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YOUR WILDERNESS ROUTE IS THE KING'S HIGHWAY!

Today's text: Numbers Chaps. 20-21; Isaiah 11: 11-16; 1 Cor. 10: 13

Extracts:

1. **“And Moses sent messengers ... unto the king of Edom, thus saith thy brother Israel, thou knowest all the travel [i.e., trouble] that hath befallen us. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders” [Num. 20: 14, 17]**
2. **“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” [1 Cor. 10: 13]**

We have followed the story of the wilderness experience of the children of Israel as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. We have estimated that they numbered close to two-and-a-half million people. But have you ever wondered about the route that they took? Were they making their route as they travelled? We do know that they followed God's sign from the sky: a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night [Ex. 13:21-22]. But which ground route did they follow?

In today's lesson, we come across a reference to the “king's highway” as the children of Israel travelled through the territories of the Edomites [Num. 20: 14-21] and of the Amorites [Numb. 21: 21-32]. Isaiah also referred to a highway stretching to Assyria that was taken by “Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt” [Is. 11:16]. Therefore, the children of Israel did not just wander about in the wilderness. God also prepared a super highway to ease their pains! That is good news for some of us who are right now passing through one wilderness experience or another. The going seems getting tougher and yet the promised blessings are not yet in sight. There are temptations from family, friends and foes to give up. We even have doubts if in deed we heard clearly what God had promised us or told us to do.

In today's lesson, we shall study the “king's highway” taken by the children of Israel, and learn from their example how we can take a similar route to our own promised lands.

1. The background of the king's highway

Chuck and Nancy Missler are an American couple who run a ministry called “The King’s High Way,” a division of their wider ministry, Koinonia House.¹ Chuck was an engineer who rose to become the Branch Chief of the Department of Guided Missiles in the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Later, he went into the private sector where he made a fortune as a consultant and member of several boards of directors. His wife studied Art at the UCLA [University of California in Los Angeles]. A devout Christian, she stayed at home to raise the couple’s four children. However, after 20 years of marriage, the family ran into tough times. The small publicly owned company where Chuck was the major shareholder had established an \$8 billion joint venture with the Soviet Union to supply personal computers to 143,000 schools in that country. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the deal failed and the Misslers lost everything, including their home, vehicles (automobiles), insurance and all.

As they passed through their wilderness of lack and want, they established a relationship with God that finally took them out. Nancy has documented their experience in a series of books that have sold over 400,000 copies to date. Of particular interest to us are a set of three books, called *The King’s High Way Trilogy: The Way of Agape, Be Ye Transformed* and *Faith in the Night Seasons*. In those publications, she has taught how to apply in practice love, as God desires, renew our minds to transform into His image, and experience unshakeable faith in order to enjoy intimacy with Him.

That story suggests that there must be something about the “King’s Highway” beyond its physical significance. Here are some facts about that famous road:

- The highway is said to be about 4,000 years old. Although its exact beginning and end is the subject of intense debate among bible scholars, the road is known to pass through Jordan from the Gulf of Aqaba in the south and meanders north and then east up into Iraq and Syria.² Isaiah confirms that it was the route taken by the children of Israel on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land **[Is. 11: 16]**
- During ancient times, most trade and travel was by land. Therefore, the control of the highway was critical. Every ruler tried to bring the road under his control.³ That explains why Moses had to ask permission of the kings of Edom **[Num. 20:14-16]** and of the Amorites **[Num. 21: 21-22]** to use their sections of the highway.

¹ “The King’s High Way: Changing Lives Moment by Moment,” http://www.kingshighway.org/faq/about_chuck_and_nancy.html

² Anthony C. LoBaido, “The King’s Highway of Arabia: Is it prophetic route for Jews during ‘end times’?” <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news>

³ “His Land-Israel My Beloved” <http://www.israelmybeloved.com>

- The road has prophetic significance. Isaiah had prophesied “there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; *like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt*” [Is. 11:16]. This is making some bible scholars speculate that this highway may actually have been named for the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Himself, Jesus Christ! Whether this is wild or believable, the Arab states of Jordan and Saudi Arabia are developing tourist attractions along the now modernized King’s Highway. For example, under the direction of Queen Noor, Jordan has obtained help from the World Bank to build hotels, water works, sewage and military supplies around the area called Petra (Aaron was buried at Mount Hor [Num.20: 27-28] near modern Petra) to accommodate over one million tourists every year.⁴

Here again, God has confirmed His word. Even before taking the children of Israel out of Egypt, He had prepared the infrastructures in terms of the route and rest places, among others. He had prepared a way for them even before the trials and hardships of the wilderness experience began, for He “is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” [1 Cor. 10:13].

2. Types of Wilderness

For the avoidance of doubt, let us make sure that we understand what we mean by wilderness. Ordinarily, a wilderness is a desolate place. The term has been used to describe the wanderings of the children of Israel between Egypt and the Promised Land [Ex. 16:1]. However, any point of desolation is a wilderness [Jer. 22:6]. In general, a wilderness harbours “great and terrible” things [Deut. 1:19], full of wild creatures [Deut. 8:15]. It is uninhabited and without basic amenities [Ps. 107: 4-5]. It is a *temporary* hard place *provoked by God Himself* to give us the *privilege* to receive spiritual discipline for our respective callings [Ex. 13: 17-18]. Let us examine some types of wilderness and the “King’s Highway” that God provided:

a) *Related to earthly blessings*

In this case, God promises us earthly blessings. However, in order to access them, we need some training and discipline, which invariably means a change in our current way of life.

The children of Israel had been promised a land flowing with milk and honey. However, in order to have it, they needed to move out of Egypt and go to the Promised Land in Canaan. We have seen how God used a series of plagues to force Pharaoh to let them go. We have seen their miraculous

⁴ “The King’s Highway of Arabia,” Op. cit., p. 2

crossing of the Red Sea. We have seen how God provided them with water from stones and food from heaven (*manna*). All the while, the people's pace of traveling was determined by the Spirit of God in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. From today's lesson, we now know that they travelled along the king's highway, which was the best inter-state expressway (freeway) in the then known world. Because of their murmurings and disobedience, *the short journey took 40 years and the disobedient generation did not reach the Promised Land.*

We are also familiar with the story of Joseph. God had through a series of dreams revealed that he would become the source of blessing to his parents and brothers. His wilderness experience lasted 13 years. His brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. There, the wife of his master, Potiphar, put him in jail through false accusations. It was while in jail that he met Pharaoh's domestic staff, one of whom finally mentioned him to the king of Egypt at the most appropriate time. The "king's highway" took Joseph into slavery and prison in Egypt, and finally to rulership as the governor of Egypt, next in command only to Pharaoh himself! He kept to that route through his *absolute faith in and fear of God*. The joy of the Lord became his strength.

b) *Preparing for a ministry*

Another type of wilderness arises when God is preparing us for a ministry. The story of the Misslers above is a case in point. God needs to discipline us so that we can cope with the said ministry in due course. Again, a good number of examples abound in scripture.

John the Baptist was the precursor (forerunner) of Jesus Christ. He lived in the wilderness where he fed on locusts and wild honey [**Mk 1: 1-6**]. Jesus Christ Himself was in the wilderness without food or water for forty days, "tempted of Satan, and was with wild beasts, *and the angels ministered unto Him*" [**Mk 1: 13**]. After his Damascus experience, Paul spent three years in the wilderness of Arabia where he depended on "the revelation of Jesus Christ" [**Gal. 1: 11-18**]. In all three cases, their *total dependence on the will and direction of the Spirit of God defined the direction and duration of their wilderness experience.*

c) *Our journey to heaven*

A third kind of wilderness is our sojourn here on earth. God brought us here to fear Him and to keep His commandments [**Eccl. 12: 13**]. We are the earthly ambassadors of Christ [**2 Cor. 5:20**]. However, the territory in which we live, the world system, is controlled by Satan and his forces [**Jn 14:30; 1 Jn 2:15-17**]. So, there are two highways before us. The broad one with a wide gate leads to "destruction, and many there be which go in

thereat.” But the narrow way with a narrow gate “leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” [Matt. 7: 13-14]. Narrow here suggests a pruning/disciplining process [Jn 15: 2], characteristic of the wilderness experiences that we have discussed above. Jesus Christ has said, “I am the way, the truth and the life: *no man cometh to the Father but by Me*” [Jn 14: 6]. Since Jesus is the King of kings [Rev. 19: 16] and also the Way to the Father, He is the “King’s Highway” to our earthly blessings, to our earthly ministries, and to our salvation!

3. Implications of Jesus as the King’s Highway

- a) In spite of Holy Spirit guidance from the sky (in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night), the children of Israel still doubted God’s word that is a lamp on to our feet and a light on to our paths [Ps. 119: 105]. Jesus Christ is the Word of God [Jn 1: 1, 14] and the Light of the world [Jn 1: 7-11]. That is why we are commanded to look on to Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” [Heb. 12:2]. Without faith, it is impossible to please God [Heb. 11:6]. Therefore, those who think that they can go directly to God without passing through Jesus have missed the king’s highway and may never reach their Promised Land!
- b) Along the king’s highway, God provided *manna* from heaven as food for the children of Israel, and water from the rock. *Manna* was bread from heaven and it was figurative of Jesus Christ, “the living bread which came from heaven” [Jn 6:51]. The people “drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, *and that Rock was Christ*” [1 Cor. 10: 4]. Therefore, as we face the hard knocks of modern living, in a world that is increasingly more wicked than ever, we need to come to the source of the living bread and the living water. In the words of Jesus, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me *shall never hunger*, and he that believeth on Me *shall never thirst*” [Jn 6:35].
- c) When the people complained of hunger and thirst, God sent fiery serpents among them, which killed a great number. When Moses cried to God, He commanded him to make a brass serpent and set it on a pole, and whosoever looked at it when bitten by a serpent was saved [Num. 21: 4-9]. Alluding to this event later, Jesus told Nicodemus, the Jewish leader who came to Him by night, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That *whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” [Jn 3: 14-15]. Therefore, having borne our sins in His own flesh on the cross at Calvary, Jesus has granted us righteousness, “by whose stripes ye were healed” [1 Pet. 2: 24].
- d) Towards the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus promised that His Father would send the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ as our Comforter, Teacher and Guide [Jn 14: 26]. “He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” [Jn 16:14]. So, today, while the King

is in heaven, the Holy Spirit, until the Second Coming of Christ, is manning His highway on earth!

4. Walking the King's Highway

. No matter the difficulties that you may be passing through right now, you should have high hopes. God has promised you that He has provided a way out of your problems. That way is the King's Highway. Jesus Christ is the King. He is also the Only Way to the Father. So, how do you follow His highway so that you can reach your Promised Land? Here are some guidelines:

- a) If you want to know God, you must first know His Son because “no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” [**Jn 1: 18**]. When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, He will then introduce you to His Father as His brother or sister and joint-heirs with Him [**Rom. 8: 16**].
- b) To become Christ's brother or sister carries an important obligation, one of absolute obedience, “for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister and My mother” [**Mk 3: 35**]
- c) Doing God's will does not mean that you will not suffer pains or set backs, for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” [**2 Tim. 3: 12**]. However, you are to “count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations (i.e., trials) knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience” [**Jam. 1: 2-3**], and patience produces experience which in turn leads to hope [**Rom. 5: 3-4**].
- d) Your journey on the King's Highway does not end until you are called home to heaven. Therefore, there is no room for complacency. You cannot afford to live on your past. On this road, what counts is where you are with the Lord *this moment* [**Ps. 95: 7-8**]. As you well know, the road to success is always under construction!
- e) God knows that you are weak and vulnerable. That is why you should lean on Him, not on your smartness or worldly devices [**Is. 26:3; Jn 15: 1-5**].

If a wilderness experience is necessary for your spiritual growth, you cannot avoid it. However, be assured that God has already lined up all your necessary provisions for you, provided you take the King's Highway. Your enemies will erect detours and obstacles but the Lord will deliver you out of them all. I wish you safe journey on the King's Highway!