

What Saith the Scripture?

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Why Do the Heathen Rage?

by Tom Stewart

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A 7.9 magnitude quake, centered in the arid western state of Gujarat, India, struck-- killing an estimated 50,000 Indians on January 26th 2001-- in the worst seismic disaster in the last 50 years of India's history. Occurring on India's Republic Day, which celebrated India's independence from Great Britain in 1947, in one instance, the 150,000 inhabitants of the city of Bhuj had 90 percent of their city reduced to rubble in about a minute. Only days earlier, 70 MILLION Hindus gathered for two days at the confluence, where the Yamuna River, the River Ganges, and the mythical Saraswati River of Hindu legend meet, on the outskirts of the northern city of Allahabad, India, to wash away their sins at the every twelve year Hindu festival of Maha Kumbh Mela (Great Pitcher Festival). The Hindu faithful declare that this event is "undisputedly the world's largest religious and cultural congregation." The Western mind cannot begin to conceive of the size of such a gathering. Perhaps the Woodstock rock and folk music festival on August 15th through 17th 1969 in Bethel, New York, comes to mind, where the counterculture of the '60s saw 400,000 to 500,000 mostly young people engage in rock music, marijuana, "Free Love", Far Eastern religion, and general opposition to the Vietnam War. "1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin... 9 That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the LORD" (Isaiah 30:1, 9).

The Pacific Northwest of the United States experienced a 6.8 magnitude quake 35 miles southwest of Seattle, Washington on February 28th 2001. Occurring 30 miles beneath the Earth's surface, the impact was softened for this major intraslab quake. "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8). Though no quake related fatalities were confirmed, disruption of daily life was great. One individual in downtown Olympia, Washington watched the quake roll toward him-- a three-foot swell that lifted buildings, sidewalk and pavement. Destruction of property was estimated to exceed \$1 billion. Microsoft founder Bill Gates was interrupted as he was delivering a speech at a Seattle hotel-- as seen on television news. Pioneer Square, in one of Seattle's oldest neighborhoods, sustained damage to its brick buildings, after hosting Mardi Gras celebrations-- only hours earlier-- that turned into violent riots. Mardi Gras or "Fat Tuesday" is described by some Catholics as the "last gasp of decadence before a period of austerity"-- that austerity being the 40 ensuing days of Catholic fasting and penitence preceding Easter. Seattle, like Philadelphia, saw Mardi Gras violence, with "crowds fighting, smashing storefronts and looting, and police fighting back on horseback and with pepper gas" (as reported by CNN.com on February 28th 2001, "Looting, violence mar Mardi Gras celebrations".) God's anger with America's wickedness can be seen even in its quakes. "Then the Earth shook and trembled; the foundations of Heaven moved and shook, because He was wroth" (2Samuel 22:8).

On March 5th 2001, 35 Islamic pilgrims were crushed to death by the press of the crowd during the ritual "Stoning of Satan"-- each pilgrim casting seven pebbles at three pillars representing Satan-- of

the Muslim Hajj, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. About two million Muslims from 70 countries annually make the journey, which they are required to perform once in their lifetime, if they are physically and financially able. Considered by faithful Muslims to be a pilgrimage of faith, the Hajj, i.e., one of the Five Pillars of Islam, has recently seen a similar tragedy in 1998, where at least 118 pilgrims died on the third day of the stoning ritual. At this time, Mecca's Grand Mosque is crowded as far as the eye can see with pilgrims attempting to pray. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7). Though the Arabic word *islam* means submission to God, Islam does not receive Jesus Christ as God, that He became a Man, died on a Cross for our sins, and was resurrected to live forever more. "And without controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Timothy 3:16).

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" (Psalm 2:1). This Second Psalm makes mention of the opposition of the world "against the LORD, and against His Anointed [Hebrew, *mashiyach*, meaning Messiah]" (2:2). Ancient Judaism viewed the non-Jewish nations and peoples as the *goi* (Hebrew), the Gentiles, or the heathen. New Testament Christianity, likewise, applies the title of heathen to all those that reject the Messiah Jesus as the Only "True God, and Eternal Life" (1John 5:20), i.e., "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" (Acts 4:25). Why should Western Professed Christianity perceive of Islam and Hindu as solely heathen religions, when the humanistic, pagan Western Civilization **also** sets its face like flint **against** the religion of Jesus Christ? "2 The kings of the Earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, 3 Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us... 7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. 8 Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for Thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the Earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 **Kiss the Son, lest He be angry**, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalm 2:2-12).

An excerpt from Arthur T. Pierson's book, "In Christ Jesus: The Sphere of the Believer's Life" (1898), provides us with a reply to the raging of the heathen, especially focusing the minds of those who have been exposed to the traditional Christian culture, but have not decided as yet to take a stand for Jesus Christ:

"This reminds one of a most forcible utterance of Sir Monier Williams, professor of Sanskrit in Oxford University, and, perhaps, the greatest living authority on all questions affecting the literature and faiths of the Orient. At an anniversary of the Church Missionary Society in London, some ten years ago [1888], he delivered a most remarkable address, in which he said that, when he began investigating Hinduism and Buddhism, he began to believe in what is called the evolution and growth of religious thought. But he adds, and we give his own memorable words:

'I am glad of the opportunity of stating publicly, that I am persuaded I was misled by the attractiveness of such a theory, and that its main idea was erroneous.... And now I crave permission at least to give two good reasons

for venturing to contravene the favorite philosophy of the day. Listen to me, ye youthful students of the so-called sacred books of the East: search them through and through, and tell me, do they affirm of Vyasa, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed, what our Bible affirms of the founder of Christianity, -- that He, a sinless man, was made sin? ["For He <the Father> hath made Him <the Son> to be Sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2Corinthians 5:21).] Not merely that He is the eradication of sin, but that He, the sinless son of man, was himself made sin. Vyasa and the other founders of Hinduism, enjoined severe penances, endless lustral washings, incessant purifications, infinite repetitions of prayer, painful pilgrimages, arduous ritual, and sacrificial observances, all with the one idea of getting rid of sin. All their books say so. But do they say that the very men who exhausted every invention for the eradication of sin were themselves sinless men made sin?... This proposition put forth in our Bible stands alone, it is wholly unparalleled; it is not to be matched by the shade of a shadow of a similar declaration in any other book claiming to be the exponent of the doctrine of any other religion in the world.

'Once again, do these sacred books of the East affirm of Vyasa, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed, what our Bible affirms of the founder of Christianity, that He, a dead and buried man, was made life. Not merely that He is the giver of life, but that He, the dead and buried man, is life ["I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am Alive for evermore, Amen; and have the Keys of Hell and of Death" (Revelation 1:18); "Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).]... All I contend for is, that such a statement is absolutely unique; and I defy you to produce the shade of a shadow of a similar declaration in any other sacred book of the world. And bear in mind that these two matchless unparalleled declarations are closely, intimately, indissolubly connected with the great central facts and doctrines of our religion: the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ.

'The two unparalleled declarations quoted by me from our Holy Bible make a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East, which severs the one from the others utterly, hopelessly, and forever; not a mere rift which may be easily closed up, but a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought, yes, a bridgeless chasm which no theory of evolution can ever span. ["For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1Thessalonians 2:13).]'

May God by His Spirit impress upon our hearts the nearness of the soon appearing of the Messiah Jesus to judge the inhabitants of Earth for her sins.

"Kiss the Son,
lest He be angry,
and ye perish from the way,
when His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"
(Psalm 2:12).

Maranatha!