the wilderness!

- The wilderness is where your sanctification begins
- It happened to Joseph – God gives Joseph a dream of future greatness, and then he was sold by his brothers into slavery! (Genesis 37)
- It happened to David – The Spirit of the LORD came upon David (1 Samuel 16:13) and before long he is running from King Saul, even though he himself had been anointed and was doing great works!
- It happened to Jesus – The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove (Luke 3:22), and yet the same Spirit led Him into the wilderness (Luke 4:1)
- If you are going to be useful to God, you must pass through the wilderness!

Why the wilderness?

- It is where you learn about yourself through pressure
- It is where you learn to overcome temptation
- It is where you learn to trust God
- It is where you learn to fight
- It is where your priorities are challenged

What is the wilderness like?

- It can be a dry place – no water
- It is usually an uncomfortable place – not much pleasure
- It has wild animals – people who wish to devour you
- It almost always will be a place where supplies are lacking

Are you in the wilderness?

- Perhaps being a Christian has meant that things have been difficult for you?
- Married for a few years, but finding your spouse is not what you thought?
- Job was great for a while, but suddenly things have changed?
- Church was great, but recent struggles became difficult?

Let's see what happen to them when they first entered the wilderness (Exodus 15:22-27)

After 3 days, they found no water

- God often uses a three-day period to prepare us, to hear Him, or to do something important

- Moses told Pharaoh that they wanted to go a three days' journey into the wilderness (Exo 5:3, 8:27)
- The spies of Joshua hid for three days (Jos 2:22)
- Esther asked the Jews to fast for three days (Est 4:16)
- Jonah was in the fish for 3 days (Jon 1:17)
- Jesus was risen in three days (Jon 2:19)
- After 3 days they arrived at a place called Marah, which had water but the water was bitter

The people complained against Moses (not God)

- Remember, these people had seen the miracles of Egypt
- They were also just out of slavery and had to get accustomed to living by trusting God
- By complaining to Moses, they were really complaining to God, because Moses was simply following orders from God.
- The people had very little faith in God (what shall we drink)

Moses did what he was used to doing – he cried out to the LORD

- The LORD showed him a tree
- The LORD showed him what to do with it
- The miracle came – the waters were made sweet

God did something there:

- He made a **Statute** (law, prescribed task, custom)
 - He told them what they had to do
- He made an **Ordinance** (judgement, decide a case, verdict, sentence)
 - He told them what would happen if they did or did not do it
- He **Tested** them (to prove)
 - He wanted them to know what they were really like

This first test is the beginning of all of the test that they will go through:

The Statute:

- Diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God
- Do what is right in His sight
- Give ear to His commandments
- Keep His statutes

The Ordinance:

- I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians
- You will not be under the judgements that they received

The test:

- I am the LORD who heals you
 - Will they believe Him or not?
 - How would they respond?

Afterwards, He gave them rest

Elim – palms

12 wells of water, which was convenient and thirst quenching

70 palms for shade and comfort

We are in a similar place that they were in:

- Like the children of Israel, we have been redeemed and justified
- Like the children of Israel, we are being sanctified
- I believe that right now, we as a church are in a “wilderness” phase
- God is giving us Statutes – He is teaching us what to do and how to follow Him
- God has given us ordinances – He is telling us what will happen if we obey Him
- We are being put to the test

Let's learn from their experiences so that we do not make the same mistakes as they did.