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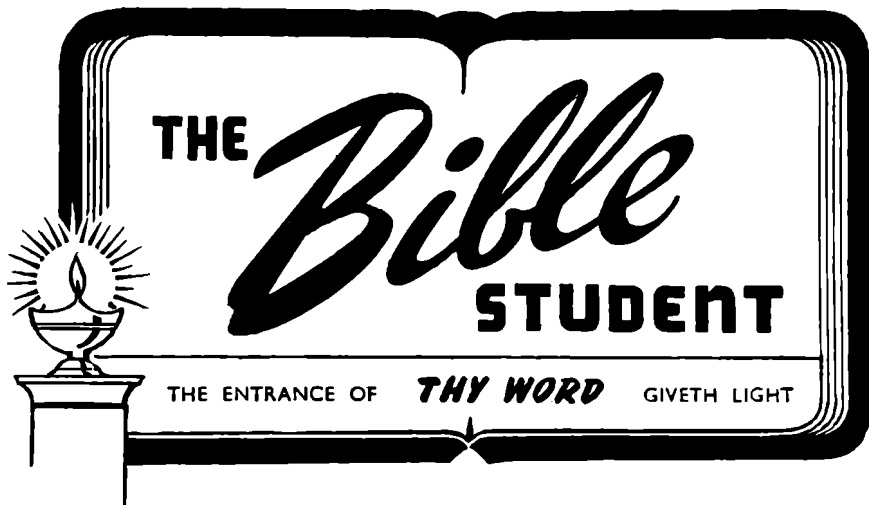
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

Gen. 49:10 instead of the transliteration, which is really meaningless. Ezekiel's interpretation is supported 'by nearly all Versions'.¹

The Sword of Ammon (21:28-32)

The Ammonites, freed from immediate alarm by Nebuchadnezzar's march against Jerusalem instead of Rabbah, seem to have sought to appease him by attacking Judah. But their sword had not been chosen by the Lord to do His work, and so their attack will only bring judgment on them. Note God's command in v. 30; the question of AV is incorrect. The theme is taken up again in ch. 25.

(To be continued)

¹ Skinner: *Genesis* (I.C.C.), p. 523.

'THE HEIGHTS OF THE HILLS ARE HIS'

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

IV. MOUNT ZION

Mount Zion, spelt with a 'Z' in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament, and with an 'S' in the A.V. of the N.T., is associated with Mount Moriah geographically, because of its proximity to it, with Mount Olivet eschatologically because of its place in Messiah's coming Kingdom, and, by contrast, with Mount Sinai spiritually and dispensationally because of its significance for the elect of God. It is described in Ps. 48:2 as 'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth'.

Zion was one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. Opinions differ as to the topography of this mountain but, while there are those who would identify it with a hill on the S.W. of the city and others who favour an eminence on the N.W., the site now generally claimed for Zion is the highest summit of a ridge of hills on the East side of Jerusalem running due South from Mount Moriah. Ophel, meaning 'High place', is an

alternative name for this hill. Originally a Jebusite fortress, it was captured by David who called it 'the city of David' (2 Sam. 5:6-7; 1 Chron. 11:4-5). With the Valley of Gihon on the West, the Valley of Hinnom on the South and Moriah's summit on which stood the Temple of Jehovah on the North, it could only be assailed from the North West. Thus the mountain was splendidly adapted to be the site of a magnificent citadel and was almost impregnable. It is sometimes called 'the hill of the Lord', sometimes God's 'holy hill of Zion', and often referred to as Jehovah's dwelling-place. In some passages in the Psalms Zion is synonymous with 'the city of David', and occasionally, with Mount Moriah, it connotes the site of the Temple. Its meaning is at times widened to embrace the whole city of Jerusalem and even the Jewish nation.

The name 'Zion' has had a variety of interpretations. The meanings, 'parched place' and 'dry rock', given by some authorities certainly indicate a rugged eminence not subjected to the skill of the farmer or embellished by the art of the builder. Dr W. Graham Scroggie renders it 'conspicuousness', and this meaning accords with its lofty situation and distinguished position. Dr Young says the name signifies 'fortress', and with this the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible is in agreement, giving the meaning as 'citadel'. In these various significations we may possibly trace the several stages in its development: first as a parched, barren, rocky hill at the time of its capture by David, then the splendidly conspicuous site of Judah's royal city, and later the well-nigh impregnable citadel that became the wonder and terror of surrounding nations. The name occurs six times in the historical books of the O.T., 37 times in the Psalter, once in Solomon's writings, about 80 times in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the pre-exilic prophets, not once in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel the prophets of the captivity, and about 30 times in the Minor Prophets.

In connection with Mount Zion several well-known figures of speech are used, namely:

i. *Simile* in Ps. 125:1. 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever'.

While in nearly every particular there are vast differences between the human soul and Zion's citadel, they are alike in one characteristic, viz., *endurance*.

ii. *Personification* in Ps. 48:11; Is. 49:14; 69:8, where Zion is spoken of as rejoicing, arguing with God and travailing in childbirth.

iii. *Apostrophe* in Is. 52:1, when the prophet addresses inanimate Zion as if it possessed the potentiality of pulsating with vital energy—'Awake, awake: put on strength, O Zion'.

iv. *Metonymy* in Zech. 2:7, in which the reference is to the people who should have the characteristics of Zion's inhabitants, set apart for God and separated from evil.

v. *Synodoche* in Ps. 87:2, where the part is used to connote the whole. 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion' is an affirmation of Jehovah's special affection for His people dwelling within the gates of the city built on that hill.

vi. *Metaphor* in Ps. 50:2, where Zion is called 'the perfection of beauty', a precious gem brilliant with Divine radiance.

In Scripture Mount Zion is viewed in the past, in the present and in the future, and there are at least two aspects of each time phase. In the past it is viewed literally and figuratively. The Zion of the present is spiritual as well as material, and in the future there will be a celestial as well as a terrestrial Zion.

I. The Zion of the Past

Mount Zion found no place in history before the reign of King David. The Jebusites in whose possession it was were so confident that such a fortified eminence could defy capture that, addressing the would-be conqueror in scornful tones, they said, 'Except thou take away the lame and the blind, thou canst not come up hither'. Like the ancient castles built on towering steep rocks, it seemed to be unassailable. But David did subjugate the Jebusites, captured their citadel and made the hill the site of his capital, the city of David, enhancing with artificial strength the

natural fortifications. David's first concern after he discomfited his enemies, the Philistines, was to find a suitable place for the Ark of Jehovah. From Kirjath-jearim they transported it on a new cart as far as the threshing-floor of Nachom or Chidon, when the oxen drawing the cart stumbled and Uzza, one of the drivers, laid his hand on the ark to steady it. For this act, no doubt well-intended, God punished him by death. For the next three months the presence of the ark in the home of Obed-edom the Gittite brought blessing to the whole household. War with the Philistines followed during this interval, and again resulted in victory and fame to David who, with his realm now enjoying the blessings of peace, followed Divine instructions for the ark in place of the Philistinian expedient and appointed the priests and Levites to carry it on their shoulders to a tent he had specially prepared for it on Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6:17). The ark remained there until the completion of Solomon's temple when it was moved into its more permanent sanctuary on Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1; 5:2-10), the hill to the north of Zion. That is the Zion of the past, the Zion of Ps. 132, the first of the final trio of 'Songs of Ascents.'

Thus on Mount Zion stood fortified towers, emblem of strength, royal palaces, emblem of dominion, and a sanctuary containing the ark, the habitation on earth of the Almighty, emblem of holiness. 'Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following' (Ps. 48:12-13). The citadel, palaces and sanctuary are no longer to be seen on the literal mountain, for the temporal Zion now lies in the dust. In the midst of taunting foes the broken line that once was Zion's zone stands in ruins, as in the days of Nehemiah. Yet figuratively, from the reign of King David until the captivity, it was the emblem of God's presence among the people of His choice (Ps. 50:2; 76:2; 28:68). Like the literal Zion, the nation of Israel lies in ruins, bereft of its pristine glory and no longer 'the joy of the whole earth' but the centre of strife.

2. The Zion of the Present

As Micah the Morasthite predicted during the reign of good King Hezekiah, the material Zion has become a ploughed field (Jer. 26:18; Mic. 3:12). In describing his visit to Mount Zion in *The Land and the Book*, Dr Thomson writes, 'that such a place should become a common wheat-field where, generation after generation, the husbandman should quietly gather rich harvests was, indeed, a most daring prediction, but it has long since been most literally fulfilled. As such, with the cutting off of Israel, it passes from Divine recognition for the time being, and its place in the Divine plan is taken by the spiritual Zion, the Zion of Ps. 133, on which the Divine blessing falls as He waters it with the dew of heaven. The coming of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the dew, is the source of power and blessing to the spiritual Zion, which is 'the general assembly and church of the firstborn'. The opening word of Ps. 133, 'Behold!' is, as Dr Bullinger says, the word of the Spirit, just as 'yea' is the word of the Father and 'verily' the word of the Son. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, describing the awesome terrors of Sinai, assures those believers in Jesus that they had not come to that mountain that fulminated forth the righteous requirements of the Law and the fearful penalties of transgression and disobedience (Heb. 12:18-21). That was the Old Covenant that has been superseded. Now we are 'not under law but under grace', not trembling with fear under the Old Covenant but rejoicing in the unconditional provisions of the New Covenant of Christ's blood. 'Ye are come unto Mount Sion' (Heb. 12:22). This is the spiritual Zion of the present. Like the Zion of old, it is the place of strong defence, of Divine dominion and of God's habitation by His Spirit.

3. The Zion of the Future

Ps. 134, the last of the Songs of Ascents, envisages the arrival in the Temple of the watch appointed for the night at the close of a day of worship. The first two verses contain the song of the retiring congregation as they salute the Levites, priests and sentry whose night watch has just commenced. The watchmen reply

in the last verse, 'The Lord that made heaven and earth shall bless thee out of Zion'. It is the psalm that anticipates the blessing of the coming Millennial day when the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing on His wings. Then Zion will be the centre from which Israel, and through Israel the whole habitable earth, will be blessed in that day when the purpose of God to head up all things in Christ will be fulfilled and He sets His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2:6). As Joel predicted, deliverance will come in Zion, and again the holy mountain will be the literal dwelling-place of Jehovah on earth.

But, before the terrestrial Zion is restored to its exalted position and becomes again 'the city of the great King', the Lamb of God, the Redeemer, will stand with a blameless, guileless company of His redeemed, the firstfruits to God and the Lamb, on the celestial Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1). These will form a part of the true Israel of God and be eternally associated with the King in His heavenly kingdom. How reassuring, then, and full of promise are the words, 'Ye are come to Mount Sion'!

THE APOKALYPTIC LETTERS

(Revelation, chs. 2 and 3)

E. W. ROGERS

There are three ways in which these letters may be read to profit.

First, *historically*, as communications to churches which actually existed at the time when they were penned, relating to things which then concerned them.

Secondly, as a *prophetic outline* of the course of Christendom from its inception until its final rejection.

Thirdly, as a *message for the present time* in which all the conditions envisaged exist concurrently and are found here and there in different places today.

In the permissive providence of God, errors sprang up early in the church's history. This was not altogether bad, for it afforded