



THE GOOD LAND

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A Place in the Wilderness

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Some people take the events recorded in the Old Testament merely as historical facts. While these events are true, they are actually far more than simple historical facts. If we believe the Bible is God's word, we have to ask, why did God put these events in the Bible? Furthermore, why did God bring these events about that they might be recorded?

Types

The apostles realized that these Old Testament events are not only historical facts but also *types*. That is, they are pictures of the reality that was to come later. That reality is seen in Christ and the believers in the New Testament.

For example, Paul told us the Passover was a type of the coming Christ,¹ the One who was to die for God's people. He also saw that Christ was the spiritual drink for the believers.² In addition, he told us that Mel-

¹ 1 Cor. 5:7

² 1 Cor. 10:4

chizedek is a type of the Christ who is the High Priest, ministering to the believers.¹

Similarly, Peter saw that Noah and his family passing through the flood of judgment was a type of baptism.² In short, the Old Testament should be viewed as a picture of the spiritual reality in the New Testament. With such a view, the hidden treasures in the Old Testament are revealed to feed, enrich, and encourage us.

The Children of Israel

Let us consider the children of Israel. After Jacob and his family went down into Egypt, his descendants remained there for 430 years.³ Then God brought all the children of Israel out from Egypt.⁴ Those who came forth numbered in the millions.⁵ Consider that procession passing through the Red Sea and into the wilderness!

They were only meant to spend a short time there, but because of their lack of faith the Israelites circled about that wilderness for 40 years.⁶ During that time all

¹ Heb. 7:1–3

² 1 Pet. 3:20–21

³ Ex. 12:40–41

⁴ Ex. 14:30–31

⁵ Ex. 12:37

⁶ Ex. 16:35

of those who came out of Egypt died, except for Joshua and Caleb.

Eventually, Israel passed through water again to enter the good land.¹ First, they destroyed Jericho,² and then over a period of many years subdued that whole region.

But what does this have to do with us? Israel passed through three stages: Egypt, the wilderness, and the good land. We—the New Testament believers—also pass through these same stages, only we do it spiritually. Let us examine each of these stages and see how it applies to us.

The First Stage

Egypt

Let us first look at Egypt. In Egypt, the Israelites were slaves to Pharaoh, doing his bidding for his purpose. Their rations were meager, and their wages were non-existent. In short, they were in a miserable state. It was not until God delivered them from Egypt—delivering them from the control of Pharaoh—that they finally experienced freedom.

We should ask ourselves, how does this apply to us? First, we must see that Egypt is a type of the world and Pharaoh is a type of Satan. Everything in the world

¹ Josh. 1:2

² Josh. 6:20–21

is a bondage to us, enslaving us and keeping us bound to Satan. He works us intolerably hard and pays us nothing. Spiritually speaking, we are bereft, in poverty, and miserable. Strangely, we may have become so used to this condition that we do not even notice it.

The World

What is this world in which we are enslaved? Apart from the natural creation, nearly everything around us is part of this world.

What are some of the many aspects of this world? Religion is one. Religion with its doctrines, rituals, practices, regulations, and seeking for self-aggrandizement is part of the satanic world. Consider the evils that have been uncovered in the various religions and denominations. Hidden immoralities and corruption expose the satanic source of the religious world.

We may think religion is fine, because it involves a kind of worship to God, but that is deceptive. Cain offered worship to God, but God rejected it!¹ True worship to God is in spirit and through the living Christ. Everything else is part of the satanic world.

Commerce is a part of the world. How much evil is hidden within commerce. Commerce is based upon the lust for money and for power. Wickedness is hidden within commerce.

¹ Gen. 4:5

Education is part of the world. Look at the anti-semitism and immoralities that fester within education. Satan makes his home there, and his hatred of God and God's people is seen in antisemitism. Satan's rejection of God and God's nature is seen in the gross immoralities found in the educational system.

Consider medicine. It engenders so much hope for the sick and injured. Yet, hidden within its seeming nobility are monstrous evils, such as the slaughter of innocents and mutilation of the confused, and all this due to the lust for money.

There is seemingly no end to the different facets of the world. Business, politics, journalism, art, sports, science, music, theater, movies, war, amusements, and so many other aspects of the world, including the numerous unseemly things, are all designed by Satan to distract man from God. If we carefully examine the various aspects of the world, we will find Satan subtly hidden everywhere. As the apostle said, *...the whole world lieth in the evil one.*¹ It is not that there is nothing seemingly good in the world, but rather that the good is used to cloak the evil and deceive. This makes the world doubly wicked.

¹ 1 John 5:19

God's Way

Because of our enslavement to the world, God allows Satan to make our lives so difficult that we begin seeking a release from Satan's power. It is then that God can intervene to deliver us.

How does God do this? We must see that part of our being corresponds to the world. Our *flesh* loves the world and the things in it. On the cross, God crucified our flesh.¹ God's deliverance from this world is through Christ's crucifixion. Both the world and we were crucified with Him.²

Baptism

We begin to experience this in baptism and in our acceptance of what God has done for us. Genuine baptism is an acknowledgement of God's work of crucifixion on Christ's cross. In that crucifixion the world and we were crucified. The genuine experience of baptism is the leaving behind of the world, and the things of the world, forever.

The Honest Heart

So, we must ask ourselves, have we left the things of the world, or are we still living in them, bound to

¹ Gal. 2:20; 5:24

² Gal. 6:14

them? We may, in some way or another, still enjoy the world.

If we see our real condition, it will lead us to seek Christ in a new and deeper way, in order that we might be delivered experientially from the world and from everything of the world. We all must come out of Egypt and enter into a new stage—a new phase—in our Christian life. This next stage is the wilderness.

The Second Stage

The Wilderness

The Israelites passed through the Red Sea and entered the wilderness. Although their time there should have been about two years, they spent far longer in the wilderness due to their condition. In the wilderness, difficulty after difficulty arose, exposing what was in the heart of the Israelites.

They repeatedly murmured against God and Moses. Given that the scripture mentions this numerous times,¹ we can assume that this was an ongoing condition among them.

They made a golden calf and worshipped it.² It is hard to believe after the miracles the Israelites observed in Egypt, and after seeing the Red Sea parted, and after being led by a pillar of smoke during the day and a pillar

¹ Ex. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:41

² Ex. 32:4

of fire at night, that they would resort to worshipping an idol.

They longed for Egyptian food and to go back to Egypt.¹ It seems they had forgotten their slavery. Although they had come out of Egypt, it was clear *Egypt had not come out of them*.

Repeated Deficiencies

God gave them heavenly bread—manna—but they despised it. They called it “light bread.”² That is, it had no heavy substance like what they previously ate in Egypt.

They longed for meat.³ Eventually, God gave them so much meat—in the form of quail—that it came out of their nostrils!⁴ After 30 days of eating the quail, it became so loathsome to them that they choked and gagged on the meat. It came back up through their nose! What a horrible discipline.

Then Israel rebelled against God and sought to overthrow Moses.⁵ This resulted in a great judgment from God, who slayed not only the leader of the rebellion—Korah—along with 250 who followed him,

¹ Num. 11:4–6

² Num. 21:5

³ Num. 11:13

⁴ Num. 11:19–20

⁵ Num. 16:1–3

but also nearly 15,000 of the Israelites with the plague that followed the rebellion.

Turning Back

After a short time in the wilderness, they came to the good land. But rather than enter, they turned away in fear.¹ They lacked the faith to go further. So, God gave them up to the wilderness.

In that wilderness every one of the Israelites from the age of 20 and older died because of their lack of faith and their refusal to enter the good land.² God let them die in the wilderness—their carcasses were strewn there.³

Moses

Even Moses died in the wilderness. His anger and temper—which were seen on Mount Sinai⁴—eventually led to God forbidding him to enter the good land.⁵ He could look upon it, but not enter it.⁶ He, with all the other

¹ Num. 13:32–14:4

² Num. 14:28–32

³ Heb. 3:17

⁴ Ex. 32:19

⁵ Num. 20:7–12

⁶ Deut. 34:1–4

Israelites, died in that wilderness—all except Caleb and Joshua.¹

Bread and Water

For 40 years they wandered that wilderness. During that whole time, they ate manna—heavenly bread—and drank water. In other words, for 40 years, their diet was bread and water. What does that tell us? *They were in a prison.* That wilderness was a prison to them. In fact, the real prison was their very own self.

A Picture

This wilderness experience is a picture for us, the New Testament believers. We must not think that we are different from the Israelites. We all—every one of us—have the same kind of heart as the children of Israel.

How many of us have been wandering in a spiritual wilderness for years or even decades? How many of us long for the things of the world and, in that longing, despise the food God gives us. When the Lord attempts to bring us into another stage of our Christian life—into our good land—how many of us turn away? How many of us have been eating “prison food” for a very long time?

¹ Num. 14:30

Our Wilderness

The wilderness typifies our soul, and in particular, the *self* of our soul. We may wander in our self for years, being unwilling to go further with the Lord. *Our self becomes our prison*. Yes, the Lord still feeds us bread and gives us water to drink, but His exceeding riches—the richness of the good land—are hidden from us. They are hidden by *our very self*. Our self becomes a huge obstacle and veil between us and the riches of Christ.

While the manna and the water are good, they must be replaced with the riches of the good land. The water and the manna are not an end, but rather a means to the end. The water and the manna help us come out of our self. They help deliver us from our self. They help change our inward being—our tastes, our desires, our thoughts, and our feelings. However, they are not an end. They are only a means to an end.

A Prayer

So, we must ask: Have you been wandering? Do you greatly desire to go further with the Lord? To go further, after having wandered in the self for so long, it requires a great spiritual exercise on our part. We may have become so content in our wilderness, so content in our self. We must go into our “closet.” There, in the quiet of our closet, we must cry out to the Lord with desperation: “Lord, save me from my self. Bring me, bring all of us further. Bring us into the good land, into

the experience of your very rich Self.” If you are truly hungry for the Lord, this prayer will come easily. The Lord is greatly pleased to answer such prayers.

Perhaps you are not hungry. Then pray for hunger: “Lord Jesus, save me from my complacency. Give me a deep hunger and thirst for you.”

Are you in the wilderness? If so, come forward into the good land, into Christ Himself, into all His riches, leaving behind your self and its wilderness.

The Third Stage

The Good Land

After 40 years, the Israelites entered the good land. From the time of their first arrival at the promised land until they actually entered it was 38 years. This is a very strong warning to us all. We may spend, or waste, much time unnecessarily before entering the good land.

During that time, except for Joshua and Caleb, every one of the Israelites, from the age of 20 years and older, died.¹ The new generation—those who grew up in the wilderness—were willing and eager to enter the promised land.²

¹ Num. 14:28–32

² Josh. 1:16–18

Passing through the Jordan

However, first Israel had to pass through yet another body of water—the Jordan River.¹ As they came to the Jordan, the Lord once again parted the waters, as He had done with the Red Sea.² They passed through on dry land.

The Riches of the Good Land

The good land Israel was to possess was endowed with riches of many kinds. It was large and broad, having ample room for all the Israelites.³ It flowed with milk and honey.⁴ It was a land of brooks, fountains, and springs, situated in valleys and hills.⁵ In this land, there were wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, olive trees, and pomegranates.⁶ There were also iron and copper.⁷ How rich this land was! There was no scarcity of food or lack of any kind. When the Israelites entered and possessed

¹ Josh. 1:2

² Josh. 3:15–16

³ Ex. 3:8

⁴ Num. 14:8

⁵ Deut. 8:7

⁶ Deut. 8:8; Num. 13:23–24

⁷ Deut. 8:9

the land, they would be satisfied and bless God for what they had inherited.¹

Enemies

However, in this promised land, there were enemies—the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.² Although the land was inhabited with these enemies, God would drive them out from before the people of Israel.

Experiencing the Jordan River

What do all these typify? They all show us something about our Christian experience. Consider the Jordan River. We might ask why there is a need to pass through water again, since we did this when we came out of Egypt. We should check with our experience to understand this.

Passing through the Red Sea is a picture of the world being crucified to us and us to the world.³ In particular, it shows us that our flesh was crucified with Christ.⁴

¹ Deut. 8:10

² Josh. 3:10

³ Gal. 6:14

⁴ Gal. 5:24

What then is crucified in the Jordan River? The very self, in which we were imprisoned in the wilderness, is crucified there.¹ When the self is crucified in our experience, we enter into a different kind of experience of Christ, one that is richer, deeper, and even more excellent.

The Difference

The good land is a type of Christ as our unsearchably rich supply.² What is the difference in the experience of Christ in the wilderness versus in the good land. In the wilderness, although Christ is there nourishing us and quenching our thirst, our self is also present. There, it is *my* experience of Christ, what Christ is to *me*, and how did *I* enjoy Christ today? In the wilderness, *I* am the center.

In the good land, our experience of Christ is different. There, our experience is not about us. It is about God, Christ, God's heart's desire, and God's people. In the good land, God is the center, not us.

Look at the Song of Songs. In chapter 8 we see the seeking one with the Lord.³ She communes with Him:

¹ Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6

² Eph. 3:8, 18–19

³ SS. 8:8–9

*We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts:
what shall we do for our sister in the day when she
shall be spoken for?*

*If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of
silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with
boards of cedar.*

In the good land, our experience of Christ is about God's heart's desire, about us—in oneness with the Lord—working together to accomplish that.

Good Land Versus Wilderness

We may have heard that Christ is our good land. While Christ is our good land, the good land is not only Christ. *The good land is Christ growing in the soil of a good heart.* Without such soil, Christ cannot grow.

In the wilderness, the soil of the self-heart is rocky, arid, and barren. It is like the rocky ground in the Lord's parable in Matthew.¹ Nothing grows there, so God is forced to feed His people in a kind of supernatural way—dropping manna from heaven

However, in the good land the soil of the spirit-heart is soft, fertile, and productive. It is like the good ground in the Lord's parable.² Here, food grows natur-

¹ Matt. 13:5–6

² Matt. 13:8, 23

ally in the good heart. There is no need for a miraculous feeding.

How many Christians today are seeking for something miraculous and supernatural? The Lord, however, is looking for something natural, organic, growing, and producing spiritual food.

Large

Consider the description of the good land. It is said to be large.¹ To the New Testament believers, it is not only that our Christ is broad, being the condition in which we are free and can move without limit.² As we experience this “large” Christ, *our* hearts are enlarged. They become like His—broad, to include all God's people and even God's creation. The heart of Christ becomes ours in our experience. This is the largeness of the good land.

Watered

In this land there are brooks, fountains, and springs in valleys and hills.³ These are the rivers of living water springing forth from our innermost being⁴

¹ Ex. 3:8

² Gal. 5:22

³ Deut. 8:7

⁴ John. 7:38

to water all around us.¹ In the deep and in the high experiences of Christ, our hearts are enlarged and the waters flow abundantly.

Rich in Food

In the good land, milk and honey flow.² That is, we constantly nourish others and provide unspoilable and sweet sustenance to them.

There are wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, olive trees, and pomegranates. How rich our good land is! The Christ growing within us provides substance and care not only to mankind (as typified by the wheat), but even to all His creatures (as typified by the barley). In Israel, wheat fed men, while barley was used for the cattle.

The vines speak of the plentiful supply that Christ is. Recall that the vines in the good land produce enormous clusters of grapes.³ This bountiful supply of the indwelling Christ produces (spiritual) wine to cheer, and grapes and raisins to invigorate others.

Fig trees speak of an ever-abundant source of seed-filled sweetness to feed a hungry God,⁴ while olive trees show us the continual supply of the Spirit to meet every need. It is not just that there are figs and olives,

¹ John 4:14

² Num. 14:8

³ Num. 13:23

⁴ Matt. 21:18–19

but fig trees and olive trees that produce continually. In such a condition, when we are pressed and squeezed, oil comes forth just like it did with the Lord.¹

The fruit of this indwelling and growing Christ sows seeds all around us, and the sweetness of our love quenches our Lord's thirst.² Our spiritual "pomegranates" are for our wonderful Lord.

In short, there is always an ample food supply to satisfy the hunger of others and even the hunger of our God.

Iron and Copper

In this land the stones are iron and there is copper in the hills. We become strong and equipped for the fight before us and we, with the Lord, build a spiritual house for our God.

In all of this, through such a wonderful Christ growing within us, we and God are satisfied; we bless the Lord for such a wonderful state of being.

Enemies

And yet, in this promised land, there are enemies.³ Can there be enemies in Christ? Of course not. But there

¹ Luke 23:34

² SS. 8:2

³ Josh. 3:10

can be enemies in our heart—the land in which Christ is growing.

There can be dark things lurking within us, keeping the Lord from growing freely. These are the various troubling, tormenting, and intimidating issues and spirits infecting and affecting us. Many such things are buried deep within us from the time of our youth. However, as we go forward in our quest to conquer the good land—for Christ to gain us and for us to gain Christ—the Lord drives these evil spirits out from before us, freeing our heart—freeing the good land—from all evil things.¹ Eventually, our hearts are only for the Lord² and only filled with the Lord. How blessed our good land is, and how blessed such a state of being is.

The Place of God's House

It is in this good land that God's house, His holy temple, is built. That is, it is in such a state of being—a land completely inhabited by Christ—that God has His dwelling. May we all go forward to take this good land for God, God's people, and God's house.



¹ Deut. 11:23

² Matt. 22:37