

Letters: Rev. John Purves, Jedburgh (1)

by Andrew Bonar

The speaker reflects on their experiences in the Holy Land, particularly in Jerusalem, and expresses their wonder at the hand of God in bringing them to the 'Promised Land'.

Scripture: Psalm 87:4-5, Isaiah 62:4, Hosea 2:12-15, John 14:2-3, John 18:2

Topics: "Faithfulness of God", "Spiritual Refreshment"

Description

Andrew Bonar shares his profound experiences during a visit to Jerusalem, expressing the overwhelming joy of being in the Holy Land where biblical events unfolded. He reflects on the beauty and desolation of the land, drawing parallels to scripture and the significance of places like the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane. Bonar emphasizes the spiritual refreshment he felt while partaking in the Lord's Supper in the city of Jesus' sacrifice, and he earnestly requests prayers for his own spiritual needs and for his congregation back home. His letter conveys a deep sense of connection to the biblical narrative and a longing for greater faith and zeal.

Transcript

DURING THE VISIT OF THE DEPUTATION TO THE HOLY LAND JERUSALEM, June 17th, 1839. MY DEAR JOHN,--I scarcely know how to write when sending you a letter from Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Our present residence is actually on the hill of Zion, and our windows look directly on the Mount of Olives. I feel like a man who has got before him more than he can use; or, as you have often felt, when you have got some full passage of the Bible, wherein you see there is tenfold more to be found than you are able to explain.

To be in this land, especially to be in Jerusalem, is really to have the Word of God open before you in another form. And it is deep joy to be in the midst of the hills and valleys where the Lord's voice so often spoke to man, and to be in the city where Immanuel's mighty work was done. We had some expectations, in our setting out, that we might see in passing Rome and Athens, and the Pyramids of Egypt, --indeed we actually were within about half a day's journey of them all,--but God led us past these, as if He meant to make us know by experience Ps. 87: 4,5: 'I will mention Rahab and Babylon--but of Zion it shall be said.'

As you might expect, the interest of this land is beyond anything in the world to a believer. It was remarkable that the first night we entered it we heard the singing of birds on every side, and soon after the turtle-dove,--so that really Bunyan's description of Beulah (remember that is the true name of Israel's land, Isa. 62: 4) seemed realised. 'We entered the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant.'

Their way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season; yea, here they heard the, song of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear on the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land.

Here, too, they heard voices out of the city, loud voices saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh." ' We saw at once that in the Song of Songs, written for the Church of Israel, chap.2:11,12, the imagery was taken from their own land. However, it was only a spot here and there that brought such descriptions to our mind. In most places the land is desolate, though it is splendid in its very desolation. We entered Palestine on May 29th, and on the fourth day found ourselves passing through the Valley of Sorek, and yet not a vine to be seen.

I remembered immediately Hosea 2: 12: 'I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees,' etc. And rejoiced also in the promise (ver. 15) that, after the time she has been in Achor, the vineyards shall be restored. . . . But I must hasten to tell you of Jerusalem. On drawing near I felt very serious. The first look we got happened to be from the Jaffa side where very little is seen--so that I felt that day nothing peculiar except the site of 'the mountains that stand round Jerusalem.

That moment the faithfulness of God appeared a vivid reality. . . . We spent ten days in it and its neighbourhood, and every day the scenes seemed fresh to me. The Mount of Olives is, perhaps, the place of deepest interest. . . . We often visited Gethsemane at its foot. . . . We could easily see how it would be a place where the disciples often came to meet Jesus (John 18: 2, ' place of rendezvous'), and then, when all had come, they together went over the hill to Bethany. . . .

I did as you asked me--one morning I went alone to it, and prayed for you specially and your people. Dear John, return my prayer--pour yours out for me, for my soul is dry. . . . Last Sabbath we enjoyed a great privilege; I am sure you would have rejoiced to have been with us--we partook of the Lord's Supper together in the little church formed here by the English missionaries. I had the very great privilege of opening my lips to speak of Immanuel, in the city where He died, and is to reign.

I took John 14: 2, 3. It was a day of peculiar refreshment and joy. . . . But I must leave off at present; for I have to write letters to some others from Jerusalem. . . . Ask for us more faith, love, zeal. I wonder from time to time at the hand of God in bringing me to the 'Promised Land.' I hope it is a type and pledge that He will one day so carry me to Immanuel Himself. The one is as free grace as the other. When you pray for me, particularly mention the case of my people at Collace, for often my soul is sad when I think of them.--Believe me, my dear John, yours truly in the flesh and in the Lord, ANDREW A.

BONAR. I prayed for your people more than once while at Jerusalem, and often, too, at different stages of our way. They came into my mind sometimes in connection with you, sometimes in connection with the Sabbath evening sermons I used to give on the Land. I don't think that I ever in these discourses overstated the reality. Remember me to the saints among you. . Tell H. B. and the other Sabbath-school teachers that I do not forget them even 'in the land of Jordan and the Hermonites.' If ever they got one cup of cold water from me to their souls, I have a claim on their prayers. I often think of your prayer-meetings. Is there any sign of the Spirit poured out?

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