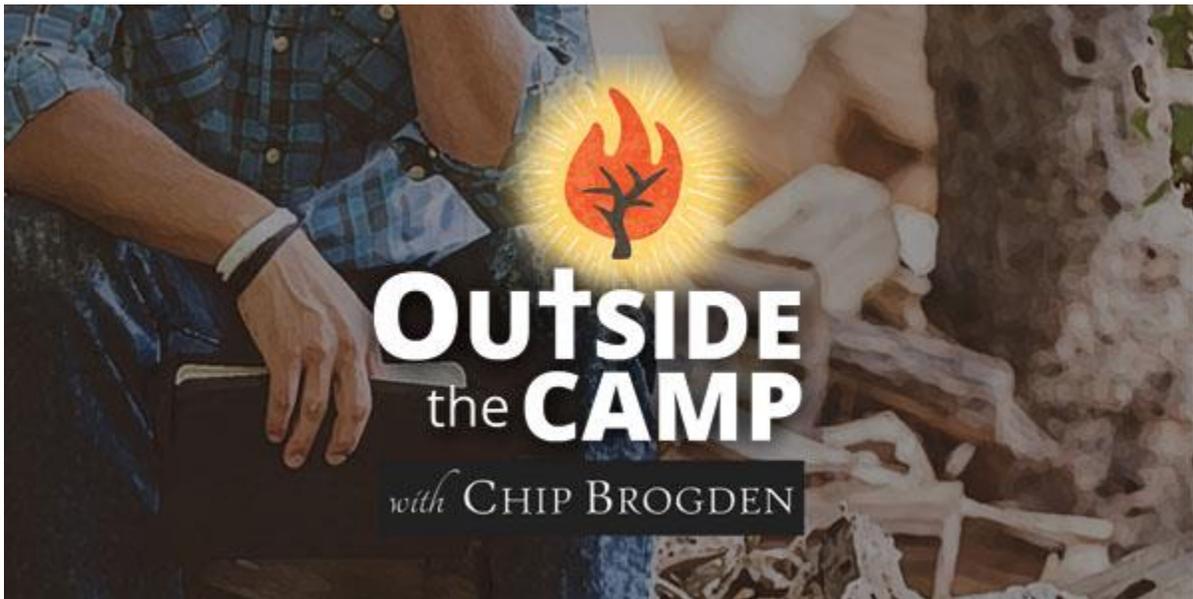


# TRANSCRIPT

## OUTSIDE THE CAMP WITH CHIP BROGDEN



### EPISODE 9: The Spiritual Importance of the Wilderness (Part 1)

Audio File Location:

<http://www.chipbrogden.com/otc-9-spiritual-importance-wilderness-part-1>

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*ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this edition of Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. Helping you discover the freedom and joy of a Christ-centered faith that is based on relationship, not religion. And now, with today's message, here's Chip Brogden.*

CHIP: In Hebrews 13:13, the Bible says, "Let us go forth to Him [to Jesus] outside the camp and bear His reproach." The purpose of this podcast is to encourage those of you who are seeking the simplicity of a Christ-centered faith and are hearing the Lord call you to come out of a church-centered faith. You know, a lot of people wonder what the Scriptural basis is for coming out of church, and they will point to one or two verses of

Scripture about gathering together as a proof-text for attending church services. But when you really look at the Word of God as a whole – not just one or two verses they like to quote in church all the time, but really look at the Word of God, and look at the history of Judaism – we see that there is much more written about the wilderness experience of coming out of Babylon and going into the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. Making that journey “into the wilderness” is just another way of saying “going outside the camp to be with Jesus.” It means you’re leaving behind the safe, comfortable, familiar world and you’re making a new, exciting, journey into the spiritual depths of Christ, where you are *reduced* to Jesus. Because you see, in the wilderness, you have to rely upon the Lord for daily bread, and water from a rock. Your spiritual life is revealed for what it really is, and there in the wilderness you learn the difference between a religion *about* Jesus and a relationship *with* Jesus.

Well, these truths are self-evident to those who have experienced them, and to those who know how to study the Scriptures. When we do go to the Word of God for guidance, we find that others have traveled the path before us, and they have left us words of wisdom and warning. So I want to really dig into the Word of God with you and talk about *the spiritual importance* as well as *the prophetic significance* of the wilderness. A good place to begin is with John the Baptist, who really conveys the essence of being “outside the camp” with Jesus, both in the message that he brought and in the way he lived his life. In fact, I did a whole series of teachings on this subject, so grab your Bible if you can; or if not, just listen as we go back to this live teaching from Matthew Chapter 3, as we examine what the Bible has to say about the spiritual importance of the wilderness.

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We're going to jump right into Matthew 3 and see if we can pick up some new truths and apply them to our season and our time today.

First, you should know that in Scripture there is what Bible scholars, Bible teachers call “four hundred silent years.” This would be the period of time between the ending of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, as far as a timeline is concerned. In these “four hundred silent years” there were no prophets or any recorded words of God (in terms of Scripture).

So the Old Testament, if you're looking at it from a chronological perspective - because the books as they appear in your Bible, are not chronological, they're arranged in a different order - but if you look at them chronologically, the last prophets of the Old Testament are Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets during the time of the Babylonian exile, and after the exile, after they were called out of Babylon to go back to Jerusalem, you had Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, who were prophets, and who had their writings recorded as scripture in the Old Testament. So that gives you a sense of the timing. Then, the last thing you see in Malachi (which happens to coincide with the last book of the Old Testament, so in that sense the chronology is in agreement), Malachi ends the Old Testament by saying, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” That is Malachi 4, verse five. “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” And after that word by Malachi, there was four hundred years of silence - four hundred years where there was no prophecy that we know of, and no scripture was recorded; that closed the canon of the Old Testament.

Four hundred years passed, and then we have the opening of the New Testament, which is where we come to in the book of Matthew. So in the New Testament, John the Baptist begins to preach, and that's where we come to in Matthew chapter 3. And then of course, Jesus the Messiah arrives just as Malachi prophesied. So the Jews were looking for the literal return of Elijah the prophet because that's what Malachi says. But Jesus would interpret this to His own disciples by saying that John the Baptist *is* Elijah the prophet - and of course they didn't recognize John the Baptist as being a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah, just as they did not recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the Messiah. So they missed both John the Baptist and Jesus.

But my point of bringing this up is to show you this: that during these four hundred silent years, the Jews created their own harlot religious system that would eventually reject and betray the Lord Jesus. So I think it's interesting that the Old Testament closes with the Jews coming out of Babylon - or a remnant of them coming out of Babylon. Most of the Jews remained behind in Babylon, as we have already pointed out. Just because you are *called* out doesn't mean you have *come* out. And that's been the biggest revelation to me personally this year. Many are called but few are chosen. The Ekklesia is the *called-out* assembly - that's God's purpose, that's God's ideal; but the fact remains, just because you are *called* out doesn't mean you have *come* out. And that's why in the Book of Revelation He keeps telling His people, "Come out of her, My people; Come out of her, My people!" He is calling them out. He's calling them out of the harlot church system, but the fact remains that many of them still remain in that system. Just because they are *called* out doesn't mean they have *come* out; so those who have come out constitute a remnant.

So in the close of the Old Testament, God has called them out of Babylon and He's trying to get them to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the temple; and

things seem to be going well. But then it's almost like four hundred years of silence... God just kind of takes a step back and left them to their own devices. My point is that left to their own devices, it took them four hundred years, but the Jews, in the absence of a prophetic voice, in the absence of a prophetic ministry, in the absence of someone standing up and saying, "Thus says the Lord: This is God's Will, this is God's purpose, this is what you are to do," in the absence of that, *religion* took over. And for four hundred years there was a famine of the Word of God. Four hundred silent years.

In the process of time, Alexander the Great took over, and then the Romans took over, and so here we are four hundred years after Malachi. And what we find as we enter into the New Testament is a very sophisticated, organized, harlot religious system. I call it a "harlot" religious system because that's the way God sees spiritual adultery - spiritual idolatry He considers to be spiritual harlotry or spiritual adultery. So in four hundred years (with a little help from Rome) the Jews rebuilt their temple into a massive, beautiful structure - so much so that the disciples would, at some point, point the beauty of the temple out to Jesus and say, "Look, Lord! Look at this great building we have constructed! Look at the beautiful stones and how wonderful everything is!" And Jesus says, "You see all of these stones that you're so thrilled with? Every one of them will be torn down. There will not be one left upon another. This whole thing is going to be wiped out." But during these four hundred years the Jews went from not having a city, not having a temple, to now: having a city, having a large temple, having a very sophisticated priesthood and several religious divisions or sects there within Judaism.

The point is that *they created a religious system in the absence of a spiritual leadership and in the absence of a prophetic voice to keep them faithful to God's purpose.* Religion took over. They built a system that did not even recognize the Messiah! And God eventually judged and destroyed that system when Titus invaded Jerusalem in A.D. 70 -

burned the temple to the ground, banned the Jews from going back to Jerusalem, and that was the end of [Temple] Judaism [in Jerusalem] in the first century; and since then, they have been scattered until the regathering in Israel in 1948.

So Paul says all these things happened to them as an example for us, upon whom the ends of the world have come. So I think it's interesting to go back and look. There were four Jewish sects – divisions, denominations if you will - in the first century in the time of Jesus. I'm setting the stage for Matthew 3 so that you can better appreciate the environment, the context of Matthew 3. Four Jewish sects of the first century.

*First*, were the Pharisees - probably the most well-known in Scripture because they were always clashing with Jesus. These were the conservatives of Judaism. They were the fundamentalists. They were pro-Hebrew, pro-Israel. They were anti-Greek, anti-Roman - meaning, they saw the Romans and the Greco-Roman society as worldly and a threat to Judaism. And so they were very zealous for the traditions of the elders; they were very tenacious about Scripture, as well as an oral tradition, which was basically an interpretation. Remember, we said previously that when you're studying Scripture there's three layers of study. The first is, "What does it say?" Second is, "What does it mean?" And the third is, "How does it apply?" So the Pharisees had the written scripture; and they also had an oral tradition that tried to give the understanding, tried to explain what it meant. And then tried to explain how it applies. They would sit in circles and ask questions and critique things; like, "Rabbi bin Yoseph: in your opinion, is it OK for me to travel more than three miles on the Sabbath if I'm going to help my sick mother? The Torah says we are to honor our father and our mother; yet it says we are not to do any work on the Sabbath." And so they would have these discussions back and forth and come up with an oral tradition, an oral interpretation, of how to apply the law of God, the Scriptures.

Well see, the issue with that, and the issue that Jesus confronted them with, is they tended to strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. In other words, they were very meticulous over things that didn't matter, and the things that were important - like righteousness and justice and mercy - they completely overlooked. Those are the Pharisees.

*The second* that you have heard about in the Scriptures are the Sadducees. So if the Pharisees were the conservatives of first century Judaism, the Sadducees were the liberals; they were to the opposite extreme. Now the Sadducees mostly were comprised of priests and politicians. They had charge of the temple, the temple grounds, they were in charge of the sanctuary, the sacrifices; and most of them were rich as a result. Most of them had connections to the Romans, and so they were the upper class. But they tended to be very liberal. They denied all of the scriptures in the Old Testament except for the Torah - in other words, they the accepted the Law of Moses, but the prophets they did not. And they also denied the resurrection of the dead. They denied that there were such things as angels or demons. So they were very liberal. In terms of their religious philosophy, the opposite of the Pharisees. So you see Jesus being confronted and confronting the Pharisees and the Sadducees throughout Scripture.

*The third sect* that you don't see mentioned in the New Testament is the Essenes, and they are important because it's believed that John the Baptist was actually a part of the Essenes, which is another Jewish group. These were more communal; these were your anti-organized religion Jewish believers of the day, but they tended to be more communal, ascetic, non-materialistic, focusing on good works. They daily immersed themselves in water to purify themselves. They were mostly scattered in different towns and villages throughout Israel, but there was a larger community of Essenes in the Judean desert near the Dead Sea, and many scholars believe that it was the Essenes who

actually wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls and preserved them. So they lived in the desert; they lived in the wilderness. And they were they were kind of the anti-establishment Jews. They rejected the conservative nit-pickiness of the Pharisees; they rejected the materialism of the Sadducees. And they were the ones who were determined to worship God in a more pure way without the trappings of Judaism and organized religion.

*Then* after Christ lived, died, and was raised again, you had a yet another sect within Judaism called the Nazarenes. You see them mentioned in Acts 25:5, when Paul is accused of being “the ringleader of the sect known as the Nazarenes.” Now the Nazarenes were those Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah; so they were Jews who accepted Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah. Most of the believers you see in Acts chapter 2, there in Jerusalem; and [chapters] 3 and 4 and 5 - before they left Jerusalem and went into Judea, and Samaria, and up into Antioch to preach Jesus to the Gentiles - most of the believers in the first part of the book of Acts would end up being *Nazarenes*, because they were still *Jewish*. They believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but they continued to observe the Mosaic Law. They didn't stop being Jewish and become Christian; they maintained their Jewish heritage, their Jewish customs. And the issue with some of them is that they would argue with Paul over things like circumcision, because they understood and they accepted and believed that Jesus was the Messiah - but they didn't have the *full* revelation, they didn't have the *full* knowledge of *all* that Christ is, *all* that Christ represents, *all* that Christ means. They were followers of Yeshua of Nazareth - and they were still Jewish.

So these are the ones where Paul would go preach Jesus to the Gentiles; and then, after he left, Jews from Jerusalem – Nazarenes - would come behind Paul and go to the Gentiles and they would say something like, “Praise the Lord that you are believers in Jesus! We are believers in Jesus also, and so we wanted to connect with you, and

fellowship with you, and say welcome to this wonderful faith in Jesus. By the way... you really should get circumcised! And while you're at it, you really should... here's the law of Moses... We know you're Gentiles and you haven't kept these Jewish customs and rules and regulations; but now that you're believers in Jesus, Jesus is Jewish, therefore you really should become Jewish! You really should be circumcised. You really should not eat pork. And while you're at it, you should probably observe the Sabbath!"

So you see how this would come into conflict with Paul, and we see this recorded in the Book of Acts. We see confrontations over it in the letter to the Galatians. So keep this in mind as we consider the Word of God in Matthew chapter 3, so that you understand who all the players are here as we first begin to talk about the spiritual importance of the wilderness.

I'll start reading from Matthew chapter 3, in verse one: "In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'"

Now as I pointed out in the email: Punctuation and capitalization and spacing were not part of the Hebrew or Greek language at the time the Scriptures were written. Punctuation, spacing, capitalization, all of these things are added for our benefit because it's very hard to read when the letters are in all capitals and there's no spacing between letters or words or sentences or paragraphs, and there's no punctuation. These are modern conveniences of a sophisticated language, but they were not present at the time that the Scriptures were written. As a result, it's really easy to be influenced by

punctuation when you're reading Scripture. But again, it's important that you look at it and not think of it, not assume, that the punctuation is inspired, or that it's actually part of the original. And the reason that's important is because it changes the meaning. You can use punctuation around the same words and change the meaning.

So it in this case, if you took away the punctuation, you could read it as, "The voice of one crying, '*In the wilderness* prepare the way of the Lord.'" So there's a voice crying - and what is the voice saying? It's saying that *in the wilderness* prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. That's a little bit different, and I'm saying it could be both; it could be someone in the wilderness who is crying out saying, "Prepare the way of the Lord," and it could also mean that there is the voice of one crying and telling you and me, "*In the wilderness* is the *place* where we prepare the way of the Lord." Both of those interpretations fit within the context; both are supported by the context. But you never hear anyone talking about the second possibility: that it's *in the wilderness*. God's calling us *out* of Babylon, we make this journey *through* the wilderness. Just like He called them *out* of Egypt, and they went *through* the wilderness into the promised land. In the same way, when they were carried off to Babylon and they were there for 70 years under the judgment of God, at the end of 70 years He called them *out* of Babylon. Most of them stayed behind because they didn't want to make that journey back - they got comfortable in Babylon and they didn't want to leave. But to the remnant who did leave, they had to make a journey *through the wilderness* to get back to Jerusalem and begin the process of rebuilding Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple.

So it's the voice of one crying, one *calling out*, which would be the same as *ek-kaleo*, to call out; the *ek-klesia*, are the called-out people, the called-out assembly. So here's the voice of one crying, saying, "*In the wilderness, in the wilderness*, prepare the way of the Lord." Now I say that the context supports this, and we'll talk about it. But let's finish

reading. Verses 4, 5 and 6, it says that, “John himself was clothed in camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went *out to him.*” *Went out to him!* “And were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”

So let's look at this: the spiritual importance of the wilderness.

1. John had to leave the priesthood - he had to get away from Jerusalem - to clearly see and speak the Word of God and to fulfill his prophetic ministry. You see, John was a Sadducee, because his father was a priest. You read about him in the Gospel of Luke. It talks about Elizabeth, who was without a child, and yet the angel comes and says, “You're going to have a child, and you should name him John.” Then the angel came to John's father, Zachariah, who was a priest in the temple, doing his priestly thing, whatever it was they did. And the angel appears to him and says the same thing, and Zechariah says, “How can this be? My wife is old and well-advanced in years!” And Gabriel says, “I'm in the presence of God. I'm telling you what God says. But because you don't believe me, you'll not be able to speak - you'll be mute - until it comes to pass.” And so Zachariah comes out of the temple; he can't speak, he's making sign language; and they realize he must have seen a vision, but he can't communicate to anybody what it is. Well, lo and behold, Elizabeth gets pregnant. She has a son and they are trying to figure out what to name him, and Zechariah is motioning - you know, give me something to write with - and he writes down, “His name is John.” And as soon as he wrote that, now he can speak; and so everything that the angel said came to pass.

Well think about it: being in the priesthood, that was a good place to be. That was a place of privilege. That was a place of relative prosperity. because the priest got a

portion of everything that was given to the temple, and this was a massive, massive operation. But the angel (referring to John) said that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, from your womb. And when Elizabeth went to meet with Mary, she said the baby within me stirred when he heard the voice of the mother of our Lord.

So the point is: John was on a path. He had a calling from God. And if he had taken the path that most people would have taken he would said, “Well you know, I’m a priest, I’m going to obey the call of God, I’m going to work for reform and revival in this religious system that we have created because it’s corrupt.” Jesus says you’re like whitewashed tombs; you look good on the outside, but on the inside you are full of dead men’s bones. It took them four hundred years to build a system that was rich on the outside but was dead on the inside.

Well, John certainly saw all of that. We’ll see from his preaching that he knows exactly what’s going on. He has the same spiritual discernment that Jesus has. And it would have been really easy for John to take a path of “reformation” or “revival.” Remember we talked about those paths in a previous teaching. There’s Reformers, who think we can fix the system; if only we can make some repairs and patch it up, we can fix the system. “Yeah, it’s not perfect, but it’s the best thing going, and we can reform it and make it better!” Then there’s people who say *revival* is the answer, and just around the corner is a big revival! “Just around the corner God’s going to pour out His Spirit, oh, in this great big last days revival!” And so they’re anxiously waiting for God to do something, waiting for God to do something. They’ve been waiting and waiting and waiting, and when you get tired of waiting, you start making things up - and then, whatever crazy thing happens, in whatever corner of the world, people rush over there thinking this is the “big revival.”

But I said there's a third option there, and that is *repudiation*. Repudiation means I'm not trying to reform the system and fix it; I'm not trying to pray that God revives it, brings it back to life, and pours out His Spirit on a bunch of tombs filled with dead men's bones. The only real answer is to *repudiate* the system: to come out of Babylon, to see it as God sees it - as a harlot, as a substitute for Christ, as something that leads us away from the simplicity of Christ.

John saw it, but he had a choice. He could have stayed there, followed in his father's footsteps, been a priest, been right there in the center of religious activity where you would expect. "If God has given you a ministry, God has given you a word, you're filled with the Holy Spirit, God's going to *use you in a mighty way!* And He's going to do it right *here* as a *priest* in the center of Jewish culture, Jewish religion!" And John is the man of the hour! But at some point, something happens and we see that John *repudiated* the system, he *repudiated* his position as a priest, and we see him out in the wilderness...

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Following Jesus "outside the camp" and bearing His reproach will cost you something. There is a price to be paid to obtain that revelation, and there is a price to be paid to keep it and to live it out. There is much more to learn from Matthew 3 and John the Baptist, but that is all the time we have for today's episode of *Outside the Camp*, so we'll return to this next time. Until then, this is Chip Brogden, reminding you that this is the day that the Lord has made, so make it a good day; and remember that greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world!

*ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. We hope you enjoyed today's broadcast and found it helpful and*

*encouraging. If you'd like to get additional teachings, audio recordings, books and other Christ-centered resources to help you grow spiritually, visit us online at [ChipBrogden.com](http://ChipBrogden.com). Outside the Camp is made possible by the prayers and financial support of listeners like you. Until next time, on behalf of Chip Brogden, I'm Kathy Smith, reminding you that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you!*