

# The Journey

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**Deuteronomy 8:1–3 (NKJV) “Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.<sup>2</sup> And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.<sup>3</sup> So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.”**

The Christian life is a journey. It is not just about starting off with the new birth. Neither is it just about arriving in heaven when we die. The Christian life involves walking every day from now throughout eternity. Some Christians focus on getting people saved. Of course, the new birth is the most important first step in this new life, but it is not the final step any more than being born physically is the end of life on earth. The new birth is just the beginning!

On the other hand, some Christians focus on the destination. However, the Christian life is not just about the sweet by and by; it is about the salty here and now. It is not just about reaching the Promise Land; it is about walking through the barren land along the way. It is not just about the finish line; it is about the race that gets us to the finish line. It is not just about the promise; it is about the pilgrimage. Christianity is living as a pilgrim in this life. The Christian life is a journey from beginning to end!

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were committed to the journey. Abraham began his journey in Ur of the Chaldees as he traveled to the land of Promise. Isaac and Jacob followed after him in this journey. They were like pilgrims on a journey of faith with God. Hebrews 11:13 (NKJV) declares, “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*” The Christian life is not just about the initiation or the destination; it is about the journey.

A journey has a beginning. Israel’s journey to the Promise Land began in the land of Egypt. Egypt represents the place of bondage. Egypt is a good illustration of our slavery of sin. For Israel, Egypt was a place of hardship and burden. As such, Egypt symbolizes our suffering under the consequences of sin. Egypt represents the place where people lived and died with no hope. As such, Egypt symbolizes our life without God. In the days of Moses, God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. They began their journey immediately following the night of the Passover. Prior to that night, God instructed the families of Israel to kill a Passover lamb and apply its blood on the posts and lintel of their doors to avoid the judgment of the death angel. Those who obeyed were spared. The Egyptians did not and their land was filled with mourning for their firstborn sons. This divine judgment broke the power of Egypt’s control over Israel. As a result, Pharaoh let them go. Pharaoh represents the slave master of sin. The Passover Lamb foreshadowed Jesus as our Passover Lamb. Later, when Pharaoh and his army pursued them, Israel miraculously crossed the Red Sea on dry ground while the Egyptian army was drowned. God delivered Israel so that they never saw the Egyptians again.

Israel celebrated on the other side of the Red Sea. They were free from slavery! Their celebration was short lived as they soon encountered the difficulty of the journey along the way. The Israelites saw the wilderness as a hindrance. However, the wilderness was part of the plan. It was to become part of their journey. God chose the route. There were easier routes to the Promise Land but God took Israel on a divine detour. God brought Israel on a detour into the wilderness to woo His people to Himself. God desires that His people love and trust Him supremely rather than to follow Him because of what He does for us. In reality, what we call detours are part of the journey. Israel would have fared much better had they rejoiced in rather than rejected God’s divine detour. God is not only in the deliverance and the destination; He is also in the journey. He was with them the entire way. God led Israel with the cloud by day and the fire by night. God Himself mapped out their journey through the wilderness. From a natural viewpoint, the journey made no sense. It was as if God was leading them through an obstacle course of testing. Each obstacle tested a different area of their life. Their part was to follow where He led them. God determined when they marched and when they camped. He was their Guide as He went before them

with the cloud by day and the fire by night. There were times when they were on the move and there were times when they rested.

So it is in the Christian journey. The wilderness is a place of wandering. There are times when we move forward to take ground while there are other times when we secure the ground we have taken. There are times of progress and there are times of problems. There are times of work and there are times of rest. There are times of war and there are times of worship. God is in our journey through the wilderness between salvation and glory. He orders the times and seasons along the way.

The wilderness is a place of testing. God tested Israel in the wilderness. God does not test us to *know* what is in our heart. He tests us to *reveal* what is in our heart. In the wilderness God reveals, proves, and purifies the heart. In the wilderness some of the Israelites were disqualified because they rebelled against the Lord when tested. Failure does not always mean disqualification, for in our weakness, we all fail at some point. Failing does not make us a failure. Failure due to weakness is different than failure due to rebellion. True believers do not quit when they fail. They learn from their failure and move forward. Someone once said, "When you fail, make sure you fail forward!"

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Paul outlines five tests that many of the Israelites failed in their journey through the wilderness. The first was the test of faith. Everyone over the age of twenty except Joshua and Caleb were disqualified from entering into the Promise Land because of unbelief. They determined that the obstacles they faced were greater than God who promised to be with them. The second test was the test of worship. Rather than worship God alone, many were disqualified through idolatrous worship of the golden calf. The third test was that of maintaining sexual purity. The people gave in to sexual license and were disqualified. The fourth test was the test of trust. When faced with needs of food and water, Israel became demanding rather than trusting. We tempt Christ when we demand that He operate on our terms rather than to trust Him on His terms. The fifth test was the test of thanksgiving. Many Israelites were disqualified because they systematically complained about what they did not have rather than give thanks for what they did have.

We must learn to cooperate with God in the Christian journey. The journey develops Christian virtues, maturity, and character along the way. The journey teaches us how to discern true priorities. The journey teaches us to walk by faith and not by sight. The journey teaches us the art of spiritual warfare and the way of acceptable worship. The journey teaches us the blessing of unity and cooperation in the ranks. The journey teaches us when to follow, where to follow, and how to follow. It also teaches where to stop, when to rest, and how to renew. The journey teaches us to be thankful for what we have and the progress made and to look forward in faith to the finish line ahead. The journey teaches us patience in doing good knowing that we will arrive at our destination if we will not quit. The journey prepares us to lead those just entering the journey. Reaching the destination makes the journey worth it all.

How are you doing on your journey? Have you grown weary in well doing? Don't give up! Are you longing for the finish line? Don't stop walking! As long as the journey continues, God's work is still being perfected in you. Trust Him with each step and keep your eyes on Jesus until your journey is complete. The destination is worth the journey. Oh, and remember: someone behind you in the journey is watching you!