

CLIMBING MOUNTAINS WITH EXPERTS

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My home in Wales was surrounded by mountains which presented an escape from the busy life of the valley. The constant traffic on the narrow streets, the shops, the people seemed to be restrictive, so I developed the habit of climbing the hills where the silence was unbroken. I had a friend called Clifford, and together we shared fellowship. He became a missionary, and I, an evangelist, but in those days we preached to each other. He practiced on me, and I on him, and maybe even the angels laughed. It was to be expected that mountains would always attract me. I have worshiped on Mount Calvary, climbed Dr. Boreham's Mount Hobart in Tasmania, stood on Mount Carmel in Israel, Table Mountain in Capetown, South Africa, and looked with awe on the mighty Himalayas in northern India. The Lord appreciates my interest in mountains, for He designed every one of those lofty places.

Climbing Mount Sinai with Moses...

The Place of Revelation

And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up (Exod. 19:20).

Moses was climbing into the holy mountain, but progress was slow. The entire area was shaking, and the hills were burning. Even the sky was obliterated by dense clouds which seemed to reflect the anger of the Almighty. A trumpet blown by an unseen angel was filling listeners with dread. Moses was about to meet with the living God and wondered what the outcome would be. Israel had been warned not to approach the mountain, for contact would mean instant death. Israel's leader was walking on a prohibited area, and that was enough to frighten any man. Higher and higher he went, until finally he reached his destination. Not since the days of Adam and Eve had any human been so close to the Creator.

When the Ten Commandments were written or engraved upon slabs of stone, the patriarch received the greatest revelation given to man. The majesty of the Almighty was expressed in the ten rules. If Israel obeyed, they would live and prosper; if they did not, they would suffer and die. Unfortunately, that awesome message has been ignored by mankind. The doctrines of holiness have been dismissed by people who indulge in prohibited practices. The Creator is now considered to be the doting parent of all who ignore His laws. Disgusting acts of immorality are now thought to be trifling weaknesses. Recently over national television, a clergyman said he was proud to be a homosexual and thrilled to know God truly loved and appreciated him. That deluded man would have quite an argument with Paul (see Rom. 1:24-27).

Climbing Mount Carmel with Elijah...

The Place of Responsibility

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table (1 Kings 18:19).

All the inhabitants of Israel were filled with apprehension, for a tremendous confrontation was about to take place. King Ahab was infuriated because the meddling prophet somehow had changed the weather patterns, and no rain had fallen on the land for over three years. Now that preacher had made an appearance

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and was about to meet the king. The royal party was already on Mount Carmel. Trouble was anticipated.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. . . . And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down (I Kings 18:21. 30).

When the fire fell upon God's altar, Israel was given a revelation from heaven. God alone was capable of supplying the needs of mankind. He could and would, but God and Baal could never occupy the same temple. When Elijah slew the false prophets who had seduced the nation, the people were reminded of God's stern warning: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The

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world needs to remember those words are as valid today as they were when first given to Moses.

Climbing the High Mountain with Christ...

The Place of Resistance

And the devil, taking him [Jesus] up into an high mountain. shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him. All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me: and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me. all shall be thine (Luke 4:5-7).

From a lofty place it is possible to see many things. and that was particularly true on the day when Satan and the Savior stood on a high mountain looking through time toward eternity. When the Devil offered to surrender the kingdoms of the world in exchange for an act of worship. he revealed important facts. (1) He had not changed! During earth's earliest ages. Lucifer fell from heaven because he desired to be like the Most High (see Isa. 14:12-15). and although centuries brought changes to the world, Satan never lost his original desire. (2) The Devil's claim to be the ruler of the world was never denied by the Lord. Unfortunately, through Adam's folly. the Evil One became the god of this world. It was the purpose of the Savior to redeem mankind, and the insidious temptation presented Christ with a way to avoid the Cross. One act of worship would apparently make the Crucifixion unnecessary. Satan appeared to be generous in his offer, but compliance would have lost forever the opportunity to bring humanity back to God. Sometimes the longest way around is the shortest way home!

Climbing the Mount of Transfiguration with the Disciples...

The Place of Reunion

And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. . . . And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias (Luke 9:28, 30).

They had made their choice! Nine disciples had remained in the valley, and were probably enjoying fellowship in the home of a friend. Peter. James, and John would have loved to be among them, but they had accompanied Jesus into the mountain to pray. Luke wrote: "And as he prayed. the fashion of his countenance was altered" (Luke 9:29). The frail barrier of flesh could

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not hide the eternal glory which Jesus had shared with His Father from before the commencement of time. His face shone with indescribable brilliance, and even His clothes glowed with radiance from His body. That sight could never be forgotten. and many years later, when Peter wrote to his friends, he was still thinking of that memorable experience (see 2 Peter 1:18).

Overcome by weariness the disciples fell asleep. but when they awakened, they saw Moses and Elijah speaking with their Lord. In spite of everything. Moses did enter the Promised Land. God buried only the patriarch's body! Elijah enjoyed a more spectacular entrance; he went home in one of God's chariots of fire. When centuries later they returned to the Promised Land. they brought a special message about the work Christ would accomplish through His death (see Luke 9:31). That meeting on the mountain was only a reunion of friends who had often met in God's country. The patriarch would have smiled to hear Paul explaining that those who die in the Lord were "absent from the body and home with the Lord" (see 2 Cor. 5:8). Moses knew death was dead!

Climbing the Mount of Olives with Jesus...
The Place of Renewal

And it came to pass in those days. that he [Christ] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12).

And he came out, and went as he was wont to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him (Luke 22:39).

It was not easy for Christ to maintain His daily schedule of activity, for crowds followed Him everywhere. The New Testament records how during a tremendous storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus slept. When the winds had whipped the waves to fury, and thunder and lightning shattered the silence of the night, the desperate fishermen feared for their safety. Yet, the Lord lay in a deep sleep until awakened by His followers (see Mark 4:38). There

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were occasions when the Savior could hardly keep His eyes open: there was no time to relax. How then did He maintain His daily program? The answer to that important question can only be found in the Mount of Olives. That particular hill is not a high mountain. It is one of the smallest in the country, yet it became a sanctuary where, throughout the night. Jesus communed with His Father. During the day people worked there in vineyards and other places. but at night they slept. Probably that was the reason why Jesus waited for darkness to arrive before He went there to pray. He taught: "Men ought always to pray. and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). This was the Lord's method of renewing His strength. Isaiah said: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary: and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Climbing Calvary with Memories...
The Place of Redemption

My wife and I. on our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, slowly walked to the place where the Savior died. At that time it was possible to do so: today special permission must be sought. for that hallowed site is a cemetery. The unpardonable conduct of senseless hippies compelled the Moslem elders to close their burial ground to all outsiders, and today it is only possible to look through large iron gates that exclude foreigners. We stood on the brow of the hill. looked at the tomb in the garden. and knew we were within a short distance of the "Place of a Skull." There, we

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thanked God for our redemption. Later I took my party of tourists to that same spot. and as they sat in the shade of a tree. we remembered Christ's death. Birds were singing in the trees, but their song could not be compared with the music filling our souls. We were worshipping at the most sacred place on earth.

Wounded for me, wounded for me.
There on the cross He was wounded for me:
Gone my transgressions. and now I am free.
All because Jesus was wounded for me.

Climbing a Great Mountain with an Angel...
The Place of Recognition

Come hither. I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he [the angel] carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem. descendine out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:9-10).

It is to be regretted that Revelation is the least understood of all the books of the Bible. The apostle John mentioned four wonderful truths when he wrote his message.

The Lamb's Blood Redeeming (Rev. 5:9)
The Lamb's Bride Rejoicing (Rev. 19:7)
The Lamb's Book Revealing (Rev. 20:12)
The Lamb's Building Remaining (Rev. 21:10-27)

He was amazed to see the greatest city ever constructed slowly descending from heaven. It mattered not how this was accomplished. for although the city was fifteen hundred miles square and fifteen hundred miles high. the laws of gravity were inoperative when the massive structure gracefully descended from the sky. It was the fulfillment of the promise made by the Savior: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John 14:1-3).

The Celestial City is to be the home of the Bride—the church—where the redeemed will live with Christ eternally. All the types, predictions, and promises of the Scriptures will have been fulfilled. and whatever surprises may await God's people, that glittering city will be at the center of everything. John said: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it. for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). That amazing place will be God's everlasting monument to the faithfulness of His Son, whose sacrificial death redeemed sinners. John was taken to a high mountain to see this spectacle, but one day, perhaps soon, we shall enter through the gates to behold the Lamb Himself. The poet was inspired when he wrote:

I have heard of a land on a far away strand.
In the Bible the story is told,

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Where cares never come, never darkness nor gloom.
And nothing shall ever grow old.

There's a home in that land.
At the Father's right hand
There are mansions whose joys are untold.
And perennial spring, where the birds ever sing.

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And nothing shall ever grow old.

In that beautiful land on that far away strand,
No storms with their blasts ever frown.
The streets. I am told, are paved with pure gold.
And the sun, it shall never go down.

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