

A History of the Work of Redemption

By Jonathan Edwards

Lesson 11 - Period 1 - Part 6 (From the Babylonian Captivity to the Coming of Christ)

“The work of redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world”

Edwards now begins this last section of the pre-Christ era. This is an interesting time in history because we do not have much for a biblical record of this period. We have some historical account in the Bible for the beginning of this period and we have _____ about this period but much of the history of this time comes to us from secular sources. Edwards gives some general thoughts first about this period of roughly 400-500 years.

“This last period of the Old Testament seems to have been remarkably distinguished from all others by great revolutions among the nations of the earth, to make way for the kingdom of Christ...The apostle, in the 8th of Romans, represents the whole creation as groaning and travailing in pain together until now, to bring forth the liberty and manifestation of the children of God.-So the world as it were travailed in pain, and was in continual convulsions, for several hundred years together, to bring forth the first-born child, and the only-begotten Son of God.”

“The world being so long a time kept in a state of war and bloodshed, prepared the way for the coming of the Prince of peace, as it showed the great need the world stood in of such a prince, to deliver the world from its miseries.”

“It pleased God to order it in His providence, that earthly power and dominion should be raised to its greatest height, and appear in its utmost glory, in those four great monarchies that succeeded one another, and that every one should be greater and more glorious than the preceding, before He set up the kingdom of His Son...God suffered Satan’s kingdom to rise to so great a height and magnificence before His Son came to overthrow it...Goliath must have on all his splendid armor when stripling David comes against him with a sling and a stone, for the greater glory of David’s victory.”

“It pleased God thus to show in them the instability and vanity of all earthly power and greatness; which served as a foil to set forth the glory of the kingdom of His Son, which never shall be destroyed...And therefore these things were suffered to rise very high, that Christ might appear so much the more glorious in being above them.”

With all of these things happening in the heathen world it is amazing that the small and frail church should be _____. We know that the church is in the hand of the Lord and He will not permit it to be destroyed as long as time endures.

“It was wonderful that the church in its weak and low state, being but a little handful of men, should be preserved in all these great convolutions; especially considering that the land of Judea, the chief place of the church’s residence, lay in the midst of the contending parties, was very much the seat of war amongst them, and was often overrun and subdued.”

After these initial thoughts, Edwards now moves to examine sacred history to see how the work of redemption was furthered at this time. One of the first thing Edwards discusses is the continued _____ of the glory of the Jewish state at this time. The Jewish king, temple-worship, and spirit of prophecy all must diminish to make way for the One who would be King, Priest, and Prophet.

“In order to introduce the glorious dispensation of the gospel, the external glory of the Jewish church must be diminished.”

“The time now approaching when Christ, the great and everlasting King of His church, was to reign, it was time for the typical kings to withdraw.”

“Again, by the captivity, the glory and magnificence of the temple were taken away, and the temple that was built afterwards was nothing in comparison with it. Thus it was meet, that when the time drew nigh that the glorious antetype of the temple should appear, that the typical temple should have its glory withdrawn.”

The captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians also was an advancement in God’s work of redemption. As the Jews were spread abroad, they carried with them the _____ of the coming Messiah. Therefore, the hope of Christ was carried out of the land of Israel and was now spread through the ancient world.

“This was a means of raising a general expectation of the Messiah through the world, about the time that He actually came. For the Jewss, wherever they were dispersed, carried the Holy Scriptures with them, and so the prophecies of the Messiah; and being conversant with the nations among whom they lived, they, by that means, became acquainted with these prophecies, and with the expectations of the Jews concerning their glorious Messiah.”

The captivity of the Jews and the removal of them from the land was also a great picture of the coming _____ of the Jewish dispensation of worship.

“Another way by which this dispersed state of the Jews prepared the way for Christ was, that it showed the necessity of abolishing the Jewish dispensation...It showed the necessity of abolishing the ceremonial law, and the old Jewish worship: for, by this means, the observance of that ceremonial law became impracticable even by the Jews themselves.”

The scattering abroad of the Jewish people led to the establishment of the _____. Every town where there was a decent Jewish population had a synagogue for the public reading of the Word, preaching, and prayer.

“The dispersion of the Jews opened a door for the introduction of the apostles in all places where they came to preach the gospel. For almost in all places where they came to preach the gospel, they found synagogues of the Jews, where the Holy Scriptures were wont to be read, and the true God worshipped; which was a great advantage to the apostles in spreading the gospel throughout the world.”

During the time of captivity, the _____ of Scripture was expanded and greater prophecies and pictures of Christ were given as the books of Ezekiel and Daniel were written during this time.

“Christ...appeared in a furnace, saving those persons who believed on Him from that furnace; by which is represented to us, how Christ, by His coming Himself into the furnace of God’s wrath, saves those that believe in Him from that furnace...The prophet Ezekiel is very particular in the mystical description of the gospel-church, in his vision of the temple and city, towards the latter part of his prophecy...Thus does the gospel-light still increase, the nearer we come to the time of Christ’s birth.”