

The Wilderness Way

The question this morning is: when were the law commandments given? God gave the law commandments to Israel in the wilderness, along with many other commandments, statutes, and teachings. Israel was given the Ten Commandments as soon as they came forth from Egypt into the wilderness, as they begin their journey to the land of promise. Prophetically, this is what happens when a sinner is born again. The heart and mind are first turned to the worship of God, the first four commandments, in thankfulness, for deliverance from the bondage of sin. Then they learn how to treat their fellow Christians, and neighbors, the last six commandments, with Christian love.

Do not forget, after they received the Ten Commandments, Israel refused to enter the land of promise at the command of God. Wherefore, they spent the next forty years in the wilderness journey. During the wilderness journey, God added many commandments, and ordinances, for them to observe, whenever they are in the land of promise. During this wilderness journey they had time to teach, meditate upon God's commandments, and learn those things, which they are to observe, both in the present life, and in the land of promise.

Israel did observe the Ten Commandments in the wilderness, but they did not observe all the commandments given, until they were in the land of promise. Some of the commandments given were to be observed, only, after they enter the land of promise. Here are a few:

- The first thing they observed, when they entered the land of promise, was the ordinance of circumcision, the sign which distinguished them as God's chosen people, which they had not done on the wilderness journey. Apply this to your life today and you see; making your profession of faith, joining the church, and being baptized, is a sign that distinguishes you as a chosen child of God.
- Then, they observed the memorial Passover, which they did not do in the wilderness.

Following are some things they were commanded to do after they entered the land of promise:

- **Le 23:10-12**; The law of first fruits that was to be observed when Israel entered the land of promise.
- **Le 25:1-7**; They were to observe the law of the seventh year sabbath, as the year of rest for the land and people.
- **Le 25:8-55**; They are to observe the fiftieth year Jubilee in all its fulness.
- **Nu 15:2-7**; They were given the commandments of the freewill offerings: a burnt offering, a sacrifice in performing a vow, a freewill offering, solemn feasts, or to make a sweet savour unto the LORD; When Israel gets into the land of promise; they are to perform these freewill offerings of sacrifice unto the Lord, as described by God. When the child of God enters into church fellowship; they are to be diligent in prayers, and their freewill service, of offering their sacrifices of praise to God.
- **De 18:9**; They are directed to not partake in the idolatry of the current inhabitants of the land. Thus, we likewise are commanded, no longer live after the lust of the fleshly nature. We are also commanded to live godly lives following the commandment of God and Christ.

As we consider this, we begin to understand; the wilderness journey was not just a journey, of punishment for disobedience to God. The wilderness journey was also a time of teaching and learning, and a time of preparation, which was to teach them how to live once they enter the land of promise. Remember; Israel was already God's chosen nation of people, who were to be representatives of his

name upon the earth, but they couldn't perform many of God's laws and commandments until they occupied the land of promise.

What does this have to do with you and I today? Until you are born again; you live in the wilderness way; the nature of the flesh. Almost everyone is taught moral laws, and rules, for living life in harmony with their fellowman, which is observance of the last six, of the Ten Commandments. When you are born again; like Israel, you are commanded to enter the land of promise, the church. You can, like Israel, disobey God and not enter into church fellowship, and continue in the wilderness way.

If you are a child of God walking in a church fellowship; you have entered the land of promise, and by faith you are being obedient to God and Christ. You understand what we see in: *Eph 1:3-12; 3*

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

This scripture testifies to us; before you were born again; you were chosen by God to be a child of God; just as Israel was God's chosen people before they entered the land of promise. You lived life by the laws of morality and humanity; as taught by your parents, relatives, friends, and the laws of the government. When you are born again; already knowing the laws of morality, you now begin to know and understand the things that are described in Ephesians, such as:

- You know you have been chosen by God to receive spiritual blessings in heavenly places.
- You know you have been made accepted in the Beloved, to the praise and glory of his grace.
- You know that through the shed blood of Christ, you have been redeemed, and all your sins have been eternally forgiven.
- You know you have been given wisdom, and prudence, to know you have eternal life.
- You know to worship and praise God, and Christ, for your new life.
- You know you have gained access to an inheritance, which you can claim by joining the church, and making that public profession of faith in Christ.

Before your new birth, you were already observing the laws of morality, and you can learn of those things you are to do when you enter into the church fellowship. You can learn of these things through the observance, of exemplary lives of the church body; through the preaching and teaching of the gospel; through reading and meditating upon God's word. Nonmembers attend worship services; as friends and observers; or even as uncommitted believers, but there are certain things you cannot do until you enter the land of promise. Joining the church, entering the land of promise, you have commandment to do things, which you were not required before you joined the church body. Here are a few:

- You know it is your duty, to Christ your Saviour, to be in full church fellowship.
- You know it is your duty to walk in the ordinance of baptism.
- You know it is your duty to participate in the Lord's Supper.
- You know it is your duty to wash the saints' feet.
- You know you should be in regular attendance of worship services to God, and your Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- You know you are to make a joyful noise unto the Lord.
- You know you are to read and study God's word of truth, the King James bible, to be ready to give an answer.
- You know you are to study the whole bible so you can teach it to your children.
- You know you are to walk circumspectly before God and the world.
- You know you are to encourage other Christians in their walk of faith in Christ.
- And all the other things required by God's commandments, which are not here mentioned.

Before you enter into church fellowship; you can attend worship services and may get to hear the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but until you enter into church fellowship, you are like the cows, who are eating shucks off the ears of corn, through the cracks in the crib walls. (In my youth, we had a crib to store the gathered corn. The corn crib was a wood building. The boards on the sides, and floor, had cracks between them to allow the air to circulate. The cows would try to get the corn by pulling the ears of corn through the cracks. They couldn't get the full ears of corn, but they could lick and pull the shucks through the cracks.) You are not getting the corn, which has the meat to sustain life. Oh, you might get to eat some nubbins, that are small enough to be pulled through the cracks, but you are not getting a full steady diet necessary to grow to the fulness of the measure of the stature of a Christian, as seen in: *Eph 4:10-24; 10 "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (for what purpose?) 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (to what end?) 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. 17 ¶ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

I trust that these words, and scripture texts, have helped you to see and understand; if you are walking in the church fellowship, you have entered the land of promise and left the wilderness way behind. You have received the greatest blessing you can have here on earth, the inheritance that Christ

provided for you here, to become a member of the family of God. You also look forward to the fulfilling of your eternal inheritance in Christ, in the place he has gone to prepare for you.

Wherefore, if you have been born again, and you have not entered into church fellowship; you are like unbelieving Israel; who, when they were first told to enter the land of promise; refused and rebelled, and they had to make that long wilderness journey, until all those men of war who refused God's commandment were all dead. I urge you to enter into the land of promise, the church of salvation by grace, and partake of the bounty of the fulness of Christ, eating and drinking the bread and water of life.

We, the church, are praying for you, desiring that you would not be like disobedient Israel. Please, we beg you, do not waste away the bounties of the precious gift of salvation by grace, by wandering around in the wilderness of this world of sin.

We, the church of Christ on earth, pray that God will continue to send forth the gospel call; and add to the church such as should be saved. We pray that we, the church body, may be a garden, tended and cared for by the Holy Spirit presence in our midst. We pray that we, in church fellowship, may live lives that would cause others to want to be like us, and to enter in and enjoy the blessings of the Lord.

We pray; God's chosen sinners do not spend years wasting away in the wilderness. We pray; sinners might be brought to repentance, be given eternal forgiveness of sins in Christ, and begin to enjoy the blessing of eternal life here and now.

We give thanks, and praise, to our Saviour and Lord, for these glorious gifts, and privileges, afforded to us by Christ, in our land of promise here in the world. Hallelujah! Amen!

185 C. M. Lloyd Hymnal *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.*

Sing to 103 in the Sacred Harp, Animation. Chorus on the odd number verses.

- 1 COME in, ye blessed of our God, And join his children here; Washed in the Saviour's cleansing blood, For him, your Lord, appear.
- 2 Stay not within the wilderness, Nor waiting at the door; Sweet Jesus will your woes redress, Were they ten thousand more.
- 3 Though fearing, trembling, rise and come; Yield to the Saviour's voice; For hung'ring, thirsting souls there's room; O make the blissful choice!
- 4 Room in the Saviour's gracious breast— That breast which glows with love; Room in the church, his chosen rest, And room in heaven above.
- 5 Why will you longer lingering stay, When Jesus says there's room? 'Now is the time, th' accepted day, Arise! he bids you come.'