

Recap of last week's study:

From Wilderness to Garden and Back to Wilderness

Genesis 1:1-2, 2:4-15, 3:22-24

- Out of void and nothingness, God creates a fruitful garden and the first humans, but Adam and Eve choose to grasp at wisdom on their own terms, resulting in wilderness exile.
- Remember I asked: How do the opening chapters of Genesis help us to see creation not as something to control or exploit, but as a gift to be received through trust and partnership with God?

Hagar's Exile and Wilderness Encounter With God

Genesis 16:1-13, 21:14-21

- This week's study reinforces once again what we've been focusing on: **the wilderness**.
- It is a place of danger, testing, and scarcity, but also a place where God provides, protects, and transforms those who have been pushed to the brink.

Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave, ends up in a desolate wilderness twice, and both times she encounters the God who sees, hears, and sustains those who are harmed and forgotten.

In Genesis 16:1–13, the wilderness becomes the unlikely setting where Hagar—mistreated, pregnant, and fleeing from Sarai—encounters divine compassion.

- Alone by a spring on the way to Shur, she discovers that the wilderness is not merely a barren escape route but a sacred meeting place where God sees, hears, and speaks to the unseen.
- What appears to be a place of abandonment becomes the very ground where God names her future, restores her direction, and reveals himself as the One who meets people in desolate places.

Genesis 16:1-13NASB

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not borne him a child, but she had an Egyptian slave woman whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please have relations with my slave woman; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ And so after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

⁴ Then he had relations with Hagar, and she conceived; and when Hagar became aware that she had conceived, her mistress was insignificant in her sight. ⁵ So Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be upon you! I put my slave woman into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was insignificant in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me.” ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, “Look, your slave woman is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

⁷ Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave woman, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” ⁹ So the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” ¹⁰ The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”

¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her further,
“Behold, you are pregnant,
And you will give birth to a son;
And you shall name him Ishmael,
Because the LORD has heard your affliction.

¹²“But he will be a wild donkey of a man;
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone’s hand will be against him;
And he will live in defiance of all his brothers.”

¹³ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees me”; for she said, “Have I even seen Him here and lived after He saw me?”

Gen. 16:1-13

A place of flight that becomes a place of encounter Hagar flees into the wilderness to escape oppression, yet the very place she runs to becomes the place where God finds her and calls her by name.

Scarcity contrasted with divine provision Though the wilderness symbolizes danger and lack, God meets Hagar beside a life-giving spring, signaling that divine care can break into even the harshest landscapes.

Gen. 16:1-13

Identity and destiny revealed in desolation

In the wilderness, Hagar receives the promise of countless descendants and the name for her son, Ishmael—marking the wilderness as the birthplace of a future.

A God who sees in the unseen places

Hagar's declaration, "You are a God who sees me," transforms the wilderness into a testimony: God is present not only in cultivated, orderly spaces but also in the raw, uninhabited areas where people feel forgotten.

In Genesis 21:14–21, the wilderness of Beersheba becomes the stark backdrop for Hagar's second exile—a place where scarcity pushes her to the edge of despair.

- Wandering with only a skin of water, she faces the terror of watching her son die in the heat of the wilderness.
- Yet this desolate landscape becomes the very place where God hears, sees, and intervenes.
- In the wilderness, God opens Hagar's eyes to a hidden well, renews his promise over Ishmael, and transforms a place of near-death into a place where a future is born.

Genesis 21:14-21 NASB

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “May I not see the boy die!” And she sat opposite him, and raised her voice and wept.

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, lift up the boy, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ And God was with the boy, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Gen. 21:14-21

The wilderness as a place of forced wandering Hagar does not choose this journey; she is sent away and left to navigate a barren land with minimal provision..

Desperation meets divine attention When the water runs out and hope collapses, God hears Ishmael's cry and responds with reassurance and promise.

Gen. 21:14-21

Revelation in desolation God “opens her eyes” to a well—showing that provision was present even when she could not see it.

A future rooted in the wilderness Ishmael grows up in the wilderness of Paran, becoming an archer, signaling that the wilderness becomes not just a crisis point but the soil of his identity and destiny.

Reflect

What does Hagar's story reveal about the wilderness as a place where the unseen and unheard are seen, heard, and sustained by God?

Next week:

Moses' Exile and Encounter With God in the Wilderness

Exodus 2:11-25, 3:1-6

Study considerations:

- Moses is rescued from death and raised in Egypt's royal court (Exod. 2:1-10).
- As an adult, Moses defends an enslaved Israelite by murdering an Egyptian slave master.
- But when his actions are exposed, Moses flees for his life into the wilderness of Midian.

Source for 3/19/2026:

The Wilderness in the Bible | Hagar's Exile and
Wilderness Encounter With God