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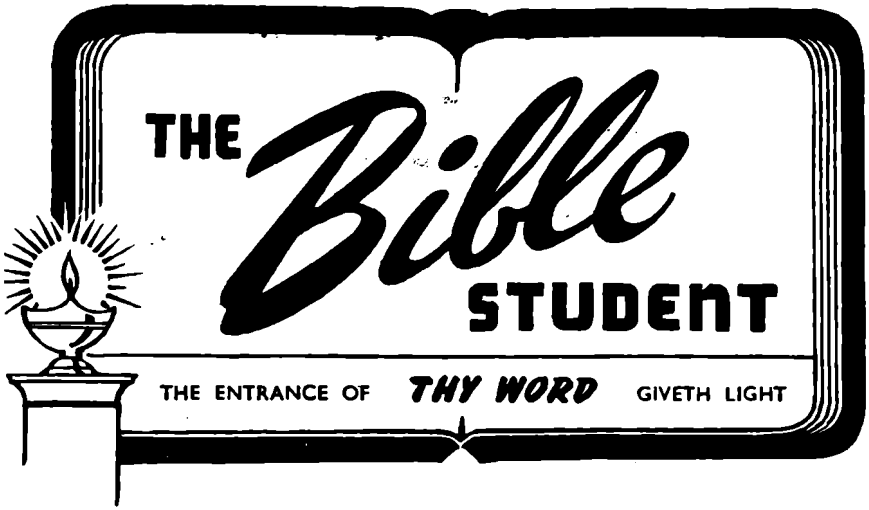
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

In the light of such an act of grace Jerusalem can be restored to her pre-eminence once more, but there is ever to remain the memory of the path of shame she had trodden. God would blot out the past, but the very memory of it would keep Jerusalem faithful to Him.

(To be continued)

[NOTE: Mr. Ellison's studies on 'Biblical Hebrew Words' are unavoidably held over but will be resumed in next issue (July).—Editor]

‘THE HEIGHTS OF THE HILLS ARE HIS’

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

II. THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

East of the city of Jerusalem there rises a bare, rocky ridge sloping up from an unprepossessing valley and towering somewhat higher than the capital of Israeli, which stands some 2,500 feet above sea level. It is separated from Jerusalem by the Brook Kedron and the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and stretches from North to South commanding a noble view of the city. That eminence is the Mount of Olives. At sunrise the light breaks over the ancient city from above the crest of Olivet, flooding the highest buildings with crimson glory. This elevation has sometimes been designated ‘The Hill of the Prophets’, but, from its associations with the Davidic dynasty, we might justly call it ‘The Mountain of the great King’. From this vantage point our Lord looked toward Jerusalem and wept over it; and from it He also predicted its destruction in that wonderful eschatological utterance familiarly known as ‘the Olivet discourse’. On that occasion He had come from one great mountain within the city’s precincts—Moriah, the place of sacrificial giving—to another outside the city—Olivet, the place of the departing glory. How eloquently significant were His movements on that occasion of all that His first advent was to mean to Him and to His earthly people Israel! The Shechinah glory—in Ezekiel’s prophecy—had halted there: our Lord Himself stood on its summit on His way from the cross to the glory, as He had

during His sojourn in this world graced its slopes on His way from the glory to the cross. Finally it was desecrated and robbed of its beauty by Titus, the Roman Emperor, who hewed down its trees for the construction of assault-ladders and for crosses on which to hang his victims until crucifixions had to cease for lack of wood.

In this study of the Mount of Olives it will be taken as

The Mountain of Kings

1. In 2 Sam. 15:30 the mount is seen *under a cloud*, the scene of a *king's abjection*. 'David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up'. What a scene of sorrow, mourning and abjection, an exiled king fleeing before his own son! David's association with the Mount of Olives was indeed a sorrowful one and the climax of a very sad story. Within a very short space of time 'the man after God's own heart' had broken four of God's commandments in the law, becoming a covetous man, a thief, an adulterer and a murderer. Nathan's parable, concluding with the words 'Thou art the man' had convicted the erring king and produced that genuine repentance that expressed itself in the language of Psalms 51 and 32; but he had broken four of God's laws and restitution must be made in restoration according to the law of God, Who claimed the child of adultery born to Bath-sheba, and David's three sons, Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. The wandering eye that too soon became the wanton eye (2 Sam. 12:2) gave place to the weeping eye (2 Sam. 15:30) and later to the anxious, watchful eye (2 Sam. 18:24). David's sin was covered through Divine forbearance, expiated by great David's greater Son 'Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past'; but its consequences brought David under a cloud of sorrow and shame.

2. What a different picture is depicted by Luke in his Gospel narrative (19:37)! 'When he was come nigh, even to the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had

seen'. It was the occasion of the partial fulfilment of Zech. 9:9,—*the King's acclamation*, and the mountain is seen resplendent *in the sunlight*. This scene stands in striking contrast to the one already considered.

There the central figure was David, the first of the dynasty: here the central figure is Jesus the Messiah, the last of the dynasty.

There it was the ascent of Olivet by a king leaving his capital: here it is the descent of Olivet by the King entering His capital.

There a sinful man was dishonoured: here the sinless Christ is temporarily honoured. There weeping prevailed in the royal retinue: here rejoicing prevails among the people of the great King.

Curses then were heaped upon the head of David: blessings are here showered upon Him Who is both David's root and David's branch.

For the moment the rightful king was acknowledged, yet how soon the fickle crowd changed their acclamations of praise to vociferations of hatred and cried, 'Away with Him! crucify Him!'

3. The next royal visit to Olivet's slopes was in the night time under the Paschal moon, and is recorded in Luke 22:39-44. It was the night of the betrayal of Jesus by His professed friend and follower, but antecedent to that act of treachery the Lord Jesus had sought the solitude of a garden on Olivet's slopes to commune with His Father. 'He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him'. The Mount of Olives *in the moonlight* tells the story of *the King's anguish*. The clamorous crowd raising their loud 'Hosannas' are now silent, the hush and stillness of night has fallen on the mountain side, and the King has entered the Garden of Gethsemane which signifies 'the olive press', and, prostrating Himself in the shade of the venerable olive trees that typified Jehovah's privileged ancient people soon to be stripped of their branches (Rom. 11:22), He sweats, as it were, 'great drops of blood falling to the ground'. The burden of a world's sin is about to fall on the sinless King of the Universe.

'He is speaking to His Father,
Tasting deep that bitter cup:
Yet He takes it, willing rather
For our sakes to drink it up'

There 'He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared'.

4. Once more, after death and resurrection, the King's journey is from Moriah to Olivet, from the cross to the crown, from the sufferings of Ps. 22 to the sovereignty of Ps. 24. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this king of glory?—The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle'.

The next time the feet of the King touch Olivet's mountain is the last time for centuries (Acts 1:9-12). Its slopes are again bright with glory. It becomes the Mount of Olives *in the spotlight*, as the apostles of the Lamb witness in *the King's ascension* the climax of a finished work, a defeated foe and a glorious resurrection: for 'while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight'. A spotlight is defined as 'a circle or patch of intense light projected to throw a person or object into relief'. The light was focussed on the ascending Lord Whose hands were uplifted in blessing. The Greek word—'atenizo'—used in Acts 1:10 and translated 'they looked steadfastly', aptly expresses the rapt attention that the Lord Jesus commands as the central object of His people's gaze. It occurs in Luke 4:20 when 'the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him' as He read from the prophecy of Isaiah and applied the Scripture He read to His mission to this earth. It is found again in Acts 7:55, where it is recorded that Stephen, 'being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God'. The vision of the great sheet, bringing to Peter the revelation of the universality of the Gospel of salvation and the impartiality of the Author of eternal salvation, commanded like attention, for Peter says of it, using the same Greek word, 'upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes'.

5. The future holds for Olivet a still more wonderful event,—*the King's appearing*, His second advent when the Mount of Olives will be seen *in the floodlight* of glory. (Zech. 14:3-4). That is one aspect of the Christian's 'blessed hope', even 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ'; and it is also the

hope of Israel. "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against the nations, as when He fought in the day of battle: and His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem in the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof'. Jerusalem and Israel's land will be floodlit by His advent, and the whole earth will be miraculously illuminated. Three distinctive phenomena are outlined in Zech. 14:1-15.

- (i) vs. 1-5. *The return of the Lord*, resulting in the scattering of His enemies, the escape of the besieged Israelites, the liberation of the captives and the dawn of a new era.
- (ii) vs. 6-7. *The resplendence of the Light*, in one unbroken day, never too brilliant and never dim, not like the natural light of the sun nor like the artificial light men use at night, for the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing on His wings.
- (iii) vs. 8-15. *The restoration of the Land*, its people, prosperity and preeminence.

The most fitting quotation with which to conclude the contemplation of this wonderful mountain in Scripture is part of Moule's beautiful poem on *The Mount of Olives*:

Rocky grey and flowery-bordered	Jesus rested, teaching, blessing,
Rise the cliffs of Olivet;	Tarried oft in Martha's home;
Bethany beneath them clusters,	Jesus from the Olive Mountain
In its grassy hollow set.	Passed beyond the starry dome.

Saviour, Lord, uplift our longing
 E'en when peace about us lies,
 To the hope of Thy returning,
 To our Home beyond the skies.