

Mountain of Faith

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Jesus Christ used the analogy of moving mountains to explain that there is no limit to what can be done if someone has complete trust in Almighty God, which includes the promises He has made in His word.

*... a man came to him (Christ), kneeling down to him and saying, ¹⁵"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is moonstruck and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶So I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him."¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me."¹⁸ And **Jesus rebuked the demon, and he came out of him**; and the child was cured from that very hour. ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" ²⁰So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, **if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you** (Mt. 17:14b- 20; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

So is there a connection between the demon that Christ rebuked, and moving a mountain? If there is no connection, what purpose would it serve if Christ's disciples were able to move literal mountains? Besides, there is no record in the New Testament of Christ's disciples ever moving any literal mountains.

The key to answering these questions is understanding that metaphors, analogies, parables, and figures of speech are used in scripture to describe spiritual realities. Once this

is understood, the reader will automatically look for a spiritual "connection" between what appears to be a literal object, or situation, and something that is spiritual in nature.

Mathew 17:14-20 is very interesting because there are a number of lessons contained within these verses. First, from a purely physical perspective, it is obvious that Christ's disciples could not remove the demon any more than they could move a literal mountain.

Second, in Mathew 17:20, Christ mentioned that his disciples must have "trust" in Almighty God; at least as much as a mustard seed. In this verse, Christ was comparing himself to a mustard seed (see study: **Least of All the Seeds**). Therefore, unless these disciples trusted Almighty God as much as Christ did, they would never have the "faith" required to remove demons.

Next, Christ made an important connection with the demon and a mountain because, as we will see, the mountain is a reference to a spiritual power. Specifically, the mountain in Mathew 17:20 is connected to an evil power represented by the demon.

*"Behold, I (God) am against you, **O destroying mountain**, who destroys (corrupts) all the earth (Rev. 12:9)," says the Lord. "And I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain" (Jer. 51:25; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

This destroying and corrupt mountain represents the evil power behind all pagan religious practices.

Then the king defiled the high places (of pagan worship) *that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of **the Mount of***

Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon (2Kgs. 23:13; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Logically, a literal mountain does not possess human characteristics such as "corruption" or the innate ability to "destroy all the earth". Therefore, the mountain that Christ's disciples were to cast away represented an evil spirit being from Satan's kingdom (Mt. 12:26). Permission to do exactly this was granted to Christ's disciples shortly after the events of Mathew 17:14-20.

Behold, I (Christ) give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions (symbols of evil spirits; Rev. 9:10; 12:9), and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven (Lk. 10:19-20; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In contrast to this evil "mountain", or kingdom representing Satan and the fallen angels, God's kingdom is "glorious".

*You (Almighty God) are more glorious and excellent than **the mountains of prey** (Ps. 76:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

The original Hebrew word translated into the English word "prey" is SHD 2964, which is associated with "the victims of thieves, those who come forth for booty/plunder/spoil, those who "tear off/down" (as opposed to building up).

I broke the fangs of the wicked, and plucked the victim (SHD 2964) from his teeth (cf. Dan.

7:7, 19) (Job 29:17; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey (SHD 2964) to their teeth (Ps. 124:6; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey (SHD 2964), to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain (Eze. 22:27; Ed. note in parenthesis).

God compares the destruction of Nineveh to the destruction of Satan's kingdom, with its young lions who represent the actions of Satan's messengers, or angels.

*"Behold, I am against you," says the Lord of hosts, "I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey (SHD 2964) from the earth, and **the voice of your messengers** (SHD 4397; angels, teachers, priests, prophets; cf. 2Cor. 11:13-15) **shall be heard no more.**" (Nah. 2:13; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added)*

Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies (Jn. 8:44) and robbery. Its prey (SHD 2964) never departs (Nah. 3:1; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In contrast to "the mountains of prey", there is "the mountain of God" which represents "the kingdom of God (Almighty)".

*And **in this mountain** The Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines matured on the sediment, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. ⁷And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations (Satan's deceptions; Rev. 12:9). ⁸He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces... (Isa.*

25:6-8a; cf. Rev. 7:17; 21:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

*Even them (Gentile nations) I will bring to **My holy mountain**, and make them joyful in My house of prayer (Jn. 4:21). Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

It is from God's holy mountain that His law and commandments will be taught to all nations.

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that **the mountain of the Lord's house** shall be established on the top of the mountains (representing formerly evil kingdoms), and shall be exalted above the hills (other worldly authorities; Gal. 1:4); and all nations shall flow to it. ³Many people shall come and say, "Come, and **let us go up to the mountain of the Lord**, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For **out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem** (Mt. 4:4). ⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2:2-4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

God's judgment of the rebellious nations, in the physical and spiritual realm, is described figuratively as mountains being removed, or brought down.

*"Behold, I will make you (God's faithful and obedient servants) into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; **you shall thresh the mountains** and beat them small (humble the rebellious nations, leading to their*

repentance), and make the hills like chaff. ¹⁶You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, and the whirl wind shall scatter them (who they were, prior to their repentance, will be removed); You shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41:15-16; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Included with these evil mountains is the household of Israel, that will also be judged. Specifically, the twelve families/nations that descended from the original twelve sons of Jacob.

*Son of man, **set your face toward the mountains of Israel**, and prophesy against them, ³and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, to the hills, to the ravines, and to the valleys: "Indeed I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places (of pagan worship)" (Eze. 6:2-3; cf. 19:9; 33:28; 35:12; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

After God's judgment, these formerly rebellious kingdoms, nations, or "mountains" will rejoice following their repentance. This is described using figurative language in the following scripture that will see its ultimate fulfillment at the conclusion of the second resurrection.

*The **mountains skipped like rams**, the little hills like lambs (Ps. 114:4; emphasis added).*

This scripture is another reminder that words like "mountain" and "mountains" are not limited to a literal/physical interpretation. Without this understanding, Christ's comment to his disciples about "faith" being a prerequisite to moving a "mountain" cannot be fully appreciated. Instead, it will have only a partial or limited meaning.

Once it is understood that Christ intended his disciples to cast out demons, who represent an

evil “mountain” or power, a connection can be made to the action of Christ’s disciples after his resurrection.

*Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶And multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷For **unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed**.... (Ac. 8:5-7b; emphasis added).*

*Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortunetelling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." ¹⁸And this she did for many days. But **Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."** And he came out that very hour (Ac. 16:16-18; emphasis added).*

In essence, Philip and Paul moved a “mountain” from one location to another; just as Christ did in the following example,

*When he had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. ²⁹And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God? Have you come here to torment (interrogate) us before the time?" ³⁰Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. ³¹So the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." ³²And he said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly **the whole herd of swine ran***

***violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water** (Mt. 8:28-32; Ed. note in parenthesis).*

So Christ removed the demons from one location to another. First, into some swine and then into the sea. So citizens of the “mountain” representing Satan’s kingdom were eventually cast into the sea; just as Christ described in the following scripture.

*So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also **if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done**" (Mt. 21:21; emphasis added).*

*Because the word "sea" or "seas" is often used figuratively to describe the realm of Satan, and the fallen angels, Jesus Christ was returning the demons in Mathew 8:28-32 back to where they came from (cf. Rev. 13:1-7; see study: **The Seas and Those Who Dwell in Them**).*

As a significant amount of scripture utilizes symbolic/ figurative language, the full meaning cannot be understood unless the principle of “literal versus symbolic” is examined closely in order to seek the spiritual intent behind these scriptures.

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