



The Sword & The Plow

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Commentary on Joel Chapter 2:12-32

Editor's note: I am writing a commentary on Joel and the other Minor Prophets. Due to length, we will spread comments on chapter two over two months. This month we offer comments on 2:12-32.

12 – Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning;

The nation is called to repentance; no half measure will do: they are called to turn to God with the whole heart, unreservedly, fully yielding and compliant. The internal conversion of the heart should then produce outward manifestations of repentance by fasting, weeping, and mourning for their sins.

13 – and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God:

Rending one's garments was an expression of great personal calamity. Where the heathen might cut themselves as expression of great grief, the Jews rent their garments instead, prohibited by the law to imitate

the customs of the pagan nations around them (Lev. 19:28; 21:5). When Jacob learned that Joseph was dead, he *“rent his cloths, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned his son many days”* (Gen. 37:34). But such outward shows would be meaningless unless they mirrored the inward rending of the heart. The expression is similar to Paul's statement that *“he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God”* (Rom. 2:28, 29).

for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

These words were used God to proclaim his name when Moses asked to see his glory. Descending upon Mount Sinai, God passed before Moses and proclaimed

“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:5-7). Thus, although anger and wrath are necessary attributes of God’s holiness, they come only with the greatest reluctance after long forbearance when there is no other remedy. The cup of divine wrath and retribution sometimes takes centuries to fill. When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, he said it would not be until the fourth generation, or about 430 years, that he would give the land unto them *“for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16).* The Jews were “vessels for wrath fitted for destruction” whom God endured for 1,500 years with much longsuffering (Rom.9:22), but who “filled up” the measure of their iniquity by the death of Christ and persecution of his church (Matt. 23:32-39; I Thess. 2:14-16; Rev. 6:9-11; 17:4; 19:2) Viewing a great catastrophe, men view the immediate suffering and ruin and ask Why, but fail to consider that perhaps for many decades or long centuries God forewent retribution until he could forbear no more. God repents of the evil he inflicts, but the iniquity of man compels him.

14 – Who knoweth if he will return and repent,

Although the prophecy is given in absolute terms, the possibility that God will turn from the purposed destruction remains open if the people repent. Moses thus held open the possibility to avert the latter-day destruction of the nation if it would but repent and obey the voice of the Lord: *“When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them” (Deut. 4:30, 30).*

and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

The prospect of God leaving a meat offering and drink offering suggests a mitigation of his wrath such that a remnant may be preserved and left behind him. The prophet does not hold out the hope of full pardon, but only of partial alleviation; for if the threat were too easily and completely averted, the people would not fully fear the Lord nor come to repentance in their hearts, but would presume upon the mercy of God and be emboldened to do evil. *“Because sentence against*

an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11)

15 – Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

As before, “trumpet” here is from the Hebrew *shophar*, or a ram’s horn, used to call the people to assembly or to warn of imminent danger (see comments at Joel 2:1). The law imposed only one fast, the annual fast of the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month when the High Priest made atonement for the temple against the sins and uncleanness of the people so that the presence of God might continue to dwell in their midst (Lev. 16:29-34). While ceremonial fasting was otherwise discouraged as a form of false asceticism (Isa. 58:3-12; Col. 2:20-23), spontaneous and circumstantial fasting was widely practiced as an acceptable form of contrition for sin; for it is inappropriate for those that are in mourning for sin to feast and carouse : *“And in that day did the LORD GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy an gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die” (Isa. 22:12, 13).*

16 – Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

The threatened crisis was so great that the whole people were called to assemble themselves in the temple and beseech the God’s pardon; none were exempted: bride and groom, though standing at the very threshold of their vows and consummation of their marriage, were to postpone their wedding and resort to the temple to entreat the mercies of God.

17 – Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar,

The priests were God’s appointed intermediaries for the people; they were thus charged to make intercession and to lead the people in entreating God’s mercy and pardon. There were three courts in the temple: the court of the Gentiles, where anyone might worship; the court of Israel, where only circumcised males who were ceremoniously clean could enter, and the court of women, where Jewish women were required to worship. “Between the porch and the altar” likely refers to the court of Israel, for it was here that assemblies of the people were addressed by their leaders and kings; it was here also that the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, suffered martyrdom

(Matt. 23:35). This prophet foretold his death and prefigured Christ. For when he wrote “*They shall look on me whom they have pierced*” and “*Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*” (Zech. 12:10; 13:7), the prophet wrote of himself, but these things also looked ahead to Christ (Matt. 26:31; John 19:37; cf. Zech. 11:7-17). It was perhaps also in this court that Jesus sometimes taught in the temple, though it was the outer court where the money-changers and those that sold doves kept shop (Mark 11:17; John 2:14), for when he says “*my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer*” he signifies the court of Gentiles. And as she could not enter the court of Israel, it would also have been the outer court where the woman taken in adultery was brought before Jesus; hence it appears that the Lord taught here many times as well (John 8:2-11; 20).

and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

The immediate threat was of a plague of locusts, coupled with famine and drought. However, as we have seen, the *plenior sensus* looked ahead to the A.D. 70 destruction of the nation by Rome. Therefore, in saying “*give not thine heritage that the heathen should rule over them*” the prophecy appears to anticipate the conquest of Palestine by Pompey the Great in 63 B.C. After defeating Mithridates of Pontus, Pompey deposed Antiochus Asiaticus, the last of the Seleucids (64 B.C.). The Jews were governed at the time by Antigonus, who had deposed his brother, Hyrcanus, thrust him from the high priesthood, and put on the royal diadem. The disputing brothers at first agreed to submit the matter to Pompey’s judgment, but Antigonus had a change of heart and shut the gates of Jerusalem against Pompey. Pompey laid siege to the city with Hyrcanus for his assistant, taking it after a siege of five months, bringing the Jews under Roman rule. 49 B.C. marked Julius Caesar’s civil war against Pompey and the Roman senate. When the forces of Pompey were defeated at Pharsalus (Aug. 8, 48 B.C.), Pompey fled to Egypt. When Caesar arrived, he found Pompey had been murdered, and king Ptolemy XIII making war against his sister and co-regent, Cleopatra, whom he had expelled from the throne shortly before. A boy in age, Ptolemy and the kingdom were under the control of the eunuch Pothinus. Caesar, who was consul that year, declared his wish that Ptolemy and Cleopatra disband their armies and settle their dispute before him in process of law, rather than by armed force between them. Pothinus, thinking it unseemly for the king to submit the contest to Caesar’s arbitration, attacked Caesar’s forces with the royal army. In the war that resulted, Ptolemy was slain, the royal army defeated,

and Egypt came under the power of Rome and Caesar. Caesar received help in this war from Antipater, father of Herod the Great. In reward for his assistance, Caesar gave the government of Judea to Antipater, who in turn gave the government of Galilee to Herod when he was twenty-five years of age (46 B.C.).¹ Herod was made king by Octavian Caesar and Marc Antony in the winter of 39 B.C.² The New Testament narratives open with the conception of John the Baptist in the autumn of 3 B.C. Herod died shortly before Passover in 1 B.C. at the age of seventy, having reigned twenty-seven years from being made king by the Romans.³ Jesus was born the preceding winter, 2 B.C., and was baptized the fifteenth year of Tiberius (A.D. 29) on the threshold of his thirtieth birthday (Luke 3:1, 23).

18 – Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

The people’s repentance will restore the Lord’s favor and compassion for his people, and return his blessing to the land so that it again becomes fruitful and productive. The phrase “be jealous for his land” evokes the image of a husband resentful of an affront or dishonor done to his wife, which he is ready to vindicate or revenge; the idea being that the Lord will nourish and protect the land to remove the reproach it suffered when it was desolate and unfruitful, and this for the benefit of his people. A similar thought occurs in Isaiah: “*In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together*” (Isa. 27:2-4).

19 – Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

In the people’s repentance, prayer, and fasting, the prophet holds out the assurance that God will answer their entreaty and fully satisfy their need. Corn, wine, and oil, were the three great staples of ancient life. By repenting and forsaking their sins, God would provide the things necessary to daily life. The existence of famine and drought would have been viewed by surrounding nations as evidence that the Jews were forsaken by God and would have been an occasion for ginsaying them, saying, “Where is their God.” In

¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.9.2. This means Herod would have been born in 71 B.C.

² Andrew E. Steinman, *When did Herod the Great Reign*, 51 *Novum Testamentum*, 8

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 17.6.1; 17.8.1

restoring their corn, wine, and oil, the reproach they suffered among the heathen would thus be taken away.

20 – But I will remove far off from you the northern army,

The normal origin of locusts is not from the north, but the south, from the Libyan, Egyptian, and Arabian deserts. It would therefore seem that the locust swarm, driven by winds, took a circuitous route into Judea, entering from the north. On the other hand, the form of the word “northern” indicates the *native land*, and cannot therefore in fairness be said to apply to locusts that originate in the south. Accordingly, many commentators take “northern” (the word “army” has been supplied by the translators) in reference to the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions, which are specifically referred to as coming from the north (Jer. 1:13, 14; 4:6; Ezek. 1:4). Farrar finds in the phrase “*I will remove far off from you the Northerner*” an allusion to Ezekiel’s vision of Gog and Magog, the great pagan hoard that comes from the “north parts” and invades restored Israel in the latter days (Ezek. 28:15).⁴ Farrar mistakenly believed Gog and Magog described the Scythian invasion from northern Europe in the seventh century before Christ, which reached as far as Ashkelon before being repelled in 596 B.C. Others have supposed Ezekiel’s vision described Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, Gog’s invasion of restored Israel follows the appearance of “David their Prince,” which plainly refers to Christ (Ezek. 37:25), so that the vision must be understood in reference to New Testament times. Hence, the better view is that Gog and Magog envisions the great end-time persecution of Nero Caesar against the church. Assuming that Joel describes in other terms the invasion of Gog and Magog, “northerner” would then have reference to the *Romans*.⁵

⁴ F.W. Farrar, “Joel” in *The Minor Prophets* (New York, Anson D.F. Randolph & Company), 118, 121.

⁵ Precedent for referring to the Romans as coming from the north is found in the book of Daniel. The eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel provides a timeline of the latter days of the Jewish nation, beginning with the Mede-Persian Empire, followed by the kingdom of the Greeks, and ending with the Roman Empire. Upon his death, Alexander the Great’s kingdom was divided between his generals, which ultimately devolved into four kingdoms or dynasties. The two most powerful of these were the Seleucid dynasty of Syria, called the king or kingdom of *the north*, and the Ptolemaic dynasty seated in Egypt, called the king or kingdom of *the south*. Most of the eleventh chapter of Daniel is devoted to the vicissitudes of these two kingdoms. However, with the passage of time the power of these two kingdoms decayed and the balance of world

and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

In answer to the people’s repentance, the locust swarm will be driven into the wilderness between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean where millions of rotting locusts would send up a pestilential stench. However, according to its *plenior sensus*, the passage likely refers to the cataclysmic judgments visited upon the Romans preceding the death of Nero, including a hurricane followed by a pestilence that killed thirty thousand in the city of Rome, and the series of civil wars that followed Nero’s death, leaving Italy in ruins, littered with tens of thousands of rotting and unburied corpses following epic battles. The sum of these judgments was to succor the church and redeem her from the hand of her persecutors, as envisioned here by Joel.

21 – Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

As the invading army of locusts had “done great things” and mighty deeds in terms of desolating the land and visiting judgment upon the people; so the Lord would do great things by restoring the land’s fertility in response to the people’s repentance.

22 -Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

“Pastures of the wilderness” refers to wild, uncultivated places away from human cities and settlements where cattle and beasts forage and graze. “Fig tree and vine” bring in view human cultivation. The drought removed and the locusts driven away, vegetation returns and cultivation resumes: The pastures germinate; the trees bear fruit; the fig and vine

powers shifted until the phrase “king of the north” and “king of south” came no longer to refer to these two dynasties but to new world powers grown up in their place. The point where this transition occurs in Daniel’s vision is best understood as verse forty, where the prophecy skips ahead from the depredations of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the “time of the end.” By this view, the king of the south refers to Mithridates of Pontus, and the king of the north, to the Romans, first under Pompey the Great who conquered Mithridates and brought Judea under Roman rule (vv. 40, 41), followed by Julius Caesar who conquered Egypt and settled the government of Judea upon Antipater, the father of Herod the Great (vv. 42-45).

yield their strength. In returning his care to the land, the Lord satisfies the need of both man and beast.

23 – Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, and former rain, and the latter rain

“Children of Zion” refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; but as Zion was the capital city, the whole remnant of God’s covenant people is almost certainly signified. The marginal reading for “the former rain” is “a teacher of righteousness.” Those adopting this translation view the reference as applying to either Joel himself, to the instructions of Moses, the prophets and priests, or even prophetically to Christ. Assuming the translation is correct, it seems more likely that the *plague and drought* were the “teacher of righteousness” to chasten the people and lead them to repentance, so that the sense becomes “Rejoice, for the Lord hath chastened you moderately.” In favor of this sense is the verb tense “hath given,” which is the perfect tense, signifying completed action in the past. The plague and drought were in the past, not the former rain, which was withheld (Joel 1:10, 17-20). But if the translation “former rain” is correct, it would seem to conflict with the clause following, which promises the former and latter rains *in the future*: “he will cause to come down for you the rain, and former rain, etc.” But as “teacher of righteousness” gives us pause as to its meaning, the present reading was undoubtedly chosen because it is easier to grasp. However, as the Hebrew is obscure, it is impossible to say definitively which is correct.

in the first month.

The first month was at the first called *Abib* by the Jews, but after the Babylonian captivity it was called *Nisan* according to Chaldean usage (Ex. 12:2; 13:4; Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7). The first month was determined by the new moon on or just preceding the vernal equinox. The new moon marking the first month had to precede the vernal equinox because Passover occurred at the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Hence, for the full moon to occur on or after the equinox, it was necessary that the new moon occur on or just before it. But the lunar calendar had not always been used by the Jews; it was instituted under Moses to regulate the annual cycle of feasts. Prior to Moses, it appears that a calendar of twelve months of thirty days apiece was used, with five epagomenal days added at the end of the year to fill out 365, according to the manner of the Egyptians. This appears from the account of the flood in which were accomplished 150 days in five months, so that each month necessarily consisted of thirty days (Gen. 7:11-

8:4). The lunar cycle, however, consists of 29 ½ days. To account for the half day, the months alternated in length between 29 and 30 days. But as twelve lunar months equals only 254 days (6 x 29 + 6 x 30 = 254), a thirteenth month of thirty days was added seven times in nineteen years to bring the lunar cycle back in synchronization with the solar year.

24 – And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil

Wheat, wine and oil, being comparatively imperishable and capable of being stored for many years, were the most important crops. Whereas the floors and barns had been empty of grain and the fats without wine or oil due to the plague and drought, repentance would restore the Lord’s favor, who would thus bless the people and abundantly supply their need.

25 – And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Again we note the future tense appended to these passages over against the perfect tense in the problematic clause in v. 23, above. “The years” that the drought and pests had eaten refers to the annual harvest and the store of grain, wine, and oil that it produced, which might last for several years. The pests sent by the Lord to destroy the land and eat up the crops and were as the invasion of a “great army.” Herodotus describes the army of Xerxes drying up streams, rivers, and whole lakes by the multitude of soldiers and livestock in his army, so that we may imagine the ravage done to the land by an army merely passing through, foraging provisions. Josephus indeed describes the army of Simon, one of the leaders in the Jews’ war with Rome, as having left Idumea a desert waste by reason of his army:

And as one may see all the wood behind despoiled of their leaves by locusts, after they have been there, so was there nothing left behind Simon’s army but a desert. Some places they burnt down, some they utterly demolished, and whatever grew in the country they either trod it down or fed upon it, and by their marches they made the ground that was cultivated, harder and more untractable than that which was barren. In short, there was no sign remaining of those places that had been laid waste, that ever they had had a being.⁶

Thus, are locusts like an army of men, and an army of like a plague of locusts.

⁶ Josephus, *J. W.*, 4.9.7; Whiston ed.

26, 27 – And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD you God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

The blessing of the Lord upon his people would result in their praising and confessing him to be the one true God: the Lord who inhabited the praises of Israel and dwelt in their midst; in clinging to him, God would never allow his people to suffer shame or disappointment.

28, 29 – And it shall come to pass afterward,

The term “afterward” is synonymous with “last” or “latter days.” This is seen by Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy on Pentecost following the Lord’s ascension, where he substitutes “last days” for Joel’s use of “afterward” (Acts 2:17). The eschatological import of the phrase also appears in several Old Testament passages. The prophet Jeremiah uses it interchangeably with latter days when he speaks of the salvation Christ would bring to the Gentiles: “*And afterward I shall bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon*” and “*But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam*” (Jer. 49:6, 39). Similarly, Hosea says, “*Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*”

that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;

The outpouring of the Spirit spoken of here should be distinguished from the Spirit’s indwelling of the believer by the word. Receipt of the Spirit is either direct and miraculous, or indirect and non-miraculous by the word. The word is to the Spirit like copper wire is to electricity; as electricity travels through and is conducted by copper wire, so the Spirit is communicated and conducted by the word. Jesus said, “*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life*” (John 6:63). As we receive and yield to the word, we receive Christ’s Spirit. All believers are thus “sealed” with the Spirit of adoption by the hope of eternal life in the believer’s breast, by which we also cry Abba, Father (Rom. 8:14-23; II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14). This indwelling pertains to all believers for all time, and is not attended by miraculous gifts (John 14:16). But the outpouring of the Spirit here mentioned was direct and miraculous, and was of limited scope and duration, belonging to the latter days of the pre-messianic age, and served as a witness of the truth of the gospel as the word of God. “All flesh”

signifies men and women of every race, language, and nation, whether Jew or Gentile. Similarly, when Peter said “*the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off*” (Acts 2:39), he means that the promise was also to the Gentiles, for it is they were afar off, but were made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:17).

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was given only to the apostles, save that the household of Cornelius received a limited dispensation of the Holy Spirit by a like outpouring as a testimony that the Gentiles were acceptable to God without circumcision, purified by the obedience of faith (Acts 10:34, 35, 44-48). In all other instances, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:4-19; 19:1-6). The phrase “in those days” signifies the “last days” and establishes the limit during which the miraculous gifts might be received, which almost certainly terminated following the destruction of Jerusalem: for the gifts were among the signs given to urge men to repentance preceding the great and terrible day of the Lord.

30 – And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

These signs should probably be understood literally, as describing conditions that marked the deteriorating stability of the Jewish nation and polity as it approached the end. The thirteenth chapter of Josephus’ second book of *Wars* is devoted to describing the conditions prevailing among the Jews as the end drew near, which wells comports with the instant language, of which we provide a single example:

Now when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their

*madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.*⁷

31 – The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,

This is best understood in reference to the “blood, fire, and pillars of smoke” from burning villages and hamlets like those described by Josephus, above, whose smoke would have blackened the sun by day and made the moon red by night as is often seen to occur when fields are burned after the harvest.

before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

The day of the Lord was fulfilled in the Jewish war with Rome and the year-of-four-emperors that followed Nero’s death. This may be plainly seen by Peter’s exhortation to his fellow countrymen to “save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). “This generation” was the time frame established by the Lord for his coming in the clouds of heaven in judgment upon the Jewish nation (Matt. 24:29, 30; Mk. 13:30). Christ would come in his kingdom in power while the disciples were still alive to see it (Matt. 16:27, 28; Mk. 8:38-9:1); before they had had time to evangelize all the cities of Israel (Matt. 10:23); the very Sanhedrin that tried him would see Christ seated on the right hand of power, coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62). And that this was understood by the earliest Christian writers to be nothing less than the second coming of Christ is well attested. Origen (A.D. 184–254), the great Alexandrian thinker and writer thus states:

*We do not deny, then, that the purificatory fire and the destruction of the world took place in order that evil might be swept away, and all things be renewed; for we assert that we have learned these things from the sacred books of the prophets...But according to Celsus, ‘the Christians, making certain additional statements to those of the Jews, assert that the Son of God has been already sent on account of the sins of the Jews; and that the Jews having chastised Jesus, and given him gall to drink, have brought upon themselves the divine wrath.’ And anyone who likes may convict this statement of falsehood, if it be not the case that the whole Jewish nation was overthrown within one single generation after Jesus had undergone these sufferings at their hands. For forty and two years, I think, after the date of the crucifixion of Jesus, did the destruction of Jerusalem take place.*⁸

⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 2.13.6; Whiston ed.

⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsus* 4.21–22

Origen’s use of the phrase “all things renewed” almost certainly alludes to Rev. 21:5, where John describes a “new heaven and a new earth” in which Christ’s bride is the “new Jerusalem.” The implication is that Origen interpreted Revelation’s imagery as being bound up in the destruction of the old Jerusalem by the coming of Christ such that the church became the “new Jerusalem,” taking its place. More importantly, Origen was not alone in this opinion, nor did it originate with him: Celsus cites *other* Christians as taking the view that Christ returned in vengeance upon the Jewish nation. Indeed, Origen’s quotation of Celsus gives every indication that the view was then *normative* and *widely* held among Christians, as indeed it would have to have been for it to come to the attention of an unbeliever and outsider like Celsus, and find its way into his works as representative of the general view among Christians. Since it is unlikely Celsus would include mention of this belief among early Christians if it was merely aberrative and isolated, at this time in history a “preteristic”⁹ understanding of eschatology was apparently the *dominant* view within the church. The famous church historian, Eusebius (A.D. 260–340), was also a Preterist. Regarding Jacob’s prophecy of the “last days” (LXX “end of days,” Gen 49:1, 10) Eusebius states:

For we must understand by ‘the end of the days’ the end of national existence of the Jews. What, then, did he say they must look for? The cessation of the rule of Judah, the destruction of their whole race, the failing and ceasing of their governors, and the abolition of the dominant kingly position of the tribe of Judah, and the rule and kingdom of Christ, not over Israel but over all nations, according to the word, ‘This is the expectation of the nations.’¹⁰

According to Eusebius, then, the ‘latter days’ describes the period *ending* with the abolition of the Jewish state and polity, which has been replaced by the universal dominion and government of Christ. Concerning Christ’s second advent, Eusebius writes:

⁹ The term ‘Preterism’ is derived from the Latin *praeteritus*, meaning *that which has past*; it describes a school of eschatology that views end-time prophecy as being fulfilled within the lives of the first disciples. Specifically, Preterists view the end-time language and imagery of Daniel, Revelation, and related prophecies as describing events culminating in the persecution under Nero, the series of Roman civil wars that followed Nero’s death, and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 8.5.375

So, then, the prophecy before us says that He comes forth from His place, and will descend upon the high-places of the earth. How are we to understand this? Shall we take it literally of the hills and mountains of Israel, which are the subjects of so many prophecies, Jerusalem itself and Mount Sion, in which our Lord and Saviour spent so much time? If so, their destruction and ruin at the descent of Christ would be prophesied. And it is the fact that after the Saviour's coming and the treatment He received all the hills mentioned were besieged, and utterly desolated. But the rulers of the Jewish people as well, and their kingdom that existed previously, their sacrificial system and the seats of their teachers, here called Mountains metaphorically, are said to be shaken by the descent of the Lord from heaven. And who could deny that this was fulfilled after the time of our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he sees all these things not only shaken, but abolished?¹¹

Hence we see that Eusebius, like Origen before him, was of the opinion that Christ's second coming as an accomplished fact, evidenced by the destruction of the Jewish state. Even Jewish Christians took this view, as witnessed by the 'Moriad.'

The Moriad is a book-length epic poem written by a third century Christian-Jew about the A.D. 70 destruction of the Jewish state. The name is taken from Mount Moriah (Zion) with 'ad' appended as a suffix similar to the 'Iliad' and the 'Aeneid.' The poem was written by Ben Asaph and translated into English from Syriac Hebrew by Anselm Korlstoff in 1857. Book two, entitled "The Advent," describes Christ's coming to visit destruction upon the Jewish nation:

*"And now, O Branch, (on earth called Christ), descend,
And bring the Second Institution to an end.
Sweep from the land the wretched Jewish State,
Their temple burn, and yield them to their fate.
To spirit-baptism they will not aspire,
So let Jerusalem be baptized with fire!"¹²*

This is a clear reference to John the Baptist's eschatological warning in Matt 3:10-12, and shows this third century Christian-Jew understood Christ's second coming as fulfilled in the A.D. 70 fall of Jerusalem.

32- And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:

¹¹ Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 6.13.271; Farrar edition.

¹² Ben Asaph, *The Moriad* (Nashville, 1857), 2:170-75; p. 51

"The name of the Lord" here must be understood as nothing less than *Jesus Christ*. The apostles taught in his name (Acts 4:18, 19); performed miracles in his name (Acts 4:9, 10), and baptized for remission of sins in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). They also proclaimed before the Sanhedrin that murdered the Lord "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for thee is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said,

Isaiah's kingdom prophecy proclaimed that "*out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" (Isa. 2:3). Zechariah said "*In that day thee shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness*" (Zech. 13:1). That fountain is the blood of Christ embodied in the gospel. The fountain of salvation once opened, soon carved channels into the wide world, bring deliverance to all mankind. Jesus thus told the disciples "*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Lk. 24:47). Today, the fountain has become a measureless ocean; Christianity has filled the earth. "*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Hab. 2:14).

and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Although the known world received the gospel, only a remnant of the Jews obeyed: "*Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved*" (Rom. 9:27-30). This is not because God actively prevented their believing; to the contrary, the gospel call is for all; God would have *all men* to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth; God commands *all men* to everywhere to repent and to believe the gospel (Acts 17:30; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). However, the gospel is repugnant to natural man—to repent from sin; to deny ourselves; to mortify the lusts of the flesh; to submit to the governance of God over our lives; to put God's will before our own; to suffer the rejection and shame of naming Jesus as Lord—all this and countless more inherent in the Christian life is repugnant to the natural man, whose first instincts are to follow the carnal appetites and impulses of his mind. Most follow the broad road to destruction; only a remnant of any generation take the straight gate and narrow way to salvation. The word of God is a discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart; those who have the world in their hearts will not obey the gospel; those that have put the world behind them will believe and obey. The choice is entirely our own.

The Consummation of the Pre-Messianic Age and the Parousia of Christ

Excerpts from Biblical Apocalypics

by

Milton S. Terry

(A.D. 1898)

It remains to notice a few things peculiar to Matthew's report of this discourse of Jesus. According to his gospel the form of the disciples' question was, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming (parousia) and of the consummation of the age (sunteleia tou aionos)?" They seem to have already inferred or assumed that his coming and the consummation of the age would be connected in some way with the desolation of the temple. The closing words of chap. xxiii were of a nature to imply all this [1] If it were not to be, and Jesus knew it, it is inconceivable that he should have confirmed them in such a belief as the language of Matt. xxiv was certainly adapted to do. What significance, then, are we to attach to the words coming, and consummation of the age?

The words parousia, commonly translated coming, is so constantly associate, in current dogmatics, with the ultimate goal of human history, that ordinary readers lose sight of its simple meaning in New Testament usage. The word means presence as opposed to absence. For example, we read in Phil. ii,12, "Sop then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (en te parousia mou) only, but now much more in my absence (en te apousia mou), work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But as the personal presence of any one implies a previous coming, so this word is not improperly rendered coming in many passages, and the verb erchomai, to come, is often employed to denote the appearance and kingdom of Christ. [2] Bt to assume that this coming or presence of Christ must needs be spectacular in any physical sense, a literal display of his person in the atmosphere of this earth, is to involve the doctrine in

great confusion. Why must the coming of the Son of man on the clouds to execute judgment on that

generation be understood or explained in any other way than we explain Jehovah's "riding upon a swift cloud," and coming to execute judgment on Egypt, as prophesied in Isa. xix,1? Whatever the real nature of the parousia, as contemplated in this prophetic discourse, our Lord unmistakably associates it with [p. 245] the destruction of the temple and city, which he represents as the signal termination of the pre-Messianic age. The coming on clouds, the darkening of the heavens, the collapse of the elements, are, as we have shown above, familiar forms of apocalyptic language, appropriated from the Hebrew prophets. [3]

That other expression in Matthew, "the consummation of the age," is a phrase that has been much abused and widely misunderstood. The common translation, "end of the world," has been a delusion to many readers of the English Bible. It has helped to perpetuate the unscriptural notion that the coming and kingdom of Christ are not facts of the past, present, and future, but of the future only. The fundamental and distinguishing doctrine of all branches of the "Adventists," so-called, is that the coming of the Son of man to set up his kingdom is this world is solely an event of the future. Christ has as yet no kingdom among men! Even the parables of our Lord, illustrative of the spiritual character of the kingdom, are forced to harmonize with the concept of a spectacular advent and a political organization. [4] Those who maintain the doctrine, and, indeed, not a few who oppose it, fall into error and inconsistency by failing to apprehend the true meaning of the phrase "the end of the age."

For, first of all, they do not determine clearly what age (aion) is contemplated in such a text as Matt. xxiv,3. They quite generally assume that the period of the Gospel dispensation is meant. But nothing is more familiar in the Jewish terminology of our Lord's time than the current phrases this age and the age to come. The period which preceded the coming of the Messiah [p. 246] was spoken of as this age; that which followed his coming was the age to come.[5] It is not important to consider what various and often contradictory notions the rabbins associated with the age to come. Their notions were as various as those concerning the character of the Messiah himself. But by this age they meant and could mean nothing else than the current period in which they were living, the then present age. The question of the disciples, as recorded, could therefore only refer to the pre-Messianic age, and its consummation was, as we have seen, associated in their thought with the overthrow of the temple. But even were it admitted that their notion of the "consummation of the age" was erroneous, the teaching of Jesus was emphatic beyond all rational question that that generation should not pass away before all those things of which they inquired should be fulfilled.

The age to come, the Messianic time, would accordingly be the period that would follow immediately after the termination of the pre-Messianic age. That time had not yet come when Jesus spoke. According to the whole trend of New Testament teaching that age and the Messianic kingdom were near or at hand. Christ's ministry fell in the last days of an aion. The gospel of his kingdom must be firmly established in the world before the end of that age. The gospel of his kingdom must be firmly established in the world before the end of that age. So we read, in Heb. ix, 26: "Now, once, at the end of the ages (epi sunteleia ton aionon) hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Also in Heb. i, 1, it is written: "God...hath at the last of these days spoken unto us in his Son." Similarly Peter (1 Pet. i, 20) speaks of Christ as "foreknown before the foundation of the world, but manifested at the end of the times for your sake." Paul, too, speaks of himself as living near the consummation of an age: "These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x,11) The ministry both of Jesus and his disciples must, therefore, be recognized as occurring in the latter days of an aion, or near the end of the pre-Messianic age. The New Testament writers, as well as Jesus, are clear on this point. They never represent themselves as already entered upon the first days, or the beginning of the age, but rather in the last days.

If, now, we ask with the disciples, WHEN shall these things be? or at what point are we to recognize the end

of the pre-Messianic age? we are to find the answer in the eschatological discourse of [p. 248] Jesus, and at some point before that generation passed away. "The ends of the ages" may have a definite point of contact and transition from one age to another. The coming age may, like the morning twilight, cast its beams into the foregoing night, and so the preceding age may partake in its last days of many things which belong to the age to come. [6] But such facts do not affect the question of the signal crisis which may conspicuously mark the end of one age and the opening of another. Was there such a crisis between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, that we can point to it and say, "That was preeminently and conspicuously an event which marked an epoch in the history of both Judaism and Christianity?"

Some writers find such a crisis or end in the crucifixion of Jesus, and the moment when he said, "It is finished." (tetelestai). Others say it was at the resurrection; some few designate the ascension; but many have taught that the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the coming of Christ in his kingdom, the end of the old and the beginning of the new age. To all of these theories there are two insuperable objections: (1) They are irreconcilable with the statement of Jesus that the Gospel must first be preached "in all the habitable earth" (oikoumene), and (2), long after the day of Pentecost, the apostles speak of their work as taking place in the last days, or near the end of the age.

Is it not strange that any careful student of our Lord's teaching should fail to understand his answer to this very question? The disciples asked, definitely, WHEN shall it be? And Jesus proceeded to foretell a variety of things which they would live to see - all preliminary to the end. He foretold the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, and an intelligible sign by which they might know the imminence of the final catastrophe of Judaism. And having told them of all these things, and of his own coming in the clouds and its glorious significance, he added: "When ye see these things coming to pass, know that it is nigh, at the door. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished." The ruin of the temple was, accordingly, the crisis which marked the end of the pre-Messianic age. [p. 249]

Matthew's gospel appends to the eschatological discourse three parables of admonition, which occupy the whole of the twenty-fifth chapter. The parable of the ten virgins and the picture of the judgment are peculiar to this gospel, but the parable of the talents appears to be in substance identical with that of the pounds (mnas, minas) in Luke xix, 11-27. The three parables as they stand in Matthew, whether originally uttered in this connection or not, are every way

appropriate to the context. They are admonitions to watch and be ready for the coming of the Lord, and are not essentially different from the counsels already noticed in the fourth section of the preceding discourse (for example, Matt. xxiv, 32-51). The lesson of the parable of the virgins is, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." The great lesson of the parable of the talents is that the Lord's servants have also something more to do than merely to watch. They must be diligently employed in the service and interests of their owner during his temporary absence from them, whether the time be long or short. There is, then, no difficulty as to the import of these parables, and no question as to their relevancy to the subject of which Jesus spoke on the Mount of Olives.

Greater difficulty is supposed to attach to the sublime picture of Judgment recorded in Matt. xxv.31-46, and most expositors have thought that the picture must needs refer to a general and formal judgment of all nations of men at the conclusion of human history. But the language of Matthew is explicit in referring it to the time "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him," and when "he shall sit on the throne of his glory." There would be obvious inconsistency in making this coming of the Son of man different from that of Matt. xxiv, 30, and xvi, 27,28. How, then, it is asked, can this sublime ideal be brought within the time-limits of the prophecy of Matt. xxiv?

The difficulties which are here suggested arise either from the assumptions of a literalizing exegesis or from a failure to keep in mind that the coming and kingdom of Christ are in their nature a process, which has definite historical beginning, but stretches on indefinitely into future ages of ages. Consequently, while most of the things enumerated in the foregoing discourse had fulfillment in the fall of Judaism and the beginning of Christianity, other things, from their very nature, are such as must needs be of repeated or continual occurrence. Such especially is the execution of judgment, a function of every reigning king. The scriptural doctrine of Messiah's reign is not that God, the father Almighty, vacates his throne at the accession of Christ. Neither the concept of Psalm ii, [p. 250] 7-9, nor Psalm cx, nor Dan. vii, 13,14, implies that the eternal God is any less the ruler and sovereign of the world after he sets his anointed Son at his right hand, and "gives him dominion and glory and a kingdom." From thence onward he judges the world by Jesus Christ, and the sublime picture of Matt. xxv, 31-46, is a parable of this great fact. Hence the force and propriety of the words: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." But how long he shall continue to sit thus on his glorious throne of

judgment - how long "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" - is not a matter of specific revelation. The ideal of judgment presented in Matt. xxv, 31-46, is therefore no single event, like the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not to be explained literally as a formal assize not to open until the end of human history on earth. It is, rather, a most impressive parabolic picture of the age-long administration of Jesus Christ, from the hour of the signal overthrow of Jerusalem until "he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father" (1 Cor. xv, 24). the anointed King of glory is judge of the living as well as of the dead, and it is a grave error to represent "the day of the Lord" or "the day of judgment" as something deferred to the end of time. We have shown over and over again in the preceding portions of this volume that "the great and terrible day of the Lord " is a prophetic phrase of remarkable fullness of meaning. The Old Testament doctrine is that "the kingdom is Jehovah's, and he is ruler among the nations" (Psalm xxii, 28). "Say ye among the nations, Jehovah reigneth; he shall judge the peoples with equity. he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his truth" (Psalm xcvi, 10-13. The day of judgment for any wicked nation, city, or individual is the time when the penal visitation comes; and the judgment of God's saints is manifest in every signal event which magnifies goodness and condemns iniquity.[7] [p. 251]

But this divine administration of the world, which in the Hebrew Scriptures is the work of Jehovah, is portrayed in Dan. vii, 13,14, and represented in the New Testament as committed unto Christ. The Father has given him "authority to execute judgment because he is Son of man" (John v, 27). And the Son of man came, in accord with the apocalyptic picture of Dan. vii, 13, and Matt. xxiv, 30, and executed judgment upon Jerusalem, guilty of "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Able the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah" (Matt. xxiii, 35,36). That was the first conspicuous exhibition of his judicial power, and it marked the crisis and end of the pre-Messianic age. Christ is, therefore, now King and Judge; but all things are not yet subjected unto him, and he must reign until he shall have put all things in subjection under his feet. And this no other than the decree,

Jehovah has said to me, My Son art thou; I have this day begotten thee. Ask from me, and I will give nations for thine inheritance, And for thy possession the ends of the earth Psalm ii, 7,8.

We conclude, then, that the additions peculiar to Matthew's version of our Lord's discourse on the Mount of Olives contain nothing inappropriate to the

occasion, and nothing inconsistent with the definite time-limit of the prophecy and the analogy of New Testament eschatology. [p. 252]

Notes

(Editor's note: the following notes appeared at the foot of the page where they are cited and should be referenced accordingly.)

[1] "the disciples assume as a matter of course," says Meyer, "that immediately after the destruction in question the Lord will appear, in accordance with what is said in xxiii, 39, for the purpose of setting up his kingdom, and that with this the current (the pre-Messianic) era of the world's history will come to an end." - Critical and Exegetical Handbook on Matthew, in loco.

[2] Comp. Matt xvi, 27,28; xxiv, 30; xxv, 31; John xiv, 3; Rev. 1, 7; xxii, 7.

[3] Acts i, 11, is often cited to show that Christ's coming must needs be spectacular, "in like manner as ye beheld him going into the heaven." But (1) in the only other three places where on tropon, what manner, occurs, it points to a general concept rather than the particular form of its actuality. Thus, in Acts vii, 28, it is not some particular manner in which Moses killed the Egyptian that is notable, but rather the certain fact of it. In 2 Tim. iii, 8, it is likewise the fact of strenuous position in Matt. xxiii, 37, and Luke xiii, 34, it is the general thought of protection rather than the visible manner of a mother bird that is intended. Again (2), if Jesus did not come in that generation, and immediately after the great tribulation that attended the fall of Jerusalem, his words in Matt. xvi, 27,28, xxiv, 29, and parallel passages are in the highest degree misleading. (3) To make the one statement of the angel in Acts i, 11, override all the saying of Jesus on the same subject and control their meaning is a very one-sided method of biblical interpretation. but all the angel's words necessarily mean is that as Jesus has ascended into heaven so he will come from heaven. And this main thought agrees with the language of Jesus and the prophets.

[4] See, for example, the excursus of Dr. E.R. Craven on the Basileia in the American edition of Lange's Commentary on the Revelation of John, pp. 93-100.

[5] See Schurer, History of Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, English translation, vol. ii, p. 177; Schoettgen, Horae Hebraicae, i., 1153-1158.

[6] And so we should note that many things which Jesus spoke by way of counsel and admonition are as

applicable to one period as another. The exhortation to watch, which having a special historical motive and force with the disciples, has its abiding lesson as one of the things ever incumbent upon the servants of the heavenly King. So many particular exhortation and counsels of Old Testament prophets have permanent value. It is in this way that the scriptures of both Testaments are profitable for instruction in righteousness.

[7] We need not assume to say how far and in what manner Christ executes his judgments or gathers his elect by the ministry of angels. He who "makes the clouds his chariot, who walks upon the wings of the wind, making his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire" (Psalm civ, 3,4; comp. Heb 1, 7), is present in all the great crises of this world's history, and he makes his angels ministering spirits to serve such as are to inherit salvation (Heb. 1,14). Our Lord represented Lazarus as carried away (apevexthenai) by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke xvi, 22). But there is no warrant in Scripture for the notion that when the angels are sent forth on missions of mercy or of judgment their operations must needs be visible to mortal eyes. When the impious Herod Agrippa allowed himself to be honored as a god, "immediately an angel of God smote him, and, becoming eaten of worms, he breathed out his spirit" (Acts xii, 22,23). Human eyes saw nothing but the curse of a foul disease, or a terrible plague; but Scripture sees back of it the potent ministry of a destroying angel (comp. Exod. xii, 23; 2 Sam. xxiv, 16). So the visible effects of divine judgment were terribly manifest in the unparalleled miseries of Jerusalem. The righteous blood of unnumbered martyrs was visited upon that generation (Matt. xxiii, 35,36); and where the Jewish historian saw and made record of appalling tribulation and woe the word of prophecy discerned a "revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of his power [personal or natural] in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. 1, 7,8). In like manner the King of glory is continually judging and reigning among the nations, and he will not cease from his age-long work until " he shall have abolished all rule and authority and power" (1 Cor. . xv, 24).same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Jewish Captives in the Imperial City

Arch of Titus and Colosseum Detail Destruction of Jerusalem Temple

Biblical Archaeology Review

Ancient Rome was the superpower of its day. Yet, when the Romans conquered the tiny province of Judea and quashed the First Jewish Revolt in 70 C.E., it was actually a pretty big deal.

BAR readers are familiar with the Judea Capta coins issued by the emperors to celebrate the Roman victory over the Jews, but new projects are shining a light on some of Rome's most famous monuments and the important role of the defeated Jews in the distant city.

Restoration work was set to begin in December on the iconic Colosseum, Rome's first all-stone amphitheater, which could seat upwards of 50,000 spectators for its gladiatorial bouts, animal hunts and mock naval battles. The work, expected to conclude in mid-2015, will include the cleaning and restoration of the familiar arcaded façade, the creation of a services center, and the restoration of numerous galleries and underground spaces.



The Colosseum has been so called since at least the eighth century C.E., in reference to a colossal statue of the notorious emperor Nero that stood nearby. In fact, the original name of the structure was the Flavian Amphitheater, after the emperors of the Flavian dynasty who built it in the late first century C.E.—Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. (The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus took the emperor's family name when he came under the patronage of Vespasian.)

As demonstrated in a **BAR** article by Louis H. Feldman, a hidden inscription on the Colosseum itself suggests that the construction of the amphitheater was financed by the plundered booty from the Jewish

Revolt. Vespasian faced a serious deficit when he became emperor, but the spoils of war from Judea—the riches of the Temple treasury, the golden vessels from the Temple, the seized personal treasures of Jewish citizens and the sale of the Jewish captives themselves—provided enormous wealth for the emperor and the plundering army commanded by his son Titus. Thus did the conquest of Judea fund the most recognizable structure of imperial Rome.

These same plundered spoils of Judea are depicted prominently on another monument that still stands in Rome, which is the focus of exciting new research. The marble Arch of Titus was built in 81 C.E. by the emperor Domitian to commemorate the victory and triumphal parade of his brother Titus, the conquering army general, and Emperor Vespasian's son and successor. A recent project of the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies (in partnership with the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma) undertook a new study of the main relief panels on the arch, which show the triumphal parade of 71 C.E. and the deification of Titus.



In the most famous of the panels, Roman soldiers carry the Jerusalem Temple spoils on parade, including the menorah, the showbread table and trumpets, which were then deposited in Rome's Temple of Peace. This

panel and the others were recently subjected to high-resolution three-dimensional scans, resulting in stunningly crisp, high-quality images of the relief that are accurate within less than a millimeter and are free from the distracting visual distortions of the marble's age and discoloration.



The menorah was also tested for trace paint colors. The resulting discovery of yellow ochre on its arms and base is consistent with Biblical and first-century descriptions of the Temple's golden menorah. In the next phase of the project, the team will test for paint traces on the rest of the arch.

According to project director Steven Fine of Yeshiva University, they plan to create a full-size three-dimensional color model of the arch's menorah panel for display at the university museum in 2014.

Great Preterist Quotes

John Samuel Thompson (1823) "This prophecy fixes the time of Christ's coming before the destruction of the second temple, which by the Romans under Vespasian, was levelled with the ground." (Prophecy Fulfilled Or Destruction of Jerusalem and Dispersion of the Jewish People at the Second Coming of Christ: Delineated in a Discourse from 2 Thess. I. 6,10, Delivered at Rochester, N.Y., Nov. 24th, 1823)

N.T. Wright - "Paul here reflects the early Christian tradition, going back to Jesus himself, according to which Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and according to

which that destruction was to be interpreted as the wrath of God against his sinful people. In the same Thessalonian correspondence, Paul asserted that the wrath of God had indeed come upon them 'to the uttermost' (1 Thess.2:16.) It is this awareness of an imminent end to the way the Jewish world had looked for so long, rather than an imminent end to the space-time universe, that drove Paul on his mission with such urgency. From his own point of view he lived in an odd interim period: judgment had been passed on Jerusalem, but not yet executed. There was a breathing space, a 'little time' in which people could repent, and in which the message of Jesus could spread to Gentiles as well as Jews (though it always remained, for Paul, 'to the Jew first'). When Jerusalem fell, Jews on the one hand would undoubtedly blame those who had reneged on their Jewish responsibilities, including those Jewish Christians who, like Paul, had been enjoying fellowship with pagans and regarding it as the Kingdom of God and the true expression of the covenant God made with Abraham." (Jerusalem in the New Testament, p 11)

F.F. Bruce on Hebrews 9:11 - But now Christ has appeared as high priest of the good things which have come to pass // "The majority reading is "the good things that are to come", but the weight of the evidence favors "the good things that have come" (so P.46 B D* 1611 1739 2005 with the Syriac versions, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Jerusalem). "But now the time of reformation has arrived; what used to be "the good things to come" are now "the good things that have come" (RSV), "the good things already in being" (NEB). "For Christ has appeared, and in him the shadows have given way to the perfect and abiding reality. And his appearance is properly announced with a triumphant trumpet-flourish; his entrance into the presence of God is not a day of soul-affliction and fast, like the Day of Atonement under the old legislation, but a day of gladness and son, the day when Christians celebrate the accession of their Priest-King. "The combination of the oldest Greek and Latin with the Syriac evidence is in itself almost irresistible" in support of genomenon rather than mellonton (G. Zuntz, the Text of the Epistles [London, 1953, p. 119); the reading mellonton is probably due to the influence of 10:1. See p. 235." (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 211)" (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p.211)