

THE MOUNTAIN REMOVED

A SERMON

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“Who are you O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting’s, crying Grace, grace unto it.” Zechariah 4:7

IN the return of the Jews from Babylon they were taught their need of the interposing hand of the Lord. And when they were hindered twenty-one years in building the temple, it was to teach them the same lesson that “Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.” None but the Lord could turn the hearts of their enemies, or repel those enemies, overturn their plans, defeat their schemes, and at the same time stir up his own people to feel an interest in their re-establishment in their land. We see how cold and indifferent they became upon this subject of the rebuilding and completing of the temple. But the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah was much blessed, and stirred them up greatly. The apostle may well say, therefore, in relation to the preaching of the gospel, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” And if the minister be kept pretty lively in the things of God, pretty earnestly and pretty constantly devoted to them, the people cannot be very, very dead; because it is what they hear from time to time that has a tendency to remind them that all their real interest lies in eternal things. “Seek you first the kingdom of God” let that be the main thing, the first thing, the most important thing, the one thing needful; and then the Lord Jesus Christ, in connection with these words, speaking as he is of the kind providence of the Lord, for he says, “Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things;” then he adds, “And all these things shall be added unto you.” We as a people have found it so, as well as other churches and other congregations. And each Christian finds it so that the more he is enabled to look to the Lord and recognize his hand, the more he will see the truth of these words in his own experience.

Now the combined forces of the adversary, together with their policies and doings, are here compared to a formidable mountain. “Who are you, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” There are four things that I wish concisely to notice this afternoon in our text. First, *the impediment*; “Who are you, O great mountain?” Secondly, *that person by whom it was to become a plain, Zerubbabel*. Thirdly, *the completeness of the work*; “he shall bring forth

the headstone thereof with shouting's." Fourthly and lastly, *the blessing upon blessing that shall follow this completeness*; where we see the beauty of the repetition that I shall more particularly notice when I come to that part.

First, then, *the impediment*. This mountain denoted the combined powers against the re-establishment of the Jews in their land, and becomes a figure of the whole power of Satan. Satan is here represented as a Great Mountain. This, of course, will include sin, and error, and everything that has stood in the way of the salvation of men. The Lord has been pleased to record these things in such language that it should be applicable to the circumstances of his people down to the end of time. Now there are four things, to my mind, which this mountain seems to say; and if we can get at these four things clearly, we shall then see the meaning of the words, "Who are you, O great mountain?" that it means the whole mountain of sin and error, that stands in the way of the salvation of souls. This mountain seems to say, first, the temple shall not be built. Secondly, it seems to say that God shall not dwell with man and man with God. Thirdly, it seems to say, and their captivity shall not be turned. Fourthly, it seems to say that they shall not have a land of their own in which to dwell. First, it seems to say that the temple shall not be built. Now there will not be the slightest difficulty in applying this to our individual experience. God had chosen the place where the temple was to be built that he would inhabit. That is self-evident. So, he has chosen the place where our souls shall be built up for eternity, and that place is the mediational work of his dear Son. Hence the necessity of our being brought to see and feel that "other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid, Christ Jesus the Lord." And we have to rest upon this foundation a tremendous weight; the weight of the value of our souls; and the soul in value is a vast weight; we have to rest upon this foundation the weight of all our hope for time and for eternity. Let us hear what the prophet Isaiah said of this foundation or rather, the Lord by him. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Now, then, Jesus Christ was tried through all his life, but never once gave way. He was tried on the day on which he was crucified, in a way man was never tried. He was tried from hell, from earth, from heaven, from our sins; yet, wonder, O heaven! And be astonished, O earth! He never gave way, committed not one error, fell not into one mistake. He knew every moment where he was. And when he came to the cross, and deep called unto deep at the noise of Jehovah's waterspouts, and all the waves and billows of omnipotent wrath concentrated upon him, yet these many waters could not quench love, neither could those floods drown it. He rose triumphant from the dead, unscathed, undefiled, uncorrupted, and unspotted. "You will not suffer your Holy One to see corruption." Now then this is the foundation upon which we are to rest, this tried stone, this sure foundation. Oh sinner, sinner, never think of any hope for eternity but by the infinite efficacy of the blood of Christ. Never think of any hope for eternity in anything but that which is eternal. His one offering is eternal; his righteousness is eternal; his person is eternal; his salvation is eternal the redemption he has wrought is eternal redemption. Here you may lean, here you may rest, and here you may walk with full confidence that the Lord will overturn every mountain, Your sins may be mountains; or, to speak of them in the singular, in their combined form they are a tremendous mountain, that may drive you down to eternal perdition; but the dear Redeemer has put forth his hand and has overturned the mountain of sin by the roots, and now "the sin of Judah may be sought for, but they shall not be found." Do you not see the absurdity of hoping for eternal life on the ground of anything that is not itself eternal? In order to have eternal life, in order to have eternal light, in order to have eternal liberty, in order to have eternal joy and eternal glory, you must rest upon that that is eternal. Now, then, Jesus Christ is the everlasting foundation. Ah, says Satan, you shall not build there. It

would occupy, and not profitably either, a great part of your time were I here to stop and point out the thousands of false foundations that men lay and upon which they build. But no one can build upon any foundation but the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, then, if you are brought to know that his work is perfect, if this is your hope, if you stand fast by that, you will meet from your own heart, from circumstances, and peradventure from some of your fellow creatures, even in this highly educated and highly civilized land, with a great deal of opposition; and Satan will seem to say to you, You shall not be built up in that faith that makes it all of grace; you shall not be built up in that faith called the faith of God's elect. You shall not be built up in that faith that sides with an everlasting covenant; you shall not be built up in that faith that sides with eternal election. This is what the mountain seemed to say. But before Zerubbabel it became a plain. Just so now; when the dear Savior steps in, and you at all enjoy his presence, the opposition loses its force, and you feel that you are founded upon that rock. Ah, you may say, the rains are descending too late; the winds are blowing too late; the flood is rising too late; I am already founded upon a rock, and God himself is my life, he is my strength, he is my salvation; of whom shall I be afraid? I think this is one thing fairly implied here, that hindrance that would prevent us from building in the right place, from building in the right way, from building upon that which is eternal for eternal things. We have a Savior that is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. The Old Testament saints, in contrast to their temporary dispensation, looked forward with vast delight to the coming in of the eternal One, to the coming in of the eternal priesthood, of the eternal glory, of the eternal kingdom, of the better Canaan, of the better world. "That they which are called," said the apostle, "under Christ's priesthood might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

The second thing this mountain seems to say is, God shall not dwell with man nor man with God. For the Lord dwelt with men by that temple as a type of his dwelling with us by Christ Jesus. He dwelt with men by that temple, and men thus dwelt with him. What shall I say upon this? for I am speaking more of the things themselves than of the opposition. See the suitability of the way. First, in dwelling with God, and God dwelling with you by the temple, the very first thing is that of sacrifice. Here am I, a sinner; how am I to approach the holy temple? How am I to dwell in that temple? How am I to dwell with God, and God dwell with me? Ah, there is the sacrifice. I draw near, and I see the sacrifice; I see the fire descend upon the sacrifice; I see the sacrifice accepted; and I ask, is there any more fire? No; the wrath is gone; Jesus endured the whole; there is no more wrath, no more curse, and no more death. Here, then, God can and God does dwell with man. Is it any wonder that the apostle Peter, concerning the Savior, should say, "Unto you that believe he is precious"? We then go a little farther, and we find the priest goes annually into the holy of holies (as a type of Christ entering heaven once), and representing the people as he went in. See what a beautiful part this is. When the priest went in, he represented by his breastplate the people, and represented them; that which the sacrifice had made them. The sacrifice had made them sinless, that is, in that covenant sense. Jesus Christ's sacrifice makes his people sinless. So that the priest took no sin with him into the holy of holies, you can understand that; he went in with the blood. That sacrifice had taken all the sin away and he went in and represented the people there as free from sin as the sacrifice could make them. So, Jesus Christ has entered into heaven with his own blood, and represents the people as holy as his sacrifice can make them. The priest took no accusation with him, nor a shadow of accusation; he took no sin with him into the holy of holies; so that if the priest had brought some sin out with him, he must have got it from God, and that would simply be an impossibility, because the devil is the author of sin, and not God; nothing can come from God but that which is in accordance with his own infinite purity and eternal perfection.

See what a beautiful type this is of Christ. He entered into the holy of holies; and what said the apostle? "He shall come the second time without sin unto salvation." And what was the priest's reappearance but that described in the 6th of Numbers? He reappeared, and when he reappeared, he had nothing but blessing for the people. So, the Lord Jesus Christ, when he left this world, he lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples; and we are there assured that he will come in the like manner. He went away blessing, and he will return blessing. Here, then, the mountain that hindered our building where the Lord intended, we should build is become a plain; the mountain that stood between us and God is thus put away by the work of Christ; God comes to us, and we come to God. "We have boldness by the blood of Jesus to enter into the holy of holies;" and the Savior says, "When you pray, say, Our Father." Here we are brought into the very center of his love; here we are brought into the riches of his grace, and here we are brought into the eternity of his mercy. O, then, this mountain of sin is thus overturned; we are brought to build where the Lord intended, we should build, and we are brought to dwell where the Lord intended, we should dwell. He leave his Zion? No, no; he has chosen it, and desired it for his habitation; "This is my rest forever."

Then, thirdly, this mountain seemed to say that their captivity should not be turned; that they should still remain contented with Babylon, contented without this foundation, contented without this presence of the blessed God. Hence the testimony, "All the earth sits still, and is at rest." Oh, unhappy wretches that we were! There was a time when we were content with this world; there was a time when we were content to know nothing of Jesus; there was when we were quite content to be without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. And if anyone from the kindest of feelings said a word to us about the truths of the gospel, our answer in substance was, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of your ways." This mountain hid from us the light of heaven, this mountain of sin. But he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shone into our hearts, and we began to see what we were contented with; we began to see that we were contented with our own damnation, though we did not know it; that we were contented with Satan, contented with sin, contented with death, contented with hell, as though we had made a very covenant with death and hell. But God in his mercy woke us up, and revealed unto us what the Savior had done. "The redeemed of the Lord shall return." The man for whom the price was paid; the man for whom the blood was shed; the man for whom the victory was wrought; the man for whom the Savior groaned, and bled, and bowed his head, that man shall, in God's appointed time, feel the arrow of conviction, he shall feel his lost condition; his face shall be turned toward Zion, and he and others like him will say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." His captivity begins to be turned; God has opened his eyes; sin cannot close his eyes now. God has made him concerned; Satan can find no means now of making him unconcerned again as he was before. God has given him a praying heart, a desire for God, longings for God, thirsting's for godliness; he is born of God; he is a newborn babe; he has a new existence; he has new feelings, new wants, new desires; his captivity begins to be turned. By and by, when the dear Redeemer shall come, and set that soul free, he will say, Oh, now is my mouth filled with laughter, and my tongue with singing; now my sins and sorrows are gone like a dream; now I am indeed glad, because the Lord has done great things for me. Ah, my hearer, if the Savior had not turned the captivity for you, he never would have turned the captivity in you; and if he had not done it for you, you would not be willing to build upon this foundation; you would not be willing to dwell with God, nor willing for God to dwell with you.

The fourth thing this mountain seems to say is, the people shall not have the land wherein they are to dwell alone. Ah, this severing from all others has been more opposed by Satan than anything else. As soon as ever Satan sees a little field of wheat, he says, I will sow some tares there. They are rather too particular there; I must sow the seed of false charity there; I don't like them dwelling alone. There was a prediction that just as God became their all and in all they should dwell alone. We will just look at the way in which they dwell alone, and which the enemy has ever opposed. The 33rd of Deuteronomy will show the way in which the people dwell alone. There is a great mountainous impediment to this. Hence the boast of some that they do not belong to any sect; whereas they belong to the sect that belongs to no sect; that is the sect they belong to. Now the 33rd of Deuteronomy will show how the people dwell alone; and if you are brought to what is there set forth, then you have overcome also in this sense; so that in this fourfold sense you are a conqueror. How is it? "The eternal God," God in his eternity, "is your refuge;" and if God in his eternity becomes my refuge, why, I want no other; from everlasting virtually, he is my refuge; while time rolls on and to everlasting, God in Christ Jesus is my refuge. I am going now to show how you dwell alone. "And underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." Ah, then, when God comes in in the eternity of his power, and thrusts the enemy out, which he did when Christ died, and which he does when he regenerates the soul, "Israel then," notice the little adverb *then*, "Israel then shall dwell", in *danger* alone. That's how it ought to read, then Israel shall dwell in *danger* alone. Why ought it to read, like that? Why, because people say that the great doctrines of the Bible are dangerous doctrines. Man's account of those doctrines and God's account are very different. What do we read here? "Israel then shall dwell *in safety* alone;" for the enemy is thus thrust out. And there is something even better than that. What, better than the enemy being thrust out? Yes. What is that? Destroyed. Not only is Satan cast out, but his power is destroyed; sin and death destroyed; death swallowed up in victory. "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone." Ah, I dare say it will be a dry place; those high doctrines are very dry. They may be to you; but they are not to those that know them, no. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also, his heavens", the glorious truths of the gospel, "shall drop down dew. Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency! and your enemies shall be found liars unto you; and you shall tread upon their high places." "Who are you, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain;" and by and by the last part of this mountain will be gone, when the saying shall be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory;" when the body shall rise triumphant from the dead. Thus, then, by the mercy of the Lord we overcome the delusion of false foundations, and are brought to build upon the right foundation; by the mercy of the Lord we overcome erroneous ways, and are brought into that way where God is to be found, and that is by the perfect work of his dear Son; by the mercy of the Lord our captivity is turned, for us to be turned back again into captivity no more forever; and by the mercy of the Lord we have a place alone to dwell in. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Now I like the Wesleyans and the low doctrine people as people, and hope many of them have the grace of God in their hearts; but they will be very much altered in some respects before they come into this discriminating land. Now a Wesleyan minister some years ago said to me, "Brother", he would call me "Brother," "Brother," he said, "it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity." "Well," I said, "it is but you see we don't dwell in the same place; therefore, we can't talk much about it." "Not dwell in the same place, sir?" "No," I said, "I dwell in electing grace." "Ah, that's too high for me." "I dwell in a covenant ordered in all things and sure." "Ah, I don't trouble myself about that." "Well," I said, "I told you we didn't dwell in the

same place I dwell in the eternal perfection of Christ Jesus, and in the immutability of God's counsel." "Well," he said, "I believe in Christ." "Ah, but what sort of a Christ? One that holds you up today and lets you fall tomorrow. That's not my Jesus Christ." So, it is good, therefore, for brethren to dwell together in unity; but they must dwell there first. It is not unity for me to dwell in Free Grace Street, and you to dwell in Free Will Street; the first belonging to Zion, and the second to Babylon. How can we talk about unity when we are opposed the one to the other? So, then, "Israel shall dwell alone," severed from all other people. Well, that is very selfish, say some, and very unkind. Stop, don't you be too fast. Is there a Naaman? What do we say? Now, Naaman, we dwell alone; you must not come here? No, we don't say so; we say, we have a river that if you will wash in you will get rid of your rosery, and we will receive you. Does Ruth come? Do we say to her, well, we dwell alone, and we can't have you? No; we will receive you; and all that, like you, come to the true God. "The Lord recompense your work, and a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you are come to trust." The Jews of old did not understand this. Hence the long faces with which some came to Peter; as long faces they came to Peter as though he had been a friend of Rahab, they could not have pulled longer faces. We have heard something of you, Peter. What have you heard? Why, we hear you have been preaching to the Gentiles. We are not going to receive those wretches. Don't you know we live alone? Don't you know we dwell alone? I know we do, and they are to dwell with us. Our city has twelve gates, and we are not to shut the Gentiles out, but to receive every one that flies for refuge to the city of God. And so, he expounded in order unto them, and they were thoroughly beaten; and he concluded by saying, "What was I, that I could withstand God?" "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." "Israel shall dwell alone," they shall dwell in the truth. Why, if the church of God is to hold fast God's truth, and if the ministers of truth should cease to be faithful, there would not be a minister for a thoroughly convinced sinner to hear. No man thoroughly convinced of his condition, and seeing what a poor lost creature he is, could ever hear a minister that does not come down to that sinner in the depths of his necessity, and roll in the mercy of the blessed God by the perfection of Christ, the sovereignty of his eternal truth. Hence our text is a text of certainty. "Who are you, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain."

Secondly, then, I proceed to notice *the person by whom it was to become a plain, Zerubbabel*. And why by him? Simply because he was the man that God made choice of, and therefore, God was with him. I will lay no stress upon the etymological meaning of the word Zerubbabel, because the learned differ very much as to the meaning of the word; and so, passing by that, we will take Zerubbabel as a beautiful type of the Savior. Zerubbabel stands, as you are aware, in the genealogical line in the list of Matthew from which the Savior descended. Zerubbabel in the first chapter of the New Testament; so is the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be a very poor chapter if he were not. I can never get on at all with those chapters where Jesus Christ is not. What, isn't he in some of them? No. "Turn you, turn you; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" I can never get on with that chapter. I read it for instruction, but Jesus Christ is not there; that chapter belongs to the old covenant. His new covenant children shall never die. Now the Lord had chosen Zerubbabel, and therefore was with him. How God was with Jesus Christ! There words cannot express it in the way I could wish, but there is something very pleasing in seeing the great God so interested in the Lord Jesus Christ when he was in his humiliation. See what care the Lord took of the Savior in his infancy; see what care he took of him all through his life and see the many tokens of it when he came to die, expressive of the truth of the Savior's words, that "I am not alone; my Father is with

me.” He made his grave with the wicked, but he was not buried with the wicked; and many other things which I have not now time to stop to notice. It is then before Jesus Christ that this mountain shall become a plain. Then Zerubbabel not only represents Christ, but he also represents every true Christian as well. You know what the Savior says, “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say, unto this mountain, be moved from here to the other place; and it shall move.” Precious faith in the Christian lays hold of Jesus Christ, and in laying hold of him how many mountains have some of you overturned in your time! and you will a great many more. It does not matter how great your troubles are, God is greater; it does not matter how wise your enemies are, God is wiser; it does not matter how determined they are, God is more determined; it does not matter whether you are aware of their craftiness, God is aware of it, he perceives their craftiness. I have found unspeakable advantage in this secret trusting in the Lord, watching his hand, and waiting for him. “Pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.”

But I must hasten to notice, thirdly, *the completeness of the work*; “he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting’s.” You always notice that everything of great importance the Lord has very much delighted in the completion of. He rejoiced when he had completed the creation, and you will always find in the circumstantial completion of things that such occasions were occasions of rejoicing, to show not only the advantage which the people recognized, but to show the delight the Lord had in the completion thereof. When the ark was finished it is said of Noah, “*The Lord* shut him in.” Now Noah could have shut the door; why did not Noah shut the door? There are several reasons that suggest themselves; but I will name one that would naturally suggest itself why Noah did not shut the door; and that would be this, that the creatures kept coming into the ark one after another, one after another, and Noah would not know when the last was in. Therefore, as long as there were any coming, he would not shut the door. The Lord knew when all were in that he intended to be in; and when all were in, he shut the door. So, it will be; the time will come, the last great day: when the door of mercy will be forever closed, the last sinner gathered in, the last sheep brought into the fold; then will the door be shut. Thus, we read, “They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.” Then again, the Lord shutting the door would make Noah feel his safety. It is the Lord that has put me here. So, then, completion the Lord delights in. Then shall I remind you of the completeness of the victory over the Egyptians, when the Israelites stood on opposite shore of the Red Sea, how they rejoiced and shouted there in the completeness of the victory? Shall I remind you of the completing of the tabernacle, how it was filled with the Lord's glory? And we hope that this tabernacle, as far as its debt is concerned, will be completed this evening (there is a note at the bottom of the sermon. The debt was paid with 50 pounds to spare). I think the people are determined upon it, praying to complete it in the same spirit as that in which it was begun. We had indeed a great mountain; and we hope this evening to have the unutterable pleasure of seeing the last particle of the mountain swept forever away, and the place as good as free as long as the lease shall last, pretty well a hundred years. Then, again, need I remind you of the completing of Solomon's temple? See how the glory of the Lord filled the house. Then to remind you of the dear Savior's words in the 19th of John, “It is finished.” And then to remind you that “he that has begun the good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”

And now the last part, the blessing upon blessing that shall follow this completeness; “crying, Grace, grace unto it.” This appears to me to be exactly suited to our feelings and to our

circumstances as a church and congregation. We will suppose that this evening you pay off the whole of the debt, and that the building is in this sense completed; what will you want then after that? Just what my text presents, "Grace, grace." It appears to me to be beautifully expressive. Now, Lord, you have given us this noble building; in your providence you have enabled your people to meet every demand, sweep away every debt, set themselves free; now, Lord, we want grace, grace upon grace; grace upon grace; now we shall want a double portion of grace. Grant, Lord, that our minister may be more devoted to you; that he may preach better, with more power, with more usefulness; that there may be more conversions of sinners, more rejoicings among the saints; that there may be more undoing of the heavy burdens, that there may be more healing times, more strengthening and saving times; and that we from time to time here may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. "Grace, grace unto it." And I would just say in conclusion, that if you take the literal temple and that which followed the completion of it, it will give a beautiful representation of what we pray may follow the completion of this. First, there was the presence of the Lord. He promised to give peace in that place. Can we have a greater grace than this? "Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces." Secondly, there was an established priesthood. So, we pray here often to see our great High Priest, often to contemplate the wonders of our great Melchizedek, and from time to time rejoice in his dear name, and the efficacy of his blood. Thirdly, there was a plentiful country, yielding all manner of store. God grant that the gospel here may be to our souls as a plentiful country. Will not that be a grace also? Here may the thirsty be refreshed, the hungry be fed, the heavy-hearted be cheered, prisoners be set free. Then the last grace I mention was that of safety. "Abide by the Lord your God, and you shall dwell in your land safely." What has the Lord done for dear old England in this! What wholesome laws we have! what protection we enjoy, providentially so. The Lord help us to prize the same, to enjoy the same, and to rejoice, even in this sense, in the safety we have. But then there is another safety that is even better than this, namely, the safety of our souls. "He shall keep you from all evil," all fatal evil; "he shall preserve your soul." Thus, it is grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing. The Lord has blessed us, does bless us, and we have every reason to believe he will bless us. And we pray also that our sister churches may prosper more and more. There is a great talk in our day about the abounding's of Catholicism and Puseyism, and books are written to impress upon our minds the evils of those systems. So far so good; say nothing against that. But we want to apply the remedy. I know what the remedy is for Catholicism and Puseyism; but the great difficulty is the application of that remedy.