

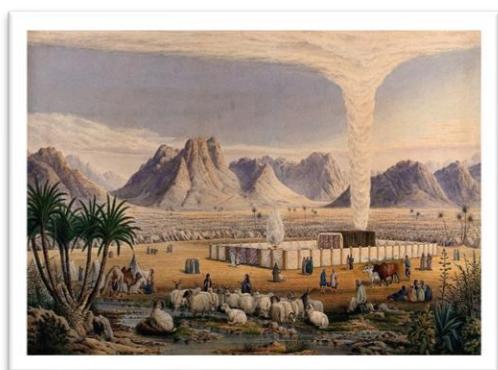
Shaped by Desert

(Part 2 - From Wilderness to Promised Land)

In our inaugural message of this series, we established that the wilderness, contrary to its apparent scarcity, paradoxically embodies God's abundance. Recall our discovery? The words we utter in the wilderness mold our perceptions and, consequently, our reality. Today, we delve deeper into how God employs these desert seasons to sculpt our character.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 reveals God's purpose in Israel's wilderness journey: '**Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**'

All Israelites were guided by the pillar of clouds and fire toward the Promised Land. Similarly, all believers are led by God, who resides within them, toward the Promised Land. As I mentioned earlier, the Promised Land is not a depiction of heaven. Instead, it represents a lifestyle of living in the reality of God's power and love here and now. It signifies what we can accomplish through the empowering grace of God on earth. The Promised Land illustrates our inheritance from the Lord on earth, which is far greater than anything we could ever pray for or imagine.



During the Israelites' journey, the Lord himself was manifested in the middle of encampment. They were about 1.5 million people that left Egypt to go into the promised land.

They are encamped in perfect order. But they are always encamped around the tabernacle. And over this tabernacle is the actual manifested presence of God, a fire at night, and a cloud by day. Everyone can see it continuously 24-7 manifestation of the presence of God. However, nobody could see God's face. It could mean deep mystery and unapproachability. But clearly visible in an invisible way.

God yearns to be with humans. Adam was in the paradise, enjoying the cool evening air, when God walked with him. Jesus came to us as a human being, taking on human flesh. The Holy Spirit makes our bodies into His temple. God longs to be with us because we were created to be loved and to enjoy Him. Jesus said in John 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." These are powerful invitations! The way to reach this place is to abide in Christ. This means living in a vivid, personal relationship with Jesus, like a friend in your heart. If you are a Christian, you should strive for this. If you live unconsciously of the one who has given Himself so completely to you, the anchor of your soul, what could it mean? Imagine!

Their wilderness journey was the process that God takes out Egypt from the heart of Israelites. It is said very well that "It is easy to get Israel out of Egypt but is harder to get Egypt out of Israel." They had this bent in them to turn towards idolatry.

It is interesting that God didn't tell Moses ahead of time about the forty-year period of the wilderness. God told him, I will take you out, and I will lead you in. God didn't explain the in-between time. God simply leads you to an in-between place and keeps you there until Christ's life and nature emerges from within you, and until God can entrust us God's inheritance in the promised land. The inheritance in the promised land is not mine. As the word *inheritance* says, it is from God.

If you surrender to God fully, then God entrusts the power, the fame, the money fully into you in the promised land. Even with all the power and resources from God, they never become your idols; they become only tools for love and service.



Life in the Promised Land is the life of fulfillment. The fulfillment of life, which gives you far greater joy than being a billionaire. For that purpose, He reaches His loving hands into your inner nature and squeezes, molds, forms, and shapes you into a replica of Christ. Testing and humiliation in the wilderness is not where God leaves us. The wilderness is God's workshop where God creates us as an art piece. He humbles us, tests our hearts, and teaches us to depend on Him rather than human approval or affirmation.

When the test is over, we will find that God was there, and that he was so kind to us, really kind. What wilderness do you have right now? Loneliness? Financial pressure? Relationship? Addiction? Depression? Sickness? You do not know where you go, which is the nature of wilderness life. All the faithful people in the Bible had to go through wilderness time. And they passed the wilderness time! Moses in the Median wilderness for 40 years, Joseph for 13 years as a slave and prisoner, the king David 14 years in the Paran wilderness avoiding the insane king Saul.

The closer you get to your promised land, the tougher the training becomes. It may seem like you are going from one wilderness to another with no oasis in between. Spiritual warfare grows more and more intense when you come closer to the promised land.

It is like birthing process of a baby. When the baby is close to the birth, the labor pain gets more and more intense, and the interval becomes narrower and narrower. You have to lock your eyes upon God, surrendering everything to God. And at the point when you think, "If I die, I will die," then victory is birthed. And you will find that victory is yours.

Let's check just one, David's wilderness. His wilderness in the desert of Judah was pretty rough for 14 years long time. He was already anointed by the prophets Samuel. David probably might have been thinking, "I don't look like a king, and I don't feel like a king. What kind of kingdom is this?" He was chased by a demonized leader. **When he could only cry out to heaven and learn firsthand the lessons of spiritual warfare, and the joy of being with God birthed. The more you are with God, the more longings you have in your heart. Your souls are purified.**

When he faced the intensity of the wilderness warfare, he said in **Ps 63:1, "O God of my life, I am lovesick for you in this weary land. I thirst with the deepest longings to love you more with cravings in my heart that can't be described. Such yearning grips my soul for you, my God."** David persevered in the wilderness. This shaped his character. You can see this pictured in what Paul the apostle taught in **Romans 5:3-4. Paul explains that believers can find joy in suffering because trials build perseverance, which develops character, and character strengthens a confident hope in God, leading to an unbreakable assurance of salvation, even amidst hardship.**

If you are in the wilderness time, keep a journal. You are going to learn so many fantastic truths about God in the coming days. God is providing everything you need for your true identity like Jesus. His care for you includes meeting every need, even in the wilderness. Yes, keep a journal. It may become your own book about miracles. And find a faithful support group who are not judgmental and who can sincerely pray for you. And reserve the time being with God as much as possible.

You will experience God's goodness! Amazing goodness! He is the one who created all goodness, delight, and pleasures in the world. God wants to give you delight in your lives. It is the reason why God leads us into desert life. God wants to make you fulfill God's design in you and God's purpose for your being. God wants you to use the gifting in you in a responsible way, in a way that glorifies God and strengthens you.

That is really beyond anything that any of us could ask for. To fulfill your life's calling and purpose would be a much greater blessing than anything in the world. Because it brings personal satisfaction that you can't get through what you would buy. God wants you to be in that exciting promised land in your life. You will shout, "I am alive for this reason, and I just accomplished it."

During your journey, God will guide you step by step. Rely on God in everything! Radically trust Jesus in you, whatever situation you are in, whatever you feel! He is living in you! God will go before you; God will prepare something beautiful for you. Jesus will give you patience and peace. Jesus will rescue you thousands of times. God will lead your steps even though sometimes you do not know where you are going, and protect you from all that may come against you. Jesus will shelter you, cover you, protect you from all our own folly and mistakes. Take joy in your father's love.