

THE GOD THAT PREPARES A BANQUET IN THE DESERT

My thought today is built around a question. I'm not the first to ask it. I won't be the last. "Can God prepare a banquet in the desert?" (Psalms 78:19, God's Word Translation). And don't tell me you have never asked it. "Can God provide in my poverty?" "Does God care in my calamity?" "Can God turn my hopelessness into hope?" "Can life and laughter spring forth from my dreadful, dilemma?" "Can God turn my pity into a party?" Yes. Yes. Yes. A thousand times, yes! I can hear a resounding, deafening "Yes!" Where is the proof?

Given the pick the last place one would likely want to live is a desert. It is usually a dull, depressing, dismal, dark, dry, deadly, dusty, dirty, desolate, despondent, drifting, place; deficient of moisture, plant and animal life. Add to that it is flat, featureless, and full of fear. It doesn't stop there. The desert is mostly hot; hostile, and horrific. Sandstorms and sadistic storms decrease visibility and increase hopelessness. Its sad status boasts of supporting very little life, is lifeless, and lonely limited to wandering, homeless nomads. It is an empty, eerie environment.

The largest hot desert in the world is the Sahara, in Northern Africa, covering over nine million kilometers and twelve countries. What a waste! One third of the earth's mass is desert.

There is hope, however, in the desert. Animals, plants, and people do learn to survive. The desert contains great amounts of valuable, usable, mineral resources spread over their entire surface.

At times, we find, falter, or fall into a spiritual desert experience. It is an opportunity for us to grow stronger gleaning from the spiritual resources prepared for us. It is here in the midst of all the negatives that God turns the table. Words shift to able, available, abundant, overflowing, rushing, supply. Not only does He turn the table, He prepares it.

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love"

(Song of Solomon 2:4, ESV). I've heard that little song for years and have never really understood what is meant. Now, I have a better understanding.

It is in desolate, desert times that one can find a place where:

- One can encounter God.
- One can see how God provides.
- One wrestles with and conquer temptations (Luke 4).
- In separation and loneliness one can enjoy close fellowship with God.
- One can hear clearly the voice of God.
- God proves Himself. He is able (Ephesians 3:20).
- God shows forth His power and provision. Both are abundant and overflowing.
- God takes another opportunity to show His love for us (Song of Solomon 2:4).
- God spreads a table in the midst of all that threatens.

“The Lord is my shepherd. I am never in need. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside peaceful waters. He renews my soul. He guides me along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage. You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the Lord's house for days without end” (Psalms 23; God’s Word Translation).

“Parable of the Great Feast: Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, ‘What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!’ Jesus replied with this story: ‘A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready’” (Luke 14:15-17, NLT).

The banquet is ready. What spiritual resources do you need in your desert?

- **Is it provision?** “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together” (Genesis 22:8). “Abraham named that place God-Yireh (God-Sees-to-It). That's where we get the saying, ‘On the mountain of God, he sees to it’” (Genesis 22:14, MSG). “And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided’” (NKJV).

- **Is it Healing?** "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26, NKJV). "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2).
- **Is it deliverance from a problem?** "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears" (Psalms 34:4, NASU). "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident" (Psalms 27:1-3, ESV).
- **The baptism of the Holy Ghost to fill your thirsty soul?** "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39, NASU).
- **Is it salvation in a weary land to the nomadic (wandering) lost?** "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS" (Matthew 11:28-30, NASU).
- **Is it to do the impossible and improbable?** "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).
- **Is it to supply your needs?** "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

To all of these questions, and so many more, God wants to prepare, for you, a banquet in your desert!