

The Sword & The Plow

Newsletter of the Bimillennial Preterist Association

Vol. XIII, No. 1 – January 2010

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The Early Days of Christianity

The Moral Condition of the World

At the time of the Revelation

“From Mummius to Augustus the Roman city stands as the living mistress of a dead world, and from Augustus to Theodosius the mistress becomes as lifeless as her subjects.” *Freeman’s Essays*, ii, 330

The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and the degradation have rarely been equaled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind. Were we to form our sole estimate of it from the lurid picture of its wickedness, which St. Paul in more than one passage has painted with a few powerful strokes, we might suppose that we were judging it from too lofty a standpoint. We might be accused of throwing too dark a shadow upon the crimes of Paganism,

when we set it as a foil to the lustre of an ideal holiness. But even if St. Paul had never paused amid his sacred reasonings to affix his terrible brand upon the pride of Heathenism, there would still have been abundant proofs of the abnormal wickedness which accompanied the decadence of ancient civilization. They are stamped upon its coinage, cut on its gems, painted upon its chamber-walls, sown broadcast over the pages of its poets, satirists, and historians. “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant!” Is there any age which stands so instantly condemned by the bare mention of its rulers as that which recalls the successive names of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and which after a brief gleam of better examples under Vespasian and Titus, sank at last under the hideous tyranny of a Domitian? Is there any age of which the evil characteristics

force themselves so instantaneously upon the mind as that of which we mainly learn the history and moral condition from the relics of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the satires of Persius and Juvenal, the epigrams of Martial, and the terrible records of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Cassius? And yet even beneath this lowest deep, there is a lower deep; for not even on their dark pages are the depths of Satan so shamelessly laid bare to human gaze as they are in the sordid fictions of Petronius and of Apuleius. But to dwell upon the crimes and the retributive misery of that period is happily not my duty. I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of insecurity and terror; its apathy, debauchery, and cruelty; its hopeless fatalism; its unspeakable sadness and weariness; its strange extravagances alike of infidelity and of superstition.

At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves, without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognized rights, and towards whom none had any recognized duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied neglect. Only a little above the slaves stood the lower classes, who formed the vast majority of the freeborn inhabitants of the Roman Empire. They were, for the most part, beggars and idlers, familiar with the grossest indignities of an unscrupulous dependence. Despising a life of honest industry, they asked only for bread and the games of the Circus, and were ready to support any government, even the most despotic, if it would supply these needs. They spent their mornings in lounging about the Forum, or in dancing attendance at the levees of patrons, for a share in whose largesses they daily struggled. They spent their afternoons and evening in gossiping at the Public Baths, in listlessly enjoying the polluted plays of the theatre, or looking with fierce thrills of delighted horror at the bloody sports of the arena. At night, they crept up to their miserable garrets in the sixth and seventh stories of the huge *insulae* – the lodging-houses of the poorer quarters of London, there drifted all that was most wretched and vile. Their life, as it is described for us by their contemporaries, was largely made up of squalor, misery, and vice.

Immeasurably removed from these needy and greedy freemen, and living chiefly amid crowds of corrupted and obsequious slaves, stood the constantly diminishing throng of the wealthy and the noble. Every age in its decline has exhibited the spectacle of selfish luxury side by side with abject poverty; of –

“Wealth, a monster gorged

Mid starving populations:” –

But nowhere, and at no period, were these contrasts so startling as they were in Imperial Rome. There a whole population might be trembling lest they should be starved by the delay of Alexandrian corn-ship, while the upper classes were squandering a fortune at a single banquet, drinking out of myrrhine and jeweled vases worth hundreds of pounds, and feasting on the brains of peacocks and the tongues of nightingales. As a consequence disease was rife, men were short-lived, and even women became liable to gout. Over a large part of Italy, most of the freeborn population had to content themselves, even in winter, with a tunic, and the luxury of a toga was reserved only, by way of honour, to the corpse. Yet at this very time, the dress of Roman ladies displayed an unheard-of splendour. The elder Pliny tells us that he himself saw Lollia Paulina dressed for a betrothal feast in a robe entirely covered with pearls and emeralds, which had cost forty million sesterces, and which was known to be less costly than some of her other dresses. Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.

“On that hard Pagan world disgust

And secret loathing fell;

Deep weariness and sated lust

Made human life a hell.

In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,

The Roman noble lay;

He drove abroad in furious disguise

Along the Apian Way;
 He made a feast, frank fierce and fast,
 And crowned his hair with flowers-
 No easier nor n o quicker past
 The impracticable hours.”

At the summit of the whole decaying system – necessary, yet detested – elevated indefinitely above the very highest, yet living in dread of the very lowest, oppressing a population which he terrified, and terrified by the population which he oppressed – was an Emperor, raised to the divinest pinnacle of autocracy, yet conscious that his life hung upon a thread; - an Emperor who, in the terrible phrase of Gibbon, was at once a priest, an atheist, and a god.

The general condition of society was such as might have been expected from the existence of these elements. The Romans had entered on a stage of fatal degeneracy from the first day of their close intercourse with Greece. Greece learnt from Rome her cold-blooded cruelty; Rome learnt from Greece her voluptuous corruption. Family life among the Romans had once been a sacred thing, and for 520 years divorce had been unknown among them. Under the Empire marriage had come to be regarded with disfavour and disdain. Women, as Seneca says, married in order to be divorced, and were divorced in order to marry; and noble Roman matrons counted the years not by the Consuls, but by their discarded or discarding husbands.

To have a family was regarded as a misfortune, because the childless were courted with extraordinary assiduity by crowds of fortune-hunters. When there were children in a family, their education was left to be begun under the tutelage of those slaves who were otherwise the most decrepit and useless, and was carried on, with results too fatally obvious, by supple, accomplished, and abandoned Greeklings. But indeed no system of education could have eradicated the influence of the domestic circle. No care could have prevented the sons and daughters of a wealthy family from catching the contagion of the vices of which they saw in their parents a constant and unblushing example.

Literature and art were infected with the prevalent degradation. Poetry sank in great measure into exaggerated satire, hollow declamation, or frivolous epigrams. Art was partly corrupted by the fondness for glare, expensiveness, and size, and partly sank into miserable triviality, or immoral prettinesses, such as those which decorated the walls of Pompeii in the first century, and the Parc aux Cerfs in the eighteenth. Greek statues of the days of Phidias were ruthlessly decapitated, that their heads might be replaced by the scowling or imbecile figures of a Gaius or a Claudius. Nero, professing to be a connoisseur, thought that he improved the Alexander of Lysimachus by gilding it from head to foot. Eloquence, deprived of every legitimate aim, and used almost solely for purposes of insincere display, was tempted to supply the lack of genuine fire by sonorous euphony and theatrical affectation. A training in rhetoric was now understood to be a training in the art of emphasis and verbiage, which was rarely used for any loftier purpose than to make sycophancy plausible, or to embellish sophistry with speciousness. The drama, even in Horace’s days, had degenerated into a vehicle for the exhibition of scenic splendour or ingenious machinery. Dignity, wit, pathos, were no longer expected on the stage, for the dramatist was eclipsed by the swordsman or the rope-dancer. The actors who absorbed the greatest part of popular favour were pantomimists, whose insolent prosperity was generally in direct proportion to the infamy of their character. And while the shamelessness of the theatre corrupted the purity of all classes from the earliest age, the hearts of the multitude were made hard as the nether millstone with brutal insensibility, by the fury of the circus, the atrocities of the amphitheatre, and the cruel orgies of the games. Augustus, in the document annexed to his will, mentioned that he had exhibited 8,000 gladiators and 3, 510 wild beasts. The old warlike spirit of the Romans was dead among the gilded youth of families in which distinction of any kind was certain to bring down upon its most prominent members the murderous suspicion of irresponsible despots. The spirit which has cone led the Domitii and the Fabii “to drink delight of battle with their peers” on the plains of Gaul and in the forests of Germany, was now satiated by gazing on criminals fighting for dead life with bears and tigers, or upon bands of gladiators who hacked each other to pieces on the encrimsoned sand. The languid enervation of the delicate and

dissolute aristocrat could only be amused by magnificence and stimulated by grossness or by blood. Thus the gracious illusions by which true Art has ever aimed at purging the passions of terror and pity, were extinguished by the realism of tragedies ignobly horrible, and comedies intolerably base. Two phrases ;sum up the characteristics of Roman civilization in the days of the Empire – heartless cruelty, and unfathomable corruption.

If there had been a refuge anywhere for the sentiments of outraged virtue and outraged humanity, we might have hoped to find it in the Senate, the members of which were heirs of so many noble and austere traditions. But – even in the days of Tiberius – the Senate, as Tacitus tells us, had rushed headlong into the most servile flattery, and this would not have been possible if its members had not been tainted by the prevalent deterioration. It was before the once grace and pure-minded Senators of Rome – the greatness of whose state was founded on the sanctity of family relationships – that the Censor Metellus had declared in A.U.C. 602, without one dissentient murmur, that marriage could only be regarded as an intolerable necessity. Before that same Senate, at an earlier period, a leading Consular had not scrupled to assert that there was scarcely one among them all who had not ordered one or more of his own infant children to be exposed to death. In the hearing of that same Senate in A.D. 59, not long before St. Paul wrote his letter to Philemon, C. Cassius Longinus had gravely argued that the only security for the life of masters was to put into execution the sanguinary Silanian Law, which enacted that, if a master was murdered, every one of his slaves, however numerous, however notoriously innocent, should be indiscriminately massacred. It was the senators of Rome who thronged forth to meet with adoring congratulations the miserable youth who came to them with his hands reeking with the blood of matricide. They offered thanksgivings to the gods for his worst cruelties, and obediently voted Divine honours o the dead infant, four months old, of the wife whom he afterwards killed with a brutal kick.

And what was the religion of a period which needed the sanctions and consolations of religion more deeply than any age since the world began? It is certain that the old Paganism was – except in country places – practically dead. The very fact that it was necessary to prop it up by

the buttress of political interference shows how hollow and ruinous the structure of classic Polytheism had become. The decrees and reforms of Claudius wee not likely to reassure the faith of an age which had witnessed in contemptuous silence, or with frantic adulation, the assumption by Gaius of the attributes of deity after deity, had tolerated his insults against their sublimest objects of worship, and encouraged his claim to a living apotheosis. The upper classes were “destitute of faith, yet terrified at skepticism.” They had long learned to treat the current mythology as a mass of worthless fables, scarcely amusing enough for even a school-boy’s laughter, but they were the ready dupes of every wandering quack who chose to assume the character of a *mathematicus* or a *mage*. Their official religion was a decrepit Theogony; their real religion was a vague and credulous fatalism, which disbelieved in the existence of the gods, or held with Epicurus that that they were careless of mankind. The mass of the populace either accorded to the old beliefs a nominal adherence which saved them the trouble of giving any thought to the matter, and reduced their creed and their morals to a survival of national habits; or else they plunged with eager curiosity into the crowd of foreign cults – among which a distorted Judaism took its place – such as made the Romans familiar with strange names like Sabazius and Anchialus, Agdistis, Isis, and the Syrian goddess. All men joined in the confession ;that “the oracles were dumb.” It hardly needed the wail of mingled lamentations as of departing deities which swept over the astonished crew of the vessel of Palodes to assure the world that the reign of the gods of Hellas was over – that “Great Pan was dead.”

Such are the scenes which we must witness, such are the sentiments with which we must become familiar, the moment that we turn away our eyes from the spectacle of the little Christian churches, composed chiefly as yet of salves and artisans, who had been taught to imitate a Divine example of humility and sincerity, of purity and love. There were, indeed, a few among the Heathen who lived nobler lives and professed a purer ideal than the Pagans around them. Here and there in the ranks of the philosophers a Demetrius, a Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus; here and there among Senators and Helvidius Priscus, a Paetus Thrasea, a Barea Soranus; here and there among literary men a Seneca or a Persius – showed that virtue was not yet extinct. But the Stoicism on which they learned for

support amid the terrors and temptations of that awful epoch utterly failed to provide a remedy against the universal degradation. It aimed at cherishing an insensibility which gave no real comfort, and for which it offered no adequate motive. It aimed at repressing the passions by a violence so unnatural that with them it also crushed some of the gentlest and most elevating emotions. Its self-satisfaction and exclusiveness repelled the gentlest and sweetest natures from its communion. It made a vice of compassion, which Christianity inculcated as a virtue; it cherished a haughtiness which Christianity discouraged as a sin. It was unfit for the task of ameliorating mankind, because it looked on human nature in its normal aspects with contemptuous disgust. Its marked characteristic was a despairing sadness, which became specially prominent in its most sincere adherents. Its favourite theme was the glorification of suicide, which wiser moralists had severally reprobated, but which many Stoics belauded as the one sure refuge against oppression and outrage. It was a philosophy which was indeed able to lacerate the heart with a righteous indignation against the crimes and follies of mankind, but which vainly strove to resist, and which scarcely even hoped to stem, the ever-swelling tide of vice and misery. For wretchedness it had no pity; on vice it looked with impotent disdain. Thræsea was regarded as an antique hero for waking out of the Senate-

house during the discussion of some decree which involved a servility more than usually revolting. He gradually drove his few admirers to the conviction that, even for those who had every advantage of rank and wealth, nothing was possible but a life of crushing sorrow ended by a death of complete despair. St. Paul and St. Peter, on the other hand, were at the very same epoch teaching in the same city, to a few Jewish hucksters and a few Gentile slaves, a doctrine so full of hope and brightness that letters, written in a prison with torture and death in view, read like idylls of serene happiness and Paeans of triumphant joy. The graves of these poor sufferers, hid from the public eye in the catacombs, were decorated with an art, rude indeed, yet so triumphant as to make their subterranean squalor radiant with emblems of all that is brightest and most poetic in the happiness of man. While the glimmering taper of the Stoics was burning pale, as though amid the vapours of a charnel-house, the torch of Life upheld by the hands of the Tarsian tent-maker and the Galilæan fisherman had flashed from Damascus to Antioch, from Antioch to Athens, from Athens to Corinth, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Rome.

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“Come Out and Be Ye Separate, Saith the Lord!”

Questions from our Readers

Question: Do you hold to the belief that the Bible uses the "land" to represent the Hebrews and the "sea" to represent the Gentiles at times? I bring this up because in our Bible Study a discussion of sea in Revelation 21:1 and I have your commentary "The Consummation of the Ages" and I stated that I thought it meant Gentiles and that there is no longer a divide between the Hebrew and the Gentiles.

Another person said that it represented death and I never heard that before.

Are there some more scripture that identifies the sea as gentiles or mass of people and the Hebrews as the land. Hope this makes sense and any help would be appreciated. Or just your thoughts on the subject of the sea referring to death.

Answer: Thanks for writing. I have never heard the "sea" described as a symbol for "death", but given the sea's appearance in chapter twenty as the place where certain of the dead were found, it is not wholly unreasonable. (Rev. 20:13). However, the idea that there is "new earth" but no sea (death) has serious problems to overcome. If there is no death in the new earth then Universalism results. All men live forever, even the wicked, who are portrayed as part of the new earth (Rev. 21:27; 22:15).

The idea that the "sea" is a symbol for the Gentiles goes back to Daniel 7, where the prophet saw four Gentile, world powers rise from the "Great Sea" (Mediterranean). Isaiah also speaks about the "abundance of the sea" being converted (Isa. 60:5). This conversion of the sea clearly sets the Jews over against the Gentiles. The "land" has connections with the promise to Abraham. So the natural dichotomy is between Jew/Gentiles and earth/sea. The sea beast in Rev. 13 is pagan Rome, and land beast is the Jewish power in Palestine. Or, so it seems to me.

Question: I hope this gets to you...you once invited me to ask questions and make comments. I have been a preterist from the first time I heard

that there was even such a thing!!!! I have been reading and reading. Came through Russell, Chilton, Preston, Stevens, and a few more, both full and partial. I have homed in on you as the most logical student of the Word. (Love the art of syllogisms). Of course, I haven't completed my vision of all the info, too much. But I want it yesterday...if you would be so kind as to direct me to articles and/or newsletters,etc., it would save me some time anyway.

I have been putting this inquiry off until I got some of my ducks in a row...but, the little dickens keep slipping out of line.

"The Question" Who are the "they" that sit on the thrones, in the first line of Rev 20:4? I see the "they" and also (in some trans.) the use of, "and I saw those beheaded..." This would lead one to think that there are others included in the ruling and reigning with Christ, other than the beheaded, would it not? If "they" are the ones given authority to judge...that still implies two groups to me.

With all good wishes and joy for you and yours and love in our Lord Jesus Christ, any offering will be most appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Answer: Thanks for writing. Do so anytime. You are never a bother!

I agree that there are two groups in Rev. 20:4. The first group seated upon thrones seems to refer simply to the righteous dead in general. Men who died in a saved condition from the garden forward, who were waiting the general resurrection. They are in Hades Paradise. I think the same group is potentially alluded to in chapter 5 as the 24 elders seated upon thrones. The other group are martyrs who died (were beheaded) during the persecution under Nero for not receiving the mark or worshipping his name, etc. They too are in Hades Paradise and live and reign with Christ pending the general resurrection, when they would be taken eternally to heaven. The souls under the altar in chapter six present a similar message, but seem to be

those that died as martyrs in earlier ages and in the persecution that arose over Stephen.

Hope that helps. Write back if you want further clarification.

Question: Hey Kurt, can you explain why Paul told the church at Colossae that he and the church at Colossae had been (I added had been) delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred them to the kingdom of Jesus? And in Rev. John said he was in the kingdom, but in 1st.Cor. Paul said flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. Should it have been translated we are being delivered and being transferred? I don't know about Rev. It seems like John was saying he was in the kingdom already. Do we have to die a physical death before we inherit the kingdom of heaven?

Also, do you know of any good books on marriage, divorce, and re-marriage? The reason I ask is the church of Christ here in Custer lost

Answer: The saints were/are "legally" added to the kingdom by repentance and baptism; they /we enter the kingdom as adoptive sons legally and covenantally when we obey the gospel and are baptized. (See Jn. 3:3-5; Acts 2:38, 47) However, while we are sons and citizens of heaven, our inheritance must wait until we put off the body at death. Only then do we enter God's presence personally and spatially.

I know of no books on the divorce/remarriage issue. I have no real interest in the topic. I believe that it is sin when a couple divorces and remarries for reasons other than fornication/adultery, but I believe that they can find grace short of separating from the "second" spouse in most cases. That is, where a man 18 years divorces, remarries then when he is 40 decides he wants to become a Christian, I do not believe he must divorce the second wife to find grace. The question is somewhat trickier when the same facts involve someone who is already a Christian when the divorce/remarriage takes place. Here I think the church has a totally different responsibility. Before they become a Christian we have no authority or responsibility for them; after they become Christians the church's relationship with members changes. Even so, where a person divorces, remarries and

then seeks grace, I would be inclined to say that breaking up a second family would *not* be necessary in most cases. I ask myself "what is going to be accomplished by breaking up a second family? What good will come of that. Does God want yet another family destroyed?" I somehow doubt that very much. In such cases I am of the opinion that a broken and contrite heart and public confession is sufficient to find grace.

Hope that helps.

Question: Thanks Kurt for these articles. I thoroughly enjoy them. On one of your answers I do have a disagreement. You used Dan. 9:26,27 to state that Jesus (Messiah) was cut off in the middle of the week & stating that this meant his ministry was to be 3 1/2 years. From reading this passage I see this as stating that He would be cut off after 62 weeks. In verse 27, concerning the "midst of the week", it seems clear, to me anyway, that this is talking about the prince in verse 26 who would come to destroy the city and the temple and bring the abomination of desolation. This prince certainly cannot be Jesus. Just my thoughts on it. Gene

Answer: Thanks for the kind and encouraging words. You certainly are not alone in understanding the pronoun "he" in v. 27 as referring back to the "prince of the people to come" in v. 26. Whiston, who translated Josephus was of that view, as are many others. I believe that the prince is Titus Caesar, who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 as Jesus prophesied in Matt. 23 & 24. However, I take the view, as my article shows, that in v. 27 the subject reverts to the Messiah again. This, too, is a well attested view. The Pulpit Commentary (Henrickson) thus states:

"On the ordinary Christian interpretation, this applies to the crucifixion of our Lord, which took place, according to the received calculation, during the fourth year after his baptism by John, and the consequent opening of his ministry."

However, I do acknowledge that the point in Daniel can be taken either way. :)

Blessings,

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9 -

When do they Begin and End?

By Philip Mauro

[Editor's note: There are several problems with Mauro's chronology we feel compelled to correct. First, the beginning of Daniel's 70 prophetic weeks begins, not with the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC, but with the decree given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah (454BC) to rebuild the city's walls and gates, as expressly mentioned by Daniel. This is confirmed by Luke, who places Jesus' baptism in the 15th year of Tiberius, which was AD 29 (454 BC - 483 yrs = AD 29). Second, Jesus was not fully 30 years old at his baptism, but was still 29 yrs. This is also expressly stated by Luke (3:23). Jesus' 30th birthday does not appear to have occurred until the conclusion of his forty day wilderness fast. The date of Jesus baptism is found by counting 3 ½ years back from his crucifixion Nisan (May) 15, AD 33, to Heshvan (Nov.) 15, AD 29. (Nov. 15th + 40 days = Dec. 25th). Notwithstanding these errors, Mauro's work was groundbreaking in its day in refutation of Premillennialism/Dispensationalism.]

CHAPTER 14

Some questions of deepest interest arise in connection with the period covered by our last chronological table; but they are question of interpretation of Scripture, rather than questions of chronology. All expositors are agreed (so far as we are aware) that the message brought by Gabriel to Daniel gives the measure of years, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince, as sixty nine sevens of years, that is, 483 years. But there is much difference of opinion as to, first, which decree it was from which the time began to run, and second, what event it was in the lifetime of our Lord to which the 483 years reached. It is manifest that, unless those two points (the beginning and the ending of the 483 years) can be established with certainty, we cannot continue our chronology down to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ,

and the dated line so carefully preserved for 3500 years would fail to reach its objective. But, after much study of the entire subject, we are convinced that the Scriptures do not leave us in uncertainty as to those necessary matters of fact, but that, on the contrary, both events are marked and dated with unusual exactitude. Furthermore, it has become quite clear to us that the differences of opinion, to which we are referred, have arisen altogether from the fact that some of our able chronologists and expositors have adopted the mistaken estimates of Ptolemy as the foundation of their systems of dates, instead of grounding themselves upon the chronology of the Bible. Having committed themselves to a chronological scheme which makes the era of the Persian Empire about 80 years too long, they have been compelled to construe the statements of Scripture in such wise as to force them into agreement with that scheme; and inasmuch as the measure of 483 years from the first year of Cyrus would, if Ptolemy's table be accepted, come short, by many years, of any event in the lifetime of Christ, one must either abandon that table, or else must search for a decree of a Persian king, many years nearer to Christ, to serve as the starting point of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel. The trouble, therefore, is not because of any uncertainty in the Scriptures, but that expositors have turned aside from the Scriptures, and have accepted for the 500 years immediately preceding the coming of Christ, a defective chronology based upon heathen traditions.

In another place we have discussed at considerable length the many interesting questions that have arisen concerning the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, so we shall not go extensively into that subject here. It is appropriate, however, that the main reasons for the conclusions we have reached should be set forth with sufficient fullness to enable the readers of this book to examine them in the light of Scripture.

Our main conclusions are:

First, that the canon of Ptolemy is untrustworthy as a basis for a system of chronology, its statements being not authenticated in any way; and that, therefore, it should be rejected as unworthy of our confidence, even if it did not come into conflict with the statements of Scripture;

Second, that "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," from which the prophetic period of Seventy Weeks began to run (Dan. 9:2 5), was the decree of Cyrus the Great, referred to in Ezra 1:1-4;

Third, that the 483-year period of Daniel 9:25, reaching "unto the Messiah, the Prince," ended at the baptism of our Lord, in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, when He was thirty years of age. . .

The words "unto the Messiah the Prince" indicate the goal towards which the long chronological line of the Bible had been steadily advancing. In the days of Daniel the voice of prophecy was about to cease, and the inspired history of God's ancient people was about to come to an end. But, before the sacred record closed, the last stage of the chronology of the Old Testament was made known to "Daniel the Prophet," and by him was recorded in "the Scriptures of Truth." From the going forth of the decree of Cyrus, unto the greater Deliverer, of whom Cyrus was a remarkable type, was to be a stretch of sixty-nine "sevens" of years.

The words "unto the Messiah" tell us with all requisite clearness and certainty to just what point in the life-time of Jesus Christ the measure of 69 sevens (483 years) reaches. The word Messiah (equivalent to the Greek Christos) means "the anointed." We ask, therefore, where, in the earth-life of our Lord, was He anointed and presented to Israel? The answer is clearly given in the Gospels and Acts. It was at His baptism in Jordan; for then it was that the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in bodily shape as a dove; and then it was that John the Baptist bore witness to Him as the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. As the apostle Peter declared: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38); and from that time He gave Himself to His public Messianic ministry as a "minister of the circumcision."

To this important matter we have also the Lord's own testimony. For, after His return in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, where, according to Isaiah 9:1,2, the "Great Light" was to arise (see also Mat. 3 :12-16), He went on the Sabbath day into the synagogue in Nazareth, and read from the prophet Isaiah these memorable words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor"; and then, having sat down, and the eyes of all being fastened intently upon Him, He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears " (Luke 4 :16-21) . Thus the Lord declared Himself to be at that time the "Anointed" One, that is the Messiah.

John the Baptist was sent to "bear witness" of Christ, and "that He should be made manifest to Israel" (John 1:6,7,31). this special ministry of John was discharged by him at the time of Christ's baptism. When, therefore, the Lord Jesus had been "anointed" with the Holy Ghost, and had been "made manifest to Israel" by the witness of John, then the words of the prophecy "unto the Anointed One" were completely fulfilled. From that great and wonderful event, down to the day of His death, He was constantly before the people of Israel in His Messianic character, and was devoting Himself continuously to the fulfilling of His Messianic service, in going about doing good, manifesting the Father's Name, doing the Father's works, speaking the Father's words, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and preaching the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God.

Indeed, even before He announced Himself in the synagogue in Nazareth as God's "Anointed One," He had plainly said to the woman of Samaria (when she spoke of "Messias, Who is called Christ") "I that speak unto thee am He" (John 4:25,26). Moreover, to the Samaritans who came out to see Him upon hearing the woman's report and her question "Is not this the Messiah?", He so fully revealed Himself that they were constrained to confess Him, saying, "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ (the Anointed One) the Saviour of the world" (v.42).

Again, the purpose, as well as the effect, of the ministry of John the Baptist's public testimony to Christ is clearly revealed by the words of those who, upon hearing that testimony, followed Him.

We read that "One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him (Jesus) was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:40,41).

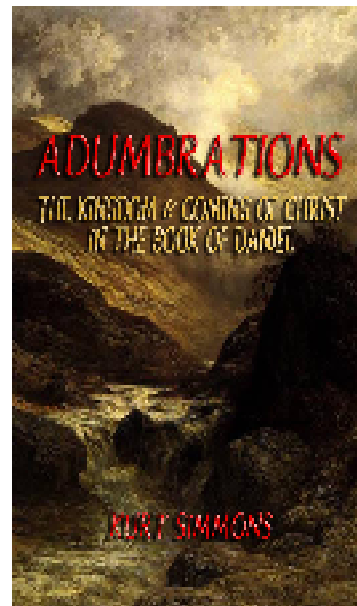
In these Scriptures the Holy Spirit has caused the important fact that Jesus was the Anointed One to be stated both in Hebrew and in Greek, so that the significance of it should not be lost. That "this Jesus is the Christ" is the great point of apostolic testimony (Acts 17:3); and it is the substance of "our faith," for "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (I John 5:1,4,5). It is also the Rock-foundation upon which He builds His church (Mat. 16:18; I Cor. 3:11).

Thus the Spirit of God has been pleased to give us proof upon proof that, from our Lord's baptism and manifestation to Israel, He was, in the fullest sense, the Messiah or the Anointed of God. Manifestly there was no previous event in the earthly lifetime of our Lord which could be taken as meeting in any way the words of Gabriel. And it is equally clear that no subsequent event could be taken as the fulfillment of those words. For there was, and could be, no subsequent occasion when the Lord was any more the "Anointed One" than when the Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism. Thus the Scriptures absolutely shut us up to the Lord's baptism, as the occasion when He was Anointed, and presented to Israel in His Messianic office. His baptism then marked the termination of the 69 weeks of Daniel 9: 2 5, and the beginning of the 70th week from the starting point of that prophecy.

But, on top of all the foregoing evidences is the culminating proof found in the fact that this epoch (His baptism), and this alone, is formally dated in the Scriptures (and in the most conspicuous way), and His age at the time is stated. For in Luke 3:1-3 the era of the preaching and baptism of John is given with extraordinary minuteness, which certifies to us that this era has a place of special importance in connection with the chronology of Scripture as a whole. It is an impressive fact that both the decree of Cyrus, and the baptism of John -- that is to say, both the beginning and the ending of the sixty-nine weeks -- are set forth with great particularity, and that they are given with reference to the reigns of

Gentile rulers. One is given as occurring " in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia," and the other "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. . ." This is an indication that the things which were to be consummated within the time-limit of seventy weeks were not matters which concerned the Jews only, but were of world-wide interest, having to do with the salvation of Gentiles as well as Jews. God's dealings theretofore had been matters of Jewish history; but now, beginning with the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," a new era was beginning, one in which God's dealings were to be matters of world history. It is appropriate, therefore, that we should have at this point a change from terms of Jewish to terms of Gentile chronology.

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Anger With the Federal Government Is Not Enough

By Pastor Chuck Baldwin

According to Rasmussen Reports, "Seventy-one percent (71%) of voters nationwide say they're at least somewhat angry about the current policies of the federal government. That figure includes 46% who are Very Angry.

"The latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey finds that only 27% are not angry about the government's policies, including 10% who are Not at All Angry."

The report goes on to say, "The data suggests that the level of anger is growing. The 71% who are angry at federal government policies today is up five percentage points since September.

"Even more stunning, the 46% who are Very Angry is up 10 percentage points from September."

The report also states, "The latest numbers show that only nine percent (9%) of voters trust the judgment of America's political leaders more than the judgment of the American people." It further states, "Seventy-one percent (71%) believe the federal government has become a special interest group that looks out primarily for its own interests. Sixty-eight percent (68%) believe that government and big business work together in ways that hurt consumers and investors."

Rasmussen Reports goes on to say that voter opposition to the proposed health care plan, government bailouts, and higher taxes is especially high.

See the report at:

<http://tinyurl.com/rasmussen-71pc-angry-at-govt>

That Americans are angry with the federal government is nothing new. As a general rule, Americans STAY angry with the federal

government. So what? Nothing changes, anger and discontentment notwithstanding.

Oh! Occasionally, grassroots effort can be mustered in sufficient quantity to stop whatever happens to be the latest effort by the miscreants in Washington, D.C., that tramples our freedoms. But only occasionally. The only recent triumph I can think of was when G.W. Bush, Lindsey Graham, and John McCain tried to ram an amnesty bill for illegal aliens through Congress. But never fear, Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid will pick up that particular baton soon enough.

I'm old enough to remember when giving the Panama Canal away was opposed by virtually everyone outside the Beltway. It changed nothing. Jimmy Carter and Congress gave it away, anyway. Most people oppose the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. So what? Our troops are not only still there, but more are on the way. Most people believe children should be allowed to pray and read the Bible in school. So what? They still are forbidden from doing so. Most people believed former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore had the right to post the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. So what? He was forced to take them down, anyway (and removed from office in the process). I could go on, but you get the point.

Anger and opposition to Washington's policies and edicts--no matter how egregious--hardly ever translate into anything beyond words of frustration. And Washington politicians don't pay much attention to rhetoric--not even their own.

You see, the wizards in Washington and on Wall Street have us figured out. Along with their compatriots in the propaganda press corps, they know that no matter how loudly we scream, how much we protest, or how angry we become, the system is rigged to protect them. The best we the

people can seem to come up with is "throwing the bums out" every two or four years. BUT NOTHING CHANGES--at least, not in terms of restoring the fundamental principles of freedom and constitutional government.

Throw out George H.W. Bush in 1992, and nothing changes. Throw the Democrats out of Congress in 1994, and nothing changes. Throw Bill Clinton's party out of the White House in 2000, and nothing changes. Throw out G.W. Bush's Republicans in 2008, and nothing changes. The only thing that happens with a changing of the guard is an escalation in the pace of whatever version of socialism--or Big Government program--is currently in vogue. With Bush it meant expanding the Warfare State. With Obama it means expanding the Welfare State. But both do everything they can to expand Big Government.

When will we awaken to the reality that Washington, D.C., has had the American people chasing their tails for decades? People, wake up! As long as we continue to focus our attention and energy on Washington, D.C., we will only continue to supply more rope to those who wish to hang us.

Washington, D.C., is too far gone to salvage. Admit it! Washington is a cesspool, a landfill, and a putrid pond of corruption and duplicity. Neither the Republican nor Democratic Party will ever allow a principled constitutionalist to become its Presidential nominee. No matter whom we elect as President, the beat toward Big-Government socialism and one-world internationalism will go on without interruption. Big Government scalawags own the entire federal system, including Big Media, Big Business, Big Labor, Big Religion, and Big Special Interest Groups. They are all feeding at the government teat.

Therefore, it is absolutely obligatory that freedom-minded Americans refocus their attention to electing State legislators, governors, judges and sheriffs who will fearlessly defend their God-given liberties. And, as plainly and emphatically as I know how to say it, I am telling you: ONLY THE STATES CAN DEFEND OUR LIBERTY NOW! And awakening to this reality means we will have to completely readjust our thinking and priorities.

It means awakening to the fact that Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, and Bill O'Reilly (and the rest of Big Media's talking heads) are, for the most part, irrelevant to providing real solutions to the continuing loss of liberty. And, in truth, they are, more often than not, part of the problem, because they continue to focus our attention on Washington, D.C., and off the source of genuine solution, which lies with the states drawing a constitutional line in the sand for freedom. Good grief! Beck and O'Reilly have recently even advocated for higher federal taxes! Yeah! That's a real solution: more power and money to Washington, D.C. Ughhh!

Instead of getting all worked up about what Glenn Beck says or what Sarah Palin says or what CFR member and Big Government neocon Newt Gingrich says, start paying attention to what your State legislators and candidates are saying.

If we had more State legislators such as Washington State's Matthew Shea; Georgia's Bobby Franklin; Pennsylvania's Sam Rohr; New Hampshire's Dan Itse; Michigan's Paul Opsommer; Oklahoma's Randy Brogdon, Sally Kern and Charles Key; Montana's Rick Jore, Greg Hinkle, and Joel Boniek; Tennessee's Susan Lynn; South Carolina's Michael Pitts and Lee Bright; Missouri's Jim Guest and Cynthia Davis; and sheriffs such as South Carolina's Ray Nash, Arizona's Richard Mack and Joe Arpaio, Montana's Jay Printz and Shane Harrington, etc., it wouldn't matter what those nincompoops inside the Beltway do. The federal government cannot violate your rights and steal your freedoms without the consent and approbation of your State government.

Folks, let's get down to where the rubber meets the road: the reason we are in the miserable mess we are in is because the states have--either wittingly or unwittingly--ceded their authority and independence to Washington, D.C. Therefore, it is now critical that states reclaim their authority--authority that is duly granted them under the US Constitution.

All of us who call ourselves conservatives or constitutionalists or libertarians (who, no doubt, compose a majority, especially in "red" states) need to retake our State governments. Elect a governor who knows how to say "No" to the federal government. Elect a State legislature that

knows how to say "No" to Washington, D.C. Elect sheriffs and State judges who understand the Constitution, State sovereignty, and the principles of freedom--and who are courageous enough to defend those sacred principles in the face of attempted federal usurpation.

The truth is, for all intents and purposes, we could turn off television completely and be in no worse shape. And newspapers are no better. The vast majority of them blatantly support and promote Big Government. As Mark Twain said, "If you don't read the newspaper, you are uninformed; if you do read the newspaper, you are misinformed."

With Big Media, it's all about Washington politics. Period. For the most part, the conservative-liberal/Republican-Democrat paradigm is nothing but a distraction at best, and a scam at worst, to keep all of us safely on the federal reservation, where we are without hope or recourse to actually change anything.

Ladies and Gentlemen, freedom in America has only one hope: the resurrection of State independence and sovereignty. Fortunately, there are rumblings around the country that this revival has already begun.

The last time I checked, some 38 states have introduced Tenth Amendment resolutions--or some form of federal nullification proposals--in their State assemblies. To follow the status of various states' rights initiatives, keep an eye on these two web sites:

<http://www.tenthamentcenter.com/the-10th-amendment-movement/>

<http://libertydefenseleague.com/liberty/>

If conservatives/constitutionalists/libertarians would spend as much time and energy influencing elections and policies at the State and local levels as they attempt to do at the national level, we could turn this floundering ship of state around. If he had the support and backing of his State's legislature and sheriffs, imagine what ONE constitutionalist governor could do. I get goose bumps thinking about it!

Imagine a State with its own financial system--its own currency, banks, regulatory agencies, etc.

Imagine a State with its own militia--under the authority of the governor only--completely independent from any responsibility to the President or federal government. Imagine a State with an education system unfettered by the federal Department of Education. Imagine a State where the BLM, the FBI, the ATF, and the DEA had to actually submit to State law. Imagine a State with no federal bribes, or federal "funding" as it is commonly called--except as is constitutionally constructed (with no strings attached). Imagine a State with its own health care system. Imagine a State with no FEMA--UNLESS INVITED IN. Imagine a State that would not allow Washington's spooks to unlawfully spy on law-abiding citizens. Imagine a State that actually had a say in how much land the federal government could claim for its own. Imagine a State where citizens never had to worry about a national ID act. Imagine a State that would protect the right of its citizens to freely express their faith in the public square. Imagine a State that did not demand that its farmers put RFID computer chips in their livestock. Imagine a State that would let you drill a well without reporting it to the federal government. And for some really fun mind games, imagine a State that would be willing to challenge the constitutionality and legitimacy of the direct income tax and the IRS. All of this--and more--is attainable with a constitutionalist State government committed to protecting the liberties of its citizens.

I repeat: freedom in America has only one hope: the resurrection of State independence and sovereignty. In the US Constitution, our Founding Fathers sagaciously reserved to State governments their independence and sovereignty, knowing that they had the awesome responsibility of being the last (and greatest) vanguard of liberty for the American people. They never intended or imagined that the states would ever become a doormat for the central government (which is what most of them have become).

In this regard, the states that are proposing State sovereignty resolutions should immediately band together to overturn the 17th Amendment, because this amendment strips the states of their constitutional powers by turning US senators into Washington insiders, who are more beholden to Washington interests than the

interests and well-being of the states that they are supposed to represent.

If the 71% of voters who are angry with the federal government would channel their energies into electing constitutionalist governors and State legislators, their anger might actually produce real and lasting change. As it is, efforts to "reform" Washington, D.C., are like trying to teach a hog to take a bath. Instead, let the hog wallow in the mud, but make sure the mudhole stays small; don't let it spread to your back yard. And keeping that Washington mudhole small is the job of the states. And, in case you have not noticed, the mudhole has already grown to the

point that it's not just in your back yard; it's on your front porch and about to consume your whole house.

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II Peter 3

Understanding the Language of the Prophets

In this article we discuss the elements of II Peter 3, and decide they are not reference to the Mosaic law or temple ritual.

Obstacles to Understanding

There are only two or three truly difficult passages that serve as obstacles to full preterism. These are the "eschatological change" of I Cor. 15:51-55, the "rapture" of I Thess. 4:16, 17, and the language of "cosmic conflagration" in II Pet. 3:7-12. The chief difficulty of the first two passages is the tendency to assume that the catching away of living saints to heaven is or was to be substantially *simultaneous* with the resurrection of the dead. However, once that assumption is dispelled, it becomes clear that Paul is in fact describing the *process* by which the living are translated one-by-one at the time of death.

The chief difficulty with II Peter 3 is the tendency to take the language literally. This can be overcome by comparing Peter's language with established usage in the Old Testament and providing a suitable explanation for the symbolism.

Comparing II Peter 3 with Old Testament Usage

The Old Testament passage that bears the greatest overall similarity to II Peter 3:10-12 is probably Isaiah 34:1-10. This is a prophecy of God's judgment and wrath upon the nations of the ancient world, first by the Babylonians, then the Medes and Persians. The time of wrath is world-wide ("all nations"). However, while it the prophecy opens by announcing wrath upon all nations, it narrows as it progresses, bringing its focus to bear upon Edom (Bozrah, Idumea) for that nation's part in helping destroy Jerusalem (see Obadiah 10-16).

II Peter 3:10-12	Isaiah 34:1-10
<p>But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and</p>	<p>Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come froth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their</p>

<p>godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?</p>	<p>carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree...for the Lord hat a sacrifice in Bozrah, and great slaughter in the land of Idumea...For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.</p>
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A list will reveal the following points of contact between these two prophecies:

II Peter 3:10-12	Isaiah 34:1-10
<p>Day of the Lord Heavens & Earth Heavens pass away Earth burned Heavens dissolved</p>	<p>Day of Vengeance Heavens & Earth Constellations dissolved Mountains melt Land turned to brimstone Streams turned to pitch Heavens dissolved</p>

The merest consideration will show that the language of Isaiah is figurative and describes a time of world-wrath through the agency of men and nations, whose armies exact the vengeance of God. The points of contact between Isaiah and Peter should suffice to show that the latter is also figurative, and that Peter in no way intends us to understand that the physical cosmos would be consumed at Christ's coming. Indeed, Peter all but says this very thing when he states that judgment he wrote about was for the "perdition of ungodly men" (v. 7). In other words, it is men who oppose the gospel that would be destroyed; appeal to the heavens and earth is merely the stuff of poetic apparatus. Here are two more

passages for comparison. This time, let's use a passage from Matthew:

Matthew 24:29, 30	Isaiah 13:9-13
<p>Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.</p>	<p>Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity...Therefore I will shake the heaven, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of his fierce anger.</p>

The Lord's statements recorded by Matthew are almost exact quotes from Isaiah's prophecy about the judgment God would visit upon Babylon and the world through the Mede-Persian Empire, which swept like a great storm from the Elam and the Black Sea in the north-east, to Egypt and Red Sea in the south-west, encompassing the whole civilized world. The points of contact between the two passages include the following:

Matthew 24:29, 30	Isaiah 13:9-13
<p>Day of the Lord Heavens & Earth Sun & moon darkened World punished Heavens shaken, constellations fall Christ comes in clouds</p>	<p>Day of the Lord Heavens & Earth Sun & moon darkened World punished Heavens shaken, earth moved Lord comes in wrath</p>

Let's make one more comparison and then conclude. This time we will look at language from Ezekiel regarding God's judgment upon Egypt by Babylon:

Luke 21:25-27	Ezekiel 30:3-19
<p>And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.</p>	<p>The day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia...And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein...I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder...At Tehphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yoke of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity.</p>

Luke here repeats the prophecy recorded in Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse, but so expands the language as to make clear that much more than the fall of Jerusalem was involved in the wrath that would overtake the first-century world. In each of the passages compared, we find a day of the Lord, clouds, heavens and earth, stars moved out of their courses, fire, darkness and dread of doom. Yet, in each case the wrath was confined to men and nations, not the physical cosmos or its elements. Reading these together should make clear that II Pet. 3:10-12 is simply one more in the long line of hyperbolic speech used by the prophets to describe heaven's rod upon a rebellious world.

What are the Heavens & Earth?

Having compared Peter with the prophets and seen that he continues a long established tradition of figurative speech in describing world events, let us next interpret his symbology.

Preterists have long held that the "heavens and earth" of II Pet. 3:10-12 are allusions to Judea and the Mosaic law. This is due to a tendency to interpret the eschaton solely in terms of the fall of Jerusalem ("locally and covenantally"). So many passages emphasize God's wrath upon the Jews for the murder of Christ and persecution of the gospel that we tend to narrow our focus and overlook events in the rest of the Roman Empire. This is unfortunate. If there is anything that is clear it is that the second coming was a time of world-wrath, in no way confined to Palestine or the Jews. Daniel two and seven are second coming passages and do not mention the Jews at all. Many New Testament epistles speak of Christ's coming and the saints' need to be in readiness, which could have no meaning to churches in Europe and Asia if the second coming was limited to the fall of Jerusalem. Thessalonica was in the province of Macedonia, yet Paul told the church there that they would find relief from their persecutors at Christ's coming (II Thess. 1:4-10). Paul told the Athenians, also in Europe, that God was "about to judge the world" through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). John wrote to the seven churches of Asia, exhorting them to abide faithful against Christ's soon coming. These churches are a thousand miles from Jerusalem. Yet, Jesus told them that his coming would directly impact them. Finally, Peter's epistle is written to churches in the vicinity of the Black Sea where Christians were suffering, or soon would suffer, persecution. How would the fall of Jerusalem help them? Wasn't it rather the changes and alterations in the Roman government that would bring relief from their persecutions and not the fall of Jerusalem? These and other considerations argue forcibly against the notion that the second coming was somehow confined to Palestine.

What then do the "heavens and earth" symbolize? If we can think of the world like the canopy of heaven in which governments provide order to the world of men in the way that constellations are hung in the sky and regulate the cycles of nature and the revolution of seasons, we can see how the heavens and earth describe things social and political. The best

explanation we have encountered for the symbolism of the heavens and earth is Sir Isaac Newton's:

"The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in prophecy; and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens and the things therein signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them: and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them; the creating of a

new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, for the ceasing of a kingdom." (*Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, Part i. chap. ii)

Happy New Year from all of Us to All of You!



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