

Biblical Storylines: The Church in the Wilderness

Eze 20.34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. 36 Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord GOD. 37 “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; 38 I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

* Last week, we looked at the biblical storyline of ..., which provides the basic interpretive framework for ...

* Last week, we saw from Matthew 2 that ...

* Our text today shows us that ..., for just as first generation Israel was led by God into ..., so was the first generation ... And this is key to understanding the writings of ... and the events of the lives of ...

* Just as believing Israelites were joined in the exodus by ..., even so in the NT, the believing remnant of Israel will be joined by ... (Exo 12.37-38; Act 8; 10; 15).

* Just as God's OT people were led out into ..., so God's NC people were also led into ...

* How did this happen? (Act 8.1, 3-4)

* How does Rev 12 confirm this?

Rev 12.1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman ... 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and his throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God ... 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him ... 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness...

* All of this is why the NT writers keep telling the first generation Christians that they are in ...

* What does God use the wilderness to do? (Eze 20.36-37; Dt 8.2-5)

** 1Cor 10.1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things ... 7 And do not become idolaters ... 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality ... 9 nor let us tempt Christ ... 10 nor complain ... 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

** Heb 3.1 Therefore, holy brethren, ... consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses ... 5 And Moses indeed was faithful ... as a servant ... 6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are ... 7 Therefore, ... "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness ... 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4.1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. ... 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.*

* What happened at the end of the 40 years of wilderness?

* What happened at the end of 40 years for the first century Christians?

* Example of application: What about the sticky issue of miraculous gifts in the first century church—tongues, prophecies, and so forth—and the question of whether they ceased or not?

Deut 8.2 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. 3 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. 4 Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

Josh 5.12 Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

Jer 31.15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more." 16 Thus says the LORD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope in your future, says the LORD, That your children shall come back to their own border.

Ezekiel 20.33 "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. 34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. 36 Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord GOD. 37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; 38 I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Josh 24.2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.

The Exodus Theme

2Kings 17.5 Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 7 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods. 8 and had walked in

the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." 13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." 14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. 16 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. 19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. 21 For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.

Jeremiah 2.5 Thus says the LORD: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters? 6 Neither did they say, 'Where is the LORD, Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and pits, Through a land of drought and the shadow of death, Through a land that no one crossed And where no one dwelt?' 7 I brought you into a bountiful country, To eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land And made My heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me; The prophets prophesied by Baal, And walked after things that do not profit. 9 "Therefore I will yet bring charges against you," says the LORD, "And against your children's children I will bring

charges. 10 For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see, Send to Kedar and consider diligently, And see if there has been such a thing. 11 Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit. 12 Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate,” says the LORD. 13 “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. 14 “Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why is he plundered? 15 The young lions roared at him, and growled; They made his land waste; His cities are burned, without inhabitant. 16 Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes Have broken the crown of your head. 17 Have you not brought this on yourself, In that you have forsaken the LORD your God When He led you in the way? 18 And now why take the road to Egypt, To drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road to Assyria, To drink the waters of the River? 19 Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing That you have forsaken the LORD your God, And the fear of Me is not in you,” Says the Lord GOD of hosts. 20 “For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds; And you said, ‘I will not transgress,’ When on every high hill and under every green tree You lay down, playing the harlot. 21 Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? 22 For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me,” says the Lord GOD. 23 “How can you say, ‘I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals’? See your way in the valley; Know what you have done: You are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways, 24 A wild donkey used to the wilderness, That sniffs at the wind in her desire; In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; In her month they will find her. 25 Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, ‘There is no hope. No! For I have loved aliens, and after them I will go.’

Fall - Satan goes after the woman and her seed. Satan wants to cut off the godly seed and use the woman to bear ungodly seed. Satan’s temptation usually involves the following elements: (1) enticing man and woman to reach out and take for themselves that which they should wait on God to confer; (2) attempting to deceive the woman; (3) lulling the man to be passive or fearful and thus to fail to protect the woman.

Exile - the man and woman and their seed are expelled from God’s presence and from the special land he has given to them.

Captivity - the man and woman are judicially consigned to slavery and oppression.

Turning to God - the people cry out to God.

Savior Appears - a seed of the woman, a savior anointed by God engages in holy war with the oppressor and frees the people.

Exodus - the people are brought out of captivity with plunder from their oppressors; many of the oppressing people believe in God, come out in the Exodus, and become part of God’s people.

Testing - the people are tested by God to humble them and to see what is in their heart before he brings them back to their special land.

Return to the land - the people come back in to the land; often it is inhabited by unbelievers whom the people must overcome.

Marriage Theme

Marriage Covenant - when God brings his people out in an Exodus, he joins them to himself in covenant and calls them (collectively) his bride.

Unfaithfulness - the bride lapses into idolatry, which God regards as adultery

Call to Repentance - God sends his prophets who charge the bride with adultery and call her to repentance

Harlotry - the bride may repent for a time, but it is short lived; she lapses into more and more idolatry until God calls her a harlot.

Judgment - God pronounces judgment on his harlot bride; he raises up one of her lovers to take her off into captivity.

Exercise: Interpret the following passage

Matthew 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.