

On The Way to Jesus pt 5 Wilderness Rebellion and Conquest

If you missed the first four weeks, then let me tell you what we're doing in this series. We are looking at the Big Story of Jesus that is woven throughout all of the bible.

Many years ago, at a conference hosted by R.C. Sproul, Alec Motyer, a British theologian, asked the group to imagine how the Israelites under Moses would have given their 'testimony' to someone who asked for it. He then offered this example:

They would have said something like this: We were in a foreign land, in bondage, under the sentence of death. But our mediator—the one who stands between us and God—came to us with the promise of deliverance. We trusted in the promises of God, took shelter under the blood of the lamb, and he led us out. Now we are on the way to the Promised Land. We are not there yet, of course, but we have the law to guide us, and through blood sacrifice we also have his presence in our midst. So, he will stay with us until we get to our true country, our everlasting home.

Then Dr Motyer concluded: 'Now think about it. A Christian today could say the same thing, almost word for word.' Motyer, Alec. A Christian's Pocket Guide to Loving the Old Testament .

Our series is ON THE WAY TO Jesus, and we've come to The Wilderness Rebellion and Conquest In the Historical Redemption Reading Plan – topic #7-8

This brings us to another part of the OT where we can get bogged down.

I failed to mention in the opening of the series that the Hebrew Bible is organized differently than our bibles. **The scriptures of Jesus had a threefold division:**

The Law –The Five Books of Moses

**The Prophets – Former Prophets Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings,
Latter Prophets – the ones we usually think of**

The Writings – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Eccles, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

No one at the time of Jesus would have questioned him about "The Old Testament." That was not a term they used. Jesus referred to those books as "The Scriptures, The Word of God, or The Law" Jn 10:35, Mk 7:13 Luke 10:26

Motyer, Alec. A Christian's Pocket Guide to Loving the Old Testament .

We often ask or hear the question, "Why should I read or care about the OT?"

BECAUSE Jesus DID!! To fully understand Him and know what shaped Him, then we need to know the OT as well.

There are numerous themes of this era of the Wilderness and Conquest, but the one that stands out to me is "THE LAND".

They are in the wilderness because they hesitated and didn't trust God to go in THE LAND (Num 13-14).

The Conquest was a period of taking the Land that God had given them – not based on their being superior to other nations, but solely based on His gracious promise.

Walter Kaiser: Sporadically, the author of Deuteronomy made explicit links between this pledge and the word that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had received (Dt 1:8; 6:10, 18; 7:8; 34:4). Thus, Israel was forced to relate the impending conquest of Canaan under Joshua to the promise of God and not to any feelings of national superiority.

This connection to the patriarchs was a way of informing this newly freed people of their history and the Covenant promises given to their ancestors.

** Sideroad – The narrative of scripture shows us one thing that can be disturbing to us: God is not in a hurry. My guess is that many of us have been disturbed by that. Perhaps we have put a negative spin on God’s timeline – “He doesn’t care; He’s unaware; He’s not good. He’s not trustworthy,” etc
There’s a reason why “Wait on the Lord” is a common refrain in scripture. We need to hear it. **

Rebellion in the Wilderness

Israel immediately falls into a pattern of sin and hardness against their redeeming God, resulting in their judgment in the wilderness prior to entering the land promised to Abraham.

Ps 95 gives a warning by pointing to an event in Numbers 20.

Today, if you would hear His voice,
8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
9 “When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.
10 For forty years I loathed that generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.
11 Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

Hebrews 3 repeats the warning of Ps 95 and then speaks about having a heart that is hardened.

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

The Wilderness Wandering of Israel is the result of a hard heart.
The external rebellion was the fruit of a heart that strayed from God.

It doesn’t typically develop overnight, but the fruit of a hard heart may break out suddenly.

THIS example of Israel is presented in Hebrews as a clear object lesson for us. “TAKE CARE...”
Israel’s wandering is not that different than what we may experience on a personal level – it is rooted in an unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. The Good News is that restoration is possible through repentant faith.

NOW, as for the book of Numbers. It has a lot ofnumbers, and Joshua and Judges gets confusing because of the geographical details and the lack of one key consistent character.

In between the giants of Moses and David are many names that have their 15 minutes of fame. Some get mentioned in the Hall of Faith – Heb 11 but they don’t get a long narrative:

- Joshua – he ‘fit the battle of Jericho’- the fall of the city was mentioned in Heb 11 but not Joshua’s name.
- Rahab – the ‘hospitable hooker’ does get a mention in Heb 11:31 because of her faith in helping the Israeli spies.
- Gideon who kept pushing the envelope with God, and God was very gracious with him.
- Samson – He fell asleep on Delilah’s lap and ended up a prisoner of the Philistines. In the end, he brings down the house and killed more in his death than in his life.

The period between the Exodus and the Kingdom is a bit of a muddled history for many of us. We know some stories but there doesn’t seem to be a clear narrative flow.

The people rebel, they wander, they get to the promised land, Moses dies, Joshua leads them in the

conquest of the land, and they fall into a pattern of obedience, temptation, rebellion, suffering, calling out to God, and then God raises up another Judge / leader / Deliverer

I'd compare this to the period between the American Civil War and WWI. It was important, but it tends to get lost in the history books. So too for the Wilderness Wanderings and the Conquest.

As we consider these two eras – Wilderness and Conquest, we'll focus on some key direct markers that tell us that we're on the Way to Jesus.

** A Word about Numbers and the Numbers

First of all, the name "Numbers" comes from a Greek translation and is not the original Hebrew title of the Book.

In Hebrew, the title is "In the Wilderness", also called The Fourth Book Of Moses. The English title is a translation of the Septuagint (Greek) title referring to the numbering of the tribes of Israel in chapters 1–4. The book is basically the sacred history of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness following the departure from Sinai and before their occupation of Canaan, the Promised Land. It describes their sufferings and their numerous complaints against God. The people are depicted as faithless and rebellious, and God as one who provides for and sustains his people.

God has promised a Seed, A Land, and His presence.

As a people coming out of bondage, the census of Numbers 1-3 was a way of creating some social cohesion and organization based on ancestral tribes.

- It was also a way of showing God's faithfulness to 'make them a great nation' as was promised to Abraham hundreds of years ago. This book also serves as a warning to future generations to avoid the unbelief and rebellion of those in the wilderness.
- Numbers tells of the preparation for entering the land after 40 years. Num 14:34
- God's presence was in their midst in the Tabernacle, which was at the center of their camp. Certain tribes were camped in front, others on the left and right sides. The tribe of Levi was camped close by to guard the Tabernacle and to serve in the rituals.

Numbers, or "In the Wilderness" shows that the people were not only in a physical wilderness, but also a spiritual wilderness. Despite their failures, God was faithful. We see God's grace and sovereign power at work on behalf of His people.

God directs His people as they prepare for their journey through the wilderness, comforts them in difficulties, deals with their fears and failures, and rebukes or punishes them when necessary. God's faithfulness is contrasted to Israel's faithlessness – corporately and in individual ways.

New Geneva Introduction to the Old Testament (p. 36).

As they traveled through the desert they were harassed and tempted by the pagan nations. At times they gave in to fear or to the enticement to worship other gods.

EX: Num 25 1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. 2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel.

Human failures are clearly portrayed and contrasted with the wise measures of the ever-faithful covenant God. Even Moses, the greatest leader of all, sinned and was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, although he saw it from a distance (20:9-11 note; 27:12-14). This shows that even the best of persons are still sinners and are saved only through the merits of Christ – salvation comes only through the grace of God. (New Geneva Introduction to the Old Testament (pp. 36-37). Metokos Press. Kindle Edition.)

We also see God's sovereign power as He leads His people toward the Land of Promise. There is rebellion in the camp and hostility from outside foes, yet God brings them to the Land, even though his fatherly

discipline is displayed at times.

Throughout the narrative, Numbers pictures the progress of God's people in redemption, pointing forward to Christ.

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The work of Christ is foreshadowed by the typology of the red heifer (19:2-10; Heb. 9:13), Jesus is the true Water that makes life possible and the true Rock that provides safety (20:11; 1 Cor. 10:4), He is the True Manna given from heaven – John 6 and the raised serpent that brought life out of death (21:4-9; John 3:14, 15).

New Geneva Introduction to the Old Testament (p. 37)

Conquest of the Land and Early Leadership

Joshua leads the nation into the land promised to Abraham, and the initial period of leadership by the judges is one of ups and downs.

The books that relate to the conquest – Joshua and Judges- are commonly grouped among the “historical books”, but in the Jewish scripture they are considered among the “prophets”. In seminary they were treated as Former Prophets because they are more than just a historical narrative.

“Joshua” = “Yahweh Saves”

Dale Ralph Davis – Joshua No Falling Words What is this difference between former prophets and historical books?

To oversimplify, it is like the difference between preaching and a world history book. The ‘prophecy of Joshua’ means to convict, not merely to inform; to comfort, not simply to enlighten He is not telling you the story only to inform you; he has a message to proclaim, a God to press upon you.

This passage from Josh 21 gives the summary of the conquest...

Joshua 21:43-45

43 So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44 And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

This a true summary of events because of the Promises and the Presence of Yahweh.

Joshua is a prophetic history to Israel as it warns the generation of Judges to avoid the failures of those who did not hold fast to God and His Word and promises. As Dr. Davis points out the Judges generation (Judg. 2:6–10) was slack about driving out the remnants of the Canaanites (Judg. 1:27–2:5; cf. Josh. 16:10; 17:12–18; 18:3), and therefore created a climate for apostasy to occur in a most predictable way (Judg. 2:11–3:6; cf. Josh. 23:6–7, 11–13)

Sadly, a cursory reading of Judges shows that the next generations fell into the cycle of sin, Divine discipline through oppressors, the people cry out in repentance, God raises up a deliverer, peace is restored.

This cycle occurs 7 times in the book because the people fell away from God with an unbelieving heart. They fell away from the Word given to them by Joshua...

Josh 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Joshua gave this prophetic word to the tribes that got their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Note

that the word of exhortation is in the context of a heart of love for Yahweh, the LORD God of Israel.

Walking in God's ways is the fruit of loving Him and holding fast to Him with all our heart and soul.

Biblical faith and practice ARE rooted in a vibrant relationship with a personal God.

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Our hearts can be strengthened by feeding on Jesus the true bread from heaven.

Jesus is the true and better Joshua- He is how Yahweh Saves.

Jesus is the true and better judge or deliverer. He delivers us from the penalty and power of sin because he took our sin upon Himself.

2 Cor 5

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

COME TO THE TABLE

7. Rebellion in the Wilderness

Israel immediately falls into a pattern of sin and hardness against their redeeming God, resulting in their judgment in the wilderness prior to entering the land promised to Abraham.

- Numbers 11 (Manna and quail)
- Numbers 14 (Rebellion)
- Numbers 20 (Water from the rock)
- Numbers 21 (Bronze serpent lifted up)
- Psalm 95 (“Do not harden your hearts”)
- *John 3 (“Son of Man lifted up”)*
- *John 6 (True manna)*
- *1 Corinthians 10 (“Rock was Christ”)*
- *Hebrews 3 (“Do not harden your hearts”)*

8. Conquest of the Land and Early Leadership

Joshua leads the nation into the land promised to Abraham, and the initial period of leadership by the judges is

one of ups and downs.

- Deuteronomy 1–3 (Preparing to enter)
- Joshua 1 (Commissioning of Joshua)
- Joshua 6 (Jericho)
- Joshua 24 (Covenant renewal)
- Judges 2 (Summary of the period of judges)
- Judges 13–16 (Account of Samson)
- *Acts 13 (Recap of Israel’s history)*
- *Hebrews 4 (Promise of rest still stands)*

9. Establishing the Monarchy

God installs a king over Israel as his vice-regent to bring security to the nation and build a temple where his manifest presence would be made known.

- 1 Samuel 1–2 (Samuel as interim leader)
- 1 Samuel 8–10 (Saul anointed king)
- 1 Samuel 16 (David is anointed)
- 2 Samuel 5 (David rules a united kingdom)
- 2 Samuel 11–12 (David, Bathsheba, Solomon)
- 1 Chronicles 17 (Covenant with David)
- 2 Chronicles 5 (Solomon completes temple)
- Psalm 2 (God’s royal son)
- Psalm 18 (David’s song of God’s deliverance)
- Psalm 89 (Covenant with David)
- Psalm 110 (“Sit at my right hand”)
- *Matthew 12 (Jesus > temple > Solomon)*
- *Luke 1–2 (Jesus, the davidic King)*
- *Luke 20 (Jesus and Psalm 110)*
- *Romans 1 (Jesus, of David in the flesh)*
- *Philippians 2 (Jesus exalted as king)*
- *Hebrews 12 (Jesus on the throne)*
- *Revelation 7 (Worship the enthroned Lamb)*

10. Religious Life of the Nation

During the early monarchy, Israel’s devotional life flourishes in psalms and wisdom writings.

- Psalm 1 (Two ways to live)
- Psalm 22 (David’s lament)
- Psalm 51 (Repentance for sin)
- Psalm 72 (Prayer for the king)

- Psalm 118 (“Blessed is he who comes”)
- Proverbs 1–2 (Wisdom and fear of the Lord)
- Proverbs 8 (Praise of Wisdom)
- Ecclesiastes 1 (“Vanity of vanities . . .”)
- Ecclesiastes 12 (Fear God)
- Song of Songs 1 (Goodness of marital love)

11. Degradation of the Monarchy

After Solomon, the monarchy splits into the Northern Kingdom (10 tribes, “Israel” / “Ephraim,” based in Samaria) and the Southern Kingdom (2 tribes, “Judah,” based in Jerusalem) and spirals into sin.

- 1 Kings 11–13 (Kingdom divided)
- 1 Kings 17–22 (Example: Elijah and Ahab)
- 2 Chronicles 33 (Example: Evil under Manasseh)
- *Luke 4 (Remembering Elijah’s ministry)*

12. Israel and Judah in Exile

Due to repeated cycles of sin, the covenant curse of exile is poured out. Assyria defeats the Northern Kingdom /

Israel (722 BC) while Babylonia defeats the Southern Kingdom / Judah (605–586 BC).

- 2 Kings 17 (Fall of Israel to Assyria)
- Isaiah 7 (Assyria assails Judah, Immanuel)
- 2 Kings 24–25 (Fall of Judah to Babylonia)
- Micah 1 (Pronouncing judgment of exile)
- Hosea 1–2 (Warnings to “Not-my-people”)
- Zephaniah 1 (Punishment from the Lord)
- Ezekiel 11 (God’s glory leaves the temple)
- *Matthew 1:18–25 (Immanuel fulfilled)*
- *1 Peter 2 (Grace to “Not-my-people”)*

13. Grief and Consolation during Exile

Judah grieves during exile but is comforted by the prophets, who reiterate God’s promise of restoration.

- Lamentations 1 (Mourning over Jerusalem)
- Psalm 44 (Plea for God to rescue them)
- Psalm 69 (Zeal for the temple)
- Jeremiah 25 (Promise of 70-year exile)
- Habakkuk 2 (Faith to endure judgment)
- Daniel 1–2 (Babylon to be judged)
- Daniel 9 (Revisiting Jeremiah’s promise)
- *John 2 (Zeal for the temple)*
- *Hebrews 10 (Faith to endure judgment)*

14. (Partial) Restoration from Exile

Though the Northern Kingdom is never fully restored (rather, repopulated with Samaritans), the Southern Kingdom is released under Persian rule to rebuild the temple. But things are never quite the same.

- Ezra 1–6 (Return under Cyrus, rebuilding)
- Nehemiah 8–9 (Covenant renewal)
- Haggai 1 (Encouragement to rebuild)
- *John 4 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman)*

15. Anticipating an Eschatological Deliverer

Throughout the period of the prophets, we get glimpses of an eschatological savior-figure (a “Messiah,” though

not always using that term) who will bring deliverance to God’s people.

- Isaiah 9 (“A child is born”)
- Isaiah 11 (“Root of Jesse”)
- Isaiah 52:11–53:12 (Suffering servant)
- Jeremiah 23 (Righteous “Branch”)

- Ezekiel 1 (“Likeness of the glory of God”)
- Ezekiel 34 (Shepherd of Israel)
- Zechariah 9 (King on a donkey)
- Daniel 7 (“One like a son of man”)
- *Matthew 21 (Jesus as king on a donkey)*
- *Mark 13 (Returning Son of Man)*
- *Romans 15 (“Root of Jesse”)*
- *John 10 (Jesus the good Shepherd)*
- *Acts 8 (Who is the suffering servant?)*
- *Revelation 4 (Throne room glory)*
- *Revelation 5 (“Root of David”)*

16. Anticipating the Day of the Lord

In conjunction with the coming of a deliverer, the Old Testament prophets also envision a new covenant, the return of God’s presence, the outpouring of the Spirit, the engrafting of the Gentiles (fulfilling the Abrahamic promise), cosmic renewal, and resurrection in the Day of the Lord.

- Jeremiah 33 (New covenant)
- Isaiah 42 (Justice and a light to the nations)
- Isaiah 65–66 (New heavens / new earth)
- Joel 2 (Spirit outpouring)
- Ezekiel 36 (Spirit and a new heart)
- Ezekiel 43 (Return of the Glory of the Lord)
- Malachi 3–4 (Messenger before the Day)
- Daniel 12 (Eschatological resurrection)
- *Mark 1 (John the Baptist as messenger)*
- *Acts 2 (Pentecost and Spirit outpouring)*
- *Romans 11 (Jews and Gentiles)*
- *1 Corinthians 15 (Eschatological resurrection)*
- *Ephesians 2 (Ingrafting of Gentiles)*
- *Hebrews 8 (New covenant)*
- *Revelation 21–22 (New heavens / new earth)*