

The God of the Mountains (8)

The Mount of Olives

Of the numerous mountains associated with the life of the Lord Jesus while He was here, the Mount of Olives stands paramount as central to His life and ministry. It was a place that our blessed Lord often resorted to, where He spent hours in communion with His heavenly Father and in prayer and intercession. There is much we could learn from the prayer life of the Lord Jesus. Although He was the Son of God and all things were known to Him, while He sojourned here upon this earth, He was ever dependent on His God.

Luke records, *“in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount called the mount of Olives”* (Luke 21:37). John tells us, *“every man went unto his own house, Jesus went to the mount of Olives”* (Jn. 7:53-8:1).

It was from the mount of Olives the Lord sent His disciples to bring the colt tied, whereon yet never man sat, and it was at the descent of the mount of Olives that the multitude met Him as He made His way into Jerusalem. They began to praise the Lord saying, *“Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest”* Matt. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-41).

As the Lord Jesus left the precincts of the temple for the last time, prior to His death, one of the disciples called His attention to the magnificence of its stones and structure. At that time, the Lord Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, saying, *“seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down”*.

As He sat upon The Mount of Olives, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him of the signs that would indicate the fulfillment of these things. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples about what He referred to as *“the beginning of sorrows”*, the signs that would precede His coming in glory, the tribulation of the last days, and the judgments that would accompany His coming (Matt. 24; Mk. 13).

In the town of Bethany, which some suggest was on the east side of the Mount of Olives, was a home where the Lord Jesus often visited. It was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Jn. 11:1). Interestingly, the word, *“Bethany”*, means, *“house of affliction”*, yet, in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, the Lord Jesus found rest and refreshment.

On one occasion in that house, Martha was cumbered about much serving as she prepared a meal for their honoured guest. Mary chose the better part and sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus and heard His word (Luke 10:38-42). What a lesson for us as those who belong to Him.

If we are going to be effective in service for Him, we must first know something of sitting at His feet. Occupation with Him, sitting at His feet and hearing His Word will prepare us for service. In the Old Testament, the priests were first presented to the Lord, before they went out to serve (Ex. 28:1; Lev. 7:35; Num. 3:6).

It was in the house at Bethany that they made a supper for the Lord Jesus. It was on that occasion that Mary took a pound of spikenard, a very costly ointment and anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The odour of the ointment filled the house (Jn. 12:1-7). This reminds us of the fragrant life of the Lord Jesus.

It also reminds us of the tremendous value and worth of the Saviour. Mary had kept the ointment for this occasion, to anoint His body for burial. He was the sole and supreme object of her affection. She would never again have this opportunity. Let us, as those who have been redeemed by His precious blood, reserve our affection and devotion for Him alone and seek to worship Him, on every occasion possible.

When King David fled from Absalom, crossing the brook, Kidron, *he went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he when went up”* (2 Sam. 15:30). The Lord Jesus, having sung a hymn with His disciples *“went out into the mount of Olives”* (Matt. 26:30). Crossing the brook Cedron (Kidron), He entered with His disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane. The name, *“Gethsemane”* means, *“the place of the oil press”*. John tells us that He often resorted there (Jn. 18:2). But there was never an occasion like the one before Him now.

It was there in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the anticipation of the cross and all that lay before Him, the Son of God experienced such agony of soul, that His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). He prayed that if it were possible the cup that lay before Him might be removed from Him (Matt. 26:39). Nevertheless, in total devotion and in subjection to the will of His heavenly Father and in immeasurable love to you and me, He could say, *“the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?”* (Jn. 18:11).

We shall never be able to comprehend the agony of His holy soul, as He contemplated bearing our sins and the punishment our sins deserved. Nor will we ever comprehend His suffering for sin on the cross. Isaiah tells us, *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”* (Isa. 53:5-6).

It was from the mount of Olives that the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:12). How fitting that Luke records that He led His disciples out as far as to Bethany, lifted up His hands and blessed them and was parted from them and was carried up into heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

When He returns He shall stand with His feet upon the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). The Psalmist records, *“He shall drink of the brook in the way”* (Ps. 110:7).

How touching and how hallowed then, the scenes that Olivet brings before us in contemplation of the life of the Lord Jesus in all that He experienced in His earthly ministry here below, and in contemplation of His ascension into Heaven and His coming again.

*We trace the steps our Lord has trod,
While here, upon this earth;
E'er in communion with His God;
E'en from His holy birth.*

*On mountain top, where oft He prayed,
Long, long, 'til break of day;
Nor ever from the pathway strayed;
That e'er before Him lay.*

*With anguished soul, doth cross the brook,
Which David crossed before;
With solemn gaze we reverent look,
His sorrows to explore.*

*Gethsemane, that sacred ground,
Is stained with blood-like sweat;
While there, prostrate, our Lord is found,
O, blessed Olivet.*

*From thence to yonder Calvary,
The Christ of God is led;
And there, whilst hanging on the tree,
For sins His blood is shed.*

*From Olivet, to Heav'n raised,
To take His rightful place;
Forever let His name be praised,
Who saved us by His grace.*

*To that same mount, He'll come to reign,
And plant His pierced feet;
There, shall through endless years remain;
A holy fragrance, sweet.*

Bernie Payne