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II Peter 3:10-13 and the Day of the Lord

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Introduction

II Peter 3:10-13, with its prediction of the heavens and earth dissolving in a conflagration, stands as one of the major texts relied upon by futurists as proof that Christ's second coming has not occurred. In this article, we look at this passage and decide that it refers to the overthrow of world powers in the first century, as Christ assumed the government of the world and put all enemies beneath his feet.

The Day of the Lord - Historical Examples

"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 godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." II Pet. 3:10-13

One of the first issues that presents itself in interpreting this passage is the "day of the Lord." For those unversed in the Old Testament prophets, the assumption typically is that this phrase is unique to New Testament eschatology, and describes a coming time when the earth will be destroyed. However, this is wrong. There are numerous occurrences of this phrase

in the Old Testament, where they describe times of divine judgment and wrath. Concerning God's judgment by the Babylonians, Zephaniah thus says:

"I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims, with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the Lord and that swear by Malcham; and them that are turned back from the Lord; and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests....The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers." Zeph. 1:2-7, 14-16

We have quoted the prophet at length so the historical context may be established and it may be seen that this prophecy describes a time of judgment upon the ancient Jews. Baal worship, Malcham, worship of celestial bodies, the levitical priesthood, fenced cities, defensive towers, the watchman's trumpet, all assign this "day of the Lord" to the far distant past. In following verses, the prophet widens the scope of divine wrath, adding the Philistines, Moab, Ethiopia, and Assyria (Zeph. 2:4-12). Like Baal worship, fenced cities, and the watchman's trumpet, most of these nations no longer exist, and confirm our conclusion that this prophecy belongs to the ancient past. As an aside, we note that Zephaniah represents this "day of the Lord" as universal:

"Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." Zeph. 3:8

Commentators are agreed that the time of judgment Zephaniah describes was the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions, when God swept the earth with a "besom (broom) of destruction," cleansing the world of iniquity and sin. The prophet Isaiah, who wrote earlier than

Zephaniah, gave identical warning of God's impending wrath upon the world. The nations and cities Isaiah mentioned by name include Moab (Isa. 15, 16), Syria and Damascus (Isa. 17), Ethiopia (Isa. 18), Egypt (Isa. 19, 20), Seir and Dumah (Isa. 21), Arabia (Isa. 21), Judah and Jerusalem (Isa. 22), and Tyre (Isa. 23). In language similar to Zephaniah, Isaiah describes the time of judgment as emptying the earth:

"Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." Isa. 24:1

Isaiah and Zephaniah describe the same time of judgment God was bringing upon the ancient world. The Assyrio-Babylonia invasions were like a great flood that rose up and spread across the world, sweeping away all before it (cf. Isa. 8:7, 8).



Nebuchadnezzar burns Jerusalem

The "day of the Lord" by the Assyrio-Babylonia invasions was not a unique or isolated event. The wrath, which *started* with the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions, *continued* off and on under the following of world empires, including Mede-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Isaiah thus describes a "day of the Lord" in which God would punish Babylon and the world through the instrument of the Mede-Persian Empire:

"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; and I will cause the arrogancy to the proud to cease and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, 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." Isa. 13:9-13

This "day of the Lord" was almost 50 years later than that described by Zephaniah. Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem in 586 BC. Cyrus the Great, commanding an army of Medes and Persians, took Babylon in 539 BC. A last example and we will move along. Obadiah prophesied a coming time of wrath upon Edom, which is widely understood to have been fulfilled in the days of the Babylonians:

"The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord concerning Edom...thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount o Esau may be cut off by slaughter. For they violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever...For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." Obadiah 1, 9, 10, 15

Edom no longer exists. The historical context of the passage describes Edom's violence to Judah during the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions. God would requite Edom for its violence to Judah when the armies of Babylon and succeeding empire of the Medes and Persians overwhelmed the earth. Clearly, there is nothing in the passage that would allow us to apply it to our day or beyond.

These few examples show that the "day of the Lord" is not unique to New Testament eschatology. The phrase has established historical usage in describing times of divine wrath, and in no sense implied an end to the world.

Day of the Lord - World Wide Wrath?

A question worth pausing to consider is whether "day of the Lord" can describe a time of judgment upon a particular people or nation? The examples we have looked at were world wide. The parallel examples in Isaiah and Zephaniah, which described the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions were both world-wide in scope. Isa. 13:11, which describes the Mede-Persian conquests, states that God would punish the "world," showing that this time of wrath would expand beyond Babylon itself and take in the rest of the world. Many commentators and critics note that the Hebrew *ha-arets*, rendered "the land" in verses 5 and 9 may be better rendered "the earth." (See the Pulpit Commentary *in loc.*) Anyone who has read Herodotus and his description of the Mede-Persian conquests knows that their empire subdued the whole Mediterranean world, including Elam in the east to Egypt in the West and Cyprus in the north. Thus, the prophet Daniel describes the Mede-Persia Empire as a bear, which is told to "devour much flesh" (Dan. 7:5). Based upon the examples viewed thus far, the phrase

does not describe isolated incidents of wrath upon a single nation, but seems to be describe wrath world-wide in its sweep.



The Mede-Persian Empire was the largest the world had seen until that time

The Day of the Lord - Messianic

We have seen that the "day of the Lord" was used by the prophets to describe times of divine wrath and judgment fulfilled in ancient history. However, there was a "day" coming associated with the Messiah, which is the subject of New Testament prophecy. Peter twice uses the phrase "day of the Lord," once in Acts and once in his second epistle. Both describe the same "day." Peter's sermon in Acts, given at outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, quotes the prophet Joel:

"But this is that which was spoke by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:16-21.

Like the other examples we have seen, the "day of the Lord" spoken of Peter and Joel would be a time of divine judgment upon the world by war, famine, and pestilence, overthrowing thrones and kingdoms, not the end of the cosmos itself. The two signs that a day of judgment was fast approaching were the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and outbreaks of war and civil disorder, bringing blood and fire and smoke, blackening the sun and turning the moon to blood. Jesus said similar signs would precede the fall of Jerusalem:

"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 falling them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers heaven shall be shaken... Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." Lk. 21:25-32

Note the poetic and figurative use of language, which puts the roaring sea for civil commotions among earth's nations, and the heavenly bodies for the ruling powers, which would be shaken from their places and fall from power. Notice, also, that the time for fulfillment of these things was fixed by the Lord to his own generation. This prediction was made in Jesus' Olivet Discourse after retiring from Jerusalem with his disciples. Immediately preceding his Olivet Discourse, Jesus made the identical predictions in his Great Denunciation against Jerusalem:

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is let unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt. 23:36-39

In saying the Jews would not see him until they should say "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Jesus signifies his return to the Father, and his coming again in wrath upon the nation, in which the Jews would "see" him coming upon the clouds of heaven. Hence, when asked by the high priest if he was the Son of God, Jesus declared:

"Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. 26:64

At this saying, the high priest rent his clothes and the Sanhedrin gave its voice for Jesus' death: They recognized his saying as an allusion to Daniel 7: 13, 14 and the heavenly coronation of the Messiah:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And thee was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Fulfillment of this prophecy was given by Peter in his sermon on Pentecost, where he said Jesus had sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, henceforth waiting till his enemies be made a footstool for his feet (Acts 2:32, 33; Heb. 10:12, 13). And that the time of judgment would overtake his own generation is expressly affirmed by Peter, tying the prophecy of Joel to the Lord's prediction of Jerusalem's fall. For Peter warned his fellow countrymen, saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Thus, Joel's "day of the Lord" must be understood in reference to the destruction of the nation in AD 70 by Rome. One needs only to read the prophet Joel to see that this is true:

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations...The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth this word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Joel 2:1-3, 10-11.

Joel's mention of the watchman's trumpet sets the historical context of the prophecy, placing its fulfillment in the ancient world. He also mentions horses, horsemen, chariots, swords, walled cities, levitical priests, national fasting, and the temple and its offerings: all indicia that this prophecy belonged to another time, and not our own. And that the time of judgment was wider than just the Jews is shown by Joel himself:

"I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there...Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (Joel 3:2).

Day of the Lord - Fall of Jerusalem & Year of Four Emperors

Gathering the nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat refers to God's overthrow of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, who had united forces against Jerusalem, but were overthrown by God. All Jehoshaphat and Judah had to do was strip the slain and gather the spoils (II Chron. 20). The reference in Joel

is to the persecution under Nero and God's salvation by his judgment upon the Jews and Romans. The imagery thus answers the battle of Gog and Magog, which also depicts the Neronean persecution and God's wrath upon the persecutors (Ezek. 38, 39; Rev. 20:7-11). Historical fulfillment came in the fall of Jerusalem and the "year of four emperors." The "year of four emperors" describes the series of civil wars that overtook the Roman Empire upon the death of Nero. In the space of one year and 22 days, five men were claimants to the imperial throne (beginning with Nero and ending with Vespasian), and the empire suffered devastation by the competing factions and armies. At the same time Titus was besieging Jerusalem, the forces of his father, Vespasian, were besieging Rome and ravishing Italy. The same year thus saw the destruction of the two greatest temples in the world: The temple in Jerusalem and the temple Jupiter Capitalinus in Rome. This is the "day of the Lord" prophesied by Joel and the prophets. Zechariah, who preached during the return of the captivity and the building the second temple, thus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome:

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue shall not be cut off from the city." Zech. 14:1, 2

Josephus reports that over 97,000 survivors of the siege were sold into slavery into the Egyptian mines; those that were not cut off from the city perished by famine during the siege, to the number 1.1 million (*Wars VI*,

ix, 3). The prophecy of Zechariah is mirrored by Malachi, who foretold that "Elijah" the prophet would come before the day of the Lord:

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Mal. 4:4-6

Joel wrote about the "great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). Malachi wrote about the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). But where Joel said the gifts of the Holy Ghost were a sign proceeding that day (Joel 2:28-30), Malachi said that "Elijah" (John the Baptist) would proceed it (Mal. 4:5; cf. Matt. 11:14). Peter warned that the day would overtake his own generation (Acts 2:40). John the Baptist said "now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees," (Matt. 3:10). Malachi said the "day of the Lord" would burn those that did wickedly up "root and branch" (Mal. 4:1); John the Baptist said the "trees" (men) falling under God's judgment would be cast into fire and the chaff burned up with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:10, 12). Peter said the heavens and earth being on fire would dissolve, and the elements melt with fervent heat (II Pet. 3:10, 11). Clearly, the "day of the Lord" in Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Peter, John the Baptist, and Christ are the same, and speak to the events which witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and God's terrible wrath upon the Roman Empire for murder of Christ and persecution of his church.

The Day of the Lord upon the Jews and Nations

Zechariah	Malachi	Joel	Peter	John	Christ
Day of the Lord	Day of the Lord	Day of the Lord	Day of the Lord		
Wrath upon Jews	Wrath upon Jews	Wrath upon Jews / Nations	Wrath upon Jews	Wrath upon Jews	Wrath upon Jews / Nations
Destruction of Jerusalem		Destruction of Jerusalem			Destruction of Jerusalem
	Elijah the prophet appear before	Gifts of Holy Ghost appear before	Outpouring of Holy Ghost	John was Elijah	
Wrath upon generation of those that murdered Christ		Wrath upon generation that witnessed gifts of Holy Ghost	"This generation"	"Now also the axe is laid to the trees"	"This generation"
	Fire consume	Blood, fire, smoke	Fire consume	Fire consume	

Symbolism of the Language

No explanation of II Peter 3:10-13 would be complete without addressing the language. All the examples we have consulted of "days of the Lord" evoked imagery of a "collapsing universe" in which the heavens and earth are shaken, stars fall from the courses, and the sun and moon are darkened or turned to blood. In the case of II Peter 3:10-13, the apostles says "*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.*" Probably the most similar example to Peter's language is in the book of Isaiah, where the prophet describes God's wrath upon Edom and Idumea:

"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 forth 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 carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens 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...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." Isa. 34:1-4; 9-10

This passage describes a time of world wrath and judgment upon the nations, and Edom in particular. Most commentators are agreed that this was fulfilled in the time of the Babylonians, and thus treats of the same "day of the Lord" upon the heathen as the books of Joel and Obadiah. Indeed, since Edom no longer exists, we must acknowledge that this prophecy belongs to the distant past. Hence, we are forced to concede that the language is purely hyperbolic. Its similarity to II Peter 3:10-13 counsels us to acknowledge that Peter's language is hyperbolic too.

A last example and we will conclude, this time from the prophet Micah:

"The Word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.

And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel." Micah. 1:1-5

This particular prophecy is very insightful, as it specifically names its objects as Jerusalem and Samaria, capitals of the two divided kingdoms. Although in this case the phrase "day of the Lord" does not appear, yet all the other elements are present: God descends from heaven, bringing judgment and wrath; the earth melts and the mountains become molten before him. Is not his language identical with II Pet. 3:10-13 in every material part? The best explanation of this symbolism we have encountered is by Sir Isaac Newton:

"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)

New Heavens and New Earth

Whatever else may be said about II Pet. 3:10-13, this much is sure: our interpretation *must be* governed by the promised new heavens and earth. Does Peter intend us to understand a literal conflagration is to destroy the physical earth and cosmos, only to be replaced by a material, new creation? Of course he doesn't. It is one of the most fundamental teachings of the New Testament that the Christian's eternal habitation is in heaven above, not upon a new earth.

Putting off our bodies in death and being caught away to heaven is the very hope that sustains us. Since heaven is the Christian's hope, the notion of a material new creation must strike us as incongruous indeed. What then is the prophet's intent? Given the symbolic nature of the "heavens and earth" and their reference to kingdoms and governments of earth, it is easy to see that Peter has in view a reordering of earth's government beneath the reigning Christ. This is the over-arching theme of Revelation and all eschatological prophecy: The world, which had been under dominion to enemy powers from the time of the fall, would come under the dominion of Christ and his saints, making a new heavens and earth ruled in righteousness.

The promised new heavens and earth take their source from the prophet Isaiah, who uses them to describe the blessed estate of God's faithful remnant over against the destruction of their persecutors.

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come to mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy....For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the

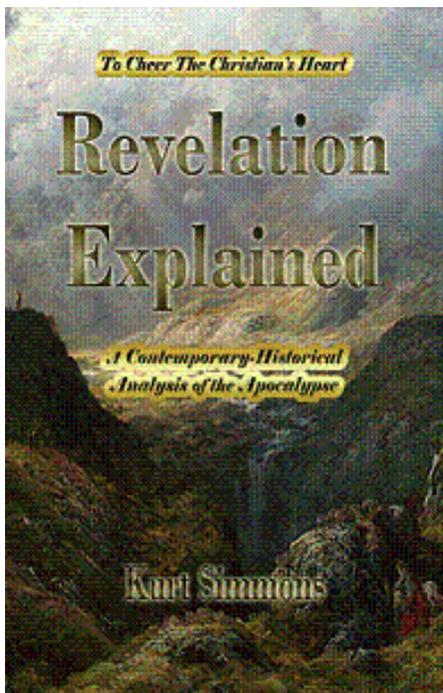
carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Isa. 65:17; 66:22-24

"The men that have transgressed against me" has specific reference to the Jews who failed to listen to the words of Prophet, whom Moses said the Lord would rise up from among them. For as Peter warned, "every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). "All flesh" worshipping before the Lord is equal to "every creature" and "all nations" of the Great Commission, and signifies the Gentiles' conversion to Christ who worship the Lord in the new Jerusalem, the church. These would witness the awesome judgment of God upon the Jews and Romans, whose carcasses strewed the landscape where they were devoured by fire and worms.

Conclusion

II Peter 3:10-13 describes God's wrath upon the Jews and Romans in symbolic terms identical with Old Testament usage portraying times of divine judgment upon the world. The world, long under the dominion of Gentile powers, would come under dominion of the risen Christ, who now rules the nations with a rod of iron, in righteous and truth.

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Home Schooling or Public Schooling?

Ariel Simmons

Ariel has been home schooled her whole life. She has studied Koine Greek, sews her own dresses, plays violin, and entered college at the state University at age 15. Most importantly, she is a devoted Christian woman, committed to her faith and to making her life count for Christ.

In 2010 the US Census Bureau said more than 2 million children in America were being homeschooled, or about 1 in 25 school aged children. Although homeschooling is new this century, it is a revival of an old and effective way of teaching. Many of our founding fathers and at least ten of our presidents, including Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and James Madison, were homeschooled (Klicka, 2002). Not until the 1870's did interaction between government and schools occur, and even then it was initially very limited. Before the government was actively involved with public schools DuPont de Nemours "surveyed education in America in the early 1800's, and discovered a nearly 99% literacy rate" (Klicka, 2002, p. 153). The more government has taken over the education system, the lower performance standards have fallen. Dating from the landing of the Pilgrims, (1620), the first 250 years of America had literacy rates that were much higher than today (Klicka, 2002). In 1765 John Adams said that a "native in America, especially of New England, who cannot read and write is as rare a Phenomenon [sic] as a Comet" (Klicka, 2002).

There are various reasons parents have chosen home education over public. Some do it for cultural, religious, educational quality, bullying, or even medical reasons. There are a few conflicting numbers, but Home School Defense Legal Association (HSDLA), U. S. Department of Education, and other legal sites, say that 76 to 83 % of homeschoolers have chosen homeschooling for Christian religious values. These parents choose homeschool because public education is *politicized* education. Parents take exception to the intellectual and historical dishonesty and "political correctness" of the public sector text books and curriculum. In many instances, public schools use text books that have re-written history and science. Historical facts that show the religious faith and background of the nation's founders have been eliminated in favor of a more "inclusive," albeit, inaccurate, world view. Schools promote what they wish and what the government wishes, rather than what is historically accurate. If the moral and cultural values of Christianity are part of what made this nation great

and allowed the West to advance, it is wrong to teach history excluding these fundamental facts. In the realm of science, an example would be Evolution versus Creation. Evolution is taught as the only scientific option. It is presented as a "given." The scientific evidence for a creation model is never allowed to enter the classroom, even though many of the best scientific and mathematic minds in history (e.g., Isaac Newton) believed in a Creator and were devout Christians. Benjamin Rush said that "the Bible should be read in our schools in preference to all other books"; if government run education means teaching a sanitized and misleading version of history and science, then perhaps it is better the government not be involved. So, at least, parents of homeschool children believe.

The next highest ranking reason people choose homeschool is educational excellence. Some have tried to "down play" home education, arguing parents are unqualified for the job. After all, professional teachers study for years how to teach, how could the average parent possibly do the same or better? Over time, statistics and studies have proven that homeschoolers indeed have exceeded the expectations of teachers and silenced the skeptics. Homeschoolers score higher than public schooled children on SAT, ACT, standardized achievement tests, and advanced placement exams. They are winning the national spelling and geography bees and are outperforming 70 to 80% of public schooled children on all subjects and in all grades (Garthercole R., 2009). Homeschoolers attend college with superior rates to public school students. In 2001, Stanford University admitted 27% of its homeschool applicants, nearly twice the acceptance rate of public schooled applicants (McReynolds, 2007). Statistics show that almost all of America's colleges (about three fourths) have policies concerning homeschool applicants. Many, including Harvard, actively recruit homeschoolers. Once in, college homeschoolers tend to have higher grade point averages than their public schooled peers (McReynolds, 2007). Studies have shown homeschoolers are also more respectful and far less violent.

In 1940 the top discipline offenses, according to the [public] educators, were talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in halls, getting out of turn in line, wearing improper clothing, and not putting paper in

waste baskets. However, in 1982 the top discipline offenses had become rap, robbery, assault, burglary, arson, bombings, and murder. This does not even count the prevalence of extortion, drug abuse, abortion, and sexual diseases (Klicka, 2002, p. 51).

The excellence in educational standards for homeschooling is attracting America's minorities. There are now many African-Americans choosing homeschooling. Some of these wish to teach their children world wide cultural history concerning black people. But the greatest reason for blacks choosing homeschooling is educational excellence and equality. The system of the public schools is such that African-Americans perform lowest on public education statistics. Homeschooling provides equal education for everyone, a promise public schools have claimed but never achieved. Over 100,000 African-Americans are now homeschooling; African Americans are inspired and excited that they, too, are able to offer the best education for their children (James J., 2007). They are excited by the realization that they don't have to depend upon government for equal education, and can achieve excellence on their own, without government assistance or handouts.

Parents that have decided to homeschool have not only taken educational standards into thought, but the issues of morality, peer pressure, and bullying. In 1962, prayer in school was removed. Statistics beginning in 1962 showed that SAT scores immediately plummeted. Teen pregnancies, suicide, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual disease, the use of pornography, and the illiteracy rates increased between 200 to 300 percent (Klicka, 2002). In New Mexico, 46 per cent of high school students drop out annually. The illegitimate birth rate in New Mexico is 59.6% (Traylor, J., McDuffie, T., 2009). The overall decline in morality nationwide has caused parents to exit the public schools, in order to provide a more wholesome environment for educating their children. This leads to the question of peer dependence. In the formative years parents and adults are the most important role models, but the public school sectors form a youth subculture as they depend on each other for social, educational, and maturity levels. Parents support, protect, defend, cherish, and form, their children to become intelligent, mature individuals. Public school separates family and age groups, causing difficulties and estrangements that are unhealthy. Bullying is a serious issue everyone is aware of; it has even been the cause of suicide in small children. Studies have shown that homeschoolers are less violent than public schooled individuals, curious isn't it? Or is it?

Concerns have been brought forward that homeschoolers are potentially more abused, and

because the number of homeschoolers is rising, the abuse rate must also be rising - that's the theory. There is no evidence that homeschooled children are more likely to be abused, and that more regulation and protection is needed.. Yes, homeschooled kids can remain unseen from the public eye, but to say that homeschoolers deliberately keep children out of the public because the kids have visible injuries has no basis in fact. There is no evidence that abuse among homeschoolers is more prevalent than in government schools.

In Montana a public schooled teacher was convicted of having sexual intercourse with an eighth grade girl, in Florida, a public schooled teacher's aide was convicted of lewd assault upon an eight year old autistic boy, in Ohio a teacher made a student do twenty-five push ups naked . . . [in one week] Chicago had four public schooled teachers arrested for sexually abusing children in their classes (Klicka, 2002, p.61).

These are just a few of the many recorded physical and sexual abuse's going on in the public schools today.. We have no such evidence or examples against homeschooled families. In Washington, D.C. the increased regulation of homeschooling was enacted in response to a mother who had withdrawn her four children from public school, and was later charged with their murder. This was a freak incident and cannot be made the basis for broad generalizations. If statistics are to control our decision, then the public schools must be condemned, since statistically they have higher incidents of rape and abuse, including molestation by teachers. "Child abuse is a societal issue. Examples of abuse exist in all educational settings. There is no method of education that guarantees child abuse won't happen" (The Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers, 2009).

The biggest argument against homeschooling is socialization. People wonder and some even condemn homeschooling parents, accusing them of hiding their children from the real world, and limiting their socialization. Do people think that you have to be exposed to everything and anything to know the real world? "This is the real world, we live in it" (McReynolds, 2007). Children can learn about the world and socialize through many things, not just a jail where they teach math and English from eight thirty in the morning till three thirty in the afternoon with anyone and everyone. Homeschooling is more relaxed, and therefore provides more time for socialization. There are sports, play dates, museums, church activities, and many other options outside of the home where a child can socialize. Home is not a prison, and definitely not a hide away from real life. Studies have shown homeschoolers are more mature and respectful,

they are exposed to realistic life styles; and must help within the family everyday and interact with each other. Public school separates family and age groups, causing difficulties and estrangements that are unhealthy.

A study done by Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute surveyed over 7,300 adults, demonstrating that adult homeschool graduates are happier, and find life more exciting than their public schooled peers. The homeschool graduates of this study were found to be more active in civic and community affairs compared to those that had been public schooled. They also voted and attended public meetings at higher rates. Over 74% of these young adults surveyed had taken college classes, compared to 46% of the traditionally schooled population. The overwhelming majority was profitably employed or attending college. 98% of the homeschool graduates had read at least one book in the six months prior to the study, compared to 69% of the comparison group. Other studies have concluded that homeschooled children are not socially isolated, that their self-concept, a barometer of socialization, tends to be better than public schooled children, and that homeschooling fosters leadership skills as least as well as homeschooling (McReynolds, K. 2007).

In conclusion we know that according to statistics and studies homeschoolers are superior academically and emotionally compared to public schooled children. We know for a fact that homeschoolers are more active in society and politics. We know for a fact there is no evidence homeschoolers are more abused than public schooled families, (evidence would actually suggest the opposite). We know for a fact that public schools do not provide equal education to races other than white. Statistically homeschoolers are going to superior colleges sooner and are attaining higher grades than public schooled individuals. We know from studies that adults that were homeschooled in general lead happier and more fulfilled lives. We know for a fact the homeschoolers are not socially inept. So weighing the evidence, we can conclude homeschooling provides not only the best education, but also emotional and family life stability, which is essential to children.

Questions From Our Readers

Q: Could help me out with some pressing questions...

You wrote, "At the general resurrection, Hadean death was cast into the lake of fire and forever destroyed ([Rev. 20:14](#)). Now, to be absent from the body is to be

present with the Lord ([II Cor. 5:6, 8](#)). At death, rather than being "gathered unto our fathers" in Sheol or Hades, we are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" ([I Thess. 4:17](#)).

I am a bit confused here since Paul wrote 2 Cor 5 BEFORE the destruction of Hades in [Rev 20:11-15](#). How then are the dead saints BEFORE the destruction of Jerusalem going to Heaven?

Am I missing something here?

How do we explain passages like Isaiah 11 - "the wolf lying down with lamb, child and vipers nest, child being 100 years old etc???"

A: You asked how the saints before the destruction of Jerusalem went to heaven, based upon II Cor. 5:6, 7?

I do not believe the saints went to heaven prior to AD 70 or the general resurrection. Even so, in Revelation, the souls in Hades are depicted in some form or other as "being with Christ." The martyrs in chapter 6 are given white robes of justification and the martyrs in chapter "live and reign with Christ." Thus, although not in heaven, in some form or manner they are "with" the Lord, although we are not told how. We only know that they did not go to heaven until the general resurrection. On the other hand, Paul may simply be speaking in view of the nearness of the resurrection - the "already but not yet" of the inheritance of the saints in glory. To live in this world is to be separate from God's visible presence (we walk by faith, not by sight); but to die is to be in God's visible presence - either in Hades or very shortly in heaven itself.

As far as Isaiah 11 goes, in this case the wolf lying down with the lamb is poetic imagery describing the domestication and tameness of the Gentiles, who are likened to vicious beasts, but become tame as they are converted to Christ (see Acts 10 where the unclean beasts are symbols of the Gentiles who become acceptable to God by faith in Christ). Whereas the Jewish nation was periodically called to "beat their plowshares into swords" to defend against the invasion of enemy armies, under the Messiah, God's people would enjoy unparalleled security and peace and would thus "beat their swords into plowshares." As a spiritual kingdom, we are no longer subject to invasion as national Israel was and we need not (as a spiritual nation) learn was anymore. Ours is a peaceable kingdom under the government of Christ, who rules the nations with a rod of iron giving his people security and peace.

Letter of the Emperor Claudius to the Alexandrians Regarding the Riots of the Jews

“Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Imperator, Pontifex Maximus, Holder of the Tribunician Power, Consul Designate, to the City of the Alexandrians, greeting.

Tiberius Claudius Barbillus, Apollonius son of Artemidorus, Chaeremon son of Leonidas, Marcus Julius Asklepiades, Gaius Julius Dionysios, Tiberius Claudius Phanius, Pasion son of Potamon, Dionysios son of Sabbion, Tiberius Claudius Archibius, Apollonius son of Ariston, Gaius Julius Apollonius, Hermaiskos son of Apollonius, your ambassadors, having delivered to me the decree, discoursed at length concerning the city, directing my attention to your goodwill towards us, which, from long ago, you may be sure, had been stored up to your advantage in my memory; for you are by nature reverent towards the Augusti, as I know from many proofs, and in particular have taken a warm interest in my house, warmly reciprocated, of which fact (to mention the last instance, passing over the others) the supreme witness is my brother Germanicus addressing you in words more clearly stamped as his own.

Wherefore, I gladly accepted the honors given to me by you, though I have no weakness for such things. And first I permit you to keep my birthday as a dies Augustus as you have yourselves proposed; and I agree to the erection in their several places of the statues of myself and my family; for I see that you were anxious to establish on every side memorials of your reverence for my house. Of the two golden statues, the one made to represent the Pas Augusta Claudiana, as my most honored Barbillus suggested and entreated when I wished to refuse, for fear of being thought too offensive, shall be erected at Rome; and the other according to your request shall be carried in procession on the eponymous days in your city, and it shall be accompanied by a throne adorned with whatever trappings you choose.

It would perhaps be foolish, while accepting such great honors, to refuse the institution of a Claudian Tribe and the establishment of groves after the manner of Egypt. And so I grant you these requests as well, and if you

wish you may also erect the equestrian statues given by Vitrasius Pollio my procurator. As for the erection of those in four-horse chariots which you wish to set up to me at the entrances into the country, I consent to let one be placed at Taposiris, the Libyan town of that name, another at Pharos in Alexandria, and a third at Pelusium in Egypt. But I deprecate the appointment of a high priest to me and the building of temples, for I do not wish to be offensive to my contemporaries, and my opinion is that temples and such forms of honor have by all ages been granted as a prerogative to the gods alone.

Concerning the requests which you have been anxious to obtain from me, I decide as follows. All those who have become epheboi up to the time of my Principate I confirm and maintain in the possession of the Alexandrian citizenship with all the privileges and indulgences enjoyed by the city, excepting those who have contrived to become epheboi by beguiling you, though born of servile mothers. And it is equally my will that all the other favors shall be confirmed which were granted to you by former princes and kings and prefects, as the Deified Augustus also confirmed them. It is my will that the neokoroi of the Temple of the Deified Augustus in Alexandria shall be chosen by lot in the same way as those of the Deified Augustus in Canopus are chosen by lot. With regard to the civic magistracies being made triennial, your proposal seems to me to be very good; for through fear of being called to account for any abuse of power your magistrates will behave with greater circumspection during their term of office. Concerning the Boule, what your custom may have been under the ancient kings I have no means of saying, but that you had no senate under the earlier Augusti, you are well aware. As this is the first broaching of a novel project, whose utility to the city and to my government is not evident, I have written to Aemilius Rectus to hold an inquiry and inform me whether in the first place it is right that a Boule should be constituted, and, if it should be right to create one, in what matter this is to be done.

As for the question, which party was responsible for the riots and feud (or rather, if the truth be told, the war) with the Jews, although in confrontation with their opponents your ambassadors, and particularly

Dionysios the son of Theon, contended with great zeal, nevertheless I was unwilling to make a strict inquiry, though guarding within me a store of immutable indignation against whichever party renews the conflict. And I tell you once and for all that unless you put a stop to this ruinous and obstinate enmity against each other, I shall be driven to show what a benevolent Prince can be when turned to righteous indignation. Wherefore, once again I conjure you that, on the one hand, the Alexandrians show themselves forbearing and kindly towards the Jews who for many years have dwelt in the same city, and dishonor none of the rites observed by them in the worship of their god, but allow them to observe their customs as in the time of the Deified Augustus, which customs I also, after hearing both sides, have sanctioned; and on the other hand, I explicitly order the Jews not to agitate for more privileges than they formerly possessed, and not in the future to send out a separate embassy as though they lived in a separate city (a thing unprecedented), and not to force their way into gymnasiarchic or cosmetic games, while enjoying their own privileges and sharing a great abundance of advantages in a city not their own, and not to bring in or admit Jews who come down the river from Egypt or from Syria, a proceeding which will compel me to conceive serious suspicions. Otherwise I will by all means take vengeance on them as fomenters of which is a general plague infecting the whole world. If, desisting from these courses, you consent to live with mutual forbearance and kindness, I on my side will exercise a solicitude of very long standing for the city, as one which is bound to us by traditional friendship. I bear witness to my friend Barbillus of the solicitude which he has always shown for you in my presence and of the extreme zeal with which he has now advocated your cause; and likewise to my friend Tiberius Claudius Archibius.

Farewell.”

Dom Touttee's St. Cyril

(1790)

From the church historians, and his works collected by Dom Touttee in his edition of them at Paris, in 1790.

Julian the Apostate

St. Chrysostom shows that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God had often delivered it from no less dangers; but to a special providence which was pleased to put it out of

the power of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances."

SAINT CYRIL, CONFESSOR, ARCHBISHOP OF JERUSALEM — 315-386 A.D.

Cyril was born at or near the city of Jerusalem, about the year 315. So perfectly was he versed in the holy scriptures, that many of his discourses, and some of these pronounced extempore, are only passages of the sacred writings connected and interwoven with each other. He had read diligently both the fathers and the pagan philosophers. Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem, ordained him priest about the year 345, and soon after appointed him his preacher to the people, likewise his catechist to instruct and prepare the catechumens for baptism; thus committing to his care the two principal functions of his own pastoral charge. St. Cyril mentions his sermons to the faithful every Sunday.[1] Catechumens ordinarily remained two years in the course of instruction and prayer, and were not admitted to baptism till they had given proof of their morals and conduct, as well as of their constancy in the faith.[2] This office St. Cyril performed for several years; but we have only the course of his catechetical sermons for the year, 348 or 347. Perhaps the others were never committed to writing. He succeeded Maximus in the see of Jerusalem about the end of the year 350.

The beginning of his episcopacy was remarkable for a prodigy by which God was pleased to honor the instrument of our redemption. It is related by Socrates,[3] Philostorgius,[4] the chronicle of Alexandria, &c. St. Cyril, an eye-witness wrote immediately to the emperor Constantius, an exact account of this miraculous phenomenon: and his letter is quoted as a voucher for it by Sozomen,[5] Theophanes,[6] Euty chius,[7] John of Nice,[8] Glycas, and others. Dr. Cave has inserted it at length in his life of St. Cyril.[9] The relation he there gives of the miracle is as follows: "On the nones (or 7th) of May, about the third hour, (or nine in the morning,) a vast luminous body, in the form of a cross, appeared in the heavens, just over the holy Golgotha, reaching as far as the holy mount of Olivet, (that is, almost two English miles in length,) seen not by one or two persons, but clearly and evidently by the whole city. This was not, as may be thought, a momentary transient phenomenon: for it continued several hours together visible to our eyes, and brighter than the sun; the light of which would have eclipsed it, had not this been stronger. The whole city, struck with a reverential fear, tempered with joy, ran immediately to the church, young and old, Christians and heathens, citizens and strangers, all with one voice giving praise to our Lord

Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, the worker of miracles; finding by experience the truth of the Christian doctrine, to which the heavens bear witness." He concludes his letter with wishes that the emperor may always glorify the holy and consubstantial Trinity. Philostorgius and the Alexandrian chronicle affirm, that this cross of light was encircled with a large rainbow." The Greek church commemorates this miracle on the 7th of May.

Some time after this memorable event, a difference happened between our saint and Acacius, archbishop of Caesarea, first a warm Semi-Arian, afterwards a thorough Arian. It began on the subject of metropolitanical jurisdiction, which Acacius unjustly claimed over the Church of Jerusalem; and what widened the breach between them was their difference of sentiments with regard to the consubstantiality of the Son, which St. Cyril had always most zealously asserted. This was sufficient to render him odious in the eyes of Acacius, who in a council of Arian bishops convened by him, declared St. Cyril deposed for not appearing, after two years' warning, to answer to the crimes alleged against him. One of them was that he had lavished away the goods of the Church, and had applied its sacred ornaments to profane uses. The ground of the accusation was, that, in time of a great famine at Jerusalem, he had sold some of the Church plate, and precious stuffs, to relieve the wants of the poor. St. Cyril, not looking upon the members of the council as qualified judges, appealed to higher powers,[10] but yielding to violence withdrew to Antioch, and thence removed to Tarsus, where he was honorably entertained by the bishop Sylvanus, and had in great respect, notwithstanding the sentence of Acacius and his council against him. Here living in communion with Sylvanus, Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil of Ancyra and others, who soon after appeared at the head of the Semi-Arian faction, this gave rise to the calumny that St. Cyril himself had espoused it. But nothing could be more falsely alleged against him, he having always maintained the Catholic faith. He had accordingly, in 349, together with his predecessor Maximus, received the decrees of the council of Sardica, and consequently those of Nice. And we have already seen, in his letter to Constantius, that he made an undaunted profession of the Consubstantial Trinity. To which we may add, that in the council of Constantinople, in 381, he joined with the other bishops in condemning the Semi-Arians and Macedonians. And the orthodox bishops assembled in the same city in 382, writing to pope Damasus and to the western bishops, gave a most ample testimony to his faith, declaring, "That the most reverend and beloved of God, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, had been canonically elected by the bishops of the province, and had suffered many persecutions for the faith." [11]

Upon the death of Constantius, in 361, Julian the apostate, partly, out of aversion to his uncle, and partly in hopes to see the Christian sects. and the orthodox more at variance, suffered all the banished bishops to return. to their churches. Thus did God make use of the malice of his enemy to restore St. Cyril to his see. He shortly after made him an eye-witness to the miraculous manifestation of his power, by which he covered his blaspheming enemies with confusion. The following most authentic history of that remarkable event is gathered from the original records, and vindicated against the exceptions of certain skeptics by Tillemont,[12] and by our most learned Mr. Warburton, in his Julian.

In vain had the most furious tyrants exerted the utmost cruelty, and bent the whole power which the empire of the world put into their hands, to extirpate, if it had been possible, the Christian name. The faith. increased under axes, and the blood of martyrs was a fruitful seed, which multiplied the Church over all nations. The experience how weak and ineffectual a means brute force was to this purpose, moved the emperor Julian, the most implacable, the most crafty, and the most dangerous instrument which the devil ever employed in that design, to shift his ground, and change his artillery and manner of assault. He affected a show of great moderation, and in words disclaimed open persecution; but he sought by every foul and indirect means to undermine the faith, and sap the foundations of the Christian religion. For this purpose he had recourse to every base art of falsehood and dissimulation, in which he was the most complete master. He had played off the round of his machines to no purpose, and seemed reduced to this last expedient of the pacific kind, the discrediting the Christian religion by bringing the scandal of imposture upon its divine author. This he attempted to do by a project of rebuilding the Jewish temple. which, if he could have compassed, it would have sufficiently answered his wicked design; Christ and the prophet Daniel having in express terms foretold not only its destruction, which was effected by the Romans under Titus, but its final ruin and desolation.

The religious Jewish religion was a temporary dispensation, intended by its divine author, God himself, to prefigure one more complete and perfect, and prepare men to embrace it. It not only essentially required bloody sacrifices, hut enjoined a fixed and certain place for them to be performed in; this was the temple at Jerusalem. Hence the final destruction of this temple was he abolition of the sacrifices, which annihilated the whole system of this religious institution. Whence St. Chrysostom[13] shows that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God had often delivered it from no less dangers; but to a special providence which

was pleased to put it out of the power of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances. "As a physician," says that father, "by breaking the cup, prevents his patient from indulging his appetite in a noxious draught; so God withheld the Jews from their sacrifices by destroying the whole city itself, and making the place inaccessible to all of them." St. Gregory Nazianzen, Socrates, Theodoret, and other Christian writers, are unanimous in what they say of Julian's motive, ascribing to him the intention already mentioned, of falsifying the scripture prophecies, those of Daniel and Christ, which his actions sufficiently evidence. His historian, indeed, says, that he undertook this work out of a desire of rendering the glory of his reign immortal by so great an achievement:[14] but this was only an after-thought or secondary motive; and Sozomen in particular assures us that not only Julian, but that the idolaters who assisted in it, pushed it forward upon that very motive, and for the sake thereof suspended their aversion to the Jewish nation. Julian himself wrote a letter to the body or community of the Jews, extant among his works,[15] mentioned by Sozomen,[16] and translated by Dr. Cave, in his life of St. Cyril. In it he declares them free from all exactions and taxes, and orders Julius or Illus, (probably Hillel,) their most reverend patriarch, to abolish the apostoli, or gatherers of the said taxes; begs their prayers, (such was his hypocrisy,) and promises, after his Persian expedition, when their temple should be rebuilt, to make Jerusalem his residence, and to offer up his joint prayers together with them.

After this he assembled the chief among the Jews, and asked them why they offered no bloody sacrifices, since they were prescribed by their law. They replied, that they could not offer any but in the temple, which then lay in ruins.. Whereupon he commanded them to repair to Jerusalem, rebuild their temple, and re-establish their ancient worship, promising them his concurrence towards carrying on the work. The Jews received the warrant with inexpressible joy, and were so elated with it, that, flocking from all parts to Jerusalem, they began insolently to scorn and triumph over the Christians, threatening to make them feel as fatal effects of their severity, as they themselves had heretofore from the Roman powers. The news was, no sooner spread abroad than contributions came in from all hands. The Jewish women stripped themselves of their most costly ornaments to contribute towards the expense of the building. The emperor also, who was no less impatient to see it finished, in order to encourage them in the undertaking, told them he had found in their mysterious sacred books that this was the time in which they were to return to their country, and that their temple and legal observances were to be restored.[17] He gave orders to his treasurers to furnish

money and every thing necessary for the building, which would require immense sums: he drew together the most able workmen from all quarters, and appointed for overseers persons of the highest rank, placing at their head his intimate friend Alypius, who had formerly been Pro-prefect of Britain; charging him to make them labor in this great work without ceasing, and to spare no expense. All things were in readiness, workmen were assembled from all quarters; stone, brick, timber, and other materials, in immense quantities, were laid in. The Jews of both sexes and of all degrees bore a share in the labor; the very women helping to dig the ground and carry out the rubbish in their aprons and skirts of their gowns. It is even said that the Jews appointed some pickaxes, spades, and baskets to be made of silver for the honor of the work. But the good bishop St. Cyril, lately returned from exile, beheld all these mighty preparations without any concern, relying on the infallible truth of the scripture prophecies: as, that the desolation of the Jewish temple should last till the end;[18] and that one stone should not be left on another;[19] and being full of the spirit of God, he foretold, with the greatest confidence, that the Jews, so far from being able to rebuild their ruined temple, would be the instruments whereby that prophecy of Christ would be still more fully accomplished than it had been hitherto, and that they would not be able to put one stone upon another,[20] and the event justified the prediction.

Till then the foundations and some ruins of the walls of the temple subsisted, as appears from St. Cyril:[21] and Eusebius says,[22] the inhabitants still carried away the stones for their private buildings. These ruins the Jews first demolished with their own hands, thus concurring to the accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction. Then they began to dig the new foundation, in which work many thousands were employed. But what they had thrown up in the day was, by repeated earthquakes, the night following cast back again into the trench. "And when Alypius the next day earnestly pressed on the work, with the assistance of the governor of the province, there issued," says Ammianus, "such horrible balls of fire out of the earth near the foundations,"[23] which rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen. And the victorious element continuing in this manner obstinately and resolutely bent as it were to drive them to a distance, Alypius thought proper to give over the enterprise."

This is also recorded by the Christian authors, who, besides the earthquake and fiery eruption, mention storms, tempests, and whirlwinds, lightning, crosses impressed on the bodies and garments of the assistants, and a flaming cross in the heavens, surrounded with a luminous circle. The order whereof seems to have been

as follows. This judgment of the Almighty was ushered in by storms and whirlwinds, by which prodigious heaps of lime and sand and other loose materials were carried away.[24] After these followed lightning, the usual consequence of collision of clouds in tempests. Its effects were, first the destroying the more solid materials, and melting down the iron instruments;[25] and secondly, the impressing shining crosses on the bodies and garments of the assistants without distinction, in which there was something that in art and elegance exceeded all painting or embroidery; which when the infidels perceived, they endeavored, but in vain, to wash them out. In the third place came the earthquake which cast out the stones of the old foundations, and shook the earth into the trench or cavity dug for the new; besides overthrowing the adjoining buildings and porticoes wherein were lodged great numbers of Jews designed for the work, who were all either crushed to death, or at least maimed or wounded. The number of the killed or hurt was increased by the fiery eruption in the fourth place, attended both with storms and tempests above, and with an earthquake below.[26] From this eruption, many fled to a neighboring church for shelter, but could not obtain entrance; whether on account of its being closed by a secret invisible hand, as the fathers state the case, or at least by a special providence, through the entrance into the oratory being choked up by a frightened crowd, all pressing to be foremost. "This, however," says St. Gregory Nazianzen,[27] "is invariably affirmed and believed by all, that as they strove to force their way in by violence, the <Fire>, which burst from the foundations of the temple, met and stopped them, and one part it burnt and destroyed, and another it desperately maimed, leaving them a living monument of God's commination and wrath against sinners." This eruption was frequently renewed till it overcame the rashness of the most obdurate, to use the words of Socrates; for it continued to be repeated as often as the projectors ventured to renew their attempt, till it had fairly tired them out. Lastly, on the same evening, there appeared over Jerusalem a lucid cross, shining very bright, as large as that in the reign of Constantine, encompassed with a circle of light. "And what could be so proper to close this tremendous scene, or to celebrate this decisive victory, as the Cross triumphant, encircled with the Heroic symbol of conquest?"

This miraculous event, with all its circumstances, is related by the writers of that age; by St. Gregory Nazianzen in the year immediately following it; by St. Chrysostom, in several parts of his works, who says that it happened not twenty years before, appeals to eye-witnesses still living and young, and to the present condition of those foundations, "of which," says he, "we are all witnesses;" by St. Ambrose in his fortieth

epistle written in 388; Rufinus, who had long lived upon the spot; Theodoret, who lived in the neighborhood in Syria; Philostorgius, the Arian; Sozomen, who says many were alive when he wrote who had it from eye-witnesses, and mentions the visible marks still subsisting; Socrates, &c. The testimony of the heathens corroborates this evidence; as that of Ammianus Marcellinus above quoted, a nobleman of the first rank, who then lived in the court of Julian at Antioch and in an office of distinction, and who probably wrote his account from the letter of Alypius to his master at the time when the miracle happened. Libanius, another pagan friend and admirer of Julian, both in the history of his own life, and in his funeral oration on Julian's death, mentions these earthquakes in Palestine, but with a shyness which discovers the disgrace of his hero and superstition. Julian himself speaks of this event in the same covert manner. Socrates testifies, that at the sight of the miracles, the Jews at first cried out that Christ is God; yet returned home as hardened as ever. St. Gregory Nazianzen says, that many Gentiles were converted upon it, and went over to the Church. Theodoret and Sozomen say many were converted; but as to the Jews, they evidently mean a sudden flash of conviction, not a real and lasting conversion. The incredulous blinded themselves by various presences: but the evidence of the miracle leaves no room for the least cavil or suspicion. The Christian writers of that age are unanimous in relating it with its complicated circumstances, yet with a diversity which shows their agreement, though perfect, could not have been concerted. The same is confirmed by the testimony of the most obstinate adversaries. They who, when the temple at Daphne was consumed about the same time, by lightning, pretended that it was set on fire by Christians, were not able to suspect any possibility of contrivance in this case: nor could the event have been natural. Every such suspicion is removed by the conformity of the event with the prophecies: the importance of the occasion, the extreme eagerness of Jews and Gentiles in the enterprise, the attention of the whole empire fixed on it, and the circumstances of the fact. The eruption, contrary to its usual nature, was confined to one small spot; it obstinately broke out by fits, and ceased with the project, and this in such a manner, that Ammianus himself ascribes it to an intelligent cause. The phenomena of the cross in the air, and on the garments, were admirably fitted, as moral emblems, to proclaim the triumph of Christ over Julian, who had taken the cross out of the military ensigns, which Constantine had put there to be a lasting memorial of that cross which he had seen in the air that presaged his victories. The same was again erected in the heavens to confound the vanity of its impotent persecutor. The earthquake was undoubtedly miraculous; and though its effects were mostly such as

might naturally follow, they were directed by a special supernatural providence, as the burning of Sodom by fire from heaven. Whence Mr. Warburton concludes his dissertation on this subject with the following corollary. "New light continually springing up from each circumstance as it passes in review, by such time as the whole event is considered, this illustrious miracle comes out in one full blaze of evidence." Even Jewish Rabbins, who do not copy from Christian writers, relate this event in the same manlier with the fathers from their own traditions and records.[28] This great event happened in the beginning of the year 363. St. Chrysostom admires the wonderful conduct of divine providence in this prodigy, and observes, that had not the Jews set about to rebuild their temple, they might have pretended they could have done it: therefore did God permit them thrice to attempt it; once under Adrian, when they brought a greater desolation upon themselves; a second time under Constantine the Great, who dispersed them, cut off their ears, and branded their bodies with the marks of rebellion. He then relates this third attempt, "in our own time," as he says, "not above twenty years ago, in which God himself visibly baffled their endeavors, to show that no human power could reverse his decree; and this at a time when our religion was oppressed, lay under the axes, and had not the liberty even to speak; that impudence itself might not have the least shadow of presence."

St. Cyril adored the divine power in this miracle, of which he had ocular demonstration. Orosius says that Julian had destined him to slaughter after his Persian expedition, but the death of the tyrant prevented his martyrdom. He was again driven from his see by the Arian emperor, Valens, in 367, but recovered it in 378, when Gratian, mounting the throne, commanded the churches to be restored to those who were in communion with pope Damasus. He found his flock miserably divided by heresies and schisms under the late wolves to whom they had fallen a prey; but he continued his labors and tears among them. In 381 he assisted at the general council of Constantinople, in which he condemned the Semi-Arians and Macedonians whose heresy he had always opposed, though he had sometimes joined their prelates against the Arians St. before their separation from the church, as we have seen above; and as St. Hilary, St. Meletius, and many others had done. He had governed his church eight years in peace from the death of Valens, when, in 386, he passed to a glorious immortality, in the seventieth year of his age. He is honored by the Greeks and Latins on this day, which was that of his death.

Endnotes

1 Cat. 5. 10.14.

2 See Fleury, Moeurs des Chretiens, p. 42.

3 B. 2, c. 28.

4 lb. 3, c. 26.

5 lb. 5, c. 5.

6 Ad an. 363.

7 Annal. p. 475.

8 Auetuar. Combefis, t. 2, p. 382.

9 T.2, p. 344.

10 Sozom. b. 4, c. 24.

11 Apud Theod. Hist. b. 5, c. 9.

12 Tillem. t. 7, p. 409,

13 Hom. 6, adv. Judae t. 1 p. 646 ed. Ben.

14 Amm. Marcell. l. 3, c. 1.

15 Ep. 25, p. 152.

16 Soz. 1.5, c. 22.

17 Naz. Or. 4, adv. Julian.

18 Dan. ix. 27.

19 Matt. xxiv. 2.

20 Rufin Hist. l. 10, c 37.

21 Catech. 15. n. 15.

22 Dem. Evang.. 1. 8. p. 406.

23 Out of the very foundations themselves, according to St. Chrysostom, Sozomen, and Theodoret.

24 Theod. Hist. l. 3, c. 20.

25 Soc. lib. 3, c. 20.

26 St. Greg. Naz. Or. 9.

27 Or. 4, adv. Julian.

28 see Warburton, p 88. (Taken from Vol. III of "The Lives or the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Principal Saints" by the Rev. Alban Butler, the 1864 edition published by D. & J. Sadlier, & Company)