



CREATOR

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BANDS OF LIFE

“The hills bring...their produce, and all the wild animals play nearby” (Job 40:20).

Grassy plains (savannas) sweep through the heart of the African continent, providing a home for many millions of animals. But the mountains of East Africa seem to proclaim loudest the landscape and gardening genius of Jesus Christ. And chief among these heralds is **Mount Kenya**, located in the heart of Africa’s **Great Rift Valley**.

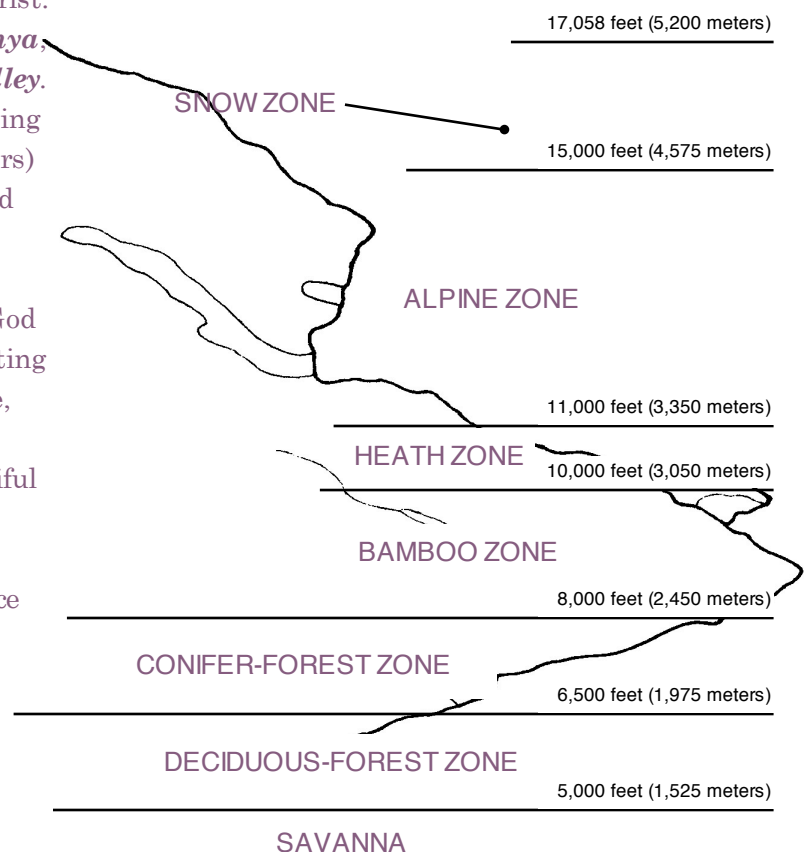
Mount Kenya towers over the surrounding savanna, fanning out 60 miles (97 kilometers) wide at its base. Standing as Africa’s second tallest mountain, it reaches an altitude of 17,058 feet (5,200 meters).¹

On the slopes of this ancient volcano, God has cultivated a lush, terraced garden bursting with a rich variety of life. To the trained eye, He has adorned Mount Kenya with many environments—layers of strange and beautiful living things, like the steps on a ladder.

It may seem quite incredible, but snowstorms sometimes rage a short distance above its tropical forests, providing us with one of the most startling displays of God’s ability to sustain vastly different habitats so close to one another! Erected very near

the equator, Mount Kenya forms a grand pedestal upon which Jesus drapes many rich tapestries of life. He uses the mountain as an enormous canvas, painting its slopes with broad, horizontal strokes—each distinct terrains. Christ created these “zones of life” to showcase specially-designed **ecosystems**, stacked one on top of the other straight up the mountain.

MOUNT KENYA’S “ZONES OF LIFE”



¹ Mount Kilimanjaro is Africa’s highest mountain at 19,340 feet (5,895 meters).



SNOW ZONE

(17,058 - 15,000 feet or 5,200 - 4,575 meters)

Despite its wind-swept and barren appearance, the **Snow Zone**—highest of Mount Kenya's ecosystems—is home to numerous insects, tiny rodents, colorful lichens, moss and wildflowers.

ALPINE ZONE

(15,000 - 11,000 feet or 4,575 - 3,350 meters)

Freezing temperatures envelope the **Alpine Zone** of Mount Kenya at night (as low as 15° F or -9° C). This poses a challenge to the survival of both plants and animals. Yet, giant groundsels and lobelias bloom 20 feet high (six meters) here. Broadest of Mount Kenya's habitats, the **Alpine Zone** also harbors numerous small mammals, lizards, sunbirds, and the rock hyrax.



HEATH ZONE

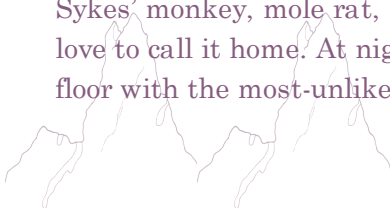
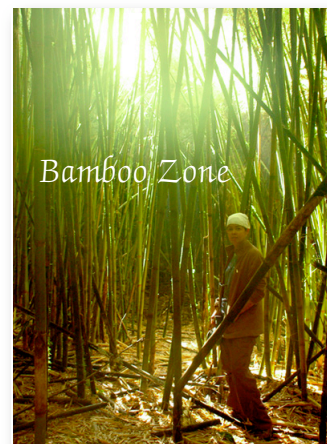
(11,000 - 10,000 feet or 3,350 - 3,050 meters)

Although Mount Kenya is close to the equator, its **Heath Zone** resembles the cool temperate moors of Scotland. Dominant among plants in this region is the heather (a type of shrub). East African rosewood trees, large Saint-John's wort, giant heaths, and pink orchids also grow at this altitude. If you hiked the **Heath Zone**, you might spot several large mammals—waterbucks, cape buffalo, elephants, lions, hyenas, and impalas.

BAMBOO ZONE

(10,000 - 8,000 feet or 3,050 - 2,450 meters)

At 8,000 to 10,000 feet up the slope of Mount Kenya, bamboo grows dense and very tall, stretching 50 feet into the sky. Large animals, like elephants and buffalo, find it difficult to live and maneuver within the thick **Bamboo Zone**. But the Sykes' monkey, mole rat, and several species of song birds love to call it home. At night, our Lord Jesus lights the forest floor with the most-unlikely of lanterns—luminous mold!



CONIFER-FOREST ZONE

(8,000 - 6,500 feet or 2,450 - 1,975 meters)

Like so many other mountains around the world, Mount Kenya sports a band of conifer trees (trees with needles and cones). The **Conifer Zone** on Mount Kenya is home to colobus monkeys, striped antelope, serval cats, and many other wonderful creatures Christ created.



Colobus monkey



Tree hyrax

DECIDUOUS-FOREST ZONE

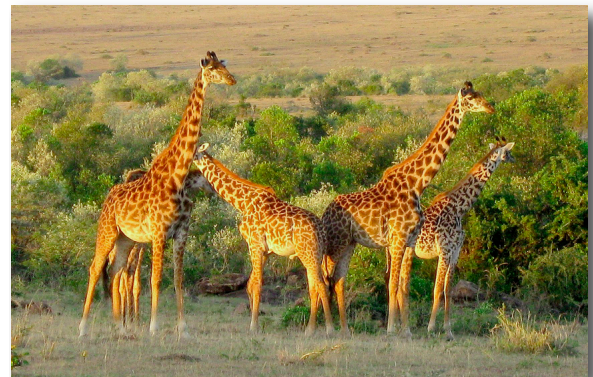
(6,500 - 5,000 feet or 1,975 - 1,525 meters)

The **Deciduous-Forest Zone** of Mount Kenya is **a true tropical jungle**. (Deciduous plants possess leaves that drop at the end of a growing season—e.g., autumn.) The deciduous trees Jesus planted on Mount Kenya include pillarwood, East African Camphorwood, olive trees, and wild coffee. Animals found here include elephants, leopards, zebras, and the noisy tree hyrax, to name a few.

AFRICAN SAVANNA

(below 5,000 feet or 1,525 meters)

Our mind's eye often pictures the **Savanna** when we think of Africa. Roaming bands of hyenas and ferocious lions prowl for prey in these **grasslands**. The majestic giraffe and winsome zebra also dot the countryside. And umbrella-like acacia (ah- KAY - sha) trees provide what little shade can be had at the base of Mount Kenya. This semi-arid environment lies **a little more than two miles** (in altitude) below its snow-tipped peak!



African Savanna

Like all mountains, Mount Kenya is a modern-day “ark” that preserves a multi-layered testimony and praise to our loving Creator. Jesus painted it with **Life Zones**, forming terraced parks and gardens that proclaim His Father's glory (Psalm 104).



A TENACIOUS LIFE

“if you have faith...you can say to this mountain,
'Move from here to there' and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you.”
Matthew 17:20

You may be amazed to learn that an ordinary-looking goose lays claim to “The Highest-Flying Animal.”² This tenacious bird actually migrates **over the Himalaya mountains!** Imagine a climber’s great surprise when, in his desperate struggle to reach the top of Mount Everest, a flock of bar-headed geese—carrying with them no food or water, no oxygen, and wearing no extra clothes—passes overhead. ***Our Creator’s skills displayed in this bird are incredible!***



The dapper-looking **bar-headed goose** (*Anser indicus*) navigates the air over the Himalayas at 30,000 to 33,000 feet (nine to ten kilometers). The oxygen concentration at this height is little more than one-quarter that of sea level—not enough air for kerosene lanterns to burn, helicopters to hover, or people to breathe. If an oxygen mask is not handy, a man will pass out within seconds at this altitude. Yet this goose remains fully conscious and faithfully flies over the Himalayas twice a

² It's been observed at a world-record height of 33,382 feet or 10,175 meters.

year, a journey which takes several hours.

The bar-headed goose is a migratory bird that breeds in Central Asia (southeast Russia and western China) but travels to India and northern Burma for the winter. Why doesn't it just fly around the mountains or snake its way through them using river valleys, like most other migratory birds of the Himal region? I am convinced this goose has been given the titanic task to show us, in a visible way, that Christ can and will sustain His creation through all difficulties—His hand leads and upholds this bird!

Christ's construction of the bar-headed goose includes larger-than-normal wings, lungs that inhale greater-than-normal amounts of air, and blood containing a special type of hemoglobin that carries higher-than-normal levels of oxygen to its tissues and organs.

God also designed this bird to produce a lot of heat during its death-defying journey. The constant radiation of body warmth, plus its down feathers, prevent ice from forming on the goose's wings, potentially 'grounding' it.

The bar-headed goose is a master of rarified air, reminding us that its Creator, Jesus Christ, makes all things possible (Matthew 19:26). God shines His glory in the farthest reaches of Earth—even where life's presence seems utterly impossible.

I quoted a verse from the book of Matthew at the beginning of this article—a passage that admittedly speaks of faith, not geese. It is Christ, however, who is Author of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) **and** the Author of creation (Hebrews 1:10)—He alone is the One who moves mountains, not us! So, whether Jesus moves a mountain for someone or moves something, like a goose, over a mountain, ***He is the God who sustains and guides us all in incredible ways.***

I will go before you and will level the mountains...
so that you may know that I am the LORD
Isaiah 45:2, 3



HIGH-ALTITUDE LIFE

“Praise the LORD...you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals...small creatures and flying birds” (Psalm 148:7, 9, 10).

Life on mountains has a lot going against it. But God seems to delight in sustaining high-altitude organisms, making them sweetly dependent upon Him. The trials facing montane³ plants and animals include all of the following:

- **Low oxygen levels**—The world’s highest village is perched in Tibet at 16,730 feet (5,100 meters). A chronic lack of oxygen makes it difficult for people to live above three miles, yet Jesus designed mountain sheep, ibex, and



yak to breathe at 19,000 feet (5,800 meters). And a few species of insects defy all odds surviving in the Himalayas up to an incredible 22,300 feet (6,800 meters)!

- **Extreme cold**—Some mountain peaks are in a perpetual deep freeze. Temperatures on the top of Mount Everest, for example, plummet as low as minus 50° F (-45° C).

- **Gale-force winds**—At sea level, winds blow seasonally—sometimes they are strong, sometimes there’s little breeze at all. Wind

³ Montane is an adjective meaning “mountainous.”

Breathing the air of Kilimanjaro & Everest

As a climber goes up a mountain, the amount of oxygen available to him steadily drops. On top of Mount Kilimanjaro air contains **one-half the normal concentration of oxygen**. If we stood on the summit of Mount Everest, we would have **only one-third as much oxygen** to breathe as we do at sea level.

speeds generally increase with increasing altitude and are strongest above three miles (5,000 meters). On tall mountains, gusty wind is virtually constant, causing things to dry out and cool down rapidly.

- **Dry air**—The alpine climate is usually low in humidity. This lack of moisture in mountain air affords life little protection from the Sun’s deadly radiation.

- **Hot sun, cool shade**—The temperature difference between the sun and the shade is extreme on high mountains. Mount Kilimanjaro can sport a cool 57° F (14° C) in the shade, while the ground just a few feet away might heat to 189° F (87° C) under direct sunshine!

- **Snowstorms**—Snow frequents cloud-piercing peaks, even in the tropics. Yet, our Lord Jesus uses snow cover as a haven for numerous small plants and animals. Snow thus becomes the solution for many of the serious problems mentioned above. It acts as a blanket, protecting creatures from dry air, wind, intense sunshine, and bitter cold. **God is such a good Provider!**

Christ hasn’t left His creation defenseless in a hostile environment. He lovingly sustains alpine life, just as He cares for everything He has made (Psalm 145:13b-17).



AN INVINCIBLE LIFE

Let the mountains sing together for joy (Psalm 98:8).

Not one bar-headed goose will fail to make it over the Himalayas as God's hand sustains it. This truth parallels what Jesus says about sparrows in Matthew 10. How exactly does God enable these geese to weather all the high-altitude stresses that they must endure? Scientists are not sure, but this much we know—these birds make it to the other side because ***Christ, their Creator and Sustainer, is all-powerful and faithful!***

Now consider this amazing fact—it's a million times more certain that God will not allow one Christian to fall away from Him (John 10:27-29) than for a bar-headed goose to fall from the sky! God is as invisible as the air at 30,000 feet and may, at times, seem as difficult to grasp, but He is always with His loved ones (Hebrews 13:5).

Have you ever worried about losing your salvation? ***If you know and love Jesus, you never will.*** Scripture guarantees salvation in the genuine Believer (John 6:37-40; Romans 8:29; 8:38-39; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 6:19; 7:25; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 23; Jude 24-25). Please carefully read these passages.


The Holy Spirit teaches us that "the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19). ***There is a finality in this statement.*** Throughout the Old Testament, we read that meadows, mountains, and many creatures shout for joy because God's people will be saved (Isaiah 44:23).

How can we be so certain that we will see the other side of this life and enter into Heaven's joy? Jesus promises that He lives in those He loves, and those He loves have eternal life (1 John 5:11 & 12). ***He is indestructible*** (Hebrews 7:16). On our own, we will never make it over the mountain of this life. But in Christ we will.

Those who know and love Jesus as their God and Savior will persevere. God guarantees that

they will not lose their love for Him, nor will they ever lose their salvation. True Christians never give up, because God's hand carries them over the peaks of life's pains and disappointments, no matter how hard or exhausting the journey gets!

Why do the mountains sing together for joy? Because they see the indestructible life of God at work in His people, bringing them to eternal life. ***Jesus is this Invincible Life*** I am speaking of. He died for the sins of God's people and rose from death because His life cannot be destroyed.

"Oh, Father in Heaven, I confess that I have lived my life in rebellion against You, and this is sin. Please forgive me through Your Son, Jesus Christ—through His death on the cross. Jesus, I turn away from my sins and look to you as my only hope. I embrace You as my all-powerful God, my sweet Savior, and my Indestructible Life. Show me how to live the way You want me to live, and allow me to see and hear Your praises throughout the universe! In Your name, Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen." 

"Though the mountains be shaken...yet My unfailling love for you will not be shaken nor My covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you (Isaiah 54:10).



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