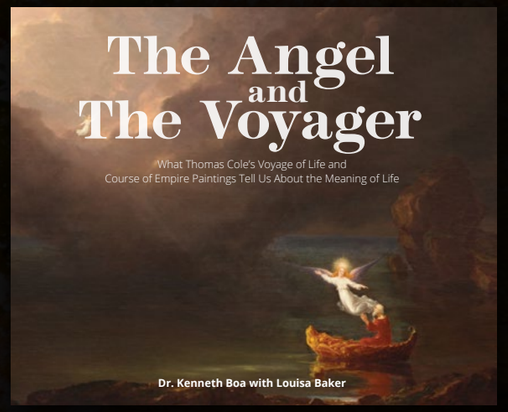
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A MOST IMPORTANT MOUNTAIN

Read Zechariah 14:4–5

Modern-day visitors to the Holy Land revel in seeing many of the presumed sites of biblical events: the setting of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, the site of His crucifixion and burial, the location of the Last Supper. But shrouded in tradition as many of those locations may be, one place in the Holy Land still sits exactly where it was when Jesus walked upon it: the Mount of Olives.

Visitors who stand at the crest of this mountain, which rises prominently just a few hundred yards east of Jerusalem's walls, marvel at what they see. To the west, across the Kidron Valley, is Jerusalem itself where the temple rose in all its glory. On the slopes of the Mount is the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed. And looking to the east are Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the Judean wilderness where Satan challenged Jesus. But if these historical recollections from the past are moving, there is a future event involving the Mount of Olives that makes visitors keep a wary eye peeled toward the heavens.

Zechariah the prophet spoke of an awe-inspiring future event that will take place atop the Mount of Olives. On a day at the end of the age, when Jerusalem is once again at the center of armed conflict, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven to do battle against the nations on behalf of His people. Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives just as two angels told the disciples He one day would (Acts 1:10–12). The Mount of Olives will be split in two when that happens, forming a great valley. Half of the mountain will move to the north of Jerusalem and half to the south, and the resulting valley will become an avenue of escape for the besieged. This mountain, a witness to more world-changing history than any other geographical point in the world, has yet to play host to history's greatest event: the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

There will probably be people on the Mount of Olives on the day Jesus returns. If you are not one of them, don't worry—wherever you are, you will feel the reverberations when it splits. Make today a preparation day for that glorious event—and look up (Matt. 24:36)!

God's Promise:

Jesus will come to earth a second time as surely as He came the first.

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NOVEMBER 2026

REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart

A PERSPECTIVE ON MY PROBLEMS

Dear Lord, may I frequently review the many acts of deliverance You have accomplished in my life. When I remember Your saving acts, I gain a renewed perspective on Your graciousness and involvement in my life. When I forget to do this, I sink back into a temporal perspective and lose the cutting edge of gratitude and trust. I want to recall Your glorious promises and remember Your creative deliverances so that I will grow in trust and not slip into doubt. With this perspective on my problems, I will not back off in disbelief and miss the opportunities You have provided for me. May I look at things through the lens of Scripture so that I will know how to respond to the circumstances and people in my life.

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Psalm 22: A Biblical Response to Adversity

Circumstances or Character?

When you encounter periods of adversity or affliction, how do you pray? If you are like most people, your prayers probably consist of various attempts to persuade God to change your painful circumstances. After all, what did you do to deserve this mess, or what possible good could come out of it?

Although far fewer people pray this way, I have come to the conclusion that in painful situations, it is wiser and more biblical to ask the Lord to change your character than to change your circumstances. Instead of looking for relief, it is better to discern what areas need reform. If we are willing to submit to God's loving and wise purposes for our lives, we will begin to see that He can use such times to reveal our deepest needs and draw us nearer to Him. In *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis wrote that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

***Deliverance* From *Vs. Deliverance* Through**

God does not promise that His children will be exempt from tribulation; that is part of our lot in a fallen world that awaits the time when it will be "set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory" that will come when Christ returns to restore all things (Rom. 8:19–22). Our Lord's promise is not that we will be delivered **from** suffering, but that He will deliver and transform us **through** the things we suffer, if we rely on His resources instead of our own.

This principle is well illustrated in Psalm 22, sometimes called the "Fifth Gospel" account of the crucifixion. Although it is a psalm of David, its imagery transcends his own experience and anticipates the sufferings of Christ (vv. 1–21) and the glories to follow (vv. 22–31; see also 1 Peter 1:11). As a prophet, David "looked ahead and spoke of . . . the Christ" (Acts 2:31).

The psalm begins with the words Jesus quoted from the cross at the end of the three-hour darkness that fell upon all the land: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). It was in this awesome and mysterious moment that the Son became the bearer of the sins of the world, and endured separation from the Father, so that we could have forgiveness, access, and peace with the Father.

From Petition to Praise

It is evident that David wrote this psalm during a time of personal anguish, and yet this is a psalm not only of lament, but also of petition and praise. Instead of turning away from God, David turned to God during his time of trial and fixed his hope completely on Him:

> In You our fathers trusted;
> They trusted, and You delivered them.
> To You they cried out and were delivered;
> In You they trusted and were not disappointed.
> (Ps. 22:4–5)

During such times, many people turn to the pill bottle, the liquor bottle, or the back door to find relief from their misery, but these escape hatches will disappoint those who trust in them. More often than not, we will not understand God's purpose in our afflictions; He does not script life the way we would like, and there are many times when we have to "faith it." If we cling to His character in the midst of our pain, we will not be disappointed in the long run.

Verses 6–18 of Psalm 22 give a graphic description of the events surrounding the crucifixion of our Lord long before this method of capital punishment was even known in Israel:

> My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
> And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; . . .
> A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
> They pierced my hands and my feet.
> I can count all my bones.
> They look, they stare at me;
> They divide my garments among them,
> And for my clothing they cast lots. (vv. 15, 16–18)

The psalm also anticipates the reproaches that were borne by Jesus when He was on the cross:

> All who see me sneer at me;
> They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,
> "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
> Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him." (vv. 7–8)

Yet it was the Father's will that the Son should die—"You lay me in the dust of death" (v. 15)—for it was only through His perfect obedience and sacrificial death that we could have life, forgiveness, freedom, and hope.

The psalmist's appeals to the Lord (see vv. 9–11, 19–21) culminate in a hymn of praise and confidence in His ability to deliver him through his time of trial.

> I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
> In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
> You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
> All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
> And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.
> For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
> Neither has He hidden His face from him;
> But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. (vv. 22–24)

While the psalmist was delivered **from** death, the Lord Jesus was delivered **through** death in His glorious resurrection. Because of His resurrection, His followers will also be delivered from the power of death, and will enjoy unending life and fellowship with God and one another in their resurrection bodies.

Since this is our destiny, we should view our temporal sufferings from this eternal perspective. This is why Paul could say, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). God's purpose in our earthly adversities is to gradually conform our character to Christ and to prepare us for our true homecoming when we will see Him face to face.

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