



THEY that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. ² As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. (Psalm 125:1-2)

In my growing up years, my family lived near a large and elegant mountain. Everyday of my life until the age of 18 years, I looked to that mountain when the visibility permitted. Though it was miles away, it stood strong and sovereign above the grasslands of the wide valley. There was mystery and intrigue associated with that mountain. It was called Fort Mountain because some civilization that predated the Cherokee Indians, who settled the region, had lived and fought there. It was called Fort Mountain because there was a fort at the very top. There was a gently rising escarpment on the south side which rose to a great height which ended in an abrupt precipice at the northernmost point. It was at the highest point before the precipice that a long, stone wall interspersed with battlements was constructed in antiquity past. Amazingly, geologists tell us that those stones were not gathered from among that abundance of stones atop the mountain – they came from some 300 miles away. No one knows why those would have been carried so far when an adequate source of stones were readily available at the mountain top. An Indian legend tell us that a people manned the fort before they arrived whom they called the ‘Moon-Eyed’ people, and they were massacred. That is all we know of the story.

My mom and dad used to take us riding on Sunday afternoons. Most trips involved either that mountain, or the cold white-water streams at its base. In those days, one could visit such sites without another soul within shouting distance. The mountain laurel was beautiful and the spring air always had a fragrance of cherry blossoms and Honeysuckle. Fort Mountain was OUR mountain, and the only mountain we knew.

As we approached Fort Mountain from the west, it loomed larger and larger on the horizon. As a very young lad, it was hard for me to imagine that we would be able to drive our car up that noble mountain.

Mountains hold both a mystic and romantic charm for most of us. They stand so tall and elegant above the surrounding terrain, that there can be no doubt of their existence. This is a bit like the mighty Presence of Almighty God. The beauty and grandeur of His Creation defies the doubting false science of our time.

There is another mountain of great importance and spiritual significance of which I wish to remind the reader. That mountain is Mount Moriah – the Mountain of Sacrifice.

Not only is Mount Moriah the Mountain of Sacrifice but, at the same time, it is the Mountain of Mercy. There probably have been more sacrifices offered to God on Mount Moriah than at any other venue. That is because the City of Jerusalem and the Temple are positioned on Mount Moriah. Those sacrifices were intended to prepare our hearts for a greater sacrifice than that of the blood of goats and lambs. The mind of our ancient fathers could not have comprehended the gravity of that sacrifice with their limited spiritual understanding; so, God chose to gradually condition their hearts to grasp the depth and breadth of such an incomprehensible sacrifice. Ultimately, that sacrifice would be of God and not by the butcher knives of men. *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* (Hosea 6:6)

The early shadow of the True Sacrifice for our sins was given to our first parents at Eden by the shedding of the totally innocent blood of an animal in order to acquire skins to cover the nakedness (sin) of Adam and Eve. Abel learned to make a proper sacrifice from his father, Adam, and so did Cain; however, Cain took umbrage at the satisfaction of God over Abel's proper blood sacrifice and the Lord's disapproval of his own sacrifice of the fruit of the ground – a source which God had cursed! *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.* (Genesis 3:17)

We now should take note of another example of sacrifice that is beyond our comprehension. While sojourning on the plains of Mamre, the Voice of the Lord came unto Abraham, saying: *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of **MORIAH**; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* (Genesis 22:2) Did Abraham not have another first son named, Ishmael? Why does God refer to Isaac as Abraham's ONLY son? It is because Sarah and Abraham doubted, in their advancing age, God would provide Sarah a son; so, Sarah undertook to do the work of the Lord herself and give her servant girl, Hagar, to Abraham by whom he could have a son. When we stop trusting God, and instead, begin trusting in our own ability, great confusion follows. Ishmael became the father of the modern Arab Muslim nations by whom Israel and, indeed, the world, have been persecuted since.

Why would God make such a seemingly unjust request of Abraham? Why would God command Abraham to sacrifice the darling of Abraham's heart, and only legitimate son, on the Mountain of Moriah? The answer to that question should lift the hearts of all believing Christians to the borders of the Third Heaven!

Before directly addressing the answer to that question, let us consider again the innocent animal sacrificed in the Garden at Eden, by the very hand of God, to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve following their disobedience. God loved all that He had made, including these beautiful creatures we call animals, which He created on the same day as He created man. And He blessed them and pronounced them very good. How do you think God felt when He had to reach down and grasp one of these beautiful and innocent creatures and spill its lifeblood over the foolish sin of Adam? The pain would have been severe enough if it were only that innocent animal's life on the Mind of God; but there was more than that. The innocent blood of that first sacrifice in the Garden foreshadowed in the Mind of God the innocent blood of another which would create a pain in God's heart unimaginable to our thoughts – His own only Begotten Son some 4,000 years later.

Now we shall return to that earlier question which asks, 'Why did God command such a hurtful thing of Abraham in commanding him sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, on the Mountains of Moriah?'

There is no sacrifice man can make which will redeem him of his sin because there is not one worthy. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) and every man born of woman must, in justice, surrender his life for his sin: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:23) No, a more perfect sacrifice than man can offer is required to satisfy the justice of God. So, could Isaac have met that high standard as a sacrifice? Not in the least sense of the question. So, again, why the command?

You will recall the answer Abraham gave to Isaac when the child asked, after Abraham had placed upon the lad's shoulder's to carry the means of his own sacrifice up the mountain, *My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?* (Gen 22:7) Such a question coming from my own son's lips would have devastated me were I Abraham. Like our Lord Jesus Christ carrying His own cross for His sacrifice up that mountain of Moriah, so would Isaac, the only beloved son of his father, carry the wood of the altar up the mountain of Moriah. This is amazing to my heart. Isaac was commanded to be sacrificed precisely on that same mountain as our Lord many centuries later.

But what did Abraham answer to the question? *And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.* (Gen 22:8) If you cannot understand the subtle meaning of the sentence structure given here, it might be helpful to diagram the sentence. What did Abraham say God would provide? The answer: God would provide Himself a Lamb for the offering. God DID, indeed, provide HIMSELF a LAMB for the sacrifice at the subordinate peak of Moriah – Mount Calvary! Your new and deceptive bibles – products of the profit-seeking, so-called higher critics – will not reveal that wondrous gem of spiritual truth. HIMSELF and LAMB are synonymous!

The truth is, God would never ask a mortal man to sacrifice his only son for the sin of others even if that were possible. He was demonstrating to Abraham, and to all who believe in that Redeemer promised to Abraham, that only God had the Mercy, Grace, and Merit to satisfy God's uncompromising Law of Justice in redemption.

When Abraham raised his knife to take the life of his son, the Angel of the Lord forbade him from taking the boy's life. The example to us is clear. What tremendous hurt did Abraham suffer in the prospect of sacrificing this son of his own love and that of Sarah? It was as if God was saying, See, Abraham, what great pain you feel in the sacrifice of your only begotten son; yet I will not demand it of you for I will offer my own Beloved and only Begotten Son as a remission for sins.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. (Genesis 22:13) A ram is a male sheep or lamb (its head caught in a crown of thorns). And at Calvary, at the same Mt. Moriah, the Lamb of God, His only Begotten Son, was sacrificed wearing a crown of thorns having neither spot nor blemish in His sinless and Divine soul. He became our Passover Lamb!