

01 Purim

That's next Friday, same time, same place, same time of day, but a week later.

The Auditorium PM, Teenage Bible Study, will be held tomorrow, December 13, in room S111 of the Science Building at 11 to 1230, 11 in the morning to 1230 for the Auditorium PM Teenage Bible Study in room S111 of the Science Building.

Also, the Auditorium PM Congregation will have its monthly coffee clutch tomorrow before services from 1 to 2, prior to services from 1 till 2, come for fellowship and refreshment.

That's addressed to the Auditorium PM Congregation.

Those are the specific announcements which we have here, and if there are any others, they can be brought up.

I thought this evening, as you will have remembered from a week ago in the Sabbath announcement that it would be advisable to fill in a part of the story of the background between Old and New Testaments, partly because in this month the Jewish custom is to recall a very important event in the life of the community.

In the days of the Greek King of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, the manifestation of God, is what it was called, in the period of time of the 1,150 days or 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices that were disallowed over a period of slightly more than three years, but it was exactly a three-year period from the final desecration of the altar to its cleansing.

Both events, having occurred on the 25th day of the ninth month, which is a month quies left corresponding to our November and December.

This festival is the Festival of Lights, or Hanukkah.

It's also called Dedication, because the altar was dedicated again, and after the last Feast of Tabernacles recorded in Jesus' ministry, he appeared prior to the succeeding Passover season once at the temple in the Feast of Dedication.

John's Gospel account is the only one that mentions Jesus' appearance at Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication.

There are certain annual festivals that God set aside.

There is one annual festival set aside in the Bible for the House of Judah at the command of Queen Esther and Mordecai, the counselor and, in a sense, prime minister of the Persians, and that is the Festival of Purim that recalls the deliverance of the Jewish community in this most remarkable period when they had to stand up to protect themselves once under the Persians.

Again, of course, under the Greeks in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the king at the time in this line of Greek rulers over Syria that we call the Kingdom of the North and Daniel's prophecy in Chapter 11, he tried to not obliterate the Jews.

He wanted to change their religion.

The Persians proved that the Jews could not be obliterated as a people, but he proposed to get rid of any such religion of this nature that would not conform to the broad perspective that he had in mind.

Now, this was quite ungreeks for him to have done it because the Greeks had tolerated the religions of various people, but it came into his mind because the devil put it there at a time when certain renegade Jews wanted to become like others and were dissatisfied with the Jewish leadership as it was.

It does recall our January, 1979, and preceding weeks with respect to the State of California and the Attorney General's office.

Now, Jesus, as well as others of the House of Judah, remembered that this festival was asked to be observed by the people, just as it was asked to be observed, that is the Festival of Purim by Esther, except that the account that is found in Esther is a part of Scripture, whereas the material in the book of Maccabees is not a part of Scripture.

In either case, they are of the origin similar to our Thanksgiving or 4th of July.

They are national customs, and it would be good to recognize the distinction between our respect to the nation on the one hand and our respect to God on the other.

Now, Jesus paid his respects to the nation and came to the Feast of Dedication.

He undoubtedly came on other occasions, but John records specifically this one instance, and it shows that Jesus was not adverse to being there on such an occasion.

When I went through a previous Bible study on the story of Daniel VIII in this connection, I will not therefore be repeating this evening the account.

Or for that matter, would it be quite appropriate for me, without the kind of, let's say, rabbinic training that Mark Kaplan has had, or the kind of training in Hebrew history, to approach it as a strictly internal matter, telling the story between 164 B.C. and 4 B.C., which is the outline that I laid out? That is, if we have, in that sense, just passed that period in which the Festival of Lights or the rededication of the altar at the temple of God has been celebrated in the Jewish community and we read sections of the Bible pertaining to this, I thought it would be advisable since that ended the tense day of this present week for us to simply go on with the experience.

But before we go on with the experience, I would like to give our study this evening a different kind of approach, as I said, not the kind that one might expect from those who are reared in Jewish background or necessarily what I might deal with in a class on the subject if I were teaching that in the college.

I'd like to give you the feeling of what it was like to live in those days and to look into the Bible and to wonder what was going to happen, because those were very real people in God's church then.

It was a physical church, a nation state, it was God's nation, it was His church, it didn't have the same kind of independence it had before, but what was it like to live during this period? To get a perspective, I would like to illustrate a little of the background that might help you better understand this particular period in which really only Daniel 11 gives us any detail.

If we were to take note, and I had set the limit of 4 B.C. as that point in time where we are dealing with the birth of Jesus, just prior to the death of Herod, Herod died in the year 4-3 B.C., using the spring to spring reckoning there on the calendar, contrary to something recently published in the Los Angeles Times by an ex-minister who believes that the date of Jesus' birth is December 25th and that the star was the conjunction of a series of planets, I'm not going to address that question, I will only state that Herod did not die in 2 B.C. as that apostolate would require.

I'm limiting myself to the point of the birth of Jesus, and I want to go back and illustrate something you might not have really thought of.

The Old Testament comes to a conclusion in the story of the fall of Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Now for most of us, anything that is past is never perceived in the depth of the experience of the people who lived during that time.

For many people the days of Christopher Columbus or Jesus or Antiochus Epiphanes or Nebuchadnezzar is as if it were painted on one flat wall.

You don't really sense the time that has elapsed, and I would like to make this period a little more realistic and say that after the captivity Cyrus the king issued a decree for the return of the Jews, the restoration of the temple, and of the sacrifices.

This was issued in the first year of Cyrus.

The first year of his reign was 538-537 on the Persian spring-to-spring calendar, which was clearly in use by the early prophets that appeared after the Babylonian captivity.

They used the spring-to-spring reckoning too.

538 BC, the Jews were given permission.

It doesn't mean they left that very year, they probably left in the next year.

But in 538-537, without a date in the month somewhere in that calendar year, Cyrus issued a decree.

How long really is 538 before the birth of Jesus? Well it's 534 years before, that's not any problem for you to figure out.

But we live in 1980.

Do you know how long a time it was between the return of the Jews under Cyrus and the birth of Jesus? It was a longer period than from the invention of printing till now.

I want you to think about this so you see what God has chosen to put into the Bible and what he hasn't chosen to put into the Bible among the experiences of his church.

We have a lot recorded from the days of Moses to the days of Saul and every king's reign from Saul to Zedekiah and then the period of captivity.

But if we were to say that 4 BC is like our year, and we just simply have this as our end framework, then 538 BC is so far back in history for any who were living in the days of Herod that it would be like living in 1446 AD.

That's the period we're looking at in this broad perspective of which I wanted to focus on the last portion.

There was, of course, in 1453 the final invention of printing, as we think of it in the Western world, by a German named John Gooseflesh.

Now that's the English translation of his name.

Whether you can see, at least you can hear.

John Gooseflesh invented printing.

He was a friend of the Jews.

We know him generally as John Gutenberg.

He invented it in 1453.

But the remarkable thing is that you'd have to even go back seven years earlier to 1446 to have the same period of time elapse between Cyrus, who issued the decree and the birth of Jesus.

We would have to say it is the same time period that would take us from before the invention of printing to this very year.

That is an immense period.

This was before Christopher Columbus discovered, as we attribute it to him, the New World for the mind of the European.

As Mr. Armstrong has long since pointed out, the Indians discovered it before.

But in the mind of the European, therefore we should realize what it would be like back later to have vintage you in those times to have looked into the book of Daniel chapter 11.

Now we won't turn to it until the lights go on better.

But Daniel chapter 11, as you all know, is a long period of prophecy, picking up with the fall of Persia at the hands of the Greeks and all the details from there till now and into the future.

Our purpose is not to go through Daniel chapter 11 verse by verse because I didn't want to repeat some things, but I want to give you this feel of time.

If we were in the days of Queen Esther, you know, in the book of Esther, roughly 480 B.C.

Of course it covers a little broader period, but this was the time of the preparation of the war that Xerxes waged against the Greeks.

The book of Esther, centering around 480, was so far before the days of the birth of Jesus that we would have to go back to 1504 A.D. or 12 years after Columbus first came to the Caribbean.

That's how long a time it was between Esther and the birth of Jesus from the days of the life of Christopher Columbus till now.

That's a long period.

And I think we need to see this perspective because when we look in the past, anything that happened before our time seems painted on, you know, the wall at about the same depth.

There's not this feel of what was it like to live and to remember you had ancestors all during this period, and I hope it will help us better and the reason I'm approaching it this way to help us better watch world events and to realize we're about to enter 1981.

This is not, you know, 1950, 1960, 1970.

My awareness of course of the world and of the work in it, and as we look forward, covers all that as for some of you it does, but for others of you, you remember only the sixties and seventies.

You don't remember it before.

And for others of you, you only remember the seventies, depending on your age.

Ezra was given a letter that gave him permission to refurbish the temple 457 B.C.

That's the book of Ezra.

If we were to say how long was that before Jesus' birth, before the death of Herod? We would have to reel back human experience from 1980 all the way back to 1527 A.D.

We would be in the next generation after Columbus.

It's that long a time between Ezra and the birth of Jesus.

Now for most of you, you understand clearly that it's a long time between the generation that followed Christopher Columbus and ours, yet it was that same period that elapsed between Ezra and the death of Herod who was the king when Jesus was born.

Now, a little later in 444 B.C., there was a man who served at the king's table in Persia.

His name was Nehemiah, and he came to be a governor and restored the walls of Jerusalem.

444 B.C. or 440 years ago, if we were to go back 440 years from this year, we would be way back yet in 1540.

Luther, you see, had just caused the Reformation, and Europe was a stir with the Protestant Reformation.

Governor Nehemiah was living in a period before Jesus as long ago as the experience of the earliest Protestant reformers till now.

That's a long, long time.

And when you were reading the book of Daniel, you are still in the period of the kings of Persia.

If you were looking into Daniel 11, you would discover that there are a certain number of Persian kings to arise, and then, of course, you have the attack from Greece, which hasn't yet come.

In fact, when this attack came, we are in the year 332.

Let me just illustrate.

Alexander came through Palestine to Egypt in 332 B.C.

He later, the next year, in 331, smashed the Persians forever and dismantled their empire.

Now, if we were to go back from the birth of Jesus to the time that Alexander first came through Palestine, and you remember in the previous study that I had, I told you that the High Priest, of course, was seen in the vision by Alexander, and the Jewish community was given great favor by Alexander because, first, he thought to punish the Jews, and then, strangely, here was the High Priest dressed in the same manner as the one who spoke to Alexander that he would conquer the Persian realm, and he realized that it was a divine message and that the Jews, in some way, were the people of God.

And then they opened the book and showed from the book of Daniel that, indeed, Alexander, the king of Greece, would come and subdue the king of Persia.

And as I pointed up, they stopped at that point and didn't tell Alexander what was going to happen to him, but that wouldn't have been good politics, anyway.

But if we were to go back, we would have to go back in time from now all the way to 1650, just after that Charles I was beheaded, and while England had no one seated on the throne of Britain.

He would be in the second generation after the founding of Jamestown in Virginia, which was in 1607, for those of you who don't know that famous American date.

From Alexander to the birth of Jesus was as long a time as it was from the days of Oliver Cromwell till 1688.

You need to get this perspective of what it means to have all this time elapsed because those people, you know, Daniel wondered when this was all going to be wrapped up, didn't he? Of religion intertwined with this series of political rulers.

And we should expect that parallel with the persecution the church would endure from time to time over 19 centuries, there would be a political and a religious ruler that would be described as that fourth beast in Daniel, which happens to be the Roman Empire and its revivals and the religious role that has been played out on the panorama of that empire throughout the Middle Ages till recent times.

Then I learned there is coming a time of the end in verse 40.

If I lived in that day and would look at all this, it would be very difficult to understand how long this would be.

Daniel simply didn't know.

And all the time that takes us to read the account of the first 32 verses really only covers about five centuries.

And it really is a surprise to realize that the last verses of Daniel, 33 to 45 of chapter 11, cover essentially the next 19 centuries, or let us say the first two thirds of this book cover about five centuries, and the next cover over 19 centuries, the last third of the book.

And so much of the last third of the book is even involved with the very time of the end beginning in verse 40.

And so I would expect, looking down the stream of time, that there is this remarkable, basically unknown period, other than it's a time of persecution.

And indeed what happened to the church was very similar to what happened to the Jews who were the remnants of the Old Testament church, for many of them also fell by sword and flame and captivity and spoiled.

And they were helped only with a little help.

And sometimes people cleaved to them with flatteries too, but they were not those who instructed many among all the nations.

But much happened to the Jews, as also happened to the church.

So today, as we have finished this period of time, I would like to have us contemplate a new approach and get the feel of what it was like to live during that period and how many generations

elapsed then, to get the feel of what it would be like to be in the Apostle's day and to ask Jesus, well, now look, the Roman Empire is here.

This is the fourth one, the last beast of Daniel 7 that represents human governments that the devil uses.

How long will that beast survive? And it's various revivals.

As I said to them, it's not given for you to know.

Paul wrote a letter thinking that those of us who are alive and remain at the return of Jesus will be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air.

Paul even thought when he was writing in AD 50s that some in his day would even possibly live to see the conclusion of it all.

He had never read the book of Revelation.

He died before it was written.

He didn't have an understanding, even of Daniel chapter 12, much less of those things revealed in the book of Revelation.

Undoubtedly the disciples, meaning the twelve apostles in this case in particular, and many in that day, simply will hardly believe their ears when they realize that what seemed so near was then so far.

Now what we learn also from this, and a very important thing is, that when so much time elapses to bring about the end of all things, that when the time of the end suddenly comes, it happens so fast.

You and I have lived many in the church for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, maybe thirty years and more.

Numerous things have happened, but the climax has not yet come, it seems, to go so.

Little by little, one piece of the puzzle and then another falls into place, and suddenly everything will fall into place with such speed that, as the book of Daniel chapter 12 points up, basically when it is all going to be fulfilled, it will be in a little over three and a half years, and it will all wind up that quickly, but it has taken otherwise so long.

I have here three books, I could have brought others, but these I think are illustrations.

If you like the feel of what the world was like around you, but not in your land, just around you, let's say you were living at that time or you're trying to see what was occurring on the horizon, trying to understand as time goes on, will it be Rome that will occupy Greece and Syria and our land and then finally to discover it is? The best simple background book that I know of, something that anybody could use for reference, is this Encyclopedia of World History, an Encyclopedia of World History edited by William Langer, it's the famous one that, it's the best of its kind, it is as error free, typographically, as one could expect, it's extremely accurate and well done, and it gives you a simple background, so you don't have to read in much detail, very, very simple outlines of what was going on in Egypt, the king of the south, what was going on in Syria, the king of the north, what was going on in the west, ultimately the fourth beast, and what was going on in your own land, Palestine, that is the promised land, Judea.

There is a very good book that covers the story graphically, it has some typographical errors, some things that you need to know, it's called the Macmillan Bible Atlas, it is a very interesting work done by Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Aviona, they are both dead now, are they not, Aviona is dead, is he

not, I believe so, Aharoni died and I think Aviona also is, I believe that is the case, two Jewish scholars, I have met both men, I have talked to both of them, the work that was done here I didn't think was done with the same typographical care, but the maps are absolutely marvelous, the maps are absolutely marvelous, they cover for instance the period that we have been dealing with, in some cases year by year and every major event is laid out, of the different battles that were fought between the Jews and the Syrians and the expansion of Judea, the expansion into Syria, Galilee, Samaria in the north, Idumea in the south and finally the role of the coming of the Romans will be laid out, it is the best graphic presentation with very simple material, you can supplement it too, I highly recommend an approach like this to give you a background if you have ever wanted to study in some depth Daniel 11 and the background of that period between the Old Testament and the New, a more accurate presentation typographically but by no means free of typographical errors is the world history of the Jewish people published a volume at a time and I didn't want to bring too many and frighten you, the previous one is the Hellenistic and this one is the Herodian period, there are two separate volumes and volume seven is the Herodian and the Hellenistic is volume six, Michael Aviona is the editor also, this was done in Jerusalem in 1975, some pictures in black and white a few maps, much text, very, very accurate information, very readable because the Hebrews were editors of this, there are typographical errors that somebody who speaks English as his first language regularly, it wouldn't have allowed but those are the little things you will spot, anyway if you wanted to know what it was like to live in the Herodian period because this book goes much further than I have today, this is the entire period, the priesthood, the Sanhedrin, the state of Jerusalem, the whole Herodian dynasty in the province of Judea is all laid out here, you don't have to go to controversial works by German scholars, there are some very technical books that are thorough but I've thought the true and think that this approach is the most helpful a map with simple statements, one map after another, a little outline of things as they have happened and then a more literary presentation but simply written, clearly written, very readable, the Hellenistic period, the Roman period and that is the Herodian period, excuse me, you don't have to have the whole set, these volumes are just published one at a time but this gives you, I think the best view, it's a new way of approaching it simply, it is not let's say what we would expect of those who teach the subject, they would add other volumes if we were to teach this material in the college but for you this is the best source of information in the simplest, I appreciate the opportunity to approach this subject in a way that perhaps will let you see how much time occurred in this unknown period during which the nation that was gods and the church that was his lived, to put it in a closing form here, between Cyrus and the birth of Jesus, between the return from captivity and the birth of Jesus was five and a third centuries, five and a third centuries before Cyrus takes us back to the days of Samuel the judge.

There was as long a time between the return from captivity and the birth of Jesus as from the birth or the time of Samuel the judge and the captivity, the story of Samuel and Saul and David and Solomon in the dynasties of Israel and their 19 kings and the long dynasty of Judah was no longer than this period of which we have as a people today so little knowledge and I have tried to emphasize of course the late period rather than the earlier period, the earlier is partly covered in the bible in Ezra, Nehemiah, we have a fragment in the second chronicles but I have tried to cover that late period that leads up to the time of the birth of Jesus that follows this festival that has just been celebrated in the Jewish community in which some of us sometimes share in on the basis of our understanding of the importance of this festival to the Jewish nation and the type that that festival has for future events. I hope that you will take a little time at this season of the year to read the story and perhaps go back into the Persian period because we are now in the 10th month of the year almost well yes we are this is this is the new moon up there in the sky and the month of Adar is when the festival of Purim or the remarkable events of the book of Esther are celebrated so during this

period from December through March it might be very interesting to note that the two national festivals of the Jewish nation are celebrated no command in terms of the Christian church but it would be worth understanding just as we give due consideration in this country to the 4th of July or to Thanksgiving and to note what happened during this period under the Persians and then under the Seleucid Greeks and the implication that has for the very very serious problems that lie ahead that's between state and church and of course the final tribulation and the return of Jesus Christ with that I'll have these three volumes out here for those of you who might be interested to take a look and I hope if you haven't seen them that you would do so have a very good evening and come back safely tomorrow and remember the cafe clutch from one to two and the earlier study for the teenage in room s one one one the science building from 11 to 1230