

## Jesus in Adummin and Nebo

Jesus, with most of His disciples, passed through Bethagla to Adummin, a place hidden away in a frightfully wild, mountainous region, broken by innumerable ravines. The road running along by the rocks was in some places so narrow that even an ass could scarcely tread it. It was about three hours from Jericho, in a district so retired on the boundary between Benjamin and Juda that I never before noticed it. It was wonderfully steep. It was a refugial city for murderers and other malefactors,



who found here protection from capital punishment. They were either kept in custody until they reformed or employed in the quarries and in the most painful field labors. The place received on this account the appellation "The Path of the Red, the Bloody." This city of refuge was in existence even before David's time. During the first persecution of the Community after Jesus' death, it came to an end. Later on, a convent was built there to serve as a stronghold, or fortress, for the first religious guardians of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>1</sup> The people subsisted by the culture of the vine and other fruits. It was a frightful wilderness, consisting chiefly of naked rocks, which sometimes toppled from their base, carrying down with them the clinging vines.

The road proper from Jericho to Jerusalem did not run through Adummin, but westward of it, on which side there was no access to the city. But that from Bethagla to Adummin was intersected by another running from the shepherd valley to Jericho, and at about one half-hour's distance from Adummin. Near this crossroad was a very narrow and dangerous pass, designated by a stone as the spot where long before had really happened the fact upon which Jesus based the parable of the good Samaritan and the man that had fallen among robbers. As Jesus was approaching Adummin, He turned a little out of the way with His disciples, to give an instruction on that memorable spot. Seated on the stone chair and surrounded by the disciples and the people of the immediate neighborhood, He taught, taking for His text the incident just quoted. He celebrated the Sabbath in Adummin and taught in the synagogue, relating a parable that referred to the advantages offered to malefactors by the refugial city, all which He applied to the grace

of doing penance on this earth. He also cured several persons, most of them dropsical. The Sabbath over, Jesus and the disciples returned to the place of Baptism.

Next evening Jesus went with His disciples to the city of Nebo, situated on the opposite side of the Jordan at the foot of Mount Nebo, whose height is such that several hours are necessary to reach the summit. Messengers had previously been sent to implore Him to enter the city and teach. The population was a mixed one, Egyptians, Moabites, and Israelites that had in former times defiled themselves with idolatry. They had been aroused by John's preaching, but had not had the courage to go over to Jesus' place of Baptism. I think they dared not. On account of some crime of their forefathers (of what kind I no longer remember), they were held by the Jews in great contempt. They dared not go about freely, but to certain places only. They now came to Jesus humbly begging Him to baptize among them. The disciples had brought from the baptismal pool, water in leathern bottles, which they had left under the care of some guards.

Nebo was about one half-hour from the Jordan, from which it was separated by a mountain, and between five and six hours from Machaerus. The country around was not fertile. To reach Nebo, one must, after crossing the river, climb the mountain and then descend on the other side. Just opposite the place of Baptism stands the mountain, affording no place for a landing, and behind was the city Nebo. It was tolerably large, the foundation hilly, and separated by a valley from the mount of the same name. There was still here a heathen temple, but it was closed and something built around it.

Jesus, from a teacher's chair and out in the open air, prepared the people for Baptism, which the disciples administered. The baptismal basin was placed over a cistern into which the neophytes stepped, and which was filled with water to a certain height. The disciples had brought with them the baptismal robes, rolled up and wrapped around their person, which were put on the neophytes during the ceremony. They floated around them on the water. After the Baptism a kind of little mantle was placed on their shoulders. At John's baptism, it was something like a stole and as wide as a hand-towel, but at the Baptism of Jesus, it was more like a real little mantle on which was fastened a stole like a lappet trimmed with fringe. Among the newly baptized were mostly tender youths and very old men, for many of the middle-aged were postponed until they should become less unworthy. Jesus healed many sick of fevers and many dropsical who had been carried thither on litters. The possessed among the heathens were not so numerous as among the Jews. Jesus blessed also the drinking water, which was not good here. It was muddy and brackish. It was collected among the rocks whence it was brought

in bottles and poured into a reservoir. Jesus blessed it crosswise, and rested His hand upon several different points of the surface.

On their return journey to the inn outside Ono, Jesus and the disciples spent the greater part of the day on the road, only one hour long, from Nebo to the Jordan ferry. Jesus taught the whole way. The road was bordered by huts and tents in which the people from Nebo sold to travelers fruit and distilled wine. It was these vendors that Jesus instructed. Before evening He returned with the disciples to His inn at the place of Baptism.

Jesus went afterward through the surrounding district, instructing the peasants singly and in crowds. Among them were many good souls, who during the time that John was baptizing here supplied the crowds with food. Jesus appeared to be seeking out everyone, even those in the most remote corners, for He was soon to leave these parts and go on to Galilee.

He stopped for a while at the house of a rich peasant whose fields covered a whole mountain. On one side the harvest was ripe, when on the other they were just about to sow. Jesus taught in a parable of sowing and harvesting. There was here an old, dilapidated teacher's chair formerly used by the Prophets. The peasants had restored it very handsomely, and from it Jesus delivered His instructions.

Several such places for teaching had been restored since John had here baptized. He had ordered it, for that, too, was a part of These teaching chairs had here, as with us the pictures of the Stations, quite gone to ruin since the times of the Prophets. Elias and Eliseus had frequented this part of the country. Jesus celebrated in Ono the morning of the Sabbath, which was followed by a feast that must have had some connection with fruit. I saw whole basketfuls carried during those days into the synagogue and town halls.

The arrangements at the place of Baptism had already been taken apart and stowed away by the disciples. Near the spot upon which the stone of the Ark of the Covenant lay, there were now scattered around about twenty dwellings. Bethabara was not close to the shore, but about one half-hour from the ferry; one could see it however. From the ferry to John's present place of baptism beyond Betharaba was a good hour and a half's distance. I saw Jesus going from house to house at Ono. At first I knew not for what reason, but later I heard that it was on account of the tithes, to the paying of which He was urging the people. He reminded them also of the alms which it was customary to give on the feast of fruit trees now beginning. That evening He celebrated the Sabbath in the synagogue where He taught. After that began the preparations for the new year's fruit festival. It was a threefold feast: first, it commemorated the rising of the sap in the trees; secondly,

because today tithes of all the fruits were offered; and lastly, it was a feast of thanksgiving for the fertility of the soil. Jesus gave an instruction upon all these points. They ate much fruit, and gave to the poor whole figures of fruit that were built up on the tables. About twenty new disciples had, up to the present, come to Jesus.