

winding from His hand by which we may ascend to the perfect possession of our inheritance in God. "Whom He justified, them," and them only, He will glorify.

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THE SCENES OF THE BAPTIST'S WORK.

It is somewhat remarkable how dense an obscurity still broods over the geography of John the Baptist's life. Every place connected with his name in the New Testament narrative—from the mysterious πόλις Ἰούδα where he was born, to the undiscoverable Ænon where he last appears in public—is the subject of more or less controversy. Fortunately, the work which he came to do—the whole essence of which is embalmed in his pregnant title of "Forerunner"—was directed so entirely to the hearts and consciences of men as men, that an adequate appreciation of it is comparatively independent of local colouring. A competently exact conception of it may even co-exist with an indifference to such details, which gladly leaves them to be supplied in those faintly imaginative traits which every one who vividly realizes John's work will inevitably throw around it. This very circumstance, however, advises us that something is lost by an attitude of indifference. If we desire to reproduce vividly in our minds the work which John did, and to feel it as a thing that really happened, we cannot dispense with these details, and must either give them to the mind or suffer an outraged imaging faculty to substitute others for them. The actual and true geography of John's life, thus, is of the same kind of importance to a complete understanding of his work, as any other subject usually classed under the department of study which the Germans, with a conciseness which is at once the admiration and despair of Englishmen, call *Zeitgeschichte*.

The difficulty of the subject resides wholly in the insufficiency of our knowledge of the geography of the region in which John's life was passed and his work done. It is true that we have absolutely no information about his movements beyond what the New Testament supplies. Josephus tells us only that John was imprisoned at Machærus, in terms that apparently imply that he had preached in the near vicinity of Herod Antipas' residence¹ (which was probably at Tiberias²), and just before his imprisonment may have been at work on the Perean bank of Lower Jordan, from which Machærus was easily accessible. But the descriptions of the New Testament are explicit enough to identify the places accurately—if only we knew anything about the places to be identified. As it is, we are somewhat in the condition of one who for the first time comes upon a letter from a missionary in Madagascar to a familiar friend; our difficulty is not in the sharp and evidently accurate allusions of the narrative, but in lack of previous information about the places alluded to.

A very striking illustration of this is furnished by St. Luke's reference to John's birth-place (i. 39, 65). The description is full enough; it bears marks of being even carefully precise: but in the present state of our knowledge, the exact identification of the place that is intended is almost hopeless. We are first told that it was ἐν τῇ ὄρεινῇ τῆς Ἰουδαίας—"the hill country of Judea"—a term which according to the Old Testament³ described the whole upland region as distinguished from the Philistine

¹ Hoekstra (*Theolog. Tijdschrift*, 1884, p. 341) thinks that Josephus' words suggest even the conjecture that Herod was personally present at John's preaching. Compare Mark vi. 20, which need not refer to the time after John's imprisonment. See also Luke xxii. 8 for the appropriateness of this to Herod's character.

² Edersheim, Hoekstra, etc., think that Herod usually resided at Livias, his new name for the improved Beth-haram, his Perean capital; but apparently on insufficient grounds.

³ Cf. Josh. xv. 48, xi. 21; Gen. xiv. 10.

plain, and which, according to Pliny,¹ was broad enough to include the site of Jerusalem. Mary's approach is thus conceived of as first across the great plain of Esdraelon and then up among the hills. What town, however, she sought in this mountainous country is an enigma which has taxed the powers of a whole series of Œdipuses to solve. The two simple words πόλιν 'Ιούδα, have been read in at least four different ways by the commentators: either "a city of Judah," or "the city of [the country] Judah," or "the city of [the patriarch] Judah," or "the city [namely] Judah." And this is but the first step in divergence. Before those who adopt the indefinite translation, the way is open for the guessing of almost any city in the land; and the opportunity has not been wholly unimproved. Those who translate definitely, think either of Jerusalem or of Hebron, as respectively the chief political and priestly city of Judah. While those who hold the fourth divide into advocates of Jutah in the south, and of Khurbet-el-Jehud in the west.

As a mere question of grammar, any one of the four translations is tenable; but exegetical objections press on each of the first three with sufficient force to throw a distinct probability in favour of the fourth. It is rather difficult to believe, for instance, that Luke, writing when he did, and after the careful enquiry which he tells us he made, did not know in what town so great a man as John was born; and the context hints that he desired to narrowly define the place. Nor, again, is it natural to suppose that 'Ιούδα and 'Ιουδαία are both used in the same context (verses 39 and 65) to express the same notion; for although this phenomenon does occur at Matt. ii. 1, 6, it is there due, apparently, to the adoption of ver. 6 from the Old Testament. It seems impossible, once more, to understand such a phrase as "the City of Judah," whether the

¹ *Hist. Nat.*, v. 15.

subauditum refers to the country or the patriarch, of Hebron, in the absence of any other example of, as well as of any ground in the history of the place for, such a usage of the term. On the other hand, the natural implication of verses 23, 39, and 65, forbids us to understand Jerusalem to be meant,—for which, otherwise, a good case could be made out. Thus it appears far the most natural course to take “Jouda” in our passage as referring to the name of the town.

But who shall decide for us between Jutah and Khurbet-el-Jehud? If the latter name is really a survival from old time, and is not to be translated simply, “the ruins of the Jews,” the exact correspondence of the name will throw the probability on its side. Dr. Caspari, the father of this identification, justly urges in its favour—the tenacity of Oriental names; the extreme, even ridiculous breadth of the title “ruins of the Jews” considered as the local designation of one heap of insignificant ruins in Palestine; the teeming wealth of Johannean reminiscences in the surrounding country—for here are Ain Karim,¹ Mar Zacharia, the Wilderness of John, etc.; and the testimony of the Chronicon Paschale (Olymp., 184) to the existence of a town bearing such a name, at an appropriate distance from Jerusalem.² On the other hand, it cannot be asserted, as some have asserted, that Jouda is an impossible representative for Jutah,³ and its position on the verge of the bleak desert country which John was to make his home, pleads powerfully in its favour. It is easy to suggest the obvious objections, that in the case of Jutah the T does not seem to

¹ Thompson puts the birth-place of John here, simply on tradition.

² *εις πόλιν Ἰούδα, ὅσων ἀπὸ μιλίων εἶ.*

³ The Hebrew יוּד lies close to and is interchangeable with ῥ; and, although usually represented in Greek by T, and next, most frequently by Θ, it is not altogether impossible to find examples of its passing into Δ. *E.g.* Gen. x. 6; 1 Chron. i. 8, the Hebrew יוּד becomes in the LXX. Φούδ, which is a fair parallel to Ἰούδα as a representative of Ἰουδα.

have been popularly softened into D, seeing that it still stands as Yûttah, and that the town had been at this date long in the hands of the Idumæans. But it is not so easy to reach a well-grounded opinion as to the comparative merits of the two claimants to the name of Jouda. On the whole, it seems that we have no choice left but to confess that we lack decisive considerations to sway our judgment. The question must remain for the present *sub judice*, and we must be content to think of John as first seeing the light in southern Judea, either in the little hamlet of Jouda in the Wâdy Bettir, south-west of Jerusalem, or in the larger village of Jutah, south of Hebron.

The next notice of John's whereabouts gives no special trouble, chiefly because, perhaps, it offers us no geographical description, but rather a general statement as to the nature of the regions (note the plural) in which John spent his early life. He was a genuine child of the desert; and "was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke i. 80). No special desert is thought of, or at least no particular one of the numerous wildernesses in or near Judea is specified; the statement amounts only to declaring that John dwelt apart from men, in the wild and uninhabited regions, until God visited him there (Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 2) and put his message into his mouth and sent him forth with meteor-like unexpectedness once more among men. Then, as the time (Luke iii. 1, 2), so the place, of the sudden flaring-up of the beacon-light is more exactly recorded. The ministry of the Baptist begins in that one of the deserts which in the Old and New Testaments alike is called the "Wilderness of Judea" (Matt. iii. 1), and about the general position of whose "horror"—"Jeshimon" is the standing Old Testament designation of it—there can be no doubt (Judg. i. 16). Its exact boundaries are less certain, its limits may even never have been very exactly set. But although the "desert" country, be-

yond question, ran along the whole course of Jordan from the Dead Sea north (Josephus, *B. J.*, III. x. 9), it is probably not justifiable to extend the "Wilderness of Judea" even far enough north to embrace the northern coast of the Dead Sea and touch upon the river. It lay rather to the south, and constituted that terrible region, seamed and scarred as if with convulsions of pain, the whole parched border of which was lapped by the accursed waves of the Bitter Sea. Here it was that the *vox clamantis in deserto* first smote the startled air with its one cry of, Repent! It suited well that such a preaching should first sound forth from such a place,—that such a ministry should take its rise amid such surroundings.

It was plainly impossible, however, for John to fulfil his ministry of baptism in so inaccessible and parched a corner of the land. Thence his voice could reach but few of the thousands to whom he was sent. And the only considerable fountain in it had been already, perhaps, pre-empted by the Essenes, with whom John had no manner of affiliation. It is not unnatural, therefore, that we next hear of him moving northwards and, though still in the desert country, on the banks of Jordan (*Matt.* iii. 6). In the succinct summary of the work of John, which alone the Synoptics give us, we read in Luke (iii. 3) that he came preaching and baptizing in "the whole region circumjacent to Jordan"—which, taken literally, implies that he travelled up the stream, preaching and baptizing as he went. This construction of the sense is borne out by Matthew's statement that the inhabitants of the whole Jordanic region were baptized by John, to accomplish which it is easiest to suppose that he moved gradually up the river in the prosecution of his work. An examination of the localities where we hear of him will prove this very natural supposition to be correct.

Where John began his baptizing in Jordan we do not in-

deed know. But as his preaching had already begun in the Wilderness of Judea, it is natural to suppose that he first drew the crowds about him on the lower stretch of the river, say about Jericho. This agrees with the hint given by Matthew of the apparently immediate effect on Jerusalem: "all Jerusalem," or, as Mark puts it, "all the Jerusalemites," were attracted to him, and the great numbers from the city which are thus implied seems to point to a site for the baptizing easy of access from it. A tradition preserved by Origen, who seems to have made diligent inquiry, and whom we may credit, mentions a place called Bethabara,¹ as another site of John's baptizing; and it may be counted as one of the great services which Capt. Conder has done to Biblical research, that he has pointed out that this name still lingers as 'Abârah, the name of a ford a little north of Beisân and the Wâdy Jalûd. It was certainly somewhat late in John's ministry when we find him at a place called by St. John (i. 28) "Bethany beyond Jordan," where he is surrounded by Galileans, and where our Lord is baptized. The mere fact that the Jerusalemites of the earlier period have here given way to Galileans suggests a northern site for this place. On the ground of these facts alone, one is justified in asserting that John carried his message from one end of Palestine to the other.

When we attempt to determine the exact site of Bethany-beyond-Jordan, we find ourselves immersed in difficulties equal to these that attended our search for πόλις Ἰουδα. We yield ourselves to Dr. Caspari's guidance here too. He seeks the site in the mound somewhat east of Jordan and north of the Lake of Genesaret, which is now called Et-Tell, and which is often (though not with the approval of the most recent investigators) identified with Bethsaida-

¹ It can scarcely be necessary to remind the reader that this name is an unauthorized intruder into the text of John i. 28, where Bethany is the true reading. Nor can it be necessary to say that Bethabara and Bethany cannot be confounded and made one place of, as Capt. Conder has tried to do.

Julias. The direct evidence which he adduces for this identification cannot be said to be copious, but it is somewhat striking. The Arabic word "Tell," meaning "mound," "heap," is one of the commonest of prefixes to Palestinian names, so that Et-Tell, "the mound," is not a name, but only a piece of one, awaiting in this case also its distinguishing suffix. This was supplied by Seetzen's "Gaulonitish Guide," who gave the name of the place as Tell-Anihje, which looks very much like Beth-Anihje, or Bethany, in ruins. And Seetzen may be independently corroborated by Pococke, who calls the place Telouy, which is most likely only a misprint for Telony. It may be added that Captain Conder apparently heard the same name as applying to this Tell.¹ The linguistic objection which he brings against its identification with Bethany is of no force until we settle exactly what the Shemitic original is that "Bethany" represents.

Whatever, however, may be thought of this precise identification, it is capable of something very like demonstration that Bethany was situated in the region about Et-Tell, north of the Lake of Galilee. It has been already pointed out that the nationality of the crowds which surrounded John had changed to a more northern complexion. That he was now baptizing, not near Jericho but some three days' journey north of it, follows again from the length of time consumed by Jesus' journey from this place to the Olivet Bethany, when called by the death of Lazarus.² We should reach still narrower limits, and be directed pointedly north of the lake, if the reading "*Bethany*" instead of "*Bethsaida*," in Mark viii. 22, which Drs. Westcott and Hort put in their margin, and Ewald de-

¹ *Survey of Western Palestine. Special Papers*, p. 132. He gives it as *Tell-Anihji*.

² The *πρῶτον* of John x. 40, is of course relative to John's own narrative, and refers back to i. 28. For the counting of the *days*, see Meyer on John i. 28, and xi. 17.

fended as genuine, could be adopted. At best, however, such a support is precarious, and we prefer to rest our case on two sets of facts that appear to us not to be liable to much doubt.

The first of these arises from a comparison of the Synoptic parallels with John x. 40, which certainly refers back to i. 28, and the settlement of the site mentioned in which will, therefore, settle also the site of Bethany. From John x. 40 itself we learn no more than was already apparent in i. 28; but the parallel passage in Matthew (xix. 1, 2) throws a flood of light on the locality when it tells us it was within the "coasts of Judea beyond Jordan," which is, beyond question, the New Testament form of "Judah of Jordan" mentioned at Joshua xix. 33. At that passage we are told that it bounded the possessions of the northern tribe of Naphtali—whose "portion" reached quite to the river—on the east. According to the investigations of Von Raumer,¹ now quite generally accepted, this northern trans-Jordanic Judah consisted of the possessions of Jair, who a son of Judah himself, held an inheritance in Manasseh from his heiress mother,² and from whom they were generally called in the Old Testament Bashan-Havoth-Jair.³ That this inheritance was included in the province of Gaulonitis, Jerome in the Onomasticon explicitly witnesses. A curious memorial of the name "Judah" is still found in the tombs called Seid Jehuda, adjacent to some important ruins, noted by Dr. Thompson.⁴ Thus it is in the far north, above the Lake of Galilee, in Gaulonitis, that we must look for Bethany.

A careful examination of the account given by St. John

¹ Tholuck's *Litt. Anzeig.*, 1834 1 and 2; and Von Raumer's *Palästina*, Ed. 4, p. 233.

² Note his curious double genealogy in consequence, as given in the second chapter of 1 Chron. and Deut. ii. 14, and Num. xxxii. 41.

³ e.g. Deut. iii. 14; Num. xxxii. 41; Josh. xiii. 29.

⁴ *Land and Book* v.l. 1 vol. i. p. 389.

of the movements of our Lord after His baptism will lead us independently to the same result. Wherever the temptation is to be placed in John's narrative, it is plain that at i. 29 the Baptist is still (verse 28) at Bethany. On the next day (i. 35) he points Jesus out to John and Andrew. Andrew immediately, the same afternoon—after ten o'clock (verse 39)—seeks Peter (verse 41). Now, Andrew and Peter lived at Bethsaida (verse 44), and if Bethany was in the neighbourhood of Et-Tell, Bethsaida was but a few miles away, and the whole transaction becomes natural. The next day (verse 43) Jesus Himself goes into Galilee, evidently, from the succeeding context, bound for Cana. The first thing that happens is that Jesus finds Philip (verse 43). Where? The narrative adds, apparently without connexion, "Now Philip was of Bethsaida." But if we suppose that Jesus started from the neighbourhood of Et-Tell, the first town He would reach would be Bethsaida, and this unconnected sentence becomes no longer unconnected, but assigns the reason why Jesus happened so early to find Philip. Philip next finds Nathanael (verse 45) later in the same day. Now Nathanael was from Cana, and accordingly we find Jesus the next morning¹ (ii. 7) at Cana,—not on the way to Cana, but at Cana. Apparently he reached Cana on the night before. But again, if he started from Et-Tell or its neighbourhood, this is natural enough, the distance being but twenty-one miles. Thus it would be natural that Philip on reaching Cana should seek out his friend and bring him to Jesus, and that the party should have been ready for the wedding the next day. Of course, none of all this is possible if we place Bethany far south, near Jericho; and only the latter part of it natural if we place it south of the lake at all. Apart from all other

¹ The "third day" of ii. 1 appears to be counted from i. 35. We might have had "on the morrow" here, too, as at i. 43, 35, 29, no doubt; but John prefers to continue to count from i. 35, when Jesus began to gather disciples.

considerations, this fitting of the minute details of John's narrative into the supposition of a northern site for Bethany seems to prove the correctness of that supposition. It is scarcely necessary to add that the phrase in John iv. 54, "This is again the second sign which Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee," in no wise suggests that he did His first sign (ii. 1-11), "having come out of Judea into Galilee." This temporal clause is no part of the comparison, and has no reference to the first miracle; it is simply a pointed and strong declaration of the time when the second sign was given—namely, at the close of the Judean and beginning of the Galilean ministry; it thus marks a second beginning, which is appropriately ushered in by a second sign, like the first, significant of the nature of the work to follow.

It seems to be justifiable, therefore, to declare it to be certain that by the time our Lord came to His baptism, John had traversed the whole length of Palestine, preaching repentance. The emergence of this fact is of historical value in two separate aspects. It enables us better to understand, on the one hand, the enormous effect which John's work had on the community, and on the other the especial fitness of the time and place that were chosen by our Lord for His baptism.

The almost unprecedented success of John's brief ministry of six months, before our Lord's appearance, has been made an objection to the historical exactitude of our Gospels. And, indeed, the Evangelists do seem to exhaust hyperbole in describing it. Jerusalem and all Judea and all the Jordan country is represented as having been profoundly moved by it. Even the proud and cold ruler-classes, the Pharisees and Sadducees, though unrepentant and incapable of repentance, partook of the general excitement, and appeared on the banks of Jordan. An official delegation was sent by the Sanhedrin to inquire into the intentions

and pretensions of the new prophet. The crowd thus appears to have swept everything before it, and to have forced even the rulers into notice of the new phenomena. Even Herod himself perhaps was drawn out of his palace to the desert by the universal enthusiasm.¹ Nor was this effect entirely evanescent; its profound and long-enduring influence on the people is evident in the memory it left behind it, and is witnessed to by Josephus as well as the Evangelists.² Now of course all this implies a previous preparation of the people for the ministry of John himself. Judea must have been, and we otherwise know that it was, very much in the condition of an army sleeping on its arms, at every moment expecting the call to the onset, and feverishly ready to spring each man to his place on every cry of a Theudas or a Judas. John was but as the beacon, whose first shining calls a whole coast to arms, as a sudden trumpet-call falling on the ears of a waiting host. But the suddenness and completeness with which his appearance inflamed the whole land is far easier understood when we realize that he was not content with merely lighting the torch, but, seizing it, ran through the whole land and applied it everywhere to the smouldering tinder. His arousing call to repentance was not sent to echo only amid the desolate solitudes and profound clefts of the uninhabited desert, or to roll only up the valley that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem; he sent it reverberating through every valley of the land, and carried his proclamation of the coming kingdom practically from Beersheba to Dan. Thus he prepared the way before the Lord.

And the King delayed His coming until the preparation was complete. It was not until John had reached the

¹ See above p. 268, note.

² Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII. vii. 2. Cf. Matt. xi. 7; Luke vii. 24; Matt. xxi. 26; Mark xi. 32; Luke xx. 6; Mark vi. 20; John v. 33, x. 41; Acts xviii. 24, *seq.*, xix. 1, *seq.*

extreme geographical limit of his ministry—not until his work of arousing the people was fulfilled, and his voice had been heard throughout the whole land—not until he had thus performed the full work of a forerunner and way-preparer, that the Promised One came. It cannot be of no significance that Jesus comes to John and is presented to the people at His baptism, just as John reaches the *ultima thule* of his possible advance through the land. Here the significance of John's ministry also culminates. It is almost sad to note how evident is it also that John's influence over the people reaches its highest point here, and how true in every way it is, that from this moment he could only decrease while his Master increased. No doubt God had still a work for him to do; some inkling as to the nature and importance of which may reach us in that noble testimony he was able to bear to his Master at Ænon (John iii. 23); and we do not know how needful it was for the Master's work to have John continue his through this puzzling period of overlapping dispensations. But it is abundantly plain that in much else than a merely geographical sense John turned his back on his furthest and highest attainment when he began to retrace his steps from Bethany. Even his faith suffered. And already at Ænon, the next and last place where he appears in public in the New Testament narrative, it is easy to see that he is losing his pre-eminence before the people, and it is becoming evident to the higher souls that "non lux iste, sed lucerna."

The site of Ænon, it must be confessed, is not yet certainly determined. St. John describes it in words of evident but brief definiteness, as "Ænon, near to Salim," where there were "many waters." His first readers were plainly expected to understand the exact locality. But later readers have sought it everywhere, from the borders of Galilee to the edge of Idumea. Amid the many sites which have been proposed for it, however, there is one, first sug-

gested by Dr. Robinson, which has the weight of probability so decidedly on its side that we may fairly accept it provisionally. This is found in or near the Wâdy Fârah, near a Salim which still exists in the south-eastern part of Samaria. The latest explorer, Prof. Stevens,¹ with great plausibility, suggests Râs-el-Fâr'ah as the exact site—a remarkable body of large springs, the most considerable in Palestine, south of the sources of Jordan and Tell-el-Kady, and easily accessible from several directions. Their exact situation is at the western end of Wâdy Beidân, the southern fork of Wâdy Fâr'ah, and some four miles from Salim. Hither, better than anywhere else in all Palestine, could John repair, because “there were many waters there.” It is true that the springs no longer bear the name of Ænon, which at present is applied rather to some apparently modern ruins about five miles to the north-east. But the inappropriateness of the name to these ruins, near which there is not a drop of water, is extreme, and slight migrations of names are not unusual. That this site is in Samaria seems to some a still more serious objection. But we must remember that the springs, baths, and roads of Samaria were expressly declared clean by the Rabbis, and John's presence in Samaria at this time is not without historical propriety and significance. No longer the idol of the people (John iii. 26; iv. 1)—the object of distinct enmity from the side of the ruling-classes (iv. 1; cf. iii. 23)—perhaps already hunted by Herod (Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII. vii. 2)—Judea, Galilee, and Perea seem to have been alike closed to him. Already his ministry was nearing its end. There seems an intimate connection between the dispute between John's disciples and a Jew about purifying (iii. 25), and the comparative desertion of John for Jesus by the people (iii. 26) on the one hand, and the cause of Jesus' with-

¹ *Journal of the American Society of Biblical Exegesis, and Literature*, for 1883, pp. 128-141.

drawal from Judea (iv. 1) and John's imprisonment (Matt. iv. 12) on the other, which binds all these events together and adds at once an increased nobleness and sadness to John's testimony: "He must increase but I must decrease" (John iii. 30). The toils are already drawing around the hunted prophet, and there was no place in the whole land where he could safely preach.

His stay in Samaritan Ænon after the discourse recorded in the third chapter of John must have been short.¹ His imprisonment must have followed his departure thence almost immediately. Why he left his place of comparative safety—or whether it proved a permanently safe retreat for him—how he fell into the hands of "that fox," Herod Antipas, whether by too rashly venturing across the river into his Perea domains, or through the treachery of the Judean Pharisees, of all this we are left in complete ignorance. At Ænon, however, John's work, for us, practically closes. We hear afterwards only of his almost immediate imprisonment, of his year's languishing in confinement, of the notable message sent from his dungeon to Christ, and of his shameful death. But not a word does the New Testament drop as to the places where all these things took place. Josephus comes indeed to our help to cast one ray of light on John's latter days, by telling us that he was imprisoned in the strong fortress of Machærus, at the extreme southern limit of Herod's Perea dominions. There, no doubt, the Tetrarch could feel that the prophet, whose rebukes smote his heart and whose popularity aroused his fears, was safe from rescue by the people. But whether this was the first place of John's imprisonment, or the sole place of his long confinement, Josephus' brief notice is scarcely able to satisfy us. At all events, we cannot go far wrong in supposing that it was the place of his death; so that, in sight it may be of the western wastes where he

¹ Notice the "therefore" in iv. 1, and the Synoptic parallel.

began his work, he at last laid down the burdens of his life—the greatest who had, up to his day, been born of woman, become the victim of a lustful woman's rage.

Once more, then—from Bethany to Machærus—John had traversed the entire land; but in how different a progress from his triumphal march from Engedi to Merom was his diminished return! Then, surrounded by ever-increasing multitudes of devoted followers, the favourite of the people and the prophet of the Lord, he mounted at every step higher and higher, until it was given him, amid the open glories of heaven, and in the visible and audible presence of Jehovah Himself, to present their promised King to His expectant people. Now, gradually deserted by all but a very few faithful followers—hemmed in by ever growing dangers—the victim at once of increasing indifference on the part of the people and increasing hatred on the part of the rulers—he sinks into lower and even lower case, until, a prisoner in the hands of a conscienceless tyrant, he is almost deserted by his very faith, and, dazed by misfortune, puzzled by the inscrutable ways of God, but clinging still to his moral convictions, he yields at last his life to his stern sense of duty and the machinations of an angered harlot. The inner change is almost as striking. For, what a contrast there is between the John of Bethany, crying with assured conviction, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! . . . I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God!” and the John of Machærus, asking in doubt and fear, “Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?” Surely such a contrast bears witness not only to the deadening blows of sudden calamities, but also to the life-destroying attrition of gradually-accumulating and long-continuing trials; all of which were, however, nothing more than the fulfilment of his own prophecy, “I must decrease.”

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