

## That The World May Know – The Life and Ministry of the Messiah – Session 3: The Time Had Fully Come

### Lessons in the Wilderness

The vast and dreadful wilderness of Deuteronomy 8:15 had a profound effect on the people of the Bible. There, God disciplined them for the lack of faith, disobedience, and complaining so that they would learn to trust in His faithfulness. There they were transformed from a band of refugees into a powerful nation called to live in obedience to God in His chosen land.

1. Which of Israel's forefathers spent time in the desert in preparation for the missions God gave them?  
Genesis 12:1 – 9  
Genesis 13:1  
Exodus 3:1  
1 Samuel 23:14
2. After God had delivered the Hebrews from Egypt and provided their food and water for three months as they traversed the deserts, what did he do? Why did God choose that time and that place?  
Exodus 19:1 – 6  
Exodus 20:1 – 17
3. What does each of the following passages reveal about the Hebrews' preparation in the wilderness?  
Deuteronomy 8:1 – 18  
Psalm 78:9 – 18  
Psalm 95:6 – 11  
Jeremiah 2:1 – 2
4. What can Christians today learn from the experiences of the Hebrews as they journeyed through the wilderness?  
1 Corinthians 10:1 - 11

### The Way of Redemption Led Through the Wilderness

1. What role did the prophets say the wilderness would play in the coming of the Messiah?  
Hosea 2:14 – 23  
Isaiah 40:1 – 5
2. Why did John the Baptist go into the wilderness?  
Matthew 3:1 – 3
3. Matthew 3:15 – 4:11 shows that as soon as Jesus came up out of the Jordan River following His baptism, He was led into the desert to be tempted by Satan. This was the same wilderness where the Essenes were located.
  - a. Why was the wilderness setting an appropriate place for Jesus temptation?  
Isaiah 40:1 – 3
  - b. How did Jesus resist Satan's 40-day spiritual attack?  
Luke 4:1 – 13
  - c. Why did Jesus have to be tempted? What is the importance of Jesus' resistance to Satan compared with Adam's?  
Romans 5:16 – 19
  - d. What do 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Hebrews 2:17 – 18 reveal about the importance of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness?

### A Community Set Apart to Fulfill God's Plan

God had worked for centuries to prepare the world for the advent of His Son, the Messiah. God had established His people Israel, the Promised Land, the line of David, the temple system, and even a small wilderness community of devout Jews (the Essenes) to provide the cultural and theological context for Jesus' life and work.

1. The Essenes held all their personal possessions in common. How was this similar to the lifestyle of the early Christians?  
Acts 2:42 – 45
2. The Essenes practiced a "ceremonial meal" that symbolized a great messianic banquet they believed would occur when the Messiah arrived. During this meal, they blessed bread and wine. Was this the original Communion feast?  
Matthew 26:26 – 29
3. The Essenes practice a ceremonial cleansing, using flowing water, that symbolized the spiritual cleansing brought about through repentance and forgiveness. What type of symbolic cleansing did the early Christians practice?  
John 3:22 – 23  
Acts 2:37 – 41
4. The Essenes believed there was a great struggle between the Sons of Light (God's followers) and the Sons of Darkness (Satan's followers). What does the Bible say about the battle between good (light) and evil (darkness) in which the Essenes believed?  
John 3:16 – 21  
John 12:35 – 36

## The Essenes Prepare the Way for the Messiah

1. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes used the following word and phrases, common to the New Testament but not elsewhere before Jesus was born.  
  
 Sons of Light – John 12:36  
 Light and darkness – Matthew 6:22 -23  
 Belial – 2 Corinthians 6:15  
 Poor in spirit – Matthew 5:3  
 Melchizedek – Hebrews 7:1 – 3  
 Son of God – Luke 1:32 – 35  
 Way of the Lord Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3
2. How would the Essenes' use of the above words and phrases have prepared Jesus' audience?
3. The Essenes interpreted the prophetic Scriptures as being fulfilled by the events of their day, which differed significantly from other religious movements. What was acceptance, or at least knowledge, of this concept important to God's plan of redemption?  
 Matthew 3:1 – 3  
 Luke 4:14 – 21  
 Luke 18:31 – 33  
 Acts 2:14 – 36
4. The Essenes traced the priesthood of the Messiah to Melchizedek, not Aaron. Why is this belief essential to accepting Jesus as the Messiah?  
 Luke 1:31 – 33  
 Hebrews 7 1 – 22
5. Even though the Essenes had many beliefs in common with the early Christians, there were key differences about the Messiah as a priest and a king.  
 Hebrews 7:15 – 17  
 Hebrews 8:1 – 2  
 Luke 1:32 – 33

## References

Genesis 12 Genesis 13 Exodus 19 Exodus 20 Deuteronomy 6 Deuteronomy 8 1 Samuel 23 1 Samuel 26 Psalm 78 Psalm 81 Psalm 95 Psalm 105 Psalm 107 Isaiah 40 Jeremiah 2 Jeremiah 7 Jeremiah 31 Hosea 2 Micah 6 Matthew 3 Matthew 4 Matthew 5 Matthew 6 Matthew 21	Matthew 26 Matthew 28 Mark 1 Mark 2 Luke 1 Luke 4 Luke 11 Luke 18 John 1 John 3 John 12 Acts 2 Romans 5 Romans 8 Romans 13 1 Corinthians 10 2 Corinthians 6 Galatians 4 Hebrews 2 Hebrews 3 Hebrews 7 Hebrews 8 1 John 1
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Jesus did not come to improve your life, a little tweak here and a little tweak there. Jesus came to transplant a new way of thinking into your mind, a new way of living into your soul. Once we join Jesus and pursue God's vision for this world, everything changes. You will go places you never thought you would go.. You will ask God for what you need and trust God to provide. And you may find there is not as much need to worry.

Was John the Baptist An Essene?	
John The Baptist	The Essenes
Came from a family of priests (Luke 1:5)	Many were priests who disagreed with temple authorities
Lived in the wilderness (Luke 1:80)	Qumran was in the Judean Wilderness
Was called to "prepare the way for the Lord" (Isaiah 40:1 – 5)	Lived in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord
Baptized as a sign of repentance and inner cleansing (Mark 1:4 – 5)	Practiced ritual cleansing in water as a sign of the soul's cleansing
Proclaimed that the One to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7 – 8)	Believed God would pour out His Spirit like water to cleanse perverse hearts
Was not accepted by most people (Matthew 21:32)	Complained that people ignored their teachings
Did not participate in the normal lifestyle of his people (Mark 1:6)	Lived an ascetic existence, prepared their own food
His disciples fasted and recited prayers (Mark 2:18; Luke 11:1)	Fasted and had specific prayers
Was in conflict with Jerusalem authorities (Matthew 3:7 – 10)	Wanted to create a new temple and religious practices