

Rachel's nurse, was buried there. It was in Bethlehem that Abraham pitched his tent when he first entered the promised land. David, the chosen of God, was anointed there. The well of Bethlehem was noted, a fit symbol of him who was born in Bethlehem and offers the water of life to all. (SDP 215.1).

"The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme." In it is hidden "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." But in spite of the sacred memories which clustered about the place, when the Christ was born but few men knew it. All that the sacred record gives concerning Augustus, the man who held universal sway, is that he was a raiser of taxes when the kingdom was at the height of its glory, and that after a reign of a few days, or years, he should end his career in peace. He had unconsciously been instrumental in preparing the way for the Prince of peace, and having done that, he passed from the scene. (SDP 215.3).

"As in old time Cyrus was called to the throne of the world's empire that he might set free the captives of the Lord, so Cæsar Augustus is made the agent for the fulfillment of God's purpose in bringing the mother of Jesus to Bethlehem. She is of the lineage of David, and the Son of David must be born in David's city." (SDP 215.4).

Most of the life of the Saviour was spent during the reign of Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, whom Gabriel described to Daniel as a "vile person." History substantiates the description. He was not a direct heir to the throne, and he was never honored by his subjects. The tyranny of absolutism began again to manifest itself, and the principles of the Oriental monarchies were repeated. Popular assemblies entirely ceased, and the emperor usurped the right to put to death without trial. The governors of Judah reflected the character of the general government. The Jews were bitterly oppressed, and as they knew the time was near for the appearance of a Saviour, they placed all their hopes upon a temporal king, one who should break the yoke of Rome and establish for them a separate kingdom. A few, perhaps, but only a few, divined the spiritual nature of the promise of a Messiah, for it was Satan's studied plan to blind men's eyes to all spiritual truth. (SDP 216.1).

In Babylon he had sought to make men drunk with idolatry; working through Medo-Persia he had hoped to slay those who were faithful to their God; through the teachings of Greece he had so fascinated man with the powers of his own mind that by works of righteousness which he might do, and philosophies of his own conjecturing, he was led to forget any higher power than that which he himself pos-

sessed. But through it all a few had clung to the promise delivered to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The world was ignorant of the Christ, but John the Baptist called many to repentance. Christ's ministry was during the reign of Tiberius, and while that vile person worked, planned, mistrusted, and killed, the Man of God went about all the towns of Palestine, healing the broken-hearted, and dispensing light to all who would accept. Angels watched him, Gabriel attended him, and in times of special danger, shielded him from the enemy who tracked him incessantly. Finally they nailed him to the cross; the Jews were responsible for it, but the Roman law upheld them in the act; and had it not been done by his own people, the Romans would have done it; for they had reached a condition when the life of man was but lightly esteemed, and the spiritual kingdom which Christ came to set up could never have been understood by the reigning monarch. The officers of Rome nailed the Son of God to the cross. The Prince of the everlasting covenant was crushed by those who sought to confederate together; they placed him in the tomb; they joined hands with Satan, as nation had never done before; but he broke those bands, and came forth triumphant. (SDP 216.2).

Representatives from the four quarters of the globe stood near him in his last hours. The Greeks met him at the temple at the last great day of the feast; the thief hung beside him on Calvary; Simon of Cyrene helped bear the cross, and the centurion, a Roman soldier, convicted, said, "Truly, this was the Son of God." The darkness which shrouded the dying form of Christ typified the condition of the Roman world. The light which shone about the tomb when the angels bade the Son of man come forth, typified the power with which the truth should penetrate the empire as his followers went forth to preach salvation. (SDP 217.1).

References

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Rome

the fourth kingdom

Part 2

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The senate, supposed to represent the people, became a corporation greedy for gain and enriched by the spoils of war. Senatorial favorites received rich provinces to govern, and bribery was almost universally practiced.

"The power of the purse" was in the hands of the senate alone. To their influence may be added the constant and steady growth of the cities, and the decline of the rural population, a practice always ruinous to republicanism, and one always encouraged by a false system of education and religion. Tradition made the Romans the descendants of the god of war, Mars, the Bruiser, and they were true to the character. Said the inspired penman, "It shall break in pieces and bruise." Christ came to Rome as the Prince of peace, the binder up of wounds, the healer of the brokenhearted. (SDP 207.3).

NAME TOOK THE PLACE OF CHARACTER

The religion of Rome was secondary to its government. That is, the state was the one all-absorbing institution. A man in Rome was great, not because of any character he bore, or deed he may have done, but for the simple fact that he was a Roman citizen. Name took the place of character. Here is seen the reverse of truth. With God it is character which gives the name; with Rome it was name independent of character. Although religion was subservient to the state, yet the form of religion in Rome played an important part in its history, especially in the second or papal phase. Since the papacy was a continuation of paganism, it is necessary to notice its leading features. There were no sweet singers as David the Bethlehemite; the nature study of the Greeks was also lacking. There were gods many and lords many, but a stern nature characterized all worship. Man was deified and canonized. The very name Augustus, which was applied to a long line of emperors, meant divine. (SDP 208.2).

In the Roman temples a body of priests performed the sacred rites, but they were appointed by the state. The highest religious officer during the life of paganism was the Pontifex Maximus, the pope of paganism, and he was a civil officer. The religious hierarchy, consisting of priests, augurs, vestals and Pontifex Maximus, paved the way for the papal hierarchy of later days, just as the transition from republicanism to imperialism opened the gate for papal supremacy. In literature and education Rome borrowed largely from Greece, so that the intellectual supremacy of that nation must be traced to Greece, although the man of learning was often a slave sold in the markets of his captors. (SDP 209.1).

ROMAN LAW BASIS FOR MODERN CIVIL LAW

It was, however, the education which prevailed in Greece, and which was copied by Rome, that trained a class of citizens for warfare, from tyranny, and for the papacy. Roman law is extolled as the basis of all civil law to-day. It was developed gradually as before stated, and the wheat of truth was mingled with the tares of error. It was good and evil, like the tree of which Adam partook in the garden. This is seen in latter-day applications of those laws. The Greek worship of mind or reason, applied to Roman love of law, made the lawyer of Rome the forefather of that class of reasoners who to-day sway the world by argument rather than by the rule of justice. (SDP 209.3).

During the transition period between the republic and the full-fledged empire of verse 20, a number of actors took a prominent part. It was a time of severe contest between men to see who could best serve the purpose of the controller of affairs who stood behind the throne of earthly monarchs. As the republic lost power, a corporation composed of Cæsar, Pompey, and Crassus took the reins of government. Crassus controlled the money, Pompey had the army, and Cæsar was the master mind.

The wisdom of God in choosing Palestine as the home of the Jews is recognized more and more as history progresses. There was no mistake in the location, and there was no lowering of the standard set for that nation. In the days of Roman supremacy, as in the days of Solomon, it was the divine will that Israel should be the light of the world. They were intrusted with the sacred oracles of truth, and each nation was brought to them as to a fountain of living water. Had the Hebrew race been true to its appointed duty, the history of the whole world would read entirely different. Rome came to Jerusalem-came because sent of God, but the well was a cracked and leaky cistern, and the soul-thirst of the nation could not be quenched. As a result, Rome enslaved the Jews: the power of life which repels the enemy was lacking. It was during the rule of the first triumvirate that Egypt, the kingdom of the south, was again entered by Rome.

EGYPT A TYPE OF SIN AND BONDAGE

Cæsar as a general stood in a position to accomplish for the fourth kingdom what Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Alexander had done for the former three, but we have no record that he even acknowledged God as a ruler of nations. He was fascinated and corrupted by the queen of Egypt. The seventeenth verse, while describing a particular event in history, also symbolizes the corrupting influence of Egypt

whenever the north came in touch with the south. Egypt was a blight to men and nations alike, from the days of Abraham to Cæsar, and its influence still lives, a type of sin and bondage. Leaving Egypt, Cæsar passed along the coast of Palestine and Asia Minor, receiving the submission of all peoples with such rapidity that he sent the famous dispatch to Rome, "I came, I saw, I conquered" (Veni, Vidi, Vici). He returned to Rome, where he altered laws, strengthened the senate, settled disturbances in the army, and later brought western Africa, which had revolted, into submission. (SDP 212.2).

After centuries of strife and turmoil, wars, bloodshed, and oppression, the world lay passive at the feet of the Roman emperor. One government encircled the Mediterranean; from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean one power bore sway. It would seem that earthly government had achieved its highest ambition. Satan exulted and rested in the hope that at last victory was his. But the moment of his quiet resting was the calm preceding his greatest struggles. So quiet were the nations that the lifting of a hand in rebellion in any of its most distant parts would send a throb to the center, which would be answered by the return of the legions. (SDP 214.2).

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH

Then it was that in the little town of Bethlehem Ephrath, where Mary and Joseph, peasants of the hill town of Nazareth, had gone to be taxed in obedience to the command of this same Augustus, was born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord. The very condition which caused Satan to exult were the conditions most favorable to Christ when he came to tabernacle among men. He whom Satan had opposed since the rebellion in heaven; he, the Prince of the worlds throughout space, "was made in the likeness of man," and came into the world a helpless babe. The simple shepherds on the hillside near Bethlehem, tending their sheep where David had often tended his flocks, heard the angel choir proclaim the birth of the world's Redeemer. Wise men in the eastern limits of the vast empire of Augustus, having read the prophecies, were watching for his star, and they, too, beheld a shining company of angels, and knew that God dwelt with men. But the rest of the empire slept on unconscious of his nearness. (SDP 214.3).

Bethlehem, the place of his birth, was dear to the memory of every true Jew. It was there that God met their father Jacob as he left home, a fugitive and alone. It was named Bethel, -the house of God, for said Jacob, "Surely God is in this place and I knew it not." Jacob came to the same spot and paid tithes of his gain while with Laban. Deborah,