

## The Wilderness and Those Who Dwell There

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Almighty God uses many descriptive words to picture spiritual realities (see studies: Symbolism). One of these words is “wilderness,” which usually pictures a dry area with little vegetation due to a lack of precipitation. As water is a symbol of God’s Holy Spirit, a wilderness in the spirit realm would be a region that experiences little, if any, spiritual growth due to an absence of God’s spirit,

For My (God’s) 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 (unrepentant and incapable of retaining God’s Holy Spirit) (Jer. 2:13; cf. 17:13; Rev. 7:17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Anyone inhabiting a spiritual wilderness would be compared to a broken cistern that cannot retain God’s spirit. When God’s spirit is absent, an individual will be in a state of lawlessness,

Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be (due to the absence of God’s Holy Spirit) (Rom. 8:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is important to consider the scriptural context in which the word “wilderness” is used. Sometimes it can be a literal wilderness, while other times it can be referring to the spirit realm of the fallen angels, including Satan,

So he carried me (John) away in the Spirit (in a vision) **into the wilderness**. And I saw a woman (symbol of a religious system) sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy (i.e. very sinful), having seven heads and ten horns (symbols of leadership) (Rev. 17:3; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Because this woman is associated with blasphemy, it can be concluded the wilderness she inhabits is associated with the author of sin who inhabits a spiritual realm separated from Almighty God (Jn. 8:44; 2Cor. 6:14; cf. Eph. 6:12). As Satan has his own system of religious beliefs, and is able to influence everyone, he deceives both mankind and the fallen angels,

His (Satan’s) tail (symbolic of lies; cf. Isa. 9:15b; Jn. 8:44) drew a third of the stars (symbol of angels; cf. Job 38:7) of heaven and threw them to the earth (hence fallen angels). And the dragon stood before the woman (symbol of Almighty God’s religious system) who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child (reference to Christ’s birth) as soon as it was born (i.e. through Herod’s attempt to kill Christ. See study: The Infant Christ was Taken to Egypt) (Rev. 12:4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

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 (Rev.12:9; emphasis added).

The fallen angels, referred to in Revelation 12:4, inhabit Satan's wilderness which is described in the New Testament as a dry place,

When an unclean spirit (i.e. fallen angel or demon) goes out of a man, **he goes through dry places**, seeking rest, and finds none (Mt. 12:43; cf. Lk. 11:24; Ed. note in parenthesis).

During the First Covenant period, God described all nations as being uncircumcised due to their rebellious attitude toward His law and commandments (Ac. 7:51), and their sinful choices have placed them in the same spiritual wilderness as Satan and the fallen angels,

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will punish all those who are circumcised (literally) with the uncircumcised –<sup>26</sup> Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and **all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness** (Satan and the fallen angels). For all these nations are uncircumcised (not meant literally in this verse), and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart (due to their stubborn and rebellious attitude) (Jer. 9:25-26; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

God then shows the connection between Satan's ability to deceive, and the negative influence religious leaders have upon those who would otherwise be serving Almighty God correctly,

Many rulers (shepherds or pastors) have destroyed My vineyard, they have trodden My portion underfoot; **they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness** (Jer. 12:10; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Due to the false teaching of this world's religious leaders, all who could be serving Almighty God correctly have become Satan's property, and are dwelling in the wilderness he created through his rebellion against the law and commandments of his heavenly Father,

You (Lucifer, prior to rebelling and becoming known as Satan) were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity (sin; cf. 1Jn. 3:4) was found in you (Eze. 28:15; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The last chapter of the Bible describes those, who persist in living a sinful life, as being outside of God's kingdom. Therefore, they would still be living in the wilderness created by Satan's rebellious actions,

But outside are dogs (symbol of those who are spiritually unclean due to sin) and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murders and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie (Rev. 22:15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The first humans to become imprisoned in Satan's wilderness were Adam and Eve. Prior to their sin, they were living in a well-watered Garden because of their exposure to God's Holy Spirit (cf. Gen. 2:10, 16), but after they sinned they entered Satan's wilderness where they remained prisoners until their death,

Cursed is the ground for your sake (i.e. because of your sin); in toil you shall eat of it all the days

of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles (symbols associated with the fallen angels; see study: Thorns and Thistles) it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return (same fate as Satan; cf. Gen. 3:14; Rom. 16:20; see study: Did God Create Adam From Dust?) (Gen. 3:17b-19; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Since the time of Adam and Eve, every human being has unwittingly and unknowingly become a prisoner of Satan, unless they have been called to repent of sin and started living a new life of obedience to God's word (Mt. 4:4; cf. Rom. 6:4),

Those who see you (Satan at his future judgment) will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: 'Is this **the man** (when he is made flesh and blood; cf. Rom. 16:20; Mal. 4:3) who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, <sup>17</sup> **Who made the world as a wilderness** and destroyed its cities, **who did not open the house of** (would not release) **his prisoners?**' (Isa. 14:16-17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

As the apostle John was led by God's spirit to see visions of future events, while communicating directly with those in the spirit realm of the loyal host of heaven (Rev. 1:10ff; 17:3), so Jesus Christ was led by God's spirit to see activities that were occurring in the spirit realm of the disloyal host, while communicating directly with Satan. The location of Satan's realm is described as a wilderness,

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit **into the wilderness** to be tempted (tried and tested) by the devil (Mt. 4:1; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Satan is so closely associated with the symbolism of a wilderness, it should be no surprise that the goat representing him during the Day of Atonement (see study: Atonement – Day of Covering) is sent away from God's people as he figuratively carries all their sins into the wilderness,

But the goat on which the lot fell to be Azazel (SHD 5799; entire removal; i.e. of Satan) shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement (covering for sin) for him, and **let it go as the Azazel** (entire removal; i.e. of the sinner it represents) **into the wilderness** (Lev. 16:10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities (sins; cf. 1Jn. 3:4) of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall **send it away into the wilderness** by the hand of a suitable man. <sup>22</sup> The goat shall bear (carry) on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabitable land; and **he shall release the goat in the wilderness** (Lev. 16:21-22; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The fulfillment of the symbolism associated with the Day of Atonement will occur following Christ's return to rule this planet (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Those primarily responsible for deceiving and misleading mankind will be punished, and they are Satan and his fallen angels,

**Those who dwell in the wilderness** will bow before him (Christ; God's designated representative; cf. Ex. 23:20-22; Mt. 17:5), and his enemies will lick the dust (Satan and the fallen angels; cf. Gen. 3:14) (Ps. 72:9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

This world is under the influence of Satan and separated from Almighty God, due to rebellion against His word (Isa. 59:2). This state of affairs is compared to a wilderness in which mankind wanders not really understanding the purpose of life or what the future holds,

He (God) takes away the understanding of the chiefs (leaders) of the people of the earth, and makes them wander **in a pathless wilderness** (Job 12:24; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

By obedience to God's commanded Holy Days, mankind can come to a better understanding of His plan of salvation. This plan details the means through which mankind can be forgiven of their sins and reconciled with their Creator (see studies: God's Holy Days). This can occur now based on repentance and obedience to every word of God. Repentance of sin is the starting point that leads an individual out of Satan's wilderness. However, those who refuse to repent of transgressing God's law and commandments will remain prisoners of Satan's wilderness until their death (Gen. 2:17; cf. Rom 6:23).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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