

15 HLH Prophecy 1 AM 770507p3

Mr. Tkach has suggested that I speak on the subject of prophecy, so I should like to today to discuss this area in some manner that might be of help to all of us at this time. Prophecy itself is a very broad subject, and therefore what I would like to focus in on is what I would call the history, the prophecy in the Church. By the Church, I mean those who have been converted in a part of the congregation of God, if you please, from able to this day.

Because we want to take a broad look at a matter that I think is important and would help us better understand and grasp the subject as of 1977. We're going to look at how prophecy has been given, what was not known, and at what time certain things became known, why God doesn't make everything known until specific periods. First of all, we must take a look at God's revelation, not in terms of the book that we call the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but in terms of the development of that book, and what we did know at a certain time on the basis of what constituted the revelation of God to his Church at different periods. Prophecy, in a sense, may be termed history in advance. It is a record partly of what God chooses to allow to occur in the world, and also partly what God intends to impose on the world whether the world wants it or not. What we should take note of is that the earliest prophecy as such that we have a record of is not recorded until late in time, but must have been verbally known from time to time.

We presume that some things have been verbally known or repeated, or it was known that so-and-so spoke. The first one to whom the words of prophecy are attributed as such is Enoch, who was the seventh in the lineage beginning with Adam. It says in Jude chapter 1, the only chapter, verse 14, behold, the Lord comes with 10,000 of his saints, and verse 15, the purpose of this is to execute judgment upon all. The whole world is going to be judged to convince all that are ungodly, that's bringing them to conversion, among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have, I'm reading the King James version, ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. That's all we have a record of, but I think it is important to note that the first prophecy, though not recorded, I should say, in Genesis, is in fact recorded in Jude very late in the sequence of the written material of the New Testament Church, and its outline is the return, the coming of the Lord or His presence with 10,000 of his saints, and to begin the judgment on the world. We presume therefore a judgment has already occurred on the saints or they wouldn't be there, so we may deduce that from the prophecy that there is a judgment of the saints in advance of their coming, and that they are to come with the eternal God, who is the Lord, to judge the world and to convince people who have not already been convinced, both of their wicked deeds and the things they have mouthed that they shouldn't have, people who have transgressed God's law because they're sinners. This presumes then a time in which people are to be converted and which people are to be forgiven their sins. This is the simple summary, and this is where prophecy begins. The important thing then to note is what constitutes the prophecy and what does not. There is no time element, no reference to a thousand years, no reference to how long men have sinned in the meantime. The concept of time is at this point not a fundamental element, but only the broad outline of events that we associate with the return of Jesus Christ today and the millennium. But we only have the reference of Lord, there is no reference to Christ, and no reference to a thousand years as it begins. Beyond this we would conclude that very little in fact was given to start with but the broad picture of God's action in the world and the simple picture that human beings will both do and think things that are contrary to God's law and that they need to be convinced that those things were an error. Now as we look down in time we come to the case of Abraham, and in the case of

Abraham there is something slightly different which is added. Here we learn that Abraham was looking and we don't find this again in the book of Genesis, we have to find it in the book of Hebrews. Now he looked for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. Now Abraham was a prophet but we don't have any quotations so much of his prophecy, his quotations from God to him, but in Hebrews 11 verse 10 we at least have the indication that Abraham was looking in a prophetic sense, Hebrews 11 verse 10, for a city which had foundations whose builder and maker is God. Now one might draw the implication that Abraham was even looking for the city while he was in the land of Canaan, but he never found it. God did not actually tell him either to us through Paul here in Hebrews or in any statement found in the book of Genesis when this city should appear. Now we wouldn't know about this city until in fact we've come to the last few chapters in the book of Revelation, but we do know that in some way Abraham knew that there should come a time in the future in which God's government is going to be on earth and is going to rule from a city whose builder and maker is in this case God. Now that's all that we have a record of, but it indicates that God revealed something like that and also other matters about the multiplication of the children of Abraham himself. There was a knowledge prophetically of the resurrection. For Abraham and all these looked forward to events in which they did not participate.

Verse 13, these all died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed there were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, declaring plainly, therefore, that they seek a country which is not now here, that is, that there was no government on earth, no government on earth to which they were willing to give their whole life and allegiance. If truly they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they might have of course had an opportunity to return, but they desired something better whose origin in terms of both law and government and leadership is from heaven, so that God, because they sought him, is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Now the interesting thing again in these two areas of prophecy is that we have no reference to things that men will do other than their sins, but we have a reference to what God intends in terms of its long range, accomplishment, the establishment of the government of God, first by the return of Christ or the Lord and his saints, then the judgment of the world, then the establishment of a country governed by God's law whose origin is from heaven, and the final appearance of a city from which that government will proceed.

Now all of this is never defined in terms of time. It is only defined in terms of either an event or a description of what shall occur. Prophecy then, if we come down to the time of Abraham, in the first third of human experience, speaking of time in the first 2,000 years of human experience, involved little more than a broad outline of what God himself should ultimately do in bringing about the establishment of his government on earth after Adam had forfeited the opportunity to participate in it at the beginning. We come to Moses. We don't need to cover every little aspect in between in the case of Jacob or Joseph, but we come to the days of Moses.

For the first time, we have God intervening in an unusual way in the earth with respect to the establishment of a people. Now he intervened at the flood, but that's not what I am referring to.

Here he is intervening in the days of Moses and establishing a people, a people destined to form Abraham. If they had done what God asked, a prophetic deed of setting an example of what the government of God would be like. In other words, in a world that has departed from God, God chose now the children of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, organized by Moses into a church and nation, gave them a law. And although this was in the letter and they were given to carnal people, the purpose was that this nation should set an example of what the law of God and the government of God should be like. In other words, it was to be prophetic of what that world was to be, a nation with

blessings, a nation without the necessity of all the personal recriminations and divorces and violets, a nation that would have been blessed, both in terms of its children and in terms of its natural wealth, in terms of its happiness, so that other nations around would say, well, look, this is something unusual. And they would have inquired and the nation would have said, well, look, we're given now the laws of God that ultimately God is going to bring to the whole world in place of what you have. Now, most of us never think of prophecy in these terms.

Most of us, in contrast, want to know how long will it be until or what is some gentile nation going to do next. And we're thinking, interestingly, of the very areas that, as prophecies started out, are not a part of the focus of what God is saying in prophecy.

Balaam came along in the days of Moses. In a Numbers chapter 24, this man conveys a particular message that is very important. We won't go over most of his prophecy, but this is purposefully recorded because he spoke nothing in this instance but what the Lord allowed him to convey what God would do. Now, what is the first time element that would indicate the character of the world when God would intervene? The answer is clear in the closing verses of chapter 24, the Book of Numbers.

He took up a parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God does this? Ships shall come from the coast of Kiddum and afflict Asher and afflict Abraham, and he also shall perish forever. Now, even though one may want to comment a little more lengthily on these verses, there is something significant that for the first time shows up.

Who shall live when God does this? In a sense, implies the question of human survival.

And when this terrible time of affliction shall come in a struggle between nations, some will perish forever. That is, of course, ultimately a reference to a Babylon which had not yet occurred. We learn now that in the days of Moses, the events of God's intervention would have to wait for such a long time that it would be a period in which it was possible for human life not to survive. God, in other words, is saying that he is letting this go until man's ingenuity, his gifts being abused, bring humanity to the place where it is a question of who will live when God brings about this ultimate fulfillment of prophecy? And the answer would be, of course, no one and less God would intervene in time to prevent the total destruction of the human race.

So we conclude this would not be in the Bronze Age. It wouldn't be in the Iron Age.

It wouldn't be in the Classical Age. It wouldn't be in the Dark Ages it followed.

It wouldn't be in the Age of the Commercial Revolution or the Industrial Revolution.

It could only be at a period of time in which the consequences of warfare would be such that all human beings would have no way of surviving because it would affect the nature of the cellular life of man himself. The sword, the cannon, could not do this, much less the bow and the arrow. It could only be when men develop such weapons that it is not possible if they are utilized in mass for the human race biologically to survive, whether or not the individual is near the weapon that is used. It would only be possible when one can say there is no place to hide, and at that point God should choose to intervene. After man has shown the ultimate consequences of his deeds, and so from this we draw now another conclusion. Prophecy then is to tell us not only what God shall do, but at what period before which he will not do it and further that the ultimate purpose of allowing man to bring himself to this place is to show that man left by himself going his way with whatever kinds of government he shall seek to establish is not capable by himself of bringing the human family through to survival and peace and happiness. You know the declaration of independence conveys something

of the purpose and intent of the government of the United States. It is to bring about, we are told, a state of affairs in which we may have life, liberty, and continually pursue, but presumably never find happiness. Most people assume that life and liberty and happiness are all guaranteed by the Constitution. This is not the case. We are only guaranteed the pursuit of happiness. Life and liberty don't automatically guarantee it.

But every nation has a government which was established for a purpose and God's purpose in allowing it is to show that no government cut off from the government of God that divorces God, as this country does, or any other country such as the atheists who run the Soviet Union and China and the various satellites will ever be able to bring about what they want to achieve. The Communists seek to bring about a world in which man is happy, in which man is divorced from the pursuits of acquiring for himself those things which make him jealous of his neighbor.

The Soviet Union is debating, in fact, how much we should all share and their conclusion is, though not finalized, that probably the only private property we should ever need to retain is our underclothing in our teeth and our toothbrushes. Beyond that, we should be able to share everything else. And this is supposed to produce happiness.

I use those two as an illustration because today the two most powerful countries, seeking to bring about a world of peace and happiness, are attempting to do so while in a state of war with each other that is called a cold, not a hot war.

And each one assumes that the other way is not the way to go to get it. Further, each one is prepared to start the war, to end all wars, in order to see the other won't be imposed, not to mention various third parties with ideas along the way that are neither a part of the philosophy of the West and the United States or that of the Soviet Union.

Now, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself, but what I am saying is that this is the logical outgrowth of all that we have seen in these few prophecies thus far given.

And it is a different view, I think, than most of us have had, where we have tended to focus in on certain prophecies that occurred late in a sequence of events.

Following the days of Moses, in which he also gave prophecies of what should happen, as Jacob also did, about the latter days and what would happen to the children of Israel for good or evil, and we can't cover everything in occasions such as this at one hour's time, we come now to a very important beginning of a new section in the Bible.

Following the close of Deuteronomy, where we have a broad outline, remember, in the times of punishment that it to be visited on the children of Israel, the miseries that come from sin, the blessings that come from obedience, but no actual major outline of history itself, but only an outline of the consequences of good and the consequences of evil, and an outline of what God himself shall do when he begins to intervene at a time of course, when human life is threatened. Following Deuteronomy, then, we have the beginning of a series of books that over the centuries began to be formed. Now it was about another four centuries in which we have two books in our present form, or one in the scrolls, Joshua Judges. So we now have passed through approximately 3,000 years of human experience by the time we have such items as the law and Joshua Judges. Now there are few little books along the way, like perhaps Ruth, or one might say the book of Job, but I'll skip that for a moment.

Job looked down the stream of time, you remember, and he saw the resurrection, he saw what life would be like in the resurrection, that apart from this flesh, I shall see God, and that I will stand in

the latter days, he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth, and there won't be a resurrection till the heavens as we see them will be no more.

Again, he's focusing way into the future, you see. But when we get back to the period of time here of Joshua Judges, we have judges who were raised up, and these two books constituting one scroll, interestingly enough, are called the first of the prophets. Now for the first time, prophecy takes on some added flesh, shall we say. We don't have a prophecy so much as, thus sayeth the Lord, and something to happen, we have in fact fundamentally history. But this history is regarded as a prophecy because the law and the prophets represent one, the first five books, and then everything else that follows beginning with Joshua Judges, and then the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the three major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor, these are all regarded as the prophets. The church came to realize that the purpose for Joshua and Judges was not merely to tell us the history, but to profit by the experience.

Again, a view that merely because an event happened, it should not be categorized as something that has no meaning for us, but that we should profit by the experience of the mistakes and of the good judgment of those whose record is recorded.

Those who do, in principle, what we find in these two books in terms of obedience will receive those rewards, such as are described in Hebrews 11. Those who make the mistakes as recorded in these books will reap the consequences both individually and nationally.

For 3,000 years then, as far as the church is concerned, it had a few broad outlines with respect to the intervention of God, the resurrection, the judgment, the government of God, the city of God, a change, shall we say, in the appearance of the heavens at that time, all of which is to occur in a world in which man is most unlikely to serve without God's intervention.

Then we come to the days of David and Solomon. Now, David was a prophet. We therefore may understand that however historical and in whatever historical setting the Psalms are given, the Psalms have a prophetic meaning.

So we note that in the beginning of the third part of the Bible, as it is preserved by the church that is the congregation of Israel or the Jewish community, we have the law, the prophets, and the writings. The first book of the writings is by a prophet, and the organization of the book of Psalms into five separate parts tells us something of a series of events. Most of these focus in on the individual or rulers or the state of the nation. There is no timetable through thousands of years of history. There is only a concept of what the world is going to be like at the close and the intervention of God and the state of affairs when the nation learns, speaking of Israel, what God himself has promised and when it comes to repentance. What you ought to do then, if you want to see how much David understood, is to see that David's focus was not a focus of what's going to happen century by century, but a focus on God's law, a focus on the time when the nation repents and the trials that preceded, and vague references, if you please, to the time that we might call the millennium, a reference to the thought that far as God's concerned that days like a thousand years, we may draw the conclusion then that some began to think of the possibility that human experience might be compared to the natural week, as we call it. Six days of labor and one of the seven. The days of unleavened bread are six, sorry, are seven days long.

The piece of tabernacles is actually seven, not eight days long, with some event happening afterwards. So by looking at the festivals, they might have discerned that indeed this whole thing could be something like seven thousand years, but it would only have been an analogy.

But for the first time from the days of Moses to David, we have obviously individuals who meditated on the law and grasped the possibilities that indeed God's time of judging might be like the Sabbath, people learning on the Sabbath and contact with God, his presence on that day, might be like a thousand years, but no more than an analogy. That's all. There is not a single statement, not only through the time of David, but anywhere else in all the Old Testament, as to the actual length of the government of God, while the world and nations are being judged and taught and convinced. Following the time of David, in which I think I might say it would be good for you to read the Psalms to see the trend of events. It's a long 150 separate chapters or Psalms, but if you were to read each of the five portions in the sense that you look at the beginnings and the ends of each portion and look at the beginning first and the end of the Psalms themselves, and then notice the spirit of each of the separate five divisions. You will see there is a small but important movement of time at the close of human experience, but no reference to events covering a period of 3,000 years.

Following the days of David, we come to a period of prophets, people who specifically were given messages, some of whom were of the Levitical family, some were not. They are given messages, but the messages are seldom recorded. They rather recorded what we call history in Samuel 1 and 2 in the Book of Kings, Book 1. Of course, we come to a major prophet such as Jeremiah and Isaiah in terms of the Second Book of Kings. We attribute the Second Book of Kings certainly to Jeremiah, but actually a number of prophets for a few centuries were coming whose records we have very little of, some of whose records we have gathered together in what we call the Minor Prophets or the Twelve, and you should know what section of the Book of the Bible that is. That's Hosea through Malachi. But the bulk of their work is recorded in Samuel, Second Samuel and First and Second Kings, which constitute the continuation of prophecy in the form of history. And we must therefore add to Joshua judges the books of Samuel and Kings as the former prophets.

That is, because it's first in the order preceding the latter prophets, though some books of the latter prophets were the works of men whose story and whose efforts contributed to the books of Samuel and Kings. We must therefore not neglect when we want to understand prophecy the fact that the longest section of the Bible apart from songs that we tend to read over and not pay attention to, which is a prophecy, is the material from Joshua through Second Kings, which is not including First and Second Chronicles, because that's a part of the writing. We should read then and see what happened to the nation, what happened to religion, what happened to individual kings, when people repented, when people did not. And all of this gives a broad view of the real focus of prophecy.

And we are down to about 3,500 years of human experience, because when Second Kings ends, we're in the days of Zedekiah and the King of Judah.

Most of us do not read these things from the point of view of what the Church recognizes them to be.

We see them as history. We do not see why this history is preserved and called prophecy, because we have overlooked these, and in place of them, we have jumped to a few chapters, interestingly, in Zachariah or Revelation or Daniel, and just because that was...

We make the same mistake in how we read the Bible. That is, people start out, for example, and try to understand escalations. If I have ever read the books of Testament, precede thought, that if you had read them, you would never have misunderstood thought.

In the same way, look at these other books of the Bible first, before I down to some of the specific mysteries of Zachariah or Daniel chapter nine or four.

It's important that at this time you learn that God chose not to reveal everything in some logical order, that there could be no question about crimes often of human conduct. A king sins, a king sins, a king does not repent. The priesthood obeys, the priesthood disobeys.

Individuals, and of course the gentiles. In all of these, you are left to evaluate the material in terms of its meaning. That is, to choose the right, the fact that we're given a choice, and the consequences when we obey the blessings, and the consequences when we disobey the curses.

Still, as we come to Jeremiah and Ezekiel over there in Mesopotamia, this is the broad outline.

Ezekiel tends to give most of his prophecies in time order until we come to the section of the Gentile nations, because they were given in various times. Ezekiel has no time frame, no century by century record of what shall happen. We do have an indication of what is going to happen in the future. There are many prophecies being added about individual Gentile nations in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, most of them in the Middle East, but some of them in the far north that we associate with the Soviets today. So there are many individual prophecies about individual national behavior, and who will be joined with whom, and who will oppose whom, all of this focusing in at the close of human experience, because it usually ends up with God intervening. That's the return of the Lord, of which you read in the book of Jude from the prophecy of Enoch. In other words, until we come to Daniel, we have no time frame at all that was ever revealed to the Church. We could say this period of time must elapse these events within such and such a period. When we come now to Daniel, who began to speak at this time and who outlived both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, we have for the first time two unique things that I draw to your attention. One, a prophecy that is given specifically to a Gentile ruler, which he could not resolve, and Daniel had to interpret. Two, a series of time lengths, which as far as Daniel was concerned, was absolutely clear to him in his wording and absolutely incomprehensible in its meaning.

I hope you heard me clearly. He knew exactly what was being said in terms of the Hebrew grammar, and he understood nothing of the meaning of those time frames.

Nebuchadnezzar, being a Gentile, was interested not in what God would do, he was interested in what he was going to do in his nation and his descendants.

And God now for the first time chooses to outline, if you please, not in century by century or generation by generation, but outline a series of events over the centuries to the coming of the Messiah, when the government of God would be set up. And for the first time in the book of Daniel, we have the beginning of a series of events laid out, a series of nations that would succeed one another and rulers succeeding one another, and how there would be ups and downs.

We know these in terms of the four world powers of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

We know them that way. When Daniel was writing, all he knew is that Babylon was ruling, Persia would overthrow it, the Medes and the Persians, and another prophecy spoke of the King of Javan and the King of Persia. But beyond that, Daniel would have to figure out now what nation, what power would ever overthrow the King of Javan? I doubt that it ever occurred to Daniel to give a second thought to a little village on seven hills in the Italian peninsula.

It may be that as far as Daniel was concerned, he never knew of the little community of Rome.

I just want you to see it from the point of view of the men who wrote.

How do you think Daniel was ever going to comprehend that fourth beast with seven heads and ten horns when he didn't even know what city or what nation it would be? And then we do know from

the prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar was given that it is only a series of events and national rises and falls, but no actual statement of the length of time.

Only later in Daniel's life to himself were revealed such enigmatic prophecies as 70 weeks, which as far as Daniel was concerned, began nowhere, and he wasn't even sure where it ended, or 1,260, or three and a half times, or 1,290, or 1,335 days, or 2,300 evening and mornings, sacrifices being the implication.

Not a one of those events that Daniel was given that give us a period of time was ever, shall we say, nailed down in terms of the Hebrew calendar and the movement chronologically of time. There is no statement of beginning or end that Daniel could figure out.

No statement of beginning or end, but only of a period of time, and some of them would seem to be days without interpreting them as years, and others would seem to be days to be interpreted as years. Now, if I have skipped two time elements in the book of Ezekiel, it's because as far as our purpose today, it is not important to note that there are two time elements with respect to Judah and Israel of 40 and 390, but we won't bother with that. Now, there isn't time to evaluate it all. Daniel had to wait near the close of his life, and suddenly one of these began to make sense, the 70 weeks.

Daniel was told that there would come forth a decree which would commit the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and there would be 70 weeks, and so many weeks, and so many weeks within the 70 would elapse to the coming of the Messiah, the Prince. Now, there are two possible things here that Daniel might have concluded, one, that the Messiah would return with all his saints, like Enoch said, to convince the world of sin. So Daniel might have thought that maybe the government of God could be set up in another 490 years, 70 times 7, prophetically, 70 weeks, you see.

At least he had a point in time that the first year of Cyrus the King, Persian Reckoning 538 Nisan to 537 Adar, inclusive, could be the beginning, but not one of the others was clear.

Daniel never lived to see the fact that a later King of Persia set aside that decree, and he said, I am preventing this from being further fulfilled until I make the decree.

And the count of the 490, in fact, started all over, and what looked like the beginning of that count turned out not to be. I want you to see what God did not allow the prophets to understand.

Isaiah was given a message. Isaiah, turn here the beginning here.

Chapter 9, for unto us a child is born, a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and wouldn't you assume that this would be something like maybe 30 years between the time of his birth that he takes over the government, or at most 70, and not 2000? Here is the prophecy of Isaiah, in which God tells us that a child is born, a son is given, without the least hint that century after century would elapse between that time and the time the government would be on his shoulder. And of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end upon the throne of David. God plainly did not intend, man can know, the time element between the birth of the Messiah, and when the government should be restored. Therefore, when the apostles asked Jesus during and at the close of his ministry, will you restore the government at this time? He said it is not given for you to know.

God never gave it for Isaiah to know. It was never given for the prophets to know.

It wasn't even given for the apostles. Paul was so aware of the coming of the Messiah and the resurrection that he thought, as many, that it might well be in his own time because when Jesus was now coming at the end of about 4,000 years of human experience, we passed over the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Jesus said that there would be a series of events that would happen, faults, teachers, wars, famines, pestilences, Jerusalem would be surrounded with armies, and this generation will not pass till all these things be fulfilled, and then you'll see the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, in the heavens, and he is in fact then pictured as lightning, as the light of the sun from east to west, the angels coming, and the angels gathering together the saints, and any apostle or any church member would hardly have mistook the ideas of Jesus in Matthew 24 and the parallel chapters in Mark and Luke. If you were living in 66 AD, in 67 and 68 and 69, and you saw the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, it would be very difficult for you to draw the conclusion with what you then had, but what this would seem to be the fulfillment of what Jesus said, and this is why some modern theologians think that Jesus didn't quite get the picture straight.

Jesus himself said that the Father has reserved the time element for himself. He further said that it wasn't given to those of that day to know when. They had the puzzle of the 7,000-year picture. They had the puzzle of Jesus' own prophecy in chapter 24 of Matthew as an illustration that no flesh would be saved alive until these things would occur, just like villain.

But there was no indication that the Roman armies were yet prepared to create a situation when no flesh would be saved alive, though a lot of those in Jerusalem might have thought it was true after the Romans nearly decimated the city. Nevertheless, it was not fulfilled.

And for another 30 to 35 years, God never explained why, and all Peter could do was say, that as far as the Lord is concerned, so let's turn to Peter. This was his only explanation he could offer, that there would come scoffers who are ignorant of what God has done and ignorant of this one thing, 2 Peter 3.8, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. In other words, that as far as God is concerned, a thousand years of human experience can be collapsed in one days of God's and one days of God's experience can be parallel to a thousand years of human. And it is no more than a broad understanding. It is not a specific statement.

It is an analogy based on perhaps the week, as we have seen. It is more likely just a reference of how long a thousand years really is compared to a day. Now we must not forget, he said, that the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but he is patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But it didn't occur to Peter that Christ's slackness is at least 19 centuries longer than he at first might have estimated.

Now I hope I'm coming clear to you to understand the state of mind of those to whom God committed his word. You see, the one thing that we note is that God was always emphasizing the responsibility to choose between good and evil. And the consequences of both and the responsibility to convey the message of the government of God being established and your responsibility to qualify in your life for a responsibility there.

Not to get in, but for a responsibility within, because you get in through the mercy of God and the forgiveness of God and the granting of his Holy Spirit. But what you will do there depends on what you are willing to do here and now with your life.

You don't earn salvation, it's a free gift of God, but you do earn a rank in the government of God. He is not going to let you rule and govern others until you first learn to rule and govern yourself. And the degree to which you do it with yourself and grow spiritually is the degree you have such a responsibility in the world tomorrow. And that distinction is not normally seen.

Anyway, somewhere like 35 years later, John receives a revelation while a prisoner.

It is called the Book of Revelation. And in it, there was a scroll unrolled in which there had been seals. And somewhere along the line, after the scroll was unrolled, there again comes that three and a half times or 1,260. And John sees in Revelation, as we now call it chapter 12, the church fleeing for 1,260 years.

He is not told when it begins or when it ends. And after 1,260 years, he finds the church has to flee again for three and a half years. And he's not told the time between the two events.

But he is told, apparently, that at the end of that last three and a half years, the return of Christ is imminent in chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation.

John had no way to know how long it would be, because although there is a reference to 1,260 years, he's never told when it began or when it ended. And he isn't told the time between the end of it and the next time a three and a half year period begins. You look at Revelation 12 and you see what I mean. John could only guess that it was at least 13 centuries or thereabouts.

And it was, as it turned out to be, many more.

Then somewhere along the line, as John was reading, he learns that the government of God is going to be on earth, ruling for a thousand years. And this is the first time it has ever stated the thousand years. Therefore, the analogy would seem to be rather clear that after the pattern of the week, it would seem that about 6,000 years is allotted for man.

And John must have realized that there would be many centuries yet.

Not Paul, not Peter, but John realized it for the first time.

Then you could understand something more of Daniel.

John knew, not Daniel, that Rome was the fourth beast. But he didn't have the faintest idea of how Rome would rise and fall for seven successive times after the empire collapsed.

And that the final restoration would have 10 parts, all of that was just so much into the future.

And not until the 1930s did it become plain to the Church of God that five of those 10 had fallen and one is and one was yet to come. And the one that was yet to come looked so much like it could have been Hitler. After Mussolini, who is, that Miss Armstrong wondered if Hitler would in fact fulfill the final one. It turned out that the Rome Berlin axis was more like the two legs in the two feet. Hitler did not. The two divisions of this Roman system, Hitler called his the third Reich, which meant clearly that it was in the continuity of the Holy Roman Empire because the first Reich was one of the restorations. So both Hitler and Mussolini regarded themselves as in the tradition of the Holy Roman Empire or the Roman Empire. I guess the Germans were more Holy than the Italians there because Mussolini never called his Holy. Only the Germans had a Holy one.

And this Armstrong discovered during the Second World War when I listened to the broadcast that indeed it was not correct that Hitler gave every evidence that he was about to, but that God was not allowing him to fulfill the role of the Seventh Head, which is yet to come and we didn't know when. Now I'm looking at the history of the New Testament church, how long it spoke before its work stopped. We recognize that there were three, eight years before the Romans abolished public presentation in 69 AD because of revolution in the Roman world spreading far and wide.

And we drew an analogy and I can remember when we saw the analogy itself. We were there around 1953.

There were many who thought it impossible that we would be here even as late as 1972, including Mrs. Herbert W. Armstrong or Loma Armstrong at the time.

That seemed preposterously a law. It would put her well into the 70s. And with the crisis between the Soviet Union and the United States in Germany suddenly rising up in the saddle because of the Korean War, which had just passed, who would have thought that the 60s would have gone by? And 72. And here we are in May 7, 1977.

I just let you think about the whole thing a little bit for the simple reason that we never knew at that time how the last state of the church would be fulfilled in Revelation chapter 3. Nor did we realize that a whole generation of these, shall I call them, Nazis would mostly come and go. And practically all who had any role are dead.

And only young people who hardly have a remembrance of Hitler are here today.

That instead of a fighting pope, there would be a decaying church.

Instead of the Soviet Union pressing the Cold War, it is pushing for detainment.

That this country, though it lost the pride and its power in the Korean War, is still unchallengeable, or the Soviet Union would already have done it.

We did not know that Mr. Armstrong had to speak to nations and towns and kingdoms, and that he is not yet finished, because there are many he has not yet reached.

And nobody wants to press the button yet.

We are at a point in which the beginning of the end has yet to begin.

And we are here primarily to finish a task before God intervenes by first casting Satan down on earth, and removing him from heaven.

We have yet a time of peace to finish the work.

When God is satisfied with the work, when he is finished with having Satan accused the work, the beginning of the end will stop.

How long between now and then is no more clear to us, though there are possibilities, then it was clear to either Daniel or even John the Apostle.

Whether Mr. Armstrong will ever finish the task or someone else must finish in his place still remains to be seen.

How long the Arabs will do with what they have.

The king of Iran, the Shah, has said that my memory serves me correctly, that Persia is likely to run out of oil and must import energy sources by around 1985, if my memory serves me correctly from a recent state, which is the same as Satan.

They're going to either have to act and use the leverage that they have, or we don't have the faintest idea whether it will even be in this generation.

But there are some limitations.

And whether the limitation of the seven times of punishment, or 2,520 years on Babylon, is indeed the standard and the only guideline for the moment.

Daniel chapter 4 remains to be seen.

We assume that prophecy meant 2,520 years to the final fall of Babylon.

I would wonder if we should have seen it as 2,520 years to the revival when the stump starts out again.

And with that enigma, we will now have a closing song.