



# Berean Christian Fellowship

## DEVOTIONAL

October 24  
2013

### Desert Highways

The Memory Verse for this week is from Isaiah 40: **“A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (Isaiah 40:3 ESV).**

This verse always struck me with a sense of awe. It is one stanza in an incredible “hymn” to the power and glory of God displayed through His promise to send His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

I remember wondering what this verse meant exactly when I would read it. How were the Jews supposed to prepare the way of the Lord and make a pathway in the desert for the Messiah? Did they think they had to literally build a “landing pad” for God—a physical way for Him to take up the throne of David? Perhaps they thought they had to go get everyone ready for His arrival with praise teams, fireworks, and palm branches. Maybe they thought they had to spread the news about His arrival. I also wondered if this verse had any pertinence to us today.

We don’t need to speculate about what this verse means, because the “voice” it refers to speaks for itself nearly 700 years after Isaiah prophesied about it. We know now that John the Baptist was this “voice” that cried this very verse into the deaf ears of the Pharisees (John 1:22-24). John told them he was preparing the way of the Lord, whom he shortly thereafter declared was Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew says, *“For this [John] is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight’”* (Matthew 3:3).

How was John telling people to make God’s way straight? Was he instructing the Jews how to build a royal carriage, sew a glorious robe, or prepare a red carpet? The verse just before tells us: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 3:2). John’s mission was to call people to **repentance** in the wilderness, preparing the way for God’s plan—the good news (Gospel) of salvation through Jesus Christ. Without repentance, the promise of salvation is meaningless and cannot lead people out of the desert they have made for themselves in sin.

God often describes man’s state without Him as a desert, for the desert is a place of abandonment and death where outcasts, criminals, and orphans seek refuge in ruins and wastelands. No one wants to live in the desert. It is a place that life has deserted, because there is no life-giving water. We read in Isaiah 14:17 that Satan made the world like a desert. Certainly, this means spiritually through his deception in the Garden that led Adam to sin and brought death into the world.

Better than leading us out of the desert of our sinful nature, Jesus can transform our natures to life, for He is the Water of Life. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *“whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”* (John 4:14).

How do we receive this Living Water until our lives become like watered gardens (Isaiah 58:11) spouting up from scorched places into eternal life? By repenting of our sin and believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God, for God sent Him into the world that *“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16b). Even so, Amen.