



The Sword & The Plow

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Revelation: A Tale of Two Cities *An internal study of the Apocalypse*

by
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Part I.

I still remember clearly when my friend Keith More first mentioned the unfamiliar idea that the book of Revelation was about the destruction of Jerusalem. I had always been told Revelation was about Rome in 96 AD, and Jerusalem in 70 AD didn't ring any bells for me.

External Dating 96 The argument I'd learned for a later date (96AD) was based on external evidence, and while I was persuaded, I felt a little challenged by my friend Keith, because, well to be honest, I'd never actually looked at the *internal* evidence of Revelation. So at first hearing I rejected Jerusalem simply because I knew nothing about it - we humans seem to have

an almost supernatural fear of the *un-familiar* – but later I overcame my initial mental-inertia and turned a page of the Greek bible to check it out.

Greek study of polis Here's what I found: the word *city* (Greek *polis*) occurs twenty-eight times in the book of Revelation. Of these *polis* occurs twenty-seven times in the singular. (Only Rev.16:19 is in the plural). Of these singular occurrences the term *polis* refers to the *holy city New Jerusalem* thirteen times, and fourteen times *polis* refers to '*Babylon*,' the ill-named '*holy*' harlot city. Here are the occurrences of *polis* in the Apocalypse.

Chart: The twenty-seven occurrences of polis (city) in Revelation

New Jerusalem in Revelation	Harlot city in Revelation
3:12 name of city of my God Ch 21-22 21:2 I John saw the holy city New Jerusalem 21:10 showed me great city holy Jerusalem 21:14 wall of the city 21:15 measured the city 21:16 city lies foursquare; measured city with reed 21:18 city of pure gold 21:19 foundations of the wall of the city 21:21 streets` of city pure gold	Ch 11-20 11:2 and the holy city will they tread 11:8 and the street of the great city 11:13 tenth part of city fell 14:8 Babylon is fallen great city 14:20 trodden without the city 16:19 great city divided into three parts 17:18 woman [Babylon] is that great city 18:10 Alas great city Babylon, mighty city 18:16 Alas great city Babylon

21:23 city needs no sun 22:14 through gates into city 22:19 in and out of the holy city	18:18 What city is like unto this great city 18:10 Great city Babylon thrown down 20:9 armies compassed camp of saints, the beloved city
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The Importance of Identity Almost ten chapters of the Apocalypse are taken up with the destruction of the doomed holy-city *Sodom/ Egypt / Babylon*. In contrast only the final two chapters deal with its sister-city alter-ego, New Jerusalem.

The observation is useful because it means in the context of the book the greatest discussion grows out of the harlot city. ***The identity of the doomed holy-harlot city Babylon was the essential key to locating the context of the book.*** Who is the harlot? Answer this question and the scene is set for understanding the book. A host of confusing theories abound. I believe that if God had wanted to say something to humanity He wouldn't just whisper in the ears of erudite scholars schooled in the mystical arts of arcane knowledge. I was convinced there was an answer, and that if I looked candidly enough in the scriptures themselves the solution would present itself. I began by emptying my mind and asking questions:-

Why was the harlot city called the 'holy city', 'beloved city', 'camp of the saints', and why did it have the 'temple of God and the altar,' and an 'outercourt given to the nations', 'where their Lord was crucified?' Weird: this didn't sound like Rome or Babylon to me.

The Two Cities However it was this strange tension between *holy city and harlot city* that most intrigued me. Why was the *holy city* to be *trodden underfoot for forty-two months?* (Forty-two months equals three and a half years, twelve hundred and sixty days, time, times and half a time). This sounded like Jerusalem.

The end of temple A.D. 70 Jerusalem was surrounded by the Roman army of Titus and sacked in three I knew from a scant reading of Jewish history, (Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*) and half years, (66AD to 70 AD) but I'd never really made anything of this connection before. More significantly though, other parallels in the gospels emerged. The words of Revelation 11:2 strangely echoed those of Luke in Jesus' *Jerusalem prophecy* about forty years before:

..and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and they will be led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled. Lk 21:24

This passage in Luke's *Jerusalem prophecy* seemed a pretty near fit between biblical prophecy and events *shortly to come to pass* in Revelation forty years later. (In 70 AD).

Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles, and they will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months. Rev 11:2

Jerusalem the Holy City Check a concordance and you'll find Jerusalem is always the *holy city* (Mtt 4:5 Satan took Jesus to the Jerusalem temple in the *holy city*. Mtt 27:53 In Jerusalem, the *holy city*, the dead appeared.). This also ticked off with Matthew 23-24 when Jesus spoke about the *end of the Jerusalem temple and the end of the age* in His own generation: 'Truly I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.' (Mtt 23:36) and also in Mtt 24:34 'Truly I say unto you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.'

Only to Jerusalem Jerusalem was certainly the *holy city* of the bible: this is just a plain fact. Rome was never mentioned by any bible author as the *holy city*. That was unthinkable. The sacred term *holy city* was only ever applied to Jerusalem by the ancient prophets, and Revelation was plainly the most prophetic book in all scripture.

Harlot to be Trampled Other things made me think. *The temple of God*, was located in the harlot city, which was consistent with Jerusalem, as was the idea that it was about to be *trampled underfoot*: which historically occurred in a time frame of three and a half years, which tied in with the same period of 1260 days or forty-two months.

Jerusalem a Harlot The idea of Jerusalem as the *harlot city* was also echoed by passages like Isaiah 1:21; *how the faithful city has become a harlot?* and Isaiah 1:10 where Jerusalem is called

Sodom. I knew a good theory should also answer more and more facts, so I wondered what would happen when I considered other facts like time and place?

Harlot's Demise: Time In time Jerusalem answers the generational span in Matthew 23 and 24 consistently with Revelation's time span of: '*shortly to come to pass*' '*quickly*' '**shortly.**' '*every eye shall see Him, even those that pierced Him,*' the destruction of the Mosaic temple and the end of the Mosaic age. (Matt 24:1-3).

This also explains Daniel ch. 9 So broadly this explanation combined more stuff: the books of Matthew, Luke and Revelation together with the more ancient prophets like Isaiah and Daniel's seventy week prophecy in both time and place:

where the end of the holy city is decreed, to seal up vision and prophecy and anoint the most holy pace; war and desolations have been determined...but after 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off, in the middle of the week an end will be put to sacrifice. Dan 24-27 (paraphrased)

Greater Simplicity There still remained to my mind some reservations, like how to explain the description of a second coming in the first century, and what the context of Jerusalem has to do with the great judgment and the resurrection? I did not know at this stage: that could wait a little, but there was one thing I thought was pretty neat. If Revelation can be explained by first century Jerusalem, then it simplifies the endtime considerably. For example, a first century view:

1. eliminates the need to add a theoretical 2000 years
2. eliminates the idea of a supposed delay. "*O Jesus has just been 'delayed' for 2000 years that's all.*" (I never felt comfortable mumbling this excuse).
3. eliminates the need to add invisible gaps between verses and chapters.
4. eliminates the need to divide chapters without facts
5. eliminates the need to invent terms like 'personally' 'visibly' and 'physically' (none of which occur in the Bible)

6. eliminates the need to deny passages like Heb 10:37 '*He shall come and not delay.*' "All things will come upon this generation.' (Mtt 23:36)

7. eliminates the need to invent 'multiple second comings'.

No facts for Futurism None of these seven futurist arguments have any basis in observable. Biblical fact: They all follow from futurism's historical ignorance of first century facts and a supposition of literalism. But I still had doubts because I had this lingering picture in my head of Jesus coming back in the clouds riding a horse and wearing a white robe.

Issue Decided by Observation A first century Jerusalem-harlot raised many new problems to solve. The thing I liked about a Preterist (past) view that it made sense of more and more facts **by observation**, and not by the opinions of scholars. I felt really comfortable seeing the connections with my own eyes. The problems I decided to defer until later, but first things first. How far had I come?

True facts like fixed Stars To my mind the safest course in life is to trust known facts: they are like fixed stars in the night sky. Facts are eternal. To the captain of a sailing ship the stars are his guideposts. The ship leaves the dock and the security of land to venture over wide oceans, the destination is far off and unseen. During the voyage the captain must navigate in the dark over unmarked shoals and reefs, at other times plunging madly through white caps breaking over the bows in sprays of foam. Every voyage has risks and danger. The navigator knows he cannot control the sea, and does not care much that he cannot see land, but he surely makes his daily sightings with care. Safe landfall comes when navigation is correct at each point of the way. It is simple logic. The workings are everything. If the observations and reasoning are correct, the correct outcome, the destination will appear. I leave it to the reader to compare their observations and sightings in scripture with the following workings of my own navigation. In Part II some aids to study will be considered.

End of Part I

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Covenantal Heavens & Earth

The fast-lane to

Universalism (Bad)

Max King

“The writer of the Book of Hebrews referred to this transformation as the shaking of **heaven and earth**, which signified the removing of the temporal **Old Covenant world that was created at Mount Sinai** (Hebrews 12:26-27)...The destruction of Jerusalem and the earthly temple in A.D. 70 provides the context for the passing of the old heaven and earth...He sums up the new creation in terms of the coming of the kingdom of God in power by writing, “since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28). Max R. King, *Israel's New Heaven and Earth*, Mar 26, 2005

*Comment: Here we see King's basic view that the "heavens and earth" are covenantal; that they symbolize the system of the Old and New covenants respectively. But as these are universal, and as the wicked are in the new heavens and earth in Revelation (22:15), all men are necessarily justified. Hence, King's covenantal model leads to Universalism. Read now the quotes of King's son, Tim, and Kevin Beck, president of King's Presence Ministries and one will see the fruit these basic misconceptions have born. **The real significance of the "heavens and earth" in prophecy is national and political, not covenantal.** The dissolution of the elements always spoke to times of divine judgment upon men and nations. (See Isa. 13, 34) They NEVER had any thing to do specifically with the Old Testament.*

Tim King

“Simply stated, man is changed because his world changed. Man is reconciled to God

because he no longer lives under the rule of sin and death as determined by the Mosaic world. Through the gift of Christ he dwells in a world of righteousness and life. The issue is cosmic and corporate, not individual and limited.” Tim King, *Comprehensive Grace*, 2005

Comment: This quote provides solid evidence of the connection between Covenant Eschatology, the Corporate Body view, and Universalism. Mankind was universally condemned by the Mosaic law, and was corporately justified by its annulment. Hence, according to King, man is saved by the removal of law, rather than the addition of grace. Since the law was removed for all men, all men are necessarily justified. We see also that the basic misconception of a covenantal “heavens and earth” lead to Universalism; the covenantal “cosmos” of the Old Testament has been replaced (per King) with a new heavens and earth in which all are justified.

Kevin Beck

“There’s no sin and no sin-related death in a world that has the New Jerusalem in it’s midst.” Kevin Beck, *The Creation of Jerusalem*, Feb, 08

Comment: Here we have a basic denial of one of scripture’s most basic facts: Sin. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). Notice also that justification is couched in terms of the “world.” This is because under the covenantal heavens and earth model, all men were condemned by the law of Moses, and all men justified by its removal.

Sir Isaac Newton

Heavens & Earth

National and Political (Good)

"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)

Comment: Here we have a correct statement of the symbolic meaning behind the "heavens and earth." They are symbols for nations and governments, *not* the Old or New Testaments. If the heavens and earth put down at Christ's coming were the throne and dominions of Nero Caesar, the Sanhedrin and rulers of the Jews, together with other temporal powers who rejected the gospel and persecuted the church, then ***the new heavens are earth are best understood as the government of Christ, ruling the nations in righteousness with an iron rod.***

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Bishop John Lightfoot on
Romans 8:19-23

“The Whole Creation Groaneth and Travaileth”

“At the nineteenth verse of chap. viii, he beings upon the second mystery that he hath to treat upon, - the calling of the Gentiles; whom he calls *πασα κτισις* ‘the whole creation’ or ‘every creature:’ by which title they also are called, Mark xvi. 15, Col. 1.23: and he shows, how they were subject to vanity of idolatry, and the delusions of the devil; but must, in time, be delivered from this bondage, for which deliverance they now groaned: and not they only, but they of the Jews also, which had received the first-fruits of the Spirit, longed for their coming in, waiting for the adoption, - that is, the redemption of their whole body: for the church of the Jews was but the childlike body; and, accordingly, their ordinances were according to the childlike age of the church: but the stature of the fulness of Christ’s mystical body, was in the bringing in of the Gentiles. Being to handle this great point of the calling of the Gentiles, and rejection of the Jews, he begins at the bottom, at the great doctrine of predestination, which he handles from ver. 29 of chap. viii to chap. ix. 24: and then he falls upon the other; - that Israel stumbled at Messias and fell, seeking indeed after righteousness, but not his, but their own; and that they are cast away, but not all; a remnant to be saved, that belonged to the election of grace. As it was in the time when the world was heathen, some of them that belonged to the election, came in and were proselyted to the worship of the true God; so some of these, while all the rest of their nation lie in unbelief. And in this unbelief must they lie, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and then all God’s Israel is completed.”

Comment: Bishop Lightfoot here argues that the “whole creation” of Rom. 8:19-23 refers to or embraces and includes the Gentiles, finding in Mk. 16:15 and Col. 1:23 language of similar meaning and import. He finds reference to the Jews by the nomination “we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit.” The Jews were the first-fruits; the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation, unto the Jew first and also the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). John specifically calls the Jews the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb in Rev. 14:4;

(cf. 7:1-8; Jm. 1:18; Eph. 1:12). Lightfoot sees “all Israel” (“and so all Israel shall be saved,” Rom. 11:26) in reference to the whole body of believers in Christ, not ethnic Jews as is incorrectly supposed by some. Israel is defined by the obedience of faith, not ethnicity; hence, it is not ethnic Jews that are the seed of Israel, but those who receive the gospel verity. Hence, it is in the inclusion of men from every race and people that “all Israel” is saved; for there is no respect of persons with the Lord, “but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

¹ John Lightfoot, *Harmony of the New Testament, The Whole Works*, Vol. III, pl. 272, 273

Calvin the Prophet

(Editor’s note: A recent trip to Walmart and the display of scantily clad, tattooed women reminded me of Calvin’s perspicuity and the verity of his prophetic powers)

“So if women are thus permitted to have their head uncovered and to show their hair, they will eventually be allowed to expose their entire breasts, and they will come to make their exhibitions as if it were a tavern show; they will become so brazen that modesty and shame will be no more; in short they will forget the duty of nature...So, when it is permissible for the women to uncover their heads, one will say, ‘Well, what harm is uncovering the stomach also?’ And then after that one will plead [for] something else: ‘Now if the women go bareheaded, why not also [bare] this and [bare] that?’ Then the men, for their part, will break loose too. In short, there will be no decency left, unless people contain themselves and respect what is proper and fitting, so as not to go headlong overboard.” *Seth Skoinitsky Translation, Men, Women, and Order in the Church: Three Sermons by John Calvin (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1992), pp. 12, 13*

Bishop John Lightfoot

Exercitations upon the Gospel of St. Matthew

Chapter 24

1. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

[*To shew him the buildings of the Temple.*] "He that never saw the Temple of Herod never saw a fine building. What was it built of? Rabba saith, Of white and green marble. But some say, Of white, green, and spotted marble. He made the laver to sink and to rise" (that is, the walls were built winding in and out, or indented after the manner of waves), "being thus fitted to receive the plaster, which he intended to lay on; but the Rabbins said to him, 'O let it continue, for it is very beautiful to behold: for it is like the waves of the sea': and Bava Ben Buta made it so," &c. See there the story of Bava Ben Buta and Herod consulting about the rebuilding of the temple.

2. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

[*There shall not be left one stone upon another.*] The Talmudic Chronicles bear witness also to this saying, "On the ninth day of the month Ab the city of Jerusalem was ploughed up"; which Maimonides delivereth more at large: "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom, ploughed up the Temple, and the places about it, that that saying might be fulfilled, 'Sion shall be ploughed as a field.'" This Turnus Rufus, of great fame and infamy among the Jewish writers, without doubt is the same with Terentius Rufus, of whom Josephus speaks, *Rufus was left general of the army by Titus*; with commission, as it is probable, and as the Jews suppose, to destroy the city and Temple. Concerning which matter, thus again Josephus in the place before

quoted, *The emperor commanded them to dig up the whole city and the Temple.* And a little after, "*Thus those that digged it up laid all level, that it should never be inhabited, to be a witness to such as should come thither.*"

3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

[*And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*] What the apostles intended by these words is more clearly conceived by considering the opinion of that people concerning the times of the Messias. We will pick out this in a few words from Babylonian *Sanhedrin*.

"The tradition of the school of Elias: The righteous, whom the Holy Blessed God will raise up from the dead, shall not return again to their dust; as it is said, 'Whosoever shall be left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem shall be called holy, every one being written in the book of life.' As the Holy (God) liveth for ever, so they also shall live for ever. But if it be objected, What shall the righteous do in those years in which the Holy God will renew his world, as it is said, 'The Lord only shall be exalted in that day?' the answer is, That God will give them wings like an eagle, and they shall swim (or float) upon the face of the waters." Where the Gloss says thus; "The righteous, whom the Lord shall raise from the dead in the days of the Messiah, when they are restored to life, shall not again return to their dust, neither in the days of the Messiah, nor in the following age: but their flesh shall remain upon them till they return and live *to eternity*." And in those years, when God shall renew his

world (or age), *this world shall be wasted for a thousand years*; were, then, shall those righteous men be in those years, when they shall not be buried in the earth?" To this you may also lay that very common phrase, *the world to come*; whereby is signified *the days of the Messiah*: of which we spoke a little at the thirty-second verse of the twelfth chapter: "If he shall obtain (*the favour*) to see the world to come, that is, the exaltation of Israel," namely, in the days of Messiah. "The Holy Blessed God saith to Israel, In this world you are afraid of transgressions; but in the world to come, when there shall be no evil affection, you shall be concerned only for the good which is laid up for you; as it is said, 'After this the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king,'" &c.; which clearly relate to the time of the Messiah. Again, "Saith the Holy Blessed God to Israel, 'In this world, because my messengers (*sent to spy out the land*) were flesh and blood, I decreed that they should not enter into the land: but in the world to come, I suddenly send to you my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before my face.'"

See here the doctrine of the Jews concerning the coming of the Messiah:

1. That at that time there shall be a resurrection of the just: *The Messias shall raise up those that sleep in the dust.*

2. Then shall follow the desolation of this world: *This world shall be wasted a thousand years.* Not that they imagined that a chaos, or confusion of all things, should last the thousand years; but that this world should end and a new one be introduced in that thousand years.

3. After which *eternity should succeed.*

From hence we easily understand the meaning of this question of the disciples:--

1. They know and own the present Messiah; and yet they ask, what shall be the signs of his coming?

2. But they do not ask the signs of his coming (as we believe of it) at the last day, to judge both the quick and the dead: but,

3. When he will come in the evidence and demonstration of the Messiah, raising up the dead, and ending this world, and introducing a new; as they had been taught in their schools concerning his coming.

7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

[*Nation shall rise against nation.*] Besides the seditions of the Jews, made horribly bloody with their mutual slaughter, and other storms of war in the Roman empire from strangers, the commotions of Otho and Vitellius are particularly memorable, and those of Vitellius and Vespasian, whereby not only the whole empire was shaken, and *the fortune of the empire changed with the change of the whole world*, (they are the words of Tacitus), but Rome itself being made the scene of battle, and the prey of the soldiers, and the Capitol itself being reduced to ashes. Such throes the empire suffered, now bringing forth Vespasian to the throne, the scourge and vengeance of God upon the Jews.

9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

[*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted.*] To this relate those words of 1 Peter 4:17, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God"; that is, the time foretold by our Saviour is now at hand, in which we are to be delivered up to persecution, &c. These words denote that persecution which the Jews, now near their ruin, stirred up almost everywhere against the professors of the gospel. They had indeed oppressed them hitherto on all sides, as far as they could, with slanders, rapines, whippings, stripes, &c. which these and such like places testify; 1 Thessalonians 2:14,15; Hebrews 10:33, &c. But there was something that put a rub in their way, that, as yet, they could not proceed to the utmost cruelty; "And now ye know what withholdeth"; which, I suppose, is to be understood of Claudius enraged at and curbing in the Jews. Who being taken out of the way, and Nero, after his first five years, suffering all things to be turned topsy turvy, the Jews now breathing their last (and Satan therefore breathing his last effects in them, because their time was short), they broke out into slaughter

beyond measure, and into a most bloody persecution: which I wonder is not set in the front of the ten persecutions by ecclesiastical writers. This is called by Peter (who himself also at last suffered in it) *a fiery trial*; by Christ, dictating the epistles to the seven churches, *tribulation for ten days*; and *the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world of Christians*. And this is "the revelation of that wicked one" St. Paul speaks of, now in lively, that is, in bloody colours, openly declaring himself Antichrist, the enemy of Christ. In that persecution James suffered at Jerusalem, Peter in Babylon, and Antipas at Pergamus, and others, as it is probable, in not a few other places. Hence, Revelation 6:11,12 (where the state of the Jewish nation is delivered under the type of six seals), they are slain, who were to be slain for the testimony of the gospel under the fifth seal; and immediately under the sixth followed the ruin of the nation.

12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

[*The love of many shall wax cold.*] These words relate to that horrid apostasy which prevailed everywhere in the Jewish churches that had received the gospel. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3, &c.; Galatians 3:1; 1 Timothy 1:15, &c.

14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

[*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.*] Jerusalem was not to be destroyed before the gospel was spread over all the world: God so ordering and designing it that the world, being first a catechumen in the doctrine of Christ, might have at length an eminent and undeniable testimony of Christ presented to it; when all men, as many as ever heard the history of Christ, should understand that dreadful wrath and severe vengeance which was poured out upon that city and nation by which he was crucified.

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand):

[*The abomination of desolation.*] These words relate to that passage of Daniel (chapter 9:27)

which I would render thus; "In the middle of that week," namely, the last of the seventy, "he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, even until *the wing or army of abomination shall make desolate,*" &c.; or, *even by the wing of abominations making desolate....*

[*Let him that readeth understand.*] This is not spoken so much for the obscurity as for the certainty of the prophecy: as if he should say, "He that reads those words in Daniel, let him mind well that when the army of the prince which is to come, that army of abominations, shall compass round Jerusalem with a siege, then most certain destruction hangs over it; for, saith Daniel, 'the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary,' &c., verse 26. 'And the army of abominations shall make desolate even until the consummation, and that which is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate.' Flatter not yourselves, therefore, with vain hopes, either of future victory, or of the retreating of that army, but provide for yourselves; and he that is in Judea, let him fly to the hills and places of most difficult access, not into the city." See how Luke clearly speaks out this sense in the twentieth verse of the one-and-twentieth chapter.

20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

[*That your flight be not in the winter.*] R. Tanchum observes a favour of God in the destruction of the first Temple, that it happened in the summer, not in winter. For thus he: "God vouchsafed a great favour to Israel; for they ought to have gone out of the land on the tenth day of the month Tebeth, as he saith, 'Son of man, mark this day; for on this very day,' &c. What then did the Lord, holy and blessed? 'If they shall now go out in the winter,' saith he, 'they will all die': therefore he prolonged the time to them, and carried them away in summer."

22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

[*Those days shall be shortened.*] God lengthened the time for the sake of the elect, before the destruction of the city; and in the destruction, for their sakes he shortened it. Compare with these words before us 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not

slack concerning his promise," &c. It was certainly very hard with the elect that were inhabitants of the city, who underwent all kinds of misery with the besieged, where the plague and sword raged so violently that there were not living enough to bury the dead; and the famine was so great, that a mother ate her son (perhaps the wife of Doeg Ben Joseph, of whom see such a story in Babyl. Joma). And it was also hard enough with those elect who fled to the mountains, being driven out of house, living in the open air, and wanting necessaries for food: their merciful God and Father, therefore, took care of them, shortening the time of their misery, and cutting off the reprobates with a speedier destruction; lest, if their stroke had been longer continued, the elect should too far have partaken of their misery.

The Rabbins dream that God shortened the day on which wicked king Ahab died, and that ten hours; lest he should have been honoured with mourning.

24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were possible*, they shall deceive the very elect.

[*Shall shew great signs and wonders.*] It is a disputable case, whether the Jewish nation were more mad with superstition in matters of religion, or with superstition in curious arts.

I. There was not a people upon earth that studied or attributed more to dreams than they. Hence

1. They often imposed fastings upon themselves to this end, that they might obtain happy dreams; or to get the interpretation of a dream; or to divert the ill omen of a dream: which we have observed at the fourteenth verse of the ninth chapter.

2. Hence their nice rules for handling of dreams; such as these, and the like: *Let one observe a good dream two-and-twenty years*, after the example of Joseph: "If you go to bed merry, you shall have good dreams," &c.

3. Hence many took upon them the public profession of interpreting dreams; and this was reckoned among the nobler arts. A certain old man (Babyl. Beracoth) relates this story; "There

were four-and-twenty interpreters of dreams in Jerusalem: and I, having dreamed a dream, went to them all: every one gave a different interpretation, and yet they all came to pass," &c. You have R. Joses Ben Chelpatha, R. Ismael Ben R. Joses, R. Lazar, and R. Akiba interpreting divers dreams, and many coming to them for interpretation of their dreams. Nay, you see there the disciples of R. Lazar in his absence practising this art. See there also many stories about this business, which it would be too much here to transcribe.

II. There were hardly any people in the whole world that more used, or were more fond of, amulets, charms, mutterings, exorcisms, and all kinds of enchantments. We might here produce innumerable examples; a handful shall serve us out of the harvest: "Let not any one go abroad with his amulet on the sabbath day, unless that amulet be prescribed by an approved physician" (or, "unless it be an approved amulet"; see the Gemara). Now these amulets were either little roots hung about the necks of sick persons, or, what was more common, bits of paper with words written on them whereby they supposed that diseases were either driven away or cured: which they wore all the week, but were forbid to wear on the sabbath, unless with a caution: "They do not say a charm over a wound on the sabbath, that also which is said over a mandrake is forbid" on the sabbath. "If any one say, Come and say this versicle over my son, or lay the book" of the law "upon him, to make him sleep; it is forbid": that is, on the sabbath, but on other days is usual.

"*They used to say the psalm of meetings* (that is, *against unlucky meetings*) *at Jerusalem*. R. Judah saith, Sometimes after such a meeting, and sometimes when no such meeting had happened. But what is the Psalm of Meetings? The third psalm, 'Lord, how are my foes increased!' even all the psalm: and the ninety-first psalm, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High,' to the ninth verse." There is a discourse of many things, which they used to carry about with them, as remedies against certain ailments; and of mutterings over wounds: and there you may see, that while they avoid the enchantments of the Amorites, they have and allow their own. You have, *Bab. Joma*, fol. 84.1, the form of an enchantment against a mad dog. And, *Avodah Zarah*, fol. 12.2, the form of enchantment against the devil of blindness. You have, *Hieros. Schab.*

fol 13.4, and *Avod. Zarah*, fol. 40.4, mutterings and enchantments, even in the name of Jesus. See also the *Babyl. Sanhedr.* fol. 101.1, concerning these kind of mutterings.

III. So skilful were they in conjurings, enchantments, and sorceries, that they wrought *great signs*, many villainies, and more wonders. We pass by those things which the sacred story relates of Simon Magus, Elymas, the sons of Sceva, &c., and Josephus, of others; we will only produce examples out of the Talmud, a few out of many.

You will wonder, in the entrance, at these two things, in order to the speaking of their magical exploits; and thence you will conjecture at the very common practice of these evil arts among that people: 1. That "the senior who is chosen into the council ought to be skilled in the arts of astrologers, jugglers, diviners, sorcerers, &c., that he may be able to judge of those who are guilty of the same." 2. The Masters tell us, that a certain chamber was built by a magician in the temple itself: "The chamber of Happarva was built by a certain magician, whose name was Parvah, by art-magic." "Four-and-twenty of the school Rabbi, intercalating the year at Lydda, were killed by an evil eye": that is, with sorceries. R. Joshua outdoes a magician in magic, and drowns him in the sea. In *Babyl. Taanith*, several miracles are related that the Rabbins had wrought. Elsewhere, there is a story told of eighty women-sorceresses at Ascalon, who were hanged in one day by Simeon Ben Shetah: "and the women of Israel (saith the gloss) had generally fallen to the practice of sorceries": as we have mentioned before. It is related of abundance of Rabbis, that they were *skilful in working miracles*: thus Abba Chelchia, and Chanin, and R. Chanina Ben Dusa; of which R. Chanina Ben Dusa there is almost an infinite number of stories concerning the miracles he wrought, which savour enough and too much of magic.

And, that we may not be tedious in producing examples, what can we say of the fasting Rabbis causing it to rain in effect when they pleased? of which there are abundance of stories in *Taanith*. What can we say of the Bath Kol very frequently applauding the Rabbins out of heaven? of which we have spoken before. What can we say of the death or plagues foretold by the Rabbins to befall this or that man? which came to pass just

according as they were foretold. I rather suspect some magic art in most of these, than fiction in all.

IV. False Christs broke out, and appeared in public with their witchcrafts, so much the frequenter and more impudent, as the city and people drew nearer to its ruin; because the people believed the Messiah should be manifested before the destruction of the city; and each of them pretended to be the Messiah by these signs. From the words of Isaiah, "Before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child," the doctors concluded, "that the Messiah should be manifested before the destruction of the city." Thus the Chaldee paraphrast upon the place; "She shall be saved before her utmost extremity, and her king shall be revealed before her pains of childbirth." Mark that also; "The Son of David will not come, till the wicked empire [*of the Romans*] shall have spread itself over all the world nine months; as it is said, 'Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth.'"

27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

[*For as the lightning, &c.*] To discover clearly the sense of this and the following clauses, those two things must be observed which we have formerly given notice of:--

1. That the destruction of Jerusalem is very frequently expressed in Scripture as if it were the destruction of the whole world, Deuteronomy 32:22; "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell" (the discourse there is about the wrath of God consuming that people; see verses 20,21), "and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." Jeremiah 4:23; "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light," &c. The discourse there also is concerning the destruction of that nation, Isaiah 65:17; "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered," &c. And more passages of this sort among the prophets. According to this sense, Christ speaks in this place; and Peter speaks in his Second Epistle, third chapter; and John, in the sixth of the Revelation; and Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:17, &c.

2. That Christ's taking vengeance of that exceeding wicked nation is called Christ's "coming in glory," and his "coming in the clouds," Daniel 7. It is also called, "the day of the Lord." See Psalm 1:4; Malachi 3:1,2, &c.; Joel 2:31; Matthew 16:28; Revelation 1:7, &c. See what we have said on chapter 12:20; 19:28.

The meaning, therefore, of the words before us is this: "While they shall falsely say, that Christ is to be seen here or there: 'Behold, he is in the desert,' one shall say; another, 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers': he himself shall come, like lightning, with sudden and altogether unexpected vengeance: they shall meet him whom they could not find; they shall find him whom they sought, but quite another than what they looked for."

28. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

[*For wheresoever the carcase is, &c.*] I wonder any can understand these words of pious men flying to Christ, when the discourse here is of quite a different thing: they are thus connected to the foregoing: Christ shall be revealed with a sudden vengeance; for when God shall cast off the city and people, grown ripe for destruction, like a carcase thrown out, the Roman soldiers, like eagles, shall straight fly to it with their eagles (ensigns) to tear and devour it. And to this also agrees the answer of Christ, Luke 17:37; when, after the same words that are spoke here in this chapter, it was inquired, "Where, Lord?" he answered, "Wheresoever the body is," &c.; silently hinting thus much, that Jerusalem, and that wicked nation which he described through the whole chapter, would be the carcase, to which the greedy and devouring eagles would fly to prey upon it.

29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

[*The sun shall be darkened, &c.*] That is, the Jewish heaven shall perish, and the sun and moon of its glory and happiness shall be darkened, and brought to nothing. The *sun* is the religion of the church; the *moon* is the government of the state; and the *stars* are the judges and doctors of both. Compare Isaiah 13:10, and Ezekiel 32:7,8, &c.

30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

[*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.*] Then shall *the Son of man* give a proof of himself, whom they would not before acknowledge: as proof, indeed, not in any visible figure, but in vengeance and judgment so visible, that all the tribes of the earth shall be forced to acknowledge him the avenger. The Jews would not know him: now they shall know him, whether they will or no, Isaiah 26:11. Many times they asked of him a *sign*: now a *sign* shall appear, that he is the true Messiah, whom they despised, derided, and crucified, namely, his signal vengeance and fury, such as never any nation felt from the first foundations of the world.

31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

[*And he shall send his angels, &c.*] When Jerusalem shall be reduced to ashes, and that wicked nation cut off and rejected, then shall the Son of man send his ministers with the trumpet of the gospel, and they shall gather together his elect of the several nations from the four corners of heaven: so that God shall not want a church...

34. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

[*This generation shall not pass, &c.*] Hence it appears plain enough, that the foregoing verses are not to be understood of the last judgment, but, as we said, of the destruction of Jerusalem. There were some among the disciples (particularly John), who lived to see these things come to pass. With Matthew 16:28, compare John 21:22. And there were some Rabbins alive at the time when Christ spoke these things, that lived till the city was destroyed, viz. Rabban Simeon, who perished with the city, R. Jochanan Ben Zaccai, who outlived it, R. Zadoch, R. Ismael, and others.

36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

[*No man knoweth, no, not the angels.*] This is taken from Deuteronomy 32:34: "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?"

37. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

[*But as the days of Noe were, &c.*] Thus Peter placeth as parallels, the ruin of the old world, and the ruin of Jerusalem, 1 Peter 3:19-21; and by such a comparison his words will be best understood. For, see how he skips from the mention of the death of Christ to the times before the flood, in the eighteenth and nineteenth verses, passing over all the time between. Did not the Spirit of Christ preach all along in the times under the law? Why then doth he take an example only from the times before the flood? that he might fit the matter to his case, and shew that the present state of the Jews was like theirs in the times of Noah, and that their ruin should be like also. So, also, in his Second Epistle, chapter 3:6,7. *The age or generation of the flood hath no portion in the world to come*: thus Peter saith, that "they were shut up in prison": and here

our Saviour intimates that "they were buried in security," and so were surprised by the flood.

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*Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind words are the roots,
Kind thoughts are the flowers,
Kind deeds are the fruits*

*Take care of your garden
And keep out the "weeds";
Fill with sunshine
Kind words and good deeds.*

Henry W. Longfellow



An unbalanced soul gets caught up on the Lord's imminent return