

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 146

THE WOMAN IN THE WILDERNESS (continued)

“And the woman fled into *the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God...* and to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into *the wilderness, into her place*” (Rev. 12:6,14).

I would again draw your attention to the fact that the woman flees into “*the wilderness*,” the well-known one, spoken of from the book of Exodus all the way through to the book of Revelation. The great types of the wilderness experience are first met in Moses who for forty years lived in the desert, under the big sky, where his brash points were worn down by the immensities around him: the star-studded sky at night; the empty, echoing canyons; the days of seeming unending silence, broken only by the howling winds and blowing, choking, blinding dust. Deserts diminish a person. Surrounded by lifeless rocks and sand, beaten by howling winds that make skin leathery, a person learns his or her true measure. Deserts purge, purify, prepare. They downsize, humble, empty, break. For forty years (for God is not rushed) the desert did its carving, chiseling, sculpting work on the gifted but proud and impetuous young man Moses. Then, finally, he is ready for...the fire! And it comes! The strange bush flames up like a dried-out old Christmas tree on fire...and just keeps on burning and burning. Moses is captivated. He leaves the sheep, forgets his work, stops his routine, steps out of the ordinary...and gazes. He does not know it yet, but here is a symbol of the next forty years of his life: he will be like this bush, filled with the fire of God, so fully, so constantly, that he will never burn out. And he didn't. Forty years later, when he died at age 120, “his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone” (Deut. 34:7). Desert, fire. Desert, fire. That's the pattern of the pilgrimage. God empties us; then fills us with His fire. That's the way of the wilderness!

As God through the fire-consumed Moses delivered His people from the fury of Pharaoh in Egypt by bringing them into that very same wilderness, so also now He brings His woman-church into the wilderness to escape the rage of the dragon-spirit. But the difference is that in Israel's case it was a natural, physical wilderness into which they were led, whereas in this case the figure is employed to signify something spiritual. The wilderness signifies a place of safety and liberation; and it is to such a sanctuary that the woman is taken to be *protected* and *sustained* by God. In the literal and natural sense of the word the wilderness is a place *in the world*, but not *of the world*. It is a place in the midst of the world, yet it is absolutely separated from the life of the world. The key word here is *separation*. This depicts a people as described by our Lord who are “in the world, but not of the world.” A people separate in every respect from the life, spirit, and ways of the world. In the wilderness they are not only separated *from* the world, but are indeed separated *unto God!*

In our text the wilderness is called “*her place*” — a place belonging to her which God has specially prepared for her. As we have already pointed out the types of this spiritual experience are found in the desert to which Moses fled for safety from the wrath of Pharaoh; to which Israel fled from the tyranny and rage of the Egyptians; to which Elijah betook himself for refuge from the wrath of the bloody Jezebel; to which the faithful Jews retreated from the persecutions of the Syrian kings in the Maccabean times. Having served as a place of shelter for God's faithful ones on so many occasions, it may well be called “*her place*” — the one

locality out of all places on earth specially prepared and consecrated as a place in the world but not of the world, a separated place where the Lord's people find refuge from the fury of the adversary, to experience in solitude those unique dealings of God which humble, empty, break, purge, purify, and prepare them for His further and higher purposes. "Her place" is thus spiritually a *state of being* and a *dealing of God* appointed and ordained for her growth and development in the spirit. She is "nourished" there, indicating that provision is made for her to be not only sustained, but strengthened and enabled to grow and increase. Aren't you glad!

Some in our day have missed the spiritual import of this wonderful scene and have sought for some supposed physical "safe area" to flee to in the day of trouble. We have known many precious ones who fearing nuclear war, Y2K, the tyranny of a one-world government, the great tribulation, the beast, or some other imagined calamity have searched for a place of safety. There is a group just north of us in New Mexico who came here many years ago from California. They believed that fearful disasters were to befall the state of California. Their prophet told them that they were the woman who was to flee to the wilderness, and a particular area of New Mexico was the wilderness. They have certainly been prospering there for nearly fifty years, but their visions have so far not been fulfilled.

We know some who went to remote wilderness areas of South America, Canada, Alaska, etc. Many have now come home. I visited one such wilderness farm in 1970 on the Cacataw River in the jungles of Columbia, South America. It no longer exists. In fact, the drug-lords have taken over that area of Columbia and one cannot even travel there anymore! One couple we knew had found a "place of safety" in a certain mountainous area of the state of Arkansas. But before they could get moved there a missile blew up in its silo right in the middle of their "safe area"! They never have gone. I prophesy that many who carnalize and literalize this precious "wilderness message" and run to what they believe are safe areas shall experience that of which the prophet Amos spoke when he prophesied that it would be "*as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him*" (Amos 5:19).

Certainly God can speak to people to locate in a particular area for whatever purpose, but the only "safe place" is IN THE SPIRIT, not a geographical location. David put it this way: "He that dwelleth in the *secret place* of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, HE IS MY REFUGE AND FORTRESS: my God, in Him will I trust. Surely HE shall deliver thee...He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust...thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; BUT IT SHALL NOT COME NIGH THEE. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. BECAUSE thou has made the LORD, WHICH IS MY REFUGE, even the most High, THY HABITATION" (Ps. 91:1-9). Ah — there is safety indeed! Yes, my beloved, there is "*her place*" which God has prepared for her, a place in the spirit, a place of separation unto God, where the protection, nourishing, and sovereign dealings of God accomplish their wonderful work!

NOURISHED IN THE WILDERNESS

"...she hath a place prepared of God, that they should *feed her there* a thousand two hundred and threescore days...and to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly...into her place, *where she is nourished* for a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:6,14).

It is in the wilderness that we need to *be fed*. The idea is that of a miraculous feeding, and the past is prophecy of the future. It was there that God supernaturally sent the manna to feed the fugitive millions of Israel. Elijah was miraculously fed by an angel, and received a meal from heaven, in the strength of which he went forty days, in his flight to this "mount of God." It was in the desert place, where the multitudes followed Jesus, that He multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed five thousand faint people. In the seasons of blessing there is abundance, but in the wilderness food and water are not available and must be in some way supplied. Before entering the wilderness you readily partook of the abundance of spiritual food — of gifts, and ministries, and movings of the Spirit. But in the wilderness the Lord separates you from even that! The feeding of the woman here, indicates the depth of her straits, and her utter helplessness in any resources of

her own. She is in great need, and no amount of activity on her part can supply her with sustenance. Yet, one doesn't need to spend a long time in the wilderness if he truly understands and appropriates what is provided for him there. Oh, yes, provision *is* made in the wilderness! Israel's experience in the wilderness is the blessed type. In the wilderness He "set a table before them." If you can truly understand that the Rock smitten in the wilderness (Ex. 17:1-6) *is Christ* in your spirit, you will soon receive the vision and strength that will deliver you out of your wilderness! If you can somehow see by revelation that the Branch cast into the bitter waters of Marah (Ex. 15:23-25) is a picture of *the Christ within*, then by forsaking all other means you will cast the spirit of Christ into your bitter experience and by the overflowing of His grace and love be enabled to get rid of the bitterness of your carnal thinking and fleshly emotions — then you will receive faith to arise and depart out of the wilderness! When you can catch the vision by the Spirit that the Manna (Ex. 16:14-22) is not just "What is it?" but that *Christ Himself* within you is the true bread that has come down from heaven, then, dear one, you will be quickened to arise, hasten, and leave the wilderness behind! If you are in a wilderness, *Christ as life* is what you must feed upon in order to get out of your wilderness! Those who fail to feed upon Christ as life, the only food provided in the wilderness, can never get out of it; like Israel of old they continue to go around and around in the desolation of the same dry desert, making the same mistakes, struggling with the same old problems, weaknesses, and limitations again and again, dedicating and rededicating, getting revived from time to time, but never fully gaining the mastery, overcoming, maturing and being made perfect. And in the end they perish in their wilderness!

I have been encouraged and edified by the following words from the pen of Art Groesbeck. "There is a place in God that is to the exclusion of all else; a place where there is no struggle; a place of entering into rest. The Lord brings us to this place by way of the wilderness where He humbles us and tries us that *we* might see what's in our hearts. *'And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or not. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live'* (Deut. 8:2-3).

"It was also said of Israel, *'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown'* (Jer. 2:2). God takes His called out ones first to a place of separation; a place of preparation, if you will; a place of processing where we forget everything the Egyptian, and the type it represents, has taught us; a place of temptation where we learn to depend totally upon the Lord our God. And we learn not to tempt Him by saying, *'Is the Lord God among us, or not?'* (Ex. 17:7). It is a wilderness, a *'no man's land'* in that no man can survive there, only God can sustain life in this place! Man will have to die there, because no natural seed can grow in this environment. It is a place *not sown*. It is a place of the supernatural only, a place of no longer looking to the natural or carnal realm of reason. The temptation that must be overcome is to do so. It is a place where God's higher thoughts and higher ways must prevail. It is the beginning of the laying aside of every sin that so easily besets us that we might run this race with patience. It is the place of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of HIM. It is the place of entering into His kingdom.

"This place is desolate, in that it must be a place not sown, a place where the seeds of man's carnal reasoning and man's ways which have gotten him much recognition in the flesh, will not prosper. It is a desolate wilderness, but through kingdom principles sown by God, it blossoms like the rose. The only thing that grows there is that which comes from heaven, even the Word of God. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. This principle was seen in the manna rained from heaven. Notice — it did not come up from the earth, which was desolate, which even if it were able to produce bread, could only sustain temporarily. But the Word of God sustains life eternally! Bread speaks of the earth-realm, the realm of man — what we have so long preserved as life, but the ends thereof are death.

"God has to remove us from our familiar surroundings, all that we have come to know life to be, even as He did starting with Abraham. Abraham was removed from the land that he was familiar with, and from his kin from whom he had taken counsel all his life, to a place that God would show him — a place apart where God would become his counselor, his sustainer, and his reward, based upon God's promise and not on Abraham's merit. Moses experienced the same thing in that when he realized his calling to deliver

his brothers from the hand of Pharaoh, his attempt at doing so ended in failure. He first had to be removed to the backside of the desert for a time of emptying out of all that he had become in Egypt. We, too, must experience a separation, a wilderness experience, an emptying out of all that we are, *that we might be filled with all that He is*. We must experience that time of testing even as our Lord was driven into the wilderness and tempted of the devil forty days. Remember His words to Peter, ‘...for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men’ (Mat. 16:23). So Satan tempts us to think *even as we have learned as man to think*, not in some way that is unfamiliar to us at all.

“God is taking us in a way we have never gone before! This why we must learn *the way of life in the wilderness*. Life in a place where life is not possible without God being the source. The way we have known, the way of man, was a way whereby we established ourselves; the effect being pride and self-exaltation, envy and strife, works of the flesh, all the result of not knowing God as our source through the subtle deception of the evil one. The key reason for our removal to the wilderness and its desolation is that we might see how we relate to it. This aspect of the wilderness and how it pertains to us individually, is that we and the wilderness must become one. We must become barren in order to become fruitful! I have heard it said, and know it to be true, that Abraham’s greatest asset was Sarah’s barren womb and their inability to bring forth life. So, any fruitfulness out of their dry ground had to be the result of the promise of God and Abraham’s belief in the God who promised. You see, a woman being barren was considered to be a curse from God. Woman is a type of the earth, the place where the seed is sown. God cursed the earth in Adam, ‘*thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*,’ and to the woman, ‘*in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children*,’ — ***more thorns and thistles!*** When the Spirit of the Father planted that heavenly seed in Mary, He brought forth life out of death. She saw the impossibility of it in that she said, ‘*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*’ (Lk. 1:34). This could have nothing to do with man; it must be a virgin birth! The best Mary could do is to say, ‘*be it unto me according to thy word*’ (Lk. 1:38). The best we can do is to say, ‘*be it unto me according to Thy word*,’ and know that the ability to bring forth life out of our barren wasteland is not of man, but of GOD. To God be the glory!

“When I was a boy growing up, I remember the phrase — God helps those who help themselves. It sounded reasonable to me in my unregenerate state, but I have found that scripture knows nothing of it. As a matter of fact, more rightly put, God helps those who *can’t* help themselves — but only when they have come to realize it and cry out to Him. Surely there is a *no man’s land* and it is a people established by God in God, to the praise of the glory of His grace. ‘*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose*’ (Isa. 35:1)” — end quote.

I mentioned earlier the manna which was the Lord’s provision for the nourishment of His people in the wilderness. There is no doubt that the manna perfectly pre-figures the nourishment provided for the woman in the wilderness! When the people of Israel first saw the manna they asked what it was — that strange substance lying on the early morning ground. Moses told them, “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat...gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an Omer apiece, according to the number of persons whom each of you has in his tent.” It is described in the book of Exodus as “a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoar-frost.” Significant is the fact that during the period the children of Israel subsisted on manna they were to eat their daily allotment the same day, and eat of it fully, for if anyone would not eat all of it, or if he attempted to hoard his surplus, it decomposed with supernatural rapidity. Only enough for the day, gathered morning by morning, was the divine order. It was natural for some of them to want to put away a little for the coming days, but God arranged it in such a way that it could not be done — the manna spoiled and bred worms within hours. The only exception was on the sixth day — on that day they could gather twice as much for both the sixth day and the Sabbath, tomorrow’s bread today, and it kept fresh through both days.

As in the natural, so in the spiritual! The supply of yesterday will not do for today, anymore than yesterday’s dinner will suffice us for today’s work. You cannot live on yesterday’s revelation, for it was strength only for that day. You cannot live on the memory of past spiritual experiences. You cannot live on the lingering aroma of blessed fellowship you had with the Lord in days gone by. You cannot live on the recollection of mercies and miracles received in previous moves of God. For every day you need fresh grace and a new dimension of glory! The manna of old only held good for one day. It had to be gathered fresh every morning. The manna of one day grew corrupt and worthless before the next. And we wonder why the

glory of yesterday's visitation has faded! We are disturbed because the move of God of yesterday has been polluted in the hands of men! Yesterday's visitations of the Spirit are a stench in our nostrils today. Already (in such a short time!) they have become a weariness to our spirit. They have been taken over by the flesh and it pains me to say it, but one and all have settled into stagnation and death. None has pressed on to GO ALL THE WAY WITH GOD. Oh, they still go through the motions of yesterday's visitation, but the so-called gifts of the Spirit they tout are most often a pitiful sham. People are 'slain in the Spirit' through psychological inducement and mass hypnosis, and sometimes even *pushed*. Worship has become soulish and mechanical, people having "learned" to sing the song of the Lord after the song has ended. The prophesyings bear the distinctive sound of a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Numerous groups have been brought under the domination of false apostles, while others have fallen victim to a sectarian spirit — "*We, and we alone, are the body of Christ; we, our group, are the sons of God; we are the manchild company; we are the kings and priests after the Order of Melchizedek; our movement is the select of the elect that will bring in the kingdom and rule the nations with a rod of iron.*" There was a great move of the Spirit beginning in 1948 called "Latter Rain". Its days were like heaven on earth, its glory unspeakable, its power earth-shattering. Within a few years the rain ended, yet to this day there are people out there "dancing in the rain," not having noticed that the clouds have dispersed, the sun is burning, and the rain is over. They go through the motions, but the glory has departed. The memory is sweet, but the body is dead, lifeless, empty. All the great moves of God of bygone generations are become the swaggering harlot, a cesspool of corruption. All the filthiness of the Babylonian church system is but the worm-ridden manna given by God for another time, preserved by man unto today. The worms are obvious to all who can see by the Spirit!

Well did brother Carl Schwing write: "Allow me to write freely and I would speak gently and lovingly...my brethren, if your soul still feeds upon the 'left-over manna'...finding nourishment in the past message...you fall short of your calling and cannot see afar off. You are pressing backward rather than pressing on...and you are still following man rather than the Lamb. All that we hope for, hunger for, and moan for is found in sonship, and sonship comes forth from the Father...sonship is the very image of the Father...and who but He has the words of life? I do not write of tomorrow or someday...I write of today...for it is today that the Father walks among us...sonship is part of God's Now...we are being born by Him, from Him and for Him...this miraculous delivery is in the process. He is offering us 'eternal life'...alas, some shall be offended...others will turn and walk no more...but there are the 'faithful few' who will know that He alone speaks life-giving words."

You see, my beloved, every day you need a new gift of grace, a deeper dealing of God, a fresh word from the throne, a further revelation of the Spirit, a greater dimension of life. The manna is only good for one day — for one step in your forward journey into God. You must get it fresh every day! This is the prayer for you and me, for all who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship — "Give us this day our daily bread." GIVE! Yes, this is a gift. You cannot buy the bread of life. Its price has never been quoted in the markets. No money can purchase reality. God never sells. God is a King, He gives. Buy? No, you cannot buy. You may buy books and sermons and papers and tapes and CD's from preachers who haven't learned the ways of the kingdom. You may even buy a "prophecy" or a "blessing" from the false prophets who peddle them in return for your offering. But you cannot buy the Word of Life!

Can you buy pardon? Can you buy peace? Can you buy righteousness? Can you buy sonship? Can you buy the mind of Christ? Can you buy the image of God? Can you buy the kingdom? No, you cannot buy; but what you cannot buy God will *give*. Listen, "It is the Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom." Listen again, "Everyone that thirsteth, let him come and take of the water of life *freely*." Listen yet again, "The *gift* of God is eternal life." Giving! This is royal giving. And so it is said of this woman in the wilderness, "she hath a place prepared of God, that *they should feed her*...her place, where she is *nourished*..." The expressions "that they should feed her" and "she is nourished" denote her passiveness. No amount of self-activity would supply her with food in the desert. She "is fed" as food is procured *for* a child, not *by* it. A number of actions *on her behalf* cluster around this woman. "Her child *was caught up*." "Two wings of a great eagle *were given her*." "That *they* should feed her." "Where she *is fed*." Oh, yes, this is *God's provision* in the wilderness! What assurance and expectation this inspires within our hearts!

Someone may ask, "Why dwell on the woman being nourished in the wilderness — we are not the woman, we are the manchild, and the manchild has already been birthed and caught up unto God and to His

throne at the time when the woman is fed in the wilderness!” True, but never forget, dear one, that the woman is simply coming by the same route that the manchild has already come. The one hundred and forty-four thousand, who are also the manchild, are the “firstfruits” unto God and the Lamb! We have already traced the revelation of God’s dealings with His firstfruit company all the way from chapter one through chapter twelve of the Revelation. Those who follow are required to walk the same route as those who go ahead! And just as the woman has her wilderness experience and is fed, nourished in the wilderness, so the firstborn Son of God had His wilderness experience and was fed, nourished in His wilderness! As soon as Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness was accomplished we read, “Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, *messengers came and ministered unto Him*” (Mat. 4:11). Jesus had just said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that is proceeding out of the mouth of God.” And now, the messengers of God — the living word of His Father — came unto Him and nourished Him in His wilderness experience! Therefore, the experience of the woman in the wilderness is instructive for everyone who has received the call to sonship, for we all must tread the same pathway, every man in his own rank!

THREE AND A HALF YEARS

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there *a thousand two hundred and threescore days*...and to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for *a time, and times, and half a time*, from the face of the serpent” (Rev. 12:6,14).

The measure of time here indicated requires no lengthy explanation. We meet it again and again, expressed in different terms, throughout the book of Revelation. It is clear from the context that the twelve hundred and sixty days mentioned in verse six is the same time period as a time, times, and half a time in verse fourteen. It should not be difficult to understand, then, that both terms indicate *three and one half symbolic years*. One symbolic year, plus two symbolic years, plus half a symbolic year. One symbolic year is calculated to be three hundred and sixty days according to the Hebrew calendar, thus three and a half symbolic years equal twelve hundred and sixty days. This is obviously the same period as the forty-two months of the testimony of the two witnesses in chapter eleven. For, taking a symbolic month to contain thirty days, as in the Hebrew calendar, forty-two months would again give us twelve hundred and sixty days, a time, times, and half a time, or three and a half symbolic years. It is always the same length of time stated in different terms and figures. The thing to keep in mind is that the Revelation is a *spiritual book*, therefore all these indications of time signify, not a literal time-period, but a *spiritual reality*! That is the mystery.

The significance lies in it always being three and a half, that is, *half of seven*. Seven is the complete, perfect number denoting fullness! Three and a half, then, shows a broken, limited period or work, that which can never endure forever, but must be cut off and come to an end. All the numbers in the Revelation are symbolic. They cannot be fitted into the framework of world history or outward world events, past or future. The spiritual interpretation of this great book must be maintained at all costs, for the writings of those who apply its prophecies to outward world events either past, present, or future, are strewn with the carcasses of confident predictions which now are fit for only the ash-heap of history.

If not a measurable period of chronological time, then what does the figure of three and a half years signify? We have already mentioned that in actual time it is *one-half of seven years*. Thus we are dealing with an indefinite period of time, in each case known only to God and not intended to be measured by man. It is my deep conviction that these strange time figures in the Revelation in each case indicate THE BROKEN SEVEN. That which is a *positive seven* denotes divine completeness, fullness, and perfection. Included in these are the seven golden candlesticks, seven angels, seven spirits of God, seven lamps of fire before the throne, seven seals, seven eyes and seven horns of the Lamb, seven trumpets, and the seven thunders. But that which is a *positive seven* also denotes that which is *eternal* — that which *has no end* and will *never pass away*! It is significant to note that all of the “halves” of seven are associated either with dark and sinister works and operations, or with that which is *limited, failing, partial*, and destined to *come to an end* and *pass away*! The message is just this — anything in the book of Revelation that lasts for forty-two months, twelve hundred and sixty days, a time, times, and half a time, or three and a half years is *not God’s perfect order, nor God’s eternal order...it will not endure, will not last forever, is not a permanent state*, but, when God is through with that stage or that state it *will come to an end and pass away*! Thank God, the

wilderness is **not a permanent condition, not a unending experience, nor the ultimate consummation of God's purpose in His woman!** Wonderful that the Lord prepares this place for the woman in her hour of need, protects her there, and nourishes her, bringing her into a new and higher place in Him. But that is merely preparation for her next step forward into God! He will take her, as He is now taking His sons, step by step and stage by stage, from glory to glory, from realm to realm, until she is seen coming down out of a heavenly realm adorned as a bride prepared for her husband, having the glory of God, and the life of God, and the word of God, and the dominion of God — enlightening the whole earth, bringing salvation to all nations, quickening and transforming all things. That order, precious friend of mine, WILL LAST FOREVER! It is indeed wonderful!

How we rejoice and sing hallelujahs that the wilderness is ordained of God for the woman-church, but it is not his ultimate order for her and it has its end. The time of her confinement and secret dealing of God will end after three and a half symbolic years, when the wilderness experience has accomplished its full work in her. The day will surely come when she will “*come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved*” (S. of S. 8:5).

Her beloved, upon whom she leans, is described by the Shulamite in these words, “*I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?*” (S. of S. 3:5-6). Ray Prinzing has commented upon this verse: “TILL HE PLEASE — and what is His pleasure now? To bring forth a company out of the wilderness! Ah, how well we know about the wilderness, with its dry, barren areas; or with its tangled underbrush which hems us in from all sides; or with its wild and unknown expanses filled with wild beasts and terrifying noises. The purpose for this is found in Deuteronomy 8:2,5-6. ‘*And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee...in the wilderness, to humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.*’

“*And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face...and I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels (or, the rebellious)...*’ (Eze. 20:35,37-38). There is so much in the heart of God's children that was rebellious, though we were not always aware of it. We have rebelled against the circumstances which He ordered for our path, and we rebelled against His will which crossed our will — until He led us through the wilderness, and there we were taught to yield all to Him, and find in Him our hope, our rest, our glorious peace. We even read that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and dwelt there for forty days and nights, tested and tried; but we also read that ‘*Jesus returned IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT...*’ (Lk. 4:14). Truly He *came up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchants!*

“And now we read of a company that comes up out of the wilderness leaning upon their beloved. These are one in Him, share His nature, and come forth in HIS FULLNESS. This company, too, comes up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed...a sweet smelling savor...a life that has been touched with the bitter experiences, the crushings, and now HIS DIVINE FRAGRANCE shall permeate the whole. With myrrh, a very bitter gum resin used for perfume, and also for part of the ‘anointing oil,’ and in the embalming process. Our bitter experiences in the wilderness will bring out the sweet fragrance of His nature, and remove the stench of our own self-righteousness. And they also become a part of the rich anointing upon us. And not only is the flesh, with its self-life put to death, it is also embalmed with the fragrance of myrrh and no one has to endure the offence. And frankincense — which, among its other uses, was also for sacrificial fumigation. Placed on every sacrifice it counteracted the smell of burning flesh. Though it has been painful, and we weren't always easy to live with, nor at the moment a sweet smelling savor in our processing, when the work is finished, there will be no lingering odors of the flesh, it will be the sweetness of His life alone that pervades the atmosphere, praise God. THIS IS THE COMPANY WHICH HE IS PLEASED TO BRING UP OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.

“In His pleasure He came to us leaping upon the mountains, judgment was there, correction unto righteousness. And in His pleasure He will lead His many-membered-son-company up out of the wilderness to radiate His life. Then in His pleasure the sons return to the wilderness to bring out the woman — the bride, leaning on her beloved. This is all beautifully borne out also in Revelation 12, where the woman, after giving birth to the manchild, flees into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God. There the manchild company feeds her, and when the days of her purification are ended, she also comes forth leaning upon her beloved. How marvelous are His ways, and the purpose in which He delights, as He pleases!” — end quote.

To be continued...

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