

# The Way of the Wilderness

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On this day, we're going to do two things. First, we're going to look at the events that happened roughly 3400 years ago with Ancient Israel and we're going to see what happened—what they've been going through. Then the second part is to see if we can learn some lessons from what they went through. The title of the sermon is:

## The Way Of The Wilderness

That is where they went and where they trudged during this time. This week we've been putting sin out of our lives and maybe there are some things we can learn. Let's go to Exodus 3:1 and if you have a marker you're going to want to place it here because we'll be going to some other scriptures and then come back. We're going to pick up the story prior to the events that happened this last week to set the context. This is basically the calling of Moses.

***Exodus 3:1*** Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. (KJV)

A strange thing happened.

*2) And the angel of the LORD appeared [we don't know in what form the angel of the LORD appeared] unto him [unto Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: ...* (KJV)

Was it from the waist up or a face or his whole body standing there—we don't know. I come from West Texas and the tumble weeds can get half as big as a house, so it could have been a very large bush—we don't know. The *angel of the LORD appeared in* some form out of this bush that didn't burn up. Then it goes on in the middle of the verse:

*2 continued) ... and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.* (KJV)

Obviously, this caught his attention.

3) *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. (KJV)*

“*The angel of the LORD*” let’s look at that for a minute. The word “angel” is Strong’s #4397 and it can mean *angel* but it also can mean *a messenger specifically of God*. We see here that this *angel*, this *messenger*, appeared in some form out of the fire. We’re told it’s an *angel of the LORD* and the LORD here is all caps which denotes, “YHVH” (sometimes pronounced, “Jehovah”), it means *the self-Existent or the Eternal*. The question is who is this angel? The New King James Version, The Holman Study Bible, the Darby Translation capitalize “Angel” indicating this is a God Being. Clark’s Commentary says this, “... and who was this but Jesus.” We know Jesus can appear to mankind—He has appeared as a man (we’ve covered that before in Genesis 14—He was Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God). Hebrews 7 identifies Melchizedek as Jesus Christ—so, Christ can appear as a man and walk the earth—we have that example. We also know that Christ can appear in Glory and we find that in many places in the book of Revelation. It’s my opinion (this is just my opinion), that this is Jesus Christ and He is described as an *angel* or as *a messenger* if you choose the other alternative of the translation. Why would one think that? It seems perfectly logical and consistent to me because God and Christ have been working together for an eternity. They have always been together, They will always be together and you have this *messenger* of the LORD and why would it not be Jesus Christ? Especially considering the next verse, let’s look at verse 4. The Angel of the LORD appeared, Moses walked up to this bush ...

4) *And when the LORD [not the Angel of the LORD, but the LORD] saw that he [Moses] turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he [Moses] said, Here am I. (KJV)*

We see here that Moses heard God but there is no record of him seeing God. He saw the Angel of God but he did not see God in this account. We know that God can be heard and as a review let’s go to Matthew 3:16 and see that God’s voice has been heard by humans many times—many, many times. This is the account of Christ being baptized by John the Baptist and when He was coming out of the water a voice was heard.

**Matthew 3:16** *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: [notice this] and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*

17) *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (KJV)*

This same comment was repeated at the transfiguration in Matthew 17—same words came down from heaven referring to Christ being pleasing to His Father. Several ministers over the years in trying to explain this have said the voice was the voice of a, “heraldic angel” but there’s no scriptural evidence whatsoever for that claim. If it was an

angel that said these words then it would be logical to assume that the angel would say, “This is God’s Son in whom He is well pleased”. If the statement was from an angel that actually said, “This is my Son” (an angel making that comment), then Christ would have to be the Son of an angel which is ludicrous and we know is not true. There is no mention of an angel in the context in any translation—it is not mentioned. With that in mind, let’s go to John 12:27. This is another example of God’s voice being heard. This was before Passover (as we keep this time of year—it was several days ago), Christ is speaking:

**John 12:27** *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say [He’s addressing His Father]? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28) Father, glorify thy name. [notice what happened] Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. (KJV)*

There’s only one Being that can make this statement—it has to be God the Father. Christ is praying to the Father and God is saying, *I have glorified My name*—the very subject of what Christ was praying about. Only God could make this statement. Notice the reaction of the people, however, verse 29.

*29) The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it [they heard the voice], said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30) Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. (KJV)*

What Christ was saying is: I know my Father exists, you don’t have to prove that to Me but you heard this voice, so you know My Father exists, you heard the words, you heard the voice. Notice the reaction of the people—it’s the same as today. They said, “it was an angel”, others said, “it was an angel that spoke to Him”. People say that about what we just read about God saying, *this is my Son in whom I am well pleased*. They said, “it was an angel” like they did here and people do today. This had to be the Father speaking and being heard. The question often comes up about John 5:37. We want to clarify this before we get into the events of this day. Christ is speaking, so these are the very words of Jesus Christ.

**John 5:37** *And the Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. (KJV)*

Some people say and claim this refers to all people for all time, “nobody that has ever existed has ever heard His voice or seen His shape”. You have to consider the context though. One of the first things we learned from Mr. Armstrong about Bible study is he said, “you have to look at the context”. You can’t pull something out of context. He [Christ] said here in verse 37, *you have neither heard his voice or seen his shape*—who is “you or ye” in the King James. Look at verse 16.

16) *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. [He healed a man on the Sabbath]*

17) *But Jesus answered them [the Jews], My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. (KJV)*

We see here the context is Christ is referring to the Jews that are standing right before Him and that are also accusing Him. If you count the words, “ye or you” which I did from verse 37 to verse 47, “ye” occurs sixteen times and “you” occurs four times. A total of twenty times He says, *you, you, you, you*. It’s obvious who He is talking to—He’s talking to the Jews at hand and He is confronting them because they are plotting to murder the very Son of God. The context of this entire scripture—the set [scene] here—is that Christ is talking to the Jews. When Christ says, *you have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape*,—the Greek word for “heard” is Strong’s #191 and it can mean to *understand*, a very valid translation: you don’t *understand* His voice. The Greek word for “seen” is Strong’s #3708, it can be *perceive*—perceiving God. When you put those together and combine it with the word “shape” (*neither seen His shape*), that can also mean *appearance*—not understanding His *appearance*. Christ directly tells them (what He’s saying to the Jews), is look, you say you understand God but you don’t have a clue Who God is. You haven’t heard His voice in scripture, you read the scriptures, you talk about the scriptures but you haven’t heard His voice. You don’t recognize Him, you don’t perceive Him. The important point about this section of scripture is Christ is not making a blanket statement that all mankind has never heard or seen God. If you want to check that out and investigate it further, go to our website under written material—there’s plenty of material there. We’ve seen on two occasions where God was *heard*. Let’s go back to Exodus 3:4 and continue the story.

**Exodus 3:4** *And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And He said, Here am I.*

5) *And he [God] said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

6) *Moreover he said, [now God is identifying Himself—this is very important] I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (KJV)*

God says, *I’m the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. What does the Bible tell us about that? Let’s go to Acts 3 and read the beginning of verse 13. Peter is speaking here and he identifies the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and it is very clear. Les was talking about clear scriptures verses fuzzy scriptures [prior sermonette]. If you want to understand the roles and relationship of God and Christ the best way to do that is to look at scriptures that have both of Them in the same verse or both of Them in the same section because then it becomes very clear, or clearer.

**Acts 3:13** *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; ... (KJV)*

No question who *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* is—has to be the Father because in this one verse it says, *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified His Son and that Son is Jesus Christ*—who, can it be but the Father. If that wasn't enough, Christ confirmed that Himself—let's go to Mark 12:24. The Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection and they were giving Christ some grief and He basically told them you don't know the scriptures very well.

**Mark 12:24** *And Jesus answering said unto them [the Sadducees], Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? (KJV)*

Just like what we read earlier—you don't perceive God, you don't understand God, you don't comprehend God.

25) *For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.*

26) *And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, [notice this] how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? (KJV)*

This is coming out of Christ's own mouth. If Christ was talking from the burning bush, why didn't He say, "I"—but he talked about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which Peter clearly identified as the Father. Here in these scriptures, they clearly prove that God the Father was the One who spoke from the burning bush. I personally believe as I said earlier that Christ was there as the messenger because They've always been together, They've always done things together, as we're going to see what happened on this journey out of Egypt—that They were both together, at the event of the bush and at the exodus. Let's go to Exodus 12 and you want to place a marker here, we're going to begin in verse 29. All of the plagues have passed except one—this very last one was the crucial one, as far as Pharaoh was concerned that changed his mind.

**Exodus 12:29** *And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. (KJV)*

30) *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (KJV)*

Can you imagine? The wailing and the pulling of hair and the screaming of what was going on.

*31) And he [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 37.

*37) And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. (KJV)*

As we've been keeping this week, that's what they were doing. They were marching, they were walking—we're going to drill down and look at this more closely about what actually happened and how big an event this was. The Hebrew word for "men" is Strong's #1397 and it can mean *a valiant man or warrior, generally a person*—meaning it could be male or female. Baker's Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament says that this word refers to *men only*. So, we don't know—men, women or men only, we just don't know. Therefore the 600,000 could be a combination of 600,000 men and women or 600,000 men. For the sake of discussion let's assume it was the men—600,000 men—to see what the numbers might look like and what happened these past several days and going on, as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. Let's see what the numbers looked like. Keep your finger here and go back to Exodus 1:7 because this gives us some more information about the number of Israelites.

***Exodus 1:7*** *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. (KJV)*

This tells us that there were probably many children per family. This wasn't like today where people might have one—if it's China, they try to limit it to one or maybe even two. We see here that if we had 600,000 men and 600,000 women (and God designed the reproductive system), so that in any population you're pretty close to 50-50. So, if you had 600,000 men and you assume you have about the same number of women that's 1.2 million men and women. But we know not everybody was married, so let's say of the 600,000 men and 600,000 women about 400,000 were couples (they were married). Let's assume (and I think this is low), these couples had three kids at the time of the Exodus. So, if you had 400,000 couples averaging three kids, you have 1.2 million children. That is a total of 2.4 million Israelites—kind of gives us an idea of what God is doing here and the mind of God, and how He can pull this off, when you think about that. He's already done the miracles and the plagues and now all of a sudden, He's got 2.5 million people that He's got to move from one place to another place—feed them, take care of them and look after them. I got to thinking if we were a witness out in the desert and you see this big pillar of cloud coming off in the distance and comes by and the first person behind the cloud is Moses walking and maybe Aaron by his side and you had 2.4 million people, how long would it take for those people to walk past you, as you just sat there and watched them—how long would it take? How long would the

column be? You have to make some assumptions, so I assumed they traveled 100 people wide—it couldn't be too much because they would get all scattered and had to go down some canyons and around rocks and around mountains, so it had to be fairly compact, so let's take 100 people wide. Let's assume that 1/3 of the children are in arms, meaning they're carried—they're not walking. That would mean you have 800,000 children walking plus 1.2 million adults, so you have 2 million people on foot and 400,000 being carried in some form or fashion. If you have 2 million walking and you have 100 wide and you do the math that means you have 20,000 ranks behind them (100 wide, 100 wide, 100 wide, to 20,000). If you figure 6 feet between ranks that's 120,000 feet—that means the procession of Israelites went on for 23 miles. That means, to our Canadian and Australian brethren, 37 kilometers (over that). If you sat there and looked off in the distance you would see people for 23 miles. Look at Exodus 12:38.

**Exodus 12:38** *And a mixed multitude went up also with them; ... (KJV)*

What does that mean? The word "mixed" is Strong's #6154 and it literally refers to *weaving a cloth* and when they wove the cloth you have threads going north and south and you have threads going east and west. This particular word means the *woof*—the threads that go east to west or it can also mean a *mixture* or a *mongrel race*. This context, what comes to mind is a mixed multitude went up with them. Was it possible that some Egyptians went with Israel after seeing all the plagues, all the destruction, seeing the example of God's power that some people woke up and said, "we're playing for the wrong team here. We must recognize this God because He is the supreme God". Could some Egyptians come out with Israel—I think probably so. We don't have a clue how many—don't know, so it could even be quite a bit more. Going on in verse 38.

*38 continued) ... and flocks [the Hebrew means sheep or goats], and herds [the Hebrew means beef cattle], even very much cattle [here the word "cattle" means livestock]. (KJV)*

So, there were a lot of animals. How many? If you have 400,000 families and you say each family had four animals, that's 1.6 million animals along with 2.4 million people. I can remember as a young teen, in the spring, we would herd cattle for a friend (cattle and sheep), in West Texas and cattle can spread out, but sheep want to clump together—they want to stay together. As the humans are 100 wide, my guess is the sheep and the cattle may have been on a rope but they tended to stay with this group and walked along. How long would it take for this conglomeration of animals and people to pass if we were just standing there watching—the pillar goes by and then Moses goes by—how long would that take? Remember their average walking speed is 3 miles an hour but they have burdens, they're dragging kids and animals and all of that, so let's say 2 miles an hour. If they walk 10 hours a day, how long would it take to pass us? It would take two days. Two full days of 10 hours a day, in other words, 20 hours of this whole procession to walk past us. That is a lot of people. It takes a lot of organization to keep

them from trampling each other, from getting lost, animals going everywhere, animals trampling people and so on, and so forth. Let's go to Exodus 13:17. Notice what God did as they came out of Egypt because you can see right away there are some lessons to be learned from this.

**Exodus 13:17** *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them [that's important] not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: (KJV)*

We have to remember that the Israelites had been slaves for centuries. They were not trained in war, they did not know how to fight plus the fact they had no weapons. God was concerned they didn't have any training and they were used to being subjugated and as we know many of them wanted to go back to that subjugation over the next forty years. Going on in verse 18, notice what God did.

**18)** *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness [this is the title of the sermon] of the Red sea: ... (KJV)*

The word "wilderness" can also mean *desert* and it was. If this is the Mediterranean right here ((hand gestures)) and Egypt is down here in the southeast corner ((hand gestures)), Promised Land is up north ((hand gestures)), there are two ways to go: follow the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea to get to the Promised Land, but you would have to go right through the land of the Philistines (and believe me the Philistines were not pleasant people), or you could go further east way out in the desert and then go north and come back to the Promised Land. So, God chose to take them farther out east into the wilderness—into the desert. Going on in verse 18.

**18 continued)** *... and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

Clark's Commentary has an interesting take and I think it's very logical about the word "harnessed". Clark's says, "I think it probable that the word refers simply to that *orderly or well-arranged manner* in which the Israelites commenced their journey from Egypt. For to *arrange* or *set in order* seems to be the ideal meaning as it was natural to expect that in such circumstances there must have been very much hurry and confusion. That God had so disposed matters that the utmost order prevailed and had it been otherwise, thousands of men, women, and children must have been trodden to death (if it wasn't very well organized and orchestrated)". So that didn't happen. You know Satan would love to get in there and stir that pot and cause all kinds of confusion but God prevented that. We see here that Israel left Egypt in an orderly matter, undoubtedly at God's instruction. Let's go to verse 20 now.

**20)** *And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.*



*21) And the LORD [again this is “YHVH”, Jehovah] went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, (KJV)*

It tells us that God was in the cloud. Notice the purpose:

*21 continued) ... to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*

*22) He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (KJV)*

What a loving God when you think about this. They are ripped out of the horrible circumstances but it was still home, it was still familiar as bad as it was—all these miracles, all this chaos and they start marching, going to this land they’ve never seen, never heard of and this pillar is front of them. God did that to encourage them. Every time the pillar started moving they knew it was time for them to move and they knew God was in the pillar and at night that pillar changed to a pillar of fire. It gave enough light for them to see what was going on, [for example] someone had to take a potty break and they wouldn’t get lost out in the desert. God had mercy but God was in that pillar and they could look at all times and knew God was there. This was a sign to them that God was with them. How encouraging that would be given the fact of all the trauma they had been through. God was in the cloud, Israel couldn’t see Him but this was the same God, (think about this) that later came down and occupied the Holy of Holies. It makes total sense—God is consistent. He led them to the place, once the tabernacle was built He made His home with them. The New Testament confirms that it was God the Father who led Israel out of Egypt. Let’s go to Hebrews 8:8. As we’re going to see, both God and Christ were there—They are personal Gods—They care about Their people, God cares about His children.

*Hebrews 8:8 For finding fault with them, [referring to Ancient Israel] he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: (KJV)*

Paul here is quoting Jeremiah 31:31 and he’s saying that God, *the LORD will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*

*9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; (KJV)*

We see here that this God who led Israel out of Egypt was also the God who made the Covenant with Israel—very plain, very simple. Who is it that made the Covenant with Israel and who is it that led them out of Egypt? Let’s go to Acts 3:25 and see the Bible is very clear, very plain. Peter is speaking here, Paul was speaking before in Hebrews. Notice what Peter is saying:

**Acts 3:25** *Ye are the children of the prophets [Peter is talking to the Jews of his day], and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*

*26) Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (KJV)*

We see here clearly that God the Father was the one that made the Covenant, therefore, it was God the Father that was the one that led Israel out of Egypt—it is very, very clear. We are told that God is our Father—took them by the hand. Anybody with kids, you know how wonderful it is when you see a Mom and a Dad and a little kid's walking along, every once in a while, the little kid will stick up their hand to hold Mom or Dad's hand. Or you're starting to walk across the street and Mom or Dad will reach their hand down and make sure they're holding their child's hand, and that is a picture of the love and concern that parents have for children. I don't think it's any accident, we are told that God led Israel—took them by the hand—and led them out of Egypt as a loving Father would do. Let's go to Acts 13:14. The New Testament confirming who led Israel out of Egypt.

**Acts 13:14** *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. (KJV)*

Verse 16 now—they are in the synagogue.

*16) Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand [these are all Jews he's talking to] said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*

*17) The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. (KJV)*

He's saying here that God brought Israel, this slave people out of Egypt. Who did Paul say this God was? Verse 33:

*33) God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (KJV)*

You see here Paul says very clearly God and Christ used in the same scripture and he's saying, *God* is the One that *brought Israel out with a high arm* and this is the same *God that raised up Jesus*. It could only be the Father that raised up Jesus—couldn't be anybody else. The other thing that Paul is saying and commenting on, the fact that God the Father is mentioned in the Psalms for those that might think that God is never mentioned in the Old Testament or that God had nothing to do with the Old Testament—you're going to have to argue with Paul on that one. The New Testament confirms that it was the Father that led Israel out of Egypt. Now let's go to Exodus 14:19. Now we come to the parting of the Red Sea—this incredible miracle! They're in a bad position

because they've come up to the Red Sea. They have the Red Sea on the one side, the mountains on the other side and the form of the V and behind them, Pharaoh's chariots and armies are coming to beat all. You can hear the thundering of the horses and you can see the dust clouds and there's nowhere to go, water on one side, mountains on the other side.

***Exodus 14:19*** *And the angel of God, [that can be messenger] which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: (KJV)*

Who was the "angel" of God that went around and put himself between the back side of Israel and the oncoming hordes from Egypt? The New King James, The Holman Study Bible, the Darby Bible capitalize "Angel" but we're told in the New Testament who that was. Let's go to I Corinthians 10:1. Letting the Bible define the Bible, we get a clear picture of what happened when the Red Sea was parted.

***I Corinthians 10:1*** *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; [referring to this event]*

*2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

*3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat;*

*4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: [notice this] for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for "followed" can mean just that, *to follow*—it can also mean *to be in the same with* or *on the same path* or it can also mean *to accompany*. Can you imagine, God leading Israel because the parting of the Red Sea was imminent. God was in front leading Israel, Christ moved around the back to take their behind and protect them from the oncoming hordes of the Egyptians. We don't have time but you can read of that account and what Christ did to the Egyptians—their wheels started falling off and all of this kind of thing—miracles were performed to protect Ancient Israel. How secure can you be with God at your front and Christ at your back? How secure is that? The point is that both God and Christ were involved. They were involved with Moses, I believe, in the burning bush, They were involved in coming out of Egypt, They were involved in the miracles, They were involved in gathering this rag tag group together with all their animals and kids, possessions and getting them on their way and making sure nobody got lost or trampled to death. They brought Israel out of Egypt and They both brought Israel to the safety of the wilderness—as bad as that sounds—but the wilderness was way out of the way of the Philistines. We see that despite the fact they were in the desert, God protected them in the desert—3400 years ago [and] during these days, Israel was walking along *the way of the wilderness*. God and Christ both there taking care of them. That's a thumbnail description of what happened this past week, and what would continue to happen over the coming months and years. God never does anything for no reason—He wants us to learn some lessons from this. The rest of the sermon we're going to talk about four points and ask the question: what does

God want us to learn about this experience? He did it this way for a reason and He describes it in detail, so there must be a reason for it. By the way, this is a way that all of us have to travel anyway—we have to do it all over again—we have to do it in our lives, so there are lessons for us to learn.

### **1. God did not rescue Israel in sin—they had to come out of sin to be rescued.**

God could have killed all the Egyptians and had Israel stay there. That wasn't the Promise but it could have been done. The point God wants to make is that the Israelites had to come out of Egypt, in order, to be rescued. We know Egypt is a type of sin. Let's go to Hebrews 11:24. This tells us about Moses, and we know that the daughter of Pharaoh raised him in their court.

***Hebrews 11:24** By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; (KJV)*

I'm sure that didn't set well.

*25) Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [or for a time] (KJV)*

The pleasures of sin, obviously were in Egypt. They worshipped pagan gods and had all of these rituals and had all of these sacrifices and all of these customs that were totally pagan. Moses was living in sin—the sin of Egypt, I mean—all around him when he grew up. The Israelite slaves were living in sin because it was all around them. Undoubtedly for those hundreds of years, Israel began to incorporate some of the worship practices of Egypt. We see that when they wanted to go back to idolatry, back to Egypt—it had been pounded into them. Israel was living in sin but to be rescued they had to come out of Egypt. They had to come out of the sin of Egypt to be rescued. Today, it's exactly the same with us—exactly the same. Let's go to Revelation 18:1. This is the environment we live in and it's becoming a worldwide environment, an interconnected environment, more so every day.

***Revelation 18:1** And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. (KJV)*

*2) And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

*3) For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. [notice verse 4]*

*4) And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, [God's people] that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. (KJV)*

Moses made a choice. He rejected his rearing in Egypt by Pharaoh's daughter and the court and all of that—He rejected that. He made a choice to be with God's people. We know he killed an Egypt and that got him in trouble. We, as Moses, have made a choice to come out of this world which is Satan's world. We made that choice. We do so prior to baptism. We made a commitment to God that we wouldn't go back, unlike the Israelites that wanted to go back. We made a commitment that we are not going to go back. We're going to look to God. One of the main purposes of this spring holy day season is we have to examine ourselves. What we should be doing is asking God to show us how He sees us—not how we see ourselves because we look through rose colored glasses at ourselves. Sometimes we tend to put ourselves in the best light. If we're honest we want God to show us how He perceives us because that's reality—that's what we're going to be judged upon. If God will reveal to us how He sees us, we can take that—then we can look at Jesus Christ and the example in the Bible of how Christ lived His life. We can compare what God reveals to us about ourselves, compare it to Jesus Christ, note the difference and then set about changing ourselves through the power of the Holy Spirit to be like Jesus Christ because we're going to marry Him, and Christ is not going to marry somebody He can't recognize. He's not going to choose somebody to marry that doesn't have the same set of values that He does. God is giving us time to prove ourselves over a period of time to show whether we want to be like Him and if we want to be like Jesus Christ. Thereby coming out of the world—the Egypt that we live in—in order, to eventually be rescued. For us to be rescued we have to come out of sin—Egypt. For Israel to be rescued, they had to come out of sin—Egypt. The second lesson:

## **2. The way of the wilderness is emptiness and desolation.**

They went out into the desert. I grew up out in the middle of the desert, 110 [degrees] easy, no water, sage brush, rocks, sand and jack rabbits and that's about it. Israel faced probably an even worse desert than West Texas. It was far more desolate and far harsher, in that regard. Ancient Israel was called "the church in the wilderness"—you can check Acts 7:38 for that as a reference. God called them the church in a physical wilderness. Today, we are the Church of God and we are in a spiritual wilderness. Americans, Canadians, and Australians—we have to admit it, we live in a godless society. Our societies are pushing God entirely out of the picture. God is no longer in our schools, in our institutions of higher learning, God is not in our courts, God is not in the thoughts of the people, God is not in those who make laws, God is not with those who enforce laws—in the main, the influence of God has been removed from our society. Remember what happens (we talked about this a little while back [previous sermon]), when light is removed—you're in a room and it's lit and you turn the light off, guess what happens—darkness replaces the light. Darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. Once society removes God, guess what happens—if God's presence is not there that vacuum is replaced by Satan. Satan moves in where God is not present. Whether it's in an individual person, a household, a community, a nation. Anytime God is moved out, we reject God, don't look to God—Satan is right there to

move in and make matters worse. We see today a world dominated by Satan. We see people who have faith in God and look to God. Those people are ridiculed and called weird by the intelligence of this world, and God is just not present. It's interesting that when John the Baptist announced the presence of Jesus Christ, where did he do it? He did it in the physical wilderness—let's go to Matthew 3:1. We were there earlier in verse 16 after Christ was baptized but notice:

***Matthew 3:1*** *In those days came John the Baptist, [notice this] preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, (KJV)*

You have to stop and ask yourself why was he in the wilderness of Judea? You would think he would go to Jerusalem or go to the larger towns but no, he was out in the wilderness, in fact, the people had to go see him. That's kind of astonishing when you think about it.

*2) And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

*3) For this is he that was spoken of [referring to John the Baptist] by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight [quoting Isaiah 40:3] (KJV)*

I believe that John preached in the wilderness as an example to the people then, and to us today as a symbol of the fact, that the land was spiritually desolate in his day and in our day—spiritually desolate. It was a symbol of the fact. When he went out in the dry desert and began preaching Christ, he knew the world was going to reject Christ, he knew the world did not want Christ. When you think about it, the Jews of John's day and Christ's day, as well as the Romans, neither group—Christ's own people didn't recognize Him, the Romans certainly did not recognize Him. Talk about being in a desolate world that would not recognize God, would not recognize Christ, and the truth had dried up. You remember how Christ went on against the religious leaders of the day, basically calling them *hypocrites*. Saying you don't understand God, you don't have a clue who God is, you don't recognize God—the scriptures are screaming at you and you won't listen. That's why John, I believe, announced Christ in the wilderness. Today, the church exists in a spiritual wilderness. That is true because, in the world out there: they don't understand God, they don't have a knowledge of God, they don't respect God, they don't honor God. The truth has completely dried up in the desert of this world. As I said earlier, most people think we're fools for believing what we believe, for meeting here on this day or on a Sabbath day. They think we're absolutely nuts. The fact is, as in Christ's day or today, those in the wilderness of this world—the desert of this world—they will not recognize the Messiah, they will not recognize Jesus Christ and they will not recognize the true God—they will not do that. In fact, when Christ returns, the world is going to be angry about it and they're going to oppose Christ. We don't have time to look at that, you can check Revelation 11:16. Christ is coming to rescue the world and the people want evil so bad, and their minds and hearts are so perverted, they fight Him. He's an alien from outer space or something like that. It's just amazing. There are many people who would rather die than to submit to Christ. They

would rather live their perverted way and if they can't live their perverted way they'd rather die than live Christ's way. The way of the wilderness, concluding the second lesson, is through a desolate desert. It was physically deserted, physically desolate for Ancient Israel and it is spiritually for the church today.

The third point, the third lesson:

### **3. In the wilderness (the wilderness of this world), God's way is not the most popular way—God's way is not the easiest way.**

God's way is not popular, God's way is not easy. It certainly wasn't for the Israelites, for them it was a long and difficult journey—but that's the way God designed it. They could complain all they wanted but God designed it this way. In a similar way, God has designed our journey to be long and difficult. When I came in the church in the mid '60s the prevailing feeling was that once you're baptized and once you come into God's church, God greases the skids into the Kingdom and all you have to do is just jump onto this slide and it's greased and you'll slide peacefully into the Kingdom of God, and that bad things don't happen to good people—bad things don't happen to God's people. Over the years we have learned that that's not the truth, that's not what the Bible says. Our journey is long and difficult. Let's go to Acts 14:22. It is talking about Paul and Barnabas, and they were exhorting the people because life was difficult back then—persecution was on the church.

**Acts 14:22** [Paul and Barnabas were] *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* (KJV)

That is a fact when you look at the record of the prophets in the Old Testament; when you look at the record of all the apostles and you look at the record of many of the disciples—it didn't end well, it wasn't pretty. The apostles were either thrown out of towns, they were stoned, they were tortured and they were killed. Life was hard—it really was for them, and it is today. I'll just pick an example—Emily Gerhardt in Australia who lost her leg, and you think about what that poor woman went through, and now her dad is dying of cancer and he's getting very close to the end. Life is hard, life is difficult. God allows it as a test for us to see if we will be faithful, remain faithful, look to Him no matter what. Counting the cost, we should have been counseled about that—in Luke 14 of, "counting the cost". It is a promise that brethren who obey the truth will be persecuted, it is a fact. Let's go to Matthew 10:21. Christ is speaking—it is very profound, He's saying look this is going to happen, don't be surprised.

**Matthew 10:21** *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death.*

*22) And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

34) *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

35) *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

36) *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (KJV)*

Applied spiritually, we belong to the household of God, the Church of God and He's telling us spiritually our foes could be those that belong to our own spiritual household. Look at John 16:1. Another promise from Christ, a prophecy—this is what's going to happen:

**John 16:1** *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2) They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, [listen to this] that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (KJV)*

People can not only kill you by taking your life, they can kill your reputation, they can kill what people think about you through gossip and slander. Whosoever kills you will think that he's doing God's will.

3) *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. (KJV)*

Just like Christ told the Jews in John 7—you don't have a clue who I am, you don't understand Me, you don't believe Me, you don't even know Me. We as members of the body of Christ—it's up to us that we better not be in this category of verse 3, where people don't know God or don't know Christ. We have to know Who They are and we have to worship Them fully and truthfully. The point is, winding up this third point is: we are, indeed, on an unpopular path, a difficult path even inside God's church, much less the world.

The fourth and last point—here's the good news.

#### **4. The way of the wilderness can be a place of safety.**

That sounds oxymoron-ish. Why do you go out in the desert in these harsh circumstances to be safe? Remember for Ancient Israel *the way of the wilderness* when they went far east out into the desert and got away from the Philistines, the desert became a place of safety for them. It led them away from danger. Let me read what Jamieson Fausset and Brown say about this route out into the desert verses the route along the coast that would go through the land of the Philistines: "The shortest and most direct route from Egypt to Palestine was the usual caravan roads that lead by Gaza. The Philistines who then possessed Gaza would have been sure to dispute their passage for between them and the Israelites there as a hereditary feud (You can read



about that if you want in I Chronicles 7:21 and 22. Just like today in the Middle East, people bear grudges for thousands of years. God knew there was this feud). So early, a commencement of hostilities would have discouraged or dismayed the unwarlike band which Moses led.” Didn’t have any weapons, didn’t have any training, Philistines were warlike and as I said, they were not pleasant people. They would come on the Israelites coming right out of Egypt, and they could have scattered the whole group, but God took them out into the wilderness and it became a place of safety—He kept them safe in the wilderness. Was Israel happy with that? Did they like that? Of course not! They didn’t understand that there was safety being away from everybody. How many times did Israel complain, how many times did they say to Moses, *you led us out here in the desert, you brought us out here to kill us, or so God could kill us, or so we can die*. How quickly they forgot all of the miracles: the parting of the Red Sea, and the pillar of the cloud in day and the pillar by fire at night. God provided safety in their physical wilderness, and He does in the church today in our spiritual wilderness that we live in. Sometimes we forget they saw the pillar, they knew God’s presence was there. We don’t have a pillar today, we have God’s Word, we have God’s Spirit which is even a greater gift, but the point is that we have God and Christ to look after us day and night, as Israel had God and Christ looking after them day and night. This is why I think it’s a disservice to God and Christ to say, “that They weren’t both there with Ancient Israel because They are both there for us today”. The Bible is consistent—They were there for Ancient Israel, They are there for us today. We have holy angels that look after us day and night. We are looked after in our wilderness—in the spiritual wilderness that we find ourselves in. Let’s go to Psalm 121:1. This is the Promise God and Christ make to us. Think about this: David is lifting up his eyes to God, and Christ is on His right hand.

***Psalm 121:1*** *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (KJV)*

*2) My help cometh from the LORD (Jehovah), which made heaven and earth.*

*3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

*4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

*5) The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

*6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

*7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: [assuming we look to him] He shall preserve thy soul.*

*8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (KJV)*

The thing we need to realize is we live in Egypt, we live in this wilderness but God and Christ are with us all the time, Their angles are with us all the time. When they have our front and our back, as they did Israel, what more could we ask, what more do we want? Let’s conclude:

After leading His people through the wilderness, guess what God did? He brought them into a Promised Land. He led Ancient Israel through a physical wilderness into a land

flowing with milk and honey—beautiful land. Let's go to Exodus 3:7 as a final scripture and see this. God Promises at the very beginning of the exodus of what He's going to do, and He brought it to pass.

***Exodus 3:7*** *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (KJV)*

Does this sound like a God that is off in the distance and doing other things and doesn't really care about His children, or delegates all of this? He's saying, no, *I've seen it, I hear their cry, I know what their going through*—same is true for us.

***8) And I am come down*** [God personally] *to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; ... (KJV)*

Look at the blessings, look what He did miracle after miracle and after miracle—God performed that. He's going to do the same for us. We won't turn there but remember Luke 12:32—it's a memory scripture really. It says, "fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" [KJV]. It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom, so we don't have to be afraid. Let's remember "the way of the wilderness". Israel spent forty years there. Most of us have spent longer than forty years in this wilderness—many more years than we thought we would. We thought Christ would have come by now. The good news is that God delivered Ancient Israel out of Egypt and He took them to a beautiful land, and similarly, He is going to deliver us and take us to His Kingdom, and we will be His sons and daughters for eternity. What these days show is God's love for us—everyone of us. Look what He did for Ancient Israel and remember that and count on Him doing the same for us.