**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 14 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRIST'S VISION OF JERUSALEM by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.*

*Luke 9:51*

EVERY CONTEMPLATION OF THE LAST MONTH, AND WEEKS, and days in the life of our Lord fills the soul with a sense of solemn and almost overwhelming awe. Through all those movements which culminated in the Cross and resurrection, He stands out, awful in His loneliness, magnificent in His heroism, supreme in His revelation of the highest possible in human life, and of the greatest in God.

This determined setting of His face to Jerusalem is worthy of our closest attention. A superficial reading would leave the impression that the value of the statement is exhausted geographically. This is by no means so. Jesus had just left the mount of glory, and set His face toward the valley, and the multitudes, toward the sin, the sorrow, and the suffering. And "when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

This declaration, as a revelation of His outlook, and in the light of the teaching which immediately followed, is of supreme value to all such as bear His name and share His toil.

I shall ask you to consider first this attitude of Christ, and then the things concerning discipleship, which are chronicled for us immediately after this declaration of Luke concerning the Lord.

In consideration of His attitude notice first His vision of Jerusalem, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"; second, the consciousness that created the steadfastness, "The days were well-nigh come that He should be received up"; and, finally, His action, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

What, then, was the vision which Jesus had of Jerusalem? First of all, it was that of a city utterly and absolutely hostile to Himself. He was drawing near the end of His ministry. He had walked the streets of Jerusalem, had taught in the courts of the temple, had held intercourse with the leaders of the people, and He knew right well that the whole city was hostile to Him.

The religious leaders, the political parties, the multitudes who were city folk, were against Him. The religious leaders were against Him because His spiritual teaching had been directly contradictory to all for which they stood. There were two great religious parties at the time, which we may broadly describe as rationalistic and ritualistic. There were the Sadducees, and the Pharisees, diametrically opposed, and yet both of them against Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees did not believe in angel, or spirit, or resurrection. That is to say, they were the rationalists in religion, the men who were attempting still to retain the religious ideal, while yet denying all the supernatural element therein. These men were against Christ necessarily. He had ruthlessly swept aside their views by speaking of angels, by referring to the Spirit, by declaring that God was not the God of the dead but of the living.

The Pharisees stood for ritualistic practice, were eager and anxious about the tithing of mint, anise, cummin, and rue; while neglecting the weightier matters of the law. They would not eat with unwashed hands, but were content to stand before the altar of God with filthy hearts.

The political parties were against Him. None of them had been able to capture Him. He had dictated the terms of righteousness to all as they had come to Him with subtle questions, but He had stood aloof from them, not uninterested in the affairs of city and nation, but speaking to His time the things of God alone.

The Jerusalem multitudes were against Him, for I think there is a sharp line of distinction to be drawn between the simple folk of Galilee and the city dwellers. It has been said that the people shouted, "Hosanna!" and within a week shouted, "Crucify!" I do not think so. I think that they were two quite different multitudes. The Galileans who had come with Him shouted, "Hosanna." The people of the city were priest-ridden, and king-enslaved, and they were all against Him.

Jesus had had His day, His opportunity. He had delivered His message. He had unburdened His soul. He had flashed upon them the light of the Divine Kingdom. His message was refused, and they were against Him; and subtle and devilish intrigues were busy, waiting for the opportunity to lay hands on Him, and hand Him over to death. All this He knew, and yet "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

But then He had another vision of Jerusalem. Not only did He see it hostile, He saw it doomed. At last, with a sigh and a sob, He pronounced that doom. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together," and He saw Jerusalem doomed by the inevitable sequence of wrong. False shepherds and scattered sheep. False prophets, and deluded people. False priests, and degraded religion. He knew perfectly well that Jerusalem was doomed by the deliberate rejection of its own opportunity. "How often would I!" That was the desire of His heart. "And ye would not"! That was the choice of their sin. He knew perfectly well therefore that the sentence must be carried out. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Nevertheless, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," the hostile city, and the doomed city.

He had another vision of Jerusalem, and I have dwelt only upon the first two that I might lead you to the third. He saw Jerusalem hostile. He saw Jerusalem doomed. But He saw Jerusalem rebuilt. He saw through all the mists and the darkness and the opposition and the doom to something beyond.

The men of faith had ever been men of vision, looking "for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." When Abraham turned his back upon Ur of the Chaldees, and went out seeking a city, he did not go to seek a heaven beyond the earth. His passion, the passion of all the men of faith, and supremely the passion of Jesus, was not that men should pass through earth and win heaven; but that there should be established on the earth the city of God. The vision which had kept the Hebrews a people through all the processes of their failure, was the vision of the ultimate. Read the ancient prophecies carefully, and amid the thunder of denunciation you will constantly hear tones that tell of coming accomplishment in the world, of the day when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" shall fill the earth, "as the waters cover the sea"; of the day when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." All these men had looked toward the building of a city. Cities had been built, but the hopes and aspirations of seers and psalmists had never been realized.

Jerusalem as Jesus looked at it was the home of evil things, and yet it was "the city of the great King," and through it He saw the city of God established, "the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God," the ultimate accomplishment of that which is in the heart of God, not merely in individual life, but in civic life; the setting up of the Kingdom of God in the world, and seeing that, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Let us gather up these thoughts. When the time was coming that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. What Jerusalem? The Jerusalem hostile to Himself, waiting to arrest and murder Him. What Jerusalem? That Jerusalem over which hung the sword of God, upon which the judgment of God must soon fall. What Jerusalem? The Jerusalem beyond all this, that which the hostile and doomed city must yet become in the economy of God, a city established, "the joy of the whole earth," because the home of "the great King," and the centre from which His government was to go forth to the ends of the world. Jesus saw the city, and deliberately set His face toward its hostility, its doom, and its ultimate triumph. He had a vision of the immediate, but He had that more wonderful vision which sees through the immediate to the ultimate. Beyond the gathering storm clouds settling over Himself and the city He saw the morning without clouds, the ultimate and final victory, when the last stone will be brought on to the city of God, and all tribes of the earth will rejoice in the setting up of His government and the accomplishment of His will. He saw through the process of pain to that ultimate for which He taught us to pray, for the day when God's name shall be hallowed, His Kingdom come, His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. And he set his face toward the Jerusalem of hostility, because He saw through it the Jerusalem of ultimate achievement.

Notice, in the second place, the consciousness which created the vision. "It came to pass, when the days were well night come that He should be received up, ..." He is coming down. He has just turned His back upon the mountain, and has set His face to the valley, and has immediately cast the devil out of the boy, and is still moving down to the valley of darkness. No, that is not the story. That is only part of it. He is moving toward the day in which "He should be received up." Here the declaration is an incidental one, but in the Gospel of John we find how perpetually our Lord looked upon His mission in its entirety. "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." He saw the Cross, but He saw the resurrection. He saw the travail, and shrank from it, but He saw the triumph, and hastened to. it. He saw the hostility in Jerusalem, the cruel, brutal hostility. He knew exactly what was awaiting Him, but He saw beyond the hostility to the crowning and the victory, and the position He was to occupy when He was received up. He was going down, but the descent was the preliminary to an ascent. The setting of His face toward the darkness was the lifting of His face toward the light, and although He set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem, and the sorrow, and the shame, and the pain, and the dying, He set His face toward the victory, and the joy, and the triumph. To Him the Cross was the way of ascent to the throne. To Him all the travail that waited for Him was the very process that made possible the triumph upon which His heart was set. From the glorious height of the Transfiguration Mount He had seen the mists as they lay along the valleys through which He must pass - the strange and chilly mists of death; but He had seen them from the height of glory, and they had been purple as the light shone upon them. Men are going to nail Him to a Cross, and taunt Him as He hangs there; "If Thou art the Son of God, came down from the Cross." But He knows perfectly well by the way of the helplessness of that hour of His dying that help is to be laid upon Him for all who put their trust in Him, and by the way of that mystery of descent He is moving out toward eternal ascent. He is to be received up.

What, then, was the effect of this consciousness upon Him? That hostility could neither hinder nor anger Him. I wish I knew how to say that so as to arrest you. Is there anything more wonderful in the story of His coming than the fact that hostility never hindered Him? We speak of Gethsemane and the shrinking there, but we must remember that the shrinking was not from human hostility, but from something far more deep and mysterious, into the meaning of which you and I can never enter. But the hostility in Jerusalem never hindered Him, and never angered Him. Is there anything in human history and literature that begins to compare with the patient, unprovoked spirit in which this Christ of ours set His face toward Jerusalem, or in the majestic and exhaustive language of the ancient prophecy, "As a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, He opened not His mouth." The vision of the glory beyond the hostility made Him such a One as could set His face toward the city, and be unhindered and un-angered by its hostility.

Again, the doom which He Himself must pronounce upon the city could not thwart Him, could not dishearten Him. Could there be a greater triumph than the triumph of One Who saw through the ruined, doomed city, a greater city, and was not disheartened by the doom?

Yet there is another thing which must be said. He saw Jerusalem hostile, He saw Jerusalem doomed, He saw Jerusalem certainly to be rebuilt; but the vision of the ultimate, the assurance that God must win, did not make Him careless. He did not say because this victory of God must be won in the long run of the centuries, I may turn aside and leave it. He set His face toward the pain, and toward the suffering, and toward the strife. Jerusalem hostile, He is to be received up; but He will go through hostile Jerusalem. Its hostility cannot hinder him. Jerusalem doomed, He is to be received up; but He cannot be disheartened about the doom of Jerusalem, for He knows through what He will do amid its darkness He will create a new day for it. Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, ah, yes, but He must go through the midst of its darkness to turn it into light; through the midst of its sin to take hold upon it and make possible that which He sees in the economy of God.

As I read this word about my Lord, I stand in His presence overawed. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," because He was to be received up. That is suffering transfigured by the light of the victory which would result from it. The only thing I fear now is that a multiplicity of my words may hide the vision. Behold the Man of Nazareth. There He stands at the foot of the hill where He has been transfigured. The multitudes are all about Him. In the city all the forces are against Him. Over the city hang the dark thunder clouds of the Divine judgment. But beyond is Jerusalem the golden, God's own perfect city! He steadfastly set His face toward the hostility, toward the doom, caring not for the one, gathering the other into His own soul, looking ultimately toward the glory and toward the victory.

Turn now to the things which immediately follow, for they are full of significance for us. What is the next thing that Luke tells us? As He set His face toward Jerusalem they came to a Samaritan village, and the Samaritans would not receive Him. Why not? Mark it carefully, because His face was to-ward Jerusalem. See how people may put a narrow and local interpretation upon a broad and infinite truth. They simply saw Him as a Jew traveling toward Jerusalem, and because Jerusalem was the objective of His journey, they would not entertain Him. The narrowness of the Samaritan was manifest there. That which was His purpose of blessing for them was the reason of their anger with Him. As He set His face toward Jerusalem it was not for Jerusalem merely, but for Samaria. Presently, having been to Jerusalem, having been smitten to the death in Jerusalem, having been raised from the dead, He will stand among these disciples who wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritan village, and He will say to them, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." His vision had not been the vision of Jerusalem only. It had been the vision of Samaria won and redeemed, of the utter-most part of the earth brought into right relationship with the government of God. And that is why His face was set steadfastly toward Jerusalem, and these Samaritans are against Him because He was going to Jerusalem. All unknowingly and ignorantly they were angry with Him, because of the purpose which was in His heart to bring blessing to them.

Then notice the disciples' anger. They requested that they might call down fire to destroy this village. They respected His person, but they were quite ignorant of His purpose. They were standing outside the great circle in which He lived and moved. They had not the vision of the ultimate as He had; and, consequently, while loyal to Him, and angry because He was not hospitably received, they rather hindered than helped Him.

Now look at the Lord. Mark the patience of His purpose. He rebuked the disciples, and quietly went to another village. The village that would not entertain Him He left, not in anger, but in patience. And yet there is a touch of impatience here in Christ. It is only a great patience that ever can be purely impatient. What impatience is there? Impatience with His own disciples. There is no impatience with the Samaritan village that had not understood Him. There is a touch of impatience with His disciples because of their blindness. Ah, methinks sometimes He must be impatient with some of us. He was moving toward the city, with all the glory filling His vision, and He rebukes the disciples, and yet is patient with Samaria.

Let us read on. On His way three men came to Him. One of them said impulsively, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." I always love that man. I like the man who speaks out what is in His heart even though impulsively. Christ did not rebuke him, but He flashed before him the truth, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Jesus looked at another and said, "Follow Me," and the man answered, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," which does not mean that his father was dead. Dr. George Adam Smith told me, talking about this very story, that when he was in Palestine he very particularly desired to get a certain man to act as guide in one of those wonderful journeys of his into the unknown regions, and was startled when the man said to him in actual words, with the Eastern salaam, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." His father was alive and hale and hearty. What the man meant was, I have home ties and responsibilities, and I cannot break them. And that is what this man in the Gospel story meant. The word of Jesus is more severe than it seems. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God."

A little further on another man said, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." To him Christ said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Now reverently I bring the three men together, and I look at the Lord. His face is set toward Jerusalem. Mark the answers. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests." What is that? Detachment from all that prevents progress to Jerusalem. And what next? "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." What is that? Abandonment of the nearest earthly tie in the interest of the heavenly purpose. And what next? "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." "Looking back." Mark it! His face set toward Jerusalem. "No man looking back." The face set. The looking back.

Christ speaking to these men unveiled His own attitude. It was first that of detachment from everything that prevented progress to Jerusalem. I want to say this most reverently, and carefully. Do not pity Him because He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Rather pity yourself if you have something left in your life that makes it hard to go with Him to Jerusalem. It was a declaration of the splendid detachment of Christ from all the things that prevented the progress. I have not where to lay My head. All personal property is abandoned that I may reach Jerusalem, the hostile and the doomed, and make it Jerusalem, the city of God.

Then mark the next word. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." Abandonment of the nearest earthly tie in the interest of the heavenly purpose. And was not that true of Him? Did He not say upon one memorable occasion, when they said, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak with Thee," "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" When Jesus asked that question He was not speaking disrespectfully of His mother. In the last consummating agony of His life, when all the sins of the world were sweeping in anguish over His soul, He was able to think of His mother, and provide for the days remaining to her, "Woman, behold, thy son! ... Behold, thy mother!" What, then, did He mean? He meant that even so dear a tie as the tie of relationship between son and mother must be swept aside in the interests of getting to Jerusalem the doomed and turning it into Jerusalem the glorified!

And then, again, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back." How they tried to persuade Him to look back! How the devil tried, how His own disciples tried! But He never looked back. He put His hand to the plough, and the furrow was lone and long, but, blessed be God, it was straight; and He reached the ultimate goal, because He never looked back.

Brethren, if this is the revelation of Christ's own heart, and I think it is, then if I am to go after Him, I must come this way. If I am to have anything to do in the building of God's city, it must be by detachment from all that prevents progress to Jerusalem. Oh, soul of mine, what hast thou of thine own that hinders thy progress toward Jerusalem with Him? And I have come in hours of meditation almost to feel myself filled with envy for the men who can say, I have not where to lay my head, I have not a thing that stands between me and this one supreme purpose.

I must also abandon the nearest earthly tie that prevents. I must remember that to look back from this enterprise is to make myself unfit for the Kingdom.

But let me thus conclude. Every city is Jerusalem for the purpose of my application. London is Jerusalem, hostile, doomed, and yet possible. London is as hostile to Jesus Christ as Jerusalem was. And therefore it is as surely doomed as Jerusalem was. Yet it is for Christian men and women in London to see through, to see to the ultimate, to see the purpose of God. And if it be impossible for us to take in the larger whole, take the local, take the thing close to you. Take the hostility that abounds all about the place where you live and serve and work. How much there is of it! And take the fact that doom is writ upon everything that is hostile. It does seem to me sometimes we want to remind ourselves of that. Are we not tempted sometimes to think that all these hostile things are going to win? Never! God's verdict is found, and His sentence passed, and all hell cannot prevent the doom of the thing hostile to Jesus Christ. Yes, but, brethren, you and I are to look through, and are to see the possible and God's ultimate.

And if it be true that every city is Jerusalem, in this sense of application, then I will say another thing, and it is this. His face is still toward Jerusalem, steadfastly set toward it, coming to it even when it is hostile to Him. Has it never occurred to you that it is an amazing wonder that He has not turned His back upon London long ago? He has not. His face is toward it. Tears are upon His cheeks even now. Call it figurative language if you will, but remember the fact is finer than the figure. His heart is still moved with compassion toward the city. He knows men will bruise Him, and are bruising Him, but He is coming toward it always. The Cross is not over. It is in His heart today, the infinite passion that was manifest on the green hill is there yet.

The Son of God in tears,

The wondering angels see.

Be thou astonished, Oh, my soul!

He shed those tears for thee.

That is His attitude toward us today.

Now, this is the question. Who is with Him? How many see these things as He saw them? How many can see through to the light and the victory? It is the men and women whose eyes are illumined with His love to see through who are prepared today to tread the pathway of shame and suffering. It would be so much easier to do something else.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."

He said, "No, walk in the town."

I said, "There are no flowers there."

He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black;

There is nothing but noise and din,"

And He wept as He sent me back:

"There is more," He said, "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,

And fogs are veiling the sun."

He answered, "Yet souls are sick,

And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,

And friends will miss me, they say."

He answered, "Choose tonight

If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.

He said, "Is it hard to decide?

It will not seem hard in heaven

To have followed the steps of your Guide."

(From "Obedience," by George MacDonald)

May God set our faces toward Jerusalem!