

# Things Seen And Heard In Bible Lands

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By

H.A Ironside

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## **Preface**

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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A visit of three weeks to Bible Lands, while deeply interesting, and yielding much that has made a lasting impression on heart and mind, was all too short to make an attempt at another book on Palestine and the Near East worth-while or really possible. But I have found that the story of things seen and heard in those lands has been received with interest, and I have reason to believe with blessing, when used as a basis for gospel messages.

These addresses have been stenographically reported and are now sent forth, with the prayer that God will use them in the winning of souls and the confirming the faith of believers.

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—H.	A.	Ironside.
Chicago, Ill, Sept., 1936.		

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## **The Street Called Straight**

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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*“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high Priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he ‘might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.*”

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*And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

*“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,, and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:1-11).*

How often had I pondered over these words, yet they never seemed so vivid as when we were permitted only recently to view the very scenes mentioned, as we spent two most interesting days in and about Damascus. Our visit there has had the effect of making the Word of God more graphic, more living, more real, than ever before. I do not mean to say that the Word seemed any more true. We have known it all through the years as the veritable Word of the living God. But you remember what the Apostle Peter said concerning the voice that he heard when he was with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; he declared, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy.”

I think it is possible to improve on that translation. I do not suppose that anyone here takes it for granted that when we say we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible we mean that we believe that any translation is perfect. One might gather from those words as rendered in our English version that the Apostle Peter meant to tell us that the word of prophecy was more to be depended on than the Father’s voice. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy”—but that was not really what he was saying. I think a correct and very careful rendering would be this: “We have also the word of prophecy confirmed.” That is, you see, the Father’s voice simply added its testimony to what was already declared in the word of prophecy. And so

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a visit to Palestine and Syria and Egypt will but confirm what is already written in the Word of God.

It was a thrilling thing to ride over the hills and valleys where the Saviour once walked so many, many years ago, to enter into the towns and villages where He lived and talked and wrought His works of power; but the city that I am thinking of particularly today is one that He never visited while He was here on earth, and that is Damascus. Damascus is probably the oldest inhabited city existent in the world. It was an old city in Abraham's day thousands of years ago, and you will remember that the steward of Abraham's house was Eliezer of Damascus. It occupies a large place in the Bible. For many years it was the capital of Israel's Syrian foes. From Damascus came Naaman, the Syrian, to the land of Israel to be healed of his leprosy. As I looked at the rivers of Abana and Pharpar on either side of Damascus, watering that lovely plain, and then later on, gazed on the muddy waters of the Jordan, I felt as though I could sympathize more than ever before with Naaman when he said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the rivers of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" But no; there was only one place where Naaman could be cleansed that day, as there is only one place and means of cleansing for guilty souls now, and that is the precious atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was impossible to be in Damascus and not think a great deal about the Apostle Paul. Even though our guide was a Mahomedan, yet his mind was full of his history. He seemed delighted to lead us about from place to place to show us where the Apostle had linked his name with the city of Damascus. We went outside the city and stood on the hill opposite the road coming up from Jerusalem, looking down over that city in all its beauty; and to look at it from the outside, it is indeed a lovely place. You

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remember, 600 years after St. Paul's visit there, Mohammed and a number of his associates stood on that very same spot and looked down upon that city. They had come so far intending to enter it, but Mahommed turned to his friends and said, "It is given to man to enter but one paradise. We will not go into Damascus;" and they turned away.

Saul of Tarsus was journeying along that very road, nearing the city, when suddenly there shone upon him that light from heaven, and he fell to the ground; and he could say afterwards, "I could not see for the glory of that light." He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And Saul cried out in amazement, "Who art Thou, Lord?" only to get the remarkable answer, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goads;" referring of course, to the goads with which they still drive the oxen in that country.

Now, think of this: Here was man who was a sincere opponent of Christianity, and a man who was an absolutely honest person. He said, speaking of his years before his conversion, "I verily thought within myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; which thing I did." And in referring to those days again, he said, "I have lived in all good conscience toward God until this day." He was an honest Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a member of the strictest sect in Israel, a Pharisee, a firm believer in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, looking for the coming Messiah; but he honestly believed that Jesus Christ was an impostor, that He was misleading the people of Israel. He believed that when Jesus died upon that cross and was laid away in that tomb, that He never came out of His grave alive again. He believed that He was dead and would remain dead until the resurrection at the end of the world. And therefore he

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believed that the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ were deliberately deceiving the people when they said that they had seen Jesus after He came forth from the tomb, and had been commissioned by Him to carry His gospel into all the world.

What was it that changed that man so wonderfully, on the occasion of his visit to Damascus, that he afterwards became one of the most earnest advocates of the new faith? I think there is something here that needs to be explained. I have heard very foolish attempts to explain it. I have heard people say that Saul of Tarsus was an honest man, but an emotional fanatic, and that he was an epileptic; and that day on the Damascus turnpike he had an attack of epilepsy, and that as he fell to the ground he imagined that he saw Jesus Christ enthroned in glory; and therefore we owe the conversion of Saul of Tarsus simply to an epileptic fit! A leading modern minister preached on that some years ago. As I read his sermon I could not help but wish that every unbeliever in the country might have that kind of epileptic fit if it would result in such a marvelous change as took place in the life and inner experience of Saul of Tarsus.

Others, again, have declared that Saul's conversion was simply due to a sunstroke as he travelled along that warm summer day. He fell stricken to the ground, overcome by the heat, and he had hallucinations for all the rest of his life. He actually imagined that he had seen Jesus Christ and heard His voice; that he was commissioned to become His apostle and carry His gospel to the Gentiles. I confess I was angry within, I was indignant, the first time I read that statement; but then, after thinking it over, I came to the conclusion that perhaps the author was not so far wrong. It was a Son-stroke, but the word "Son" should be spelled S-o-n, and not s-u-n. It was the light of the glory of

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God in the face of Jesus Christ that shone upon Saul of Tarsus that day, and shone into the very depths of his soul and changed him from Saul the Pharisee to Paul the humble, devoted Christian.

It was a very real thing that took place. He was born of God; he was made a new creation. Oh, how real it seemed to us as we stood there and looked down over the city and realized that we were practically in the very place where the Word of God laid hold on that man's soul!

And then we went back into Damascus, and walked all the way through the old city from one wall to the other, along "the street called Straight." It is there today as it has been for thousands of years. It is a street with bazaars on every side, and hundreds of people can be seen walking up and down. We are told that when Saul of Tarsus arose from the ground and found himself blind, he sought for someone to lead him by the hand, and he was led into the city and along the street called Straight to the house of a friend of his named Judas. As we were walking down that street we heard a man behind calling out something in Arabic which we could not understand. I asked our guide what he was saying, and he replied, "Look out! Lookout!" We turned to see why he called like this, and we saw that he was leading a blind man by the hand down that busy thoroughfare. We stepped to one side to let him pass, and I said to my wife, "Nineteen hundred years ago that might have been Saul of Tarsus—the blind man led by the hand."

To that blind man of old came Ananias with the glorious message of the gospel of God; and Saul of Tarsus believed that gospel, and, believing it, was baptized in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then began immediately to preach the faith that once he denied. You remember how opposition developed, and the Jews sought

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to slay him, he who before had been the persecutor but was now the advocate of the new gospel of the grace of God; and so his friends to save his life, took him into a house built on the wall of the city; and through a window in the wall they let him down in a basket, and he fled to Jerusalem to join himself to the disciples there.

Visitors are still shown the traditional window where it is said he was lowered over the rampart to avoid his enemies who were thirsting for his blood. Whether one can place much reliance on this attempted identification or not, we could not but be interested in what enabled us so clearly to visualize this event of the distant past.

To the Moslem as well as to the Christian Paul is a notable personage, but the gospel committed to him is perhaps as little known among many in so-called Christian lands as in countries where Islam holds sway. Damascus is a city of mosques today. Long years ago it contained many Christian churches, but their teaching and their practices became so corrupt that God would not defend them against their bitter Mohammedan enemies, and so the crescent has largely supplanted the cross in this ancient capital. There are struggling Christian missions, but I was told they have thus far made very little impression upon the adamant fortress of the followers of the false prophet. Oh, for a mighty work of the Holy Spirit of God, that will open the blinded eyes of the millions of the Islamic world to see their need of Christ and to find in Him an all-sufficient Saviour!

The same omnipotent power that converted Saul of Tarsus can reach the people of Damascus, if they will but heed the voice of the Lord and obey the heavenly vision as he did. But just as, of old, few there were who earnestly sought the way of life, so it is still. Men are blinded by

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their great enemy, the god of this world, and do not care to inquire concerning a Saviour's grace because they have no sense of their need. Though "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent" they refuse to face their sins, and so persist on their own self-chosen course, making themselves believe that all is well, when in reality, all is wrong.

But to come back to the conversion of Saul. It is important to realize that it is possible for one to be wrong and yet honestly wrong. People say sometimes that it does not make any difference what a man believes so long as he is sincere. Saul of Tarsus was just as sincere when he was an enemy of the Cross of Christ as he was when afterwards he became a Christian. But first he was sincerely mistaken. Afterwards he was sincerely right, because God had revealed Himself to him in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so you may have come to certain convictions in regard to religion, but let me ask you, Are they based on things that are certain and sure? Read the Word of the Living God; and in His blessed Book in the Old Testament we have the prophecies of the coming of Christ. In the New Testament we have the prophecies fulfilled: the coming into the scene of the Lord Jesus. And now God in His grace invites you to come to that blessed Saviour and trust Him for yourselves. If you are skeptical, if you are unbelieving, He says to you, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself."

As we walked the street called Straight we felt very close indeed to that zealous Pharisee who so long ago had been changed by the grace of God into the earnest apostle to the Gentiles. We wondered where his friend Judas lived. They

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showed us the reputed house of Ananias, but we could not credit the tradition, for we feel sure it was only that. But though we could not identify the sites with any exactness where the humble messenger received his direction to seek out Saul, “for behold, he prayeth,” or the house into which the feet of Ananias somewhat reluctantly entered, we felt very near indeed to that bewildered and amazed glory-blinded man, who somewhere along that street was instructed by one of the very men he had hoped to arrest, and became himself the bondman of Jesus Christ.

It made it all very, very real indeed, and I do not so much wish to occupy you with any description of the city of Damascus as to press upon your heart the importance of a careful investigation of the great matter that was thus pressed upon the heart of Saul of Tarsus so long ago. He who revealed Himself to him desires to have you know Him too.

It is impossible to explain away that memorable conversion. Something very definite must have occurred to change that erstwhile persecutor into the greatest exponent of the Christian faith who has ever lived. It was an outstanding miracle of grace. Divine power and a Divine revelation are accountable for it. Nothing less can possibly satisfy any honest inquirer.

If you are sincere today in the desire to know the truth, may I direct your attention to a passage in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John? There in verse 30 we read: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” Now, observe, here is one particular book in the Bible, the Gospel of John, which we are

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specifically told was written “that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we may have life through His name.” If you have any doubt, therefore, as to the Messiahship of Jesus, if you have any doubt that He is the Eternal, Sinless Son of God, I beg of you, read this little book for yourselves. Read it carefully, thoughtfully, and as you turn its pages lift your heart to God in prayer and cry, “O God, if this be indeed Thy Word, and Jesus Christ be indeed Thy Eternal Son, the Saviour of sinners, then reveal it to me as I read Thy Word;” and I promise you that if you come to the Word in honesty of purpose like that, God will make Himself responsible to reveal Christ to you, just as long years ago by a light from heaven He revealed Him to Saul of Tarsus and changed him into Paul the Apostle.

There is one thing that I would like you to remember in regard to Saul, and that is this: we do not see in him a man saved from flagrant sins and vile, wicked, obnoxious behavior, but we see in him a self-satisfied religious zealot who thought his religion was enough to get him through to heaven, but who found that not religion, but Christ, is necessary to save the soul; and so he turned from his religion to a Living Saviour. What is your confidence today? Is it simply religion, or is it the Lord Jesus?

It is years since I was preaching one night in a little church in Los Gatos, California. Behind me was a choir composed chiefly of young men and women. As I preached that night I did so with a strange oppression of spirit. Somehow I felt that my words were as seed falling upon hard-trodden ground. When at the close I invited any anxious souls to meet me for personal conversation, no one came near. I went to my room discouraged and grieved in spirit. The next day I left for another appointment, and I thought nothing had really been accomplished for God and

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eternity.

But a few days later I received a letter from one of the members of that choir. She wrote somewhat as follows: "I cannot refrain from letting you know how wonderfully God has saved me. I joined the church several years ago, but I knew nothing of a second birth. As I love singing I became a member of the choir. The songs of praise I sang meant nothing to me excepting that I thought I was doing my religious duty in singing them. But the other night as I sat behind you, God showed me from His Word that I was lost. I realized that all my righteousness was but as filthy rags in His sight. Oh, how I wanted to speak with you and seek for help at the close, but my pride would not let me. To own that I was unsaved and yet in the church and the choir, seemed too humiliating. But I went home in great distress. I could not sleep. At last I arose and threw myself on my knees. I told God I was only a self-righteous hypocrite and I begged Him to save me." I do not pretend to give her exact words but the gist of them burned themselves into my memory and I have never forgotten the thoughts expressed. She went on to say that hours passed by, and she was in despair till the words of Jesus came home to her in living power, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." She told me how she trusted Him and rested on His Word, and then she added, "Oh, how different the gospel songs are now! They have a meaning I never saw before."

I met her often in after-years and had occasion to see how she grew in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. She had truly passed out of death into life.

My friends, do you know Him who met Saul that day on the Damascus Road? Have you taken Him as your Saviour? If not, I pray God you may do so now.

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In closing let me carry you in thought a long way from the street called Straight, right over to the dungeon of the Mamertine Prison in Rome. For he who met the Lord first on the Damascus road and then had his faith confirmed in the house of Judas on Straight Street, finished his course as a prisoner in the Imperial City, and sealed his testimony with his blood when he was decapitated on the Appian Way just outside.

We stood in that dungeon a few weeks after walking the street called Straight. It took Paul over thirty years to cover the same distance! But what fruitful years they were—witnessing to Jew and Gentile alike, calling to “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Unhonored—nay, positively dishonored by the world—he went from land to land and city to city, testifying to free and bond, to cultured and barbarian, that He who had saved him was ready to do the same for all who would turn to Him and live.

And then to end it all, a prisoner in such a dungeon death-cell! It is a gloomy den indeed— an underground room, round in shape with a conical roof, a hole in the center-top from which all light and air had to come, until in our modern day electricity was installed. The floor and walls are of brick. The whole place is just sixteen feet in diameter. It was there that Paul wrote his second epistle to his friend and companion, the younger preacher, Timothy.

But there is no note of discouragement in that letter, no expression that would give the impression that Paul was ending his days a defeated man, no regret that he had not continued in the old life so that he might have become an honored Rabbi and died with the esteem of his people, and in circumstances of comfort. Not at all. His death was as

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triumphant as his life. Listen to his exultant words: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (**2 Tim. 4:6-8**).

It was a glorious finish to that new life which began at Damascus with the sight of the glorified Christ. For long centuries, as we count time on earth, Paul has been “with Christ which is far better,” but never, throughout eternity, will he forget the experiences connected with the street called Straight.

If we would share his heaven we must in our measure share his experiences on earth by trusting in and following Him whom God has set forth to be a Prince and a Saviour.

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## Nazareth, the Home of Jesus

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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*“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him” (Luke 4:16-20).*

“Nazareth, where He had been brought up.” In connection with our recent tour of Palestine and the Near East, we awoke one beautiful Lord’s Day morning in early Spring and found that our ship was anchored in the magnificent harbor of Haifa. I suppose many of you know that throughout all the past centuries Palestine has never had a real harbor. Jaffa, or Joppa, as it was called of old, the port from which Jonah sailed, has been the recognized harbor for Palestine. It is really just a kind of roadstead. It is not possible for vessels to come close to the shore: they have to anchor some distance out, and then passengers and freight have to be transported to and fro by tenders. However, in late years since the British took over the mandate for Palestine, they have constructed a

most commodious harbor at Haifa by building a great breakwater, so that at the present time it is possible for a vast number of ships to anchor inside the breakwater and thus be at perfect quiet while the sea may be raging outside. We had intended stopping at Jaffa, as a number of our passengers were to leave there, but the sea was so stormy that it was not possible, and so we went on to Haifa.

On this Lord's Day morning, as we came up on deck about six o'clock, we looked for the first time upon the beautiful shores of Palestine. I confess it gave me a wonderful thrill. I had been reading this Blessed Book of God practically all my life, and the land where the Lord Jesus lived and walked, where He taught and wrought His works of power, where He suffered and died, and where He rose again from the dead, and from which He ascended to heaven, had always meant a great deal to me. In fact, it had been one of my dreams from childhood on, that some day I might see Palestine. But, as the years went on and no such opportunity presented itself in my busy life, I had about concluded that I never would see it until I came back with the Lord Jesus Christ, when He shall descend to that very land and His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. However, in the providence of God, the way was opened for us to visit it, and so, as we looked out upon its shores that day, my wife and daughter and I were deeply moved. There before us rose Mount Carmel in all its majesty, where Elijah had his great controversy with the prophets of Baal. Nestling at the foot and climbing up the sides of that mountain we saw the beautiful modern city of Haifa; and then, as we looked as far as eye could see, we beheld the valley of Jezreel and the distant hills. We arranged to go ashore just as soon after breakfast as possible, and when we entered Haifa we learned that we could take a bus about twenty miles over to Nazareth. It was interesting to notice the signs on the bus, and, in fact, we found the same kind of signs everywhere, all printed in three

different languages: Hebrew, Arabic and English. When our Lord was here three languages were used in Palestine: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Since the return of so many thousands of the Jews to Palestine under the British Mandate, three languages are again recognized as official in that land: Hebrew, Arabic and English. They are found in the railroad stations; they are found on shop signs; they are found on the postage stamps and on the coinage of Palestine—telling us that a new day has indeed dawned for that land so long trodden down beneath the iron heel of the Turk.

You remember what God said of Israel: that because of its sins, He would sell the people and their land into the hands of the worst of the heathen; and I think you will all agree that the Turk proved throughout the centuries to be indeed the worst of the heathen; and the Jews of Palestine were subject to Turkish domination for many centuries until that wonderful day when General Allenby walked through the Jaffa Gate into the Holy City, at the head of his triumphant army.

We found we could get this bus for Nazareth, so we immediately set out. It was most interesting as we traveled across the plain. Remembering a little of the geography of the land from what I had learned in studying my Bible, I said to the driver, "We surely ought to be crossing the River Kishon soon," and he replied, "It is just ahead;" and in a moment or two we were passing over the bridge of that stream which so often ran red with the blood of the foes of Israel. On we went across the Plain of Jezreel, the celebrated Valley of Armageddon where so many tremendous conflicts have taken place, and where the last great battle is yet to be fought. Far to the southwest we could see Mt. Megiddo, and to the west Mt. Carmel; and as we looked to the east we beheld Mt. Tabor in all its beauty and majesty. To the north

Mt. Hermon stood in its grandeur and glory, snowcapped the whole year 'round. On and on we sped. The ground was literally covered with the most beautiful wildflowers—just a splash of color—and the most prominent of all was the lily of the vale, which is not a lily after all, but a beautiful blood-red anemone found in millions over the Plain of Sharon and the Valley of Jezreel.

At last we came in sight of Nazareth, nestling on the hill-side, with its beautiful white buildings, the Franciscan monastery, churches and a number of hospitals towering above the flat-roofed houses. Soon we were actually in the city. The moment we got off the bus we were surrounded by a crowd of dirty, pinch-faced little children and older beggars, all screaming for *buksheesh*. We didn't have time to learn much about oriental languages on this trip, but we learned one word, and that word is *buksheesh*, which means "a gift." Everywhere you go in Syria and Palestine, you find people clamoring for *buksheesh*. We found the only safe plan was to have plenty of very small coins in our pocket and distribute them as sparingly as possible.

As we walked along the streets of Nazareth, we realized that the city was much more beautiful at a distance than it was when you came within its precincts. I happened to look at my wife, and I saw tears welling up into her eyes. I said, "My dear, what are you thinking of?" She replied, "I was thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ growing up in this dirty, squalid city."

Oh, yes; it moved our hearts. The Holy Son of God had come all the way from Glory down to this poor world to die for our salvation, and He spent thirty years of His life in that city. Doubtless as a boy He wandered about to the villages around. Several times, we know, possibly once a year from the time He was twelve years old, He took the annual Passover journey to Jerusalem. He perhaps went three times a year to

the different feasts. Oftentimes He wended His way to the Sea of Galilee, twenty-five miles away. But His life was largely spent within the precincts of that little city of Nazareth. He was called a Nazarene, and the early Christians in derision were called Nazarenes.

We saw many so-called holy places in the city, but there were none of them that we felt we could be absolutely sure of, so far as identity was concerned. We went down beneath the floor of the Franciscan church and we saw underneath the caves which were pointed out to us as the former dwelling-place of the Holy Family: the shop of Joseph, the kitchen of Mary, and the living-room of that stone dwelling. We could not be sure that that was actually the place where Jesus once lived; and yet it touched our hearts, for we know in all likelihood that He lived in at least similar surroundings and was brought up under similar circumstances. There was one thing that we could be absolutely sure of, of course, and that was the Well of the Virgin, where for thousands of years the women of Nazareth have come to draw water; and there they were still, a constant stream of them coming and going with their pitchers upon their shoulders or upon their heads. Thus they looked very picturesque indeed. The Standard Oil Company has rather spoiled the picture, I think, in some respects; for many of them, instead of bringing the old-fashioned Palestinian water-jars, had upon their heads five-gallon gasoline or petroleum cans. They looked rather prosaic, to say the least, as they walked along in their flowing oriental robes and these Standard Oil cans full of water on their heads.

Everything about Nazareth was eloquent of Jesus. We knew He walked those streets; we knew He entered in and out of the houses that had stood there years ago. Of course, the city has often been destroyed and rebuilt since, but always on the same site and with practically the same street

directions; and our hearts were moved as we thought of that day when He came into the synagogue there in His own city, and we are told that He “stood up for to read.” It says, “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue.” There is something very striking there. It was the custom of the Lord Jesus from His childhood on to attend the services where the Word of God was read and where prayer was offered, and as He grew in years and in stature, He was apparently selected by His towns-people to read the Holy Scriptures to them on the holy Sabbath Day. There was therefore nothing unusual in His going into the synagogue, walking up to the reader’s desk, taking the book of the Prophet Esaias and then reading from it.

But notice the words that He read. He applied them directly to Himself. He recognized the fact that now the time had come to proclaim His Messiahship to the people among whom He had lived all those thirty years. They must have felt a peculiar thrill that day as He uttered the words, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.” What a wonderful sentence! He came not looking for the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. He came to preach the glad, good tidings of God’s infinite love and mercy to poor sinners. By the word *poor* I understand Him to mean not merely the poor in purse, but those who are also poor in spirit, for you remember He pronounced a special blessing on the poor in spirit, those who had no spiritual assets, nothing to offer God, who needed not a salvation which they could purchase by effort of their own, but a salvation which would be bestowed freely upon them—and that was exactly why Jesus came into the world.

He could say, “He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.” How He declares His Deity in those words! Can *you* heal the

broken-hearted? Did you ever know a minister, priest or rabbi so holy, so consecrated, that he could heal the brokenhearted? Did you ever know a doctor who, whatever his skill, could heal the broken-hearted? There is only One who can do this; and who is that? It is the One who made the human heart: God Himself. But Jesus said, "He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted," because Jesus is God manifest in the flesh.

Then He read on: "To preach deliverance to the captives." He was thinking, of course, of those who were captive in the chains of sin. You know, sin is such a dreadful thing that it binds for time and eternity those who persist in it. You have heard the story of the Greek tyrant who sent one day for a celebrated blacksmith and said to him, "I understand that you are the best chain-maker in all my dominions." The blacksmith smiled deprecatingly and said that he always tried to do his work well.

"Well," said the tyrant, "bring your forge, and bring the metal, and let me see you forge a chain right here in my presence." And the blacksmith brought the forge and the metal, and link by link he forged a chain. When it was completed they tested it out in many ways, and found that it was impossible to break the links. Then the tyrant said, "Now take him who has made it, and bind him hand and foot with his own chain and cast him into prison, because he is a rebel against my authority!"

Sin is just like that. Every time you commit sin, you are forging a link in the chain that is going to bind your soul forever unless you find deliverance. But Jesus came to preach deliverance to the captives; and, thank God,

"The conquering Saviour can break every chain;  
And give us the victory again and again."

And next He read that He came for the recovering of sight to the blind. Oh, He not only opened, while here on earth, the eyes of those who were literally blind, but how many blind souls He made to see! Sin blinds men, you know; and because of sin we are born blind. All men are blind from their very birth so far as the ability to see into and comprehend eternal things is concerned. But then we add to our blindness when we deliberately reject the light that Jesus offers. But if subject to Him, if we are ready to turn to Him as repentant sinners, and believe His Word, He gives sight to the blind.

And, He read, “to set at liberty them that are bruised.” How many there are who are bruised by sin—and some, not because of any fault of their own. All around us we see the victims of other people’s sins: little children born into the world with defective bodies and defective minds because fathers or mothers have sinned; or it may go farther back, perhaps to a distant grandparent or great-grandparent who in the hour of temptation fell into sin and contracted thereby some dreadful, vile disease which was passed on to posterity. And so all about us are the poor, helpless victims of the sins of others. Sometimes it looks as though God hasn’t been fair, but, remember, God giveth not account of His matters. No matter how we have been bruised by sin, if we but turn to Him, He will set us at liberty and give us deliverance, and some day we shall thank God in eternity for all His ways with us.

If we notice again the scripture which Jesus read, we find that He closed the reading in the middle of a sentence. He read, “To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Now, if you turn back to the prophet Isaiah, you will find that the sentence goes on like this: “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” Why did our Saviour stop at that comma? Why did He not finish the

sentence? Because of this: the Lord Jesus came to proclaim something which was just then beginning; but it was to go on for centuries, and the day of vengeance of our God has not yet started. It is still the acceptable year of the Lord. And so to everyone today the call goes forth as of old: *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." We do not know when the book will have to be opened again, and when the last part of that sentence will be read: "To proclaim the day of vengeance of our God." But before that day of vengeance comes, avail yourselves, if you have never yet done so, of the riches of grace offered in the acceptable year of the Lord.

The Saviour put up the book that day in the synagogue of Nazareth, and then He began to preach. The people waited expectantly, hoping He would do some miracle or mighty work. They were far more interested in this than in the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. They did not know that the fellow-townsmen who had helped repair their stairs and builded their houses when He had worked with Joseph, could preach in such a wonderful way, and yet all the time they were saying within themselves, "Why doesn't He do something marvelous? Why doesn't He work a miracle?" And so Jesus said, "Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thy country... But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many-lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." They immediately saw what was meant. They did not recognize their needs, and so He could not do anything for them. But they were so indignant because He disappointed their

expectations that they rose up in the synagogue and they thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon the city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong.

We could not tell just where that synagogue was, but as we looked down over the city we imagined that we could see that angry throng hustling Him out of the building and hurrying Him through those narrow streets and down to the farther end of the city, and then up beyond to the hill, the Mount of Precipitation, which our guide pointed out. If His enemies could have done so, they would have hurled Him over that precipice on to the rocks of the valley below.

But His hour had not yet come. "But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." It was impossible that He should die until the appointed moment when He was to give Himself for our sins on Calvary's cross. Our visit to Nazareth made it all so real to us; and I hope that the passing our experiences on to you will lead you to Him who was known as Jesus of Nazareth. May God bless His Word for His Name's sake. Amen.

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Submitted by **H A Ironside** on Mon, 01/14/2008 - 06:00

*“As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum” (John 6:57-59).*

I am thinking today of Capernaum. We were intensely interested in going over the ruins of that ancient city. I suppose you know that until very recently archaeologists were not at all clear as to just where the Capernaum of the Bible actually stood. It had been surmised that possibly it was now a heap of ruins on the shore of the Sea of Galilee south of Tiberias, for behind those ruins rise in majestic grandeur the Horns of Hattin, a double mountain peak which many have supposed to be the scene of the Sermon on the Mount; and yet there were certain things about that site that did not appear to be in full conformity with what was written in the Word of God. So for many years there have been those who surmised that possibly Tel Hum, a mound on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near where the Jordan enters, might be the actual Capernaum. This, I think, has now been confirmed beyond any question.

Some years ago, a group of German Franciscan monks built a monastery on Tel Hum. During the time of the World War, after General Allen-by's great victory over the Turks and the German army, these German monks were interned in their own monastery. They were not at liberty to go abroad until after the signing of the Armistice. During that time of their partial confinement, in order to get suitable exercise, they betook themselves to digging in the ground; and they were amazed, as they began to

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unearth one great block of white limestone after another. They uncovered the ruins of an ancient building which at first looked as though it might have been a Greek or Roman temple. There were beautiful white limestone pillars, great blocks of stone with which the walls were made; and the flooring of limestone flags remained practically as it was in the days when this building was in use. As they uncovered more and more of it, it became evident that it was never a Roman or a Greek temple; but on the other hand, it was a Jewish synagogue—and yet it was built in Roman style. The cornerstone bears the Roman insignia of the eagle, though it is very much marred as though some Jewish zealot had tried to blot it out in years long gone by. The ornaments found upon the stone and upon the pillars, the capitals and the lintels, are all distinctly Jewish in character. Over and over they found reproduced, as we saw them, the seven-branched candlestick which had its place in the tabernacle and the temple. Then there was unmistakably represented the golden pot of manna that was hidden away in the Holiest of All. Then, too, there were ornaments of olive-leaves, palm-branches, fig-leaves, and the six-pointed Star of David and the five-pointed Star of Solomon. All of these ornaments showed that the building had been used, not by the Romans but by the Jews.

Why, then, was this synagogue Roman in architecture and yet marked with Jewish ornamentation? Scripture itself evidently gives the reason. You remember how, on one occasion, a Roman centurion sent to Jesus, asking Him to look in pity upon his sick servant and help him, and the Jewish representatives who came to the Lord in behalf of this centurion said, “He is worthy for whom Thou shouldest do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” Now, this was in Capernaum; and

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to walk over the floor of that ancient synagogue and go up upon the rostrum and stand in the very place where undoubtedly the feet of the Lord Jesus stood over and over again. For He was a very frequent visitor to that synagogue, and often gave His message there. It was in that very synagogue that He healed the man who had the withered arm. It was there that the man possessed by a demon interrupted the service by screaming out, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us?" And you remember the Lord healed the poor afflicted man who had been held in bondage for so long.

It was in this very synagogue that He gave the sermon recorded in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel on the Bread of Life, in which He declared that He Himself was the Living Bread that came down from heaven, "which if a man eat thereof, he shall live forever." There was something wonderfully solemn to us in going about over these ruins. We could see the place for the Jewish purifications. We could see the chief seats where the leading men of the synagogue sat. As we looked down over the floor and beyond that to the road, in fancy we could see Jesus and His disciples passing by on His way to meet Jairus, who was one of the rulers of that very synagogue. We could see that afflicted woman stealing through the throng, saying in her heart, "If I can but touch the hem of His garment I shall be healed." Oh, it was so easy to imagine it all as though it happened but yesterday, as we stood on the rostrum of that old building. After having visited some of these eastern lands and being acquainted somewhat with archaeological findings, I feel that God Himself, in these days which some of us believe to be the last days of this dispensation immediately preceding the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto

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honest investigator to be a skeptic or an unbeliever. I have heard so many people say, "Sometimes I would like to believe the Bible, but there are so many things about it that I find so difficult to accept. I am not able to credit its miracles; and I can't seem to believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ. What do you suggest that I study in order that I may be convinced?" Well, my friends, if you who are listening to me have thoughts like these running through your minds, I would suggest that you become more conversant with modern archaeological findings. In our day the very stones are crying out, proving beyond the question of a doubt the authenticity of the historical portion of the Bible. The very things that have been most questioned are proved to be actual facts. We felt that very strongly as we walked about over the ruins of this synagogue in Capernaum.

And then we turned about and looked to the north-west of the city, and there saw that which wonderfully confirms the Biblical account. You remember that in the Gospel of St. Matthew, where we have the record of the Sermon on the Mount, we are told that our Lord Jesus went up into the mountain. He went from Capernaum *up* into the mountain, and as you walk out of the city you walk up into this mountain immediately behind it. And it is said that when the Lord Jesus sat down, His disciples came unto Him and He taught them, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and so on. But when you turn to Luke's Gospel, you read that when "He came down with them and stood in the plain," and the people thronged about Him, He preached that Sermon on the Mount. And skeptics have said, "Look at that. There is an absolute discrepancy in the Bible utterly impossible to explain away. In the one instance He went up to the mountain and taught, and in the other instance He came down into the plain."

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But as we stood in Capernaum and looked up into that mountain, everything was explained perfectly; for as you walk up into the mountain you come upon a plain or table-land so large in extent that thousands of people might be accommodated there; and then the mountain rose up beyond that table-land to a considerable height; and we could just imagine the Lord Jesus walking with His disciples out of the city of Capernaum and up into the highest part of the mountain for a period of communion with His Father, and then, seeing the multitudes following Him, come down from those heights to the plain, which, after all you see, was on the mountain but yet not so high up as the position that He first took. I fancy that a great many of the so-called discrepancies of the Bible could be explained just as easily if we were more familiar with the facts. Now I want you to think of the day that the Lord Jesus preached that sermon on the Bread of Life in the synagogue of Capernaum. There some of His mightiest deeds had been done. It is called the city of Andrew and Peter. It was in this city that He entered the house of Simon Peter and healed Peter's wife's mother who lay sick of a fever. It was in Capernaum that He raised the daughter of Jairus. It was there that He healed the woman who had the issue of blood. The people of Capernaum had privileges such as few others had, of coming into the most intimate contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet the amazing thing is that instead of receiving His message, instead of accepting Him as their Messiah and their Saviour, the vast majority rejected Him. There were a few who received Him. There was Matthew, the Roman tax collector who had his custom-house in Capernaum. He heard the message of Jesus, and the Saviour passed his custom-house and turned to him and said, "Follow Me;" and Matthew rose up, made a great feast to his friends and relatives, bade them all goodbye, wound up his

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business affairs, and went out to follow Jesus. So there were others who heard His message in Capernaum and believed, but the great bulk turned away from Him. What a solemn thing to become familiar with the message of the gospel and yet turn a deaf ear to it!

Think of Jesus standing in that synagogue and proclaiming that marvelous message in regard to Himself as the Living Bread. The people had intimated to Him that they would like to see a miracle again, such as feeding the multitude with loaves and fishes. They said to Him, "What sign showest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee?" They reminded Him that Moses gave them manna from heaven. And Jesus said, "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven. For the true Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, even the Son of God that gave His life for the world." And then He went on to show that when all mankind are hungry and famished in their sins and there is nothing in this poor world that can save them, that He had come all the way from heaven to meet the need, and that all who put their trust in Him really feed upon Him. It is important to see that, for our Lord Jesus was not proclaiming the institution of an ordinance here, but He spoke of Himself as the Living Bread; and when He spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was not referring to the Communion. That was not yet given to His people until many months afterward, just before He went out to die. He was speaking of heart-appropriation of Himself by faith; to eat the Living Bread is to trust the Saviour; to drink His blood is to believe that through that precious blood shed on Calvary all our sins are put away. As He spoke of this, many turned from Him. Some who, up to that time, had followed Him in a nominal way as His disciples, were grieved, and they went away saying, "How

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it all so literally, and they never sought for the hidden spiritual meaning that was beneath the surface. But you remember when the Lord Jesus turned to His Apostles, Peter and the rest, and said, sadly, "Will you also go away?" that Simon answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who shall give His life for the world." You see, Peter was eating the Flesh of the Son of God and drinking His Blood: his words declared it.

Since our Lord Jesus preached that sermon in Capernaum, the same words have been translated into hundreds of different languages, and by the living voice and by the written Word have been carried into the very ends of the earth. But it makes no difference to whom the message goes, what circumstances the hearers or the readers were found in, if they but took Him at His word, if they but believed what He said, and accepted Him as their Saviour, men have found in Him that peace of conscience and heart-satisfaction which He promised them. Listen to these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am that Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: and the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

See how our Lord Jesus intimates His Deity and His pre-existence here. He came down from Heaven. He did not begin to live when He was born here on earth as the son of the blessed virgin Mary; but He had come from the land of light and glory down into this dark scene in order that He might give His life for the world. And He makes it all so

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simple. He explains what eating His flesh is in these words: "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

I remember long years ago hearing Ira D. Sankey sing at one of the meetings conducted by that princely man of God, now in heaven, Henry Varley. He sang with great tenderness,

"Some day the silver cord will break,  
And I no more as now shall sing,  
But, oh, the joy when I awake,  
Within the Palace of the King.  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story, saved by grace!"

After singing the entire song Sankey told us the story of his own conversion. He told how he had been brought up piously and religiously, but had come into doubt and fear and conflict of mind as a young man, until he saw that he must get this matter settled. "I must find out whether I can say that I possess eternal life or not." And he went to God about it, and asked for a word that would settle this definitely and eternally. He opened his Bible, and his eye fell upon **John 6:47**, this very verse I have read. He read it, and oh, it came to him in new power that day. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." Sankey said the words just burned into the depths of his soul, and he said, "Thank God, I do believe in Jesus Christ, and therefore I have eternal life." He said that he had never lost that assurance all through his life. He knew from that day on that, having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he was a Christian. He ministered to thousands of others in that assurance through his sweet song messages, and he died in that assurance, and we can be assured that he, now absent from the body, is present with the Lord.

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I am wondering if I am speaking to any today who have said, "I would like to be a Christian. I would like to know definitely that my own sins are put away. I would like to be certain that God has accepted me, but somehow or other, I can't seem to get that assurance." Perhaps you have joined the church, and thought when you did that everything would be all right. But you are a church-member and still you are not sure about your salvation. Perhaps you were baptized and have taken the sacrament religiously, and you thought if you did these things that surely your soul would be saved, but you are just as much in the darkness and doubt as ever. Perhaps someone says, "I used to live in all kinds of sin, but I am giving up every wrong thing so far as it is in my power to do so, and I am trying to do right and live an upright life, and still I have no assurance."

Well, my dear friends, let me remind you that this assurance does not come through anything that you can do, and it isn't a question of your feelings. There is a little hymn that I like very much which expresses this strikingly:

"Oh, the love of Christ is boundless,  
Broad and long and deep and high;  
Every doubt and fear is groundless,  
Now the word of faith is nigh.  
Jesus Christ for our salvation,  
Came and shed His precious blood;  
Clear I stand from condemnation,  
In the risen Son of God.

"I was waiting once for pardon,  
I was hoping to be saved,  
Waiting, though my heart would harden,  
Hoping danger might be braved;

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Till by God's own Truth confounded  
I, a sinner, stood confessed,  
Richly then His grace abounded,  
Jesus gave me perfect rest.

"'Tis not doing, 'tis not praying,  
'Tis not weeping saves the soul,  
God is now His grace displaying,  
Jesus died to make you whole.  
Look to Him and life-works follow,  
Look to Him without delay,  
Look to Him, and ere tomorrow  
Thou wilt weep and praise and pray."

Now, to look to Him is to believe in Him; and to believe in Him is to feed upon the Living Bread, to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who came down from heaven to give His life to the world, the One who stood that day long ago in the Capernaum synagogue and there revealed Himself to men as the only Saviour for sinners!

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## On the Sea of Galilee

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Henry Allen Ironside

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*“And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What ‘manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’” (Mark 4:35-41).*

If you were to ask me, “What has your visit to Palestine done for you that you appreciate above everything else?” I think I would have to answer, “It has made the Person of the Lord so much more precious to my soul.”

There is something about frequenting the haunts of one of whom we have read and heard that fixes things in the heart and mind in a way that is not otherwise the case. I suppose that like most folk of Scotch extraction I have had about as much interest in and admiration for Scotland’s plough-boy-poet, Bobby Burns, as any other person who knows how to burr the r’s. But recently I went to Burns’ birthplace and entered the little hut where he first saw the light of this world, and then walked about the “Banks and Braes o’ Bonnie Doon,” and saw the kirk where Tarn O’Shanter had his wild time, and I feel that Robert Burns will never be a kind of a mythical figure to me any more. He is almost like a

personal friend. Well, for forty-five years the Lord Jesus has been a wonderful Saviour to me, but oh, I can say thoughtfully, sincerely, He never was so real as He is since I have walked the streets that He used to walk, since I have gone over the hills that He once went over, and since I have sailed on the lake that He crossed so many times.

One thing that a visit to Palestine does for a reverent believer in the Word of God is to make him see everything else in the light of it. I find myself almost unconsciously, after looking out on a body of water, saying, "It is nothing to the Sea of Galilee," or maybe, "It reminds me of the Sea of Galilee." Or if I am on a railroad and crossing a river, and I see a lovely little stream with the trees hanging over it on each side, I find myself saying, "It reminds me of the Jordan; it looks something like the place where the Lord Himself was baptized;" or, if, as I travel through the hills a beautiful mountain looms ahead, saying, "It looks like Mount Tabor," or some other eminence I saw in Palestine.

I think that most travelers, whether they have any piety or any love for Christ, or whether they believe the Bible, or not, are charmed by the scenery surrounding the Sea of Galilee. It is a very unique body of water. I do not know why it is called a sea, for it is a small lake. Its length is about thirteen miles, and its widest part about seven miles, yet it is unique among all the lakes in the world, for it is 680 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, which is about fifty miles away. The Jordan descends rapidly from its sources about thirty miles farther north, down, down, down into this deep gorge, and then widens out and forms the Sea of Galilee. At the deepest part, to the north, it is nearly 900 ft. to the bottom, but generally between 200 and 300 ft. The Jordan leaves it again at the south end and continues on its downward way. The very name "Jordan" means, "the

Descender,” the river that goes down. And it goes on down to the Dead Sea, 1300 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean.

We spent part of two days at Tiberias. It is a thriving city still as it was in the time of Christ, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. We saw the fishermen bringing in their fish in the morning. As in Bible times, they fish in the night. You do not see them going out fishing in the day-time, and so we could well understand Peter’s almost incredulous expression, when the Lord said, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught” (**Luke 5:4**). But Peter said, “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.” The Lord did not tell him to let down the *net*; He told him to let down the *nets*. But they let down the net and immediately inclosed such a multitude of fish that the net brake. If he had let down the nets as the Lord told him to, he might have saved them. And that spoke to Peter’s conscience. He knew he was in the presence of the Creator of the wealth of the seas, and he threw himself down at the feet of Jesus and exclaimed, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” As much as to say, “I am not fit to be in Thy presence, Thou infinitely holy Creator, but I am not going away unless Thou shalt send me away.” And Jesus spoke peace to his soul. No one ever approaches Christ in that way to be sent off. He is waiting for people to say, “I am a sinful man; I am a sinful woman,” and He will receive them in grace and save their souls.

It is a singular fact that of the six or seven kinds of fish in the Sea of Galilee (we saw only two kinds) some of them are found in only one other place in the world, so far as is known, and that is in Lake Tanganyika in Africa. It has been thought that there must be some kind of a subterranean connection between that lake and the Sea of Galilee. Although this sea has been fished and fished for these

thousands of years, the fishermen still go out nearly every night and come in laden with them in the morning. It is a kind of standing miracle.

The sea itself is a lovely gem. We caught our first sight of it before we were near it. As we were driving we came over an eminence, and our guide said, "There is the Sea of Galilee." It was just like a beautiful blue-green jade, in the midst of the surrounding hills as a setting, and we could enter more fully into the old hymn than ever before:

"Each cooing dove and sighing bough,  
That makes the eve so blest to me,  
Has something far diviner now,  
It bears me back to Galilee.

"Each flow'ry glen and mossy dell,  
Where happy birds in song agree,  
Through sunny morn the praises tell  
Of sights and sounds in Galilee.

"And when I read the thrilling lore  
Of Him who walked upon the sea,  
I long, oh, how I long once more  
To follow Him in Galilee."

I do not think we were in Tiberias an hour before we were wending our way down to the shore to go for a sail on Galilee. Every tourist wants to say, "We have sailed the sea where Jesus quelled the storm and walked on the waves." Our oarsman was a great big burly Arab, and he pushed out and began to row down south and out into the midst of the sea. The scenery on every side was most interesting. The Horns of Hattin, on the west, and on the other side the mountain where Jesus is supposed to have fed the five thousand, the hot springs of Tiberias where Herod went to be healed of his miseries, and the little town called Magdala where Mary

Magdalene came from. Farther north we could see Bethsaida, and still farther north Capernaum, and yonder the mount where the blessed Lord stood when He preached that wonderful sermon recorded in Matt. 5, 6, and 7. Beyond it all was Mount Hermon rising in majestic grandeur.

We were surprised when this Arab turned to us and said, "Now sing American Galilee song." I am not noted for singing and so I parried a bit. I thought I knew what he meant, but said, "What is the American Galilee song?" And then with rich voice he sang:

"O Galilee! Sweet Galilee!  
Where Jesus loved so much to be;  
O Galilee! Blue Galilee!  
Come, sing thy song again to me."

Over and over again he sang it, and it all began to come back more and more vividly to us as we thought of that night on the lake when the blessed Lord had taken ship to go to the other side. He had left the eastern side to go to Gennesaret and Capernaum, and a great storm arose. The waves beat into the ship and the disciples were so alarmed and so distressed; but He, the blessed Lord, wearied in His search after lost sinners, lay in the hinder part fast asleep—asleep, we are told, on a pillow. It is a striking thing that this is the only time in any of the Gospels that we ever learn that He had a pillow. I wonder where He got it. I have my own idea about it. I think one of those holy women that ministered unto Him of her substance said to herself, "The blessed Master must often be tired and weary, and I am going to make Him a nice cushion so that when He sleeps on the mountain-side, or wherever it may be, He will have it as a pillow for His holy head." And God has not forgotten whoever it was that provided it, for it is recorded, "Asleep on a pillow." There was nothing that disturbed Him, because He was not only Man in perfection but God, the Creator of all things,

and, “The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm” (**Nah. 1:3**). But those disciples were so much like you and me; we get so troubled and distressed by the storms of life.

Many of you have been exposed to them until your courage is beginning to fail, and you have wrung your hands and said, “If there is much more of this, life is hardly worth living.” That is what they are saying all around us today, and we read of one after another going out of this world by self-murder, going out to meet a holy God with their hands crimsoned in their own blood, thinking to escape from trouble here but plunging into certain judgment beyond, for, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (**Heb. 9:27**). But life is for many a stormy sea, and numbers of you may feel as though you are pictured by those disciples in the little ship tossed and driven on the sea. You do not see any hope; you do not know what to do; you are at your wits’ end. Well, then; do what they did. They went to Jesus about it.

I think I see them coming and laying hold of that sleeping Man, and rousing Him and crying, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” They did not need to talk to Him like that. Of course He cared and He was not going to let them perish. He had said a little while before, “Let us pass over unto the other side.” They should have remembered that when the storm came. They should have said, “He did not say, ‘Let us go into the middle of the lake and get drowned/ but, ‘Let us pass over unto the other side;’ so we can trust His word; He will get us through.” But they forgot and said, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” “And He arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.” Greek scholars tell us that the word for “still” is really the word that we use to a mad dog, “Be muzzled.” Those waves were lashing up like mad dogs, threatening to destroy the ship. He

rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Be muzzled.” In a moment they recognized the Master’s voice, and the wind and waves did as He told them, and the disciples feared exceedingly and said one to another, “What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

What manner of Man is this? He is the Creator of the wind. “Who hath gathered the wind in His fists” (**Prov. 30:4**). He is the One who brought the sea into existence; in fact we are told, “He hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand” (**Isa. 40:12**). He did not look like the Creator; He was lying asleep in that little boat. But the peace of Jesus that night was the peace of God, and He says to those who are troubled and distressed by the storms of life, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (**John 14:27**).

Just as He stilled the tempest on the Sea of Galilee that night so He can still the tempest in your poor heart. He can give you the deliverance for which your soul craves. He can give you the peace that you have never been able to find in this poor world. Do you remember the hymn:

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

And notice how it traces down all the different things that trouble and distress us.

“Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?  
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

“Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?  
On Jesus’ bosom naught but calm is found.

“Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?  
In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.

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“Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?  
Jesus we know and He is on the throne.

“It is enough: earth’s struggles soon shall cease,  
And Jesus call us to heav’n’s perfect peace.”

What I would like to do is just to introduce you to that Man of Galilee, to the One who stilled the storm, to the One who walked the waters of that little inland sea so long ago, and who tonight “sit-teth o’er the water-floods and guides each drifting wave.” You do not know what you are missing if you are turning away from Him. You do not know what you are losing if you lose the sense of His love and companionship as you cross the sea of life in your frail little bark. He wants you to take Him aboard; He wants you to give Him the direction of your life. Won’t you do it? He has shown His love by dying for you on the cross; He has shown His concern for you by bearing your sins in His own body on that tree. And now He who died to redeem and lives to keep, says to a weary, sin-stricken world, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Won’t you come? Why should you turn from Him?

An old Scotch woman, of whom I heard when I was a boy, could not do much work for Jesus, but there were always after-meetings in the church, and when the sermon had been preached, there would be singing, and the folks would go about “fishing,” as they called it, speaking to this one and that one trying to bring them to Christ. She would watch for folks who were hardening their hearts against the Gospel, and she had only one question, “What ails you at Jesus?” That is, “What have you got against Jesus?” That is a serious question: “What ails *you* at Jesus?” What have *you* got against Him that you won’t trust Him? He never did you anything but good, and yet you spurn Him, and turn from His love and grace and refuse His love and mercy.

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“Oh, my friend, won’t you love Him forever?  
So gracious and tender is He!  
Won’t you fall at His feet and adore Him,  
This Stranger of Galilee?”

Come with all your sorrows, come with all your sins. He says,  
“Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

## At Jacob's Well

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*“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13, 14).*

What a wonderful story is that from which these words are taken! There is something about it that grips my heart-strings every time I read it. If you have not been moved by it, it must be because you have never yet sensed your own deep need, nor the marvellous grace that will meet that need if you will but accept the loving invitation: “Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.”

As we drove down through the land of Palestine, one delightful day last February, it was with a thrill of gladness that we found ourselves in sight of Jacob’s Well, just at noontime. We left Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, at nine o’clock in the morning. That is the city, with its hot baths, where so many people still go for the medicinal good that they expect to get from them, as in the days of Herod himself. We do not read in the Gospels: that the Lord Jesus ever entered Tiberias. It was a Gentile city in the midst of Jewish Palestine. It was devoted to worldly pleasures of every kind as well as the exercise of the healing art. Whether or not the Lord ever actually entered it we do not know. If there was a Jewish synagogue there, He did, because we are told that He preached in “all the synagogues of Galilee.” He Himself said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). That was His mission while here on earth.

We spent a very interesting part of two days in Tiberias and its environs; and were almost loth to leave it when the time came to start for Jerusalem. It was our plan to visit several

places of interest on the way, and to lunch at Jacob's Well, and then push on to the "City of the Great King."

Soon we espied a little village nestling on the hill-side bearing the name of Kafr Kanna. It was the ancient Cana where our Lord wrought His first public miracle. We spent a little while looking about the town, purchased a few souvenirs and moved on across the eastern part of the Valley of Jezreel, or Esdraelon. As we journeyed we talked together of the significance of the miracle of turning water into wine. Of course it was but doing in a moment what our Lord does year by year in thousands of vineyards. He gives the water from heaven that is changed by omnipotent power into the red blood of the grape. Men call it Nature, but we know it is God, who alone can do this. And Jesus was manifesting His glory—displaying His creatorial power when He wrought that sign in Cana. Those empty waterpots (for Jewish purifications) picture the ancient forms and ceremonies—all empty when He came—into which was poured the water of the New Testament revelation, and ever since His servants have been drawing the new wine of the Kingdom of God out of these Old Testament types! And surely He has kept the best wine until the last.

We were charmed with the beauty of Jezreel—especially with the many prosperous Jewish colonies dotting the plain and climbing the hillsides. Beautiful orchards and vineyards were flourishing where a few years ago all had been desolation and barrenness.

Crossing a ridge, inside of a couple of hours we were in Samaria, but still we saw the same evidences of Jewish thrift, and we realized that the time must be near when Israel will not only be restored to their land, but to their God and to Him whom once they rejected as an Impostor and a Deceiver, but who is God's blessed Son, our Saviour.

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We did not take time to climb the hill of Samaria to see the ruins of Ahab's palace, but contented ourselves with viewing it from a distance, as our time was limited.

At Nablus, however, the Shechem of the Bible, we spent about half-an-hour, threading our way through its dirty, narrow, winding streets to find the Samaritan synagogue. We entered it and found a very kind old Samaritan gentleman, the last high priest of that tribe, who succeeded to the priesthood about a year-and-a-half ago when his predecessor died. He told us a little about the history of his people, and how they still observe the Passover. He showed us a very ancient scroll written upon parchment, which he declared was written by the grandson of Moses. We had our doubts about that, but did not think it polite to express them. It was at least very interesting. I examined the Hebrew letters, and they were not the square ones which have been in use for many centuries but were of a much more ancient type. After leaving the Samaritan priest, as we went out of the city, our attention was drawn to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal—Mount Gerizim, where certain of the Levites stood to bless the people, and Mount Ebal where others stood to pronounce the curse if they departed from the living God. We felt we must be very near the well where Jesus met the woman of Samaria. Soon we drew near a little city and I asked its name. It was Sychar. John tells us: "And He must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." Joseph himself was buried there. We did not have far to look to see his sepulchre, and our guide said, "There is Joseph's tomb. We Mohammedans think just as much of that as the Jews and Christians do, and it has been undisturbed through the centuries." It was interesting indeed to know that that in all likelihood the body of Joseph was actually still preserved within that tomb.

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Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah are buried in Machpelah, at Hebron, but Joseph was buried in the plot of ground given him by his father. Soon the voice of the Lord will be heard and they shall all rise to meet Him, with all the redeemed, in the air. What a moment that will be!

We passed on from Joseph's tomb and just ahead saw an inclosed garden and a little Greek chapel within. Our guide told us that Jacob's well was inside the chapel. It always provoked us to find these chapels over so many of the places of special interest. Almost every site of this kind is covered over either with a Roman Catholic church or a Greek or Armenian chapel. However, we entered the chapel and saw the well itself. It is built up about two feet from the ground with the coping, as when Jesus sat there so long ago. I am not sure, of course, that it is actually the same coping as the one on which He sat, but it seems very old and they have built another wall of stone around it to keep it from falling to pieces. We sat there and looked into its depths. We could not see very far down in the darkness, but a Syrian woman brought a candle with a long cord on it, and after we had given her a few piasters she dropped it down nearly a hundred feet, and there we could see the water in the bottom of the well. We understood what the woman of Samaria meant when she said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water?" As we sat there we called to mind that scene so vividly described in our Bibles.

A little later we went into the garden and, sitting on one of the stones, read this fourth chapter of John's Gospel, and it seemed more real, more living than ever, though I think it is one of the chapters I have preached on literally hundreds of times during the last forty-five years. I could see the blessed Lord Jesus coming from the opposite direction to which we had come. He came from the south, from Jerusalem, and

wended his way straight to Jacob's well because an appointment had been made in the past eternity with a poor sinner who was utterly unconscious of it. He was to meet her there that day, and cleanse her from her sins, and change her whole life and save her soul. So He was there on time. His disciples were off to buy food while He sat there waiting for one needy soul. He was tired and wearied with His journey. I love to think of that. The Lord of Glory who from all eternity had never been weary came down to earth and took the form of a servant, and here as Man on earth tired Himself out seeking after poor sinners. And while He was sitting on the well that day there came from the village yonder this woman for whom He waited. We looked up the road and could easily imagine we saw her coming, coming to draw water with her pitcher on her shoulder or on her head. And as Jesus looked upon her He knew her great need, He knew the sin of her life, He knew the sorrow of her heart, He knew the distress of her conscience, and He was there to meet all these in His own wonderful way.

If you are a poor sinner, a slave to sins and passions that you do not seem to be able to overcome; if your heart is burdened with grief and your conscience smarts because of conscious guilt, thank God, Jesus is waiting for you, waiting to give deliverance to you just as He was waiting for that poor woman of Samaria so long ago. I think that as she drew near the well a feeling of resentment probably arose in her breast. The Jews had one way of dressing and the Samaritans another in those days, and as soon as she saw this Man she knew in a moment that He was a Jew. The Jews hated the Samaritans, and the Samaritans hated the Jews. But on she came, a poor brazen woman, I suppose, and when she drew near to Jesus I presume she was ready to give as good as He might give her. She would be ready to answer back if this Jew insulted her. What was her amazement to see Him look up in the most kindly,

gentlemanly way and ask a favor of her, a poor, wretched, polluted, unchaste woman of a despised race! Yes, Jesus' heart was overflowing with tender compassion and interest. She got the surprise of her life. She knew that if she ventured to say to the average Jew, "Will you take a drink?" he would have knocked the cup from her hand, but this One said to her, "Give Me a drink." He was willing to put Himself in a place where she might do Him a favor in order that He might save her precious soul.

She asked in amazement, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" And then John explains why she said that, "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." I do not think she said that herself, but I believe John added that in order that you and I might understand. Otherwise we would not comprehend why she should speak in this way, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" But the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of answering that question in the way she perhaps expected, gave her information that was utterly beyond her understanding for the moment. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Consider these statements. "If thou knewest the gift of God"—O woman, if thou only knewest how God delights to give, and if thou knewest who it is that has put Himself in the place of a suppliant today, and asked of you, you would have turned it right around and said, "Give me what I cannot get from Jacob's well, give me the water of life."

Do you know the gift of God? Do you know that God is a Giver? I find people all around who imagine that God is a merchantman, that God has something to sell. I have even heard preachers say, "God will save everybody who is willing to pay the price." What a misrepresentation of God's

salvation! Jesus paid the price, and God is a Giver. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (**Rom. 6:23**). You do not have to earn salvation by anything you do. You cannot buy it by penances, by turning over a new leaf, by giving money. Tears won’t put away sin; works won’t put away sin; money won’t put away sin. Salvation is a gift, full, free, eternal. Sinner, do be persuaded that God is a Giver. He has something He wants to give to you without money and without price. Won’t you accept His gift and make Him yours for eternity?

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” You cannot separate the gift from the Person. In fact the Person Himself is the expression of the gift. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (**1 John 4:10**). God has given Jesus, and in giving Him He has given Heaven’s Best. And having not withheld His Son He with Him will freely give us all things. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” This poor woman cannot understand it. She looks at the well and then at Him and says, “Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.”

We found it about a hundred feet deep. Often the water rises higher. It is really a cistern, and sometimes the water is seventy-five or ninety feet down, but at any rate it is a very deep well. “From whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the

well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?”

The Samaritan has great respect for Jacob and the fathers. He almost expects to be saved through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus might have said, “Greater than Jacob! Woman, do you remember away back in the past years when Jacob remained at the ford Peniel and sent his family and his cattle on ahead of him and there came One down and wrestled with him all night and finally had to put his thigh out of joint? I was that One. I was He who changed Jacob’s name that night; I was the One that put his thigh out of joint, and out of weakness he was made strong.” If He had told her that, she would have thought, “Why, this person is insane.” So He did not astonish her by telling her these things, but pointing to the water He said, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” Oh, she knew that. How many times she had come to that well! She had often refreshed herself, but she had been just as thirsty the next time.

Is that not true of everything that worldlings seek? They try in vain to quench the thirst of their souls with the follies of earth. I am sure some of you have tried all your lives to satisfy the thirst of your souls. You have tried worldly pleasures, wealth, fame, music and literature, and many other things; and yet you are just as thirsty and dissatisfied as ever because it is true of everything that earth can offer—“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” Augustine said, “O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls will ever be restless until they rest in Thee.” It is impossible that man created for eternity should be satisfied by the water of this poor scene.

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” What does He mean? He is saying, “I have living water to give

you. If you will accept My testimony, believe Me, and allow Me to give you life, your soul will be satisfied forever, and you will never thirst again for the things of this world.” But it is utterly beyond her for the moment. And yet in some sense she believes in Him, and she is not afraid to come to Him as a suppliant, and so she pleads, “Sir, give me this water.” He has won her confidence and her heart. It is important to first win the confidence of souls, but there must be more than that. Her conscience has to be aroused. She has to face the sin of her life before she will get the living water from Him. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (**Prov. 28:13**). There is no salvation apart from repentance. None ever came to Jesus for life and peace until he realized something of his lost condition.

And so He told her to go and call her husband. I wonder whether her eyes did not drop and her cheeks blush. She had been lost to shame for years, but in His presence she was abashed because of the unchastity of her life, and she replied, “I have no husband.” Jesus took her right up and said, “Thou hast well said, I have no husband...in that saidst thou truly.” She had lived with five different men. She had discarded one after another and now was living with, a sixth one, and Jesus said, “He is not your husband. You are living in the sin of adultery.” And instead of fighting back, instead of justifying herself, she cries out in amazement, “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet.” That was just another way of saying, “O Sir, I confess that I am a sinner,” for she knew that He had seen into the depths of her soul. He had uncovered the sin of her life. But He did not drive her from Him because she was a sinner; He would draw her to Him and cleanse her from her sins. If God wounds, He wounds to heal; if He kills, it is only that He may make alive. If He strikes down with the thunder and lightning of Sinai, it is in order that He may lift up in matchless grace and save the

soul. And now—awakened to a realization of her guilt in the sight of God—she would know where she may find Him and how she may approach Him. “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain”—and she pointed to Mount Gerizim—“and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” But the Lord does not wait for her to finish the sentence. He knows what is in her heart, and anticipating it, He says, as it were, “You do not have to go to Jerusalem or to climb this mount to meet God; you can meet Him where you are—for the hour cometh and how is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” He declared a wondrous fact that day, the fact that a needy soul, a repentant sinner, can find God where he is and as he is. If you are troubled about your sin and anxious to be delivered from it, you do not need to go to some church and make confession, you do not need to come to me as a minister of Christ to have me tell you to do something or other in order to be saved. But where you are, and as you are, lift your heart to God and tell Him you are a poor lost sinner and that you want salvation and cleansing. Come in all your need and He will meet you on the ground of faith and give you the living water that will satisfy for all eternity. “Salvation is of the Jews.” He came as the promised Seed to give Himself a ransom for all. She then looked at him rather doubtfully as something rose up in her heart, and she was evidently saying to herself, “Messiah! Messiah! I have heard of Him all my life. I wonder whether by any possibility this could be He.” And then voicing the thoughts of her mind, she said, “I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.” There were so many questions for which she wanted answers, and she thought she never could get to God until they were all cleared up, and so she puts it in that doubtful way. But Jesus replies, “I that speak unto thee am He.” And she took one long look

into those wonderful eyes of His and could not doubt Him any more. She forgot her water-pot for love of Him, and went into the village and said to the men, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Friend, have you met Him like that? Have you looked into His eyes by faith? Have you seen Him as the Son of the living God who came from heaven to give the living water?

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'Come unto Me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon My Breast.'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting-place,  
And He has made me glad.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live.'  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him."

And it is because I have done just what that poor Samaritan did and found that Jesus satisfies the soul, that I commend Him to you.

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

May I add that I am quite sure that when this Samaritan woman spoke of worshipping God she had simply the idea of

drawing near to Him. She was a sinner, and she wanted to know how to approach Him, and the Saviour made it clear that He was waiting to receive her at that very place and at that very time.

For us, of course, worship has a much higher meaning, since the cross and the rent veil. It is the outpouring of our adoring hearts as we prostrate ourselves before the God of all grace in the Holiest of all, rejoicing in the privilege of sins forever put away.

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## On the Mount of Olives

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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In the closing verse of the seventh chapter of John's Gospel and the first verse of the eighth chapter there is an omission that perhaps some have never noticed. A very significant word has been dropped out in our English translation. As we have it here, we read in **John 7:53**, "And every man went unto his own house." Then when we turn to chapter 8, verse 1, we read, "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." We appear to have two sentences here, but the fact of the matter is that this is just one sentence in the original, and the connective that makes it one is the little word, "but." "Every man went unto his own house, *but* Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." Do you get the pathos of that? They had houses to which they might go. His opponents, who had been disputing with Him about His wonderful mission, when the evening shadows fell went off to their own homes. Every man went to his own house, but Jesus had no house. He who had left the Father's house to come into this dark world of sin, was homeless that night, and so He went out to seek shelter beneath the kindly boughs of the trees on the Mount of Olives. For the Mount of Olives of that day was very different to the Mount of Olives of today.

I have been asked by a good many people if I was disappointed in Palestine. No; I was not disappointed. I was wonderfully stirred in my inmost soul by what I saw there. Yet there were some things that were very different to the way they have often been pictured. For instance, if I had gone to Jerusalem expecting to see the Mount of Olives as the painters have imagined it, and as the artists down through the centuries have attempted to portray it, I would have been very much disappointed. Of course, I had seen

photographs of it and so was prepared for what I found. In the Saviour's day the Mount of Olives was literally covered with olive orchards, and with other trees, principally cypresses, so that it accorded a marvelous place of rest and recreation just outside the busy city of Jerusalem. But during the siege of Jerusalem under Titus the Roman, he cut down every tree on the Mount of Olives, and there have never been many trees on that mountain since. He even cut down all the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, though from those old roots have sprung up again and again other olive trees, so that possibly the very trees that are growing in the Garden today, some of them known to be 800 years old, have actually sprung from the older trees that were there when Jesus resorted, as He often did, to that mountain for rest and prayer. The Mount of Olives, however, today is almost denuded of trees, and to that extent might be a disappointment to those who would expect to find it beautifully wooded and bearing olive orchards upon its crest.

It occupies a rather prominent place in Scripture. The first mention of it by name is in the 15th chapter of 2 Samuel, where we read of David, when his own son proved a traitor and turned against his father, that David fled from Absalom and his army, and he passed over the brook Kedron and up over the side of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went up. David, the rejected king! He was a type in that way of great David's greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a striking fact that our Lord too, on the night of His betrayal, passed over the brook Kedron and wended His way up the side of the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane's garden, there to speak with His Father before going out to die for our sins.

He had often frequented that spot during His earthly ministry. Jesus loved the countryside. He loved the out-of-doors. He loved the woods, and into the woods of Olivet He often went. Again and again you will find Him going out

there to spend the night in prayer. When even His own disciples were sleeping soundly and seeking the rest their bodies needed, He was over there on the ground beneath the shade of the trees, lifting His heart to the Father on behalf of the world that did not understand and did not care. And when at last He had offered the one supreme Sacrifice for sin, settled the sin question, and then was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, it was to Mount Olivet that He led His disciples, and as they went over the crest of that hill to Bethany, He lifted up His hands in blessing, commissioning them to go out into the world preaching the gospel, and assuring them that all who put their trust in Him would be saved. Then He was taken up to be with the Father, who said to Him, "Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." But as we turn to the prophetic Word we find Him coming back again, and the striking thing is that when He comes again He is coming to the very place that He left. Zechariah tells us that "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," and there shall be a great earthquake and the Mount of Olives shall be literally rent asunder, and half shall remove toward the north and half toward the south, and then a river will flow out from the temple in Jerusalem down that valley to the Dead Sea, and the waters of the sea in that day shall be healed.

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives when He uttered His great prophecy concerning His second coming. He was on the Mount of Olives when He wept and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" And He told them, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation," "thy house is left unto thee desolate." And so He gave Israel up that day until the time when they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." His

disciples were standing on the Mount of Olives when they spoke of the great temple that Herod had erected in the city. The Mount of Olives is on the east of Jerusalem just across the brook Kedron. Jerusalem is built upon four hills, and is about 2500 feet above sea level, whilst the Mount of Olives is about 260 feet higher, and so standing upon the mount the whole city is spread out before one as a marvelous panorama, and the disciples, as they looked down upon it and the temple, were filled with a pardonable pride, and said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" He could not take any pleasure in that scene for He saw its sin and folly, and with prophetic eye He looked on to the time when that city was to be destroyed by Titus, that ruthless invader, because it knew not the time of its visitation. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another." Forty years after Christ's ascension to Heaven, that prophecy was literally fulfilled, and it was at that time that Titus ordered all the trees on the Mount of Olives cut down, that he might use them in manufacturing battering-rams and other formidable engines with which to destroy the walls of the city of Jerusalem in order that he and his armies might enter it and take possession of it.

We were greatly interested in seeing this historic and sacred mount. It was the first thing we did see as we were going down from the north and drew near Jerusalem. Our driver said, "In a few moments now you will get your first sight of Jerusalem," and in a moment or two, as we came round the bend, he said, "There is the Mount of Olives," and soon we could see the city itself. The name, "Mount of Olives," does not describe what one really sees. It is not just one mountain; it is a range of rather high hills. Beginning on the north-east,

there is Mount Scopus, then that which is properly called the Mount of Olives, and then below that the Hill of Evil Counsel, where Caiaphas is said to have had his house when they took counsel with Judas and arranged that the Lord should be betrayed. As we drove around Mount Scopus we saw the British burial-ground, where thousands of boys lie, boys who gave their lives in the Great War to drive the Turks from Palestine; there, too, is the mansion of the present High Commissioner; and also to one side the buildings of the Hebrew University, and then as we went down we came to the Mount of Olives proper. There are many churches built upon it, one called the Church of the Ascension. There is a Mohammedan Mosque also, for the Mohammedans believe in Jesus as a Prophet, as the Christians do, but they do not admit His Deity. And they showed us something in the stone which they say is the mark left by Jesus just before He ascended up to Heaven. We knew that was not true, for Luke has told us definitely the place from which He ascended. We knew it was at Bethany. Somewhere in that neighborhood our Lord had His last interview with the little company of His disciples before He left this scene. They had been with Him in His days of humiliation, in His sorrow and suffering. True, they had failed Him at the hour of the cross when He most needed their sympathy, because, though He was God incarnate, He was true Man, and He felt the loneliness of those hours. In **Psalm 69**, which depicts His suffering upon the cross, we hear Him say: "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." They had all forsaken Him, they had all fled, and He was left alone to die. But there upon that cross He poured out His soul unto death. His soul was made an offering for sin. In some mysterious way that you and I will perhaps never be fully able to understand, He offered up Himself as a ransom for all. And now having finished that wondrous work, He was eager that the news of it should be carried into all the earth. After His resurrection He walked over the brook Kedron

again, not now as a rejected One, but as the triumphant, risen One, and He led them out to Bethany, where He was wont to go and where He had friends to love Him, and there He commanded them to go forth as His messengers throughout the world, proclaiming His testimony. That is why we are trying to preach the Gospel today, because He said, "Go," and in obedience to His word we have gone and we are proclaiming His truth and we are bringing the message to you from Olivet just as He gave it to His disciples so long ago. He said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And so we come to you with the message from the Mount of Olives. We come to tell you that if you are still in your sins, if you are still without Christ, if you are still unsaved, that God in infinite grace is even yet waiting to receive you. He is calling upon all men everywhere to repent and to come to a knowledge of the truth, "because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." And mark this: there is no salvation for any soul of man until he comes to God as a repentant sinner. Oh, I know that some will tell you who do not even understand the meaning of the word, that if you tell men to repent you are on legal ground, as though repentance was a good work that people had to do. But the word simply means to change the mind. Here you are in your sins and unsaved, yet proud, self-sufficient, indifferent to the claims of God. Oh, that you might hear His voice, change your mind, change your whole attitude about your sin, about God, and turn to Him. Plead the merits of the precious blood of His Son, and thus be saved for eternity. I know we have so-called gospels today without repentance, but remember this, that men who try to meet God solely in a carnal way, without ever facing their

sins, are only deluded by the devil with a false profession and will never be saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." My dear, unsaved friend, you who have been trying to cover up your sin, you who have been saying, "I am not so bad as other people," you who are comparing yourself with others and have become self-satisfied and have built upon your own righteousness, I pray that God may give you repentance now. Confess yourself a lost, ruined sinner and, giving up all pretension to merit of your own, turn to Christ. He won't turn you away. Charles Spurgeon used to say that for over thirty years he had stood in that pulpit and preached, "Him that cometh to Me I will never cast out." And he used to declare over and over again, "If you will come and He turns you back, if He does not accept you, then I will never preach again," But he never had to retract his message, he never ceased proclaiming it until the Lord took him home and he went to be with the Christ whom he had served so faithfully. Jesus will never go back on His word. He promises to receive you if you turn to Him, and that is repentance. Judging yourself and owning your guilt, you may be saved now and saved for eternity.

You say, "If I do not come to Him, what then?" Well, then you will be lost forever. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins, and whither I go ye cannot come." These are the Lord's own words! We would like to believe there is only one way to die. We would like to believe that everyone will die in Christ. But Scripture forbids such a conclusion. We would like to believe that after all the sorrows of life, when a man comes to die there is something about death that purifies and cleanses the soul. But that is not the testimony of this Book. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord;" that is one side. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins;" that is the other side. Just as there are two ways to die, so there are two destinies before men. Those who are saved

shall be with Christ, but those who refuse His grace, Scripture says, “will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Do not come to me and ask me what that means. I cannot explain it, but I know it is in the Book and I know at least it means this: Loving what God hates and hating what God loves, you can never be with Him in eternity, but you must be shut away in outer darkness and misery forever. Why trifle with your soul? Why not heed the message that comes from Olivet, of repentance and salvation preached to all men? Come and find an all-sufficient Saviour. The Christ of Olivet stands today with arms outstretched calling to all men everywhere to turn to Him and live, offering remission of sins to all who receive His word in faith.

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## Memories of Bethany

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Henry Allen Ironside

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*“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and blessed them, and it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50).*

It was our privilege only recently to retrace His path. I take it that so far as we are able to tell with the somewhat changed conditions as a result of nineteen hundred years of the varied experiences through which Palestine has passed, that when we left Jerusalem by the gate a little north of the temple area and crossed over the brook Kedron to the Mount of Olives, then went along its western slope and over to the southeastern side, and after following the road about two miles or more came to Bethany, we were following almost the same route that the Lord Jesus took when He made His last little journey here on earth.

He had died for our sins upon the cross; His precious body had lain for a little time in Joseph's new tomb. Then He had risen in triumph. For forty days He appeared to His disciples, instructing them in the things concerning the Kingdom of God, gave them the great commission to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” proclaiming repentance and remission of sins through His name, and then He led them out along the slope of the Mount of Olives as far as to Bethany, and there with His hands lifted up in blessing He was parted from them. Up and up He went until the glory-cloud enshrouded Him and He was received up into Heaven, some day to come again to call His own to be with Himself, and then to stand on that very Mount of Olives when He comes to take the Kingdom and rule in righteousness for a

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thousand years over a redeemed universe.

Our hearts were much solemnized as we took that road, and when we came at last to the little village I could not help but be grieved when I saw how ruined it is. With the exception of Hebron, the greatest lot of beggars that we saw anywhere in Palestine we found at Bethany. Wee little tots and older people, all had one word, "buk-sheesh." If you did not give them a little bit, they screamed after you; they were so disappointed. But as usual we had made it a point to change some larger money into very small coins so as to be able to give them something.

We went up to the village of Bethany and a young Arab guide was prepared to identify every place for us. He could tell us just where the house of Simon the leper was, and where the house of Mary and Martha stood! He undertook to take us to the very place where Lazarus had been buried. It may indeed have been the actual tomb; though when he pointed it out I was a bit taken aback. It is a singular thing how we get misconceptions sometimes when we simply read about an event and have not been on the ground where it happened. All my life I have pictured Lazarus' tomb as a cave in the side of a hill, something like the garden sepulchre where the body of our blessed Lord lay. I have thought of the Saviour coming and standing opposite that door and the stone being rolled away from it and Lazarus coming out from it. When he took me to the reputed tomb of Lazarus, underneath an old house where there were stairs leading down to an underground cave, and said, "This is where Lazarus was buried, and he came up those stairs when the Lord gave him life," I thought, "That cannot be." I had so definitely visualized his walking out of that door in the side of the hill. But as I stood there thinking it all over and wondering whether it could possibly be true, it suddenly came back to my mind that

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the place where he was buried “was a cave, and a stone lay *upon* it.” Not, “a stone lay *against* it.” And so I realized that this was just exactly the kind of a cave in which he probably was buried, and if I was not looking into the very sepulchre of Lazarus, it was one very similar to that in which his body had been laid away. There was an air-vent where you could look down into it, and I could see now the Lord standing there and calling down through that opening, if you will, “Lazarus, come forth.” And then Lazarus coming up that stairway bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. It was an altogether new conception to me, but I think I understand it better than ever before.

We walked about Bethany for a time, and our hearts were moved as we thought of the various events that had taken place there. Bethany was Jesus’ other home. He was brought up in Nazareth, spent thirty years there, but when He began His public ministry He chose Capernaum as His home city. That was up in the northern part of the land, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. But when He came down into Judea, as far as we have any record, He never slept in the city of Jerusalem at night. He always left the city at sunset and went out to the Mount of Olives, and that probably means that He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane, or to Bethany, because on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives was the home where He was always welcome. I looked at the ruins of the place which they said had been the home of Mary and Martha. I do not suppose it is possible to identify that home, but I love to think that there was a place which Jesus knew was always open to Him. You like to feel there is some place where you are always welcome, don’t you? It is a pathetic thing when one does not know of any home on earth where the people love to have him come. They were always glad to have Jesus visit at the home in Bethany.

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You remember the different incidents recorded. One of the first was that time when He came with His disciples, and as He sat there in the outer court of the home, Mary drew a stool to His feet and sat listening to the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, while Martha in the kitchen and dining-room was preparing a meal. You recall how the Lord rebuked her. Some preachers are altogether too hard on her. I feel for Martha. She was very anxious to give of her best when Jesus, and possibly His disciples, were all to be her guests. For Jesus knew that He was so welcome there, and His disciples were welcome because they were His friends. So there were possibly thirteen itinerant preachers, every one with a good appetite; and Martha says, "I must do my best for them."

And so she is cooking there in the heat and all the time thinks, "Of course Mary will be coming right out to help me." But Mary seems utterly indifferent. The reason was that Mary was delighting in the message that Jesus brought. She was taken up with the words that fell from His lips. Her soul was so enthralled that she never thought of anything else, and the Lord loved that. At last Martha could stand it no longer; she was nervous and upset, and said, "Master, won't you speak to my sister that she come and help me? I have a big dinner to get up." And Jesus says, and I do not think He said it sternly for He did not mean really to blame her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." In other words, "I know how you feel; you are all upset. You want to get a good dinner for us, but listen to Me, there is something that means more to Me than a good dinner and that is to find some one who loves to hear My message, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

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You get the same thought in John's Gospel where you find

the Lord Jesus Christ at Jacob's well and the disciples come and say, "Master, eat;" but He has been ministering words of peace and life to that poor Samaritan woman and says, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Our blessed Lord, though truly Man and though He hungered as Man and thirsted as Man, yet found more satisfaction in ministering to needy souls than He did in enjoying the good things provided for the nourishment of the body.

The next time that we read of His coming to Bethany was when the sisters had watched for days over their sick brother, Lazarus. At last the physicians shook their heads and said, "There is no hope; he cannot get well; he is going to die." And the sisters said, "Oh, but there is hope," and they called a messenger and said, "Go for the Master at Bethabara; we hear Jesus is over there." It was about fifteen miles away, just down the Jericho road, beyond Jordan on the other side of what is today called Allenby's Bridge. "Go and tell Him, He whom Thou lovest is sick. He will understand. You don't need to use any name. He will surely come." And I know they said in their hearts, "He will be right up the road j He won't be long. He will be coming on a donkey and will be here as quickly as possible." The messenger went and did as he was bidden, but Jesus "abode two days still in the same place where He was." He did not come, and Lazarus got worse and worse until at last he died, and the sisters could not understand it. Jesus who loved them so tenderly, Jesus who was so much to them, and He did not seem to care! He let Lazarus die! Oh, how little they understood the purpose of God. And how little we often understand when God permits death and desolation to come to us!

Finally Jesus came, and a messenger came running and said, "Jesus is here," and Martha ran to meet Him and said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not

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died.” I think there was a little censure there, as though she said, “I thought You loved him. You might have been here but You didn’t come.” But Jesus assured her, “Thy brother shall rise again.” “Oh,” she said, “I know, but that isn’t the same thing as having him now. I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day, but that is a long time to wait. We miss him so; our hearts are so sore; our home is so lonely without him.” He answered in those wonderful words, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” Then she sent for her sister and said, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” Mary at once went to meet Him and she fell at His feet—she always seemed to find her way to His feet—and she said just what Martha said, but I think with a different inflection. And Jesus replied, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” And so they led Him to the house and He said, “Where have ye laid him?” They told Him and led Him out and up the hill, and then to the cave with the stone upon it, and the Jews followed to see what was going to happen. He stood there, and as He saw the grief that the sisters evidenced, and realized the pain that they were enduring, the hot, scalding tears began to fall from His own eyes, and we read, “Jesus wept.” We say sometimes that that is the shortest verse in the Bible, and contains only two words. It might be translated in this way, “Jesus shed tears,” tears of loving sympathy. The Lord Jesus Christ was no cool looker-on. He was no mere stoic in a world of suffering and sin, but His heart was moved by all the sorrows of His people. He has told us to weep with those that weep as well as rejoice with those that rejoice.

The Jews when they saw His tears exclaimed, “Behold, how He loved him!” And some of them said, “Couldn’t He

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have arranged it that this man had not died?” Then came the startling command, “Take ye away the stone.” He might have done that Himself, but it was something for them to do. There are dead souls all about us. Men and women who, though alive as to the things of this world, are dead to the things of God, and to us the Lord is still saying, “Roll ye away the stone.” There are hindrances that you and I can put away in order that the dead may be brought to life. Do you think of anything in your life that is hindering others from coming to Christ? “Roll *ye* away the stone.” I have had people come to me and say, “I wish you would pray for my son, for my daughter, for my father, my mother, my husband, my wife,” and I have said to them, “Are you really living for God before them?” Often they have dropped the head in shame and have had to confess that their own testimony was a hindrance instead of a help. “Roll *ye* away the stone.” He could give life without lifting a hand, but He does not chose to do it that way. That is one reason why it pleases God “by the foolishness of preaching”—not by foolish preaching—“to save them that believe” (**1 Cor. 1:21**). That is our part in the salvation of men. We are to live for God before them, to carry the message to them, and then to count on Him to do the work in the soul that gives life.

But the sisters attempted to interfere and Martha objected, “Master, he has been dead four days already, and in this climate the body will have begun to corrupt and be offensive.” “No,” He says, “roll it away,” and they obeyed Him. There He stood and looked down, perhaps through that very opening that I saw, and cried with a voice of command, “Lazarus, come forth,” and the next moment he that had been dead came up those stairs still bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. He had life but not liberty. That is often the way when people are first saved. They receive divine life when they believe, but they are still in

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bondage to old ideas and misconceptions of His will. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart as in the provocation" (**Heb. 3:7, 8**). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (**John 5:24**).

The moment a poor sinner believes the Word of the Son of God, hears the Word in faith, that moment he gets divine life. But he is not immediately set at liberty. New life has stirred within him; he who had been utterly indifferent to the things of God now loves the Lord and His Word. But there may be much he does not understand and he may be in great legal bondage until he is set free by the truth. So that day Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Loose him and let him go." So Lazarus was freed, and off he went to the house to get into his ordinary garments. Brought forth alive from the tomb! "Marvel not at this," says Jesus, "for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (**John 5:28, 29**).

There was a great difference between the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus. When Jesus was raised, He came out of the grave-clothes, leaving them in the tomb, because His was the resurrection to glory. But Lazarus' resurrection was simply to natural life, and so he came out of the tomb with the grave-clothes still upon him.

The next time the Lord Jesus came to Bethany they made Him a supper in the house of Simon the leper. He could not have been a leper then, but I take it that he had been

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one for years, until one day he met with Jesus, and when Jesus touched him or spoke the word of power, his leprosy was healed. Now Simon the leper is back in the home again and is evidently a well-to-do man. He makes a feast for Jesus, and the blessed Lord comes to enjoy this time of fellowship. Martha is not cumbered now; but she is still serving, for we read that “Martha served.” Lazarus was one of those that sat at the table with Him. And Mary took a pound of ointment and anointed His head and feet in view of the burial. What a lovely scene! There you have a threefold picture of what every Christian should be. Martha served—and every Christian should be one who serves. Lazarus sat at the table—that is fellowship and communion, and we should all live in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary brought the ointment and brake it—that is worship, and we should all be worshipers.

The house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Everywhere through that home was the fragrance diffused which spoke of the worship and adoration of Mary’s heart. But there was one man there who could not enter into this, and that was Judas, of whom the Lord said, “Have not I chosen you twelve?—and one of you is a devil” (**John 6:70**). Judas looked on and asked indignantly, “Why was this waste of the ointment made?” (**Mark 14:4**). While Mary is pouring out her treasure of love upon the Lord—nothing is too good for Jesus—Judas is doing some calculating, “Why, that would sell for three hundred denarii. That is all that a man could earn in a whole year, and she is wasting it on Jesus.” The natural man cannot understand the Christian’s devotedness.

The fact of the matter was, Judas did not care anything about the poor; he was using that as a pretence, for he was the treasurer of the little company. He carried the bag, and, we are told, “He bare away what was put therein,”

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getting his own out of the contributions that were made for the work of carrying the gospel of the kingdom through Israel in that day. But Jesus says of Mary, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (**Mark 14:9**). As she sat at His feet I have no doubt one of the things He told her was that He was going to die, to give His life for poor sinners, and then come back from the grave in triumph. Much as she loved Him, Mary was not one of the women at the cross, neither was she one of those at the tomb, because she could wait quietly at the little home in Bethany. She knew He would be back; she knew the grave could never hold Him; she knew that some wonderful day He would appear at the door just as of old, and Mary and Martha and Lazarus would run to greet Him and He would sit with them again in happy, holy fellowship. They loved Him there in Bethany, and so, when it came to the end, after His death and after His resurrection and after the forty days’ instruction to His disciples, when He is going back to Glory, it is as though He says, “There is one spot I must see again before I go Home to Heaven.” And so He led His disciples over the Mount of Olives as far as to Bethany. All that took place there we are not told, but from there He ascended to Heaven. And now, exalted at God’s right hand, He is a Prince and a Saviour, but just as truly the Man Christ Jesus with the same tender heart as when on earth. “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (**1 Tim. 2:5**).

He wants you to come into the circle of His acquaintance. He has such a wonderful circle now. Of old there were so few with whom He could enjoy fellowship, but think now of the millions of those who have been saved, think of the millions gathered on each Lord’s Day in this and other

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are you outside the company of those redeemed to God by His precious blood? Would you not like to know Him? He wants you to be one of His own. “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace” (**Job 22:21**). Like Lazarus, you are dead if you are still unsaved, but He wants to give you life, to speak the word that will make you live eternally. If now you will believe the gospel message, that life will be yours. “He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (**John 3:36**). Jesus, the Christ of Bethany, speaks to you now, offers you life. Will you believe Him? Will you trust Him? Will you hear His voice? Will you come to Him?

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## **Bethlehem, the City of the Nativity**

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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*“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least (among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel” (Matt. 2:6).*

To one who visits the Holy Land, which by the way is not very holy at present, there are many disappointments. What I mean by that is that so many sites are exhibited, your attention drawn to so many places where you feel that, after all, persons who are interested from a financial standpoint are only trying to make you believe that you are actually beholding sites mentioned in the Bible. But the land remains, the Sea of Galilee is there, the River Jordan and the Dead Sea down at the other end, lordly Mount Hermon, the Lebanon range, Mount Tabor, the mountains of Ephraim, and Carmel, the mountains of Megiddo, the wonderful Plain of Jezreel—all these are there and thrill the soul and stir the heart as you find them.

When you come to Bethlehem, five miles southwest of Jerusalem, I am sure any one who has ever visited it will say it is one place that does not in any sense disappoint. In some way or another Bethlehem seems to be just what you expected it to be, that beautiful little city nestling there among the hills. As you drive down from Jerusalem, you are very likely to see, as we did, here and there the shepherds leading their flocks to pasture. You pass Rachel's tomb and remember the little sad note in the book of Genesis how Rachel died just before getting to Bethlehem, and Jacob buried her and set a pillar over her grave. It may not be the same pillar today, because those interested in studying these things tell us that the present

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pillar above the grave is probably of a later time, but undoubtedly the tomb is the actual resting-place of the body of Jacob's wife who was so dear to him. And then you come to Bethlehem itself; as you enter from the west, the first thing that strikes you is the well of Bethlehem by the gate. And you remember David and think of that time when out in the fastnesses of the mountains, after a hard-fought day with the Philistines, when evening came, he threw himself down in the cave of Adullam and said, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate" (**2 Sam. 23:15**). And those three mighty men, you recall, each looked in the others' eyes, rose simultaneously, stole off through the shadows and went to Bethlehem, and came back perhaps early in the morning bringing a water-jug or maybe a water-skin filled with the cool refreshing fluid from that well where David so often drank, when as a shepherd-lad he cared for his father's flock. The well is there still, and you can drink its clear cool water with no wonder that David longed for it.

Then you pass up into the village, and here the first thing that strikes you is the broad open space just in front of the Church of the Nativity. You enter the Church. It is a magnificent old building erected in the fourth century by Constantine the Great. It has been repaired through the centuries since, but still is practically the same building that he ordered constructed over the place where Christ was supposed to be born. As you go down beneath the building itself you come into a cave which was once a stable for cattle. Maybe you and I, taught by the pictures we have been so accustomed to looking upon, have the idea that it was what you would call today a stable, a barnlike affair away from the house, but that was not the case so long ago. As a rule the houses of Bethlehem, many of them still, have these stables attached to them, and the

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people live above, and in the cave below they keep their live-stock. The manger is just a crib cut in the limestone. And it was in such a place as this that our Lord Jesus was born.

The cave beneath the Church of the Nativity answers to everything that Scripture suggests regarding it, and as far back as the second century it was reported to be the actual birthplace of the Lord Jesus. Saint Jerome, who in the fourth century of our era came from Rome to Bethlehem, dwelt for a number of years in a cave right next to this, which he considered was the actual place of the nativity. It is most interesting to see the cave of St. Jerome, where he lived during those years when he translated the Bible into Latin, the Vulgate, which is today the standard version of the Roman Catholic Church.

I cannot exactly tell you our feelings as we went down into those caves and then as we stood looking at that stone manger where they said the blessed Saviour once lay. It meant little to us if they were mistaken as to the actual site. We knew we were in the city where He was born, and that we were in the very neighborhood where He first came to earth. We knew too that we were in the same kind of a stable as that in which the shepherds found the Baby Jesus lying in the manger when in response to the message of the angels they went to Bethlehem to see the Blessed One who was born to be the Ruler of God's people, Israel, and the Saviour of sinners.

I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus and His blessed mother and Joseph, His foster-father, were still dwelling in that cave when the wise men came from the East. We have gotten the idea from pictures that have come down to us from the middle ages that the wise men found the Lord in the stable and brought their gifts there, but Scripture does

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not tell us that. It says that they entered into “the house” where the young Child lay. In all likelihood they did not reach the place where Jesus was until He was considerably older. We have the record here in this second chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. We are told that, “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:1, 2). Undoubtedly they first saw that star at the time of the nativity and they had come a long distance. It was not easy to travel in those days, so they may have been many weeks or months upon the way.

Why should these wise men be interested in Him? Well, they came from the East, and the last prophet from the East that we read of in the Word of God was Balaam. While he himself was an ungodly man, yet God so took control of his mind and speech that he it was who uttered the prophecy that a Star should come forth from Jacob that should smite the corners of Moab. That had undoubtedly been preserved through the centuries among the Magi. And then it was not at all unlikely that the book of the prophet Daniel was also known and studied by these wise men, for the greater part of that book is written originally not in Hebrew but in Aramaic or Chaldean, and the study of the seventy weeks would give any careful student to know just about when the Messiah of Israel must be born.

There was a spirit of expectancy among the nations at this time, and these Magi had evidently been instructed by the Word of God as well as by the Holy Spirit, and were looking for the coming One, and—think of it!—they came to Jerusalem guided by a star! They put the question to Herod, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” And

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Herod was startled—"King of the Jews! Why, I am king of the Jews! What are they talking about? One risen up to overthrow my dynasty! What do they mean?" And he called together the scribes and doctors, the religious leaders, who were familiar with the Holy Scripture and said, "Is there anything that tells us where Christ is to be born?" At once they pointed to the chapter and verse in the prophet Micah: "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel."

Here were men so familiar with the Bible that when a question like this arose, without a moment's hesitation they could give chapter and verse in answer to the question, and yet they had never turned to God themselves as repentant sinners and they were not ready for the coming into this scene of His blessed Son. Familiar with prophecy and yet did not know Him of whom the prophets spake! And as Herod receives the instruction from them the one thought that comes into his mind is this, "I can use this knowledge to destroy Him, so that He will never reign as King of the Jews." And craftily he sends for the wise men again and says, "You go to Bethlehem: find Him and worship Him, and come back and tell me where He is, that I may go and worship Him too." But he had no thought of adoring Him, he had no intention of recognizing Him, no thought of worshipping at His feet. Rather, he would destroy Him. But the wise men went in accordance with the star that again appeared and found Him in Bethlehem, found the young Child in a house, and they brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

What wondrous gifts they were! Surely they had been divinely guided in the selection of them. Gold—that is the

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beautiful symbol in the Bible for divine righteousness. Frankincense — that tells us of the matchless perfection of the humanity of our blessed Saviour. And the myrrh, the myrrh that they brought and placed at His feet, is that which had to be crushed in order to give out its fragrance, and so speaks of His death. They brought their treasures which tell of His righteousness, of the perfection of His humanity, and of the work of redemption that He should accomplish, and they poured them all out at the feet of the little Babe. Have you brought your heart's treasures to Him yet? Have you seen in Him the divine, eternal Son of God who became man in absolute perfection that He might die an atoning death on the cross to accomplish your redemption?

And then, being warned of God in a dream, they went back to their own land without returning to Jerusalem. And when Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he sent his soldiers with instructions to destroy every babe in Bethlehem, every child who was two years old and under, in that way hoping to make sure of destroying the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know whether there is anything in a legend which has come down to us, but the early Christians tell us that Herod (who had murdered several of his own sons and one after another of his most intimate relations, so that Augustus Caesar said, "It is better to be Herod's pig than Herod's son," so cruel and bloodthirsty was this man) had one little grandson to whom he was devoted, the only creature on earth that he really loved. When the soldiers went to Bethlehem to destroy the little children, they did not know that Herod's grandson had been taken to Bethlehem by his nurse, and that he was among those thus put to death. I do not know whether that is true but the early Christians related it as though it were fact, and it would speak of the awful retribution that God may have meted out to Herod because

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of his effort to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ. But Herod could not put Him to death. The soldiers could not have killed Him. He could say long afterwards, “No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (**John 10:18**). It was impossible that any one should ever put Him to death. At the appointed hour when He was to die for our sins on Calvary’s cross He Himself dismissed His spirit. So God preserved Him, sending Him down to Egypt, calling Him out of Egypt again as He had called Israel so long ago, and He came and dwelt in Nazareth.

Bethlehem remains today a city that bears constant witness to the incarnation of our blessed Lord, and the singular thing about it is that in the midst of a country that has been Mohammedan for over 1200 years, Bethlehem is nominally a Christian city. There are very few Mohammedans living in it. For a long time there were none at all, because the Mohammedans of this city revolted years ago against the Turks and the Sultan banished them to other parts, forbidding them to return to Bethlehem. The Christianity of the present inhabitants, I grant, is not of a very high order. There are three groups: Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Armenians, and one section is set apart for each in the Church of the Nativity. In the old days there had to be Mohammedan soldiers there to keep these three groups of professed Christians from fighting over their right to the sacred places. And yet, after all, they are nominally Christian, and among the people of Bethlehem there are numbers of genuine believers.

They are different from the other natives of Palestine. Instead of seeing everywhere the black-haired, dark-eyed Arab people, you see a folk, many of them blue-eyed and light-haired and fair-complexioned, showing that they

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come down from Crusader stock. The Crusaders settled there, took them wives of the women of the land, and these Bethlehemites are practically all their descendants. The women have their own peculiar costumes which have come down from Crusader times. The ladies, you may note, have a very high-peaked cap and a long veil flowing from it. These are almost identical with the costumes that were worn by the ladies of Europe in many places in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

And then it is here at Bethlehem that you understand clearly what Jesus meant when He taught that parable about the woman having ten pieces of silver. Underneath this cap they have a fez and the cap fits down over it, and right across the front of it they have ten pieces of silver linked together. When a woman is married, her husband gives her this chain of silver coins to wear on her forehead. If a woman should lose one of those pieces, the implication is, and her neighbors would think, that she has been unfaithful to her husband, and her husband would very likely think it was ground for divorce. So you can imagine if a woman lost one how frantically she would look for it. She calls for a light, she searches the house, peering into each corner trying to find the lost piece before her husband comes home. When she has found it, she calls her women friends together, and says, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost" (**Luke 15:9**).

You remember how the Lord Jesus used that as a picture of His own joy and the joy of heaven in the salvation of sinners, for He says, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance" (**Luke 15:7**). Of course there are no just persons who do not need salvation, but there were those who *thought* they were just and imagined they did not need a Saviour, and Jesus told

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this little story to let us know that the heart of God and the saints in heaven are filled with gladness when any poor sinner comes to God and is numbered among His redeemed.

So many lessons crowd in upon heart and mind when one walks the streets of Bethlehem. To go to Palestine for eleven days as we did is, in one sense, just an irritation. You wish you could be there for at least thirty days, and yet we do thank God for the time we had there and for what we saw. We have come back with a clearer understanding, I hope, of some of these precious things that we have believed through all the years and which now have been so marvellously confirmed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ became a Man, stooped to be born of a virgin in the village of Bethlehem, in order that He might give His life a ransom for all, that guilty sinners may be saved. One would think that coming in full accord with prophecy the whole world would have been waiting for Him, particularly His own people, but, alas, when He was born, we read, "There was no room for them in the inn" (**Luke 2:7**), and so Joseph and Mary had to turn aside into this cave. That was just a picture of the attitude of the whole world. We are told, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (**John 1:11-13**).

Have you found room for Him, or is it true today that there is no room in your heart for Him?

"Room for pleasure, room for business,  
But for Christ the crucified,  
Not a place that He can enter,

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In the heart for which He died?”

Oh, won't you fling wide the door of your heart and say,  
“Lord Jesus, come in; make room in my heart, Lord Jesus;  
there is room in my heart for Thee!”

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## **In King Solomon's Quarry**

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*“And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house... And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building” (1 Kings 5:17, 18; 6:7).*

We know from what we are told in the New Testament that the temple that King Solomon reared on Mount Moriah was a type of the Lord’s present dwelling-place, a temple that He has been building through the energy of the Holy Spirit during the last 1900 years, that great temple composed of living stones made up of all in every place who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The temple of old was a picture, a type of this. It is a very remarkable fact that it was erected as no other building of which we have record. Enormous stones were used, and it covered a great deal of ground, and yet there was not a sound of a hammer heard as it was in course of construction. This was because all the stones were prepared and made ready in the quarries before they were brought up to the top of Mount Moriah. They fitted perfectly, and slipped into place and were cemented together without the necessity of any further preparation after they were brought to the top of the hill.

It was our privilege to go through at least a part of the great quarry underneath the city of Jerusalem. It had been

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known in past centuries that such quarries existed, and that when Titus conquered the city of Jerusalem the Jews hid many of their treasures in great caverns beneath the city which the Romans were unable to locate. It was even rumored that the Ark of the Covenant was hidden there. Then there were others who said it was hidden in Lebanon when Nebuchadnezzar took the city. But it was also said that other vessels of the Tabernacle were hidden there, but none have ever been discovered. These great quarries were lost sight of for some hundreds of years until about eighty-five years ago, an English gentleman by the name of Barkley was walking along the wall of Jerusalem accompanied by his dog. The dog was running on ahead of him and suddenly with a cry dropped from sight. This gentleman hurried to see what had become of him. He found an opening into a cave but no sign of his dog. But in a few minutes it came out from another opening some distance away. The next day with a party Barkley undertook an investigation, to find out just where his dog had been. They located an opening, and with lights entered into a large cave, and were amazed to find themselves in a vast quarry glistening with pure white stone on every hand. Great passages led off, they could not tell how far, in all directions underneath the city of Jerusalem.

Near the Damascus Gate we had the privilege of going into this quarry, and of all the things that we saw on the other side I think this was one of the most interesting. As we approached the mouth of it we could see several Arabs sitting at a little table on which they had spread out a great many curios made out of the limestone from the quarry. It is very soft and can easily be cut into various shapes, but if exposed to the air for a little while it becomes exceedingly hard. We bought a little stone hammer to bring home as a souvenir. After paying a few

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piasters we were each handed a long taper, and a guide escorted us through a part of the quarry. We walked about a half-mile, taking a round-about passage, and were astounded at what we saw. Above our heads were blocks of stone partially cut out, and on the ground were piles of chips just as they had lain for thousands of years, since B. C. 900, when King Solomon's servants, and others sent by Hiram, king of Tyre, undertook to prepare the stone of which the great temple was to be constructed. The guide drew our attention to the Phoenician markings upon the stones. There they were just as 2900 years ago. There is a well-known secret society which sets great store by Solomon's quarries and so we found a great many Masonic signs on the walls, but these were undoubtedly later than the old Phoenician markings.

We entered a great room large enough to contain a congregation of several thousand people, from which the stone had all been cut out. In it the Masons frequently hold their secret meetings. We could see on the walls the places where the old Phoenician workmen fastened their little lamps and the smoke had discolored the limestone. Hanging to the domed ceiling were what looked like a cluster of dark spider-webs but we found they were bats, thousands of which make their home there. On the floor of the quarry were many great blocks of stone. Some are about fifteen feet long, and five or six feet wide, and as many feet in height. How they transported such immense blocks and raised them up on to Mount Moriah and builded them into the temple I do not know, but in those days they were able to accomplish a great many things by some method we cannot now understand.

I asked the guide how they blasted out these stones, and he said that they cut the stone on each side and then went around and cut it away in the back, and that set it loose.

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On other occasions they simply chopped along the side of the wall and then drove in wooden wedges which they soaked in water from a stream running through the quarry. As the wedges swelled they cracked the stones apart. I think that we now have a better understanding of what actually took place when this temple was built. What a marvelous picture it is of what God is doing now.

The temple stood on the place of sacrifice, the place where Isaac was offered up, but where God provided the ram in his stead. It was also where David offered the sacrifice when the plague was stayed in Israel. And it is upon the place of sacrifice that God is building His great temple today. We speak of standing on redemption ground. An old hymn says,

“Once from my God I wandered far  
And with His holy will made war,  
But now my songs to God abound,  
I’m standing on redemption ground.

“No works of merit now I plead,  
But Jesus take for all my need;  
No righteousness in me is found,  
Except upon redemption ground.

“Redemption ground, the ground of peace;  
Redemption ground, oh, wondrous grace!  
Here let our praise to God abound,  
Who saves us on redemption ground.”

On no other ground could God meet with sinful men and make them His own. This great rock, Mount Moriah, was the extreme foundation on which the temple was built, and that of course speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ for we are told that “that rock was Christ,” and He is the One upon whom the Church is built. “Upon this Rock I will

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build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). I know some people think the rock on which the Church was built was the Apostle Peter. Well, it would have been a pretty shaky one if built on him because, though saved by divine grace, he was a poor, failing man like others. But Christ Himself is the Rock of our salvation.

Built up along the side of Mount Moriah, the ancient foundation of the old temple may be seen. The Jews today come there to wail, to mourn over the desolation of Jerusalem and the scattering of their people throughout the world. On one Sabbath evening we walked down with Pastor Hyman Jacobs and stood by that wailing wall, and there looked at the great stones taken out of that very quarry and built on the foundation upon which the temple rested. Today it has disappeared and in its place is the Dome of the Rock, the Mosque of Omar. But, thank God, even though the old temple has disappeared God is building on Christ Jesus today a temple that shall never be destroyed. The stones which are being builded in have been brought out of the quarry of sin by the power of God. Enter into those quarries of Solomon without a light and all is darkness; and is not that the condition in which men are found in their sins, in darkness and in the shadow of death?

One of the first things that the Spirit of God does when a living stone is about to be quarried out of the great caverns of sin is to bring in the light. The Lord Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus that He was going to make him, “A minister and a witness... to open the eyes and deliver them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (**Acts 26:16-18**). Of old when God was about to bring this world out of its chaotic condition and make it fit for the habitation of man, He said, “Let there be light: and

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there was light” (**Gen. 1:3**). “The entrance of Thy words,” the Psalmist says, “giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (**Ps. 119:130**). And so light today is shining in the caverns of sin. And then God sends His workmen in to blast out living stones by the power of the Gospel.

The servants of Hiram worked those quarries of old, where it was their business to break these great stones from the rocks of the caverns and shape them, in order to be fitted into the temple. I was struck by the fact that they used water in order to do that. That is what God is doing today, blasting living stones out of the quarry of sin by the water of His Word. The message is preached in power, the truth of God is proclaimed to men who are otherwise dead toward Him, just as dead toward God as those stones in that quarry, but they are awakened out of their natural condition and then lifted up by power divine and built into the temple of God. The Apostle Paul says in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God... in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (**Eph. 2:19-22**). And the Apostle Peter tells us the same thing when in his first letter he says, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (**1 Pet. 2:4, 5**). And so wherever you find a redeemed sinner, wherever you find a saved man or woman, there you have one who has been brought out of the quarry of sin and delivered, freed from his natural condition, by the mighty power of God, and by the Holy Spirit has been builded into this great and

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glorious temple where the Lord Himself dwells.

I wonder how many of you know what it is to be living stones in this great temple. It is a wonderful privilege. By nature, you know, we had no interest in the things of God, but the Lord in His grace saw us in our lost condition, dealt with us, gave us to see our need and then led us to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and now we find ourselves builded together. I like that word, “together”— we are not saved alone. You might take stones out of that quarry and not have a building. Some have been brought out of the quarry and not built together, but these were taken out in order that they might be built into a holy temple for the Lord. And so today God is not merely saving us as so many individuals, but is building us together. That speaks of a wonderful, holy, happy fellowship.

It cost Solomon a great deal to build that temple. All the work of preparing these stones could not be done without cost; it meant much in the way of toil and labor. We are told, “The king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.”

And then see the house going up so silently, so beautifully, when it is in building. “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither.” It was made ready in those dark quarries. Today God is sending His servants through the world, to Africa, Asia, to South and Central America, and here throughout our own country, and they are searching and finding out men and women dead in sin, and through the power of the Word of God they are being blasted out of their natural condition, and by the Spirit made ready to be

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built for a habitation for the Spirit of God. You cannot hear a sound when a soul is built into this temple. Oftentimes when preaching the Word, as the message is going forth, God by the Spirit is doing His work and building a living stone into the temple. No one hears the sound. There is something going on between that soul and God, and the moment that any poor sinner trusts Jesus he is built into that temple. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. We are inclined to think that we cannot accomplish anything without a great deal of fuss and noise, but after all it is, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (**Zech. 4:6**). As I am trying to present Christ to you, as the living Stone, if you even now realize something of your lost condition, if you are saying within your heart, "I would like to be a Christian; I have tried to be better but have failed," let me say, If you look away from yourself, giving up all self-effort and look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, trust Him now as your own personal Saviour, the moment you put your trust in Him, God the Holy Spirit builds you into the temple of the Lord. It can all be done silently, secretly, without any one else knowing anything about it for the moment. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (**John 3:8**).

But on the other hand, when they dedicated that great temple there was a great deal of noise. They were singing and rejoicing and sacrificing, and the praise of the Lord was on every tongue. And so, if now you trust the Lord Jesus, if you will receive Him as your Saviour, do not go away without giving Him glory; let Him have the praise, the honor, the thanksgiving that is His due. He Himself has said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in

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heaven” (Matt. 10:32).

Mark, it is not necessary that you say anything aloud to any one in order to be saved; it is only necessary that you lift your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and trust Him as your Saviour. But, on the other hand, having been saved, you can glorify Him by witnessing to others of the riches of His grace. Giving public testimony does not save, it has nothing to do with fitting living stones into the temple of the Lord, but by these means you have the opportunity of making known the work that God in grace is doing in your soul.

This building has been in construction for 1900 years. Solomon’s temple was seven years in building. They took an enormous number of stones out of that quarry. You can go through passages for a number of miles, and they tell us that enough stone has been taken from that quarry to build two great cities like the city of Jerusalem. Not only Solomon’s temple, you know, was built of those stones, but the buildings in that great city and other cities around about, and yet there is enough to build even greater cities. God in grace has already quarried untold millions of souls out of the dark caves of sin, but there are millions more to whom He is ready to extend His grace if they will trust in Him.

You may still be in your sins, in the darkness, in hardness of heart, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Will you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart” (**Ps. 95:8**). Won’t you trust Him? Are you not coming? Will you not be built into this house of God and become a living stone in His temple to the praise of His glory?

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## The Place Called Calvary

Henry Allen Ironside

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*“And when they were come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33).*

It is thus that Luke tells the story. John relates it a little differently, though both accounts are in full agreement with each other. He says, “And He bearing His cross went forth unto a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (ch. 19:17, 18).

Skull, Calvary, Golgotha, all tell the same story in different languages. The place of His crucifixion was so designated, not because of skeleton parts found there, but because in shape and general contour it resembled a skull. There is only one such eminence in or about Jerusalem today, and that is the skull-shaped hill known as “Gordon’s Calvary,” outside the wall, north-east of the Damascus Gate. Let others, if they will, believe that the hidden rock beneath the bizarre Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the site of the world’s greatest tragedy, I am fully persuaded that the other is the true scene where the Saviour died to redeem a lost world.

Since the days of Helena, the mother of Constantine, who believed she identified the real Golgotha, and built a church over it, millions have accepted that as the veritable

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place of the crucifixion, and to them the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is perhaps the most sacred place in Christendom. We visited it reverently, realizing that it might prove at last to be the proper location. But the more we saw of it, and the more we pondered the words of Holy Scripture, the more improbable it seemed.

But when we climbed to the top of the north wall just east of the Damascus Gate, and saw the hill rising before us, across the road, with its smooth top, and great caves in its face, we felt at once that we were looking upon something that was in exact accord with the account given in our Bibles. As we conversed with different Christian residents of Jerusalem we learned that evangelicals as a rule accept this as the real Calvary, while sacerdotalists generally cleave to the traditional site inside the walls.

Some have claimed that in ancient times the walls ran very differently to what they do now, and the north wall was once actually south of the church in question. But recently a part of a very old wall has been discovered which, if it be the original northern one, will settle beyond all doubt that Gordon's Calvary is the right place.

Why is it called Gordon's Calvary? General (Chinese) Gordon spent some months in Jerusalem and occupied a house looking out over this very hill. As he read his Bible and meditated on the descriptions there given and observed how markedly that hill suggested a skull, he became reasonably sure that it was indeed Golgotha. But he felt if he could find a rich man's tomb in a garden adjacent to the hill it would be settled unquestionably. Permission was given to do some archaeological work, and, sure enough, the tomb was found on the side of the mound cut into the limestone cliff, with an ancient garden surrounding it. Today the Garden Tomb is under the care

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of Mr. Clarke, an English Christian gentleman, manager of Barclay's Bank, and through his kindness we were permitted to enter it and to join with others in a prayer-meeting there, on the Lord's Day afternoon that we were in the city.

It seemed to us providential that both Calvary and the Tomb had been hidden as it were throughout the centuries of superstition so that no Roman or Greek churches have been built upon or about them. On Calvary itself is a Mohammedan cemetery, off to one side, but otherwise there is nothing to take away one's attention from the bare skull-like rock upon which in all probability those three crosses once stood.

As we gazed upon it we found our hearts welling up with conflicting emotions. A sense of our own sinfulness and guilt was almost overwhelming! To think that we were so utterly lost and undone that so great a Sacrifice was needed to redeem us! But the realization of the infinite love that gave the Lord Jesus to go to that place of unparalleled woe for us, was such that it was hard indeed to keep back tears of gratitude as we bowed our heads and silently gave thanks for that supreme Sacrifice.

Attention has often been directed to the three crosses that stood on Calvary, but it will not be amiss to dwell upon them again. He who hung upon the central tree was One upon whom death had no claim. He was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. But He was there for us; "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (**2 Cor. 5:21**). It was because of His sin-lessness that He could take the sinner's place. And because He was God as well as Man He could endure the wrath that our sins deserved, He had to be who He was to do what He did. No lesser

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Person could have accomplished our redemption.

As they nailed Him to that cross He had no sins on Him, nor did He have sin in Him. But when the darkness enveloped the scene and God “laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” He hung there with our sins on Him, though still sinless within. On the other side hung the impenitent thief, blaspheming and reviling to the last. Alas, poor wretched man, he was in everything the very contrast to the Man he abused. He had sin in him and sins on him, and he was soon to meet God in judgment because of this.

But the other malefactor, when convicted of his guilt he turned in faith to Jesus and confessed Him as Lord, immediately had all his sins transferred to Christ. True, he still had sin in him, but he had no sins on him. What a sublime faith was his! He recognized in a dying Man, agonizing on that middle cross, God’s anointed King. “Lord, remember me!” he cried, “when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.” But the Saviour said, as it were, “I will do better for you than that. You will not have to wait for bliss until I return to take My Kingdom. Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” And ere sunset that day, both the saved and the Saviour were together in that place of gladness.

As we contemplated that rock height and these thoughts ran through our minds, we looked down upon the road below. Cars were gliding back and forth. Nearby some sheep-men were buying and selling. Souvenir vendors were hawking their wares. Beggars were crying for *buksheesh*. Merchants were busy yonder just inside the Damascus Gate. We alone seemed to be interested in “the place called Calvary.” And, we thought, what a picture of the world we saw that day! Men interested in anything and everything pertaining to this life, and so few who have any heart for the Christ of God, His sufferings, and His joys!

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When the well-known evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, visited Palestine years ago, he was permitted to hold a most unique open-air meeting on this very hill. Standing on Gordon's Calvary, he preached to a vast throng the unsearchable riches of Christ—dwelling on the grace of Him who there laid down His life for our salvation. In spirit I stand on that same spot today, and bid you gaze on Him who nineteen hundred years ago “died for our advantage on that bitter cross.”

“Behold, behold the Lamb of God  
On the cross;  
For us He shed His precious blood  
On the cross.  
The sun withholds its rays of light,  
The heavens are clothed in shades of night, While Jesus  
wins the dreadful fight

On the cross.”

Say to your soul, “O my soul, it was all for me.” And so find rest of heart and peace of conscience in that finished work wrought out by God's beloved Son at “the place called Calvary.”

It may never be yours to visit the actual hill of the cross in this life, but faith can take you there in a moment as in penitence you bow low before the Crucified and own Him as Saviour and Lord. Then indeed you can say from the heart:

“Near the cross, a trembling soul,  
Love and mercy found me,  
There the bright and morning star  
Shed its beams around me.

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Be my glory ever,  
Till my raptured soul shall find  
Rest beyond the river.”

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## The Garden Tomb

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Henry Allen Ironside

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*“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand” (John 19:41, 42).*

Of all the places we saw in Bible lands the sweetest and most hallowed memories linger round the garden tomb. It was on a Lord’s Day afternoon that we visited it in company with a group of devoted believers, who were firmly convinced after living in Jerusalem for some years that it was actually the sepulchre once owned by Joseph of Arimathea, and wherein once reposed the precious body of our most blessed and holy Saviour.

In the morning of that day we met with an assembly of Christians to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. It was very precious and very solemn to be thus carrying out His request perhaps less than three-fourths of a mile from the very place where that upper room was located in which the Lord’s Supper was first instituted. Though there were probably not quite fifty persons present we were a very cosmopolitan company who enjoyed fellowship together as members of one Body, showing the Lord’s death, “till He come.”

After a noon meal with an earnest missionary family, quite a group of us walked over to the garden tomb. We had a special permit to visit it, by the kindness of the custodian.

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It took some time to arouse the caretaker, but eventually we secured his attention by persistent ringing of the bell, and the big door swung open and we found ourselves in a delightful garden, laid out very much as it may have been long years ago when Joseph prepared the sepulchre there.

The entrance to the tomb itself was originally an almost square opening, about three or three-and-a-half feet wide and four feet high. But it has been made higher since the British Government took charge of it, in order that people may find easier access to the rooms within. As we noticed how low it had formerly been we could see vividly why it is written of John that, “he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen cloths (not clothes) lying; yet went he not in” (**John 20:5**).

Inside there are two compartments separated by a low limestone wall. The first or outer room is about seven feet wide by ten feet long, with a ceiling some seven or eight feet high. Looking over into the second compartment we could see “the place where they laid Him” (or one at least similar to it), a crypt along the wall at the far end. This second room is practically the size of the first. So the crypt is about six-and-a-half feet long by about two feet wide. At the far end is a rounded depression to receive the head of the body buried there. There is a wall running across to separate it from the rest of the compartment, and at each end adjoining this low wall is a stone seat. Could it actually be that it was on these seats the angels once sat, “the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain?”

At the other end of this room was another crypt left unfinished. Evidently no other body but One had ever been entombed there. Above this unfinished part was a square window in the outer wall so arranged that the first

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rays of light would shine on any body lying in the far crypt.

Again we thought of Peter and John coming early to the sepulchre. When John looked in, as he stooped down to gaze through the door from which the stone had been rolled away, the light would shine through the window-opening directly upon the crypt. There the beloved disciple discerned the linen cloths still lying just as they had been wrapped about the sacred body of the Lord, after being dipped in an ointment prepared from spices sent by Nicodemus. The rest of the hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes would form a bed upon which the body rested.

It is noticeable that so long as Jesus was suffering in our stead God permitted every kind of indignity to be heaped upon His precious body. It was marred and wounded most shockingly. But the moment all was finished God said, as it were, "Hands off!" And from that instant not an enemy hand was permitted to touch the Saviour's physical form. Loving hands took it down from the cross and tenderly washed away the bloody stains and wrapped it in the linen cloths for hasty burial, intending to embalm it completely after the Passover. Then they reverently laid it on a bed of spices in that crypt. It was the burial of a King. Of King Asa we read that he was laid on such a bed (see **2 Chron. 16:13, 14**).

Evidently John, seeing the undisturbed linen cloths, thought the women mistaken and the body still there. But impulsive Peter went right into the tomb, and beheld the linen cloths and the napkin, or turban, that was wound round the head, not touching the linen cloths but wound together in a place by itself, or apart. The loved face of Jesus was gone! The body had come out of its cerements, as a butterfly emerges from the chrysalis-shell leaving the

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wrappings undisturbed. Trembling with awe and wonder, Peter beckoned to John, who entering “saw and believed.” How could he do otherwise? No power on earth could have taken the body from those funereal garments and left them as they beheld them. They knew He was risen from the dead!

Oh, how easy it was to live it all over that wonderful Lord’s Day afternoon! Our entire group bowed before God in prayer and praise, while our hearts swelled with adoring love as we worshipped Him who said, “I am He that liveth and became dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of death and of hades” (**Rev. 1:18**, correct rendering). Never did He seem nearer than in those hallowed moments.

We were sorry when the time came to leave, but I was to preach the gospel in a Mission to the Jews shortly, so reluctantly we passed out into the garden, and then to the world outside, saying in our hearts, “The Lord is risen indeed!”

Yes, Jesus is not dead. He lives in power. And He is now exalted to God’s right hand a Prince and a Saviour. To any one anxious to enter into peace and to be sure of salvation the Word declares, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (**Rom. 10:9, 10**).

That empty tomb tells of sins forever put away, of death conquered, and of peace made with God. And only,

“That which can shake the cross

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Which tells me Christ has never died  
Nor ever left the grave.”

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## Lessons from the Dead Sea

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**Henry Allen Ironside**

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*“I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord” (Amos 4:11).*

You never read of the Dead Sea in the Bible; it is never mentioned under that name. It is spoken of on a number of occasions in the Old Testament as the Salt Sea, and it is also called the Sea of the Plain, and again it is designated the Eastern Sea, in distinction from the Mediterranean, which was the Western Sea. But the Dead Sea, as we know it today, is near the site of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we cannot think of the one very well without thinking of the other. So you will at once see the connection of this passage from Amos with my subject.

The Dead Sea is one of the most unusual bodies of water in all the world. The day we went down to its shores we left Jerusalem by auto and started down the Jericho road. About three miles out from Jerusalem our driver stopped the car and just pointed to the scene below, and we found ourselves looking upon one of the most remarkable views we had ever beheld. A little bit to the north we could see the Jordan rolling down from the Sea of Galilee, and below was the Dead Sea. It is forty-seven miles long and three to nine miles in width. We could see the mystic mountains of Moab rising right up from the very shores of the sea on the eastern side, the wilderness of Judea on the western side, and a number of strangely-shaped cone-like low hills along

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the western slopes and down to the south. As we went nearer we found that these conical hills were almost mountains of sulphur or of salt; the sun was blazing down upon that valley in which the sea lay, the water shone there in all its deep blue brilliance, and the hills around presented a strange appearance, being colored something like the Grand Canyon of Colorado.

We could not help but realize that we were looking upon that which to the Hebrews symbolized the doom of the lost, and when in the book of Revelation John wrote of a lake of fire and brimstone into which the wicked would be cast, he undoubtedly had before his mind's eye that Dead Sea with the brilliant midsummer sun shining upon it, the whole scene seemingly marked by the hand of destruction.

As we went down the Jericho road we came to a sign marked, "Sea Level." We took the road from Mt. Olivet and had gone down nearly three thousand feet to reach that sign, and then we went on deeper and deeper down until by-and-by we reached Jericho, nearly nine hundred feet below sea level. We spent the greater part of the morning clambering over the ruins of the Jericho of Joshua's day; that Jericho which has been covered by a great mound of earth for centuries and has within the last few years been excavated. It was a very strange sensation to get down into the city and walk along some of those old circular streets (for the ancient city of Jericho was a great oval set upon a hill), and as we saw the broken walls on every side to realize that we were probably looking upon the actual ruins that were brought into that condition through the overthrow of the city in the days of Joshua so long ago.

I happen to have at home something given to me several years back which I rather value. It is a little tube filled with grains of wheat, and these are black, blackened by

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smoke, so that they look like large grains of gunpowder. But if you examine them carefully, particularly under a microscope, you can see that every one is a perfectly formed grain of wheat. Where did they come from? When they uncovered this city of Jericho and had dug down through the debris to the original city, the city of Joshua's day, they found in many of the houses great jars filled with this old corn of the land. We are told that the manna ceased after the people of Israel entered into the land, and they fed upon the old corn. The corn had been gathered in, and Jericho was destroyed at the very time the old corn was stored *m* so many of these homes. Archaeologists found it just a few years ago, bearing mute testimony to the truth of the record given in the Word of God.

We left the ancient city of Jericho and went over to the new city of Jericho. It used to be called "the city of palm-trees," but long ago practically all the palm-trees were destroyed. They are now planting more, and there are great plantations of banana-palms all around the city, and coconut-palms are beginning to thrive, so that Jericho is once more becoming a city of palm-trees. It was intensely hot, although we were there early in the season. Because it is so low down folk who are used to living above sea level find it difficult to breathe easily there. We decided to go over to the Dead Sea to have our lunch. At the north-western shore of the Dead Sea a very fine sanitarium has recently been built. A kind of open-air restaurant is attached to it, and so we went the five miles from Jericho to the Dead Sea, passing the slime pits of which we read in the Word of God. Reaching this place we went on to the porch, and as we sat overlooking the Dead Sea we were served with refreshments there. Right to the north we could see the rather disagreeable-looking (by that, I mean there was nothing attractive about it) plant of the chemists who are endeavoring to extract bromides and phosphates

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and chlorides from the Dead Sea.

It is a remarkable fact that the Dead Sea has now been discovered to be of inestimable value. In fact, British scientists who have carefully analyzed its water, figure there are minerals of different kinds which, if they could all be taken out of the water of the sea, would be worth in our money, over twelve hundred and fifty billions of dollars. That is the hidden wealth of the Dead Sea. How did it all get there? There was a time when the Dead Sea was not dead. You remember the day when Lot stood on the heights of the land and looked out over it, and Abraham said, "You are complaining that the land is not able to bear us both. Take whatever part of the land you want." God had given it all to Abraham, but with magnificent unselfishness he said to his nephew Lot, "If you go to the right hand, I will go to the left, and if you go to the left, I will go to the right." And Lot looked out upon the well-watered plain of the Jordan, down toward the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, a beautiful country, and said, "It is like the garden of the Lord." And then I think he whispered, "It is like the land of Egypt." He had been there, and though he had come back he had brought Egypt in his heart, and he still longed for a land like that of Egypt.

Egypt is a type of the world. Lot was like some professing Christians who still have the love of the world in their hearts. "Like the garden of the Lord" sounded very pious, but he chose the valley of the Jordan and pitched his tent toward Sodom. There is no hint that the land was then in the desolate condition it is now. From Lot's choice it was evidently the very opposite. When Lot moved into Sodom, he found himself among perhaps the most ungodly people living in the world at that time. A striking paragraph in George Adam Smith's magnificent volume on "The

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Historical Geography of the Holy Land,” deals particularly with the Valley of the Dead Sea:

“In this awful hollow, this bit of the infernal regions come to the surface, this hell with the sun shining into it, primitive man laid the scene of the most terrible judgment on human sin. The glare of Sodom and Gomorrah is flung down the whole length of Scripture history. It is the popular and standard judgment of sin. The story is told in Genesis; it is applied in Deuteronomy, by Amos, by Isaiah, by Jeremiah, by Ezekiel and Zephaniah, and in Lamentations. Our Lord employs it more than once as the figure of the judgment He threatens upon cities where the Word is preached in vain, and we feel the flame scorch our own cheeks. Paul, Peter, Jude make mention of it. In the Apocalypse the city of sin is spiritually called Sodom.

Sodom and Gomorrah were luxurious cities, cities where plenty reigned and where God was forgotten; and when God is forgotten, men allow themselves to fall into all kinds of sensual indulgences. And so the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah became so vile that it reached up to Heaven, and you remember how God is said to have come down to see if it were really as bad as the report that had reached Him. That, of course, is what theologians call an anthropomorphism. An anthropomorphism means, a speaking of God after the manner of men. Of course God knew all about Sodom and Gomorrah, knew all about its sin just as He knows all about your sins, your iniquity, knows the things you are keeping under cover, hiding from your closest friends, knows them all; and you might as well recognize it and say like Hagar, “Thou God seest me” (**Gen. 16:13**). You may try to cover your sin, you may try to hide it, but “Be sure your sin will find you out” (**Num. 32:23**).

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God knew what was going on in Sodom, but when it says that He came down to see whether it were really as bad as the reports had been, it simply means this, that God is infinitely long-suffering and of tender mercy and was waiting if perchance there might be the least evidence of man's repentance. No matter what the sin that has blighted your life, no matter what the hidden sin, the secret sin, sins that some of your dearest friends never dream would be tolerated in your life, if you will turn to Christ, if you will turn to God in repentance owning your guilt, confessing your sin and putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. I would that men and women whose consciences tell them that they are living in sin, whose consciences accuse them of violating God's holy law, would turn to Him as David did when at last his conscience was awakened, and he cried, "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (**Ps. 25:11**). The reason a great many people never have their iniquity blotted out is because they are trying to underestimate it all the time. You might have thought David would have said, "O God, blot out my iniquity, for it is *not* very great, and so forgive it." No; David does not try to cover it now. He had been doing that before. He said that when he tried to cover it, his "bones waxed old;" but, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee," he says, "and mine iniquity have I not hid" (**Ps. 32:3-5**). It takes a great God to forgive great iniquity, and our great God delights to blot out great sins, to save great sinners and change them into great saints.

Well, God came down to see the actual condition of things in Sodom and there was no repentance, no grief because of sin, no sense of guilt. They flaunted their iniquity before the very angels of Jehovah's presence who came down to deliver Lot and his family from those awful conditions. We

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are told in Peter's epistle that Lot was a righteous man, and "that righteous man in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (**2 Pet. 2:8**). I do not have very much sympathy for him. He need not have been vexed like that, for he moved into Sodom when he had no business being there. He was a saint in the wrong place, and because of that he was continually vexed and troubled by conditions all about him. Abraham was not vexed; his soul was not troubled by their ungodly deeds. He was up yonder with God, breathing the pure air of fellowship with the Almighty, but Lot had allowed himself to get down into the midst of this worldliness and unspeakable corruption. He was saved, but we read that it was "so as by fire." You remember how the message came, "Hast thou any here besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place" (**Gen. 19:12**). And we remember Lot went out and called to his sons-in-law and said to them, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" (**Gen. 19:14**). But we are told, "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." The trouble was he had lived too near their own level for so long, that now when at last he was dead in earnest his testimony had no power. Some of you as Christians know what that means. You go on with the world, participating in the same things as worldlings, and then try to witness for God, and see what your testimony amounts to.

The story is told of a Christian young woman who had gone to a ball but she had made up her mind to be true to Christ. There as she danced around the floor with an ungodly young man, she said to him, "Pardon me, are you a Christian?"

"I should say not," he said; "you are not; are you?"

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“Yes, I am,” she said.

“Well, what in the world are you doing here?”

Even the worldling could see the incongruity of a Christian being in such association. Lot’s sons-in-law had no confidence in him. “He is a fine old chap, but queer; yet he is easy-going, easy to get along with. And he has some nice girls, and we would rather marry girls like these after all,” they might have said. But his testimony had no power, and they would not heed when he called them to leave, and in the morning the angels hastened Lot and said, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed” (**Gen. 19:17**). They were hardly outside before the judgment storm fell.

What actually happened? Archaeologists have been making a great many investigations in that low valley, and have come to the conclusion that in the hills around there had been through the centuries great deposits of sulphur and petroleum. If God on that morning that Lot left the city caused a great earthquake to take place, and there was an electric storm, and those stores of petroleum were set on fire by lightning from heaven, there would surely be fire and brimstone rained upon that place. Professor Kyle tells us that they have discovered in the south-western end of the Dead Sea what evidently were the actual foundations of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. A great many people, following the account of Josephus, have supposed that those cities were buried under the waters of the sea, but at the south end of the sea is a great hill of salt which is called Mount Usdum, and archaeologists have little difficulty in recognizing in that word “Usdum” the Biblical “Sodom.” When investigating they found the ruins of an ancient city underneath, evidences that there

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had been a great city there long years ago.

You remember how the word of God tells us that when Lot's wife got safely out of the city, she turned around and became a pillar of salt. "Oh," the skeptics say, "that is an Old Testament legend; no one could believe that!" Dr. Kyle tells us he has no difficulty about it, for while making their investigations one day there blew up a tremendous storm which lifted the waters of the Dead Sea into the air, and before they knew it they were so encrusted with salt that they might have been rendered utterly incapable of motion, and would soon have been so covered with it that they too would have been pillars of salt if help had not come. Something like that may have happened to Lot's wife, but our Lord Jesus Christ points us back to that woman and says, "Remember Lot's wife."

Why should we remember her? Because she was *almost* saved, but lost! She had heard the Word of life, she had started to obey it, but looked back and perished. The Lord Jesus Christ practically says, "Be careful that the same thing does not happen to you. Remember Lot's wife."

But what makes the Dead Sea dead? It is dead. No fish can live in it. Fish coming down from the fresh water of the Jordan and entering into the Dead Sea, in a very few minutes are found drifting on the top of the water with their white bellies upward, and in a little while they are thrown out on the shores encrusted with salt. The only creature that scientists have found that lives in the sea is an infinitesimal shrimp; otherwise there is no life in the Dead Sea. Evidently down beneath that sea there are hidden sources from which certain chemicals are constantly being absorbed into its waters. And then the River Jordan pours down into it over seven million gallons of water every day, bearing into the sea different minerals

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that it collects as it comes down from near Mount Hermon right on through that mysterious cleft of the earth until emptied at last in this Sea of the Plain.

The Dead Sea has no outlet. It is constantly receiving water, and yet nothing apparently goes out except by evaporation. It does not rise any higher. The sun is so intensely hot that the water is evaporated and the minerals remain. The water of the Dead Sea contains nearly twenty-six per cent of solid matter. The waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans contain four to six per cent of solid matter. So you can see how much more dense the waters of the Dead Sea are. What a lesson is there—constantly receiving and never giving out! I have an idea some of you have been attending services for years, listening to the Gospel all this time and yet you never talk to other people about Christ. You are constantly receiving and never giving out. But then think of the worldling, how terribly true of him! Think of the blessings that God is continually lavishing upon this poor lost world, and yet there are millions of people who never recognize His goodness, never give back to Him the love and worship that He should have, and who are absolutely indifferent to the needs of those around them. If you want to have a fresh, bright, happy experience yourself, then as you receive the goodness of the Lord, pass it on to others.

“Have you had a kindness shown?

Pass it on.

Twas not meant for you alone;

Pass it on.”

And as you pass it on, you give back to God the glory due to His name, and your own life is freshened and sweetened and gladdened.

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There came a time in Israel’s history when God had to deal

very strenuously with them because of their sin, and He called to their mind His ancient dealings with Sodom and Gomorrah saying, “I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto Me.” That is, God had permitted certain calamities to come upon the people of Israel and He meant them to be exercised by them. I know people like to rule God out of His own world. We talk about conditions in this country and the drought and other adverse conditions, and men do not like to think that God has any part in it, but He has not abdicated His throne. He is still the Ruler of the universe, and we are suffering for our forgetfulness of Him. No land has been more blessed of God than this, and so it was with Israel, but He had allowed famine and earthquake and, “Yet,” He says, “have ye not returned unto Me—therefore there is just one thing more, I will have to deal with you directly. Because I will do this unto thee, *Prepare to meet thy God.*”

The greatest lesson that the Dead Sea, that awful memorial of a ruined civilization, brings to us today is this warning, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (**Luke 13:3**). As I stood there looking upon its waters, it seemed that I could hear the word of the prophet saying again, “Prepare to meet thy God.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (**Heb. 10:31**). Men get the idea that they can sin with impunity because sentence against an evil work is not immediately executed, and they go on flaunting their iniquity in the face of God, who may wait with long patience but who eventually strikes in judgment.

Dear unsaved friend, “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom

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cross will not avail if you persist in rejecting the One who hung upon that cross. If you won't have Jesus, God has no other salvation for you, and you will have to meet Him in judgment if you won't meet Him in grace. Have you trusted Him? Are you ready to trust Him? Do you feel the weight of your sin and do you long for deliverance? If so, flee to Him who waits to hear your penitent cry and to save your guilty soul.

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## Graves in Egypt

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### Henry Allen Ironside

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*“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?”* (Exod. 14:11).

In a general way, I think, I had for years entered into the irony of this speech of the children of Israel, but the full force of it never came home to me until our recent visit to the land of Egypt. Next to spending some time in Palestine, it was my earnest desire to visit the land where Joseph had been so wonderfully used of God, where the people of Israel sojourned so many years and out of which they were delivered, and which long centuries afterwards afforded a haven for the Infant Jesus when as a Babe He was taken there by Joseph and Mary to escape the wrath of Herod. It was most interesting when we did get there, to sit down on Lord's Day evening at a five o'clock Communion Service in the ancient town of Heliopolis; and as we looked out of the window, right across the street we could see a gnarled tree, which they told us was about nine hundred years old, but had sprung from a stock that was very much more ancient. It was covered with bits of rag and paper that were tied to its limbs. Tradition says that under that very tree, Mary, the mother of Jesus, rested and was bathing the holy Babe, when a poor leper came by and begged for an alms. Instead of giving him money the mother of Jesus is reported to have thrown the bathwater over him and in

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a moment he became perfectly clean! And because of that reputed miracle the Copts and others attach great virtue to that tree, and write out their prayers on paper or cloth and tie them to its boughs, hoping they will receive answers because of the sacred locality. It all seemed very sad and pitiable—the lamentable ignorance and superstition of people bearing the Christian name, to whom the New Testament is a sealed book.

We literally went *down* into Egypt. We had spent some eleven days in Palestine and would have stayed longer, but at the Gospel Center in Cairo, a week's Bible Conference had been arranged for, and word sent around inviting all the missionaries of the various Boards to come in for five days of Bible study. So we cancelled the last four days of our intended visit in Jerusalem and took the train to Cairo to fit in with this program. We felt quite sure that it was the Lord's doing, for we had a most delightful time of ministry with those beloved missionaries. We left Jerusalem in the morning, taking the train for Egypt, a railroad running right across the Sinai Peninsula to Cairo. The new and old methods of traveling are in close juxtaposition. As we came down from Jerusalem we had only to look out of the window to see long caravans of camels, sometimes thirty, forty or fifty animals at a time, plodding along on the desert, and there we were on the steam train hastening on to Egypt. Israel, we are told, would have needed eleven days in the journey over that same trail, but they took forty years to go to Canaan by another route, largely because of their unbelief. It took us ten hours.

We beheld many things of great interest. As we sped along through the Philistine country we saw the rock Etam, and the cave in which Samson hid after he slew the Philistines. Other places of historic interest there were, too numerous

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to mention. We enjoyed a marvellous view of the desert. We reached El Kantara on the bank of the Suez Canal in the evening at about six o'clock, and took dinner there, had our baggage examined by Customs and then passed into Egypt proper and on to Cairo, which we reached about ten o'clock at night, and found our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Boutros and others waiting for us. They drove us out to Maadi, to the home of Dr. Wilson, an earnest Christian and an employé of the Government Hospital, who is particularly engaged in treating the Egyptians for eye-trouble. Thousands of them are afflicted with trachoma. That is one of the things that is so pitiable in a Mohammedan country. There, dear little children sit about in the hot sun, their festering eyelids covered with flies that must cause them great distress, but if the little ones raise their hands to brush them off, the parents sometimes say, "Do not disturb them; it is the will of Allah that you should be bitten by flies." It is no wonder that hundreds of them become absolutely blind, though the British authorities in co-operation with the Egyptian Government are doing a great deal to teach the people the necessity of proper treatment, and to show them that it is not true that they must go blind, but can be healed if the trouble is dealt with in time.

We saw much of interest as our friends took us about Cairo, a marvellous city extending some five miles along the eastern bank of the Nile. The old name for Egypt is Mizraim, and they tell us that means "the land of double narrowness." It aptly describes it—two narrow strips of arable land on either side of the River Nile. A few miles beyond and you are right in the desert, and it is a constant fight to keep the desert sand from encroaching on the tillable land. The Nile, as you know, is in flood every year unless there is some unexpected happening, such as lack of rain in Ethiopia, but otherwise it overflows the whole

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country, when the natives plant their corn in accordance with the precept, "Cast thy seed upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." The seed sinks down into the deep alluvial mud and generally a rich harvest can be depended on. It is very suggestive to those of us who try to preach the Gospel. How little we know just where the Word we proclaim may reach. I cannot tell as I seek to exalt Christ whether the Word is being received by any one or not. But it is my business to sow the seed and expect that I will see fruit after many days. When one stands at the judgment-seat of Christ, he may learn of many who were saved, of whom he knew nothing down here.

When Israel dwelt in Egypt something like 1600 years before Christ, it was already an ancient kingdom. The great pyramids, which are located about eight miles southwest of Cairo across the Nile, were built, so far as archaeologists can ferret out, about 2900 years before Christ, and the lesser pyramids of Memphis and Saccarah are supposed to be 5000 years old. Some may ask, Does that fit in with the story of the deluge? The deluge, I believe, occurred something like five or six hundred years before that. Personally, I am inclined to think that the chronological system which is based upon a careful study of the Septuagint would be more correct than that of Usher, and would carry history back nearly a thousand years earlier than that which is based upon the received text. The people of Israel saw those vast temples, they saw the obelisks, they saw the pyramids and Sphinx. These things were there in their day. They stand still, monuments to human vanity, and to the ancient Egyptians' belief in immortality, for these great pyramidal structures are all tombs.

Egypt is God's type of the world. He sent Moses to deliver His people out of Egypt. Now, in the New Testament we

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read that the Lord Jesus gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world. This is our Egypt. How naturally it suggests things of the world: in its wisdom, for the wisdom of the Egyptians was renowned; in its riches, for the Egyptians were a most luxurious people; in its love of pleasure, for with the Egyptians the pursuit of pleasure had been reduced to an exact science; and then in its love of fame and honor, for after these the kings of Egypt ever strove. And yet as we think of that great land today, we find ourselves using the very words that the people of Israel used, when they spoke to Moses angrily because they had not been immediately brought into the promised land of which he had told them. Their history is a most interesting one. They picture worldlings everywhere who are in the bondage of sin. The Apostle Paul tells us, speaking of their history, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." There are several things one learns from that verse. Observe, "All these things happened." There are some people today who tell us they never happened. But the Holy Ghost says, "All these things happened." But then, He says more than that. He shows that there was a reason for the happening—that God had something in view that He wanted to picture for other people in the suffering and redemption of Israel. So we read that all these things happened to them for types and they are written for our learning and instruction, we upon whom the ends of the ages have arrived.

Consider the Passover. We do not have to guess as to the meaning of that. "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." What a marvelous picture of the redemption that is in Christ

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Jesus you have there! God was going to bring judgment upon the land of Israel, and He says unto them: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." Now observe, it was *not* the beginning of months. Quite the contrary. It was the seventh month of the year, but He says, "It shall be the beginning of months to you," because they were going to make a new start, reckoning from the time they were redeemed. That is why Christ said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The moment one is saved life really begins; it is an entirely new start, for all who believe the gospel are born from above. Have you ever experienced anything like that? Have you ever known what it was to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and thus begin all over again? Have you found yourself a bondman to sin and evil habits of various kinds, from which you are unable to deliver yourself? You may have said sometimes with Tennyson:

"Oh, for a man to arise in me,  
That the man I am may cease to be."

God wants to give you a new start; He wants to create in you a new nature. Through Christ you may be born again, and delivered from the bondage of sin.

But how men shy away from this tremendous truth. It has been told of one who often preached on that text, "Ye must be born again," that someone said to him, "When you were here last you preached on that subject, and the time before, and now you preach on it again. Why do you preach so frequently on this text, 'You must be born again?'" And the preacher looked at him with a smile, and replied, "Because ye *must* be born again!" God would have that truth impressed upon men's souls. "This month shall be the beginning of months." They were to begin beneath

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the sheltering blood of the Lamb. Notice three expressions:—"Take *a* lamb," "*The* lamb," "*Your* lamb." The lamb typifies the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He just one of the world's saviours, *a* lamb? Or have you come to the place where you say, "No, I would never think of putting Him on the same level with other teachers; to me He is *the* Lamb?" Can you go a step further? Can you say, "He is *my* Lamb, *my* Saviour, the One in whose redemptive work I am resting tonight?" *Your* lamb? Moses said, "You are to slay the lamb." You and I have had a part in the slaying of the Lamb. It was our sins that put Him on the cross at Calvary. It was because of what we are and what we have done that He went to the cross.

Yes, unsaved one, you had a part in the death of the Son of God. Now will you have a part in the salvation that He wrought out by His death? It is not enough that Christ has died, but God said, "And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and sprinkle it on the door-posts, and the lintel, and go into the house, for I am going to pass through in judgment tonight, but when see the blood I will pass over you." What does it mean? It means the appropriation of the death of Christ by faith for your personal redemption. Have you put your trust in Christ? Has the blood been sprinkled over your door-post? Are you inside in the place of security? If you are, thank God, the judgment can never reach you there.

But now notice it was not only God's thought that they should be saved in Egypt that night, but they were to be saved out of it altogether. He does not want us to go on with the world after He has saved us. He said to Moses, "Let the people camp between the mountains and the sea," and behind them was Pharaoh's army, and the the people were in great distress and they said, "This is not deliverance. Is it because there were no graves in Egypt

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that thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness?” No graves in Egypt! Why, that is what you will always find in Egypt. No other nations made so much of graves as the Egyptians. Everywhere we went in Egypt our friends were directing our attention to graves—not only graves of their mighty men, kings and priests and priestesses, but graves even of the lower animals, graves of crocodiles and of oxen and other creatures. We went into the recently-discovered catacombs and saw the graves of the twenty-four great bulls, and these beasts were buried in vast mausoleums so high you had to climb up to look into them, and they are all empty now because the mummies have been taken away and placed on exhibition. Graves in Egypt? The pyramids, those vast structures, are only graves. The Great Pyramid covers thirteen acres of ground, and yet that great pile is nothing but a tomb like the rest.

We visited the Royal Egyptian Museum. We saw the vast treasures that had been taken out of the tomb of Tutankhamen, a tomb containing almost fabulous stores of wealth and ornaments of all kinds, precious stones, and furniture that was simply amazing to behold. It is all intensely interesting, and gives a remarkable insight into the civilization of long ago. Egypt, a great Egypt, but a type of the world. There is nothing stable here. You can live for the world, you can go in for its pleasures, you can seek its honors, you can pile up its wealth, and what will you find? Only a grave. Would you have something that will last beyond the grave? That is what you are offered in Christ.

The one outstanding piece of literature that has come down to us from ancient Egypt is “The Book of the Dead.” Their mighty kings are written in “The Book of the Dead.” But God’s blessed Book speaks of a Book of Life. Is your name in it?

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Graves in Egypt? They are everywhere. And so it is with the world. Go where you will, the dead are there. But the blessed Son of God came into this world of death and declared, "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." How foolish to live for a world like this! How foolish to turn away from the gracious invitation of the Son of God, who offers eternal life! If you live for the world and refuse the salvation God has provided what will you have at last?

After the joys of earth,  
After its songs of mirth,  
After its hours of light,  
After its dreams so bright—  
What then?

Only an empty name,  
Only a weary frame,  
Only a conscious smart,  
Only an aching heart.

But after this empty name,  
After this weary frame,  
After this conscious smart,  
After this aching heart—  
What then?

Only a sad farewell  
To a world loved too well,  
Only a silent bed  
With the forgotten dead.

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But after this sad farewell  
To a world loved too well,  
After this silent bed  
With the forgotten dead—  
What then?

Oh, then—the judgment-throne!  
Oh, then—the last hope gone!  
Then, all the woes that dwell  
In an eternal Hell!

Why will men forfeit heavenly glory for earth's passing, fading folly? Why will they risk the loss of the soul for a little sensual gratification? "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Well, you will never gain the whole world. What will it profit a man though, if he could gain the whole world? You will lose it all some day. A rich man died in New York some years ago, a multimillionaire, and the next day on Exchange they said, "So-and-so is dead." "How much did he leave?" asked one. "Oh," was the reply, "he left it all." Selling your soul for a grave in this Egypt-world! Why will you die?

"Oh, turn ye, oh, turn ye,  
For why will ye die  
When God in great mercy  
Is drawing so nigh?  
Now Jesus invites you,  
The Spirit says, Come!  
And angels are waiting  
To welcome you home.

"How vain the delusion  
That while you delay  
Your heart may grow better

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By staying away.  
Come wretched, come starving,  
Come just as you be,  
While streams of salvation  
Are flowing so free.”

Come then to Christ without further procrastination and,  
trusting Him, you may know your name is in the Book of  
Life from which it can never be blotted out.

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