

# Clarence Larkin's mountain peaks of prophecy

by Douglas E. Cox

## The Mountains of Prophecy

Clarence Larkin (1850-1924) published a series of charts on prophecy that promoted the premillennial view of Scripture, and dispensationalism. In his chart, "The Mountain Peaks of Prophecy," shown in Figure 1, a larger-than-life, bearded figure stands on a plain at the left, looking towards the right. The scene is a timeline, representing the progression of time from left to right. The bearded person clearly sees the birth of Jesus, Calvary, the descent of the holy Spirit at Pentecost, which are represented by symbols upon the top of a mountain ridge which represents the coming of Christ in the first century. Behind the first range of mountains is a valley that is hidden from the view of the bearded prophet. In the middle of the valley, called the Valley of the Church, there is a church building, that is obviously meant to represent the Christian church. A note states that the prophets did not see this. Beyond the Valley of the Church, there is another range of mountains, representing events at the end of the age, and the return of Christ. Antichrist stands near the summit. Beyond him, over the mount of Olives, is an image of the sun, and farther beyond it another valley, called the Millennial Valley. A circle floating above the valley contains the kingdom of God, which is visible to the prophet. At the far right, suspended in the air, are the New Jerusalem and the new earth.

What do mountains represent in this graphic? The two prominent mountain ranges represent the two advents; one in the first century, and the other just before the Millennium.

## A one-eyed perspective

Larkin's chart shown in Figure 1 depicts all the prophetic revelations of the OT as the point of view of one individual, a giant in the garb of a prophet. In Scripture, prophetic revelations were given to people in all walks of life, at different times, in various countries. Each one provided a unique perspective on future events. They include Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, all the other prophets, and many saints besides. Thus the perspective of prophecy is not that of a single person. The figure depicted in the chart is representative of a human point of view, which is limited, and partial. The prophets wrote, not their own, but words inspired by the Spirit of Christ. A panoramic view of prophecy was provided by Jesus in the Olivet

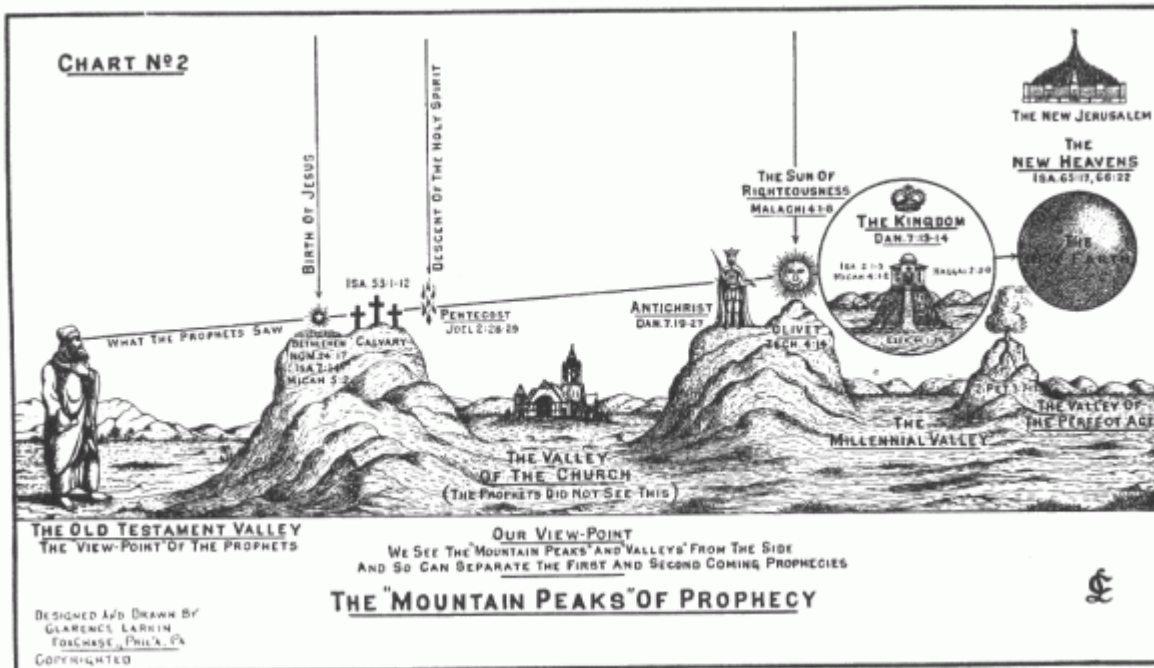


Figure 1: Clarence Larkin's "The Mountain Peaks of Prophecy"

Discourse. It can hardly be said that Jesus was ignorant about the future of the church he said he would build. If that is true, what was the point of his parables?

In the book of Revelation, John's prophecies incorporate lots of material from the Old Testament. In Hebrews, the prophets and saints are collectively called a great "cloud of witnesses." [Hebrews 12:1]

### Did the prophets see the church age?

James said, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." [Acts 15:16] By itself, this demolishes dispensationalism. Larkin's chart attempts to portray the church age as unforeseen by the prophets, a "parenthesis" in God's plan, as dispensationalist Harry A. Ironside called it.

James applied a prophecy found in Amos 9, about restoring the house of David, to the church. If James was right, Larkin's chart is incorrect. The apostle Peter said that the prophets ministered "unto us," meaning the church. [1 Peter 1:9-12] The present age of the church is prominently featured in prophecy, but this is hidden from some. [Daniel 12:10] Larkin's chart was designed to promote dispensationalism, and does not represent a true picture of things.

## Jerusalem was raised up

In the New Testament, Jerusalem was raised up, as Isaiah foretold, in Isaiah 2:1-3, above the hills. This happened when Jesus ascended to heaven. John said God and the Lamb are the temple of the holy city. Paul referred to "the Jerusalem which is above," in Galatians 4:26. Hebrews 12:22 says, "Ye are come to mount Sion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem." The saints in every age, in every location, and of every nation, have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

In Larkin's chart, the New Jerusalem should be located not at the far right, but at the beginning of the church age. Similarly the kingdom of God should correspond to the ascent of Jesus to heaven, not removed to an age following the present church age. The chart seems to imply that the whole corpus of prophecy is defective, and in need of the enlightenment that is provided by dispensationalism. Larkin represents his chart as a "view from the side." In fact, prophecy provides *a view from above*, a divine perspective.

## Mountains and the gospel

Jacob associated mountains and hills with spiritual blessings, when he blessed Joseph. The mountains are both durable, and high. Jacob said that his blessings extended to "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." His blessings were eternal, and spiritual in nature. This suggests how we may interpret the metaphorical mountains and hills in other scriptures.

Genesis 49:26

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

The covenant given at Sinai is represented by mount Sinai. Promises, prophecies and revelations about the gospel are represented by mountains. High mountains are associated with profound spiritual revelations in Ezekiel 40:2, and Revelation 21:10. In Isaiah, lofty thoughts are related to height above the earth; God says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." [Isaiah 55:9]

Below, some examples of prophecies that refer to mountains are listed, and their explanations.

In Daniel 2:35, a stone cut out from a mountain without hands destroys the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The stone grows into a mountain which fills the earth. The stone represents Jesus and the kingdom which he established.

Isaiah 2:2 says the mountain of the Lord's house will be established in the top of the mountains, above the hills. This was fulfilled when Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection. His saints have come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are raised up and sit together in heavenly places, Paul said in Ephesians 2.

Isaiah 40:4 says that every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low . . . the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This message was also preached by John the Baptist. [Luke 3:5] The promise of the land to Israel was one of the mountains "made low" because of the Gospel; the literal land was relegated to the status of a

mere shadow of something “better,” the better country mentioned in Hebrews 11:16. God’s glory is revealed when the spiritual meaning of the land promise is understood.

In Zechariah 14:4 the mount of Olives cleaves in the midst; half the mountain moves north, and the other half moves south, forming a wide valley between. The Mount of Olives represents the Olivet Discourse Jesus gave to his disciples. The mountain being cleaved and two halves moving apart depict two opposite, contradictory interpretations that are commonly applied to the Olivet Discourse, that of Preterism, and that of futurism and dispensationalism.

Revelation 6:14 says mountains and islands are moved out of their places. Mountains represent promises, blessings, and prophecies; mountains moved out of their places depict prophecy being misinterpreted; the promises and blessings of the gospel are applied to the wrong people, at the wrong time.

In Joel 3:18, and Amos 9:13, mountains drop wine. This figure depicts prophecies being given a new, fresh interpretation. Jesus compared his teachings to wine.

In Isaiah 34:3, God’s enemies are slain, and mountains are melted with their blood. The mysteries of prophecy, properly understood, confound those who promote wrong interpretations.