

**God Will Lead You Through:  
The Wilderness Way**

Exodus 13:17-22

**Big Idea – God will always lead His children on the best way.**

**Exodus 13:17 - 22**

17 When the king sent the people out of Egypt, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was the shortest way. God said, “If they have to fight, they might change their minds and go back to Egypt.”

18 So God led them through the desert toward the Red Sea. The Israelites were dressed for fighting when they left the land of Egypt.

19 Moses carried the bones of Joseph with him, because before Joseph died, he had made the Israelites promise to do this. He had said, “When God saves you, remember to carry my bones with you out of Egypt.”

20 The Israelites left Succoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the desert.

21 The LORD showed them the way; during the day he went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud, and during the night he was in a pillar of fire to give them light. In this way they could travel during the day or night.

22 The pillar of cloud was always with them during the day, and the pillar of fire was always with them at night.

The big question is, how can the Exodus be helpful for us today? The answer is in Paul’s letter to believers at Corinth where he writes about the children of Israel and their time in the wilderness.

1 Corinthians 10:6 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did,

1 Corinthians 10:11 These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

British novelist Charles Kingsley rightly said, "There are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; and the true, where a man is free to do what he ought." Throughout their history, the nation of Israel struggled with both of these freedoms, just as people struggle with them today.

It's a mark of maturity when we learn that freedom is a tool to build with, not a toy to play with, and that freedom involves accepting responsibility. Israel is going to learn about their responsibilities in the wilderness.

God will always lead His people through the way of the wilderness – notice some interesting facts as we start this new series:

### **Which route did God choose to lead His people out of Egypt?**

#### **Not the closest way**

The direct route was along the coast of the Mediterranean, through the land of the Philistines. That is the way Jacob “went down” to Egypt, and by which the funeral procession “went up” (Gen. 50:7-14), when Joseph buried his father in the cave of Machpelah, about a 10 day journey. But God was aware of their potential to be afraid if they had to go to war right away.

Israel's immediate destination was Mount Sinai, but why take several million people the long way instead of using the shorter and easier route? The answer is: because there were Egyptian military posts along the shorter route, and the soldiers stationed there would have challenged the

Jews. Furthermore, crossing the Philistine borders would have invited their army to attack, and the last thing Israel needed was a war with the neighbors. God knew what He was doing when He chose the longer way.

If you permit the Lord to direct your steps ([Prov. 3:5-6](#)), expect to be led occasionally on paths that may seem unnecessarily long and circuitous.

Psa. 103:13,14 “Like a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust.”

God knows our limitations, when we are ready for the next trial, and what size we can handle.

1 Cor. 10:13 “...but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested above what you are able ...”

### **The wilderness way through the Red Sea**

God chose the way for them that He knew would be best, and it was through the wilderness.

Nothing takes God by surprise, for in His providence He plans the best way for His people to take. We may not always understand the way He chooses, or even agree with it, but His way is always the right way.

Remember that God knows what He's doing, He isn't in a hurry, and as long as you follow Him, you're safe and in the place of His blessing. He may close some doors and suddenly open others, and we must be alert

Psa. 37:23 “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way...”

Proverbs 16:9 We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.

Proverbs 19:21 There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel--that will stand.

God leads us through His written Word and the Holy Spirit.

Psa. 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path...”  
Now, why would God choose to lead His people through a wilderness?

### **Some things are only acquired or learned in the wilderness.**

Deut. 8:2 “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord God has led thee 40 years in the wilderness, that He might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, if you would keep his commandments or not.”

F.B. Meyer said, “The wilderness finds us out, humbles us, brings us down from the high pinnacle of self-sufficiency and self-glorification. Beaten, baffled, disappointed, dependent for our manna and water on His constant bounty, suffered to hunger, and then fed with Heaven’s own food, athirst, and satisfied from the rocks, fighting but vanquished till the arms of faith and prayer are uplifted, we come to know God, and to know ourselves: to reverence God and reverence ourselves; and to hand over the control and keeping of our souls to a faithful Creator.”

Things we can learn in a wilderness are:

Humility, our own inadequacy

Knowledge of God and reverence for God

Knowledge of our selves and our need for dependence on God

Trusting God’s control and keeping power.

### **Where does the Devil/Evil One come to us?**

The tempter comes to us in the wilderness, as he did to Jesus in Matthew 4., and tries to get us to give in to the lust of the flesh (our physical appetites), the lust of the eyes (our desires for stuff), and the pride of life (our desire for power or position).

How should we answer the devil’s temptations? Like Jesus did, 3 times, with Scripture.

Ephesians 6 teaches us that our weapons of spiritual warfare against Satan are the Word of God and prayer! Need to know the Word to use it as a Sword.

### **Why did Moses take Joseph's bones out of Egypt?**

not relic, or ancestor worship, but to keep a promise that the children of Israel made to Joseph years before.

Gen. 50:25, 26 "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." (word for coffin is "hope chest")

As a reminder of the great faith of Joseph expressed hundreds of years before,

Heb. 11:22 "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Josh. 24:33 shows that they buried Joseph's bones in Shechem.

As a great illustration of Joseph's faith, and God's faithfulness, and a reminder to the people that just as God had been faithful to Joseph and their forefathers, He would be faithful to them.

They began their journey at a city named "Rameses" (12:37) "city of the sun", and traveled to Succoth which means "tents," a reminder of the fact that they were strangers and pilgrims on their journey.

God lead them every step of the way along their journey.

### **How did God lead them?**

By an obvious display of His presence and person with them in the pillar of cloud and fire – vs. 21, 22

Ex. 13:21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. 22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Here you have a tremendous \*type, or symbol, or picture, of God the Holy Spirit. What is a type?

A “type” is a divinely purposed illustration of some truth and occur most frequently in the Pentateuch, although they are found sparingly elsewhere. The antitype, or fulfillment of the type is found generally in the New Testament.”

Listen to what Arthur Pink says “Just as Jehovah-the covenant or promising God, the One who heard the groanings of the children of Israel in Egypt, and raised up a deliverer for them-just as He is a type of God the Father, so the Passover Lamb, without spot and blemish, slain and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts to secure protection and deliverance from the death angel, typifies God the Son; so this Pillar of Cloud – given to Israel for their guidance across the Wilderness speaks to us of God the Holy Spirit. Amazingly full and Divinely perfect are these O.T. types and symbols.

#### **4. How does the pillar of Cloud/Fire typify the Holy Spirit of God?**

First, the slaying of the Passover Lamb, then the giving of the Cloud, just like in the N.T.

First, the death of Christ on the Cross as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, then, the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost.

## **Cloud was God's gracious gift to His people.**

Not a word is said about the people asking for this Guide, but it was given to them as a loving provision of God's mercy. So it is with the Holy Spirit of God in the N.T. Jesus promised His followers,

"...I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter..." Jn. 14:16.

Rom. 5:5 "...the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.

1 Cor. 12:13 "...by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body."

Rom. 8:9 "...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (not saved)."

## **Cloud given to guide Israel on their journey.**

Ex. 13:21 "And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead the way..."

Rom. 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

## **God gives us His Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us day by day.**

Ex. 13:21 "...by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: "

Neh. 9:12 "Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,  
And by night with a pillar of fire, To give them light on the road"

Isa. 11:2 "...The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord

John 16:13" However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth..."

## **The Cloud was given as a protective covering**

Psa. 105:13 “He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night.

God’s people needed protection from the hot desert sun, and God gave it to them through the Cloud. So too, is the Holy Spirit our Protector, for we are told in Eph. 4:30 that it is

“...the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”.

## **God spoke from the Cloud.**

Psa. 99:7”... He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud...” refers to

Ex. 33:9 “And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tent: and Jehovah spoke with Moses...” So today the Holy Spirit speaks through the Word about Jesus Christ –

John 16:33 “ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

## **The Cloud was darkness to the Egyptians.**

Ex. 14:20 “...and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: 20and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness

Here is a fearful, solemn thought: God not only reveals, He conceals.



Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

John 14:17 "...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

**All through the wilderness wanderings the Cloud was never taken away from them.**

Nehemiah 9:19 "You have great mercy, so you did not leave them in the desert. The pillar of cloud guided them by day, and the pillar of fire led them at night, lighting the way they were to go.

20 You gave your good Spirit to teach them... "

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—