

## **ONWARD TOWARDS JERUSALEM (1)**

### **Looking For Jerusalem**

Hebrews 12:18-25a: “For you have not come to the mount that might be touched and was all on fire, and to obscurity, and darkness, and tempest, and trumpet’s sound, and voice of words; which they that heard, excusing themselves, declined the word being addressed to them any more: (for they were not able to bear what was enjoined: And if a beast should touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and, so fearful was the sight, Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and full of trembling;) but you have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven; and to God, judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel. See that you refuse not him that speaks.

Hebrews 11:10 (King James Version): “For he looked for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Psalms 87:1-7: “His foundation is in the mountains of holiness. Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon among them that know me; behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High himself shall establish her. Jehovah will count, when he inscribeth the peoples, This man was born there. Selah. As well the singers as the dancers shall say, All my springs are in thee.”

*Lord, we are so grateful for Your Word this morning. We know as we come to You we have to look away. We cannot look to ourselves or trust in ourselves to give anything of real spiritual worth or value, but we know that You alone have the words of eternal life. And as we come to You, we come in utter dependence that the Lord Himself, the One whom we heard about this morning at His table, and now that the Lord would bring His Word. What a difference it will make to our lives and our walk in the Lord Jesus. So we ask You to quicken us to speak and to quicken us to hear that we may know what the Spirit is saying to the churches. These things we ask in the name of Jesus.*

### **God’s Great Work**

I have been inquiring of the Lord ever since I shared on divine assurance about what He would have in His heart for me to share, if anything. And this phrase came to me, “Onward Towards Jerusalem,” and it was quite strong when it came. I will never forget when I went to San Antonia, the last conference I spoke at, it was confirmed. A brother there spoke on the “Gates of Jerusalem,” and I knew this was the Lord. I believe, in fact, the Bible is a progressive journeying towards Jerusalem. It is hard to imagine otherwise. When you come to the end of the Old Testament, which our brothers have been sharing on every other Friday night in Nehemiah, it is all about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It is all about that city that was in ruin, and just in a short while God, because He is the One who does the “great work,” was able to transform that

barren, ruined place into a place of glory and marvel in just fifty-two days. So that is the end of the Old Testament, and I believe that you can see what the emphasis clearly is.

When you come to the end of the New Testament, you begin to also see what appears to be on the Lord's heart. You remember the writer of Hebrews and how he shared those words we read in Hebrews 12 which were his concluding words and was also his summing up. This is what was on his heart, and in that great contrast we see God's great work.

At the end of Revelation there is no mistaking that the last vision in Revelation, chapters 21-22, at the end of time, after the end of the 1,000 year kingdom, is about Jerusalem, the city of God. I think it is quite clear. The Lord has something to say in the end of the New Testament to those Jews who were tempted to go back to those old things, those shadows, and live in them. He was calling them back to Zion. Then at the end of the Bible it is also quite clear.

I remember when we were at the Christian Family Conference recently, how in Nehemiah that thought in Nehemiah 6:3 was imbedded in my heart. When Nehemiah said to those enemies, "Why should I come down to you? Why should I do it? I am doing a great work, and I will not come down."

Now brothers and sisters, Nehemiah himself was not doing a great work; it was God who was doing a great work. And thank God, it is an unmistakable privilege that in His sovereignty He calls man together with Himself to join in that great work. That is a phenomenal thing when you think about it. Who would have thought such a thing? God could do it all by Himself. Why does He need to call man into the situation and into this relationship to be part of His great work? And the simple answer is that this is what He had always purposed. This is the explanation of the creation of man. This is the explanation of Genesis 1:26-27 when He made man in His image and in His likeness to have dominion and to be ones who were involved in that great work. So this is the burden the Lord has laid on my heart. I will share it in three parts because I can hardly get it all in today.

First of all, the whole burden is this phrase, "Onward Towards Jerusalem." I think there is a march towards Jerusalem, a moving towards Zion that is from the beginning of the Bible right through to that grand conclusion at the end of the Bible. So much is at stake. Will the Lord get what He wants? I am sure He will. Will man be involved in it, engaged in it as He wants? I hope so, but it all depends on our response.

There are three parts and this one is the first one. This is also a progression just like the progression of going onwards to Jerusalem. First of all, the phrase that comes to me is the one in Hebrews 11:10: "Looking for Jerusalem." Now of course it says, "Looking for the city." But it is clear that what Abraham was looking for was Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly Jerusalem. Some are so hung up in the earthly Jerusalem. Thank God, it is a wonderful illustration in this world that God can keep a people who have been so resisted, so in conflict, so much the center of controversy, but nevertheless, earthly Jerusalem is not our end. Heavenly Jerusalem is our end. So, number one, today we will look at "Looking for Jerusalem." I think that is quite important.

Another thing in the progression I think you must understand, and it becomes clear in the Bible when you see David, when you see Abraham, when you see others like Nehemiah, like Ezra, like Zechariah, like Haggai. When you see these ones, you see ones who were "Longing For Jerusalem." Think about it. Do we have that longing in our heart, that deep longing for Jerusalem? It will make a difference.

And third, I think there is a phrase that is very clear in the Bible, it is "Living in Jerusalem." It is not enough just to see something. It is not even enough to have a passion about something. If it is not part of the reality of your life and you are living in it, then you have missed it. So in the grand end, the thing that God is after is that we, as the people of God, would in the end be living in Jerusalem just as in Nehemiah 11:1-2. We would be like those priests of old that are talked about in the Old Testament that lived in Jerusalem. So that is the over-all burden. These three are a necessary progression to "Onward Toward Jerusalem."

### **The Concluding Vision**

Now I would like to talk about these verses that I read in Hebrews chapter 12. I think these are wonderful verses. They show all that we have in Christ Jesus. They show the great work that He has done. They show the completeness of that work and the provision that is made available to us in Christ Jesus. I believe these words are the concluding vision of this anonymous and anointed writer of Hebrews. You must be sick of me saying that by now, because I always say it when I talk about Hebrews. But this one never identifies himself. Why does he not identify himself? Paul identified himself. I love you guys that would say, "I am sure it was Paul." I am glad you are so sure. But he never identifies himself because the message is more important than the man. That is the key. And this anonymous and anointed author had a concluding word for the people of God. You might argue with me and say, "Surely there are other things. The whole of chapter 13, brother, did you tear your page out of your Bible?" And I did not. They were reminders, but they were not the concluding thought. He said in chapter 13:1: "Let brotherly love abide and be not forgetful of hospitality."

Verse 7: "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith."

I think of that verse almost every day when I think of our beloved Brother Kaung and his passing. "Remember your leaders. Imitate your leaders. Walk as they walked." That was one of his final closing comments (speaking of the writer of Hebrews).

Then in verse 18 he said, "Pray for us: for we persuade others." And I believe these are, in fact, some points he made, but it was not his glorious conclusion. The conclusion was in chapter 12. I have thought that for some time, but I was so helped when I read Brother Sparks' thought—"Now We Have Come to Mount Zion." It is an old book from the sixties. They are actually spoken ministries and preserved in that fashion, but Brother Sparks said, "All that he had to say is summed up here" (speaking of that anonymous and anointed writer of Hebrews). He went on to say, "the concentration of the whole letter is in this one section governed by these two words, 'not' and 'but.'" These are the key words that open the mystery of what God is after. It is a contrast between the Old Covenant and the better covenant, but it is much more than a contrast.

It was the writer's conclusion and his concluding vision. This is what he wanted those Jews to hear, who had become believers, and were on the verge of turning back away from the Lord Jesus. This is what he wanted them to hear, and it was his concluding thought.

I will put it another way. It was his chief exhortation. The book of Hebrews says in chapter 13:22: "Bear the word of exhortation." It is full of exhortations. It is full of warnings. "Lest," that is a warning. It is repeated again and again. Then it is full of exhortations, "Let us." These two phrases show us what was in his heart. But in this word of exhortation, this is *the* exhortation. What we have come from, and what we have come to, what this journey is about, where we are going from and where we are going to, onward to Jerusalem. That helped me so much when I heard Brother Sparks, a man that really had vision. When I think of Brother Sparks, I can only say that he was a man of vision. Some people have said, "He was not very practical." I would not say that about Brother Sparks because we have gained so much from someone who saw something. Do you understand my emphasis? Do you understand about someone who saw something? That is the point of Hebrews. He was looking for a city, and he saw something, and he was never the same after that. So this is the burden that the Lord has put on my heart.

In Hebrews 12:18 look again at this concluding vision. "For you have not come to the mount that might be touched." That is a very important phrase. Those Hebrew believers who were going back to the Old Covenant, they were going back to these things.

But when you read verse 22, this is the sense of his exhortation. "But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem."

This is what he had to say, and this was all he had to say. This is the journey onward towards Jerusalem. Then there are the two words that Brother Sparks said, "not" and "but." What a difference! When you look at the first part in those first few verses, it describes that mountain. It says something astounding: "It was a fearful sight." And Moses, who had the vision, who had the revelation, whose face glowed when he came down from Mount Sinai, says in verse 21, "I am exceedingly afraid and full of trembling." Thank God, that is not the vision we see in the rest of this exhortation. It was a fearful sight, and it is a great contrast between Sinai and the better covenant. Sinai was a fearful sight. They would not go near the mountain, it was so fearful. They were afraid they would be struck down to death.

But Zion is different. Everything is made available to us in Christ Jesus. Everything we need is made available to us in Christ Jesus. There is no lack, no want, no limitation; all is provided. That is what I believe these two words "not" and "but" mean.

### **Seven Times the phrase "and to" is Repeated**

It says in Psalm 87:3: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." And when you read Hebrews 12:22-24, you begin to discover those glorious things that are spoken of thee O city of God. How glorious they are in fact! When you read them, you began to understand the depth of the glorious things that we have been given in Christ Jesus. When you read the Word, you should read the Word carefully and meditatively, and you should think about it when things are repeated. If you do not think about it when things are repeated, you will miss the writer's emphasis. Repetition is often the key in the Scriptures, and in my version, the Darby (I haven't

read all the other versions), there is this phrase, “and to”. “You have come to Mount Zion “and to.” Seven times this phrase is repeated, “and to.”

Brothers and sisters, when I thought about that, it is the perfect number, for seven is the number of perfection. And here we see all the glories of God spoken of that had been done in Christ Jesus. Everything has been made available to us as we come to Mount Zion, and as we journey towards Jerusalem.

In verse 22a it says, “And to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem.” No more is the vision that we see a fearful sight. Sinai is gone. We could not keep it. It was a burden that we could not bear. It was simply to be that hard school master to prepare us for Christ and Him alone (see Galatians 3:23-26). He is the only One that can do what is required. He is the only One who can do that great work. Do you understand that? Sinai speaks of men’s efforts to get to God, and I think there is one word that works well. You could write over all of Sinai, “It is impossible!”

You do not want to hear my story about the Christian life again. But it is impossible. However, when you come to Zion, when you come to the city of the living God, you see a great work that the Savior does in a people that completely prepares them and brings them into all their inheritance in Christ Jesus, and into the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem. And Zion is the fulness of all that is available in Christ. The living God is with us doing what we could never do under the old order of things.

Verse 22: (This is the second “and to”) “And to myriads of angels, the universal gathering.” I will be quite honest with you. I did not quite understand this phrase and what it was there for. But I think it is a wonderful thing that God put it there through this writer. And it means every divine provision is made available to you in Christ Jesus to bring you on towards Jerusalem and bring you across the finish line. How wonderful it is!

In Luke 22:43 this is the Lord Jesus in His moment of darkest agony at Gethsemane, and it says a remarkable thing. “And an angel appeared to Him from heaven strengthening Him.” I do not know what you think about that, but all the resources were made available.

In the early chapters of Hebrews, the writer calls the angels ministering spirits. God has made these myriads of angels, this universal gathering, available to bring us into all that is ours in Christ Jesus.

(Number 3) Hebrews 12:23: “And to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” Thank God for that! Do you know this journey towards Jerusalem is never a solitary journey. Some people wrongly think of the Christian life as a solitary walk. There is much that is solitary about the Christian life, but nevertheless in the end is this great encouragement. We have come to, (in this concluding vision of Zion and the new Jerusalem) the assembly of the first born. The church is the place where we see Him the clearest because my view of Christ is so little. It is not enough. Your view of Christ is so little; it is not enough. Jerry’s view, believe it or not, is so little that I can even say Jerry’s view of Christ is far less than what is needed. But in this gathering of the firstborn, in this holy assembly, there is a large Christ.

I always liked the way Brother Fromke put it. I do not know how many of you are aware of Brother Fromke, but he talked about vision in this way. He said, "It is like an elephant in a closet." Now I do not know how you get an elephant in a closet unless it is a little elephant or a big closet. But in this we all touch a part. Some of us grab that skinny old tail and say, "This is what the elephant is like; this is what I see." By the way, he said, "The closet is dark." Well, you touch that big chunk of a leg and you say, "He is like a giant tree." Or you grab that long snout and you say, "He is like a big snake." We see in part. But when we are together in this gathering of the firstborn, we see things fuller and clearer than we ever did. Just like this morning at the Lord's table, we saw things fuller. The opening was precious, the remembering was even more precious. How I am thankful for the assembly. How I am thankful that when God thought of this journey towards Jerusalem; it was never meant to be alone. It was never meant to be solitary. It was always meant to be corporate.

(Number 4) "And to God the judge of all." I am so thankful there is a righteous Judge. I get sick most days, and I know some of you will say that I listen to too much news. I get that. I sometimes feel conviction about that myself. You hear these judges all the time who think they have supreme power making decisions after the law has been invoked. But we have a just Judge; He will judge the world righteously. He cannot fail. All of His judgments are right, and all of His judgments are true. We have come to the just Judge.

(Number 5) I like this very much. "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." Have you ever meditated on that? When we were brought into this city of Zion, into this Jerusalem by birth, we were made just men. We were justified. You are not going to be justified; you are justified. It is a marvelous letter of Romans that lays out that justification in such a spectacular way. We are justified. But that is not the end of God's work. The encouragement in this concluding vision is: "just men made perfect." Do you understand? He is doing a continual work. He is making us perfect. I always think of Peter. You remember that first call to Peter: "Come to me and I will make you fishers of men." I am sure Peter forgot that line, "make you." I am sure he roared into divine business thinking that he could somehow do the great work of God, and how he failed again and again.

You remember the Lord's discipline of Peter. Can you imagine a disciple of the Lord and the Lord looking at him and saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." It is one thing for you to call me a bad brother. Dora calls me a bad brother about every day. But it is another thing to be called Satan.

I tell you, He is doing a work. He is making us perfect. He has given the Holy Spirit with its singular responsibility to transform us and to conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus, "just men made perfect." Isn't that beautiful?! He could have said, "Just men, and you take it from there, boys." How horrible that would be. If it were not for His sanctifying work, if it were not for His transforming work, if it were not for His conforming work, how could we ever complete our journey to Jerusalem? It would be impossible.

(6) Verse 24: "And to Jesus, mediator of the new covenant." Isn't that beautiful? That says it all. Jesus is all in all. As a matter of fact, I love that verse in Colossians 1:13 when it describes what this all in all is. It says, "He is everything." Now what part is left out of everything? If I were

to give to Linda everything, which by the way does not happen, what would she ask for? There would be no need. In Christ, the glory of this concluding vision is you have come to Jesus, and in Jesus, God has provided you everything. Breathless vision! And I do not know why but I have a better understanding of why number 7 is not number 6 and number 6 is not number 7. In my wisdom, if I were the anointed anonymous writer, I would have put number 6 number 7. "And to Jesus." What more can there be? But he said something wonderful. I have come to appreciate it more.

(7) "And to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than the blood of Abel." Think of that! When all else fails in your journey towards Jerusalem, the last thought He wanted to leave with us is that there is always the blood. The blood can never fail. The blood can cleanse us from every sin, every detour we take like these Hebrew believers, the blood can bring us back, cleanse our conscious and we can continue on our journey towards Jerusalem.

I will tell a story on my older brother if he can even hear me. Jerry is the older brother; he is eight years older than I am. And when we were saved and joined in this great work together, I used to marvel at Jerry's prayer which he prayed often, "Thank You for the blood of Jesus." I have to admit I did not have the appreciation for it that he did. But as he kept praying it, I began to think there must be something to it, and when I see that the writer of Hebrews concludes with it, I know there is something to it. The blood can right every course. The blood can rescue every fallen sinner. The blood can make us pure before God and no matter where we fail, the blood is always available. These are the glories spoken of in Psalm 87: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O Jerusalem, O Zion."

Then there is this exhortation. There is always a responsibility. Remember it is a letter about exhortation.

The first phrase in verse 25: "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." Brothers and sisters, we can be hardheaded. Linda tells me that pretty often. We can be stubborn, we can be stiff-necked, but I believe the one cure is to not refuse Him who speaks. When He speaks, things happen. When He speaks, His great work is done. When He speaks, everything is made right. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if those did not escape who had refused Him who uttered the oracles on the earth, *much more* (a Hebrew phrase) we who turn away from Him who does so from heaven." If we turn away from Him, we will never make this journey to Jerusalem. It is impossible. These Hebrew believers were a testimony of it, turning back to shadows. How we need the Lord to help us in this matter.

It is not the only concluding vision. When you look at Revelation 21-22, you see this wonderful vision. I have already told you that it is at the end of the millennial kingdom, and it is the end of time, and it is all that is forever set before us for eternity. Think how kind God is that He showed us this while we are living and sojourning as strangers upon the earth that we have a record of what eternity will be like, what it will look like in part. We will never, never imagine all the things He has prepared for those who love Him, but we can get a taste.

### **The Last Concluding Vision**

Here is the last concluding vision of the Bible. I just want to read a few things.

Revelation 21:1 it says something wonderful. “And I saw a new heaven and new earth.” That is the key. John saw it. For us the Word of God is; Have you seen it? Are you looking for it? Has it dawned on you the glories that are prepared?

Then he says, “For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more.”

V. 2: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heavens from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

V. 9: “And there came one of the seven angels which had had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’”

Dear friends, I know you might disagree with me, but I believe this is all about vision. This is all about heavenly vision. The only way we can press towards Zion, the only way we can go towards Jerusalem is with vision. It is the key. What do you see? To John he was shown.

V. 10: “And he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.”

Just think of Psalm 87 again and the glories spoken of in her. Think of the glories that it begins to talk about: the twelve foundations, the gates. Just think of the walls, think of all those unbelievable beautiful precious stones in those walls. Just think of the size of Jerusalem. Think of the magnificence of Jerusalem which he reveals. He says, “It is 12,000 stadia.” Now most of you do not go to Lowe’s and buy a stadia tape, you will have difficulty if you do. But if you convert that stadia to miles, it is 1,400 miles long. Can you imagine a city 1,400 miles? That is like from Boston to Kansas City. But this glorious city is so magnificent; and it is 1,400 miles wide and believe it or not it is 1,400 miles high. That is glory, bigger than any city. Now I am an engineer, and most of you know that and put up with me. But when you look at a city in square miles, you do not think about the vertical miles because that is air. But this city is so glorious that it is three dimensional in glory. So we always think in square miles. This city of Richmond is not such a big city, but there is a city called Hulunbuir, China, and that city is 100,000 square miles. What a city! You better be glad you do not have an electric car and try to get to the end of that city. You understand that the city of Zion, the new Jerusalem, is 1,960,000 square miles. It is twenty times the size of Hulunbuir.

Brother Steve is on zoom, and he lives in this little place, Vermont. It is only 9,600 square miles, and the glory of this city is 1,960,000 square miles. How marvelous it is! What a sight of unspeakable glory! The walls are 216 feet high. I have designed a lot of walls in my career, but I have never designed a free standing wall 216 feet high. We call that a cantilevered wall. The first wall I did was twenty-five feet, and when I walked out, there was no building around it, and I thought, this is a big wall. But the glory of Jerusalem is so magnificent. The scene is so magnificent.



In chapters 21-22 it can hardly be contained. This is what we are journeying to. All is there, and the best of all is that the throne of God is in that city. The best of all is that the throne of the Lamb is in the city. The tree of life is in this city. The river of life is in this city. Can you imagine a more magnificent place to be? You might think, Orlando and Disney World is the place of wonder and magic, but it is not. It is Jerusalem with all of its glory, unspeakable glory.

I remember our friends from New York. If you are here from New York, please forgive me. New York people I think can be a little haughty. Now do not all charge the podium at once. They talk of New York, the City. They say, "The City!" That is all they will tell you. Where do you live? "The city," as if this is the greatest city in the world. I think people are moving out now, so I am not sure it is the greatest place in the world. But *the city* is Zion in God's eyes. The city is Jerusalem, and it is magnificent!

Linda and I went to the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC., and I would recommend that you go. You may not like it so much, but I thought it was magnificent. It is the largest personal residence in the United States, almost 200,000 square feet. It is enormous. There are forty-three bathrooms. Can you imagine if Linda made me clean that many bathrooms! There are three kitchens and 250 rooms. It is magnificent. And I remember when we were there, the artist who did the official pen and ink, which is only one, because they do not give it to three and tell one guy one thing and another lady another thing. The official pen and ink man was there, and he was a Christian. Linda and I found that out, and we had fellowship with him. I looked at that pen and ink, which I love, and it is beautiful. And I said, "This is magnificent. This place is magnificent." But I said, "Listen to me. There is something more magnificent." And I asked him would he please write on this copy that he signed for me, "whose builder and maker is God." How much more magnificent is this Jerusalem. He was touched by that and we left, and it hangs now in our kitchen over our breakfast table. It will always remind me that there is nothing as magnificent. There is nothing more marvelous. Even when you can build the most grand thing in the whole of the United States, there is nothing more marvelous than Zion in Jerusalem. That was the impression.

### **On Towards Jerusalem**

There is a phrase I would like to draw your attention to about Jerusalem concerning the Lord Jesus. It says, "On towards Jerusalem." Our Lord was progressing on towards Jerusalem. You remember in Matthew 16 He said, "I must go to Jerusalem." Journeying towards Jerusalem is an actual phrase about our Lord. He goes; He completes His great work, and because He completes that great work, Zion and Jerusalem is a certainty—not a probability. He did that work all alone. That is the thought.

### **Ones Who Saw that Vision**

I want to take a few moments and talk about ones who saw the vision. I am not just up here to tell you how glorious Jerusalem and Zion are. If we do, it can be helpful, but the key was just like John, you need to see it. And Abraham is such a good example; he is described as the father of faith. As a matter of fact I think it is astounding in Romans 4:1, 12 that he is described as "our father." Some people might think that is a little blasphemous, but he is the father of faith who went ahead of us. And we know when we read Hebrews 11 that he was one of the main ones

who exhibited real faith, but that was not his motivation. When we come to Hebrews 11:10, we see what motivated him. "And he journeyed as a sojourner in a promised land." He did not know where he was going, but it says this: "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God."

Brothers and sisters, I think that is the key. Are you looking for that city? Has that concluding vision so gripped your heart that you cannot look away. It fills your eyes, and you yearn for it and long for it. That is what I think explains Abraham. Remember, he never owned a piece of property. He finally bought one for his dear wife. Here was this man that was promised everything, but nothing would satisfy. Only that city, and he looked for it. I believe that is a clear message of Hebrews.

He saw Jerusalem. Many people might debate that, but he saw Melchizedek, the king. Abraham defeated the four kings and rescued Lot, who was always getting into trouble. I think he exhibits a Christian, a man of the flesh. Nevertheless, he rescued him, and then Melchizedek appeared, "priest of the Most High God." It does not say much about him except that he was king of righteousness, king of Salem which is Jerusalem. He saw something; he did not just imagine it. When he saw this king, this one who had no beginning and no end of days, when he saw this one that had no father and no mother, he saw the king of Salem, Jerusalem, and that was his motivating force. Not only that, he saw something else.

In Genesis 22 when he went to Mt. Moriah and God said, "Take now your son, your only son, the one you love, and sacrifice him upon the mountain that I shall show you." How Abraham was tested! All he ever wanted was an heir. He had the heir, and God said, "Sacrifice him!" But that day when he went to Mt. Moriah and the angel of the Lord, which was the Lord Jesus Himself, an Old Testament expression of the Lord Jesus Himself, held back that knife. He saw the One caught in the thicket, and knew God Himself would provide the offering. He saw Mt. Moriah which was the place of the building of the temple of God in Jerusalem. Mt. Moriah was the place where God's sacrifice would be made. That is what he saw; it was not Isaac.

I think of Nehemiah, who is an amazing man. I love the fact that at the family conference they said, "Well, he was just an ordinary man." I do not know about you, but that gives me much hope. He was the king's cupbearer, and he had it made in the palace of Shushan. He had anything he wanted except maybe he would get a bad taste of wine and he would exit. He would lay down his life for the king. But one day, he inquired of his friends and he said, "Come to me, and tell me about Jerusalem." And his friend and the others came and said, "The walls are burned; it is in ruins." And it broke his heart; he was never the same. The palace meant nothing to him. From that moment on it was only Jerusalem that filled his vision and that great work of God. He knew he could not do it. There was no question. So the first thing he does when he hears this devastating news is to fall down, and it says, "before the God of the heavens." Why is that? Because there was no testimony on the earth. He was no longer the God of the heavens and the earth; He was only the God of the heavens. But thank God, when his great work was completed, when God did it in a short time, He was God of the heavens and the earth.

I will never forget that my whole life was changed when I read Brother Sparks' book, "The Recovering of the Lord's Testimony in Fullness." I was changed forever. That was back in the early

seventies. I know you young guys do not like us old guys revisiting the glory days, but those days changed me forever. I saw something. I read that book, and this world no longer meant what it had meant to me. Jerusalem, that glory that He was after filled my thoughts and heart. And it did the same for Linda and for Jessica, my daughter, many years later. I will never forget Brother Kaung sharing in December 1973 those three messages on Nehemiah when he visited Richmond, and I will never forget that word. Nehemiah's life was uprooted, and all that he had, which was enormous, no longer meant anything to him. What meant everything to him was God's great work in Jerusalem.

### **The Effect of The Vision**

What about the effect of this vision? Clearly, it affected Abraham. Clearly, it affected Nehemiah. The question is will it affect us? Will it have the same kind of impact? I always remember Lance, in his eloquent way of speaking, would quote to us and also Brother Kaung, from Proverbs 29:18 (King James): "Where there is no vision the people perish." Or in Darby, "Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint." And then I think what happens to the people of God is that they become their own king and their own master. It is their own life and their own future and their own family. Now I am not against any of those things. I love chasing my grandchildren around. I do not know if they love it, but I love it. But here are ones who were changed. It says in Judges the last verse; "In those days there was no king in Israel; and every man did what was right in his own eyes." I think in some ways we are living in the days of Judges. It is not what God wants; it is not His great work. Everyone is doing what they think is right, and we have become gods to ourselves. May the Lord deliver us.

This is the burden that the Lord has laid on my heart. I think of II Chronicles 16:9 which is about Asa, King of Judah, who was a bad man. And it was about judgment, but it says something spectacular: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth looking for ones that He can make strong." I believe those that see this concluding vision are the ones our Lord is looking for. I believe these are just a few examples of what the Lord is looking for. And what He will say in the end in Psalm 87:2, 5, 6 is what the effect will be. "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob...And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself shall establish her." Isn't that encouraging! "Jehovah will count, when he inscribeth the peoples, This man was born there. Selah."

Will the Lord say of you and me in the end, "you were born there?" Zion was your home; Jerusalem was your dwelling. You now have a new vocation. You are involved in His great work, and that I believe is the story about this concluding vision.

*Father, we come to You knowing full well we cannot explain these grand things, unexplainable for humans. But the Holy Spirit can explain it. He can write these things into our hearts. He can cause us to be people who know this concluding vision and make it our vocation. Lord, You can cause us to be not only those who know it, but the people who see it, that are looking for it, that are longing for it, that are living in it. And only You can do this precious great work, but You are looking for ones, ordinary men and women, who can join You in this great work. May You do that. We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.*