

940706 Time for Messiah HLH BS

Originally, I was not assigned on this occasion, but the congregation had a responsibility and the pastor was en route to Australia, so the lot fell to me at the same time and on the same day that we were to have our Tucson meeting and discuss the festival so that we were able to put it together reasonably well. There are all sorts of familiar faces I see here.

I want to express appreciation, of course, publicly to the leadership that is in the city of Tucson in terms of festival planning. The number of topics were discussed regarding the Bible study, and it was thought appropriate to address a question that was also part of our general discussion in Tucson in terms of background for the festival, because the festival is not the time to discuss the things that sometimes need to be locally presented.

There are times when we need to discuss the question of what is the church, where is the church, why are you here and not with others, and why are others not here, and why are many with others who have never been with us going to be here sometime. All those things need to be understood in advance, and so it is important that we learn something of the nature of our responsibility in the church, which brings us to the question of how the church was born, who was to bring it about, and how remarkable the time of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth is in terms of laying the foundation for the institution that is the church of God. I would like to give some overviews and some that might be thoughts that might be repetitious for a few, but I don't think that you have ever heard it put together in this fashion, even though you may have heard separate pieces on occasion. For example, we understand something unique occurred with the founding of the church of God. Now, what relationship does this have with respect to the events that preceded? And where was the history of the congregation of Israel to end, and something completely new to begin? That is, did the story of the congregation of Israel, as recorded in the Bible, lead one to think that at its close, Messiah's kingdom would be immediately established? Well, it would appear that in terms of those who thought they understood the Old Testament, apart from the question of prophecies about the day of the Lord, they thought it would be established in the days of the early Roman Empire or in the days of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, we do have a remarkable statement regarding one of the features of the Tabernacle and later the temple. There was the story of a candelabra, if we may use a modern term, or a menorah with seven lamps, not seven separate lamp stands, but seven lamps on a single stand. What is significant about that symbolism is that in a sense it was to give us an understanding of the nature of the congregation of Israel and its government that would occur through the period that corresponded with the rituals, the sacrifices, if you please, given to the children of Israel under the supervision of the family of Aaron as the priesthood, that in fact you have the story of Israel as a church and as a nation paralleling the duration of the rituals that pertained to the Tabernacle and the temple. Those two went together because one was simply, shall we say, a more permanent replica of the other insofar as civilization moves from that which is more temporary to that which is permanent. Now, this is very interesting because all of this concluded in the first century. That is, there is no indication, if you understand, and I haven't explained it yet, no indication that those seven lamp stands were meant to continue beyond the time that the temple continued or the rituals of the Law of Moses. Something else was to follow. This was the period of a covenant with a nation. This was a period in which a people had a sign, and many people in the church either misunderstood before or misunderstand today, and I want to at least touch upon this.

The Sabbath day was and is a sign. It has not ceased to be a sign. The Sabbath day is not a sign as to who is a Christian because then no Christians would be Christians if they had no Sabbath, and all who had the Sabbath would be Christians. Now, we know that there are some who have the Sabbath who certainly are not under the government of God, and we also know that the Jews who have the Sabbath are not Christians. So the Sabbath day is not a sign, never was a sign, that you were a Christian. I do not know who might have fought that. Mr. Armstrong never taught that, and if he did, it would have been wrong. How are you going to explain that the Sabbath day is observed by the Jews, who are at least orthodox and to some extent by the Reformed, and generally those who are in between? No, the Sabbath is not a sign that you are Jesus' disciples, that you were Christians. It's a sign of who God's people are, and it is also, if you please, a sign that if you decide to refuse it, you lose that identity. Or need I explain why the ten tribes are not now identified even among the Jews as having all been found and known to be Jews? No, it's not that at all. The house of Israel departed from God's law and his Sabbath. The Sabbath is a sign of who God's people were. It's a sign of who God's people are today in terms of whether they want to come into a relationship with God which says that you were willing to obey and do what he says. That's all it is. Now, what is significant, and the reason I bring that up is so that we understand, that there was a nation formed at a high point in the history of Egypt, and that nation was given a foundation in the land of Canaan, and that nation was to go through seven stages. If you please, a nice term. Remember, it is one menorah that was in one lamp stand with seven oil lamps, not seven separate ones. The nation, the people, the government, the congregation is one, and yet there are remarkable differences.

The light can shine in the days of its foundation. The light can shine in the days of the later judges, in the days of monarchs, whether the nation is united or divided, or under governors or priest kings, or under scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat. The same congregation, the same people, having the same sign that they were God's people, and it all stopped in that first century. Let me give you a little background now, because I think it is helpful to understand when you read the Bible, it's easily lost the continuity between what we call the Old Testament and the New, when you complete the Old Testament and then suddenly move into the New. That is, you end up with the story of Ezra and Nehemiah, let's say, in terms of the history of events, and you then wake up to the birth of a person in the days of the Roman Emperor Augustus. Why was Jesus not born much earlier? What was unique about, shall we say, the last hundred years of the history of the nation Judah, or if you please, the early Roman Empire? If we were to go back, what you would discover in the beginning is a nation that had wandered in the Sinai and had finally inherited the promised land, following the death of Moses, and was established on that promised land, a government which was Asiocracy. The nation Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua and the elders that outlived him had a king. The nation had a king, but this king was not visible.

Now the Pharaohs were rulers, or great houses, kinds of kings, if you please. The Assyrians had kings, other nations had kings, but what was unusual about the twelve tribes of Israel is they also were a kingdom, but their king was invisible. Their king was the eternal God, and he spoke by means of the priests and sometimes seers. He spoke by certain men who were also called judges in translations such as Moses, Joshua, and administrative individuals that are of lesser rank who were also called judges. The nation then was in a small piece of territory.

The dominant powers were along the Nile and in the Mesopotamian Valley. This was a people whose purpose to start with was to set an example. The means of travel were still quite limited.

Trade indeed occurred over the waters, but the world was centered on the Nile, centered in the Mesopotamian Valley, that's modern Iraq, and the whole rest of the Western world was divided among many peoples. That is, you had simply small political entities.

Then what happened following the death of the elders who outlived Joshua was an interesting story. It still is when you read the book of Judges and 1 Samuel. It is a story of the nation, or at least part of 1 Samuel, the story of a nation that sometimes continued to have judges like Moses and Joshua and sometimes had none. Now I have dealt with this question before, but I want you to think about it. Their leader was always the eternal God. He was their king.

They had his instruction, the Torah, or called law. We much prefer the concept of instruction, or the Torah, to use a Jewish word, which means instruction. Law is good so long as you know we're not dealing with the kind of concept of law that we have today that is a matter of human legislation. But now look at the difference. Was this the time for Messiah? When sometimes there was a ruler, a judge, through whom God as king could work, and sometimes there was no one fit for the task of the nation, and the nation went into captivity. It was an unusual period.

Most of us have never given serious thought to the fact that as the Egyptians looked at the land of Canaan, in which the Israelites lived, they would have seen people there, sometimes with judges or military rulers, that's what they were, protectors of the country, and sometimes with no visible ruler, except let's say a continuing high priesthood, they saw no king. The people who made up that church saw no king. They only knew that his presence, the Shekinah or Shekinah, dwelt in the tabernacle. God's presence was there, but if anybody were permitted to look, they would have seen nothing except the furniture that Moses instructed to be there. Later on, of course, the Romans did go in and look on one occasion, and they couldn't imagine why the Jews had such a building with nobody in there.

It was empty, and I'll tell you when the Romans looked in there, it must have been empty.

That was not a time for the Messiah to be born when Moabites, Ammonites, Midianites, sometimes the peoples from the north, all the various tribal people around, sometimes the Canaanites, the rulers, sometimes the Philistines, were essentially tearing the country apart. There was no possibility of a Messiah sending out messengers in a world in which all your small neighbors were at your throat. Or was it a time when the kingdom finally appeared to be a kingdom and they had one king who was Saul, then another David, then another Solomon? Now it started out with a very critical period. One cannot imagine the Messiah being born at the beginning in the days of Saul and carrying out the work that would be done.

And of course, if you understand what those lamps stand, I should say those lamps on, that candelabra or each of the branches, that's the proper way to define it, what they meant, then you would understand the time and not come. You had passed from the period of the foundation of the nation then to the later judges and now to the United Monarchy.

Egypt was not great anymore as it was. Mesopotamia was not great as it was. It started out with the Philistines, a power, but they didn't last. And Israel came to prominence and came to the world's attention in the days of David and especially Solomon. Now, of course, you might say would it have been possible in the days of Solomon? Yes, most anything is possible, but look at the situation.

The nation had just come to the attention of the world in terms of what a peaceful people is like.

There is the building of the temple in the days of Solomon. People came to inquire of the wisdom of the nation. Solomon here is the one to whom they are looking. The people weren't needing a messiah.

They were happy with things as they were. And even the nations around saw that Israel finally dwelt in this general state of happiness till toward the close of Solomon's reign.

Now, something very strange happened. As soon as Solomon was dead, we find that the nation breaks up.

The means of transportation and communication have not altered that much.

The world became divided and gradually, gradually, there was a reasonably important power in the Nile, valley again in Egypt, but certainly, slowly, but surely, the rise of powers and then finally, the power of the Assyrians in the North. This was a time in which the world was very divided.

There was no Rome yet, even as a town. The Greeks had many, shall we call them, city states.

There were various peoples at the doors subject to the Assyrians and all the smaller nations around. It was a divided world. Now, you had a family, a church that was split, a congregation divided.

One group was led by a series of kings, none of whom fundamentally obeyed God, though some sought to please God in some ways, like Jehu did, in ridding the nation of the worship of Baal.

But in the other was a family, the family of David. Some kings did and sought the will of God, and some did not. Christ, if you please, much later could look back on that.

Would that have been the time for him to appear? It was a time in which there was a king who was still invisible, but there was also a human king beneath. This was a church that now had God as king. This was a congregation, a church, same kind of word, but it was not a converted church as a whole. It was a people, some of whom had broken off and were drifting further and further away, and some who held together to a family through which the invisible king ruled.

Sometimes that family had a child who came to maturity and sat on the throne and rebelled.

Now what is important for us to realize is during this period of the divided monarchy, an appeal by the invisible God was made through prophets to the ten that departed.

Among those of the house of Judah who held to the throne of David, there would be support for that royal family. Sometimes the leader of that royal family did the will of God. Sometimes he stumbled, but there's no question that you see that certain kings sought to do God's will, yet not like so and so, or however the term may be expressed. Then sometimes the human leader did not and simply was in a bad attitude. Take the case of young Joash who was in fact protected by the high priest, who later was responsible for the slaying of the son of the high priest. That was a very sour and sad period in the history, but think about what it was like to be then. Certainly this was perhaps a time when a messiah would be needed, but what a small nation, a time when it was not possible to communicate what ultimately the New Testament church message was to be, which said, go into all nations.

No, it was a time in which the real test was whether a Jew would stay a Jew, whether the king would obey or not. It was a test of whether the people who had God's sign that they were willing to acknowledge the law and God as king would hang on even if something were to go wrong in the nation.

Now there's an important lesson for this, and I think most people have never, never faced how important that lesson is. We have grown up in a world that is so close to the 470 odd years of Protestantism that splitting and dividing seems natural, and the earlier world of Catholicism and orthodoxy doesn't seem natural. But anciently the people, the people who had been heirs to that revelation, stayed loyal to the institution that God had established, that is the throne of David, from whom they knew Messiah would come.

They did not divide. Those who abandoned the house of David essentially cut themselves off from the responsible leadership through whom God ruled the nation, and an appeal had to be made to that nation by the later prophets, that is to the Ten Tribes. But the nation had to go through some people did, some very traumatic experiences. Sometimes the people as a whole allowed themselves to be corrupted. Sometimes it took a leader to straighten them out, sometimes the leader led them astray. But always there was above an invisible God, and His written, revealed, available law. Whether you were able to read or not, there were those who could, and there were the traditions as to how these things should be done.

So we have moved through four periods of human experience, and we come to the earliest and greatest catastrophe, which was lamented, and that is why we have a book of laments that is Lamentations. We will forget the story of what happened, the disappearance of the Ten Tribes as a whole, and now we discover that because of the sins of the nation, at the close of the divided monarchy, the house of David and the nation went into Babylonian captivity.

It was a lesson for them, and we know the fact that when the nation was restored, or shall we better say, the people were restored, it was only a fragment of people. And now there was a kind of under the invisible king who is God, who has a law, and has a people, and has a covenant with them.

There was a high priest dealing with religious matters, but there were also governors, sometimes of the family of David, sometimes not. Certainly Nehemiah made no such claim, as a rubber stamp was different, and these worked together as Nehemiah and Ezra described the priest.

The priesthood was consistently inherited, but the governors were now appointed by the Persians.

What a strange world to realize that, in fact, the government under God in your congregation, your nation among your people, was no longer wholly free of human government.

Administered by the influence of highly placed people, in this case a king of kings, the Shah and Shah.

And he made appointments, and sometimes there were no governors, and other times there were.

The nation wasn't that free. Was this the time for Messiah to be born? Now indeed something had happened, whereas we had a brief period when the nation was in captivity, and when there was one dominant power, that is Babylon, this dominant power was nevertheless centered in simply the region of the Middle East, to Egypt, throughout the old realm of Assyria, to the borders of Media and Persia, and to the borders of Lydia in western Asia Minor. That is, it was still a very regional situation.

But when the Persians came and delivered the Jews, a new experience happened.

The bulk of Jews never returned. The bulk of Jews never returned, and now they are living in a realm that extends from India to the east, and Ethiopia to the west, into Europe, much like Turkey extends into Europe, into the borders of Greece. So you have all of modern Turkey, Iraq, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, some of Pakistan, the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula, essentially parts of Libya and Egypt to the borders of Ethiopia. All that now, bigger than ever before.

But it is remarkable at a time when very few Jews, by comparison, were living in the Promised Land.

Very few were living in the Promised Land. The bulk of them were outside. The language was multiple, but there was at least the Persian language that was dominant at court.

But the language that was dominant in commerce was Aramaic.

Was that the time for Messiah to come? Should he have come in the days of the Persian Empire? Well, there were promises in the days of the Persian Empire that Messiah would indeed be coming, but not an indication of who would be ruling at the time.

Now, by this time, there was, of course, a city called Rome in the west. Traditionally founded at 753 before the fall of Judah, and had been dominated by a series of kings. And by the time, a number of the Jews had returned to the Promised Land, the kings were overthrown.

And you gradually have the beginning of a republic at Rome. At the time, the Jews are back, and the dominant world is Persia, and the dominant potential enemy of Persia is Greece. I am speaking from the Persian point of view. The Greeks would have looked at it differently, to give you the sense of where the center was. Now, there would have been a rather dominant world without any question. But it would have been limited to Aramaic as the language of commerce and trade. And beyond this old Middle East, it would have been difficult to go beyond.

This was a day in which, under the governors, Buddhism arose in the west.

I'm sorry, west of the realm that lies east of Persia, that was a mistake of explanation.

In the vast realm of Asia, east of Persia, in the western part and the borders of Nepal and India, the Buddhism arose in the late sixth and early fifth century.

Somewhere, we might say, between 560 and 480 to give round figures only by the decade.

No, that was not yet the time. But it was a time in which the nation had gone back very clearly to a responsibility that was expressed in two ways. One, a restoration of the temple, the center of worship of the small number of Jews who were in the Promised Land, and the beginnings of synagogues in the Persian realm, which would have much greater expansion in the period of the Greek and later Greek period. Now a synagogue was a local place of worship, because obviously the bulk of the people in this captivity until the temple was restored had no continuity with the sacrifices of the altar. And those who stayed outside, in most cases, never did come to the Promised Land. The wealthier, of course, could go from Afghanistan or Seneca in North Africa, the western part, the eastern part of Libya, we would say bordering on Egypt.

They could come from Asia Minor, or they might have come from Mesopotamia. But most Jews never came to the temple in all that time. There wasn't that much wealth. It was a world that was drawing the ancient world to a close. It was a world that's going to be quite different than what is about to happen. The Jews are now widely scattered and also have a center of religion.

But they are widely scattered so that throughout the region of Asia, it is possible to become acquainted with Jewish views. There is no doubt that there were Jews who migrated even outside of the Persian realm eastward, from whom Gautama, later known as the Buddha, must have learned some of the fundamental ideas that are in the law.

In the West, at this time, was a remarkable culture that is going to be different from anything before. It was indeed a culture of people who had many gods, a culture that we will call Greek. It was unique in the sense that it was made up of an inquisitive people.

Now, different nations had been quite inquisitive before, but I don't think that we can say that there ever was a nation quite as inquisitive as the Greeks who came up with many ideas through reasoning, who expressed themselves in the arts, who were the first to introduce the concept of government that is called democracy by which they meant those people who are free as distinct from your slaves. Go to assume that most people had the right to express themselves in government.

But for the first time, you have something that is different from anything we know of in ancient Assyria or ancient Egypt, Babylon or Persia, any of those areas, the idea of government at the level of free, responsible, educated, property-owning people. A people who came up with the idea of the importance of schools, the importance of school, of people who were gifted in architecture and the arts, but lacked one thing, the sense of political unity.

That's what they lacked. They had all the other gifts. When the time could come, they pooled their resources and defeated the Persian Empire in its attempt to occupy them. But the Persian Empire was becoming decadent within, having acquired many of its points of decadence from the West, from the Greeks, homosexuality being one of them, but not the kind that we associate today.

This was something a little different. It was a cultural thing that permeated the country.

Was the Persian Empire, which was about to collapse, the time? No, as it turned out, it wasn't.

Now, the Greeks came under the domination of a people who were Macedonians and were culturally, let's say, Grecianized. They were certainly not the kind of people who had lived in the Greek city-states, but Philip and then Alexander put them all together, and he created, in the lightning destruction of the Persian Empire, that did not that much effect the Jews. He created a whole new realm, and something now has taken place quite different. Whereas the Persians had Egyptians in their midst, Jews in their midst, Assyrians in their midst, Armenians in their midst, Medes and Arabs of all sorts. Alexander's idea was, in a sense, to acculturate all of them, to give them something of Greek culture and thinking and learning. Now, for the first time, the power would appear to have shifted, would appear to have shifted to southeastern Europe.

So that the center or the heart would appear to have been in southeastern Europe and not Asia, but as it turned out, Alexander never intended his capital to be in Greece or Macedonia.

He actually went to the old area of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian realm, and the center of the government was still in the heartland that was west of Persia. Instead of the government coming from Persia on the highlands and extending west in this gradually expanding area, Alexander didn't make his capital in the west. That is, he didn't move from Persia to Greece.

He centered it in Mesopotamia, southern Mesopotamia. He introduced Greekian ideas, no one knows what's happening, into areas like Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, into Egypt, Libya, the whole of Asia Minor, and the Arab world.

But was this the time? Well, Alexander was quickly dead and his realm broke up.

Now, we have no basic change. The high priest is dominant. Sometimes there is a political leader, sometimes not. And the traditions of the Jews basically continue. Alexander did little more than to confirm the rights of the Jews that existed in the days of the Persians. They were granted the opportunity in terms of the sabbatical year and the tithing for the poor, the observation of the festivals and the Sabbath. And so that period continued. It began with the restoration of the Jews under Zerubbabel. Now, it's a very important thing to ask. There were Jews who might have posed the question. Why shouldn't we have supported the Persians? Why did the high priest ultimately appeal to the Greeks? Well, it wasn't quite that way. Some people might have looked at it that way. But then Alexander asked why the Jews remained loyal to the Persians. It was because they hadn't made an agreement. And the Jews actually, and the high priest said, if you become the new ruler, we will show our responsibility to you as well. But it is not our responsibility to revolt, but to show respect to those that are over us in authority. Now, that was quite a daring statement to make. And Josephus, of course, gives an account that Alexander was going to punish the Jews for not

immediately siding with him until he saw that the high priest who met him was the same person he had seen in a dream that told him he should conquer Persia. What is interesting is the Jews still remained loyal to God, who said in the book of Daniel, the government would pass from Babylon to Persia to Greece, and then to yet another power.

When the country was divided after the death of Alexander, the Egyptians, shall we call them, the Greeks in Egypt became the dominant ones, and the Greeks in Syria were the other dominant ones.

But those who dominated the promised land where the Jews centered with the temple were the Ptolemy's.

Somewhere between the days of Alexander and the end of the dominance of the Ptolemy's, we have essentially a century and a third. Approximately from Alexander, we have something more than a century of the Ptolemy's, that's the name of that Greek family that dominated in Egypt from one of the generals of Alexander. Things basically continued structurally as they were.

But then when the Seleucids or the family of the Greeks that dominated in modern Syria, that region, see, when they got control and rested the promised land from the Egyptians, things began to change very rapidly. Now in this age, remember, you have the spread of sports, the spread of the concepts of logic and reason, the spread of schools, the spread of the Greek language, the Greek culture, Greek ideas, it's called Hellenism. An idea greater than the Greeks, given birth to by the Greeks. Why do I say it was greater than the Greeks in the sense that others came to be attracted to this culture with ideas with respect to democracy? That is, government in which local rule came to have more and more media. Oh, it was going to be a long time before that was ever a part of our modern vocabulary. But these were the seeds of an idea that is born in southeastern Europe, but spread in western Asia, southwestern Asia.

But the Greeks politically broke up. There was no united realm. There was no way for a messiah to do what needed to be done or his disciples. Because you had kings who were Greeks in the north fighting kings who were Greeks in the south, that is between Syria and Egypt.

And a crisis arose in the east as developments also were in the western Mediterranean, where a power called Rome was overthrowing the remnants of the Canaanite civilization, the Carthaginians. But the dominant force was still centered in the east, but one began to note that pressuring eastward was the story of a Roman republic, moving eastward, eastward, and finally giving orders.

That is, the old Hellenistic realms were beginning to crumble, but the Hellenistic civilization would soon even be infecting Rome.

Infecting in the sense like you inoculate a loaf of bread with leaven.

A change took place and a persecutor, the like of which had never been seen before, with Antiochus epiphanies that is the revelation of God.

No one really understands fully of those who study the historical records why suddenly in a Hellenistic world that was tolerant, a man rose who was so intolerant. But you must understand that Antiochus was in a state of stress from Rome. And when you have a state of stress, you often want to have a people to blame for your problems. There was a period of enlightenment in the modern west, and who would have thought after the wonderful expansion of creative ideas of the 19th century, we should have the Holocaust of the 20th century.

Anybody in the 19th century could hardly have dreamed what the 20th century was to be like.

In the same way, the people who lived in the third century BC, the 200, could hardly have imagined that there would come a war in which a man would try to destroy the religion of God and the Jewish people from being what they were. Now there were personal attempts, as in the days of the story of Esther, but this was something quite different.

This was the leader of the country who made an issue of religion, an issue of religion, not to be compared to Haman at all. And there arose an opposition in the church, people who determined to observe Sabbath and holy days and circumcise the children and observe the law.

And these became the Maccabees, priests who rose up and defeated the Syrian Greeks, the Seleucid family, and became priest kings.

This is the story of the book of Maccabees, not a book of the Bible, a book in the Deuteronomical Catholic or Orthodox versions, but what a world in which Rome was dominant in the west, in which there were crumbling relics of the Tommies in the east, the Seleucids in the north, in which Hellenism was spreading and the Roman Republic was becoming more and more assertive.

This was still a very divided world. The Jews had made an agreement with Rome because they recognized that Rome was the forthcoming ruler, but it had not yet dawned on them that Rome would ultimately occupy Jerusalem, as Pompey did in 63 BC. We pass through quickly the story of priest kings, where the government of God was essentially expressed through the house of Aaron and a group of rulers of the people who were often advisors, sometimes dominant over the priest kings and sometimes not the Sanhedrin, a group of advisors, some 70 men.

And then Rome moved on the scene and Rome imposed a king, Herod.

Now, this is a phenomenal thing. God is still using his people. The people now actually see in their leadership as we approach that last stage in which the priest kings disappear. There is the invisible God who is king. There were those now who seated themselves on Moses' seat. Remember Matthew at the end of the ministry. The scribes and Pharisees had seated themselves in Moses' seat. The Sadducees still dominated the priesthood. Remember, the priesthood was a continuation of the line of Aaron. Moses' seat was the function of Moses, not the function of Aaron.

And so it was a very divided nation and Rome was now in charge. But what was remarkable is that a new empire and a new culture had developed. Now, look what has happened.

Hellenism became, in a sense, the dominant culture of the whole realm, from India to the borders of Rome, a dominant culture. Hellenism was still, even though the Greek city states and the Greek political power had been broken. It was there in a realm that was called Parthia.

There were Greek cities all over. There were Jews all over that realm east of Rome.

But finally, the Roman Republic gave way, in 31 before the present era, to an empire, it was called an empire, that extended from Spain in the west, France and Belgium and the borders of Germany. Nothing like this had ever been before. All across North Africa, that is from the Atlantic ocean into ancient Mesopotamia, from the Danube into the upper Nile, Judea, and through Asia-Mire. And in this realm, the language of government was Latin, but the language of culture and education was Greek. It was possible to travel in this empire on roads and by boat, in a way that had never been possible before. The whole world was either under the domination of Rome in the west or had already been modified outside of the Roman empire by the Hellenistic culture that dominated the thinking, even of people in the realms of, well, the realm of modern Persia today and Central Asia. That used to belong to the Soviet Union, that we knew almost nothing about in the west here. It was

into this realm in the seventh period, when the scribes and Pharisees were dominant and the priest kings were gone, into this realm that Messiah was born, the cause of the reign of Herod, who would die in the days of Tiberius, begin his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius, meaning AD 27, who would found a church whose apostles would explain that there was now a period of some four decades, broadly speaking, that the Jews would have to reconsider what they should do.

It was during this time that the Twelve were sent out. Jesus said, go you into all the world.

First he said, go just to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then it was a commission to go to all the world which most certainly couldn't have been limited to the Twelve apostles.

They could never have gone to all the world. It was a commission to the church, as Mr. Tkach will be pointing out in a letter in the Worldwide News, in his coworker letter, is a commission to the church because it was impossible, even in the Roman Empire, to go into all the world in that generation. But they were to begin to penetrate, first of all by going to where the lost sheep of the house of Israel would be, spiritually lost and otherwise. But what is significant is that it was a world in which the Greek language was that language of the city. This was not a time to go to the countryside.

This was a time to go to the cities of the Roman world, the cities of Parthia, the cities bordering on the Roman realm, the cities in the Black Sea area, the cities in western India.

And before that century was over, Christianity had reached the British Isles as also the Roman Empire, Christianity had reached into India, into Central Asia, into Ethiopia, up the Nile, further south. The Messiah came when the Jews were looking for a kingdom, how to get out from under the iron grip of Rome, looking for deliverance at the very time that the Roman Empire had, let's say, built a realm in which it was possible to sail from one end to the other of the Mediterranean into the North Sea, that it was possible to sail down the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, that is the Arabian portion of it, possible to sail into the Black Sea.

This was a world the like of which it had never been before.

A world as dramatically different from that of ancient Babylon as the world of Europe was in 1492 versus 1994.

Jesus came, in other words, in a world that was as different from the history of the Old Testament as Old Europe was before Christopher Columbus.

I think we have to use that kind of parallel.

The Messiah came and called out a church which was also to have experience, and that church was to wander, and by the end of the century had received a book called Revelation which tells how long it would be wandering, that the Jews, in fact, would be dispersed, as first happened in AD 70 and then the Second Civil War against Rome in 135, after which the Jews never had a nation until 1948.

The people of Judah were scattered. The work of the Jew in that sense was done for that time in preserving the Scriptures in Hebrew, and they were to be scattered so that everywhere it was possible for the church that the Messiah would found to have the knowledge of the Sabbath or Holy Days, the calendar, the book, the Scriptures.

And it was to be translated, as it turned out. The Old Testament came to be translated into Greek, and the language of the Greeks, not the language of the Arameans or the language of the Persians, the language of the Greeks, was to be a language of learning of the Roman power from the days of the early Roman Empire till the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

And from that time on, the knowledge of Greek came to be dispersed in the West, and Greek came to be the language as well as Latin of learning in the West.

But it was possible for the church that Jesus would build to survive, whether in Britain, Spain, Italy, Armenia, in the Roman Empire or outside its confines, depending on circumstances.

It would be a persecuted church. It would not be in one place. It would not be one people, whereas the ancient nation was one people in one place, the Promised Land and Israel.

The people of the church would include Jews and Greeks and Armenians, Balkan people, peoples from the Alpine area, peoples from Ireland and Britain, peoples who had migrated to the United States, and now peoples from practically every major group in the world.

The Messiah came at a time that it was possible to establish the Christian tradition, shall we call it, in a world that was united in trade and commerce.

That was educated in the cities quite different from what had ever been before.

Never had education been so widespread, never had learning been so common, never was it possible to communicate so rapidly.

The Messiah came at a time when it was possible to listen to Him, when it was possible for the church to work in peace, despite local persecution, and to move about in such a realm that was the Roman Empire.

Then when persecution began in the days of Constantine, in his attempt to unify Christianity, and those who were told they had to give up all things Jewish, were expelled and lost their property, the Christians have come to the place where their work was very, very small.

But there was a very great country, a building, the United States of America, with similar ideas that the ancient Greeks had.

In fact, it was built on the republican form and the Greek educational tradition.

And in this free society, which we just recently celebrated, this being now Wednesday and Monday was the fourth where we commemorate, not the wisdom of our revolution, but the consequences of it.

Because not everything could be justified, but the consequences God saw.

Nowhere was it possible to do what it has now been possible in publishing, radio, and television. And from this wealthy economic world, just as the Roman Empire was a world of comparative wealth, to go around the world and to have churches as widespread as we have today.

Jesus came at a critical time, so different from anything before, when you conceive of what it was like to be in western Asia, in a much more parochial world. It was like the world before Christopher Columbus, and the tremendous things that have happened since.

But that moves speedily from the Persian realm to Rome.

Hours has taken a much longer time from Columbus till now, that is to this later 20th century.

I thought it appropriate, in the week in which we do commemorate the Fourth of July, to realize something. That this work would not have been possible if the United States had not been founded on a unique concept.

That is the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, and the separation of the administration of church and state.

It was never meant to be an irreligious society.

It was meant to be free from Catholics who could come and worship God in Maryland.

It was meant to be free for the secular world who might like to come to Virginia.

It was meant to be free even for the pilgrims, the Puritans who went to Massachusetts.

These colonies interestingly were established on the premise of certain freedoms, but it took all the colonies together to think it through and to establish certain fundamental principles different from anything that had ever been before.

The colony that set the primary example was Rhode Island and Providence Plantation.

And that's where the church came to in the 1660s.

And we have the beginning of Sabbath Keepers, the beginning of an understanding spreading in the Baptist world.

Little Roger Williams, you remember, who was a Baptist and founded that colony.

And from there has grown the church of God step by step.

We don't want to trace that, but it is important for us to recognize how significant it was for the world of Jesus to be what it was if his message was to be carried out by the apostles in the closing age of the role of the House of Judah as an institution.

That nation has its purpose still today and a much greater purpose tomorrow.

But this is the age in which people are being called out and trained for the world tomorrow as first troops, as all nations will ultimately be called to salvation.

We are being called out of all nations and peoples now and the largest work that has been done in centuries has been done in this century in bringing our message to so many people.

We have gone and warned the world of the consequences of sin.

We have witnessed to them the work and the function of Jesus Christ as Savior and High Priest.

And we have told them what the goal ahead is because he is also coming as King to set up the government of God over all the world. And he's coming at a time as unique as the Roman world is because he is coming at a time when the world is going to have no other alternative even though all nations get together to try to solve the problem.

We will never now in human government be without the equivalent of a united nation. United may be unimportant. They function at least in some joint fashion. The world is now being guided more and more by the importance of decisions made at the United Nations. We're no longer in a world of two super states. We're in a world in which one or another area of the world works with the United Nations in trying to resolve the many dilemmas and finally when they cannot be resolved God will send Jesus Christ to rescue man and woman all of us as a people from ourselves.

I want to thank you for the support you do give to the Wednesday studies and I hope you will give serious thought to the experience of God's people in all these past centuries and ask yourself the

question that I keep asking and now I'm making a habit. The Jews never lost sight of where God ruled through the house of David. The church must not lose sight of where Christ is head.

Where people are converted or to put it in these terms.

Brethren you who are converted why should I ever want to leave and abandon you? Why should any minister, when here are the people whom God has called and have his understanding? Why should the church be other than one? How would anyone ever justify breaking up this church made up of people who are under Christ's authority? That's the authority. Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

He works through human beings appointed to responsibility but let's never forget what I mentioned. This church is based on a government that is based on faith in Christ and Christ doesn't always solve every problem at once.

If so every woman's problem with her husband would be resolved.

Now that's a nice place to stop.

Have a safe evening and returning home.