

The Earthquake

Apparitions of the Dead in Jerusalem.

I saw the soul of Jesus, at the moment he expired, appear under the form of a bright orb, and accompanied by angels, among whom I distinguished the angel Gabriel penetrate the earth at the foot of the Cross. I likewise saw these angels cast a number of evil spirits into the great abyss, and I heard Jesus order several

of the souls in Limbo to re-enter the bodies

in which they once dwelt, in order that the sight might fill sinners with a salutary terror, and

that these souls might render a solemn testimony to his divinity.

The earthquake which produced the deep chasm at Calvary did much damage in different parts of Palestine, but its effects were even more fatal in Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were just beginning to be a little reassured by the return of light, when their terror was reawakened with double force by the shocks of the earthquake, and the terrible noise and confusion caused by the downfall of houses and walls on all sides, which panic was still farther increased by the sudden appearance of dead persons, confronting the trembling miscreants who were flying to hide themselves, and addressing them in the most severe and reproachful language.

The High Priests had recommenced the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb (which had been stopped by the unexpected darkness), and they were triumphing at the return of light, when suddenly the ground beneath them trembled, the neighbouring buildings fell down, and the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. Excess of terror at first rendered those on the outside speechless, but after a time they burst forth into cries and lamentations. The confusion in the interior of the Temple was not, however, as great as would naturally have been expected, because the strictest order and decorum were always enforced there, particularly with regard to the regulation to be followed by those who entered to make their sacrifice, and those who left after having offered it.

The crowd was great, but the ceremonies were so solemnly carried out by the priests, that they totally engrossed the minds of the assistants. First came the



immolation of the lamb, then the sprinkling of its blood, accompanied by the chanting of canticles and the sounding of trumpets. The priests were endeavouring to continue the sacrifices, when suddenly an unexpected and most appalling pause ensued; terror and astonishment were depicted on each countenance; all was thrown into confusion; not a sound was heard; the sacrifices ceased; there was a general rush to the gates of the Temple; everyone endeavoured to fly as quickly as possible.

And well might they fly, well might they fear and tremble; for in the midst of the multitude there suddenly appeared persons who had been dead and buried for many years! These persons looked at them sternly, and reproved them most severely for the crime they had committed that day, in bringing about the death of 'the just man,' and calling down his blood upon their heads. Even in the midst of this confusion, some attempts were, however, made by the priests to preserve order; they prevented those who were in the inner part of the Temple from rushing forward, pushing their way through the crowds who were in advance of them, and descending the steps which led out of the Temple: they even continued the sacrifices in some parts, and endeavoured to calm the fears of the people.

The appearance of the Temple at this moment can only be described by comparing it to an ant-hill on which persons have thrown stones, or which has been disturbed by a sick being driven into its centre. The ants in those parts on which the stones have fallen, or which the stick had disturbed, are filled with confusion and terror; they run to and fro and do nothing; while the ants in those parts which have not been disturbed continue to labour quietly, and even begin to repair the damaged parts.

The High Priest Caiphas and his retinue did not lose their presence of mind, and by the outward tranquillity which their diabolical hardness of heart enabled them to preserve, they calmed the confusion in a great degree, and then did their utmost to prevent the people from looking upon these stupendous events as testimonies of the innocence of Jesus. The Roman garrison belonging to the fortress of Antonia likewise made great efforts to maintain order; consequently, the disturbance of the festival was not followed by an insurrection, although every heart was fixed with fear and anxiety, which anxiety the Pharisees endeavoured (and in some instances

with success) to calm.

I remember a few other striking incidents: in the first place, the two columns which were placed at the entrance of their Holy of Holies, and to which a magnificent curtain was appended, were shaken to the very foundations; the column on the left side fell down in a southerly, and that on the right side in a northerly direction, thus rending the veil in two from the top to the bottom with a fearful sound, and exposing the Holy of Holies uncovered to the public gaze. A large stone was loosened and fell from the wall at the entrance of the sanctuary, near where the aged Simeon used to kneel, and the arch was broken. The ground was heaved up, and many other columns were thrown down in other parts of the Temple.

An apparition of the High Priest Zacharias, who was slain between the porch and the altar, was seen in the sanctuary. He uttered fearful menaces, spoke of the death of the second Zacharias, and of that of St. John Baptist, as also of the violent deaths of the other prophets.⁸ The two sons of the High Priest Simon, surnamed the Just (ancestors of the aged Simeon who prophesied when Jesus was presented in the Temple), made their appearance in the part usually occupied by the doctors of the law; they also spoke in terrific terms of the deaths of the prophets, of the sacrifice of the old law which was now about to cease, and they exhorted all present to be converted, and to embrace the doctrines which had been preached by him whom they had crucified. The prophet Jeremiah likewise appeared; he stood near the altar, and proclaimed, in a menacing tone, that the ancient sacrifice was at an end, and that a new one had commenced. As these apparitions took place in parts where none but priests were allowed to enter, Caiphas and a few others were alone cognisant of them, and they endeavoured, as far as possible, either to deny their reality, or to conceal them. These prodigies were followed by others still more extraordinary. The doors of the sanctuary flew open of themselves, and a voice was heard to utter these words: 'Let us leave this place;' and I saw all the angels of the Lord instantly leave the Temple

The thirty-two Pharisees who went to Calvary a short time before our Lord expired were almost all converted at the foot of the Cross. They returned to the Temple in the midst of the confusion, and were perfectly thunderstruck at all which had taken place there. They spoke most sternly, both to Annas and to Caiphas, and left the Temple. Annas had always been the most bitter of the enemies of Jesus, and had headed every proceeding against him; but the

supernatural events which had taken place had completely unnerved him that he knew not where to hide himself. Caiphas was, in reality excessively alarmed, and filled with anxiety, but his pride was so great that he concealed his feelings as far as possible, and endeavoured to reassure Annas. He succeeded for a time; but the sudden appearance of a person who had been dead many years marred the effect of his words, and Annas became again a prey to the most fearful terror and remorse.

Whilst these things were going on in the Temple, the confusion and panic were not less in Jerusalem. Dead persons were walking about, and many walls and buildings had been shaken by the earthquake, and parts of them fallen down. The superstition of Pilate rendered him even more accessible to fear; he was perfectly paralysed and speechless with terror; his palace was shaken to the very foundation, and the earth quaked beneath his feet.

8 The Zacharias here referred to was the father of John the Baptist, who was tortured and afterwards put to death by Herod, because he would not betray John into the hands of the tyrant. He was buried by his friends within the precincts of the Temple.

He ran wildly from room to room, and the dead constantly stood before him, reproaching him with the unjust sentence he had passed upon Jesus. He thought that they were the gods of the Galilean, and took refuge in an inner room, where he offered incense, and made vows to his idols to invoke their assistance in his distress. Herod was usually alarmed; but he shut himself up in his palace, out of the sight of everyone.

More than a hundred persons who had died at different epochs re-entered the bodies they had occupied when on earth, made their appearance in different parts of Jerusalem, and filled the inhabitants with inexpressible consternation.

Those souls which had been released by Jesus from Limbo uncovered their faces and wandered to and fro in the streets, and although their bodies were the same as those which they had animated when on earth, yet these bodies did not appear to touch the ground as they walked. They entered the houses of their descendants, proclaimed the innocence of Jesus, and reprovved those who had taken part in his death most severely. I saw them passing through

the principal streets; they were generally in couples, and appeared to me to glide through the airs without moving their feet.

The countenances of some were pale; others of a yellow tint; their beards were long, and their voices sounded strange and sepulchral. Their grave-clothes were such as it was customary to use at the period of their decease. When they reached the place where sentence of death was proclaimed on Jesus before the procession started for Calvary, they paused for a moment, and exclaimed in a loud voice: 'Glory be to Jesus for ever and ever, and destruction to his enemies!' Towards four o'clock all the dead returned to their graves.

The sacrifices in the Temple had been so interrupted, and the confusion caused by the different prodigies was so great, that very few persons ate the Paschal lamb on that evening