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## WILDERNESS (PART 1)

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WE'RE GOING TO BEGIN TODAY THE CONTINUATION OF A STORY – AN INCREDIBLE STORY. IT IS THE STORY. THE STORY THAT WE ARE ALL TO LIVE OUT OF BECAUSE WE ALL LIVE OUT OF A STORY – OR STORIES.

<sup>11</sup> In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, <sup>12</sup> and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. <sup>13</sup> They set out for the first time at the command of the LORD by Moses.

<sup>14</sup> The standard of the camp of the people of Judah set out first by their companies, and over their company was Nahshon the son of Amminadab...

<sup>29</sup> And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel." <sup>30</sup> But he said to him, "I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred." <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us." <sup>32</sup> And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you." <sup>33</sup> So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey. And the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them. <sup>34</sup> And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. <sup>35</sup> And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." <sup>36</sup> And when it rested, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

**Numbers 10:11–36 (ESV)**

THE NEWLY FREED AND FORMED NATION OF ISRAEL LEAVES SINAI TRIBE BY TRIBE. OUT IN FRONT LEADS THE ARK – THE THRONE OF YHWH. ABOVE THEM THE CLOUD OF GLORY COVERS THEM GIVING SHADE AND REFUGE. AND YET, IT'S NOT AN EASY STORY. IT'S FROM WILDERNESS TO WILDERNESS. WHY IS GOD LEADING THEM INTO THE WILDERNESS?

THIS ONLY MAKES SENSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LARGER STORY.

THE PENTATEUCH IS ONE BOOK. ONE STORY.

THIS IS THE STORY WE'VE BEEN WALKING THROUGH. THE BIBLICAL STORY IS ROOTED IN CREATION.

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV)

GOD TAKES CHAOS AND MAKES ORDER. HE CREATES ENVIRONMENTS FOR LIFE AND THEN FILL THOSE ENVIRONMENTS. HE CAUSES THAT LIFE TO EXIST AND THEN NURTURES IT TO FLOURISH. THIS IS WHAT GOD DOES. THIS IS THE STORY HE'S TELLING.

AND HE MAKES US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STORY. WE ARE NOT NPC'S. WE'RE HIS IMAGERS. WE'RE CALLED TO CREATE LIFE. WE'RE CALLED TO BRING ORDER TO CHAOS. WE'RE CALLED TO STEWARD AND SHEPHERD GOD'S CREATION WITH HIM.

AND WE'RE CALLED TO DO THIS FREELY. FREEDOM MEANS THAT **WE CAN CHOOSE OUR COURSE BUT WE CAN'T CHOOSE OUR CONSEQUENCES.**

SO THE CREATION STORY GIVES US A FULL BLOWN WORLDVIEW. IT TELLS US:

- WHO WE ARE (ESSENCE)
- WHERE WE ARE (ENVIRONMENT)
- WHAT'S WRONG (EVIL)
- WHERE WE'RE GOING (ESCHATOLOGY)

THE BIBLICAL STORY IS GOD RESTORING CREATION TO HIS ORIGINAL INTENT. (GEN 3:14-15) IT IS A PROCESS THAT BUILDS AND DEVELOPS OVER TIME AND IT FOLLOWS GOD'S CREATION PATTERN: GOD TAKES CHAOS AND MAKES SOMETHING AMAZING!

GENESIS 6 WE SEE THE PATTERN: RECREATION FROM CHAOS (FLOOD) TO LIFE (RAINBOW).

AFTER BABEL GOD BEGINS HIS RESCUE OF ALL CREATION BY FORMING A NEW IMAGER – A NEW FAMILY – A NEW PEOPLE THAT WILL JOIN HIM IN HIS WORK. ABRAM IS CALLED TO FOLLOW GOD AND HE IS LED INTO THE UNKNOWN – INTO THE WILDERNESS. GOD IS GOING TO TAKE HIM AND SHAPE HIM INTO HIS IMAGER AND HE DOES IT IN THE WILDERNESS. HE SHOWS HIM THE LAND THAT HE WILL INHERIT BUT NO MORE.

ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS END UP IN EGYPT – A LAND OF FALSE ORDER. EVIL ORDER. GOD RESCUES THEM THROUGH MOSES BUT NOTICE:

<sup>16</sup> Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, <sup>17</sup> and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." ' <sup>18</sup> And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

Exodus 3:16–18 (ESV)

GOD IS GOING TO TAKE THEM TO THE LAND OF PROMISE BUT FIRST THEY MUST ENTER THE WILDERNESS. מִדְבָּר *MID·BĀR*. THE TERM *MIDBĀR* REFERS TO DESERT REGIONS WHOSE LACK OF WATER MAKES AGRICULTURE AND FARMING SETTLEMENTS IMPOSSIBLE.

LISTEN TO HOW MOSES DESCRIBES THE WILDERNESS THAT GOD LEADS THEM THROUGH:

<sup>15</sup> who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock,

Deuteronomy 8:15 (ESV)

REMEMBER GEN 1:2 - הוּא *TŌHŪ* FORMLESS? LISTEN TO HOW MOSES DESCRIBES GOD'S FINDING AND FORMING OF ABRAHAM INTO ISRAEL IN DEUT 32:

<sup>10</sup> "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Deuteronomy 32:10 (ESV)

WASTE = הוּא *TŌHŪ*! THE WILDERNESS IS THE PRIMORDIAL CHAOS WHERE GOD DOES HIS WORK!

THE TERM *MIDBĀR* CAN ALSO BE TRANSLATED AS PASTURE LAND. YOU CAN'T FARM IT BUT YOU CAN GRAZE SHEEP AND GOATS IN IT. IT IS SUITABLE FOR SHEPHERDING.

GOD IS LEADING THEM INTO THE WILDERNESS TO SHEPHERD HIS PEOPLE FROM CHAOS TO ORDER – FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

PATTERN REPEATS OVER AND OVER. THINK ABOUT DAVID – THE SHEPHERD. WHERE IS HE WHEN SAMUEL COMES LOOKING FOR A KING? WHEN HE IS ANNOINTED AS KING BUT HUNTED BY SAUL WHERE DOES HE FLEE? (THINK PSALM 18)

THINK ABOUT JESUS.

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." <sup>12</sup> The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. <sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 1:9–15 (ESV)