

A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN

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"Brought hither."—Ezekiel xl 4.

THERE are some people who think that the books of Ezekiel, Daniel and the Revelation ought to be let alone, for that they are so ambiguous that no one can get at their meaning; that to attempt to do so is to become a mere speculator, and so to deal with the scriptures as not to be the means either of ingathering sinners or of building up saints. Now if this be true, then it would have been better if these three books—Ezekiel, Daniel. and the Revelation—had not been written at all; because they call off our attention from what some term the plain parts of scripture, and occupy our time, and hinder us in trying to get at what can never be found out. And then again, if the various opinions of men upon these books be an argument against them, why then the various opinions of men upon salvation would be an argument against salvation itself; and so we had better let it alone altogether, because some are in error concerning it. However, the Judge of all has thought otherwise; and he has by his servant assured us that "all scripture is profitable." And I am sure I am taking none too much to myself when I say that I am one of the last—I trust I am at least—that would for a moment read the scriptures speculatively, or encourage others so to do. We should read the scriptures prayerfully and earnestly. In olden time the prophets searched diligently "what, or what manner of time, the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And if I should not this morning make it manifest to you that our text embodies that by which sinners are converted and saints built up in their most holy faith, then I will never preach from Ezekiel again.

But before I enter upon the subject, let us just hear what the Savior says. The Savior gives us, upon the subject of reading the scriptures, a command. He points out a truth, and yet upon that truth the Pharisees of old made a fatal mistake. And at the same time the Savior gives us a clue by which to understand the scriptures at large. "Search the scriptures"—that is something more than reading! searching into their meaning,—"for in them," said the Savior to the Pharisees, "ye think ye have eternal life." But the Pharisees were mistaken in this thought; for they so perverted the scriptures as to shut regeneration out. Hence, when the Savior said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," there was a doctrine that they had shut out; and therefore they thought that they had eternal life; but they had not, because they shut out the doctrine of regeneration, and were strangers to that essential department of salvation. So they shut out the person and the substitutional work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thought they had without him and apart from him eternal life. Then, again, they shut out the election of grace and could not imagine how Gentile sinners could ever become the children of God, heirs of God. But eternal election, had their eyes been opened, would in their minds have settled this matter, that salvation being from first to last of grace. Thus, while

they thought they had eternal life, they wrested the Holy Scriptures unto their own destruction. And then the Savior adds—and we shall have this morning, in following out our subject some pretty good proof of the truth of his testimony,—“They are they which testify of me.” You may judge the surprise of the Pharisees on hearing this. Why they would say, who art thou then? Art thou greater than Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob? Testify of thee! What, a humble man like thee! The foxes are better off, and the birds are better off; thou hast not where to lay thine head. The holy scriptures that speak of the high and the lofty one inhabiting enmity, testify at thee! Though hast neither earthly form nor comeliness and we see no reason why we should choose thee; and yet the scriptures testify of thee! They abhorred the thought. See, then, what a solemn and fatal mistake they made. They thought they had eternal life, and yet those very scriptures testified of just what they rejected. This is a serious, a very serious matter. And as I grow older I feel increasingly concerned to have the mind of the Holy Spirit in every scripture I handle; for it is certain that we can be saved only in the Lord's own way; and he never did step out of his way, and he never will. He has his way of salvation, and he will never come over to the people, to comply with their thoughts and views; but he will, in infinite mercy, bring the people over to himself; and then, when he brings them over to himself, an eternal oneness is established between himself and the people.

I had thought of taking the whole of this fourth verse—it is a very long one—but I at once saw that these two words, "Brought hither." Would occupy the few minutes allotted to us in our public services. It would seem that Ezekiel was at Babylon, and the Lord appeared to him, and brought him in the visions of God to the land of Israel, and set him upon a very high mountain, wherein there was the frame of a city on the south, and there the revelation was made to him of a divine person; so that I have this morning, even to begin with, to take a fourfold view of this part of the subject, namely, what Ezekiel was brought to—“Brought hither”— what he was brought to, and how he was brought to it. It was the Lord that brought him. There is an essential difference between the religion of the man that is brought into his profession by the Lord, and the man that comes into it by human suasion, or by mere mental and moral conversion, without having the Spirit of God in his heart. Hence you recollect in the 22nd of Matthew—and that is a very important and significant scripture—“Friend, how came thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?” He had not the garment, much less had he it on. Now what is the meaning then? Why the meaning is this, that the man was ignorant of God's righteousness, and thought he had established his own righteousness; and therefore by his position among the people of God he would put the great part of the truth out, and try to persuade others to do the same. Rather than that should be done, the Lord commanded him to be cast out. Now if the man had had the wedding garment in his hand, and had looked at it and said, well, this is a beautiful garment, this is a royal robe, I never saw such a robe before;— it is indeed a beautiful robe; I am afraid to put it on: I am such an unworthy creature, I am afraid if I put it on when the king comes in he will tell me to take it off again; that he will say, What business have you, a poor degraded thing like you, such a wretch as you are, with that wedding garment on? So I am afraid to put it on. Why, that had been the man's state, when the king came in he would have recognized the man's trembling, and he would have said to the servants, put that robe on him. He has got the robe in the hand of faith; he longs for it, he admires it, he sees it just suits him; but he feels unworthy of it—he is afraid to put it on. Put it upon him, and that will banish all his fears and all his doubts, and he will meet my smiles, and he will be pleased. I shall be pleased, and all pleased together. But he had not even the wedding garment in his hand, did not believe in it at all. So then some of us, if we cannot put on, as it were, the Lord Jesus Christ in the form of full assurance, yet if we have the hand of faith, and are saying secretly, I hope I have grace whereby I will not let thee go except thou bless me; if such be our condition, then we have indeed cause to be thankful to the Lord for his goodness unto us.

Now I must take hastily a fourfold view, and that is as far as I shall get this morning, of where the Lord brought Ezekiel to. First, he brought him into the land of Israel. Now while this refers to the land of Israel

literally. I shall take it to mean the land of Israel spiritually; and I will be as clear upon it as possible, because if we are brought spiritually into the spiritual land of Israel, then it is because the inheritance is ours. What then is the land of Israel spiritually? The land of Israel spiritually is a land of true believers in Christ. The land of Israel spiritually is a land wherein everyone knows the Lord; a land, shall I call it, of faith and thus spiritually the Lord will bring every one of his people into this land of Israel. Let us hear it described, and see whether the Lord has brought us into the same land. You are aware that the literal, earthly land of Israel was a covenant land—it was covenantally given to the Jews. But then that was the old covenant that is waxed old and vanished away. There is another land of life eternal, there is another land that needs not the light of the sun, the moon, or the stars; there is another land that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. And it is spoken of thus—that “This is the covenant I will make with them; I will put my law”—and ever remember that the law there which the Lord promises to put into the minds of his people is the law of faith; the word law there means the authoritative testimonies of the most High: hence he puts the law of eternal life into the heart; that is a law of faith; “He that believeth hath eternal life;” he puts the law of love into the heart; he thus brings this law so as to make manifest the truth, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn thee;” he puts the law of Christ's substitution into the heart; these and all the promises, are the authoritative testimonies of the Most High, and these he puts into the mind, and writes them in the heart,—“and they shall all know me,” in this spiritual land, for this heavenly earth, this heavenly land, this new earth, “shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; they shall all know me, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” “I will.” says the apostle, when taking up this infinitely precious theme—“I will,” says the Lord by his servant the apostle Paul, “be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Are we brought into this new covenant truth, this new covenant order, this new covenant land? The apostle Peter is very clear upon it, and at the same time very deep. He speaks of it thus “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ.” Then he goes on, as you know, to speak of the abundant mercy of the Father and of the quickening power of the Father, and of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the inheritance, and of being preserved by the power of God thereunto, unto final possession. “Brought hither.” Ah, then, if the Lord has brought us hither, let us trace out a little further the nature of the land, or, if you please, the covenant by which he has brought us hither. Hear what he says: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good.” So that I solemnly engage to do them good by all means. You know that place where it is written that “all things work for good.” What we want is the Spirit of the Lord to spiritualize our minds, and then we shall see that however afflictive things are in the body, however trying they may be in the world, in the family, or in the church, it is all well there: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; and I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me.” They have plenty of opportunity to do so, but they have no inclination to do so. The Lord fulfils his word: “they shall not”—they shall have no inclination—“depart from me.” “They might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.” And then, mark, “Yea, I will rejoice over them.” They shall not depart from me, the Holy Spirit uniting them to me by the mediation of my dear Son, and by this everlasting covenant, “I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land”—they shall prosper in this land and bear fruit in it,—“I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.” Why, when I come to die, I shall leave a people as clearly brought into this new covenant land, most of you, as you are brought into your natural existence; for you can truly say that nothing but such a gospel as this is to you the voice of the good Shepherd, who shed his precious blood as the blood of this everlasting covenant. His voice the sheep will hear, and a stranger will they not follow. Ah, then, brought into this land of Israel, brought into this heavenly country. In the last verse of the 11th of Revelation, John says, “The temple of God was opened in heaven,”—the temple there meaning

the church of God, —“and there was seen in his temple”—that is, the church—“the ark of his testament;” that is, the everlasting covenant. And where ever you meet with a man that is not brought into the land of this covenant, and by whom this covenant is neither understood nor sought after, and by whom this covenant is not desired nor loved, you can feel but very little Christian fellowship; whatever respect you may have to the man in other ways, you can feel very little, or rather no Christian fellowship with him. It all lies here. The people of God become natives of this heavenly land; they are born in it. Why, this free gospel is the very air they breathe; it is a sun that ripens for them all their fruits; it is the light in which they glory; for, as you see at the end of this book, the very name of this land is “The Lord is there.” “Brought hither;” and if he has brought you, this blessed covenant, I say, will be dearer to you than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. That I take to be one part of the meaning. I say to this assembly at large, that the man that is not brought to Jesus Christ, and by him brought into the bond of this everlasting covenant, has no right whatever to conclude that he is a Christian; for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.” It is the same thing which the apostle says, that “God, willing more abundantly,”—the Lord did not look down from heaven, and say, such is the progress of science, and such is the progress of education, such is the progress of civilization, such is the progress of refinement, and such are their social improvements, that by and by they will need but very little gospel; therefore, while in olden times I had to deal with great sinners, and could do nothing with them only by revealing to them the eternal perfection of the spiritual, great Melchizedec, and revealing to them the immutability of my counsel; yet times are so altered they will not need this. Does the Lord speak in that way? No. While, then, I admit the excellence of all the things to which I have referred in their place, you must not put them into the place of religion. You know very well that the last sinner, let him be what he may, will certainly be sinner enough to be saved by grace, for “the top stone shall be brought home with shouting’s of, Grace, and grace unto it!” He is “abundantly willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel.” Therefore those of you that make no profession at all, you thereby prove that you are dead in sin, and you will be lost if you die in that state and those of you that make a profession, but have not felt your need of Christ’s perfection, and of Gods sworn covenant, you have no right to conclude that you are Christians, and if you do so conclude you will deceive yourselves, as did the Pharisees of old; and “he that hath not, from him shall be taken that which he thinketh he hath.” People say, Ah, but love is everything. But we want to know what kind of love it is. If it be not the love of the truth, then it is not the love of God: for the love of God is the love of the truth. Thus, then, they become natives, as it were, of this land of Israel. That is one place to which Ezekiel was brought.

Then, secondly, “He set me upon a very high mountain.” Now I think I could prove that this high mountain simply signifies the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ in its completeness. And before I name four or five scriptures, I will just ask you a question or two. “A very high mountain.” Is not the completeness of the Savior’s work the very height and perfection of holiness? Is not sin our degradation? Has not Jesus Christ made an end of sin? Hath he not finished transgression? Hath he not made reconciliation? And is not his mediatorial work the very height of holiness? Does justice ask for holiness higher than that? Does the law ask for holiness higher than that? Does the gospel bring any holiness higher than that? Does heaven itself ask for any holiness higher than that? Oh, if Jesus Christ be your sanctification, if he be your holiness, here it is, by the completeness of his mediatorial work, that you are completely holy. This is the high mountain,—the exaltation. Oh, how it lifts you up into fellowship with God, into fellowship with Christ, into fellowship with eternal things, and it will lift you up into eternal glory at last. So those who are before the throne, there they are without blame, without spot, without fault. I think, therefore, that this high mountain, —and I will presently try to prove it—if I fail I will try,—simply means the work of Christ in the completeness thereof. It includes not only your exaltation by faith now, not only your fitness for heaven, but it includes your glorification. For if heaven be a high mountain, if that be a high exaltation, what will

be your exaltation? Why, the Savior's work in the completeness thereof. And I am sure the happy and divine revelations granted to our departed brother just before his death, they all go on to confirm me that I am right. We cannot cleave too close to these eternal, self-sufficient, independent, glorious realities; we cannot have too much of Christ; for the more you have of Christ the more you have of God; the more you have of Christ the more you have of the Spirit of God; the more you have of Christ the more you have of the grace of God; the more you have of Christ the more you have of the life of God; the more you have of Christ the more you have of the light of God. If you would walk in the light as he is in the light you must walk in Christ, for God is in Christ. Then, again, is not his work, in the completeness thereof, the very height of righteousness? Would you wish to be more righteous than his righteousness can make you? Would you wish to rise higher than his righteousness can carry you? Would you wish to be more gloriously righteous than his righteousness can make you? Would you wish to be more happy than his righteousness can make you? For by his righteousness your peace shall be as a river, yea, and as the waves of the sea, blessing after blessing in full tide surrounding you to all eternity. And then is it not the very height of victory, is it not the very height of dignity, the very height of glory? Yea, time would fail me to enlarge upon it. Now, I think I may put this part of our subject to this test. The Savior says. "They are they that testify of me, —these scriptures testify of me. While men have puzzled their brains as to what is meant by this mountain, and that, and the other, the Christian comes to the completeness of the Savior's work, and sees, that because of the elevating character of that work it is called a mountain. It is a figure, but it is a very beautiful figure, and such as can be understood in all nations, and in all ages. It is a figure taken— not from science, for then but few would understand it, but a figure taken from nature, which can be understood, as the Lord intends it should be, in all nations and in all ages. Let us look at this mountain again, keeping to the idea that it mystically means the completeness of the Savior's work. Ezekiel was brought to that. Now go to the 31st of Jeremiah; there is another proof; we shall have a stronger proof than that presently, when we come to Ezekiel, for he, rather fond of this lofty order of things, saw the blessedness of it. "The Lord hath redeemed Jacob,"—there is the work of Christ—"and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he;" the hand of Satan, the hand of sin, the hand of death, the hand of law, the hand of justice, the hand of error. Some of us have found this out; we have found out that there is no strength that can savingly stand on our behalf but the strength of eternal salvation precious faith in that gives us a strength that thus sets us free. "Therefore they shall come and sing,"— they shall be happy there. "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion." They are redeemed, ransomed, there is the perfection of Christ, and when they realize this completeness they shall sing. Sin is gone, condemnation gone, Satan gone, law gone, justice gone, death gone, hell gone, everything adverse is gone Jesus Christ is come, God is come, liberty, glory, heaven is come. Here I can sing. "And they shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord;" and wherein do we see the goodness of the Lord more wonderfully than in this completeness of the dear Savior's work? "For wheat;" and is not Jesus the wheat? The wheat there means the bread of life; and is he not our sustenance? "And for wine" and is not the blood of the everlasting covenant that shall cheer our hearts and make us happy to eternity? "And for oil;" the flowing grace of God, the golden oil, as Zechariah has it. "And for the young of the flock." You see there are four things. There is the wheat, meaning of course mystically the bread of eternal life; there is the wine, meaning the precious blood of the everlasting covenant; then there is the oil, meaning the grace of God, the anointing of the Holy Spirit; then there is the young of the (flock, that means the milk; all of which is you are aware, spoken of mystically in different parts of the word of God. "And their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." How will you realize this, how will you prove the reality of this, but by the completeness of the Savior's work? Is it not true, then, that by his works we are brought to the very height of Zion? Here we have the goodness of the Lord to cover the badness of the creature; here we have the bread that delivers us from eternal famine; here we have the wine that turns all our sorrows into joys; here we have the oil that keeps our lamps burning; here we have the sincere milk of the word. "Their soul shall be as a watered garden." How is that? Let us have the dear

Savior's own explanation of this; it is simple, clear unmistakable. "The water that I shall give shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "Their soul shall be as a watered garden." Ah the sweet spices and fruits that that soul shall bring forth in a way of love and gratitude to Jesus! He will indeed say, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly O beloved." "And they shall not sorrow any more at all. Now I hardly dare go to the 17th chapter of this book of Ezekiel further to describe what is meant by this high mountain. The tribe of Judah is there called a high cedar; the royal house is called the highest branch of that high cedar; and the descendants of David are called the young twigs. "I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one" and "will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent one." Shall I go too far, if I say that Jesus Christ in the counsels of eternity was planted in perfection of his work, and that the people in the counsels of eternity were planted in the perfection of his work. You embody the same truth when you sing that hymn,—

"Now in the glass or his decree,
Christ and his bride appeared as one;
Her sin by imputation his,
While she in spotless spender shone."

He was planted on earth actually where he was in heaven in counsel— in the perfection of his work. "I will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent;"—yea, as though the Lord would impress this matter upon our minds,— "In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it." And did not the Savior always say and always feel that he was not come into this world to do what he could, but to do what the Father willed. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." "And it shall bring forth boughs," the blessed truths of the gospel, "and bear fruit," precious promises, "and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell." Why, is it not clear that it has been so? "All fowl of every wing." There is a bird of prey, and as soon as ever the feeling seizes that bird of prey to fly to this tree, he loses this carnivorous appetite, and becomes granivorous all at once. And so when they are thus brought to dwell together in the shadow of this tree, their original instincts and desires are overcome; whatever difference there may be in nature or in circumstances, they all agree here. Of all dwelling places in the whole range of existence to dwell under the shadow of this tree is the best; and of all fruits that man ever heard of, the sweetest, the best, the most precious, are the promises that grow into perfect ripeness on this wondrous tree. And these birds are all turned, when they come there, into singing birds— "The time of the singing of birds is come." And this is on "the mountain of the height of Israel." And yet preaching from Ezekiel has no tendency to reveal Christ to sinners, nor to bring sinners to Christ, nor to build up the saints! Why, I love those words,— "fowl of every wing;" —all nations, kingdoms, peoples, and tongues. "All," says Jesus, "that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." This height of Israel, than, this very high mountain, was just where Ezekiel was—very high. So you and I ought to reckon it an honor to be called high. When a man that does not know the truth goes and hears a man that preaches it, and his friends say to him afterwards, Well, how did you like him? Well, he says, very high—very high. Why, we ought to be glad of being called so; that is just what Ezekiel was. "He set me upon a very high mountain." Ezekiel gloried in being very high —high above sin's reach, above Satan's reach, above death's reach. As Watts sings,—

"Where is the power can reach them there,
Or what shall force them thence"

The last scripture I quote in this part is the 20th of Ezekiel and the 40th verse, "In mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, says the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me." Mark that, "all of them in the land;" brought into the new covenant, the spiritual land. Thousands yet are not brought into this land, but they shall be brought. "Other sheep I have." And then, to prove—at least it does to my mind—beyond all dispute that this high mountain means the completeness of the Savior's work, it is added, "There will I accept them." Now there stands the positive declaration that he hath made us "accepted in the beloved" approved in Christ, accepted in Christ. "There will I accept them." And where doth he accept us, but in this height of holiness, of righteousness, of victory, of dignity, of glory? Here we have the lofty thoughts, the lofty ways, and the lofty settlements, of the lofty One. And is it any wonder that it is written of the people of God that "they shall rise with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint?" for they are as hinds let loose, bounding over the mountains, and happy in the height of the Savior's perfection. "There will I accept them." Now let me be very serious upon this part. If what I have said be true, then there is no acceptance with God but in the height of holiness, in the height of righteousness, in the height of victory; and that height is, as I have said, Christ's work in the completeness of it. Jeremiah, in his 31st chapter, and 23^d verse, takes a twofold view of this same subject. "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice;" that is a habitation of justice where Christ dwells; Christ dwells in your hearts by faith as your justification; —"and mountain of holiness;" and Christ is that mountain of holiness. "There will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things." "Brought hither." Can we say these two things this morning—that we are, we trust, brought into the land of Israel where the new covenant is known, understood, and abode by. "They shall all know me; they shall not depart from me;" and that we are brought into this height of Zion, this completeness of the Savior's work, as our only hope for time and eternity.

But again,—the third thing to which Ezekiel was brought was the city of God; "by which was as the frame of a city on the south." That has delighted me many a time. You all know that topographically, or, if you like, geographically speaking the literal city of Jerusalem, which now is in bondage with her children, is on the north side of mount Zion, on the sides of the north. But Ezekiel sees that here is a transition—the city has passed over from the north to the south; that is, passed over from a broken covenant, that let in upon it, on the ground of the people's apostasies—let in upon that city the desolate, destructive northern blast. But here the city now is on the south—on gospel ground, on a covenant that cannot be broken. The whole of that covenant was entrusted with the Savior, and he never failed nor was discouraged. He has laid the foundations of the city firm; so that we may well say, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appointed for walls and bulwarks." And it is indeed a sunny city, for God himself and the Lamb are the light therein and the light thereof. See then the difference,—the one is in the north, exposed to destruction; the other in the south, to represent it in its new covenant position. Now there is a very significant scripture that I may quote here—"Abraham still journeyed toward the south"—mark that phrase. And so I like to do the same. Ah! the world is in the north— under the law, and under the curse; and so false religions, they are all under the curse. The blessing lies in the gospel, called the south. You must not think that I am fanciful here; I will try to prove that I am not. If you will do yourselves the pleasure to read the 47th of Ezekiel, you will find that the altar stood before the temple, on the north side, to denote that Christ was to take away the wrath and curse due to us; and that the river came out from under the threshold on the south side of the altar, on the gospel side, to show that the goodness of the Lord doth not come to us by the works of the law, but by abiding in the faith.