

Mountains in Prophecy

Douglas Cox

December 14, 2012

Contents

Contents	i
Mountains in Prophecy	1
Isaiah's threshing sledge	1
Threshing the mountains	4
A way in the mountains	11
Mountains made low	12
Prophetic mountains and time	16
Mountains skip like rams	16
A mountain that grows	17
Vertical earth movements	17
Mountains made low, valleys filled	18
Land around Jerusalem becomes a plain	19
Horizontal earth movements	19
Mountains and islands are moved from their places	20
The mountains are not found	21
Seeking lost mountains	22
The symbolic mountains of Ezekiel 34	24
The mountains of Ezekiel 36:1-15	26
Strange things happen to mountains	32
The resting place	34
How are mountains connected with the gospel?	37
Jesus said, flee to the mountains	39
The feet of them that bring good tidings	42
Mountains and rivers of peace	45

Mountains in Prophecy

Copyright © 2012 by Douglas E. Cox¹

Isaiah's threshing sledge

Mountains are to be threshed, in a prophecy of Isaiah. The saints are the "threshing sledge."

Isaiah 41:15-16 NIV

"See, I will make you into a threshing sledge,
new and sharp, with many teeth.
You will thresh the mountains and crush them,
and reduce the hills to chaff.
You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up,
and a gale will blow them away.
But you will rejoice in the LORD
and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states that ancient threshing floors were located in exposed, windy places, as wind was required for winnowing.²

Threshing. The threshing-floors are constructed in the fields, preferably in an exposed position in order to get the full benefit of the winds. If there is a danger of marauders they are clustered together close to the village. The floor is a level, circular area 25 to 40 ft. (7¹/₂ to 12 m.) in diameter, prepared by first picking out the stones, and then tamping or coating it with marly clay. A border of stones keep in the grain. The normal method of threshing seems to have been by the trampling effect of oxen or donkey hoofs as these animals were driven around the floor. (Dt. 25:4), or by the use of a drag, the bottom of which was studded (2 Sam. 24:22). The supply of unthreshed grain was kept in the center of the floor and fed into the path of the animals. Constant turning of the partly threshed grain hastened the process of breaking all the stalks into short pieces and tearing off the husks. This mixture of chaff and grain was then winnowed by tossing it into the air so that the wind may blow away the chaff. When the chaff was gone, the grain was tossed in a wooden tray to separate from it the stones and lumps of soil which clung to the roots when the grain was reaped. The difference in weight between the stones and grain makes separation by this process possible. The grain was then stored in the common store jar, usually for home use.

¹For updated versions of this file go to:
<http://tcc.customer.sentex.ca/download/MP.pdf>

²Geoffrey W. Bromiley. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Wm. B. Eerdmans. 1995. p. 74.

P. C. Anderson wrote about the sounds associated with threshing:³

When a threshing sledge is pulled on the threshing floor by one or two donkeys, oxen, horses or mules in a circular trajectory at a constant low speed over a mattress of sheaves of grain, the plod of animal feet, often sounds of chains or bells are accompanied by a continuous sound of cracking and swooshing which corresponds to the pulling and smooth working of the instrument as it sets the plant material in motion in such a way as to rapidly thresh the grain and cut up the straw into tiny pieces.

A key question about Isaiah's prophecy is, what do the mountains represent? Many commentators claim they represent the governments of nations, which were Israel's enemies, but the threshing metaphor implies some kind of separation operation is performed on them.

The idea of threshing mountains implies there is something within them that needs to be extracted, and separated out, like grains of barley, oats, rye, and wheat from straw.

In the Old Testament, and in Isaiah's prophecy, mountains and hills are metaphors; they represent revelations of God; covenants, promises, and prophecies. This is evident in Genesis, in the blessing of Joseph by his father Jacob. He said the blessings that he inherited extended "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." [Genesis 49:26] This alludes to their height, and thus their heavenly origin, and their eternal duration.

Prophecies in the Old Testament relate to the covenant, and the land promise to Israel was a type of the spiritual things contained in the new covenant. Mountains are both durable, and high, so they represent things that are eternal, having lofty or spiritual meanings. Promises to the saints about spiritual things are represented by mountains.

The promised land was the location of many revelations, and mountains are the prominent parts of the promised land. Specific mountains may give their name to prophecies, such as the Olivet Discourse.

Correctly interpreting prophecies and parables extracts their true meaning. This is the *threshing* process, that Isaiah said is to be accomplished by the church. The chaff that is blown away by the wind consists of superficial, flawed, *literal* interpretations. It is the embellishment surrounding and concealing kernels of *truth*.

Parables are similar to prophecies; the meaning or interpretation of a parable is the grain which provides nourishment to believers.

How are mountains threshed? This has to do with interpreting the symbolic mountains of prophecy. Joel said that mountains will drop down new wine and hills will flow with milk.

Joel 3:17-18

So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain:

³P. C. Anderson. Sound and Science: an approach to the ethnoarchaeology of threshing cereals and pulses.

then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

These mountains and hills are figures representing promises of God to the saints, who seek a “better country,” which represents their spiritual inheritance. Wine and milk are metaphors interpreted in the New Testament as representing God’s word. When Jesus spoke of new wine, and old bottles, he was referring to the gospel.

Mark 2:22

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

The author of Hebrews said “milk” represents teachings intended for those who are immature: “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” [Hebrews 5:13]

The apostle Peter encouraged his readers, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” [1 Peter 2:2]

Wheat is also a metaphor that Jesus often used to represent his teachings, for example in the parable of the sower. Harvesting of wheat involves threshing. After the stalks of grain are harvested, they are chopped and beaten or *threshed*, to separate the grain from the chaff.

Isaiah’s prophecy about threshing mountains alludes to this process of separating. The church is involved in beating the mountains, which are symbolic of the revelations of God, and prophecies, and the promises of God to the saints contained in scripture. Perhaps the “threshing” metaphor represents various attempts to discover the true meaning of the prophecies of scripture. In the threshing process, the stalks are broken and cut small, and the grains are rubbed against one another, and moved about, so that all the chaff can be dislodged, and blown away by the wind. The process of interpretation of prophecy is similar; various theories are proposed, which are the means of “threshing.” When these interpretations are compared one against one another, flaws are exposed in the debate, and “chaff” gets separated from the truth.

This is the role of theories of preterism and dispensationalism; these theories are opposed to each other, and are mutually destructive. Supporters of preterism expose flaws in the theories of dispensationalism, and likewise supporters of dispensationalism, when defending their views, expose the flaws of preterism. Both doctrines represent “chaff.” The grains of truth remain, to which both groups are blind.

Threshing the mountains

Isaiah 41:15-16 says that Israel will become a threshing sledge, which will thresh mountains and hills, and beat them small. The prophecy is similar to Isaiah 40:4, and no doubt the interpretations of each prophecy are connected. Three questions are presented to the expositor; (1) what Israel is in view? (2) what are the mountains? (3) how is the threshing done?

Many commentators stumble on the first question; they suppose that ethnic Jews are the subject, and consequently they try to discover ways in which Jews might become so wonderfully powerful, they will thresh mountains and hills; this approach was proposed by Rabbi David Kimchi (1160–1235) in his comments on Isaiah 41:15. Kimchi wrote:⁴ “Mountains and hills are here used metaphorically for the kings and princes of the Gentiles.”

Joseph Addison Alexander was one of a few who resisted Kimchi’s opinion, which had become the traditional view; instead, Alexander suggested they represent unspecified obstacles. He wrote:⁵

15. *Behold I have placed thee for* (i.e. appointed thee to be, or changed thee into) *a threshing-sledge, sharp, new, possessed of teeth* (or edges); *thou shalt thresh mountains and beat (them) small, and hills like the chaff shalt them place* (or make). The erroneous idea that he simply promises to furnish Israel with the means of threshing mountains, has arisen from the equivocal language of the English Version, *I will make thee*, which may either mean, *I will make for thee, or will make thee to become*, whereas the last sense only can by any possibility be put upon the Hebrew, as literally translated above. The oriental threshing machine is sometimes a sledge of thick planks armed with iron or sharp stones, sometimes a system of rough rollers joined together like a sledge or dray. Both kinds are dragged over the grain by oxen. (See Robinson’s Palestine, vol. III p. 143.) The word translated *teeth* strictly denotes *mouhths*; but like the primitive noun from which it is derived, it is sometimes applied to the *edge* of a sharp instrument, perhaps in allusion to the figure of devouring. Here it signifies the edges, blades, or teeth, with which the threshing-wain is armed. The image presented is the strange but strong one of a down-trodden worm reducing hills to powder, the essential idea being that of a weak and helpless object overcoming the most disproportionate obstacles, by strength derived from another.

Albert Barnes expressed some doubt about the views of Kimchi and others:⁶

The words ‘mountains’ and ‘hills’ in this verse seem designed to denote the kingdoms greater and smaller that should be opposed to the Jews, and that should become

⁴Quoted by Adam Clarke in his Commentary on Isaiah 41:15.

<http://w.studylight.org/com/acc/>

⁵Joseph Addison Alexander. Isaiah translated and explained, Vol 2.

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=5qMCAAAAQAAJ>

⁶Albert Barnes. Barnes’ Notes on the Whole Bible.

<http://w.studylight.org/com/bnb/>

subject to them (Rosenmüller). Grotius supposes that the prophet refers particularly to the Medes and Babylonians. But perhaps the words are used to denote simply difficulties or obstacles in their way, and the expression may mean that they would be able to overcome all those obstacles, and to subdue all that opposed them, as if in a march they should crush all the mountains, and dissipate all the hills by an exertion of power.

Walter Brueggemann seems to have applied an interpretation tailored for the prophecy in Isaiah 40:4 to Isaiah 41:15. For him, the mountains were not objects that could be “threshed.” He wrote:⁷

The metaphor is of a farm implement with sharp teeth (threshing sledge) that is dragged over the land to smooth the soil, forcibly crushing and breaking and refining what is not yet amenable to planting. This is exceedingly vigorous language whereby Israel is imagined to become a force and an agent who can “rough up” even Babylon. Thus the speech imagines a complete role reversal between powerful Babylon and pitiful, wormlike Israel, whereby Israel becomes threshing sledge and Babylon is left to be leveled, abused soil.

J. B. Coffman assumed that the mountains which are threshed are nations, but they are threshed not by ethnic Jews, but through the influence of Christianity. He wrote:⁸

In these verses (including also the text through Isa. 41:20) Israel is assured (1) of the faithfulness of God, Isa. 41:8,9; (2) that they will receive strength from God, Isa. 41:10, (3) that weakness will afflict their enemies, Isa. 41:11,12; (4) that God will raise up aid for them, Isa. 41:13,14; (5) that their enemies shall be scattered, Isa. 41:15,16; (6) and that they shall receive spiritual refreshment during their worst experiences, Isa. 41:17-19. ... The metaphor here of Israel’s threshing the mountains and hills, i.e., all nations great and small, large as it is, does not exaggerate the influence of Judaic-born Christianity over all the nations of mankind.

Franz Delitzsch and S. R. Driver supposed that mountains and hills were “plainly a figure of lofty, powerful foes, just as wind and storm are a figure of God’s irresistible help.” They wrote:⁹

The comforting word “Fear not” is once more taken up, in order to add to the promise, that Israel shall not succumb to its foes, the positive promise that it shall acquire power over them, vers. 14–16: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, thou petty people Israel!

⁷Walter Brueggemann. *Isaiah: 40-66*. Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p. 35.

⁸J. B. Coffman. *Coffman’s Commentary*.

<http://w.studylight.org/com/bcc/>

⁹Franz Delitzsch and Samuel Rolles Driver. *Biblical commentary on the prophecies of Isaiah* (1890). p. 157.

I help thee, saith Jehovah; and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I have made thee a threshing-roller, a sharp one, new, with double edge. Thou shalt thresh mountains and crush them, and thou shalt make hills like chaff. Thou shalt winnow them, and the wind carries them off, and the storm scatters them; and thou shalt exult in Jehovah, and boast thyself in the Holy One of Israel," Israel, now helplessly oppressed, is sympathetically called worm of Jacob (gen. appos.), i.e. Jacob like a worm, perhaps not without allusion to Ps. xxii. 6; for the picture of the Messiah is enriched in these discourses, Israel itself being regarded in a Messianic light, so that the second David does not stand beside Israel, but is Israel's own true, inmost nature. Then the nation is addressed as "people of Israel" ... (Luther: ye poor crowd of Israel); they now no longer form the compact mass of a nation, the bond of the commonwealth is broken, they are resolved into individuals scattered here and there. But it shall not remain so: "I help thee" (perfect of certainty) is Jehovah's solemn utterance, and the Redeemer (redemptor. Lev. xxv. 48.) of His now enslaved people is the Holy One of Israel, whose love again and again triumphs over wrath. But not merely will He set it free. He will endow it with power over its oppressors ... Like such a threshing-machine, Israel henceforth threshes and crushes mountains and hills; here plainly a figure of lofty, powerful foes, just as wind and storm are a figure of God's irresistible help. The enemies' might is broken to its last remnant, whereas Israel can rejoice and boast in its God, who is absolute being and absolute light.

Jan L. Koole mentioned several interpretations that have been proposed for the mountains and hills of Isaiah's prophecy, including: literal mountains; Babylonian temple towers; Babylonian idols; powers that oppose God's plan of salvation; hostile nations, especially Babylon; spiritual or eschatological obstacles; all religious obstacles that thwart Israel.¹⁰

Paul E. Kretzmann supposed that the mountains were "mighty enemies" of Israel. He wrote:¹¹

V. 15 *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth, the sledge used in the Orient to cut up the straw for fodder and to separate the grain from the hull, sometimes used to put captives to death; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff, the very world-powers being compelled to yield to the army of the Lord. V. 16 Thou shalt fan them, as the husbandman winnows his grain, and the wind shall carry them away, like useless chaff, and the whirlwind, the strong tempest, shall scatter them and thou, seeing this marvelous victory over the mighty enemies, shalt rejoice in the Lord and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel, properly giving all honor to Him who is the zealous Deliverer of His people. Not only will the enemies be overthrown, however, but the Church of God will find divine refreshment in the midst of the tribulation of this world.*

¹⁰Jan L. Koole. Isaiah: Historical commentary on the Old Testament. Part 3, Volume 1. Peeters Publishers, 1997. p. 171.

¹¹Paul E. Kretzmann. The Popular Commentary.
<http://w.studylight.org/com/kpc/>

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown also said the mountains represent enemies of Israel. They wrote:¹²

15. God will make Israel to destroy their enemies as the Eastern corn-drag (Isa 28:27, 28) bruises out the grain with its teeth, and gives the chaff to the winds to scatter. *teeth-serrated*, so as to cut up the straw for fodder and separate the grain from the chaff.
mountains ... hills—kingdoms more or less powerful that were hostile to Israel (Isa 2:14).

Carl Wilhelm Eduard Nägelsbach, commenting on Isaiah 41:14-16, emphasized the contrast between verse 14 and the following two verses. He thought that threshing the mountains was related to the church's spiritual victories. He wrote:¹³

The expressions "little worm," "little people" are evidently intended to paint the wretchedness and weakness of Israel. The former recalls Ps. xxii. 6 "I am a worm, and no man," and also the description of the suffering servant of God, Isa. liii. 2 sqq. Comp. too, Job xxv. 6. Yet one cannot but see in this "worm Jacob" the transition of the servant of God to the "form of a servant," and thus recognize an intimation that the suffering people of God is also a type of the suffering Saviour. ... Yet what a contrast! The Lord makes this worm Jacob a mighty instrument of judgment against the nations. ... Sharp, new, and double-edged (... only here in Isaiah, comp. Ps. cxlix. 6) shall the roller be. As such a roller lacerates the bundles of grain, and as the similarly formed harrow crushes the clods, so shall Israel rend and crush mountains and make hills like chaff, etc. This prophecy has not been fulfilled by the fleshly Israel, or at least only in a meager way, the best example being the Maccabees. But by the spiritual Israel it has had glorious fulfilment in spiritual victories.

Nägelsbach applied the metaphor of threshing to the influence of the church upon the Roman Empire, and upon the Germanic nations, which he said, "will in turn be threshed in pieces that the church may become the free." Was it a premonition of events to come in the 20th century? He wrote:¹⁴

On ver. 14 sqq. What a contrast! A poor little worm, and a new threshing instrument with double-edged points that rends mountains to pieces! When was the church of either the Old or New Testament ever such a threshing instrument? First of all, the

¹²Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible.

<http://w.studylight.org/com/jfb/>

¹³Carl Wilhelm Eduard Nägelsbach. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Isaiah. Johann Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Eds. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1878. p. 440.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 447.

Babylonian Empire was threshed to pieces that Israel might be free. Afterwards many kingdoms and nations were threshed in pieces and made subject to the Roman Empire that the church of the New Testament might grow and spread abroad. Afterwards the Roman Empire itself was threshed in pieces to gain for the church a new, fresh, healthy soil in the Germanic nations. But finally the Germanic nations will in turn be threshed in pieces that the church may become the free, pure kingdom of Christ ruling over all. So the church, the poor little worm Jacob, rends in pieces one form of the world-power after another, until it issues from the last as the glorious bride of the Lord.

Matthew Poole wrote in his commentary on Isaiah:

The mountains; the great and lofty potentates of the world, which set themselves against thee; such persons being frequently expressed in Scripture under the notion of hills and mountains.

The Pulpit Commentary states:¹⁵

Ver. 15.—*I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument.* Israel is to be more than sustained. Strength is to be given her to take the aggressive, and to subdue her enemies under her. She is to “thresh them” and “beat them small,” as with a threshing-instrument (comp. 2 Kings 13:7; Amos 1:3; Micah 4:13). In the literal sense, no earlier accomplishment of this prophecy can be pointed out than the time of the Maccabean war. Metaphorically, it may be said that Israel began to conquer the world when her literature became known to the Greeks through the expedition of Alexander the Great, and completed her conquest when the Roman empire succumbed to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. *Having teeth.* Threshing-instruments of the kind described are still in use in Syria (Thomson, ‘The Land and the Book,’ p. 539) and Asia Minor (Fellows, ‘Asia Minor,’ p. 70). The corn is spread out on the ground, and the machine, which is sometimes armed with sharp stones, sometimes with saws, is dragged over it. The Arabic name is still *noreg*, a modification of the Hebrew *moreg*. Thou shalt thresh the mountains ... the hills; *i.e.*, “thou shalt subdue proud and mighty foes” (Delitzsch).

John Wesley said, “The mountains—The great and lofty potentates of the world.”¹⁶

Edward J. Young thought that the mountains of Isaiah 41:15 represent enemies of Israel, but he identified Israel with the church, as did J. A. Alexander. He wrote:¹⁷

¹⁵The Pulpit Commentary.

<http://biblestudyaid.net/com/ot/pulpit/main.htm>

¹⁶John Wesley. Wesley’s Explanatory Notes.

<http://w.studylight.org/com/wen/>

¹⁷Edward J. Young. The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1972. p. 89.

Not only will the Holy One redeem Israel but He will also cause her to prevail over her enemies and all obstacles. This is a new and important element of their salvation, and to call attention to its dignity Isaiah uses the word Behold! By this means he arouses the attention to face the comfort and consolation of which he proceeds to speak. God has placed (appointed, set) Israel as a threshing sledge. This was a flat plank or board, with rollers underneath studded with iron or basalt spikes. This instrument is sharp, and new, so it is effective in its working (cf. 28:27). Furthermore it is possessed of mouths (edges?) so that it will cut sharply.

In the second line the prophet addresses Israel, and tells her that she will be such an instrument as will thresh even mountains and pulverize them. The language is figurative to show that no peoples, be they ever so great or powerful, even as mighty as the kingdom of man that was then overshadowing the world, could stand in the way of Israel. Not that Israel in herself had the strength to withstand and destroy her enemies, but as the redeemed people of God she would in the strength of her God do valiantly. The parallel thought lends strength to the idea, Israel will render the hills like chaff. Israel, weak and downtrodden, a worm, will overcome obstacles far greater than herself, and that with the help of God.

Claus Westermann correctly connected the mountains in Isaiah 41:15 with those of Isaiah 40:4, but he incorrectly (in my opinion) interpreted these prophetic mountains as representing obstacles to Israel's return from Babylon.¹⁸ If that were the case, John the Baptist would hardly have chosen Isaiah's prophecy that every mountain will be made low and every valley will be exalted as a theme for his ministry.

There may be several ways in which the mountains were made low because of the advent of Christ, and the Gospel, the mountains being symbolic of the revelations and promises made to Israel. Whereas before, Jews were confident that they possessed an élite status, now Christ had come, that had passed away, but circumcision of the heart was necessary. The Mosaic system of worship became obsolete; the temple was destroyed; Jerusalem had become a heavenly city, while the earthly Jerusalem was identified with Hagar, an Egyptian bondwoman. Lowering of the mountains also refers to the mysteries connected with the interpretation of prophecies being solved, as Isaiah connected it with revealing the Glory of God. Westermann wrote:¹⁹

The metaphor of threshing in v. 15a fits in with the grain and chaff of v. 16a, but not with the object 'mountains and hills' in 15b. On the other hand, the metaphor of the verbs in vv. 15b and 16a, 'threshing...crushing...making into chaff...winnowing' is uniformly carried through. Obviously then, in introducing the odd and incongruous object 'mountains and hills' into the old and common metaphor for the destruction of a foe, Deutero-Isaiah had something particular in mind to emphasize. There can be no doubt that the phrase alludes to these same words in the prologue ('every mountain and hill shall be made low'). There they represent the obstacles blocking Israel's

¹⁸Claus Westermann. *Isaiah 40-66*. Westminster John Knox Press. 2001. p. 77.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

return. It is prophesied that they are to be levelled to make a smooth road on which the nation can make its journey home. However, in the prologue it is not Israel herself who removes these obstacles. We have to take it that by inserting 'mountains and hills' into the traditional metaphor for the destruction of foes—threshing and crushing corn—Deutero-Isaiah's real intention was to say, in a deliberately cryptic way, that God is proclaiming to Israel, 'Behold, I make of you an instrument capable of overcoming the obstacles set up by your foes, which separate you from your home-land.' The way in which this is to come about is not specified here, but at all events there is no idea of God's raising Israel afresh to power in the realm of politics that will enable her to destroy her foes with her own arms. The prophet's cryptic way of speaking, using traditional forms and metaphors to express a meaning different from their original one, is characteristic of him. But it has given rise to much false exegesis.

The mountains of Isaiah's prophecy may be taken to be the mountains of Israel, but they are symbolic, not of nations or rulers, as many commentators suppose, but of God's promises, and revelations, including prophecies. The Israel which is to become a threshing sledge is the church. The centuries-long struggle to interpret prophecy and extract from it the truths of the Gospel, is the threshing process. The chaff that is blown away by the wind represents all the flawed interpretations. The kernels of grain which remain are spiritual nourishment for the saints.

The New Testament supports this approach, as when Paul was teaching that those who labour in the word are worthy of support and honour from those who benefit from their labours, he referred to a Mosaic precept regarding threshing:

1 Corinthians 9:9-10

For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

And similarly, he wrote in the first epistle to Timothy,

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

The commentators have laboured, and if they did not discover the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy about threshing the mountains, at least they helped to fulfill it.

A way in the mountains

Isaiah said, “And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.” [Isaiah 49:11] By various interpreters, the mountains of prophecy are said to be powerful, self-righteous and proud people, kingdoms, obstacles in a road, proud thoughts, or literal mountains. However, I suggest, the mountains of prophecy are in fact none of these, but instead, they represent God’s promises. These promises, and blessings are a way or route that believers can follow, because in his *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus promised a number of blessings to those who follow him. [Matthew 5:1-11] Below are some of the reasons why the mountains represent God’s *promises* to believers.

The mountains of Israel were the prominent parts of the promised land, which God promised to give to Jacob, in his dream at Bethel, in which he saw a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending upon it. [Genesis 28:12-22] The land which God promised to give him in the dream was connected or associated with the oracles of God and the angels conveying messages between earth and heaven. The promised land was to become the location of many of God’s revelations. The land promise, and Israel’s Exodus, their journey to the land, their taking possession of it, dwelling in the land, the monarchy, and their ultimate loss of the land, are all prominent themes in the Old Testament. Mountains are prominent in the account, especially in the prophets. The ark of Noah grounded upon a mountain; the offering of Isaac occurred upon a mountain; when he blessed Joseph, Jacob connected his blessings with mountains. [Genesis 49:26] Elijah offered a sacrifice upon mount Carmel to end a great drought.

While the promised land was the scene of many revelations; other revelations given elsewhere were often about the land.

The mountains are durable; they last for long span of time. Because of their durability, mountains seem unsuitable as symbols of men, or nations, or kingdoms, except, of course, for God’s eternal kingdom, and the covenant people. The mountains resist change, and are not moved around. They are landmarks. The mountains offer a higher view on things, a view from above. Thus Isaiah wrote, “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” [Isaiah 40:9] And, “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]

Ezekiel was taken to a high mountain, to record his vision of the temple, [Ezekiel 40:2] and similarly John was taken to a high mountain, to describe the heavenly Jerusalem. [Revelation 21:10] In each case, mountains connect the visions with high, spiritual revelations, or else, what else could their significance be?

Jesus was taken to a high mountain when he was tempted. [Matthew 4:8] Again, the mountain represents a spiritual experience; it was not a literal, earthly mountain.

The kingdom of God is represented by a mountain; it is described as a mountain that began as a stone, cut without hands, [Daniel 2:35] and eventually it grows to fill the earth. This is a tremendous promise. The prophecies about mountains confirm that they represent promises. The

mountains, representing God's promises, are possessed by the heathen, who make them desolate; [Ezekiel 36:3-5] they are cast out for a prey; they are assaulted by the armies of Gog and Magog. [Ezekiel 38:8] They will be restored to God's saints. The armies of Gog and Magog fall down upon them. [Ezekiel 39:4] They will be inhabited by the saints, the true Israel; and they will bring forth fruit, which no doubt alludes to the fruit of the Spirit. The saints will possess them; [Ezekiel 36:8-10] rivers and streams will flow on mountains; [Isaiah 30:25] and wine will drop from them, and hills will flow with milk. [Joel 3:18] Rivers of living water represent the Spirit, and wine and milk are each symbolic of God's word in the New Testament. [Luke 5:37; 1 Peter 2:2]

When Jesus said, "flee to the mountains," [Matthew 24:16] he could not possibly have meant flee to preserve your own life, as many assume; he said, whoever seeks to save his life, will lose it. [Matthew 16:25] He must have meant, flee to the *promises* of God that the mountains represent.

What is *the way* in the mountains that Isaiah mentioned? Mountains are metaphors; they represent God's promises. Departing from evil is a highway connected with a promise: "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul." [Proverbs 16:17]

Mountains made low

Isaiah's prophecy about making a highway in the desert is coupled with a prophecy about mountains being made low, and in many interpretations of his prophecy, the mountains are reduced to mere bumps in the road!

Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:3-5

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

The message of Isaiah 40:3-5 was a theme taken up by John the Baptist, and so the prophecy is prominent in the New Testament. John dwelt in the wilderness, and he identified himself with the *voice in the wilderness* mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy. Robert Lowth, bishop of London, wrote in his commentary:²⁰

3. *A voice crieth: In the wilderness*] –The idea is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey,

²⁰Robert Lowth. *Isaiah: a new translation: with a preliminary dissertation, and notes, critical, philological, and explanatory.* W. Hilliard, Boston. 1834. pp. 313-314.

especially through desert and unpractised countries, sent harbingers before them to prepare all things for their passage, and pioneers to open the passes, to level the ways, and to remove all impediments. The officers appointed to superintend such preparations the Latins call *Stratores*. “Ipse (Johannes Baptista) se *stratorem* vocat Messiaë, cujus esset alta et elata voce homines in desertis locis habitantes ad itinera et vias Regi mox venturo sternendas et reficiendas hortari:” Mosheim, *Instituta Majora*, p. 96.

Diodorus’s account of Semiramis’s marches into Media and Persia, will give us a clear notion of the preparation of the way for a royal expedition: “In her march to Ecbatane she came to the Zarcean mountain; which extending many furlongs, and being full of craggy precipices and deep hollows, could not be passed without taking a great compass about. Being therefore desirous of leaving an everlasting memorial of herself, as well as of shortening the way, she ordered the precipices to be digged down, and the hollows to be filled up; and at a great expense she made a shorter and more expeditious road, which to this day is called from her the Road of Semiramis. Afterward she went into Persia, and all the other countries of Asia subject to her dominion; and wherever she went, she ordered the mountains and precipices to be levelled, raised causeways in the plain country, and at a great expense made the ways passable:” Diod. Sic. lib. ii.

The writer of the apocryphal book called Baruch, expresses the same subject by the same images; either taking them from this place of Isaiah, or from the common notions of his countrymen: “For God hath appointed, that every high hill, and banks of long continuance, should be cast down, and vallies filled up, to make even the ground, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God;” chap. v. 7.

The Jewish, church, to which John was sent to announce the coming of Messiah, was at that time in a barren and desert condition, unfit without reformation for the reception of her king. It was in this desert country, destitute at that time of all religious cultivation, in true piety and good works unfruitful, that John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance. I have distinguished the parts of the sentence according to the punctuation of the Masoretes, which agrees best both with the literal and the spiritual sense; which the construction and parallelism of the distich in the Hebrew plainly favours; and of which the Greek of the LXX and of the Evangelists is equally susceptible.

John was born in the desert of Judea, and passed his whole life in it, till the time of his being manifested to Israel. He preached in the same desert: it was a mountainous country; however, not entirely and properly a desert, for, though less cultivated than other parts of Judea, yet it was not uninhabited: Joshua (chap. xv. 61, 62.) reckons six cities in it. We are so prepossessed with the idea of John’s living and preaching in the desert, that we are apt to consider this particular scene of his preaching as a very important and essential part of his history: whereas I apprehend this circumstance to be no otherwise important, than as giving us a strong idea of the rough character of the man, which was answerable to the place of his education;

and as affording a proper emblem of the rude state of the Jewish church at that time; which was the true wilderness meant by the Prophet, in which John was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

In many commentaries, the idea of making a road is connected with mountains being made low, and valleys filled. However, in making a road, only those places that are in the actual route are affected; other mountains, not in the path, would not be made low. Isaiah said every mountain would be made low. Connecting the mountains with road making seems to miss the true meaning of the prophecy. Verse 9 in the same chapter also refers to mountains; the prophet says to the mountain of Zion, "get thee up into the high mountain."

This implies that the mountains in Isaiah's prophecy are not literal ones. What mountains are to be made low? What high mountain was he referring to? Was Isaiah really referring to leveling bumps and hollows in a road?

I suggest that the mountains Isaiah referred to are the promises of God, which are high, and lofty, because they are spiritual revelations. They are beyond the understanding of most men. The promises of God, Jacob said, as he blessed his son Joseph, and the blessings he received, were like the mountains, and reached to "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills," the hills that would never erode away, but are truly eternal. [Genesis 49:26] They were spiritual promises, that the promised land represents.

The prophecy of Isaiah that mountains would be made low must mean that the mysteries of these promises will be solved; their true meaning will be discovered, and prophecy will be explained so that people will understand it.

In Revelation 21:10, John was taken up into a high mountain, where he viewed the holy city. He described it as "coming down from God out of heaven." Its altitude decreases as it descends, and becomes less remote and distant from us. As the symbols in his prophecy are understood and explained, they too are "made low" in a figurative way. Isaiah encouraged Zion, which represents God's people, to go up into the high mountain, just as John was taken up into a figurative high mountain, when he described the holy city, and as Ezekiel was taken up to a high mountain, when he described the visionary temple. The mountains that are to be made low are the promises and prophecies that are to be explained, and understood, the promises of the gospel.

The true meaning of the promised land is spiritual; the literal land promised to Abraham is a metaphor and a figure of the true promised land which is what the earthly Canaan represents. The promised land of the saints is the "better country" of Hebrews 11:16, and the New Covenant that Christ has brought in is founded on "better promises."

In his discussion of verses 6-8 Lowth alluded to the contrasting views, the flesh contrasted with the spirit. The Christian one interprets the promises as eternal, while the Jews hoped for a temporal, earthly kingdom. Lowth wrote:²¹

6-8. *A voice sayeth, Proclaim*] –To understand rightly this passage is a matter

²¹Ibid., pp. 315-316.

of importance; for it seems designed to give us the true key to the remaining part of Isaiah's prophecies; the general subject of which is the restoration of the people and church of God. The Prophet opens the subject with great clearness and elegance: he declares at once God's command to his messengers, (his Prophets, as the Chaldee rightly explains it,) to comfort his people in captivity, to impart to them the joyful tidings, that their punishment has now satisfied the divine justice, and the time of reconciliation and favour is at hand. He then introduces a harbinger giving orders to prepare the way for God leading his people from Babylon, as he did formerly from Egypt, through the wilderness; to remove all obstacles, and to clear the way for their passage. Thus far nothing more appears to be intended than a return from the Babylonish captivity: but the next words seem to intimate something much greater:

"And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed; And all flesh shall see together the salvation of our God."

He then introduces a voice commanding him to make a solemn proclamation. And what is the import of it? That the people, the flesh, is of a vain temporary nature; that all its glory fadeth, and is soon gone; but that the word of God endureth for ever. What is this, but a plain opposition of the flesh to the spirit; of the carnal Israel to the spiritual; of the temporary Mosaic economy to the eternal Christian dispensation? You may be ready to conclude, (the Prophet may be supposed to say), by this introduction to my discourse, that my commission is only to comfort you with a promise of the restoration of your religion and polity, of Jerusalem, of the temple, and its services and worship in all its ancient splendour: These are earthly, temporary, shadowy, fading things, which shall soon pass away, and be destroyed for ever; these are not worthy to engage your attention, in comparison of the greater blessings, the spiritual redemption, the eternal inheritance, covered under the veil of the former, which I have it in charge to unfold unto you. The law has only a shadow of good things; the substance is the gospel. I promise you a restoration of the former; which, however, is only for a time, and shall be done away, according to God's original appointment: but under that image I give you a view of the latter; which shall never be done away, but shall endure for ever. This I take to be agreeable to St. Peter's interpretation of this passage of the Prophet, quoted by him 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." This is the same word of the Lord of which Isaiah speaks, which hath now been preached unto you by the gospel. The law and the gospel are frequently opposed to one another by St Paul under the images of flesh and spirit: "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Gal. iii. 3.

The spiritual promises of God to the saints are represented by mountains, and they are made low in the sense that they are viewed with contempt by the world, and are misinterpreted. Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Taking great promises of the gospel as foolishness fulfills Isaiah's prophecy about mountains being made low. An example of this is applying spiritual blessings and promises to the earthly types and shadows. When the promises that apply to the heavenly Jerusalem, and the church, are mistakenly applied to the earthly Jerusalem, it is degrading to the word of God, and involves a "dumbing down" of prophecy.

Prophetic mountains and time

Commentators have long claimed that mountains in prophecy represent nations or kingdoms, and it is quite true that God's kingdom is represented by a mountain. However, scripture supports a more fundamental interpretation of the mountains; they represent God's blessings, and covenants, and promises.

Natural mountains may appear differently, when viewed from various directions, and prophecy is similar. Promises of blessing, and covenants, may be represented by mountains, which are prominent parts of the promised land. The kingdom of God is a prophecy, and a promise of blessing, and so it can be represented by a mountain.

There is much evidence to show that prophetic mountains represent promises, and covenants, and prophecies. Promises and prophecies couched in symbolic language are *high* in the sense that they are difficult to comprehend. Some of the time prophecies are in this category. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 55:8-9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The foremost of all prophecies about time is the 70 weeks prophecy, which remains a puzzle for many. It could be represented by a mountain that is rather difficult to ascend.

Mountains skip like rams

If mountains are symbols of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and God's promises to Israel, the history of those promises is outlined in the prophecies about mountains. Psalm 114 shows that the promises may become detached from the earth, as when rams and lambs skip, they become airborne. David wrote:

Psalm 114:1-4

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.
The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.
The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

God's promise that Israel will possess the land of Canaan is represented by a mountain, that may become detached from the literal earth, as rams and lambs are when they skip, because the promised land has a higher, spiritual significance; it represents the eternal inheritance of the saints.

A mountain that grows

A growing mountain is described in Daniel 2. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a stone cut out from a mountain without hands struck the great image on the feet, and the image was destroyed, while the stone became a great mountain.

Zechariah refers to Jerusalem as a "burdensome stone." This connects with the stone in Daniel's prophecy. The stone and the mountain refer to Christ's kingdom.

Zechariah 12:3

The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

This prophecy applies to the heavenly city, the church.

Vertical earth movements

Christians have come to a heavenly mount Zion, and Jerusalem, and a better country. There are other features in this land that correspond to features of the earthly Canaan, and there are also numerous differences. The topographical changes described by the prophets are figurative, and have a spiritual significance.

The mountains of prophecy are symbolic, not literal ones. In Genesis 49:26, the blessings Jacob received are compared to high mountains and hills. Jacob said, "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.” These blessings were the promises given to Abraham and Isaac, as well as promises he received directly from God. For example, in his dream at Bethel God promised to give him the land of Canaan. Jacob realized that these blessings and promises were spiritual in nature. They were high, as there was a higher, spiritual meaning attached to the promised land. They were also durable, and eternal, and so he associated them with “the everlasting hills.” The mountains and hills of the promised land represent the great spiritual promises of the gospel.

The kingdom of God is one of these promises. It is represented by mount Zion, which Isaiah described as being established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills.

Isaiah 2:1-2

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Jerusalem was raised up as Isaiah foretold, in New Testament times, when Jesus ascended to heaven, and to the throne of his Father. Hebrews 12:22-24 speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem; all believers come to it. This is the church that Christ is building in the present age.

Mountains made low, valleys filled

Isaiah said every valley will be exalted and every mountain made low. Later, this same message was preached by John the Baptist.

Isaiah 40:4-5

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

In Isaiah 40 and 41, mountains are metaphors, and symbols of God’s promises. The mountains, as the most prominent, and highest parts of the land, represent the high and lofty revelations of God, the truths hidden in prophecies, that need to be *threshed*, for us to discover their true meaning. [Isaiah 41:15-16] There are kernels and grains of truth in the prophecies that need to be separated from the chaff.

The promises that the mountains represent are hidden from those who believe that the literal land of Canaan was all that the land promise involved. In fact the land of Canaan was a shadow and a type of a better county. [Hebrews 11:16]

The mountains that Isaiah refers to are the promises of God, which are high, and lofty, because they are spiritual revelations, beyond the understanding of most men. The prophecy that every

mountains will be made low may be explained as follows. The literal mountains of Israel were types and shadows of spiritual realities; however their true meaning is hidden; but when the meaning of the prophecies is explained so that people understand them, God's glory is revealed. The hidden mysteries of prophecy reveal the glory of God.

Land around Jerusalem becomes a plain

Zechariah wrote:

Zechariah 14:10-11

All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

Zechariah said Jerusalem will be "lifted up," and all the surrounding land will become a plain. The land becoming a plain implies that the literal land is no longer the focus of God's covenant, and of the promises of God. The literal Canaan loses its significance, as under the new covenant, the land promise has to be understood in an entirely spiritual or figurative way. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." [Hebrews 11:16]

Zechariah's prophecy of topographical changes in the area around Jerusalem identifies the mountains that Jesus alludes to in the Olivet Discourse, where he said: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:" [Mark 13:14]

Since all the area around Jerusalem was to become a plain, only Jerusalem itself, and mount Zion, remain prominent. They represent God's heavenly kingdom. In the Judea of prophecy, and the better, heavenly country, there is only one mountain to flee to; it is Jerusalem, the city where Jesus reigns on the throne of David, as king over all Israel.

Horizontal earth movements

In Habakkuk's prophecy, the everlasting mountains are scattered. These everlasting mountains are God's promises. In the gospel, the promises of God become available to people of all nations who believe in Christ.

Habakkuk 3:6

He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and

the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

In Zechariah 14:1-2, the armies and nations that come against Jerusalem are spiritual, not armies of flesh and blood. The Jerusalem in the prophecy is the heavenly one. They include every flawed interpretation of prophecy. Zechariah 14:3 says, "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." The mount of Olives divides and the two halves go towards the north and towards the south.

Zechariah 14:4

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

The mount of Olives is not a very high mountain, and it is fairly easy to walk across it; Jesus did so many times with his disciples. The mountain is no obstacle at all for pedestrians. A literal view of Zechariah's prophecy makes no sense; why would survivors of a major earthquake flee *towards the epicenter*, which would likely be subject to aftershocks? What would they flee from? And why flee after the event? What could be the point of an earthquake prediction, that says to flee after it occurs?

Zechariah's prophecy is fulfilled in our age by the theories of preterism and dispensationalism. The two halves of the mount of Olives displaced from their positions represent these two opposite interpretations of the Olivet Discourse, and other prophecies, which displace the prophecies of Jesus from their place. Preterism says all that Jesus said applies to Jews of the first century. Dispensationalism says it applies to Jews in a future seven year tribulation.

Both theories deny that Jesus confirms his covenant with his church throughout the whole church age. Both limit the 70th week in the 70 weeks prophecy to seven literal years. Preterism limits the 70th week to seven years in the first century, and dispensationalism says it is limited to a future seven year tribulation. Dispensationalism also mistakes Christ for Antichrist.

Zechariah said, "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." [Zechariah 14:5] The way we need to go is represented by the figurative valley, between the two flawed interpretations of preterism and dispensationalism; that is, apply the Olivet Discourse to the church in the *present age* .

Mountains and islands are moved from their places

At the opening of the sixth seal, heavens depart as a scroll rolled up, and mountains and islands are moved out of place.

Revelation 6:14

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

The metaphor of a scroll being rolled together applies to the scientific revolution. When the two spindles of a scroll are rolled together, they cease rotating. No further rotation can occur while the spindles are together. This aptly portrays the scientific revolution in astronomy. After the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton were published around the world in the eighteenth century, men everywhere abandoned the old idea of a rigid firmament revolving around the world each day, carrying the stars. The diurnal rotation was assigned to the earth. The heavens ceased their revolutions permanently; all the planetary spheres of the Ptolemaic system vanished forever.

Stars falling to earth like figs from a fig tree that is shaken by a strong wind, probably depicts the effects of the scientific revolution and the enlightenment upon the Christian church. Jesus used a fig tree to represent the church. [Luke 13:6-9; 21:29-32] The fig tree casting her unripe fruit pictures Christians who abandon their faith. The "mighty wind" represents a powerful doctrine. [Ephesians 4:14]

The great earthquake mentioned in verse 12 is best understood figuratively, as in prophecy, the land of promise represents the truth of the gospel. The earthquake pictures the shaking of the belief systems of men. Mens' faith in the church and in the Bible was shaken, as a result of the enlightenment.

Mountains and islands being moved out of their places represents prophecies and promises in scripture being misinterpreted, and misunderstood. Interest in prophetic interpretation flourished after the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars. The variety of interpretations increased dramatically. Flawed interpretations of all varieties are represented by the mountains being moved from their places.

The mountains are not found

After the great earthquake of Revelation 16:18, the mountains were not found.

Revelation 16:20

And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Islands and mountains represent the promises and revelations of God. They are not found because they are misinterpreted. The flawed interpretations hide the promises of God, like clouds that obscure the mountains.

Misunderstanding the time prophecies is probably the greatest reason that prophecy is misunderstood. One of the purposes of the 70 weeks prophecy was to “to seal up the vision and prophecy.” [Daniel 9:24] This has been accomplished. The meaning of much of Bible prophecy is sealed, or hid from us, unless the spiritual nature of the *time, times and a half*, the final half of the 70th week, is correctly understood. The time in this portion of the 70 weeks prophecy is not natural, but figurative, because while the previous portions apply to the earthly Jerusalem, the final half-week applies to the heavenly city, and the mountain of the Lord’s house that was raised up when Jesus ascended to his Father’s throne. [Isaiah 2:1-3] Natural, earthly time does not apply to *the city of the living God*.

Seeking lost mountains

Revelation 16:17-21 describes the events that occur when the seventh angel pours out his vial with the last of the seven last plagues. In verse 19, John wrote of a great earthquake, unprecedented in scale, and connected with it, he said, in verse 20: “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” The earthquake must be viewed as spiritual in nature, just as the mountains and islands are spiritual.

In his Olivet Discourse, Jesus exhorted those who are in Judea to “flee to the mountains.” This implies that they are able to find the mountains. In each prophecy, the mountains meant are not literal mountains, but they represent promises of God to the saints, who are represented by “them that be in Judea.” The mountains Jesus intended us to seek are invisible ones.

The mountains of prophecy are symbolic of the promises and blessings of the gospel. They are not really lost, but they have been obscured from our view, just as literal mountains are often obscured by clouds.

In Genesis 49:26, when Jacob blessed his son Joseph, he compared the blessings and promises he had received to mountains. The mountains are durable, and high, and this may also be said of God’s promises, and his mercy, which is one of the promises to those who love him. The promises and blessings that Jacob received have a lofty, spiritual meaning, including the promise of eternal life, and so he said they extended to “the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”

The apostle Peter said that *exceeding great and precious promises* are available to those who believe in Christ. God’s promises are both great, and high, as they are promises of a spiritual nature. Mountains are fit symbols for them. Peter wrote: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” [2 Peter 1:3-4]

In Matthew 24:16, Jesus said “flee to the mountains,” not to preserve their own lives, but so that they might possess the blessings and promises of God which mountains represent.

Most people lack the desire, and the opportunity, and courage to venture into the mountains; myths about the mountains kept people from visiting them for centuries. For example, the

mountains were supposed to be inhabited by dragons.

There are many parallels between the literal mountains, and the figurative or spiritual ones. The literal ones are not found, because they are remote. Most people live too far away from them; the cities of the world are located far from the great mountains, and to go to the mountains requires travel and some expense.

Most men hope for spiritual blessings, such as the promise of life after death, but they view such promises as if these were a benefit that they inherit simply by being born. Jesus taught that the blessings of the kingdom of God have to be sought for, for example in the parable of the merchant seeking pearls, who found a pearl of great price, and sold all he had, to obtain it. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." [Matthew 5:6] David said God's righteousness is like the great mountains.

People tend to remain in the denomination and religion of their parents, and they adopt the beliefs of families and societies that they were born into. Jesus said, as he was led away to be crucified, that men will say to the rocks of the mountains, "fall on us." [Luke 23:30] A fall is a random event, and an accident; rocks in natural mountains may fall in an avalanche, or in a landslide, in places where the rocks are unstable. Similarly, the beliefs of men regarding the gospel and God tend to be determined by their environment, and the various cultural traditions that influence them, more by chance than by planning. Most men tend to follow the teachings of men, but Jesus said of the Jews of his time, "in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." [Matthew 15:9]

The literal mountains may not be found, because the high mountains are places where cold, ice and snow, storms are prevalent. Warm clothing, boots, an ice ax, ropes or other equipment may be required by climbers who venture into high mountains. The approaches to the mountains may be places where wild animals such as bears, or cougar are present. Climbers must be prepared for a strenuous effort to ascend into the high mountains; physical fitness and training is required. Young people may greatly benefit from an introduction to the mountains; those who put it off to old age may miss their opportunity. By becoming familiar with God's promises when young, people may be blessed throughout their lives. The elderly may benefit too.

Careful planning is required for a successful mountaineering experience. Those who venture unprepared to high mountains endanger their own safety. This also applies to the spiritual mountains. To benefit from the promises of God, one must diligently seek them.

When natural mountains are not found by adventurers, it may be because of lack of experience in route finding. Traversing mountainous country is a skill that must be developed. Early maps and guides to the mountains were often incomplete, but they were still very useful to later explorers. Pioneer mountaineers and explorers marked trails, and established routes, that were followed by others who came after them. The ultimate guide to the promises of God is the Bible; people seeking God's promises need to study it, and know what is there. Many commentaries exist, of varying quality.

When in the mountains, the peaks may become obscured from our view by clouds or mist. In Scripture, false teachers are called clouds, driven by a tempest. Peter wrote, "These are wells

without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.” [2 Peter 2:17] The apostle Paul refers to their words as “wind of doctrine.” [Ephesians 4:14] In contrast, the words of God are represented by mountains, that are durable, and unchanging.

In mountains, weather and snow conditions may either impede, or aid progress. And similarly the teachings of men may either impede or aid progress.

When amongst the mountains, the particular mountain peak one is seeking may be obscured by other mountains. The ones nearby may seem prominent, but there may be others that are greater and higher. A more complete view is seen from the summit of the higher mountains. The view is limited, when one is passing through a valley or a canyon.

Most mountain climbers have discovered at some time that they were following the wrong route, or that they had been climbing the wrong mountain, and have needed to make corrections, or retrace their steps. Christians may have a similar experience, when seeking the promises of God that the mountains represent. Some are climbing the false mountains of academic or denominational status, following material goals, and the lure of wealth, or sectarian involvement, or pursuing other delusions.

The symbolic mountains of Ezekiel 34

Ezekiel 34:6 describes God’s sheep scattered over the whole earth: “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.”

In the New Testament, Jesus identifies himself as the shepherd of the sheep. [John 10:11]

In Ezekiel’s prophecy, not only are the sheep scattered over all the earth, but they wander upon all the mountains, and upon all the high hills. Obviously, these mountains and hills are symbolic. They are distinct and separate from the mountains and hills of Israel, as the prophecy says the scattered sheep will be brought back to the land of Israel, and they will feed upon the mountains of Israel. [Ezekiel 34:13]

What is the meaning of the mountains and hills, of verse 6? In Scripture, the mountains of Israel are symbolic of God’s promises, and revelations, and covenants, that apply to Israel, those who are heirs to the promises through faith in Christ; the interpretation is based upon Genesis 49:26, where Jacob blessed Joseph, and said “blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.” These blessings were durable, like the mountains and hills, and high, or spiritual in nature, and so Jacob connected them with mountains. The land of promise was a shadow and a type of eternal, spiritual things, and a “better country.” [Hebrews 11:16]

Compare the teachings of Jesus in the sermon on the mount, in Matthew’s account, with those recorded by Luke. In Matthew 5, Jesus taught his disciples, and began with a list of blessings, at least nine. In Luke’s account, Jesus was not on a mountain when he gave these teachings, but on a plain; he taught not only his disciples, but also a great multitude of people. He listed only

four *blessings*, and an equal number of *woes*.

Blessings and woes in Luke 6:20-26

Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

The emphasis in Luke is different. Matthew seems to have associated mountains with *blessings* and *promises*.

In Ezekiel 34, the mountains where the scattered sheep wander are symbolic, and they represent *doctrines* and *beliefs* other than those revealed in Scripture. They may include the philosophy of the Greeks and Romans, for example, along with flawed interpretations of the prophecies and promises of the Scriptures, adapted to the theories of men. Christians are scattered in tens of thousands of denominations; Ezekiel's prophecy describes the sheep being gathered to feed upon the mountains of Israel, which are the spiritual things promised to the saints, such as the teachings of Jesus in the sermon on the mount. The sheep are not literal sheep, but they represent believers, the people who Jesus Christ is seeking.

Ezekiel 34:11-16

For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon

the mountains of Israel.

I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Other prophecies point believers to mountains. Those preaching the gospel are exhorted to get up into the *high mountain*; this alludes to the promises of God, and to their spiritual nature. The mountains are metaphors, not the *literal* mountains and hills of the West Bank in Palestine, as some teach.

Isaiah 40:9

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Hebrews 12:22 says, “ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” The Church is the Jerusalem bringing the gospel to the world.

Isaiah said, “And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.” [Isaiah 49:11] The mountains are symbols of the promises to the saints. Jesus promised that the Spirit will guide them into *all truth*. [John 16:13] No wonder Jesus encourages people to “flee to the mountains!” [Matthew 24:16] He did not mean flee to the mountains in order to preserve our own lives, as he said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” [Matthew 16:25]

The mountains of Ezekiel 36:1-15

Scholars have suggested various meanings for the mountains of Israel in Ezekiel 36:1-15. These include (1) the land; (2) the people of Israel; (3) either the land or the people; (4) they are metaphors representing God’s promises. Correctly interpreting the mountains is key to understanding the prophecy. Daniel I. Block wrote on the theological significance of this prophecy:²²

This oracle addresses the heart of Israel’s theology and one of the primary issues behind the spiritual crisis of the exiles: Had Yahweh forgotten his ancient promises to Abraham to give to him and his descendants the land of Canaan as an eternal possession? This promise had been fulfilled under Joshua, when Yahweh dispossessed the Canaanites and delivered the land to his people as their fiefdom. But the devastation of the land and the deportation of its population had cast serious doubt on Yahweh’s willingness or ability to keep his word. The rupture of the deity-nation-land relationship was complete and apparently permanent. The present oracle addresses this theological and national crisis.

²²Daniel Isaac Block. *The Book of Ezekiel: chapters 25-48*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1998. p. 336.

The following includes notes and comments on Ezekiel 36:1-15 by various authors compiled by George Barlow and others in their *homiletic commentary*, together with quotes from several other authors.²³

Ver. 1. “By the mountains, in ver. 1, as the most prominent part, the whole land is represented. What is flat appears as an appendage to the mountains, which are to the land the same as the king and his nobles to the people.” –*Hengstenberg*.²⁴

– “This prophecy is uttered concerning the land of Israel, as is plainly declared in Ezekiel 36:6; whereas in Ezekiel 36:1 and Ezekiel 36:4 the mountains of Israel are mentioned instead of the land, in antithesis to the mountains of Seir.” –*Keil*.²⁵

– “The word ‘mountains’ is used for the land and people of Israel, to keep up the connection (by contrast) with the Mount Seir of the previous chapter. The personification is a strong one, by which the mountains represent the people as well as the land.” –*Gardiner*.²⁶

– “The mountains of Israel not only figures, but also places of the promises to Israel.” –*Schröder*.²⁷

The idea that mountains are symbols of blessings and promises was also supported by H. A. C. Hävernich,²⁸ based upon Genesis 49:26 and Deuteronomy 33:15.

Vers. 1-4. “The grand distinction between the people of God as Israel, and the people of the world as Edom, is, whereas the latter are finally given over to destruction, the former are only chastened for a time, and shall be finally and completely delivered. The people of the world may now seem exalted to a great height, but their elevation is of a carnal and material kind, and is therefore transitory. The elevation of the Israel of God is spiritual, and therefore permanent. Her hills are ‘the everlasting hills’ (Gen. xlix 26). The Mount Zion, as the seat of God’s earthly throne, cannot be removed, but abideth for ever (Ps. cxxv. 1). Therefore Edom’s shout of triumph over the fallen Israel shall be turned into wailing for her own fall. She had greedily thought to take possession of the ancient high places of the people of God. Nay more, she had turned into derision the promise of perpetuity which God had given to His people, as though that promise was now proved to be abortive, and had sneered at Israel’s connection with Jehovah as though He were unable to save them.” –*Fausset*.

Ver. 2. “Many were the enemies of God’s people, but they so conspired in one design, and were so one in their humours, enmity, and carriage, that the prophet speaks of them as one, and

²³George Barlow, David Gilkison Watt, Thomas Henry Leale. A homiletic commentary on the Book of the prophet Ezekiel. Richard D. Dickinson, London. 1890.

²⁴Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. The prophecies of the prophet Ezekiel elucidated. T. & T. Clark. 1869.

²⁵Carl Friedrich Keil. Biblical commentary on the prophecies of Ezekiel Vol. 2. T. & T. Clark. 1876. p. 101.

²⁶Frederic Gardiner. Ezekiel. In: Charles John Ellicott, ed. An Old Testament commentary for English readers. Vol. v. 1884. p. 302.

²⁷Wilhelm Julius Schröder. The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel; tr. by Patrick Fairbairn, William Findlay. Johann Peter Lange, ed.: A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: critical, doctrinal, and homiletical, Volume 13. T. & T. Clark, 1876. p. 345.

²⁸Heinrich Andreas Christoph Hävernich. Commentar über den Propheten Ezechiel. Erlangen: C. Heyder. 1843.

particularly of Edom.” – Pool.

– “Thus they mocked at the promises of God, as if their eternity were now come to an end.” –*Berleburg Bible*.

– “The scorn of the world an old experience. Thus were the prophets and Christ reproached, and the Lord said that men would speak all manner of evil against His disciples (Matt. v. 11), and Paul, that we should be a spectacle to the world (1 Cor. iv. 9).” –*Heim-Hoffman*.

– “The ‘perpetual heights’ (ver. 2) are the natural mountains as a figure of the unchangeable grandeur of which Israel boasted, because it had the Eternal for its protector, and in Him the security of its own perpetuity; comp. Ps. cxxv. 2.” –*Hengstenberg*.

– “This is very nearly the same expression as in Gen. xlix. 26; Deut. xxxiii. 15, where it is translated ‘everlasting (or lasting) hills,’ and is probably an allusion to those passages. ‘The enemy’ is a general term, which may refer to Edom; but from the following verses it is more likely that it is used for the heathen at large. When Israel’s land had been left desolate, the surrounding nations claimed that God’s promise to His people had failed, and that they themselves might now enter upon its secure possession.” –*Gardiner*.

Ver. 3. “Ye are made to ascend upon the lip of the tongue and upon the evil fame of the people. God takes it extreme ill that His people should be traduced and defamed, which hath been their lot in all ages, but He will not fail to vindicate them and to avenge them.” –*Trapp*.

– “God knows, sees, and hears the misery of His children: that must comfort them, therefore they cannot despair. How ready men often are not only to count up the sufferings of others, but also in their talk to exaggerate still more.” –*Starck*.

Ver. 5. “What God calls His cannot be lost for ever. He is jealous *with* but also *for* His possession.—God lets His people be stricken only by whom He will; one cannot simply open the mouth and devour them at pleasure.” –*Schröder*.

– “For ‘cast it out,’ in the last clause of the verse, read, empty it out. The idea of casting out a land for a prey is incongruous, and the other sense is admissible. –*Gardiner*.

[Perhaps it is not only the literal land that is cast out for a prey, but *spiritual things* that the land represents, the promises of the gospel.]

Ver. 6. “To these lifeless creatures He directeth His speech to show that every creature groaneth and waileth for the redemption of our bodies. It fareth the better also in this life present, for the elect’s sake, as it was once cursed for man’s sin, and hath lain bedridden, as it were, ever since.” –*Trapp*.

Ver. 7. “The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach on God’s people will sooner or later have it turned upon themselves; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach; at furthest, in that day when all the impenitent shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.” –*M. Henry*.

– “They shall be paid home in their own coin, be overshot in their own bow, be covered with their own confusion.” –*Trapp*.

Vers. 8-15. “While Edom and Tyre rejoiced in their sins at the fall of Jerusalem, the jealousy of the Lord was roused to say that they should return, and as Jeremiah had said that fields and vineyards should again be sold in that city. The promises, like clouds of refreshing rain, scatter their blessings on every age. They were in one form or other continually repeated, and in all the glowing powers of Oriental language. But however justified the prophets might be in the use of hyperbole and metaphor, they could not exceed the truth, which would have been the case had their promises been restricted to the weak but rising times of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. And if the waste places were rebuilt, why then, whole Palestina, dost thou lie very much in ruins to this day? Consequently the gracious cloud of covenant blessings only scattered its drops on Jewish ages, and gave showers to the primitive church, reserving its fulness, or the residue of the Spirit, for the mountain of His holiness in the glory of the latter day.” –*Sutcliffe*.

– “A certain fulfilment of the most literal kind began at an early period to be given to the prophecy. People of the stock of Israel did again possess the land of their fathers; by them the mountains of Israel were again cultivated, and for them the land yielded its fruit; there again, as of old, the seed of man and of beast did greatly increase and multiply, so that the region was known for ages as one of the most fertile and prosperous in Asia, and that too while the old and hereditary enemies of Israel in the neighbourhood sank into comparative insignificance and lost their original place in the scale of nations. Had Israel but seen in all this the hand of God, and viewed the whole in connection with His unchangeable righteousness, there should certainly have been nothing wanting to complete the correspondence between the description of the prophet and the facts of history. But the old relations of the covenant people with the kingdom of God give way; the outward Israel are no longer distinctively the covenant people—all the children of faith of every land become the seed of blessing and heirs according to the promise. And while it is only under the Gospel dispensation that we can expect the perfect realisation of the promised good, we must now no longer expect it after the old form, or according to the simply literal interpretation. The good is too great and expansive to be now shut up within such narrow limits, for since wherever there is a royal priesthood offering up spiritual services to God, there the incense and offerings of the temple are perpetuated (Mal. i. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 5), so wherever there are members of Christ there also are the mountains of Canaan, there are the people who have the promise of all things for their portion, on whom descends the blessing—life for evermore. Nor can the old evils properly return again, for the good is avowedly connected with nothing but a spiritual qualification, and is entirely dissevered from a merely ancestral relationship or a political existence in the world.” –*Fairbairn*.²⁹

Ver. 8. “Thus shall the ruined churches bring fruit, wine, and bread, that is, the mysteries of doctrine to the profit of the people, that they may no longer be rude and ignorant, but a people taught of God. Therefore the spiritual husbandmen, vine-dressers, till and sow diligently. With the plough of fear they turn up the soil of the heart in which they sow the new word of the Gospel, whereby the forsaken churches become planted anew; and these are the mountains which

²⁹Patrick Fairbairn. *Ezekiel, and the Book of His Prophecy: An Exposition*. T. & T. Clark, 1851. p. 344.

the Lord addresses.” –*Heim-Hoffman*.

Vers. 9-11. “The Lord declares to the people of Israel, ‘Behold, I am for you.’ Since God is ultimately to be for them, no power can avail anything that is against them. God will ‘turn to’ His people in mercy, and they shall at the same time turn to Him in repentance. The restoration to their own land is to be literal, and all things and all persons in the restored state of Israel are to share in the coming blessedness—the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, the houses, the cities, man and beast.’ So in the case of the spiritual Israel, the true Church: she is now a little and despised flock, but she shall at last be a multitude which no man can number (Rev. vii. 9); whereas the antichristian faction, and all the carnal, worldly, and unbelieving, who shall for a time seem to triumph over the Church of Christ (Rev. xi. 7-11), shall perish awfully and everlastingly.” –*Fausset*.

Ver. 9. “It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.” –*M. Henry*.

– “‘I will turn unto you.’ Look towards you with regard to what has been and is your estate, your sufferings, which were less than you deserved, yet were the greater because ye are mine. Your inhabitants gave me the back and sinned against me, and I turned the back on you and regarded you not: then all darkness covered you, now my face shall be towards you, and you shall prosper and be fruitful to the comfort of those that shall dwell in you and plough and sow you.” –*Pool*.

Ver. 10. “They are far wrong who consider a great increase of men as a curse because it gives rise to want and distress. God can nourish many as well as few, and we should live moderately, avoid endeavouring to surpass others in expenditure, and seek for concord in families.” –*Luther*.

Ver. 11. “God’s kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom, and His Church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself and be again replenished.” –*M. Henry*.

– “The sitting (ver. 11) forms the contrast to the lying low. ‘Better than in your past:’ this was fulfilled when He appeared in the holy land, who could say of Himself, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,’ and who far outshone Solomon in all his glory.” –*Hengstenberg*.

– “‘Will multiply upon you.’—The promises of abundant blessing of this, with the previous and following verses, certainly received a partial fulfilment at the time following the return from the exile, and in the subsequent Maccabean period; yet one cannot but feel that the language of promise, if taken only in a literal sense, goes far beyond the historic fulfilment, and hence that these earthly blessings are the shadow and type by which is set forth the higher spiritual blessing given to the Church without stint.” –*Gardiner*.

– “‘Settle you after your old estates.’—This does not mean that particular families are to have again each their own former inheritance—though, doubtless, this was true, as far as circumstances allowed, of the comparatively small number of families who returned—but that they shall in general be settled and prosperous, as of old. And even this promise is eclipsed by the next clause: ‘I will do better unto you than at your beginnings,’ which can only be considered as fulfilled in the spiritual blessings, far higher and, better than anything of earth, of the Messianic kingdom.” –*Gardiner*.

Ver. 12. “The promised good is always to be understood with the condition that men repent (Mal. iii. 7). The self-evident condition is, that they do not fill up the measure of their sins anew. There is no charter of immunity against Ye would not. How often is the country or a district made to bear the blame when there comes a pestilence among men or cattle, when it should be known that sin gaining the upper hand provoked God’s wrath thereto.” –*Lange*.

– “As already observed by Jerome, the Jews refer this to a kingdom of a thousand years, when Jerusalem shall be built and the temple of the latter chapters of our prophet erected; while in the opinion of others, the fulfilment took place under Zerubbabel, which cannot possibly be the case, as also Jerome grants, and then compares the Christian Chiliasts with the Jewish dreamers of their millennium. Hence we must abide by the spiritual interpretation regarding these blessings promised to the people, to which we are directed besides by Christ and the apostles.” –*Luther*.

Ver. 13. “‘Thou land devourest up men.’—Comp. Num. xiii. 82, a passage probably in the prophet’s mind, though he uses it for a different reason. Israel had so often sinned, and so often, in consequence, suffered the Divine punishments, that the heathen, not recognising the true cause, superstitiously attributed the result to something in the land itself.” –*Gardiner*.

– “With the promises of this chapter comp. Isa. liv. 1–5. It is impossible to interpret that passage otherwise than of spiritual blessings; and Ezekiel, as a devout Jew, as well as a prophet, was thoroughly penetrated with the same hopes as are there expressed by the evangelic prophet.” –*Gardiner*.

Ver. 15. “‘Thou shalt no more make thy people stumble’ (ver. 15); that is, no more make them unfortunate. Moral stumbling is not to be thought of in this connection. The land had no part in this. The covenant people stumbled afterwards indeed (Rom. xi. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 8); but God’s gift and grace remained the same, even when they were ungratefully despised. The rock on which they stumbled was the rock of salvation! –*Hengstenberg*.

[Taking the land and mountains in Ezekiel’s prophecy *literally* causes people to stumble. When the mountains are interpreted as God’s *promises* and *prophecies*, the prophecy makes sense; when they are properly understood, they won’t cause people to stumble.]

– “‘Cause to fall.’—In the last four verses there is a delicate play upon words which cannot well be expressed in English. Two verbs are used, each of them twice (‘bereave’ in verse 14 should be cause to fall, as in margin), one of them meaning to bereave, the other to cause to fall; and these verbs have the same radical letters, but with the first two of them transposed.” –*Gardiner*.

– “In reviewing this whole prophecy (chaps, xxxv.–xxxvi. 15), it is evident that the time had in view by the prophet was one in which Edom still existed as a nation, and was rejoicing in the fall of Israel. It cannot, therefore, look forward to any literal, but still future, accomplishment, since Edom, as a nation, has long since disappeared; and no future people, occupying the same territory or bearing the same name, could possibly sustain the same historic relations to Israel as are here attributed to Edom. Whatever, therefore, is to be literally understood in the prophecy must have been long ago fulfilled. And this was much. Israel was restored to its land, and there greatly multiplied, so that the country became for ages one of the most fertile and prosperous in Asia. At the same time, the sinfulness of the people, as of old, hindered the fulness of blessing

that was within their reach. But a small part of them availed themselves of the opportunity to return to their land; and they who did so suffered themselves so to live that when the crowning blessing of the ages was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, the mass of the nation rejected and crucified Him. The blessings promised were fulfilled literally as far as the sinfulness of the people allowed; but inasmuch as these prevented anything like the full realisation of the terms of the prophecy, and as no future realisation of these is possible, on account of the total change of conditions and circumstances, it is plain that under these earthly terms the prophet, like his predecessors, Isaiah and the others, sets forth the glories of the spiritual future, and uses earthly blessings as the types of those better ones which are heavenly." –*Gardiner*.

Strange things happen to mountains

In Genesis, when Jacob blessed his son Joseph, he said that the blessings he had inherited extended to "*the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.*" [Genesis 49:26]

In Joshua, the mountains *melted* in the presence of God, at Sinai.

Judges 5:5

The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

The mountains *skipped* like rams, when Israel went out of Egypt, David said. "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." [Psalm 114:4]

Isaiah said that "the mountain of the Lord's house" would be raised up, and established in the top of the mountains. [Isaiah 2:1-3]

In the New Testament, Mt. Sion is raised up to heaven! [Hebrews 12:22]

Isaiah described mountains melting, but he meant melting with the *blood* of God's adversaries.

Isaiah 34:3

Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

Isaiah said that the mountains would all be *made low*, and valleys would be *exulted*. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." [Isaiah 40:4]

Mountains and hills, he said, will *sing*:

Isaiah 55:12

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Jeremiah said the mountains *trembled* . “I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.” [Jeremiah 4:24]

Ezekiel said God’s sheep “*wander* through *all* the mountains.” “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.” [Ezekiel 34:6]

Ezekiel said they will be brought back to the *mountains of Israel*. “I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” [Ezekiel 34:14]

Blasphemies are spoken against the *mountains of Israel*; [Ezekiel 35:12] they are made desolate, swallowed up on every side, possessed by the heathen, taken up in the lips of talkers, and they become an *infamy* of the people. [Ezekiel 36:3] They bear the *shame* of the heathen. [Ezekiel 36:6]

The hordes of Gog and Magog come against the *mountains of Israel*. Addressing these invaders, Ezekiel wrote: “After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.” [Ezekiel 38:8]

In Daniel, there is a mountain that *grows*, from a single stone, which smites the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and eventually fills the whole earth. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” [Daniel 2:35]

The mountains drop down *new wine*, in the prophecy of Joel. Hills flow with milk. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.” [Joel 3:18]

Also in Joel, an army of locusts *leaps* upon the tops of mountains. [Joel 2:5]

The mountains in Amos drop *sweet wine*, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” [Amos 9:13]

Nahum said the mountains *quake*. “The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.” [Nahum 1:5]

Habakkuk said the mountains were *scattered*.

Habakkuk 3:6

He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

Zechariah said that the Lord's feet will stand upon the mount of Olives, and it will *cleave in the midst*, and half of it will *remove* towards the north, and half of it *remove* towards the south.

Zechariah 14:4

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Jesus said, *flee* to the mountains. "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:" [Mark 13:14]

As he made his way to the place where he would be crucified, Jesus said to the woman who followed him, weeping for him: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" [Luke 23:28- 31]

In the sixth seal of Revelation, every mountain and island is *moved out of its place*. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." [Revelation 6:14] Men say to the mountains, "fall on us!" [Revelation 6:15-17]

Again in Revelation, mountains are *not found*. "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." [Revelation 16:20]

The mountains of these prophecies are not literal ones; they represent *blessings*, and promises of God, as Jacob said when he blessed his son Joseph. The blessings of God are represented by *mountains!* That is why Jesus said, "*Flee to the mountains!*"

The resting place

One of the symbolic meanings attached to mountains in prophecy is connected the fact that the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. In many prophecies the mountains are symbolic of blessings, promises, and revelations of God. The Genesis account of the flood connects mountains with rest. After the flood men tried to build "a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven." The progressive revelation of Gods plan in prophecy focuses on mountains, especially mount Zion, and a city, Jerusalem, which were raised up to heaven in a spiritual sense. These contrast with the tower of Babel, a kind of man-made mountain, and the city of Babylon. In the table below, references to mountains are listed, and the possible symbolic meanings attached to them in prophecy are noted.

Mountains	Reference	Notes
Mt. Ararat	Gen. 8:4	the mountain where the ark rested was a resting place
the tops of the mountains	Gen. 8:5	mountains emerging above the flood waters were a promise of better things to come
the tower of Babel	Gen. 11:4	the tower of Babel was like a high mountain
blessings, promises	Gen. 49:26	Jacob said his blessings extended "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills."
prophecies about Israel	Num. 23:28	Balaams' predictions about Israel were all given from high places
Caleb's inheritance	Josh. 14:12	Caleb said, "give me this mountain"
a rock	Psa. 18:2	"The LORD is my rock"
God's righteousness	Psa. 36:6	"thy righteousness is like the great mountains"
a source of help	Psa. 121:1	"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."
mount Zion and Jerusalem	Isa. 2:1-2	the mountain of the Lord's house was raised up, and established at the top of the mountains, when Christ ascended to the throne of his Father
mountains made low	Isa. 40:2-4	prophecies are misinterpreted, and discredited
mountains threshed	Isa. 41:15	prophecies and interpretations are compared, and truth is separated from chaff
Babylon	Jer. 51:25	Babylon, representing man-made religion, will be a burnt mountain
a nation	Ezek. 17:23	Ezekiel wrote about "the mountain of the height of Israel"

Mountains	Reference	Notes
false religious beliefs	Ezek. 34:6	God's sheep wander on all the mountains
the mountains of Israel	Ezek 36:1-15	prophecy is discredited by false teachers, but that will change
a very high mountain	Ezek. 40:2	in his vision of the temple, Ezekiel was set upon a high mountain
from a stone to a mountain	Dan. 2:35	God's kingdom is a mountain that ultimately fills the earth
the mount of Olives splits	Zech. 14:4	two halves of the mount of Olives moving apart may represent two opposite interpretations of the Olivet discourse: preterism and futurism
blessings	Matt. 5:1-12	the beatitudes in the sermon on the mount
a truth stated by Peter	Matt. 16:18	Peter said Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church."
the mount of Olives	Matt. 24-25	the Olivet Discourse
mount of transfiguration	Mark 9:1-3	a vision of the kingdom
rocks of the mountains	Luke 23:30	men say to the rocks of the mountains, "fall on us;" rocks represent the words of scripture; this depicts nations wanting salvation and eternal life
dens and rocks	Rev. 6:16	men hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: they claim the promises, but evade scriptures that say Christ reigns as king

Mountains	Reference	Notes
untouchable	Heb. 12:22	"Ye are come to mount Zion," a mountain that cannot be touched [vs. 18]
promises	2 Pet. 1:4	great and precious promises may allude to prophetic mountains
mountains not found	Rev. 16:20	prophecies misinterpreted, and applied to the wrong people at the wrong time
a spiritual mountain	Rev. 21:10	John was carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain from which he saw the heavenly Jerusalem

How are mountains connected with the gospel?

A connection between the mountains and the gospel exists, because David wrote that God's righteousness is like the great mountains, and the apostle Paul said that the gospel reveals God's righteousness. [Psalm 36:6; Romans 1:16-17]

In the prophecies of scripture the mountains are symbols, and in Genesis 49:26, they represent blessings and promises of God. Jacob said, when he blessed Joseph his son, "*The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.*" His blessings were promises, which were high, like high mountains, as they were spiritual rather than earthly and temporal. They were also eternal.

The great mountains are awe-inspiring, and God's promises are also awesome. Jesus listed several of these in the sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of God is represented by a mountain in Daniel 2:35. It begins as a stone, that smites the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and grows into a mountain that fills the earth.

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

The promise of comfort is supplied by the holy Spirit that Jesus sends to guide the church to the truth.

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The saints are promised not only the earth, but all things. Paul said, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" [Romans 8:32]

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Those who seek God's righteousness, will find it. Many scriptures contain promises that those who seek the truth with all their heart will find it. [Deuteronomy 4:29-31; Proverbs 8:17; Jeremiah 29:13; Luke 11:9; Hebrews 11:6]

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The promise of mercy is surely one of the promises Peter referred to as "exceeding great and precious." [2 Peter 1:4]

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

John said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." [1 John 3:2]

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Peace is on those who are part of God's new creation. Paul wrote, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." [Galatians 6:15-16]

Matthew 5:10-12

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Christians who are faithful are promised an eternal reward.

Jesus said, flee to the mountains

In the Olivet Discourse the questions the disciples asked Jesus, when would these things happen? they were referring to the fate of the temple, and wanted to know, what will be the sign of his coming, and of the end of the world?

The disciples would have been well aware of Old Testament prophecies about the “day of the Lord;” for example, it is mentioned in Joel 2:1, and Zechariah 14:1. Zechariah’s prophecy foretold the cleaving of the mount of Olives, half of it moving to the north, and half of it moving to the south.

It cannot be an accident that Jesus’ prophecies about the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the end of the world, were associated with the mount of Olives. Jesus stood on the mount of Olives many times during his ministry, and even lived there, which fulfilled the part of Zechariah’s prophecy that said “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.” [Zechariah 14:4]

When the Romans besieged Jerusalem, the mount of Olives did not cleave in its midst, in any sense whatsoever. If any Jews at the time thought that the Roman armies besieging Jerusalem might be the ones Zechariah had foretold, and that God would soon fight on their behalf, and cleave the mount of Olives, and send awful plagues on the Romans and even upon their horses, mules, asses, and camels, they were mistaken. Many were killed, or became slaves.

No doubt, Jesus included the Jewish war when he said, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” [Matthew 24:6]

When Jesus said, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh,” [Luke 21:20] it is unlikely he meant the earthly Jerusalem. Consider, where were those apostles when Jerusalem was under siege by the Roman armies? Many of them were probably already dead. And how could anyone but those in the immediate area have seen Jerusalem compassed by the Roman armies?

At that time, the church was established in many nations; most Christians had probably never been to the earthly Jerusalem, and would not get to see any armies camped around it. This applies to most Christians who have ever lived. But every Christian, in every age, has come to the heavenly Jerusalem. [Hebrews 12:22] And that one has been compassed by armies, not of flesh and blood, but the armies of “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” who promote “spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The armies that compass the holy city of the saints are those described in prophecies such as Isaiah 34:2; Ezekiel 38:4; Joel 2:11; Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 9:16; 20:8-9. The Roman armies that laid siege to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. were a sign that the beginning of the spiritual desolation of the heavenly Jerusalem was near.

I suggest the Mount of Olives represents the Olivet Discourse of Jesus. His prophecy has been figuratively “cleaved in the midst,” and displaced to the north, and to the south, by the two opposite interpretations, preterism and futurism, or dispensationalism!

Zechariah said to flee to the valley between those two mountains; that is, apply the things Jesus taught in his Olivet Discourse to the whole age of the church, not to Jews of the first century, or to the Jews in a hypothetical future seven year tribulation. The church is the "Jerusalem" of Zechariah's prophecies, which God promised to defend!

If there is anything that the history of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD should teach us, it is that the Jerusalem of prophecy is *not* the earthly Jerusalem. But, both preterism and dispensationalism apply most prophecies about Jerusalem to the *earthly* city. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Jerusalem to which those prophecies apply is the *heavenly* city, the Church. This explains why Jews living in the first century, who hoped for the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecies, were disappointed.

Jesus referred to the *blowing of a trumpet*; "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call," [Matthew 24:31] which connects the Olivet Discourse to the book of Revelation, and the seven trumpets described there. These allude to the trumpets at Jericho, which stood at the gateway to the promised land. The trumpets in Revelation precede the resurrection, when the saints of all ages are to be raised up, and inherit the promise of life, and be rewarded for their works.

Jesus included many people, "all the tribes of the earth," among those affected by the events that he described in the Olivet Discourse. But the events of 70 AD were local to the area of Judea. He said, "all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." [Matthew 24:30]

The scope of the events Jesus described is universal. Isaiah said, "the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations." [Isaiah 34:2] The armies described by Ezekiel and by Joel also involve *many people*. [Ezekiel 38:6; Joel 2:2; 3:12]

Zechariah said, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people." [Zechariah 12:3] All nations would gather against it. [Zechariah 14:2] This did not apply to the events of 70 AD, where the armies were Roman armies. And the Jerusalem to which these prophecies apply is the heavenly one. Jerusalem has been raised up, as Isaiah had said it would be. [Isaiah 2:1-3]

Jesus said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." [Luke 21:24] This is the captivity foretold by the prophets. Joel spoke of it; [Joel 3:1, 3, 6] Zechariah said, "half of the city shall go forth into captivity." [Zechariah 14:2] But this prophecy was not fulfilled in 70 AD; instead, the entire city was captured. It applies to the heavenly city, not the earthly one; people have been taken captive in sects, and cults, and denominations, and they are captive to various flawed interpretations and traditions.

Jesus warned his disciples to watch; he warned about thieves, and becoming victims of theft. Peter said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." [2 Peter 3:10] Jesus spoke of our *spiritual house* being broken up, and the loss of potential eternal rewards. This is the house he spoke of in the sermon on the mount, when he compared the person who did what he taught to a man who built his house on a rock. [Matthew 7:24] Jesus said: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have

watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.” [Matthew 24:43]

When we compare what he said here to other prophecies, the members of the army described in Joel “climb up upon the houses,” and “enter in at the windows like a thief.” The hordes of Gog and Magog seek “To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” [Ezekiel 38:12] Zechariah said, “thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.” [Zechariah 14:1]

According to these prophecies, the saints have been “spoiled” in some fashion, by the invading armies. Evidently, there are spiritual blessings available that they are missing. Some of the gifts of the spirit are absent; the holy city is trampled by Gentiles. [Luke 21:24] Compare with Revelation 11:2, “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”

Mountains are very prominent in the Olivet Discourse. The mount of Olives gives its name to the prophecy. Jesus said, when you see the abomination of desolation, “Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.” [Matthew 24:16]

Most people reading this think he meant, flee for self-preservation. But Jesus also said, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” [Luke 17:33] Clearly his warning to flee to the mountains was *not* for self-preservation.

Joel wrote: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.” [Joel 3:18]

When Jesus spoke of new wine in his parable, it represented new teaching, and new understanding. [Matthew 9:17] The mountains of Israel represent revelations of God, and promises, and covenants. The promises of God are the “mountains” that Jesus meant we should flee to.

Ezekiel said an enemy had claimed the mountains as a possession, and had made them desolate, and swallowed them up on every side, so they were “taken up in the lips of talkers,” and were “an infamy of the people.” They had become “a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about.” [Ezekiel 36:2-4]

God promised that the mountains would “shoot forth branches,” and “yield fruit to my people of Israel.” “I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it.”

These mountains represent the invisible spiritual things promised to the saints. Understanding prophecy is one of them. The enemy will be overcome. “And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD.” [Ezekiel 38:21]

Another feature of the Olivet Discourse, that this prophecy shares with other prophecies, is that it refers to clouds. Christ is revealed “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” [Matthew 24:30]

Clouds and thick darkness are associated with “a great people and a strong,” in Joel 2:2. The hordes of Gog and Magog “come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it

shall be in the latter days.” [Ezekiel 38:16]

John wrote, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” [Revelation 1:7] Peter described false teachers as “clouds that are carried with a tempest.” [2 Peter 2:17] Similarly, Jude wrote: “clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” [Jude 1:12]

These contrast with clouds such as Zechariah described, bright clouds, that give showers of rain, the rain representing the word of God. “Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” [Zechariah 10:1]

Jesus said, “then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” [Matthew 24:30] This is about universal repentance. Joel wrote, “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:” [Joel 2:12] “Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” [Joel 2:17]

Zechariah said, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” [Zechariah 12:10] The ones who pierced him are not Jews who lived in the first century, but everyone who truly repents. Isaiah said, “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.” [Isaiah 53:5]

The feet of them that bring good tidings

Isaiah wrote,

Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Four things are brought together in the prophecy: good tidings, mountains, the feet of the messenger, and the fact that God reigns. The meaning of *good tidings* was identified by Paul, who applied the scripture to those preaching the Gospel. [Romans 10:15-16]

Commenting on the mountains referred to in Isaiah 52:7, J. A. Alexander wrote: “The mountains meant may be the mountains round Jerusalem, or the word may be more indefinitely understood as adding a trait to the prophetic picture.”³⁰ Evidently, he was somewhat mystified by the reference

³⁰Joseph Addison Alexander. *Isaiah translated and explained*, Vol 2., 1852. p. 274.
<http://books.google.ca/books?id=5qMCAAAAQAAJ>

to mountains in the prophecy. Other commentators have struggled to explain why the prophet refers to mountains in this verse.

In another prophecy Isaiah spoke of mountains as becoming a *way*. “And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.” [Isaiah 49:11]

The idea of mountains becoming a *way* or a *highway* underlies the prophecy that John the Baptist proclaimed, which he borrowed from Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:4-5

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

A metaphorical highway to God is “departing from evil.”

Proverbs 16:17

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Removing stumblingblocks out of the way is a similar idea. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 57:10-11

but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

In Isaiahs prophecies, mountains represent the blessings and promises of God, and revelations of a spiritual nature. There is something beautiful about the feet of the saints upon the mountains because it implies that they possess those promises. One of the great promises of Jesus was that the Spirit will guide his saints to all truth. [John 16:13]

The mention of feet in Isaiah 52:7 alludes to the walk of believers, and the direction of their lives.

God promises to direct those that put their trust in him. Proverbs 3:6 says, “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

God will “keep the feet of his saints.” [1 Samuel 2:9] That is, he guides them. David said men are blessed according to where they walk, stand, and sit. [Psalms 1:1-2]

God keeps the feet of his saints from falling, [Psalms 56:13] and lights the path of their feet by his word. [Psa. 119:105]

The righteous refrain their feet from evil. The psalmist wrote, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.” [Psalms 119:101] Paul said the saints feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. [Ephesians 6:15]

They seek the holy city Jerusalem, and Christ's kingdom. The psalmist wrote, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." [Psalm 122:2] They have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. [Hebrews 12:22]

Ezekiel said God will search for his sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered, and feed them on the mountains of Israel. [Ezekiel 34:12-13]

Proverbs 4:26 says, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."

God gives strength to his people; Habakkuk wrote: "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." [Habakkuk 3:19]

The prophet Nahum wrote using almost the same words that Isaiah used: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" [Nahum 1:15] In the last part of the same verse he wrote: "O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."

Paul wrote, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." [Romans 16:20]

The prophecy of Isaiah 52:7 is about the feet of those who declare to Zion that God reigns, which implies that this is not generally known in the Church. Some dispensationalists deny it, for example. But many Scriptures confirm it. Hebrews 12:22 suggests prophetic scriptures that refer to mount Zion apply to the Church. It says of all believers, "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." This being the case, Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," shows Christ reigns as king among his saints in his Church, even though some don't believe it.

Similarly Psalm 48:2, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" applies to the Church that Christ is building in this present age. The phrase "sides of the north" is applied to heaven in Isaiah 14:13. Jesus said Jerusalem is the city of the great king. [Matthew 5:35]

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her?" [Jeremiah 8:19]

Matthew 21:4-6 shows that Zechariah's prophecy, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," [Zechariah 9:9] has been fulfilled. Jesus entered Jerusalem, in the last days of his earthly ministry, as the promised king. He acknowledged being a king, when he stood before Pilate: "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." [John 18:37]

Jesus is now an immortal king, in the heavenly Jerusalem, reigning among his saints. When he ascended to heaven after his resurrection, Jerusalem and mount Zion were also raised up, and established in the top of the mountains, above the hills, as foretold in Isaiah 2:1-2. "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORDS throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children

of men.” [Psalms 11:4] In the present age, the Church is the temple of God. [Ephesians 2:20]

Mountains and rivers of peace

The scriptures say that God is around his people like the mountains around Jerusalem, and like broad rivers and streams.

Psalm 125:2

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

Isaiah 33:21

But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

In many other scriptures, like the above example, mountains and rivers of a spiritual nature are related.

A mountain and a river are both associated with *the temple*. The temple is sometimes called mount Zion; Psalm 125:1 says that mount Zion cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Ezekiel 47:1 describes the river that flows from the threshold of the temple.

Similarly a mountain and rivers are associated with *Jerusalem*. In Isaiah 2:2, Jerusalem is exulted to the top of the mountains; in Zechariah 14:8, rivers of living water flow from Jerusalem.

Another parallel is the mountains of Israel becoming desolate, and the waters and fountains polluted. In Ezekiel 36:4 the mountains of Israel are made desolate, and a prey and a derision to the heathen. In Ezekiel 34:18, the waters where the sheep come to drink are fouled by feet of other animals. In Revelation 8:11, fountains of waters are turned to wormwood and made bitter.

In the mountains, men hide in caves and dens in the rocks, which may be compared to the miry places in the river described by Ezekiel, that are not healed.

Luke 23:30

Jesus said, “Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”

Ezekiel 47:11

the miry places in the course of the river are not healed

Revelation 6:15

men hide in the dens and caves of the mountains

The saints are encouraged to go up to the high mountain, in Isaiah 40:9; and 52:7. Jesus said, flee to the mountains; Mark 13:14. In John 7:38, he promised that rivers of living water will flow from the belly of whoever believes in him.

Both mountains and rivers are *a way* for God's people. Isaiah 49:11 says the mountains will become a way for the saints; the sermon on the mount also defines a way. Jesus said "narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" [Matthew 7:14]. David said, "he leadeth me beside the still waters." [Psalm 23:2] In Jeremiah 31:9, Israel is led by the rivers in a straight way; in Revelation 22:1-3, a river of the water of life flows in the street of the holy city.

On the mountains of Israel, God's sheep will find *pasture*, by the rivers. [Ezekiel 34:13]

Mountains and rivers are both mentioned as places for *prayer*. [Matthew 14:23; Acts 16:13]

In the gospels, a mountain was the place of Jesus' transfiguration, [Matthew 17:2] and the Jordan river was the place where the Spirit descended upon him like a dove.

Joy is connected with both mountains and with a river. Mount Zion is "the joy of the whole earth," [Psalm 48:2] where God will make a feast for all people; [Isaiah 25:6] in Isaiah 44:23 the mountains break forth into singing; Psalm 46:4 says "there is a river that makes glad the city of God."

Peace is connected with both mountains and rivers. Psalm 72:3 says "The mountains shall bring peace to the people." Isaiah 66:12 says "I will extend peace to her like a river."

Mountains and rivers are each associated with the other; Joel 3:18 says mountains will drop wine, hills will flow with milk; in Isaiah 30:25 and 41:18, God will make rivers in high places.