

**Unfolding Unveiling:
Studies of Christ Revealed in the Types of Joshua, David, and Solomon**

Chapter One: The Wilderness Journey

Israel's journey through the wilderness provides us with great insight into the plan of our Father as well as the intentions of our own hearts and the workings of the carnal mind. Far from being only a physical journey, God's plans for Israel ["And He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the Land..." (Deut. 6:23)], set in stark contrast against Israel's failures that kept them wandering in the wilderness for forty long years, reveal to us that another journey was taking place. It is the journey of leaving the natural realm as our home and coming to embrace the spiritual realm as our new abode.

The Difference between New Birth and Maturity

Of course, this "journey" is not a measure of our true state before God. Just as Israel became God's nation at the first Passover and were then baptized in the Red Sea, so we New Testament believers are instantly placed in God's family the minute we are born again. At that moment, all that the Cross accomplished is ours. However, we are not born as grown sons of God, for they are matured by the revealing of Christ and the manifesting of His life. We enter the kingdom as babes in Christ with no knowledge of our Father and His ways other than what He had just done for us. Though we are made Spirit-creatures and partakers of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection at the moment of new birth, we remain ignorant of these things until the Spirit of truth reveals them.

The same was true of Israel. They knew that they were delivered by the death of a Lamb and by baptism into that death as depicted by their passage through the Red Sea. But the remainder of their knowledge had to do with the only realm they had ever known – Egypt. The only way to acquire knowledge in Egypt, which represents the natural realm, is through the evaluation of our surroundings by the five senses. This knowledge can then be used to draw conclusions, make judgments, or form opinions. Little does the new believer know how different the economy of God is, where knowledge is revealed by the Holy Spirit, and laying hold of that knowledge is by faith.

Before we are born again, we are flesh (cf. Jn. 3:5-6). After we are born again, we are spirit, but our minds still operate after the flesh (cf. Rom. 12:2). We as believers need our minds changed from a mind which is after the flesh to a mind which is after the Spirit. Israel's wilderness journey was not one of moving from less spiritual to more spiritual. Israel in the wilderness represents a needed journey for believers everywhere for whom all of God's promises are "yea and amen" in Christ who still possess a carnal mind that keeps them in a carnal existence. These believers must move from such a state to knowing this place that Jesus has already prepared for us, therefore leaving the old fleshly existence for our new heavenly and eternal one.

We will now explore Israel's shortcomings before God while in the wilderness and why it was that God did not allow Israel to enter the Land. We will study eight incidents that are

recorded in the books of Exodus and Numbers, where conflict arises between Israel and the Lord. Each situation contributes to the overall picture of what the wilderness is exactly and what it means for a believer to have what can be called a “wilderness mentality”.

The Red Sea

Israel did not even have a chance to cross the Red Sea before God provided them their first “test”. Exodus chapter 14 is the story of Pharaoh’s pursuit and God’s deliverance. Israel was not used to a lifestyle of faith, for they had just been born again into a relationship with the Lord that they had never experienced before. Here they were, camped by the shore of the Red Sea with Pharaoh bearing down on the infant nation. Israel’s first reaction was not to trust God. Exodus 14:10-12 says, “And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were in great fear; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”

There was no visible means of escape from Pharaoh and his men, so Israel grew afraid and began to accuse God of neglect. Their fear, accusations, and unbelief were manifestations of their natural view. They did not know the Lord and His ways. They did not understand that in God’s economy, when He speaks, things come into existence. If He intended to deliver His people, then He would do so, regardless of the circumstances.

They had yet to learn the ways of the Lord, and God was gracious to them. He delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh through the Red Sea without them having to put forth any energy. Such a mighty deliverance revealed God’s greatness on behalf of His people. His heart towards them was that they should be free. The miraculous display must have been intended to settle the hearts of His people so that they might learn to trust the Lord, which is a primary element in coming into God’s purpose for His people. The Lord wanted His people to know of His desire for them to come into all that He had promised Abraham.

The Bitter Water

God had but only begun their lessons, and it was three days later that they had been without water when they came to a pool of bitter water (cf. Ex. 15:22-27). They began to murmur against Moses, not trusting that God would provide. Again, the Lord was good to His people. He showed Moses a tree which, when thrown into the water, made it good to drink. Still the Lord said nothing to Israel about their critical attitude and lack of faith. But to show them His goodness, He led them to an oasis that had twelve wells of good water. Not only could the Lord fill Israel’s lack; He could lead them to a place where there was none.

Israel's problem was that they were evaluating their circumstances in light of fleshly resources instead of trusting God to be their source. Such a carnal viewpoint leads God's people to be afraid, to murmur, and to believe wrongly concerning the Lord's intentions. They had yet to learn that to view the spiritual realm from a natural point of view only leads to wrong ways of thinking and misunderstanding. And yet the Lord meekly said nothing but instead served His people and humbly blessed them above and beyond their needs. His intention was to show Himself to His people that they might begin to know Him. If they knew Him, they would trust Him and begin to draw from Him as their source instead of looking for a happy existence in their circumstances.

No Food

Again the Lord allowed lack in their provision, this time in their food supply (cf. Ex. 16:1-15). Do you begin to see a pattern emerging? Is it possible that the Lord was trying to get their attention by drawing a contrast between His way and theirs, that He might teach them of Himself? Their reactions to their circumstances were to murmur against their leaders and to voice their desire to have remained in Egypt.

To desire to have remained in Egypt! What could possibly have provoked God's own people who were bought with the blood of the Lamb to wish they were back in bondage again? It grows clear that the problem is not their circumstances but their heart condition. When Israel's circumstances looked bleak, they would immediately turn on the Lord. When their circumstances did not suit them, their first act was to accuse God and His leaders. There is something terribly wrong with this. God's people should be the first to trust Him, the first to know that He cares for them.

The contrast was sharply drawn again when the Lord provided quail that evening, and instituted manna as their food for the rest of the journey, that they would know that He was the Lord their God. Six days out of seven, the reminder of God's Lordship over His people and His care for them lay around them on the ground, the miraculous provision that sustained a nation of people for forty years. A new element was added to how God responded to Israel's lack of faith this time – that of instruction (cf. Ex. 16:4, 12). He desired that they learn to seek their spiritual, invisible God instead of natural, fleshly provision.

Striving with the Lord

And so the lesson continued. In Exodus 17:1-7, Israel was again in need of water, and their attitude changed, but definitely not for the better. They did not just murmur or wish for happier circumstances. Verse two says that Israel strove with Moses. The lexicon defines this word, "to agitate the mind, to hold a controversy, to defend". This situation was a turning point for the worse in Israel's journey. It was here that they yielded to a heart condition so completely that they would become entrenched in it. They were determined to argue their side to the end. They demanded assurance for their senses that God was with them, and they would not allow God to relate to them any other way. This is a significant point because it looks as if they had made their decision and were not

turning back. It is from this point forward that their circumstance-bound mentality so motivated them that it would ultimately prevent an entire generation from entering the Land.

From this time forward, we will also begin to see a change in how the Lord responds to Israel, as well. Up to this time, there had been no correction or chastisement from Him, but the striving of Israel did prompt a negative action on the part of Moses, who named the location Massah and Meribah, in remembrance of the seriousness of Israel's state. Before this time, Israel's unbelief was regarded by God as the immaturity of a newborn son. No longer would these issues be isolated failures. In making a stand against the Lord, Israel had chosen unbelief and accusation toward God as a way of life. Such a choice is a serious one indeed, for it is impossible to enter the Land with such a heart condition. To implement a division between our hearts and the Lord is to sign our own death warrant, for such a separation from our Source can only mean death for us.

No Physical Presence

In Exodus 32:1-35, Israel became confused when they did not understand why their leader was not physically present with them. They quickly slipped into idol worship. Moses was in the mountain for forty days, and it took less time than that for Israel to decide that Moses and the Lord were not with them anymore. It certainly did not take much to convince them, did it? The consequences of Israel's divisive attitude at Massah and Meribah were beginning to manifest. If we insist upon accusing the Lord of being against us, then it will not take long to act as though this is the case when He chooses to remove His manifest presence for a time. But if we close down to the Lord and refuse to walk in His ways, then idolatry is never far away. If we will not worship the Lord, then we will worship something else. Three thousand Israelites died that day, and the Lord's presence was moved outside the camp. This was the first time that Israel experienced God's displeasure toward them, and the severity of it should have been a warning to them of their worsening condition, but they could not see it.

If we need the Lord's manifest presence to keep us from falling into idolatry, if idolatry is only one step removed from the Lord withdrawing His presence from us, what does that say about us as His people? How fickle we can be! It seems as though something ought to have been accomplished in Israel at this point. But when the Lord's presence left them, they looked no different than their Egyptian oppressors. If resisting the Lord results in such swift degradation, then let us be equally swift to learn the Lord's heart as He reveals it and then learn to trust it. Only as we develop such a relationship with the Lord will the journey through the wilderness accomplish the change in us that the Lord intends.

No Toleration

Numbers 11:1-3 records an incident of complaining, the reason for which is not mentioned. Apparently the author felt the reasons for their complaining to be beside the point. The Lord did not even attempt to reach their hearts as he had in the earlier stages of the journey; He simply consumed the complainers with fire. Their self-centered,

unbelieving, carnal mindset was too entrenched in their thinking for the Lord to be anything other than a consuming fire to them.

Lusting for Flesh

Those who live in a carnal mindset long enough will begin lusting. If we do not allow spiritual reality to govern, then the flesh will. In Numbers 11:4-35, Israel was tired of manna; it was not the kind of food they wanted. Because they were discontent with what they had, they longed for Egypt, where fleshly sustenance was more palatable than what the Lord had provided. Because God would not provide for their lusts, they wept for self-pity and meditated on the country from which they had departed. It was not as if the Lord had not provided – He had given them manna! Verse 20 says that Israel despised the Lord who was among them. His provision was not good enough because it did not gratify their fleshly lusts. They hated spiritual provision and longed for the life that they had before the Lord delivered them.

What was the Lord's response? He gave them quail, made them eat it for a month, and struck dead those who had lusted. They had failed to learn the one very important lesson that they were to learn from the manna, which is that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live," (Deut. 8:3). He had tried to teach them to live by the spiritual instead of the natural. Their insistence for soulish gratification shows they were very far from the Lord, indeed.

The struggle taking place within the Israelites is for their hearts. Which will claim their affection: the living God or earthly gratification? It is obvious to us which of the two found a place in their hearts, but I wonder if it was as evident to them at the time. I wonder how evident it is to us when we are in the same situation.

No Heavenly View

Our search culminates with the return of the spies from Canaan back to Kadesh-barnea, where Israel was camping (cf. Num. 13:25-26). They were finally about to enter into that spiritual place which God had promised Abraham so long ago. But the Land was not Israel's idea of a nice place to live. It had problems to be overcome, such as giants, walled cities, and warring nations. The children of Israel were nothing if they weren't consistent, and true to form, they could not see the good land for the contrary circumstances. How many thousands of believers, I wonder, have stopped short of entering into the fullness of identity in Christ because the problems posed to their senses overruled their faith towards God. It is a sobering thought.

With this mindset, ten of the spies brought back an evil report of the Land – a report, by the way, which contradicted God's view of the Land. Israel, in turn, questioned God's care for them and accused Him of neglect once more. They undermined Moses' authority and determined to go back to Egypt. Finally, they threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb for their good report of the Land. These are not the actions of a people who are learning to abide in Christ. How they responded to the Lord's greatest blessing – a spiritual abode

from His spiritual people – was a disgrace superseded only by the heart condition that birthed such a response. Israel’s trek through the wilderness had been for nothing. At the end of their journey, they had not changed. They looked exactly like the Egyptians they had left behind years before.

How drastically different were the two viewpoints, the one that sees a far worse place than their bondage in Egypt, and the other that sees and exceeding good Land, a Land that floweth with milk and honey (cf. Num. 14:7-8). To the natural mind, God’s greatest blessing is an offense. But to the spiritual mind, it is exactly what God says it is. And what does God do with His rebellious people? What else can He do, except forbid Israel to enter?

Barrenness

It was God who led them through the wilderness. What was His intention? Let us think of Egypt as the natural realm, from which we are delivered at salvation, just as Israel was. After salvation, then, we are a spiritual people, and it is God’s intent to bring us into a spiritual way of relating. Israel’s trip through the wilderness was designed by God to prepare them for life in God’s realm – the Spirit realm, which is both above time and unable to be experienced by the five senses. This place is typified by Canaan, the Land of Promise.

God’s primary purpose for leading Israel through the wilderness, according to Scripture, was

“...to humble thee, and to test thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or not. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

The most obvious element about the wilderness that makes it so useful to God’s purposes is its barrenness. Unlike Egypt, the wilderness is void of positive experience for our senses. Israel was always in need of something, especially food and water. For the unbeliever, the world, typified by Egypt, has great riches to offer. But the Lord sees Egypt as a barren and dead land which was nothing to offer. If the sinner’s view of the natural realm is Egypt, then God’s view of it is the wilderness. God has placed His life and wealth in His Son and desires that we begin to identify in and draw from this Land.

That Israel might have a contrast between the natural realm which has nothing to offer a born-again believer, God led them through a stage of barrenness to their senses. And when they did need their God to care for them, He did not simply provide for their physical needs; each time provision was given, the Lord revealed Himself that they might begin to know Him after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Think back over God’s various provisions for Israel: the parting of the Red Sea a type of deliverance from bondage to the natural realm in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the bitter waters made sweet by the tree – the Cross; the daily provision of manna as a type of the bread which came

down from heaven (cf. Jn. 6:30-59). If Israel had just properly evaluated their situation, they would have recognized that God was providing Himself! He desired to meet their needs, but He also desired that they recognize their needs to be spiritual now rather than fleshly. Sadly, it took forty years of wandering in their uncomfortable circumstances and the death of an entire generation for Israel to recognize this fact.

It was this spiritual understanding that was necessary for entering the Land. To do this, the Lord led them to a place of lack that brought dissatisfaction to their souls so that they might recognize their tendency to draw from the natural realm instead of the spiritual. That acknowledged, they would then be able to turn from their old way of life that had served them so well in Egypt and learn the elements of abiding in Christ that would make it possible for them to take the Land and live there.

The wilderness was never meant to be the final destination for believers. In the mind of God, it is only a transitional stage between the place from which we came out and the place into which God intends to bring us. We are not supposed to get comfortable there. Israel dwelt in tents for the duration of their wilderness wandering. It was not until they had begun to possess the Land that they had houses to dwell in. The tents and houses are our clue as to where Israel was living. While in Egypt, they dwelt in the natural realm, and consequently, their houses were there. When they entered into Christ and began to possess Him, they began to live there, and therefore lived in houses there. But while in the wilderness, they only had tents because they were constantly on the move. It was not their home. It was a place for revealing, testing, and training, not a place for living!

A Wilderness Mentality

It is painfully clear even to the casual reader that Israel did not choose to turn from the natural realm to live in the Spirit realm. Their insistence at living in the natural is what kept them out of the Land. And so we must ask, what is it that would cause God's people to disobey the Lord (cf. Num. 14:9) to such a serious degree, and to despise His Land (cf. Num. 14:31), which was one of the elements of God's covenant to Abraham? To answer this most important question, we will examine the various elements of the wilderness mentality.

The first element of a wilderness mentality is a natural viewpoint. It is to be expected of a new believer, for all he has known up to this point of salvation is the natural reality. It is as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds that we both receive our information from a different source – the Spirit realm – and begin to see and comprehend from a different viewpoint. It is in the wilderness where this natural viewpoint begins to cause us problems. At certain times it will even conflict with our Lord because He allows lack in order to wean us from finding our security in natural things. This is very difficult for the carnal mind to comprehend, much less embrace, for it requires us to throw away all that we have known of our security and identity that we might learn to find these things in an invisible Source.

In Egypt, Israel's security rested in knowing how to take stock of their surroundings and then after a time of evaluation setting about to take care of themselves. This kind of survival served them well in Egypt because the Egyptians were not going to care for them. The world system requires us to look out for ourselves first, but God's economy is different. For those who belong to Him, He has provided everything already in His Son. To judge after the natural surroundings does not work in this new economy. We have all things in Christ whether our circumstances say it at any given moment or not.

To change from a natural way of living to a spiritual way of living can be scary, difficult, and even painful at times, but this "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," (cf. II Cor. 4:17-18). If, however, we choose to harden our hearts to the Lord's leading, we will move from childish ignorance into an evil heart condition. It will rule our viewpoint and the principles by which we live to such a degree that we will be at odds with the Lord and His ways.

Fear

The second element of a wilderness mentality, which is an outgrowth of choosing to keep a natural viewpoint, is fear. We see fear arise in Israel for the first time by the side of the Red Sea as Pharaoh and his armies bore down upon them (cf. Ex. 14:10-12). Fear was an issue for Israel from this very first incident right up to Kadesh-barnea, where they refused to take the Land for fear of their lives and the lives of their children (cf. Num. 13:26-14:11). That this fear was a governing force in the heart of Israel is evidenced by the fact that it was what caused them to react in unbelief in so many of their testings. For them, fear was not a problem every once in a while, it was a way of life. It was from a basis of fear that they viewed both their God and the challenges that He put in front of them.

At no time during that first year in the wilderness did they replace their fear and unbelief with faith in God's viewpoints, attitudes, and actions. Fear will keep our eyes scanning our circumstances for an outward sign of reassurance, which, if we are in the wilderness, will cause us to misinterpret God's heart and intentions toward us. It will keep us bound to living in the natural realm only, and that will not be too pleasant if God has us in the wilderness to contrast the dryness of the sense realm with the richness of His Son. And if we draw our truth from the place that is passed away (cf. II Cor. 5:17), then our fear will continue to clash with God's mind and keep us from entering into identification with Christ in the heavenlies. This is exactly what happened to Israel. And this fear mentality is exactly the opposite of the mindset that we need in order to take the Land (cf. Josh. 1:9).

Accusing God

Living by fear provides the foundation for the next element of a wilderness mentality, which is a wrong view of God, which, when the circumstances provide sufficient "evidence" for it, accuses God of neglecting and not caring for them. We see this

viewpoint manifested in words such as, “Hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Because a wilderness mentality bases its viewpoint on evidence in the natural realm, it will equate the present “bad” circumstances with God not caring about them. God is judged by the natural realm and is therefore misjudged, since only the spiritual man can judge spiritual things (cf. I Cor. 2:13-15). Although God’s plans for Israel were based on His covenant with Abraham and His love for Israel, they could not perceive it because they were operating in the natural realm only.

An Evil Heart of Unbelief

As was mentioned earlier, if the believer does not choose to turn to the Lord’s point of view, then his heart will harden into resisting all things spiritual and desire only things natural, including his relationship with God. And so the wilderness mentality quickly moves from a wrong viewpoint to a heart condition. It is a mentality that argues with God, as seen in Exodus 17:1-7. It allows uncomfortable circumstances to agitate the mind and then justifies its wrong attitude with excuses such as, “I am right in both my stance and my attitude, and my present set of circumstances is unfair.”

Before the incident in Exodus 17, we can pass off Israel’s lack of faith as immaturity. But the striving that took place at Massah and Meribah reveals that somewhere along the way, Israel had become entrenched in their mindset. In their hearts, they refused to change their position before the Lord. They insisted that God meet the terms of their demands in the way that they wanted them met. They did not want to move into a spiritual relationship with the Lord. They wanted to remain in their carnal lifestyle, like a donkey that digs in with its hind legs and refuses to budge.

In so doing, the heart makes the issue out to be the lack experienced by the senses instead of the plenty in the Land, the wilderness being where the senses function and the Land being Christ, in whom we are to abide. Believers with such a heart condition expect, even demand, blessing in the natural realm at all times. They look for it and appeal to God for it. To them, lack in their circumstances is proof of God’s neglect. And because God does not desire to feed the flesh of His Spirit-born children, these pine for the “good stuff” in Egypt: leeks, garlic, meat, and melons.

When the Lord does not give this believer what he wants right away, he falls into self-pity and lusting for natural satisfaction. His soul is full of himself and his predicament and constant insistence that the Lord relate to him by natural means.

It is interesting to note that each time Israel complained about a need, or even a lust, God met it. The Lord will give us what we cry out for in the wilderness, but He will not allow us to think that living selfishly is acceptable (cf. Ex. 17:1-7 & Num. ch. 11). And when we get that which we long for, our souls will not be satisfied for long. In between the times where we get what we want, are long dry periods of nothing worth mentioning. And why is that? Because Israel was not expressing anything of an eternal nature or doing anything that could be of instruction to us. And this is what wilderness wandering does to believers. It keeps them ignorant of God’s reality and unconformed to the image

of Christ so that we are ineffective and wandering without purpose. No fruit is borne in the wilderness; it is a barren land, indeed.

To despise the Land (cf. Num. 14:31) is to despise Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and our identification with Him in these three aspects. And to desire Egypt is to desire an existence dominated by the natural realm. The wilderness mentality keeps us enslaved to that realm. The Lord wanted Israel to seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God, to set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth (cf. Col. 3:1,2). While providing for their natural needs, He was trying to provoke them to seek Him for their spiritual reality. Are you hungry? Christ is the bread of life (cf. Jn. 6:32-58). Are you thirsty? He is a river of life (cf. Rev. 22:1). Are you lonely? He has made you bone of His bone (cf. Eph. 5:30), so that He can never leave or forsake you (cf. Heb. 13:5). Are you in bondage? He is our salvation (cf. Mt. 1:21). All that we could ever need is found in Christ, but Israel would not seek there.

The wilderness mentality is found a spiritual creature (cf. Jn. 3:6) who is trying to make his home in the realm of the senses. What a miserable life it is! He cannot go back to Egypt for he was brought out by death; he will not go forward for he has refused to leave the natural realm. And so he has relegated himself to live in the wilderness, the place which was not designed – and was never supposed to be – his home.

Perhaps there is need of a disclaimer just now. The reader should not think that Israel's need for food and drink is unnecessary in God's eyes. This is not the case. Israel's problem was not that they asked for their needs to be met. It was their attitude toward God, how they justified their desire for the things left behind in Egypt that kept them in the natural realm. Our Father is happy to provide for our natural needs. But He also desires that we learn to relate to Him in Spirit and draw our satisfaction from Him, and not the meeting of our natural needs.

Following the Cloud

It is interesting to note that while Israel was consistently failing every test that God put in front of them, they were following the cloud without a single deviation from the path in which it led them. The cloud being a type of the Holy Spirit, whose job it is to lead us into all truth, we can conclude from Israel's example that it is possible to maintain a high level of accuracy in following the Holy Spirit's guidance in our lives while completely missing the Lord's heart and His intentions toward us. This is a sobering thought. We cannot justify our carnality in huge areas of our lives with the satisfaction of knowing how to follow the Spirit's lead. Nor was following the Spirit of highest importance to the Lord, for Israel's "following record", which testifies of no failure in this respect, did not give them the ability to enter the Land. The lesson for us here is that there is something more important in the heart of God than that we know how to follow the Spirit on the earth, and that is that we stop living on the earth altogether and begin to abide in the Spirit – in Christ.

Being led by the Holy Spirit in our circumstances is not the same as being governed by the Spirit-realm. The one is the Holy Spirit having to come down and deal with us in our own circumstances because we are either incapable of, or unwilling to, live elsewhere. The other is living in a constant state of identification with Christ. Though all of us need guidance from the Holy Spirit to some degree, this should not be our primary way of relating to the Lord.

The Wilderness and the Land Contrasted

The difference between the wilderness and the Land is the difference between Christ being revealed to us and us entering into Him who is revealed. As we saw earlier, the Lord was revealed to Israel many times while they were in the wilderness, but Israel did not enter into Christ by faith until the book of Joshua. Hebrews 4:2 says of Israel, while they were in the wilderness, “but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” It is not enough to have the Lord revealed; we must embrace the word by faith! It is then that we will begin to walk in spiritual reality.

The word is profitable and effective when we are IN the Land. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word.” The Word is found in a place. It is not until verse 14 that the Word was made flesh. In the wilderness, we may see the Word revealed, or experience the manifestation of the Word. Wilderness wanderers will recognize and acknowledge the Word and partake of it to a certain degree. But when we enter IN to Him who is revealed, we become One with Him, and the Word has a transforming effect on the recipients. On a corporate level, believers manifest the man of war that they are in Christ (cf. Ex. 15:3)

Living in and receiving the Word in such a manner will cause us to disinherit the more base elements that inhabit the Land that is ours. In this place, instead of the circumstances and the base elements conquering us as was the case in the wilderness, we conquer them!

The only difference between living in the Land and living in the wilderness, then, is how we receive the revealing of Christ. Christ was revealed in the wilderness, and Israel saw Him in the tree that was thrown into the water, in the manna, and in the water from the rock. But Israel did not enter IN, and so what – or Who – was revealed did not affect their daily walk, and they remained in the wilderness. They stayed separate from God. To Israel, He was somewhere “up there”, and His job was to make sure that their problems were taken care of. There were two mindsets in the wilderness: God’s mind to bring Israel into a spiritual realm in their understanding, and Israel’s mind to have their circumstances work out to their benefit. There were two motivations: God’s motivation towards Israel, and Israel’s motivation towards themselves.

To be separate from the Lord in source and realm is the wilderness, where there is no purpose to work towards and no effectiveness of the Word either in us or through us. When we enter into revealed spiritual reality – where we are one with Christ and are raised up in Him – we work towards one purpose: that He might be revealed in all, and that we all might be conformed to His image. What a contrast between the Land and the wilderness!

The Word reveals the Son. When we take the Word and apply it to self-centered purposes, even if those purposes are rightful needs, we become separate from the Lord in mind, heart condition, and motivation, though we are one with Christ in reality. When we allow the Word to reveal Christ as the center instead of using it to keep ourselves in the center, we will find ourselves translated from the natural realm where self is the center to the Spirit realm where Christ is the center.

IN the Beginning

Israel's journey began with Passover, at which time they were commanded to be IN the house, lest their firstborn die. They obeyed the command of the Lord that night, but when they left Egypt they did not continue to keep the command. When they entered the wilderness, they did not stay IN, in their understanding but began to make judgments based on themselves and their circumstances.

At Passover, separation – not being IN – meant certain death. And it meant death in the wilderness as well. They were dead to God's heart and mind. They were alive to their own problems. IN the Land, when they were walking in the reality of "IN", they were alive to God and able to accomplish His purpose. When we are separate from Christ in our hearts, we are dead to God's mind and will not pursue His eternal plan, which is conformity to the image of His Son. But when we are IN, His mind is taken as ours, His life is taken as ours, and it becomes all-consuming.

To have begun in the beginning means that we are in Christ. This is what being a believer is. This Land represents the comprehending and entering in by faith based on Spirit-revealed knowledge of Christ. God leads His people through the wilderness to "test thee, to know what is in thine heart" (cf. Deut. 8:2). What we realize in the wilderness is that we in our hearts stay separate from God. The wilderness is where we see our desire for the natural realm placed in contrast to God's desire that we enter the Land – the place of living in Spirit-revealed reality. When we see the tendencies of our own heart, we can then turn from ourselves to the Lord by virtue of the finished work of the Cross and leave the wilderness.

It was the Lord's intention to bring Israel into the Land as speedily as possible. It is not our Father's intention to keep us ignorant of His mind, His nature, His Son, and His plans. Nor does He dole out "spiritual knowledge" in stages by which we progressively become more and more spiritual. What kept Israel in their frustrated wanderings for so long was their own heart condition. They longed for a happy fleshly existence and a god (for it will never be God who does so) who would provide that for them. Such an attitude keeps us bound to the realm that has already passed away. He who lives this way is no candidate for entering the realm of heavenly existence that is ours in Christ.

A Willing Heart

All believers are able to enter into Christ and possess Him because we are dead and risen with Him (cf. Col. 3:1-3), but will we? An entire generation of a whole nation dropped

dead in the wilderness, not because they broke the Law (the Law was to be lived in the Land), not because of a lack of commitment, because they weren't strong enough, or because they did not pray or read their Bibles enough. They died because of unbelief. Not as a one-time slip-up but by habitual lifestyle, they refused to leave the natural realm for their new home in the invisible eternal heavenlies.

This should not put fear into the heart of any believer, for trusting the Lord and His Word is neither a striving nor a works relationship by which we earn God's favor. We are in Christ! We are accepted in the Beloved! We are there now. We can rest in God's reality, even if we have a long way to go in understanding it. Besides, that is the purpose of the book of Joshua, as we shall see in a later chapter. Traveling successfully from the Red Sea to the Jordan is not a matter of ability – our Lord has taken care of that already – but of a willing heart.