

A History of the Work of Redemption

By Jonathan Edwards

Lesson 20 - Period 3 - Part 2-From the Fall of Jerusalem to the time of Constantine

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

The next division that Edwards has for this final period of human history covers the span of roughly 250 years. The fall of _____ took place in 70AD and _____ rise to power started in the year 312AD. Edwards notices four key factors during this period.

- 1. During this period Satanic opposition _____ against Christ’s Kingdom-** *“When Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews were much incapacitated for troubling the church; therefore the devil turns his hand elsewhere, and uses other instruments. The opposition which was made in the Roman empire against the kingdom of Christ was chiefly of two kinds.*

- _____ **opposition-** *“Christ came into the world in an age wherein learning and philosophy were at their height in the Roman empire. The gospel, which held forth a crucified Savior, was not at all agreeable to the notions of the philosophers. The Christian scheme of trusting in such a crucified Redeemer, appeared foolish and ridiculous to them.”*

- _____ **opposition-** *“The authority of the Roman empire employed all their strength, time after time, to persecute, and if possible, to root out Christianity.”*

“One emperor after another (Nero, Domitian, etc.) set himself with the utmost rage to root out the Christian church from the earth, that there should not be so much as the name of a Christian left in the world. Thousands, yea millions, were put to cruel deaths in them; for they spared neither sex nor age.”

“In the later persecutions, the Roman emperors being vexed at the frustration of their predecessors, who were not able to extirpate Christianity, or hinder its progress, were enraged to be the more violent in their attempts.”

“Thus a great part of the first three hundred years after Christ was spent in violent and cruel persecutions of the church by the Roman powers.”

- 2. During this period the Kingdom of Christ _____ -** *“Though the learning and power of the Roman empire were so great, and both were employed to the utmost against Christianity; yet all was in vain. They could neither root it out, nor stop its progress.”*

“It was very observable that, for the most part, the more they persecuted the church, the more it increased...Justin Martyr, an eminent father in the Christian church, says, that in his days there was not part of mankind, whether Greeks or barbarians, or by what name soever they were called, even the most rude and unpolished nations, where prayers and thanksgivings were not made to the great Creator of the world, through the name of the crucified Jesus.”

- 3. During this time, right before the coming of Constantine to power, there was a great time of _____ for the church-** *“This persecution lasted for ten years together, and as it exceeded all the foregoing persecutions, in the number of martyrs, so it exceeded them in the variety and multitude of inventions of torture and cruelty.”*

“Thus it was the darkest time with the Christian church, just before the break of day. They were brought to the greatest extremity before God appeared for their glorious deliverance, as the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt was the most severe and cruel just before their deliverance by the hand of Moses. Their enemies thought they had swallowed them up, and sealed their destruction, as Pharaoh and his host thought when they had hemmed in the children of Israel at the Red Sea.”

4. During this period the Kingdom of Christ was glorious _____ under the leadership of Constantine-Edwards sees four immediate benefits with the rising of Constantine

-The Church was spared from further _____ -*“Now the day of her deliverance came after such a dark night of affliction: weeping had continued for a night, but now deliverance and joy came in the morning.”*

-The enemies of the Church were _____ -*“Remarkable are the accounts which history gives of the fearful ends to which the heathen emperors, princes, generals, captains, and other great men were brought, who had exerted themselves in persecuting the Christians; dying miserably, one after another, under exquisite torments of body, and horrors of conscience, with a most visible hand of God upon them.”*

-Heathenism was, for the most part, _____ from the Roman Empire-*“Images were now destroyed, and heathen temples pulled down.”*

- _____ and _____ were brought to the Church-*“Now all heathen magistrates were put down, and only Christians were advanced to places of authority all over the empire.”*

“This revolution was the greatest change in the face of things that ever came to pass in the world since the flood...Now is come the end of the old heathen world in its principal part, the Roman empire...Now it pleased the Lord God of heaven to set up a kingdom on the ruins of Satan’s kingdom; and such honors does the Father put upon Christ for the disgrace He suffered when on earth.”

Edwards ends this section by seeking to convince his listeners that these events prove that the Christian religion is _____ and that the gospel of Jesus Christ is from God. He gives 4 evidences that support this:

- 1. The gospel _____ brings one to an understanding of the true God-***“Till the gospel and the Holy Scriptures came abroad, all the world lay in ignorance of the true God, and in the greatest darkness with respect to religion, embracing the absurdist opinions and practices, which all civilized nations now acknowledge to be childish fooleries...The Scriptures were designed by God to be the proper means to bring the world to the knowledge of Himself, rather than human reason, or anything else.”*
- 2. The gospel _____ where such hatred opposed it is evidence that it is from God-***“The Roman empire had subdued many mighty and potent kingdoms; they subdued the Grecian monarchy, though it made the utmost resistance: and yet they could not conquer the church which was in their hands; but, on the contrary, were subdued and finally triumphed over by the church.”*
- 3. Only God’s _____ is responsible for the miraculous growth of the Church-***“It was not the outward strength of the instruments which were employed in it. At first, the gospel was preached only by a few fishermen, who were without power and worldly interest to support them.”*
- 4. Christ and His apostles _____ this success-***“When a thing is foretold which is very unlikely ever to come to pass, is entirely contrary to the common course of things, and yet it does come to pass just agreeable to the prediction, this is a strong argument that the prediction is from God. Thus the consideration of the manner of the propagation and success of the gospel during the time which has been spoken of affords great evidence that the Scriptures are the word of God.”*