

Israel's time in the wilderness is of great importance to Christians because of the way Christ fulfilled so many of the themes and promises throughout the narrative. God's chosen people, the Israelites have been set free from their slavery but are now in the wilderness and in the process of learning what it means to be God's people before His plans come to completion. Does that sound a little familiar? For us, it's often representative of the fact that we were all born as slaves to sin but because of Jesus' great love and sacrifice we are free. We, too, are in our own wilderness as we have access to freedom but await the completion of God's promises and plans.

New to daily devotionals? Here are a few tips for this series:

- The Old Testament can sometimes feel distant and confusing. Remember that if we wish to truly understand the message of the New Testament, we must know the message of the Old Testament—this rings especially true for the Israelites' time in the wilderness! When we read the Old Testament, we're crossing into different cultures, worldviews and time periods—that's a lot of differences and yet God is the same! Take each part little by little and ask God, "How would you have me know you more deeply because of this Scripture?"

Monday, March 18th

Exodus 29:38, 42-45

³⁸ Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly...⁴² It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³ There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

Why do you think God would ask the Israelites to commit to a regular schedule of sacrifices? What about the ritual would create space for something to be consecrated (made sacred)? How might it help the Israelites know God more deeply?

Do you have any sacred routines? How have they helped you know God more deeply? What would it feel like if you needed a priest, like Aaron, in order to meet with God?

Tuesday, March 19th

John 1:35-41

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

What do you know about the name "Lamb of God" given to Jesus?

In light of the sacrifices the Israelites had previously made, what would it be like for the original audience to identify Jesus as the Lamb of God? How might that add meaning to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?

What do you notice about the disciples' interactions with Jesus? How do they compare to communicating with God through a priest?

Wednesday, March 20th

Read 1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

What does it mean that Jesus was the one mediator between God and people? What was different about Jesus when compared to priests like Aaron?

The word "ransom" means "a payment demanded for the release of a prisoner." Have you ever thought about Jesus' sacrifice in this way? How does that grow your understanding of Old Testament sacrifices and Jesus' sacrifice?

Thursday, March 21st

Read 1 Peter 2:4-6, 9-10

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Notice the comparisons and contrasts—rejected by men but chosen by God, darkness versus light, without mercy versus receiving mercy. What similar contrasts do you have in your own story—before following Jesus compared to following Jesus?

What would it look like for God's people/the royal priesthood to proclaim God's excellencies? In what ways do you currently proclaim His excellencies? What might you need to start doing, continue, or stop doing in order to live into that calling?

What does it look like to be a people who have received mercy? How might that change the way you look at the world and people around you? How does your life proclaim that you have received mercy?

Friday, March 22nd

Read John 14:15-17

¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Why do you think Jesus told the disciples He was sending a Helper before he became the perfect sacrifice? What do we learn about the Helper/Holy Spirit from these verses?

As part of a royal priesthood—people who have direct access to God, what encouragement does the Helper/Holy Spirit offer you? What are the ramifications of the Helper/Holy Spirit dwelling within you? How might you need to grow your awareness of the Helper/Holy Spirit?

As a royal priesthood, how might you need to be a means for others to see God? What do people know about God if they only have seen you?



Wandering

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