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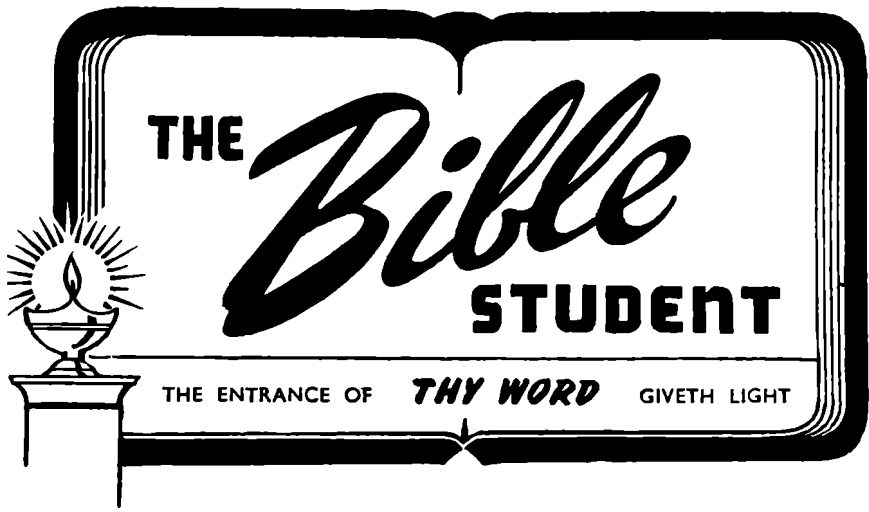
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# 'THE HEIGHTS OF THE HILLS ARE HIS'\*

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

## I. MOUNT MORIAH

(References: Gen. 22: 1-5; 1 Chron. 21: 18-27; 2 Chron. 3: 1-2; 7: 1-3;  
Mark 12: 41-44)

The summit of the highest mountain in the world—Everest—was reached at the end of May 1953, after a number of previous attempts that had all failed in their objective. It has seen exemplified conspicuous courage and a tremendous expenditure of energy, money and human life, for some of its intrepid climbers lie buried somewhere in its eternal snows. Moriah is a hill of only 2,448 feet. The original hill has been much altered artificially, but its slopes still fall precipitously down into a deep ravine on one of two of its sides. Though the summit of Mount Moriah is not even a tenth of the height of Mount Everest, yet for centuries it had resting upon it the visible Shechinah glory of Jehovah that linked it with the Heaven of heavens: for there the Temple of God with its Holy of holies stood. Many costly sacrifices in life, time, talent and energy were made to conquer Everest, but these are insignificant in comparison with the immeasurable cost of the sacrifice of Christ to make a way for the sinner to return to God.

The significance of the name Moriah is *Jehovah sees*, or *Jehovah provides*. It is therefore, in an unparalleled sense, the place of Divine provision as well as the mountain of costly sacrifice, as the incidents associated with it prove. A lecturer of the Palestine Exploration Society who was for twenty-five

\* This article opens a new series by Mr Naismith (who has often contributed to our edification) on the spiritual lessons to be learnt from historic events connected with some of the notable mountains mentioned in Bible history. The title given to the series is adapted from the R.V. of Psalm 95: 4. It is of interest to note that the Hebrew word for 'heights' (A.V. 'strength') occurs again only at Num. 23: 22; 24: 8 ('strength'), and Job 22: 25 ('plenty', marg.: 'silver of strength'). Also a number of authorities give the word the sense of 'mines' or 'treasures', because of the labours of extracting metal from the earth (Ellicott). Considering the great spiritual truths arising out of the historical incidents which make these heights famous, 'the *treasures* of the hills are His' offers an excellent alternative title for the series.—Ed.

years its Secretary, said, 'The discoveries in Palestine not only proved that the Bible events might have taken place as described, but in many cases they could not have happened anywhere else'. The three main incidents associated with Moriah in Scripture are Abraham's offering up of Isaac in obedience to the behest of Jehovah (Gen. 22); David's purchase of the place of the threshing-floor of Ornan, and his offering of the sacrifice which enabled Jehovah to stay the raging plague; and Solomon's choice of the mountain as the site for the temple (2 Chron. 3:1). The three characters conspicuous in those happenings were Abraham, the friend of God and father of the chosen race, David, the 'man after God's own heart' and the founder of the dynasty of Judah, and Solomon, David's son, on whom God bestowed more wisdom and riches than on any other ruler of his time.

Mount Moriah is, in a special sense,

### 1. The Place of the Altar

the altar of the tested Abraham, the altar of the troubled David, and the altar of the Temple courts. In the case of the first of these three altars, the emphasis is on the *son*: in the second on the *sin*, and in the third on the *sacrifice*.

(i) The first of the three Moriah incidents, the offering of Isaac, teaches us two great lessons, one from the Divine and the other from the human, standpoint. It is essentially and eternally a Type of God's love and it was temporarily a Test of Abraham's faith. Here we find the first mention of 'love' in the Bible (Gen. 22:2). 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest'—is an illustration of the truth that 'the Father loveth the Son'. The words—'He that received the promises offered up his only-begotten Son' in Heb. 11:17 obviously refer only to Abraham, but the typical significance of his offering is indisputable in light of John 3:16, 'God gave His only-begotten Son', and Rom. 8: 32 —'He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' On Moriah Abraham's faith, often sorely tried, was tested to the utmost, for the son of his old age, in whom all his hopes and all the Divine promises to him were centred, was virtually offered to God as a burnt-offering at the command of Jehovah. But the triumphant faith of Abraham, reasoning that Isaac, supernaturally given, would be supernaturally restored, stood the test.

(ii) 'The wages of sin is death'. 70,000 Israelites died when King David yielded to a temptation to number his people and omitted to collect from each the atonement money, the half shekel per head according to the injunction in Ex. 30:11-16. David purchased from Ornan the ground on which the threshing-floor stood, the threshing-floor itself, the oxen required for sacrifice, the flails for fuel for the fire, and the wheat for the meal-offering. Then he built the altar and offered the holocaust and peace-offerings: the sacrifices were accepted and the acceptance ratified by fire from heaven. David learnt, to his sorrow, that sin, whether it be that of commission or that of omission, is a costly thing; for he had experience of the fruit of both, of the former on Olivet's slopes and of the latter on Mount Moriah.

(iii) The brazen altar that stood in Solomon's Temple courts must have witnessed the slaughter and sacrifice of innumerable victims, as day after day its fire consumed the offerings. In those sacrifices there was repeated and continual remembrance of sins: for 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin'.

Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain  
 Could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away its stain.  
 But Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our guilt away,  
 A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.

Moriah is also, in each of the three events,

## 2. The Mount of Divine Provision

(i) It was there that God revealed Himself to Abraham as *Jehovah-jireh*,—'the Lord will provide'. On the way to its summit Isaac had asked his father, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' and had received the reply, 'My son, God will provide'. At the time of the question and answer neither Abraham nor Isaac had any idea of the provision that God was going to make, but He did provide a substitute, a ram that Providence placed within the reach of Abraham just as his knife was uplifted and about to fall upon his only son. The great doctrine of *Substitution* is clearly stated here: 'Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering *in the stead of his son*'. The truth of Propitiation presents the death of Christ on the cross as the act by which Divine justice was completely satisfied and because of which God can be just and yet the Justifier of every one that

believes in Jesus. Substitution is that aspect of Christ's sacrifice which makes a personal claim on what the cross of Christ has achieved and acknowledges that He suffered 'in the stead of me, the sinner'. 'Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God' (1 Pet. 3:18).

(ii) The provision of the *Redemptive price*, the 'atonement money', which David had omitted to collect when he sent Joab to take the census of the people, was also the provision of Jehovah. At the Divine command, through the seer Gad, David was directed to Mount Moriah to build there, in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, an altar on which to offer a burnt-offering to the Lord. The whole place, including the threshing floor and the oxen for the sacrifice which he purchased for the insignificant price of fifty shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24:24), cost six hundred shekels of gold, the equivalent of 9,000 shekels of silver, and that became the site of the magnificent temple built by David's son, Solomon. To this David contributed out of his poverty 100,000 talents of gold and a million talents of silver, besides brass, iron and timber in abundance. Had Israel's population when David took the census been several millions, the ransom for their souls at the prescribed rate of half a shekel *per capita* would have been more than met.

David had written, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof' (Ps. 24:1). Asaph was to record the proclamation of Jehovah in connection with the temple sacrifices, 'Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills' (Ps. 50-10): and Haggai was later to encourage the remnant in rebuilding the temple with the affirmation, 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine', saith the Lord of hosts (Hagg. 2:8). Yet all that David out of his poverty and Solomon out of his wealth gave for the sanctuary on Mount Moriah was insufficient for the redemption of even one soul from the tyranny of sin and Satan. 'Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world' (1 Pet. 1:18-20). The most costly provision of God for sinful man was the *Redemption* of his soul. For this His only-begotten Son, man's Redeemer, must suffer and die.

(iii) On Moriah God has revealed Himself to man as Jehovah-jireh, the God Who provides, not only in substitution and redemption, but also in conferring the privilege of *Access*; for, in the temple erected on its summit, the veil that shut out the sinner from the holy presence of God 'was rent in twain from the top to the bottom' at the death of Christ. The efficacy of that one sacrifice for sins for ever, and the entrance of Christ our great High-Priest, into the heavenly Sanctuary in virtue of His blood poured out for sinners on the cross, removes for the believer the defilement that excluded him from God's holy presence. The veil was rent from the top to the bottom, not by the hand of man but by the hand of God.

'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near' (Heb. 10:19-22).

Lamb of God, through Thee we enter inside the veil;  
 Cleansed by Thee, we boldly venture inside the veil;  
 Not a stain; a new creation;  
 Ours is such a full salvation;  
 Low we bow in adoration inside the veil.

From the human standpoint, as well as the Divine, Moriah is also conspicuously

### 3. The Hill of Costly Sacrifice

(i) 'Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only-begotten—of whom it was said, 'That in Isaac shall thy seed be called' (Heb. 11:17-18). God could not have claimed from Abraham a sacrifice that was more costly, more precious or more difficult to offer than his son, his only begotten, his well-beloved, and the one in whom all the Divine promises of blessing to the world through Abraham were centred. Yet Abraham did not withhold him.

(ii) It is difficult to appraise David's offering, of which he himself declared, 'neither will I offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing'. His material gifts were exceedingly bountiful but who can estimate the intangible offerings of the king who, while denied the privilege and honour of building the temple, contributed liberally the devotion of a zealous heart,

the physical strength of a frame that had endured untold hardships and sufferings, and the planning and motivating energy of a steadfast mind?

(iii) The narratives of Mark and Luke record an outstanding instance of costly giving in the very place where Abraham and David made their offerings (Mark 12:41-44). The Lord Jesus, seated by the treasury in the temple built on Moriah's summit, observed the manner and measure of each offering: He saw how and what each person cast in. But He took particular notice of a nameless, penniless and helpless woman, a widow, who 'cast in all that she had, even all her living'. No one can give more than this, and no true Christian should give less. On Moriah Abraham gave his son to the Lord, David gave his substance and his service, but the widow gave her *all*!

## AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

### II. Jesus reveals Himself to the World: 'His own received Him not' (John 1: 19-11: 50)

#### (a) THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES (John 1: 19-51)

Ch. I, v. 19—*And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to ask him, who art thou?*—The two prose passages dovetailed into the Prologue have already told us that John the Baptist came 'that he might bear witness of the light' (vv. 7, 8), together with the terms in which his witness was summed up (v. 15). John's witness is now recorded in greater detail (vv. 19-34). At the time when John commenced his public career as a preacher of repentance in the Jordan valley, there was a widespread sense of expectancy in the world—particularly among those pious Israelites who 'were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem' (Luke 2:38), but also to some extent and in a more undefined way among the Gentiles. The sudden appearance of this strange preacher and baptizer, displaying the authentic marks of the prophets of old, vested with 'the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17), made an instant and