

WHY THE WILDERNESS?

By Paul M Hanssen

The wilderness! Not exactly the place we long to go, experience, or walk through. And yet, without the wilderness, we cannot and never will know the Almighty. Without the wilderness experience, the journey to our destiny cannot be completed. Without the wilderness, certain treasures of God cannot be known to us. There is a reason “wilderness” is mentioned 305 times in the Bible – an interesting fact.

- Israel didn’t receive God’s Law in a city or place of comfort – she received it in the wilderness.
- Moses did not encounter God and His voice in the palace in Egypt – He experienced the burning bush in the wilderness.
- Elijah did not hear God’s voice in the wind, earthquake, or fire – but the still small voice was heard in the opening of a dark cave in the wilderness of Horeb.
- David was prepared for the kingdom and kingship in the holds of the wilderness.
- Jesus did not begin His public ministry until He had been driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. The Holy Ghost had descended upon Him when He was baptized – It then drove him into the wilderness. When He returned, He did so with power:

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. (Luke 4:14)

Our experience in the wilderness is never meant to destroy us but to enlighten, teach, and mature us, to fill us with power. The wilderness is a place of transformation – **but why the wilderness?**

When John the Baptist came on the scene, he was known as “the voice crying in the wilderness.” What a strange characterization of a ministry. He wasn’t known as a miracle worker because he performed no miracles. He wasn’t known as, nor did he identify himself as, a preacher or priest. He identified himself as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (John 1:23). His voice, the voice that prepared the way of

the Lord, was heard not in the temple, the busy streets, the synagogues, or gatherings in the town square, but in the wilderness. **Why the wilderness?**

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (Revelation 12:6)

After the Bride brings the man-child to birth, she flees into the wilderness to a place prepared by God. There, she is fed for 3 ½ years: years of tribulation (not the great tribulation but the 3 ½ years of pre-tribulation tribulation). **But why the wilderness?**

Everyone hearing my voice or reading this lesson has been in, or maybe is going through, a wilderness (if you haven't, save this lesson – you will need it). The wilderness manifests itself through trying times, or we can call it “the blues.” It can be a time of hurt and a sense of walking in obscurity. It can be a time of peril, difficulty, and calamity, a time when you feel tested. Often, when in this place, we ask, “How did I get here?”

Let's examine the Hebrew meaning of the word wilderness.

מִדְבָּר Midbâr (*mid-bawr'*) means in the sense of *being driven* (like a flock driven to pasture or an open plain), and a *desert place*. **It also means speech, to talk words.**

Midbar describes an uncultivated, wild, or desolate area, such as open pastureland where shepherds take flocks or a harsh desert environment – it can be either.

It shares the exact same three-letter root (*d-b-r*) as the Hebrew word for **word** and **to speak** (*daw-bar'*) which means to talk, teach, speak, command, commune, promise, pronounce, and subdue.

The wilderness is not just a place of emptiness or danger, but a quiet, stripped-down setting designed by God where His voice and revelation can be heard. Being in the wilderness doesn't mean something has gone wrong – the wilderness is not void of God; rather, He is there, pursuing you because He desires to speak. So He takes us to a place of desolation to remove all distractions that take our time and attention. All the foolish, worldly things that stand between Him and you – things we make so important, cares of this life – distractions!

I don't profess to know very much (as a matter of fact, I don't know much at all). However, this I do know: God is chasing after us – He is chasing after you and me. Chasing us to the wilderness to get our attention, stripping away all the distractions that hinder His voice from penetrating our inner ears. We can become so wrapped up in life as the people were in the days of Noah – so lost in living that we forget to live, or at least we forget what life is about. We see this principle clearly in the example of Martha and Mary.

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42- New American Standard Bible)

Hosea 2:1-14.

Beginning in Hosea, chapter 1 verse 2, we read that God instructed Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms, or a woman who was a whore. This was to be a public prophetic demonstration to Israel and Judah of what they had done in departing from God.

In verse 9, God speaks to His adulterous bride and tells her that they are not His people, and He is not their God. How bad it must have been for God to pronounce these words over His elect. What is described here is no different than what the church is witnessing today. Are we, indeed, His people? His call upon us is one thing, but our response to His call is yet another. It's the response that is lacking!

In chapter two, God directly attacks the "lovers" of His apostate bride. Five times in this one chapter, God speaks about *her lovers*: "... *for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*" (Hosea 2:5)

Take note of what the bride said: "My lovers provide me with bread, water, wool, and flax"; without them, I'm empty – at least that was her thought. Without my lovers, I cannot be sustained, comforted, provided for, or sheltered.

- **Bread and Water:** These represent fundamental **physical nourishment** and daily survival. In a modern context, they symbolize our basic needs, jobs, income, and physical sustenance.

- **Wool and Flax:** These materials are used to make warm and cool garments, representing **shelter, protection, and clothing** for the body. Today, they symbolize our lifestyle, physical security, and comfort.

This is what life is all about for millions of people: nourishment and shelter. We look to our lovers, the things we pursue most in life, for nourishment and shelter. It's amazing how people think of serving their lovers before serving God. This is evident in people's lack of giving – offerings, tithes, first fruits, and alms. We would rather pursue our lovers than trust God to provide for us; in other words, "God is not able to keep us or protect us if we choose to put Him first" (at least, this is the sentiment).

This is where the bridal nation of God found herself: loving her lovers, trusting her lovers, and embracing the rewards of her lovers.

But then, in the midst of it all, *God speaks*:

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. (Hosea 2:14)

Oh, when God begins to "allure" you, He is chasing you! The understanding of the word allure in English is not always positive – it can mean to powerfully attract, charm, entice, beguile, or tempt.

However, the Hebrew word used in this case is *paw-thaw'*, meaning to open, persuade, make room, and enlarge. God was about to bring His bridal people into a place of enlargement, a place of stretching their capacity in a location where there was nothing but one thing – ***His voice***. There, He says, I will speak comfortably to her. Comfortably has a dual meaning – AL-LABE / meaning, the Almighty reaching beyond the outward man into the heart, into the center and interior part, into the core of her being.

This is the purpose of the wilderness – to speak to you, to reach beyond the physical aspects of your life into the deep within you. Submit to the wilderness; it is here that the Bridegroom has lured you to speak to you for the purpose of enlarging your capacity for Him!