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Into the Wilderness - Part 1

by Sam Downey

Jaysee pulled off the Interstate and looked off to the southeast, his eyes pursuing the ribbon of gray dirt that passed for a road as it disappeared over the distant sandy ridge. He had been riding with his back to the setting sun for almost an hour, dodging the big rigs and playing tag with the four-wheelers. He was more than ready to escape the pinball machine of I-15 for the tranquility of a wilderness road. He pulled off the exit ramp and parked the Knucklehead on a patch of hardpan, dismounted and stretched to his full length, trying to get some of the kinks out. Most of his friends thought he was a little over the top for wanting to visit the desert so often, especially in the summer. But he had ridden up from the coast to be by himself and think about what he wanted to do now. He had always been able to think things through better when he was away from noise, traffic, and distraction. There were just too many temptations out there that would keep him from finding the answers he was seeking.

Jaysee had packed his duffle bag with a minimum of necessities and started this trek after lunch at a local watering hole right off the Pacific Coast Highway. He went through Barstow, bearing to the left on I-15 toward Vegas, and had stopped for gas and supplies in Baker, the Gateway to Death Valley. Death Valley offered beauty and solitude at this time of year, but he elected to head into the eastern Mojave and explore the area over toward the Colorado River. He knew that there was little that passed for civilization in that part of California, and that suited him just fine. If he could have his way, he would find a hanging little valley somewhere with a spring and a spot of shade where he could pitch his tent and unfurl his sleeping bag and not see another human being for the rest of the week. He had enough on his mind to keep him isolated for six weeks if he so chose.

Jaysee had a great affinity for the desert which began before he was born. His mother had taken her pilgrimage into the wilderness to visit relatives while he was a pre-born infant, curled up comfortably in her womb. He was sure that he could recall the songs that she sang and the tunes she hummed which became their constant companions on that trip. He thought he could remember the laughter and the tears which attended them and sustained them as they traveled. He had vague memories of a hasty trip from the comfort of home out into the desert when he was about two years old. He didn't remember much except the feeling of security his mother felt as they left the village for the vacant hills of the southern deserts. He had always felt safety in the silence. There were stillness and constancy, murmurs and change, all at once in the desert. Jaysee supposed that the difference was not true emptiness or absence of life, but a different strain of life, variant levels of noise which made the modern cacophony of civilization seem rude and harsh. He knew that for his entire life he would need to escape to this seclusion often, for it helped him sort out the complex thoughts that continually invaded his mind. He had always known that he had been made for a special purpose. He grew up in a world that had undergone dramatic changes, and there were many who would need for him to successfully carry out his purpose. Actually, Jaysee believed that every person on earth had been created with a plan and purpose in mind, and that it was part of his task was to help others discover that meaning for their lives. He was just trying to accomplish what he thought everyone should do, and he could best do that in a solitary place.

The lowering sun burnished the distant mountains, insinuating that there might really be wealth secreted out there somewhere. Jaysee straddled the Knuck, kicked it to life, adjusted his goggles, and began rolling toward his treasured silence, down that darkening gray track to the middle of nowhere.

Isaiah 43:20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

Jesus came into the world to fulfill the eternal plan of God. Because all human beings failed to follow God's plan, but instead disrespected Him, God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. God does have a plan for our lives, but we are often distracted by the cares of the world, and we don't obey Him and don't hear His voice. We may not make it out to the wilderness, but it would be good to find a quiet place where we can talk to God and hear Him speak to us. Through faith in Jesus Christ we can have a personal relationship with God. Why don't you talk to Him about it?

Questions or responses:

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