



The Wilderness

Transcript

The Long Way

00:00-00:27

Jon: In the story of the exodus, God rescues his people out of slavery to bring them into a new home, a distant garden land full of abundance.

Tim: But God didn't take Israel directly there. Instead, God leads Israel the long way through a harsh, dry wilderness.

Jon: But why? What's the reason for taking them through the desert?

Tim: Yeah, that's a great question. Let's explore the biblical theme of the wilderness.

Life Outside the Garden

00:28-01:29

Tim: So here's something interesting. The story of the Bible begins in a lifeless, empty wilderness. But then, God's life causes a spring of water to flow up out of the dry ground.

Jon: From that fountain, God plants a garden.

Tim: A garden full of God's own life. And then, outside the garden, God forms the human from the dust of the wilderness.

Jon: And God places humanity in the garden.

Tim: Right, so they can be connected to God's life. However, to stay close to God's life, humans need to learn how to succeed in the garden, which we're told means listening to God's voice.

Jon: But there's another voice in the garden.

Tim: Yes, the voice of a deceiver, saying, "God cannot be trusted. In fact, God is holding out on you. You could have life on your own terms."

Jon: And the humans listen to that voice.

Tim: And as a result, they end up out in the wilderness.

Jon: Ah so the wilderness represents the tragedy of being disconnected from God's life.

Wilderness Stories in the Bible

01:30-02:23

Tim: Right. Now, throughout the Bible, different characters end up in the wilderness for different reasons. Sometimes it's a result of their own decisions.

Jon: Like when Moses murders an Egyptian, and then he has to flee into the wilderness.

Tim: But the wilderness can also be the result of other people's bad decisions, like Hagar. She's abused and so escapes into the wilderness. But in both stories, God comes to meet them in the wilderness and provide for their needs.

Jon: God meets Hagar at a well and promises a blessing for her family that will last through generations.

Tim: And God meets Moses in the wilderness and prepares him to lead his people out of slavery.

Jon: Okay, so we're back to our first question. When Moses leads Israel out of slavery, why take them through the wilderness instead of straight to the land of promise?

A Place of Preparation

02:24-03:03

Tim: Well, Israel had not yet learned to trust God with their very lives, and so God led them into the wilderness for a time of preparation.

Jon: Preparation?

Tim: Well, the wilderness is really harsh. But God went alongside them, providing what they needed, just enough for each day.

Jon: Why so little?

Tim: Well, God was teaching them to trust that he would show up for them every day. He's training them to listen to his instruction and stay connected to his life.

Jon: Ah so the key to surviving in the wilderness is the same key to succeed in the garden.

Tim: Yes, the wilderness can be a place to practice being garden people.

A Return to the Wilderness

03:04-03:55

Jon: Okay, but the intensity of the wilderness was too much for Israel. Most of them didn't listen to God. Some even wanted to go back into slavery.

Tim: And they were left behind in the wilderness. So it was the younger generation, those who were raised in and formed by the wilderness, they had become ready to enter into the garden land.

Jon: And when they first entered the land, their trust in God was strong.

Tim: But it didn't last. Soon, the Israelites begin to imagine that the goodness of the land came from their own wisdom and strength, or as a gift from other gods. They forgot the God who provided everything. And this led to idolatry and violent injustice and, ultimately, their exile back into the wilderness.

Jon: So the biblical story is pretty pessimistic. Humans fail in the garden, but we also fail in the wilderness.

Humanity's True Home

03:56-05:31

Tim: But God stays committed to his purpose to bring humanity into the garden. And so God meets us in the wilderness again, but this time, in a new way. Early in the life of Jesus, he spends 40 days fasting in the wilderness. And there, he replays the wanderings of his people.

Jon: He was tempted by the deceiver to stop trusting God and to seize life and power on his own terms.

Tim: But where Israel and all humanity failed, Jesus succeeded by trusting his Father and listening to God's voice alone. And then, Jesus went around announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom and life, giving gifts to people who were in their own kind of wilderness.

Jon: Yeah, he was healing people and feeding them, sometimes in an actual wilderness.

Tim: And he called people to follow him and to listen to his voice and to share his garden gifts with others.

And after his death and resurrection, Jesus went ahead of all of us to open up the way to the future garden land.

Jon: But we're not in the land yet. In a sense, we're like Israel now, wandering through the wilderness, which is often harsh and dangerous.

Tim: But Jesus promises to be with us, not necessarily giving us what we want but what we need. And as he gets us ready to inherit the garden land that God has in store, he invites us to trust and to listen and follow and to practice being garden people in the wilderness.