

## That The World May Know: The Path to the Cross – Session 1: The Way of the Essenes

### The Desert as God's Land

God has often used desert settings to test and train, shape and mold his people. In the desert, he spoke to the patriarchs and established his covenant through which the entire world would experience his blessings. God's ancient people often experienced painful struggle and suffering in the desert, but there they also experienced his faithful provisions, mercy, and forgiveness. When we stray from his "path," God calls us back to the faithfulness that his people learned in the desert. The Essenes were a part of the Hebrews dedicated to deepening their faith.

1. What do you imagine daily life in the desert would be like? What daily challenges would consume time and energy? How hard might it be to meet those challenges? What would happen because of failure?  
Exodus 15:22 – 27  
Exodus 16:1 – 3  
Exodus 17:1 – 3  
Numbers 21:1 – 8  
Deuteronomy 1:19 – 21  
Deuteronomy 8:10 – 18  
Jeremiah 2:1 – 8
2. Why did God take the Hebrews, who he had just delivered from Egyptian slavery, into the desert where they experienced a different kind of pain and suffering?  
Exodus 13:17 – 18  
Deuteronomy 8:1 – 5  
Ezekiel 20:8 – 12
3. What specific things did God want his people to learn about their relationship with him through their desert experiences?  
Exodus 16:1 – 12  
Exodus 29:45 – 46  
Numbers 15:37 – 41

### Remember the Desert

It is easy to think about the exodus in terms of its impact on the Hebrews. In the desert, God revealed his intimate presence to them through fire, cloud, and the thunder of his voice. His awesome miracles—water gushing out of rock, bread and meat from heaven, deliverance from enemies—testified to his love and protection over his beloved people. But God's challenge to "remember the desert" was not just for those who experienced it firsthand. God was speaking to Moses and all those who would follow.

1. The Bible often refers to positive aspects of what God accomplishes during "desert" experiences. What do the following verses reveal about God and his people—and what future generations were to remember?  
Deuteronomy 8:1 – 5  
Psalm 77:1 – 20  
Psalm 78:52 – 55  
Psalm 105:37 – 45  
Jeremiah 2:1 – 8  
  
How may remembering these passages and events teach, discipline, and encourage God's people of all times to trust and obey?
2. What did Moses command the Hebrews to do so that future generations would remember the experiences and lessons of the desert and live by God's every word?  
Deuteronomy 6:1 – 12  
Deuteronomy 11:16 – 21

### Dedicated to the Text

The Essenes lived in the wilderness at Qumran as a response to God's command to prepare the way for him in the desert. In the solitude of their desert community, they sought to escape the "noise" of a Hellenistic culture, avoid contact with Gentiles, and Hellenistic Jews, and remain untainted by the corrupt ruling temple authorities. In the harsh desert environment, they dedicated themselves to intense study of the Word of God and living by his every word. They diligently prepared for the apocalyptic age that they believed would soon arrive to purify God's people and install new, godly religious leaders.

1. The Essenes expected to hear directly from God through the tabernacle. Where did Moses receive God's words? What was he to do with them?  
Exodus 19:1 – 6  
Acts 7:37 – 38
2. When God gave his words to his people through Moses, where were they? What were they to do with them?  
Deuteronomy 4:9 – 14  
Deuteronomy 6:4 – 9  
Deuteronomy 11:16 – 21
3. Where did John the Baptist receive God's words? How did he respond to them? For what purpose?  
Mark 1:1 – 8  
Luke 3:1 – 6
4. If you were a faithful Jew who wanted to obey God and live by his every word, where might you go and how important would it be for you to read, memorize, copy, study, and interpret the Hebrew text?

## A Passion for Obedience

The Essenes' passion to walk in God's ways by obeying his every word was exemplary. They willingly sacrificed the comforts of life and the pleasures of culture in order to live in the desert wilderness and focus their full attention on knowing and obeying God's words. But they had a problem in the desert. In order to fulfill their interpretation of God's commands, they needed "living" water to use in their purification rituals.

1. Read the following passages. How much passion and love for walking in God's ways do they inspire in you?  
Deuteronomy 5:28 – 33  
Deuteronomy 10:12 – 13  
Deuteronomy 13:1 – 5  
Deuteronomy 26:16 – 19  
Psalm 25:4 – 11  
Hosea 14:9
2. God desires more from his people than intellectually knowing the right path. The practical application of the way of God is to walk obediently in God's way. What kind of effort does God desire his people to expend in obeying his words?  
Deuteronomy 10:12

What impact did these and similar passages of Scripture had on the Essenes' commitment to work diligently and put extreme effort into all aspects of their walk with God?

## Live the Text and Wait for God's Glory

The Essenes took to heart God's command in Isaiah 40 and went into the desert. They separated themselves from the prevailing Hellenistic culture in order to know and worship God. Their devotion led to new ways of living the text and preparing God's way by obeying his words in all aspects of life. And just as God had promised, his glory was revealed at the coming of Jesus the Messiah!

1. In what ways had the "glory of the Lord" been revealed to God's people in the past? What did it represent?  
Exodus 24:15 – 18  
Exodus 25:17 – 22  
Exodus 40:34 – 35  
Leviticus 9:23 – 24  
2 Chronicles 5:11 – 14  
2 Chronicles 7:1 – 3
2. As the Essenes lived the text and walked the path of righteous obedience to prepare the way for God, they anticipated the coming of his glory. What occurred in Bethlehem? What occurred by the Jordan River just five miles away from Qumran?  
Matthew 1:18 – 24  
Matthew 2:1 – 2  
Matthew 3:1 – 17

Genesis 12  
Exodus 12  
Exodus 15  
Exodus 17  
Exodus 24  
Exodus 26  
Exodus 28  
Exodus 30  
Leviticus 1  
Leviticus 3  
Leviticus 5  
Leviticus 7  
Leviticus 9  
Leviticus 16  
Leviticus 23  
Numbers 6  
Numbers 21  
Deuteronomy 4  
Deuteronomy 6  
Deuteronomy 8  
Deuteronomy 10  
Deuteronomy 13  
Deuteronomy 32  
1 Samuel 24  
1 Kings 19  
2 Chronicles 7  
Psalm 25  
Psalm 77  
Psalm 105  
Psalm 107  
Isaiah 30  
Isaiah 43  
Jeremiah 2  
Hosea 2  
Matthew 1  
Mark 1  
John 3  
Luke 4  
Acts 7  
Romans 15  
1 Corinthians 3  
Galatians 4  
1 Thessalonians 3  
1 Peter 1

Genesis 20  
Exodus 13  
Exodus 16  
Exodus 19  
Exodus 25  
Exodus 27  
Exodus 29  
Exodus 29  
Leviticus 2  
Leviticus 4  
Leviticus 6  
Leviticus 8  
Leviticus 11  
Leviticus 20  
Leviticus 25  
Numbers 15  
Deuteronomy 1  
Deuteronomy 5  
Deuteronomy 7  
Deuteronomy 9  
Deuteronomy 11  
Deuteronomy 26  
Joshua 1  
1 Samuel 26  
2 Chronicles 5  
Nehemiah 9  
Psalm 63  
Psalm 78  
Psalm 106  
Psalm 119  
Isaiah 40  
Isaiah 57  
Ezekiel 20  
Hosea 14  
Matthew 3  
John 1  
Luke 3  
Acts 2  
Romans 3  
1 Corinthians 1  
1 Corinthians 10  
Ephesians 2  
Hebrews 7  
1 Peter 2