

## **The Divine Oasis**

*“I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.” ~ Isaiah 41:18*

I have always been fascinated by the imagery of the desert in Scripture and how God uses real-life situations to show his divinity and help his people.

Trudging through the hot sands of the Sinai for more than forty years, the Israelites saw God take them from place to place despite their own sin and stubbornness. Miracles and direct revelations from heaven pepper a journey which goes in circles every time God’s people focus on themselves or insist on their own way.

One of the most beautiful sights when we are wandering in the desert is the oasis. Somehow in the midst of all that heat, the struggle to make it through deep sand, and discouragement when we think we have gone as far as we can go, an oasis offers the exact opposite.

Without the desert there is no oasis. An oasis is a small area in the desert lush with vegetation, nurtured by the desert’s most precious resource -- water. Birds and animals are drawn there, along with humans who have traveled far and are in need of those same resources.

An oasis for Christians is a time of rest and rejuvenation in middle of life itself, which can sometimes become choked with high temperatures and stagnate because of no running water. God offers hope in those moments, and that hope itself can create a place known as a faith oasis, where he tends to his people and nurtures them back to strength for their journey.

The image of the desert is what makes the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm with its green pastures and still waters so refreshing and full of vitality. The deserts are necessary for the oasis to exist.

“God takes everyone he loves through a desert,” writes Paul Miller. “It is his cure for our wandering hearts, restlessly searching for a new Eden... The best gift of the desert is God's presence... The protective love of the Shepherd gives me courage to face the interior journey.”

God’s presence both creates and becomes a divine oasis for God’s people. We go there for the living water of Christ. We go there to regroup and focus on God as the one who is in charge and has a divine plan for us. We leave that place refreshed and ready to walk with God in wonderful moments.

The wonderful thing about God's oasis is that we can go there whenever we need to. It is very close to us at all times, because God is everywhere and can do anything. It also brings an ingredient which changes everything. God says that he will do something new. He will give waters in the wilderness and make rivers in the desert, drink to his chosen people.

Isaiah 43 says "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people..."

What this divine oasis does is create new things, life-giving force, to all situations where God's people may find themselves. Individuals, families, churches, even nations must seek God's guidance and presence instead of wandering blindly in circles in the desert of sin and darkness.

This oasis cannot be reached by intellectual striving or human understanding. It is a free and unmerited gift of God. In its most complete sense, that oasis is faith.

"Faith," writes Khalil Gabran, "is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking."

Think of how many times we have tried to straighten out our world by figuring out what to do. While there is a certain basic need for that, when it comes to the big things, only God knows the solutions. Only God can provide the faith oasis with all the ingredients that come with it.

When we stop trying to save ourselves and turn to God for help, the oasis begins to be visible in the distance, shimmering through the waves of heat over the sand. When we lie down in green pastures created by God instead of ourselves, we rise up strengthened and renewed. Like the leper Naaman who dipped himself in the Jordan River seven times before he was healed, it becomes more about listening to God rather than coming up with our own solutions.

I see a world today, dear reader, which can often get bogged down in the desert, depending on limited human thinking and action.

But I also see that same world which God is blessing when his people turn to the oasis. There we find the answers to every question, the strength to do what must be done, and the faith to trust in God's direction for a wonderful future.

That oasis is waiting right now. Are you thirsty?