

Pursuing Resilience in Revelation

A People and a Place Prepared by God

Revelation 12:1-6

Intro

Abraham, Moses, Elijah.... many saints and heroes of the faith have found themselves in a wilderness place at some point as they wandered through life. Christ Himself experienced the desert.

In John Bunyan's classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there is a story about Christian and Hopeful seeing and taking a shortcut in an attempt to avoid some of the difficulty along the way to the celestial city. At first all seemed well but before long a torrential rain came and the path that seemed so easy began to flood and became more difficult than the narrow way was. People around them were swept away and killed. They took refuge in a nearby shelter only to be met by a servant of Satan there who put them through all manners of torment and would have killed them had the Lord not sent an angel to rescue them. The men made their way back to the narrow road with fresh knowledge of how shortcuts may look good to the eyes, but only by staying in God's path can we make our way to His victory.

The wilderness and its difficult paths are a part of the Christian life which cannot be avoided if we are to walk along the path towards victory. In fact, avoiding the wilderness struggles often lead us to far worse experiences. Though the wilderness is hard, Christ is with us along the way. He will shelter us and nourish us if only we will take up our crosses and follow Him.

Discover

I. The Lord's holy bride (1-2)

- A. Here we are introduced to a woman but this is clearly not just any woman. She is adorned in light (Psalm 104:2), stands on the moon, and has a magnificent crown resembling the crowns of previous visions from the Old Testament and even from Revelation.
 1. This woman resembles Christ in her description.
 - a) She has a victory crown showing conquest and sovereignty.
 - b) She is radiant like the sun.
 - c) She stands on the moon, symbolizing mastery over the material realm.
 2. The woman is pregnant with a very specific child.

- B. The woman's birth pains likely refer to the years of suffering and struggling of God's people which lead up to the incarnation of Christ out of David's house (Isaiah 66:7-10, Micah 4:10).
 - 1. Though promised early on, the pathway to Christ was filled with challenges, apostasies, bloodshed, exile, and etc. It was not a calm and easy road.

II. The enemy of the bride (3-4)

- A. The beast's seven heads harken to the seven lampstands of God's people.
 - 1. Rather than a holy, radiant church lead by the Holy Spirit, Satan leads a corrupt and insolent people.
 - a) His seven represents the totality of the rebellious world.
 - 2. Satan's horns (Daniel 7:7) represent his power over the world. His diadems represent his power to rule over the peoples of this world.
- B. Satan is such a powerful deceiver that he even took $\frac{1}{3}$ of the angels in heaven with him (Daniel 8:10).
 - 1. Satan is a great deceiver. If he can talk a multitude of powerful angels who have seen God's power and glory into following him to their doom, how much more can he do this with people?
 - 2. Satan always promises great reward for those who practice sin and rebellion against God, but all he can deliver is death.
 - 3. Satan promises shortcuts to power, wisdom, knowledge, and authority.
 - a) This is what he did for Adam and Eve. Rather than trusting God to take them to their destined place, Satan tricked them into attempting a shortcut which circumnavigated God's discipleship plan and it utterly failed. Satan's plan can get us places, but it cannot get us to the promised land and it can never develop in us the quality of life and character which God has for us.
 - b) Satan's plan is like choosing McDonald's when you have been offered a wagyu steak if only you will wait a while.
 - c) We have to always be on the lookout the the schemes of Satan and keep our eyes on Christ.
- C. Satan's all consuming passion is to destroy Christ and His church (Matthew 2:16).

III. The child who is King (5)

- A. This is the One who comes from Bethlehem to rule (Matthew 2:6).
- B. He carries a rod of iron to shepherd His sheep and to destroy God's enemies (Rev 2:27).
- C. He overcame Satan through His active obedience to the Father.
 - 1. Where Adam and Eve took a shortcut and failed, Jesus took the cross and won eternal riches for all of us who believe in Him.
 - 2. Christ could have taken the shortcut in the desert when Satan offered Him his dominion, but He refused knowing that all of that would be His but that God's way was the only way to secure it properly and righteously.

a) Maybe the idea of eating a piece of fruit rather than dying on a cross appeals to you also, but I should warn you that though the fruit is sweet and the cross is painful, the fruit only buys you moments with your dreams while following Christ to the cross brings you an eternity with His promise. Jesus is better. Why trade a \$500 steak for a \$5 burger?

D. He has ascended to the Father where He now rules over His Kingdom, leading His church and preparing for His ultimate return and the restoration of all things.

IV. A place prepared by God (6)

A. The church is in our season of wilderness wanderings, but the end of the wandering in the wilderness will be coming into our land with Christ.

B. Though we are in the wilderness with pitfalls and wild beasts all around, our God provides for us a shelter and sustains us.

1. For a follower of Christ, the desert is not a hopeless place.

2. We know confidently that the desert is a place where God meets us, but also that it has a definite ending point and our future is both glorious and secure in Him.

3. Romans 8:35-39

Nurture

Who is God? He is the Lord who has become one of us in order to redeem us and to restore the world.

What has God done? He shelters us, provides for us, protects us, and rules the nations with an iron rod.

Who are we? We are God's people whom He has promised to shelter and nourish.

What is God calling us to do? We are called to persevere during our time of temporary discomfort in this world that He might be glorified in us and that the world might see the light of Christ through us and repent.

Act

We must fight to persevere in Christ, resisting the devil's temptations to take an easier path than the wilderness God has us in. Any trade of what Christ has for us for the temporary ease of Satan's rule will never be worth it.

Our call is to live lives marked by repentance, belief in the Gospel, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Is that what your life looks like and if not, what much change? What must you leave behind in order to follow Christ today?

I would encourage you to come today to receive prayer that you might walk with Jesus, be filled with His Spirit, and remain on His path no matter what temptations for momentary pleasure may be coming your way. Better to suffer with Christ for a moment and receive eternal glory than to have pleasure with Satan and this world for a moment in return for eternal suffering.