

#43 #44 THE DREAMS AND A SPOKEN WORD.....

The two following dreams were given to me in one night. I did not see any real connection between them until later. Sometimes we receive certain revelations from the Lord but do not always get the full understanding of them at one time. It is sometimes a little here and a little there, line upon line, line upon line. We frequently have to search out, pray out, ponder and wait upon God. We may have to meditate and let the Spirit reveal as and when He pleases. Reading and studying the Word of God is often like that. We would be foolish indeed to say we had read the Bible once and had no need to do so again. We can never exhaust Scripture or ever grasp every new level available to us. The same words can be milk to one and meat to another.

First dream: I see many shells, the sort you find on the seashore. These shells are shaped into an object that resembles a cross. I begin to handle and examine this shell-cross with interest. Then a voice speaks to me saying, "The shells have a special meaning."

Second dream: I am flying up and down in a swooping motion. Then I am on the ground gathering dark purple plums which are ripe and ready to eat. Looking upwards I see a large, forty-foot-high plum tree laden with fruit. I fly to its higher branches to pick more plums and encounter a large demonic being who attempts to prevent my taking the fruit. At that moment I find a sword in my hand. The spirit has a sword also and, as we fly about swinging and slashing at each other, we lock weapons. We fall to the ground and begin to fiercely wrestle one another. My opponent fights with rage and determination to keep me from that plum tree and its ripe fruit. Often I would break free and fly up quickly, snatching and eating a plum or two before the spirit attacks me again. This scene is repeated several times before I awake.

Thoughts began to pour into my mind as I pondered these dreams, and I thought of death! Shells are the leftovers from former life in the sea. The shells in the shape of a cross speak twice of the symbol of death. I assumed the special meaning of the shells was death, but later discovered it was just partially so. In my research weeks later I came across some information that began to connect the two dreams. As I read the Bible I noticed the phrase "sellers of purple." I knew that purple was a dye used for thousands of years back in the Bible days. This dye was made from a shellfish called murex. The living animal was removed from its shell, and slowly and carefully an excretion was extracted from this mollusk. It was very costly and time consuming to produce. It is believed Phoenicians were named from this dye, as the root word of Phoenicia is "purple."

The costly dye was used by royalty and the wealthy. On the one hand, purple symbolizes royalty and high rank and on the other, sorrow and suffering. As the shellfish had to die before this expensive dye could be produced, so Christ had to die on the cross to have His life extracted from Him for our sins. It cost the Son of God his very life to redeem us. It will in like manner cost us much to go deeper with God.

We do not take up our cross to deal with sin, for the Lord has accomplished this. We take up our cross to put to death the flesh in us so that we are able to receive more of Christ's life. When God calls a Christian to higher service or authority, that soul must be brought down lower and deeper than the average soul. It is just that way! Moses, Elijah, Job, Paul and, yes, the many others who went deeper with God also went down deeper in death and had the cross-life worked well in them. Why, the apostle Paul declared that sufferings and conflicts were a truer sign of an apostle above all else.

So the special meaning of the shellfish is this: for higher calling and service we must go down deeper and let the cross and death be worked in us. Things do not just happen with God! God has no

favorites we know. God takes great pains and time to make a vessel of gold. Precious gems are not created easily---intense heat, pressure and cutting are needed. God considers these stones worth the time and expense to produce. Even Jesus, for the joy set before Him---the redemption of many men and women---endured the cross and death to gain those jewels. So must we.

Now consider the plum tree and the battle. As mentioned before, the purple plums and purple dye speak of royal service and suffering. They often go together---the cross and the crown, life and death! Newborn babies bring great joy to their mothers, but not before labor and great suffering. So it is with our spiritual walk---the suffering is counted worth the joy of the goal attained.

We think of a plum as something desirable---something special or of value to us. In the search for a higher level and deeper walk with Christ we must reach further and higher than normal. In that pursuit we will have opposition and conflict! Now the plum tree was forty feet tall. Forty often in Scripture signifies a period of testing or probation. Yes, we will be tested and proved of the Lord. God knows our character and abilities but proves us that we may know our own capabilities and weaknesses.

Those proved and tested who emerge victorious are ready for higher service in our Lord's kingdom. We do not pick and choose our crosses and trials---God does this for us. The Great Refiner knows what He is out to obtain. We often try to exchange our furnaces or crosses for more pleasant experiences, but then they would not be crosses, would they? We say, "If only God would remove this one thing, life would be so much better for me!" No, in the long run it would not, for without those crosses of His choice, we would only produce leaves and dead wood, but no fruit.

God created fruit trees to produce fruit! The only object Christ cursed while on earth was the fruitless fig tree. That tree boasted of fruit but had only leaves and branches. God cuts and prunes His own branches for one purpose---to provide more fruit. Leaves and branches can draw out the life of the vine into themselves, keeping the tree or vine from producing more fruit; God cuts these away so they will not be a hindrance to His purposes.

The enemies of our souls will attempt to prevent us from going deeper with the Lord. As we are given a weapon---the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God---so the enemy also has a sword. His words will be lies, discouragements, threats and whatever else he finds that will work against us. He stands between us and the plums! We will take the kingdom by force at times, and we will wrestle against our spiritual foes to obtain higher ground. We must drive the usurpers away.

Our warring is with the spirits of darkness and spirits that rule in higher places. Let us not be naive in assuming we will have easy, walk-over victories---we shall not! We will fight in the name of the Lord and, with His Spirit's aid, will win those battles to gain that higher ground for Him. We will battle and fight, but let us battle and fight to win! The fruit of those victories will be worth the conflicts we must endure!