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"UPON THIS GENERATION."

"That upon you may come all the *righteous* blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." – Matt. 23:35,36.

AT first glance it appears unjust on God's part to thus visit punishment for the sins of the parents upon their children, centuries after. Nor can we suppose that the evil-doers – Cain and his successors – would be excused from further responsibility even after their children had suffered, for it would be as unjust to let the real culprit go free of punishment as it would be to punish him and his children both for the same sins. Neither of these unjust and unreasonable views can be the proper explanation of these, our Lord's words.

The thought is this, – That generation (the one in which our Lord lived) had so many advantages [R1701 : page 286] over every previous generation, in general intelligence, as well as from the special teachings of Christ and his followers, that its [R1702 : page 286] responsibility was only proportionate. As it had more advantages than all previous generations combined, so the punishment for its course of sin must in justice be all and more than equivalent to the punishments visited upon past transgressions all combined.

But let us not confuse these national and generational judgments with individual judgments. They were distinct. For instance, a certain immediate judgment came upon Cain for the murder of his brother; and so with every crime there seems to go a certain amount of *present-life* punishment, entirely distinct from the future retribution. What "stripes" may yet be due to Cain we cannot surely know, except that it will be "a just recompense." And so in the case before us in our text, only the immediate and visible consequences of sin are referred to. The outward and immediate consequences of the rejection and murder

of Christ would be, and properly, more severe than all the outward and immediate punishments of all previous transgressions against God's people combined.

This statement in no way involves the *future* retribution of the people of that generation. In that future retribution they will not be judged nationally, nor as a generation, but each individual will be held responsible for his own conduct in proportion as he transgressed against the light; and each, through the merit of the "*ransom for all*," will be offered a credit proportionate to the weaknesses he had sustained from the fall. These conclusions are sustained by the words of the Apostle Peter. – Acts 2:23,37-40.

Our Lord's statement in our text was corroborated by the Apostle Paul, who declared, "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thes. 2:16); confirming the Prophet Daniel's words, "He shall make it desolate until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Dan. 9:27.) And secular history estimates the trouble which came upon Israel, upon that generation, within forty years of our Lord's utterance above quoted, as the most awful that had thus far occurred amongst men; – thus attesting the correctness of our Lord's prediction.

But when we remember that Israel according to the flesh was a typical people, and that God's promises to them, dealings with them and judgments upon them were typical or illustrative of similar promises, dealings and judgments, but on a wider and grander scale, made to the Gospel Church – the antitypical people of God, the true Israel – we are led to expect similar things upon the closing generation of the Gospel age. And we find it predicted of these two houses of Israel, by God through his prophets, that only a remnant, a "little flock," from each will prove worthy, while the majority will stumble; and that upon them will come an awful trouble in the end of the Gospel age, "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." – Dan. 12:1.

As not all Israelites were Israelites indeed, so not all Christians in name are Christians indeed. As the true Israelites were gathered out of, or separated from, nominal Israel, first in spirit or intent and afterward literally, before the great trouble came, so here, in the end of this age, there must be a separation of true wheat from tare imitations, first in spirit and afterward actually, so that they be not partakers of the plagues or troubles predicted. – Rev. 18:4.

And as a punishment equivalent to all other punishments combined for shedding of righteous blood was exacted of the closing generation of typical Israel, just so it will be with the closing generation of this Gospel age; – the present generation. The knowledge and advantages every way of the present generation, above those of all previous generations, make its responsibility correspondingly great; and its penalty for hardness of heart, unreadiness to receive the Lord and his Kingdom, and resistance of the truth, now shining out upon every side as never before, is to be *equivalent* to the combined judgments upon all who have despised, rejected and persecuted God's people, throughout the age. And thus we read, that when Babylon's fall is complete, after God's people, heeding his voice, have come out of her, then, in her overthrow, will be found – "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. 18:24.) No wonder, then, that her fall will mean a "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation!"
