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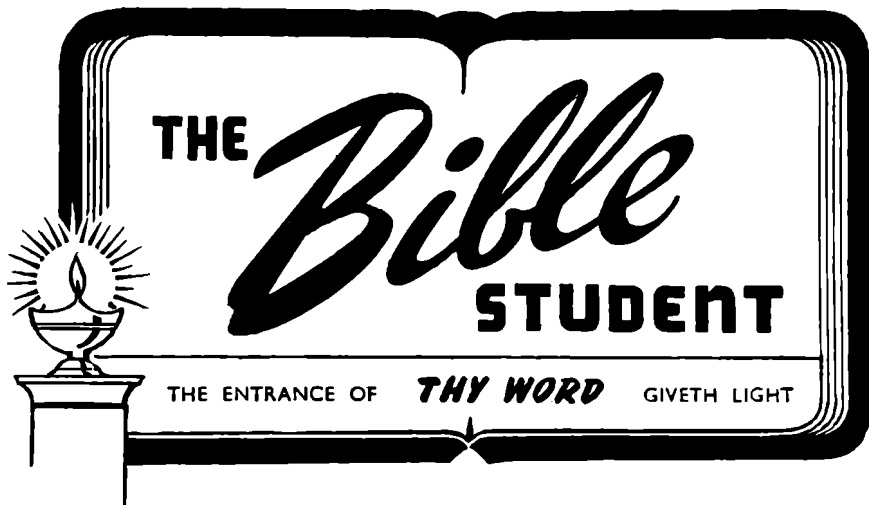
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

The Fourth Step

The fourth step is *Dependence* or, 'Naked faith which is independent of sensible devotion or consolation and which because it believes in a dawn can walk undismayed in the darkness'. This according to the Scripture is, 'The just shall live by faith'. All depends upon the 'dependence of faith'. The mighty God has spoken. We have heard His voice above all voices and we must obey. By faith we have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. By grace we are in the kingdom and the kingdom is within us in the person of the King.

'Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of the ages. —*Amen*'.

THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL

H. L. ELLISON, B.A., B.D.

A Lament (19: 1-14)

Though God had held out His promise of life to those exiles that would walk in His ways (ch. 18), there were two who could not benefit from it because of the sins of others, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, and so Ezekiel lifts up a lament over them.

There are numerous variations in the interpretation of this chapter, but this seems to be the only one that takes its position—due as I believe to Ezekiel himself—in the book seriously and does justice to it. This becomes the more obvious when we realize that the second half (v. 10-14) comes in all probability from a slightly later date. Many see in these verses a prediction of the ruin of Zedekiah, but there is no claim that a prediction is being made. In addition it would involve the verbs in vs. 12-14 being taken as prophetic perfects,¹ but this idiom is seldom used unless

¹ To stress the certainty of the prediction, or the vividness of the vision the prophet often uses a 'perfect' where a 'future' would be expected. In most cases where a literal translation would create ambiguity the future has been used in English versions.

the fact is made clear from the nature of the passage. It is far simpler to see two laments in the chapter; vs. 1-9 bewail the sad plight of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, while vs. 10-14, written after the fatal outcome of Zedekiah's rebellion, show its fatal effect on Jehoiachin's fortunes. In this way too the complete change of metaphor is most easily explained.

The mother (v. 2)—'What a lioness was your mother among lions!' (RSV)—is the kingdom of Judah. Jehoiakim is not mentioned because his fall was of his own creating. He was one of the most despicable of the descendants of David, for whom the only suitable fate was that he should 'be buried with the burial of an ass' (Jer. 22:19), i.e., no burial at all. Though it is not the reason for his omission, Ezekiel's imagery could in any case well dispense with him, for Jehoiakim had never been chosen king by his subjects (2 Kings 23:35).

As elsewhere in Ezekiel's allegories (cf. Vol. XXV, p. 64) we must avoid stressing the details. It is of no importance that Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin were, in fact, given little or no possibility of showing what they were capable of. Indeed, just here lies their tragedy. 2 Kings 23:32; 24:9 pass condemnation on them, but in the three months that each of them reigned there is no suggestion that either had merited his fate. Jeremiah strikes a similar note of regret in 22:10 ff (Shallum=Jehoahaz) and 22:24-30 (Coniah=Jeconiah=Jehoiachin). The young lion (*kepir*) is never a lion-cub but the lion in his first strength, cf. Is. 31:4; Amos 3:4; Mic. 5:8, etc.

Of Jehoahaz' fate we know nothing, and we may well assume that he did not long survive in Egypt. Apparently Jehoiachin had lenient treatment at first (cf. Vol. XXIII, p. 150), but the effect of Zedekiah's rebellion was to land him in prison, where he stayed for twenty-seven years. When he was finally released (2 Kings 25:27-30), it was as a broken man of fifty-five with no hope of restoration to his throne and with the right of succession for his descendants denied by God (Jer. 22:29 f, cf. 1 Ch. 3:17). And so for the king in prison through the criminal folly of another Ezekiel laments in vs. 10-14.

The meaning has been obscured by textual difficulties. Already the rabbinic exegetes recognized that 'in thy blood' (v. 10)

is meaningless. 'In a vineyard' (RSV) may be correct. A reference to RV mg. in v. 11 will show that the grammar in Hebrew is self-contradictory. RSV, which has the general support of LXX, will give the approximate force of what Ezekiel will have written:

Its strongest stem became	a ruler's sceptre;
it towered aloft	among the thick boughs;
it was seen in its height	with the mass of its branches.

He is referring once again to Jehoiachin, under whom the vine was plucked up (v. 12). But the fire (v. 14) is Zedekiah—Ezekiel will not even call him a rod, or stem, just as he will not call him king (cf. Vol. XXIV, p. 159.)

The Spiritual History of Israel (20: 1-44)

With ch. 20 we enter a new section of the book. In chs. 8-19 Ezekiel has been describing the sin of Jerusalem, but in chs. 20-23, which cover the period between the final drift into revolt (590 B.C.) and the appearing of the Babylonian armies before the walls of Jerusalem (24:1-588 B.C.), while traversing much of the ground again, he goes deeper and seeks to lay bare the deeper reasons for Jerusalem's sin.

Ch. 20 is peculiarly important. Because the traditional interpretation of Israel's religion has consistently ignored it, it has failed to understand much in the prophetic books. This in turn opened the door to last century's destructive criticism, which was equally a travesty of the truth, even though it rescued much that traditionalism had lost. The general thought of the chapter was prepared for by ch. 16, but as Ezekiel is here unhampered by allegory, he is able to go far deeper and into more detail. For all that there is a certain curtain of verbal expression through which one has to win one's way before the meaning is clear. The chief difference between Ezekiel and traditional interpretation is briefly as follows. For tradition the idolatry and social unrighteousness of Israel that loom so large in the Old Testament were, until near the end, the exception; for Ezekiel a true knowledge of God and a true keeping of His law were so exceptional that he can ignore them.

Israel cut off from God (20:1-4)

In certain aspects this section is reminiscent of 14:1-11. There, however, God's refusal to answer the elders who enquire of Him is motivated by their sin; here God refuses to answer because they are the heirs of their ancestors (but see comments on vs. 30-32 below). The question (v. 4) has the force of an imperative, heightened by the repetition. The judging is carried out by rehearsing God's verdict on the past, cf. 22:2 and especially 23:36.

Israel in Egypt (20:5-9)

Ezekiel begins with the moment, when Moses returned to Egypt with the gracious message of Jehovah (Ex. 4:29-31). In the light of Ezekiel it becomes easier to understand Moses' unwillingness to return and his expectation that his message would be refused (Ex. 4:1). But Ezekiel's words need closer attention.

Though archaeology has shown sporadic signs of Egyptian religious influence among the Israelites, it has shown clearly enough that it was never strong. Nor does any passage of Scripture outside Ezekiel make any such suggestion. For Joshua the twin dangers were the gods of the Canaanites and the old traditional gods the Patriarchs had known beyond the Euphrates (Jos. 24:14f). Further, if we are to take the command in v. 7 literally, it seems strange that it is unmentioned in the story of the Exodus.

The plagues on Egypt are popularly interpreted as God's punishment, but such an explanation leaves many unsatisfied. They know that Pharaoh hardened his heart as well as having it hardened by God, but they cannot forget that God's threat of hardening was pronounced before Moses ever stood before Pharaoh (Ex. 4:21; 7:3). In addition the plagues seem excessive. But, though we cannot exclude the element of punishment, this was not the main intention of the plagues; they were demonstrations of Jehovah's power—see especially Ex. 9:14 ff, RV, and Paul's use of the passage in Rom. 9:14-18—in particular over Egypt's gods (Ex. 12:12). It should be reasonably obvious that this demonstration of Jehovah's power was for the good of the Israelites above all.

Our conception of God has been so humanized and personalized by His revelation in Christ Jesus, that we fail to grasp the true nature of idolatry. The gods of the heathen were always forces of nature more or less thinly personified. In old Rome before the advent of Greek influence it is doubtful whether they had been personified at all. Even where we find figures like the Vedic Brihaspati, the 'lord of prayer', the personified and deified sacrificial formula, or the Egyptian Thoth, the god of wisdom (and other things as well), they personify forces as real to the worshipper, even if less tangible, as the physical forces of nature.

There is probably no part of the world where nature presents a greater uniformity than in Egypt. Whether the rise of the Nile was great or small, it occurred so regularly that it led the Egyptians to the making of what may have been the world's first regular calendar.¹ The sun and the river, life and death, these were the great facts to which man had to bow.

To us the three signs given to Moses (Ex. 4:1-9) may seem too reminiscent of the conjuror's repertoire, and it is probably no accident that the Egyptian magicians were able to imitate two of them (Ex. 7:11 ff, 22). But to the Israelites, for whom they were intended, they were to proclaim that Jehovah controlled the uniformities of nature and was not controlled by them. This is even truer of the plagues. It has often been remarked that they were also blows at leading Egyptian gods (e.g., *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 112 a), but this has hardly any meaning until we remember that the gods were the real power behind nature. Various unconvincing explanations have been given why Moses led the Israelites to the apparent trap facing the Sea of Reeds (English versions, Red Sea), but the obvious reason is that for Israel's sake it has to be crossed in a miraculous manner. In Semitic thought the sea was the type of chaos (the Babylonian Tiamat), the ancient enemy of the gods of cosmic order. The Israelites had to learn in this way that Jehovah was Lord of cosmos and chaos alike.

There is no evidence that the Israelites in Egypt ever question-

¹ Breasted: *Ancient Times*, suggests that the calendar started in 4236 B.C., but this is far from enjoying universal acceptance.

ed the existence of Jehovah or His call of the Patriarchs. It was rather that they doubted His power in the midst of the great uniformities of life. After the first flush of enthusiasm on Moses' return (Ex. 4:51) their true feelings were revealed once the relentless pressure of daily life was felt again (Ex. 5:21; 6:9) or a new peril was faced (Ex. 14:11 f). It is an interesting study, but outside our scope, to see how this doubt of Jehovah's power dogged Israel throughout the Biblical period.

The typical orthodox Christian lays great stress on correct doctrine about God, but Israel's ancient sin is all too often his as well. It is not so difficult to trust, when all the old landmarks disappear and chaos seems to be resuming its sway, for then even the unbeliever is forced to throw himself on God, if he is to survive. It is amid the great uniformities of life, hemmed in by the great gods of 'Egypt', the state, public opinion and economic pressure, that we find it hardest not to make concessions to the world.

Ezekiel stresses that the 'natural' action of God would have been to punish Israel and finish with him then and there (v. 8). 'I said' is far better rendered 'I thought' (RSV), and so also in vs. 13, 21. The Bible never hesitates to use anthropomorphic language about God. His action (9) based purely on His character and for his glory represents His unchanging purpose; His 'thought' is what men would have considered natural, right and proper, had He done it.

Israel in the Wilderness (20:10-26)

Ezekiel divides the wilderness period into two. In vs. 10-17 he is concerned with those who came out of Egypt and had sentence of death passed on them at Kadesh Barnea (v. 15); vs. 18-26 take up the fortunes of their children.

Of Israelite idolatry in the wilderness we know little. Jos. 24:14 f, is evidence enough that it must have been widespread enough, even if secret, and Lev. 17:7 shows one form it took—the placating of the desert demons. Ps. 81:12 and Acts 7:42 point to its existence, as does indeed the warning of Dt. 4:15-19—Acts 7:43 has no bearing on this period, for it is a free quotation

of the LXX of Amos 5:26, but a reference to the RV mg. or RSV will show that it is referring to the prophet's own time.¹

Ezekiel's references to the Sabbath show that he was in possession of information that has not been preserved for us in the Pentateuch. It need not surprise us however. The drastic and public punishment of the man who collected sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36) suggests that a public example was needed.

The modern tendency is to explain Ezekiel's stress on the Sabbath by the peculiar needs of the exile, for sabbath-keeping, circumcision and the eating of 'clean' food were among the few outward elements of their religion that the exiles were able to observe. This seems to be a mistake. No prophet rejected the ritual and external as whole-heartedly as did Jeremiah, but we find the same stress on the Sabbath with him, and this before the exile (Jer. 17:19-27). We are so accustomed to a weekly day of rest that probably only those that have lived in pagan lands can grasp what life without it means, or what an immense innovation it represented. In spite of strong arguments to the contrary, it seems conclusive from this chapter and Neh. 9:14 that the Sabbath is part of the Sinai revelation and does not date from Eden. Certainly all efforts to find a trace of a weekly rest-day elsewhere in the ancient world have conspicuously failed. It is easy enough to keep the Sabbath in a legalistic way, but once it is correctly understood, it becomes a very real test of a man's faith. Only where the Lord is recognized as controller over the great powers of nature can one go beyond a legalistic cessation of work and turn heart and mind away from all the clamant claims of the world.

The reference in v. 23 is to Dt. 28:15-68 (note especially v. 64). Just as the lack of faith and obedience in Egypt led inevitably to the disaster of the golden calf at Sinai and of Kadesh Barnea, so the failure of the second generation in the wilderness led inescap-

¹ Some might challenge this opinion on the basis of Nu. 23:21. But Balaam is not painting a picture of Israel as he is, but as God in His grace regards him. In Dt. 32, the Song of Moses, all from v. 13 is prophetic, much in the prophetic perfect, so vs. 16 f. do not refer to wilderness idolatry; on the other hand "There was no strange god with him" (v. 12 b) means that Jehovah had no other god to help Him.

ably to the exile of Israel and Judah. When Joshua said, 'Ye cannot serve Jehovah' (Jos. 24:19), he was basing himself on his knowledge of his hearers.

The Ebionite Christians of the first and second centuries A.D. used v. 25 in their polemic against the Jewish sacrificial system. They interpreted the verse to mean that much of the sacrificial law was a later, falsified addition.¹ We can hardly make the words bear this meaning, but equally they can hardly be interpreted literally. The vast bulk of the Mosaic legislation was given before the tragedy of Kadesh Barnea, and therefore could not be considered in any way a punishment of the younger wilderness generation and their descendants. In fact none of the legislation given after Kadesh Barnea can be said to have made any major modification in the Sinai legislation. We can only understand Ezekiel to mean that much of the law is so phrased and worded that only those with a true faith in and understanding of God would understand it aright. This seems, at least in part, to be the thought in Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19. Taken all in all we get the impression that the prophetic message was for most of its hearers sheer folly. They seem to have been as convinced that they were doing God's will as were the bulk of the Jews in our Lord's day. Ezekiel does not say that human sacrifice marked Israel's religion down through its history, but rather that it was the natural climax of its downward path (see Vol. XXV, p. 66), and therefore an indication of the essential wrongness of all that had gone before. But the very degradation brought about by their lack of understanding was to drive them back to God (v. 26). As Paul says, 'The law was like a strict governess in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in Him' (Gal. 3:24).²

It may well be asked how this gloomy judgment can be reconciled with the idyllic picture of Hos. 2:15; 9:10 a; Jer. 2:2 f; Ezek. 16:8-14. Compared to what Israel was to become, the prophets could well look back to the wilderness period, in spite of all its faults, as the happiest time in Israel's history. But when

¹ Schoeps: *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums*, p. 151, 221.

² Phillips: *Letters to Young Churches*.

the prophet had to trace the poison root that led to the bitter fruit, he had to show it there right at the beginning.

Israel in the Land (20:27-29)

This section of the prophecy is kept short because all the false religion of the time of the Judges and under the monarchy was merely the natural outcome of what had gone before. Ezekiel had already described it in 16:15-34 (cf. Vol. XXV, p. 66 ff). Now Ezekiel dismisses the whole of this man-made perversion by a pun (v. 29 a) based apparently on popular etymology (v. 29 b). He links *Bamah*—consistently and conveniently, but not quite adequately rendered ‘high place’¹—with ‘mah (what) is *ha-Bamah* (the high place) whereunto *ha-ba'im* (ye go)?’ In other words he suggests that the very popular etymology showed that men recognized that the *bamah* and all it symbolized was merely a place of human choice and not of divine ordaining.

Ezekiel's own Generation (20:30-32)

Seeing we lack confirmatory evidence, we should not infer from v. 31 that human sacrifices were brought in again after the death of Josiah. Note that it is not included among the abominations of Jerusalem in ch. 8. We may rather compare it with a saying like that of Matt. 23:29-35; Luke 11:47-51. Josiah's reformation had not meant any real break with the past, and given the opportunity the sins of the past would lift their heads again. The real temptation for Ezekiel's contemporaries was dully to acquiesce in that which had happened and to adopt the idolatry of the places of their exile (v. 32). Their very misunderstanding of the nature and will of Jehovah would make such a step easy.

Jehovah's Triumph (20:33-44)

The whole of the chapter up till now has been seeking to establish one point: once God chose Israel for His own purposes, nothing that Israel could do could thwart Him in working out

¹ See note on 1 King 3:2 in I.C.C. or *New Bible Commentary*, or more fully in Albright: *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 105 ff.

His final will, however much He might have to discard generation after generation on the way. Now Ezekiel proclaims that the last act of the strange drama was to be played out.

Jeremiah had already said that Israel's history had been worked out under a broken covenant: 'Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; forasmuch as they break My covenant and I had to lord it over them (*ba'alti bam*)—Jer. 31:31 f, so essentially RV mg. Now He would be king over them in judgment (v. 34). As once before, there would be a testing in the wilderness—of the exile (v. 35) and a judgment that would separate His true people from the idolaters. We can best render v. 39: 'Go, serve each his idols, and afterwards, if ye do not obey Me'—! (I.C.C.). Many of the exiles must have adopted the idolatry around them, but they vanished without trace. It is not easy to decide whether we should follow the Hebrew in v. 37, 'the bond of the covenant', or the LXX, 'by number' (RSV).

As we have previously noticed (Vol. XXV, p. 110), Ezekiel's vision of the future is foreshortened, and centuries and a yet greater exile in 'the wilderness of the peoples' would have to elapse before God's purpose with Israel would be fulfilled. For all that vs. 40-44 have had a striking partial fulfilment. The remnant that returned under Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Joshua had learnt certain aspects of Ezekiel's teaching well, and it was reinforced about a century later by the work of Ezra. Even though it was often not according to knowledge, there was a real zeal for God. The Judaism of the return provided the setting in which the Christ could come and the Church be born, while the amazingly rapid spread of Christianity in the first century of its existence was in large measure due to the manner in which the Synagogue had prepared the way for it among the Gentiles. This partial fulfilment gives us confidence to look forward to the day when 'all Israel shall be saved'.

The Sword of the Lord (20:45—21:32)

The chapter division is unfortunate, for this is one section, as is duly recognized in the Hebrew. It consists of four oracles all, except perhaps the last, spoken during the time that Nebuchadnezzar was on his way to subdue the revolts that had broken out in Tyre, Ammon and Jerusalem. The language is at times far from easy, and our understanding is made the more difficult by a number of textual corruptions.

The Sword of the Lord is Drawn (20:45—21:7)

This oracle falls into two. In 20:45-49 we have a very figurative description of the coming destruction of Jerusalem under the picture of a forest fire. In 21:1-7 it is explained; though still in figurative language, its meaning is obvious.

In v. 46 three words are used for 'south'. Two are merely variants used for effect, but the third, differentiated in the RV by the use of a capital letter, is best translated, as in the RSV, by Negeb, the dry semi-wilderness of the south of Judea. Ezekiel is told to 'set his face toward the south', for though Judea lay to the west of Tel-abib, Ezekiel has been transported in spirit to the Chaldean army, which is now marching south from Carchemish and the Euphrates. The Negeb being a semi-arid area, a fire in its dry shrubs (the forest is little more than that) is a very serious matter and extremely difficult to put out.

As I pointed out in connection with 2:8—3:3 (Vol. XXIV, p. 3 f), the divine word has to be assimilated by the prophet before it is spoken, and therefore it shows the peculiarities of the individual prophet. On the other hand the prophet has no liberty to recast the message into a form more acceptable to him and his hearers. This is shown by 20:49. While Ezekiel's fellow-exiles might well not understand the details of such an oracle, the general intention must have been obvious. But they shewed a trait we are all familiar with today. As now so then, because something in the Word is obscure, it is taken as an excuse for ignoring the whole message.

The use of the forest fire as an image is explained in v. 3.

Once the sword of the Lord is drawn it will slay as indiscriminately as a forest fire destroys. No contradiction should be seen between this verse and 9:4-6 or ch. 18, though this latter is addressed principally to the exiles. Emerson was near the truth, when he wrote, 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines'. The Scriptures are never self-contradictory, but they often seem to be inconsistent, and the worst examples of foolishness in exegesis are due to those who could not or would not grasp this. Only God and His angels know who bears the secret mark, only God can pass the judgment as to who is really walking in His ways. For man with his biased judgments there will be good who will perish and evil who will be spared. But Ezekiel does not have to explain this. If any will misunderstand, let him misunderstand!

Ezekiel was evidently given a vision of the destruction and this breaks him down (v. 6 f). The prophet was no passive recipient of his visions, cf. Amos 7:2, 5; Jer. 4:19 ff; 31:26.

The Song of the Sword (21:8-17)

The language is often difficult. RSV seems to make the only possible sense of v. 10 b, 'Or do we make mirth?'—i.e., is the warning a mere joke?—'You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood'—i.e., all lesser chastisement has been despised. But it would be dangerous to assume that the text is in order. The same is even more true of the RSV in vs. 14-17; it at least makes sense, which can hardly be said of AV and RV. The exultation of the prophet in this oracle contrasts strangely with his distress in v. 6 f, but this must always be the effect of God's judgments on the believer. His heart exults because God is triumphing, but it breaks because of those who perish under them.

Nebuchadnezzar is the Sword of the Lord (21:18-27)

RSV gets the sense in v. 19 by rendering 'mark two ways'; the prophecy was obviously accompanied by a symbolic action. As far south as Riblah Nebuchadnezzar would use the same road whether he was marching against Ammon or Jerusalem. Ezekiel depicts the scene at the road-fork where the Babylonian king has to

make up his mind which of the rebels is to feel the weight of his chastisement first. AV has partly missed the force of v. 21. Nebuchadnezzar uses three means of divination: arrows with names written on them are thrown in a certain way and 'into his hand comes the lot (i.e. arrow) for Jerusalem' (v. 22 RSV); he consults the age-old magic means of the *teraphim* (almost certainly to be understood as one object in spite of the plural form, possibly as in rabbinic tradition a mummied child's head); he sacrifices and looks at the liver, perhaps the commonest of Babylonian forms of divination.

v. 23 is difficult. The people of Jerusalem do not take the result of the divination seriously, but why? It is not clear who has sworn oaths to whom. It may be that the old interpretation represented by some MSS of LXX, by the Targum, Aquila, Theodotion and the Vulgate is correct, 'they have weeks upon weeks', i.e., the Chaldean is in no hurry.

The confidence is baseless for the time of reckoning of the 'unhallowed wicked one, prince of Israel' (v. 25 RSV) has come. For 'prince', not king, see Vol. XXIV, p. 159 f. The mitre (v. 26—the AV diadem is impossible) is only a priestly garment (Ex. 28:4). Though we are not otherwise told so—but we are really told very little about the actions of Zedekiah—it may well be that this weak man had given way to the temptation that always dogged the kings of Judah and Israel and had claimed to be the head of the church as well as of the state, a position held both by the Pharaoh and the king of Babylon.¹

With the fall of Zedekiah the old order was to pass never to be restored until the Messiah came. Such is the obvious meaning of v. 27. In the slightly enigmatic 'until he come whose right it is' we have almost certainly the first extant interpretation of Shiloh in Gen. 49:10 that has come down to us. The interpretation of Shiloh as a proper name was a rarity before 1534. Ezekiel reads the word *shelloh* = whose it is. It is gratifying that RSV should have rendered 'until he comes to whom it belongs' in

¹ Reference may be made to *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 335b, also to 312a.

Gen. 49:10 instead of the transliteration, which is really meaningless. Ezekiel's interpretation is supported 'by nearly all Versions'.¹

The Sword of Ammon (21:28-32)

The Ammonites, freed from immediate alarm by Nebuchadnezzar's march against Jerusalem instead of Rabbah, seem to have sought to appease him by attacking Judah. But their sword had not been chosen by the Lord to do His work, and so their attack will only bring judgment on them. Note God's command in v. 30; the question of AV is incorrect. The theme is taken up again in ch. 25.

(To be continued)

¹ Skinner: *Genesis* (I.C.C.), p. 523.

'THE HEIGHTS OF THE HILLS ARE HIS'

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

IV. MOUNT ZION

Mount Zion, spelt with a 'Z' in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament, and with an 'S' in the A.V. of the N.T., is associated with Mount Moriah geographically, because of its proximity to it, with Mount Olivet eschatologically because of its place in Messiah's coming Kingdom, and, by contrast, with Mount Sinai spiritually and dispensationally because of its significance for the elect of God. It is described in Ps. 48:2 as 'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth'.

Zion was one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. Opinions differ as to the topography of this mountain but, while there are those who would identify it with a hill on the S.W. of the city and others who favour an eminence on the N.W., the site now generally claimed for Zion is the highest summit of a ridge of hills on the East side of Jerusalem running due South from Mount Moriah. Ophel, meaning 'High place', is an