

Trumpets 9-16-1993

I'm always very pleased to hear the beautiful music that we're privileged to have, whether in one of our areas or another, Mrs. Finch, labored under a problem with a middle-up.

It doesn't seem perfectly, but for most of us, the ears are not absolutely aware of everything other than the overall perspective you might not have molested.

We very much appreciate, in general, the contributions made without the chest in the area of the fine arts, the music in particular. It has been a long time, I would say, in coming where we could have the music, as we can say, more and more arises out of our own cultural environment. I have said on many occasions in Bible studies and otherwise, that that is one of the greatest lacks that we have to identify ourselves, because the music that the often is presented, and I don't mean in church services, but socially, is directly from the world and does not represent the whole perspective of the different generations making up the church. Of course, it doesn't matter the different sensitivities of the ear.

I am reminded the fact that the State of Israel was established in 1948, the most remarkable thing was the one who identified the music of Israeli very quickly. It was either Arabic, nor Russian, nor German, or American. That is, it was something internally created that is full of what it meant to be a migrant to the land or a sovereign one who was born there.

And that brings us to a very special occasion such as this, where we do focus on one of the festivals. In a sense, it's the middle of the religious years, the middle of the year in terms of the numbering of months. But in another sense, Lashashana, the festival of trumpet, that's not a translation, Lashashana is literally the head of the year. And I appreciate a young gentleman who wished me a happy new year. In the Hebrew calendar, which did not begin with the week of recreation as defined in Genesis, but when man was able to determine the nature of the average length of a month, we have the beginning of a lunar solar calendar in 3760.

The Jews traditionally in the West have used the previous year as year one in order to define the nature of the year that preceded the year the calendar was introduced. They settled on the basis of 3761, where we begin today, a new civil year in the oldest functioning calendar in the world.

Those who think the Jews invented it only long after the Roman calendar do not understand that this calendar in different form, on small points, which are not at issue today, was extant from the days of Moses long before Julius Caesar was born. And in this year, 5754, which extends from the peaceful compass to the end of the civil year in 1994, the rule should look forward to a remarkable growth and development spiritually in the church as every year we should look forward.

This is an unusual day because, in a sense, it's the one day in the year that marks the beginning of a year in the biblical account. There is no festivation at the beginning of the first month because there is no year that has special significance beginning in the spring.

Just the numbering of the month begin in the spring in our northern hemisphere.

So we begin March-April as month one. That's the modern Hebrew Nissan, Moses, Joshua, and before the Babylonian captivity, it was called the month of Green Ears or Aviv, A-B-I-V, which was meant to be pronounced Aviv as infel-Aviv. So we have that sequence of emulation. This is the first day of the seventh month of the religious year. But we must remember that this year long preceded

the religious year for the simple reason for one of the fundamental laws of God, that every seven years there should be declared at the end of that seventh year a release from certain debts and obligations due in the interim to the close of that seventh year.

And then after seven sevens there was, in ancient times, a jubilee. And the jubilee was declared beginning with the day of atonement, but for practical purposes this particular day regularly marks all of these events pertaining to the return to property, on the jubilee the return to a certain freedom rather than servitude for those that were indentured servants after seven years or any shorter period there was the ultimate release at that time.

In fact, this year marks the beginning in Jewish tradition of a seventh year. This year marks that it is not a continuation of the Old Testament with a jubilee, it is in fact a continuation of a cycle of sevens, the jubilee having never been celebrated again since the year that closed in 423 to 422 B.C. That is the last record of which the Jewish nation gives account of the jubilee. So we were there dealing with the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi for those who believe Malachi was a person. There are many different strange ideas in circulation today, but in any instance that was the last time that the jubilee was celebrated, but the sabbatical years have gone on and on from that time till now in a cycle of seven, 49, and you don't count 50, you simply went to 56, 63, you know, and 70, 77, 84, and so forth, and that's the way it has gone on since. So I would like to suggest, since we have a significant number of visitors and a significant number of new members who are attending both the East A.M. and P.M. congregations here this afternoon, that we take a look back and a look forward because it's been some months.

In May, June, we deal with the third month of the year and then we celebrate Pentecost of the founding of the Church. So let's go back and at least rehearse some fundamental things that we should not forget. The beginning of the Church for congregation is essentially in two forms. The New Testament Church began in formality with the coming of the Spirit of God on an annual Holy Day, and it is interesting that in the year that that occurred, we have Pentecost being remembered the occasion of the coming of the Holy Spirit being on that day and from then till now. The majority of Christians have never forgotten Pentecost. The majority of denominations have, but remember if you are Roman Catholic, if you are evangelical Lutheran, if you are Episcopalian or the Church of England, you will not have forgotten. If you are Orthodox, you will not have forgotten Pentecost.

Now, it is significant, you see, that the Christian churches in many cases have neglected that day, though the majority of people who call themselves Christian remember the day of Pentecost without fully realizing that it isn't just the coming of the Holy Spirit.

On a particular day, it was the coming of the Holy Spirit in AD 31 after Jesus had died, rose again from the dead and ascended to heaven. It was that the Holy Spirit came on an annual festival, and that annual festival tells us something. It tells us that these days do involve events. Events succeed one another in time. Time was created by God. God lives in eternity, but he is not incapable of thinking in time. If you think so, you haven't been reading your Bible. Let's not forget that. These days represent the plan of God, and that plan placed the beginning of the New Testament Church on a particular annual festival, not just one day in a year that randomly occurred. But the original congregation, which was not a New Testament Church, but the original congregation, which we call the Congregation of Israel, also formally commenced in the days of Moses at the foot of Sinai when the giving of the law on a Sabbath day, the 6th of Syban as it occurred in that year, was followed by the completion of the Covenant, the giving of the law on Exodus 20, the completion of the Covenant in Exodus 21 and 22 and 23, which in a sense was a marriage agreement, and that marriage agreement had the eternal God as husband, and Israel was to be the wife. A nation made up of the family of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes, that line of descent, not Abraham's other children or Isaac's other son, but the house of Israel, the twelve tribes, were called out and formally established.

So at that time the Church became the custodian of a beginning revelation in written form that we call the Bible.

Previous to this, men and women had learned to write and to communicate, but not until the days of Moses do we have the beginning of information to be passed on from generation to generation as authoritative and not to be forgotten or laid aside.

And so it was that in the days of Moses, beginning in Exodus chapter 12, we read of the introduction of the annual festival. God told Moses, in the middle of the civil year, and in Egypt there was both a solar year and a lunar solar year. The Hebrew calendar is lunar solar. The Roman calendar is two-fold. It is a solar calendar and a confused one. Whoever heard of months of 31, 30, and 29, and 28 days, who knows anything about astronomy. But then again there is a reason it was politics, pure and simple. In that day, God told Moses that the spring of the year would now give rise to a series of months so that the first month of the sacred or religious year would commence around the spring equinox. And this was given as one of the first messages to the congregation of Israel. In Exodus 12, in fact, you will find for the first time the expression congregation of Israel. So now we're learning two things, that in fact there was a family of Jacob that was now to be formally gathered together for meetings and would in fact play a particular role on a forthcoming festival outside the land of Egypt. But in the land of Egypt, God said the certain events were to take place before the departure and immediately following that departure which would be commemorated by annual festivals. Some would be annual holy days or a high day. The church has correctly understood, even though individuals may have other opinions, the church has understood that even if there were examples during the lifetime of earlier patriarchs scattered throughout the year that might have foreshadowed events to come, the formal introduction of annual festivals or holy days did not commence prior to the time of Moses. Whereas the Sabbath began with the week of recreation as stated in Genesis chapter 2, there is the introduction of the Sabbath day, not at some later time. The Sabbath was made for man and therefore was made when man was made. You've heard of that before. The holy days were given for the church because before there was no book with a written message. There was only a messenger who came to Abel, to Cain, who didn't wish to obey, to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and finally Moses. A messenger came to them as individuals. But finally we come to a time when the family of Jacob or Israel had grown to a point that they had now a twofold responsibility. One duty was that Israel should obey the Lord as a wife is submissive to her husband, and the other that she should be the custodian of this written record.

One was to set an example so that the nations would look at this country and say what a remarkable law or set of laws you have. Now the Egyptians knew what life was like in Egypt. In Egypt we have an inkling into the situation where we clearly have the prison system, the first clear indication of a prison system in the biblical record, and it is very likely if we were to examine it in history itself, was in Egypt. Joseph was put in prison. If you were to look at the law of God, the most remarkable thing is that individuals who were charged with a crime under the laws that God gave the nation were put in ward that is under certain custody. But apart from that till the time of the trial there is not a single penalty anywhere in all the Old Testament for putting anybody in prison. There were fines, there was forgiveness, repayment, servitude, and the death penalty.

Never was there a prison system, and I think it is fundamental that we should bear in mind the importance of that fact as we look at the record of the world today. Now with this background the

nations clearly would have said that Israel was a remarkable land because its concept of justice, of mercy, of forgiveness, of love was different and the results should have been different.

In order to keep the children of Israel aware of what the responsibility of the nation is, God did not leave the Sabbath day a weekly ceremony as sufficient.

God did not leave the weekly Sabbath as sufficient to teach us all the plan of God.

God instead devised a means by annual festivals and holy days that we should gather together uniquely at certain times throughout the year to remember the steps that must be taken in carrying out what God is planning for the human family. That is to transform human beings from just to immortality, from having simply the natural mind to having the mind of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be able to think like God thinks, to understand mercy and judgment and kindness and to know when justice is merited. So the annual festivals were set out in months one and three and seven. We are now in the seventh month.

In month one, most all of you but not all of you were here in our fellowship when the Passover is celebrated. The Passover occurs in the middle of the first month.

What is unique about it is that it looks back to an event and it looks forward to an event.

It looks back to an event and forward to an event and the second event to which the nation was to look forward to now is also a past event. So we can say today it looks to past events and it still looks forward because the Passover is a time when people can be forgiven of sin and not all the world is yet forgiven.

It was a time in a sense when God said that the blood of the lamb or the goat over the doorway or on the two side posts of the doorways and the houses in which they lived in the land of Egypt, that blood of animals was sufficient for anyone to be free of the death penalty who was a first born in the land of Egypt. This event is described in Exodus 12 and 13. If an Egyptian decided to be in the house of an Israelite and we trust God, that person would not pay the penalty of death.

That person was spared. That is mercy was extended. If an Israelite decided it didn't matter and was outside and was a first born, he died as a result. The 14th, between the two evenings, a lamb was slain and a lamb became the symbol of the Messiah to come, the Christ.

Then the death angel passed over and the children of Israel departed on the 15th and set about leaving the land of Egypt, finally crossing the northern shores of the Red Sea on the last day of unleavened bread, not so stated directly in Scripture, but any examination of the distance traveled would give such an indication. Most certainly it was a remarkable event that occurred and represented the final delivery of the nation from Egypt as a formal territory, Egypt being a type of sin, because most every imaginable sin existed in the land of Egypt.

So now we have a picture where God says to the children of Israel, at every year you are to remember that you were delivered by the shedding of blood. And so there is one festival in which a particular sacrifice is required before the law of Moses. Take note of that. All other sacrificial customs attached to every day of the year, every Sabbath, every annual day, all those, a part of the law of Moses, were separate from and after the statement in which God said, my sacrifice, that's the one that represented the one who was to come. So the children of Israel did have a bloody sacrifice of a lamb or a goat, I say bloody, because blood was shed. There are religions today that do not have any such custom, because they do not recognize sin. They do not recognize that the wages of sin is death. If the wages of sin were not death, the lamb would not have had to be slain. So we have a

situation where Israel was a nation that looked forward to the coming of a particular individual who would not only essentially save the nation in the future, but would become the savior of the whole world.

That was fulfilled in the New Testament experience of Jesus Christ at the crucifixion.

But the effect is not yet fulfilled. Those who were spared in the days of Moses were only a few out of the many. Those who were brought into the church in New Testament times after Jesus ascended were only a few out of the many. So even today, the church is only a few out of the many. And not until, in fact, the conclusion of the plan of God will the effects of the Passover be fully recognized. The days of Unleavened Bread, 7 in number, immediately followed the 14th. The 15th was a holy day in the 21st or the last of the seven, also one.

These seven days were days in which anything that was leavened that had leavening in it was to be removed fundamentally bread, but also leaven itself.

That was a very interesting example because leaven has more than one meaning in the Bible, but in this case was meant to represent the vanity of sin, which puffs up bread on the one hand, and more significantly the spread of sin through a society or in one's life if you let it be there.

There were natural opportunities for both of these festivals to be commemorated.

The children of Israel lived in the land where there were sheep and goats, so it was possible to sacrifice the Passover. The children of Israel lived in the Middle East where you had barley, where you had oats, and you most certainly had wheat. So there was the possibility in making bread that you have leaven. And my wife and I have been in some parts of the world where it would have been impossible to observe these festivals in the old tradition of the Old Testament.

For instance, Polynesia, before the coming of the white man, had only the pig.

They had no goats and no sheep. Polynesia had tubers. They had no wheat and no bread.

Mr. Hanganu, Tolutawu Hanganu, in charge of the weathering in the island, the Kingdom of the South Pacific, said the most remarkable thing they think of when the days of unleavened bread come in the spring is that they had no symbol for sin, nothing that they had to put away.

In a sense, they have to import some sample to illustrate the point to them.

To this day, of course, nations that live on rice, where leaven is simply not a factor, have no symbolism. We had some years ago, 1984, it's nine years ago now, a group of faculty members of Chulalongkorn University, one of the departments of education, at our home on the night at the beginning of the days of unleavened bread.

It was interesting to realize that it wasn't easy to explain. The first thing you explained is the slaying of the lamb and the goat and the death of a messiah, but that presumes that you have some knowledge of sin. Then bread as a symbol of the spreading of sin, that in some way it must be forgiven for the penalty of death occurs, whereas their religious background had something altogether different. That is, you had to be born again and again and again, and given time after time to improve yourself and not make so many mistakes. The God had reasons for using these symbols for placing the children of Israel in the temperate zone. Then, of course, you have the harvest that began during the days of unleavened bread. This harvest chained to a climax after seven weeks. On the 50th day was the day of Pentecost, and that started out as the foundation of the church having agreed fully with God, having had full seven weeks of experience They said they were willing to do

whatever God said. That's what often is said at the marriage ceremony. What follows is often quite different. People quickly forget what they promised.

It's nice to meet people who don't. That's most of you.

Some of you, of course, have lived through tragedies before, even during your relationship with Christ and the church. Mr. Alvey, who attends our congregation in the morning, has returned following the funeral of his father, who died at age 94. His father and mother were married 68 years. Some don't stay married 68 days. It's really sad to think of the difference.

And anyway, we welcome him back. I hope that none of you have to handle matters like that between now and the festival, although these things are natural in occurrence.

The day of Pentecost was also called the day of first groups, because it celebrated the fundamental conclusion of the harvest of grain in Palestine, as it later was called, that is the land of promise, the old land of Canaan, that now is the center of new controversies.

Later, as the fruit trees and the grapes were ripe and the melons, various fruits in the region, not to mention the vegetables, there was the celebration.

In fact, three celebrations or four, all in the seventh month, to commemorate some very important things. I'll give a quick overview of those, so we see both where we have been and where we go.

So we've had to pass over, which is not a holy day, but it is a festival. The days of Unleavened Bread, a festival with two holy days at beginning and end, and it cost a holy day, a festival, a holy day in the sense that you treat it as a Sabbath day, a high day, a festival because you were called together to celebrate, to communicate with one another. This day, the festival of compass was unique in that a ram's horn was to be blown. The church has not developed any formal custom of this, because the church did not grow out of the Jewish community, or most certainly it would have been a formal custom retained. Some of our customs, and I will call them that, represent the background out of which we have come. Certain aspects of our services represent the background out of which we have come. We do not have a copy of the law, let's say, behind the speaker, as the Jews do. We have something that essentially befits the Anglo-Saxon mind. This was an Anglo-Saxon world, and the general trend of our cultural habits tend to conform to that. We are a group of people who do not, let's say, argue and discuss in the same way that the Jewish world would discuss religious matters. Nevertheless, it is important that we realize it was something unique in that celebration. I'm not going through all of the things, and I've skipped, of course, particular points of the Spring Festival. You can read that in the booklet that we have on the annual holy days. But I will now, since this is the festival of compass address, the fact that a horn was blown. This is a ram's horn. Now, there was another tradition also that a horn was blown at each. This is a Jewish tradition, and you may find it, of course, both in the Jewish literature, and it is summarized in the older Hastings and Psychopedia, sorry, Bible Dictionary. A horn was blown at the beginning of each new moon, and on the seventh month, a horn was blown seven times. That was, presumably, the old silver horn, particularly, that is defined in the Book of Numbers. There is some significance there in terms of the seven trumpets that blow in the Book of Revelation in this connection, which would indicate that Revelation is telling us of a time which is symbolized by the meaning of this day. But the ram's horn was a particular symbol that meant that people were to come together for some major reason. It was a very important symbol in terms of assembling the people.

The first time we might see a fulfillment in this day, apart from any crisis that is otherwise not recorded in the Old Testament, we do have the fulfillment of Passover in the Old Testament and in

the New. We have, indeed, the events of Jericho, Josephus, the priest, writing the first century, the present era, that defines the fall of Jericho during the seven days of unleavened bread, picturing the putting out of sin by the symbol of the blotting out of the city, which was the symbol of the land of Canaan, if you were coming from the east. Many cost was fulfilled by the giving of the law and the completion of the covenant, and later the coming of the Spirit of God.

The festival of trumpets, in a sense, may be seen in two parts for, most surely, the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ not otherwise identified as today, but most certainly in the month corresponding to September, October, that is the seventh month, is in some way to be associated, that is the first appearance of Jesus as an infant, should be seen in terms of this festival, that in a sense was mentioned to the shepherds, who were yet out in their fields by night around the Bethlehem.

It was also a time in which, somewhat later, there were wise men who came from the east, presumably from Iran, there are different points of view, but Iran was the most important nation in there, not otherwise called Arabs, and since they are called Magi, that would seem to settle it, because one of the tribes of the Iranians were the Magi, they were a priestly tribe, they had one king who reigned nearly one year, that is the Pseudo-Smeritus in 522-521 BC.

Anyway, the world had a great announcement in the last year of Herod's life, that the Messiah had come, but it was announced interestingly to the people of the countryside, and to a particular religious group of people with a number of representatives, who were bringing three kinds of gifts from the land of the east, and there may have been a reason for this, because the bulk of the Jews were living in an area dominated in that day by the realm of the Parthians, and the Parthians dominated Persia and the land to the confines of Armenia and Rome. So in a sense, the wise men carried a message back to the land of Mesopotamia, east of the Roman Empire, where the bulk of the children of Israel in the far northern reaches of the Ten Tribes and the bulk of the Jews were living in southern Mesopotamia and Iran.

In other words, the message came to the shepherds, to the kill people in the land of Judea, it didn't come to the religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem, but in the east where many of the children of Jacob were dwelling, and where the largest group by far of the Jews were dwelling, the announcement was made to the religious leaders in that vast realm of the Parthians east of the Roman Empire. So it was announced both in the Roman Empire and in Parthia. It was announced where the Jews were the most populous people in the region of Judea, on the one hand, and the region of Parthia on the other. Far more Jews lived there than were living in Greece or Rome or Spain. In a certain sense, this festival should be seen as a symbol of the birth of Messiah, the coming of the Messiah the first time, to announce the good news of the availability of the kingdom of God and how we may in fact be born into that kingdom and what our responsibility in it will be in accordance with what we do in this life. Now note carefully, I didn't say in accordance with what you do and what God does through you in this life is what determines whether you are there. I said clearly your responsibility in it, for there is a tendency today to overlook that you have a duty through the power of the Spirit of God to overcome sin just as the days of unleavened bread define them. You need to keep rooting out sin as that spring festival gives us some very interesting examples of, based on the sermons and sermenets where you think you put all leaven out only to discover during the festival, it isn't all out just as sometimes sin shows up that you didn't know to be sin. So we have a situation that also in the festival of compass Jesus Christ is telling us that the time is come when we should be ready in our lives year by year for the approach of the kingdom of God to rule all nations and bring us peace at last. But we may enter in through forgiveness of sin, through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and in each of us, we may enter into that kingdom here and

now, and we can also be uprooted out of it. For the angels are told that when they get rid of the Darnell that grew in the wheat, that's the best name for it, at the time of a harvest, there are some who are uprooted. Do not assume that just because you're converted, you are never going to face the challenge of temptation and of what you will do.

There are some who faced temptation and have made some very serious mistakes.

God, be their judge, we are not. But here is where the converted minds are. Here is where the people of God are and wherever there is the mass assembly of the churches of God throughout the world, that's why we should not render a group such as this. We may have variations in our spiritual growth and understanding, but what we do not do is care ourselves apart. If you want to tear yourself away, that becomes your responsibility, and you will have to give an account to Jesus Christ.

I have been here since 1947. I was baptized in 1948, though I probably wasn't converted until 1949, at least that's the implication. One's experience is interesting to reflect on.

Herbert W. Armstrong would have agreed with that. I can agree with it.

So I've been here for some time. Some of you have been here for some time. I met a woman who was baptized in the year in which I was born. She's a member in the state of Oregon in her 80s.

A remarkable person who would certainly support what I have recently said about the importance of keeping the church one.

We are today celebrating a number of events, the introduction of the Messiah into the world in the early part of the seventh month, born of the Virgin Mary, born of a woman betrothed to Joseph.

Betrothed in the sense, and you should understand it because the scripture says that if Joseph had wanted not to have Mary as his betrothed, he would have to divorce her.

And therefore, Mary was betrothed before the conception. But that betrothal was not like our symbolism today when we have an engagement that has no legal effect. The ceremony and the final acceptance of the paper is what makes it legal today in our society, in Latin society, is their variations. The Mary was born, sorry, Jesus was born to a woman, Mary, a virgin, betrothed to Joseph. But the Jews' ceremony was completed only later by the acceptance of the husband, of the wife by the husband, when they would live together. They were betrothed and formally married before. And betrothal is a very good English word for that because marriage would convey the wrong thought. Today we don't have the same kind of ceremony. You see, you have to realize that there are some things we do as a society and the church that are not what the Jews then did. And there are some things that the Jews do that we don't necessarily have to. These are customs. I don't think our customs are an improvement in one iota over it.

Many societies from which a few members come do not have public dating. Public dating, especially in the United States and in some parts of Europe, is quite a different affair. And based on the number of divorces would seem not to be the most effective means of being acquainted with your mate. But we do have dating that we have to then teach responsibility. Anyway, Jesus grew up and came to announce a message. And you know, of course, the rest of his life is defined in the four Gospels. Now, in that account, we have a clear presentation of what happened then, and in the Book of Acts, the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made that in anticipation of the kingdom, he would build a church. He would build a church that is a group of people called out of all nations to be prepared for the time when the kingdom of God is established over the whole world. We can enter into that relationship because the government of God is in the church.

The government of God is in the home. And if we have been baptized, if we have really understood what it means to be buried in water, to have our sins symbolically washed away, to be washed and, let's say, clean and renewed, to be now the citizens of the kingdom of God with our citizenship reserved for us in heaven, you may say that's where the papers are kept.

We are, in a sense, forerunners because we can, in our minds and in our fellowship, now live a life and learn from our experience so that when the resurrection occurs, we will be prepared to explain to others in the thousand years to come what it means to become converted and to become the children of God.

This day then symbolized the beginning of a very great event, the beginning, the entry of the child, Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man, to announce and to prepare for the establishment of the government of God over the church, and to call people out who will be in the first resurrection, a doctrine which the majority of Christians have no knowledge of.

Most people would not fully realize to what extent the vast majority of Christians, I didn't say denominations, but Christians assumed the first resurrection has already passed, and all we are waiting for is the resurrection of the judgment.

If you do not know that, you do not know Catholic teaching.

You do not know Orthodox teaching. You do not know some Protestant teaching.

If you think that because some others look for the first rest forward to the first resurrection and the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God on earth, and then the judgment, you will be mistaken if you think those people who have a general perspective like we do represent anything like a majority in the Christian world, they are a very small minority.

They happen to be publishing widely, and that distorts the picture of their impact, but so is our message published widely.

Anyway, the festival of trumpets also is a festival that climaxed the blowing of trumpets over the sacrifice at the beginning of each month on the new moon, and there were seven, customarily seven, blowings of that trumpet on the seventh month this day.

There was also the blowing of the shofar or the ram's horn.

It's a time in which we assemble and look about us.

It is, in a sense, a picture of the day of the Lord in the narrow sense of that time when God intervenes following heavenly signs after the tribulation and introduces ultimately the coming of Christ, for there is a period of God's intervention in world affairs before Messiah appears. That's the day of the Lord described in many prophecies of the Old Testament.

The festival of trumpets also looks forward to the day of the Lord in the broad sense, that is, the rest of the time that God reigns over the nations through Jesus Christ, who is appointed judge of all.

So this day has been, interestingly, a point in time, in a sense that we should look back this particular year to some significant events that have occurred this week in the Middle East. For the first time, the State of Israel has recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO. That was, in a sense, likely it was postponed and postponed and postponed, and most certainly wouldn't have been if there had not been a change of mind in the State of Israel with respect to the government. Also, Yasser Arafat, who is the essential leader of the PLO, their factions within the organization, is getting older, and there was something that he had to accomplish, and so far he has accomplished nothing

in terms of the development of self-government. It is, and I say this non-politically, I say it just as historic reality, the Palestinians have been gifted in actually seizing defeat from the jaws of victory.

In 1948, the Arabs and the Jews were told that they could have the land divided.

This is where the Arabs could be, this is where the Jews could be, but there was war. A Palestinian state could have been here since 1948, but in the Middle East there has been a very long history in which the view is that Islamic Arabs must culturally and politically control.

Now, that history, of course, didn't make much sense when Islamic Turkey was in control.

But what the Palestinians and the other Arab nations were not prepared to tolerate was either a Christian state which didn't have some kind of equal balance as in Lebanon with the Muslims, or a Jewish state. Now, in the case of Lebanon, it was simply a matter of tolerance, but at least Islam had an equal say in the way the government was balanced. But in a Jewish state, this was regarded as something unbelievable. And so, for all these years, for 45 years, 48 to 93, and it's more than a full 45 because that was in the spring and this is in the autumn, almost autumn, the Arabs have hoped to have a homeland and every step they have taken has led further and further away until now they have had to recognize before that homeland to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel, which is what they had never wanted to do. And in exchange, interestingly, the Jews, the Israelis have given up the ultimate governance, or let's say plan to give up the ultimate governance of the modern city that was the first one they captured across the Jordan, Jericho. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that 20 and more years ago, 25, 30 years ago, the crisis of the world was centered over Eastern Europe and Vietnam and some other hotspots. There was a crisis in 67 in the Middle East, but actually Vietnam dominated the news. There was a crisis in 73 in the Middle East. That brought it to our attention a little more. But interestingly, the world has focused on areas like Vietnam and they're likely to face some very serious questions in Korea involving both Japan and China and the United States, as you can read between the lines. But in the meantime, something has happened in the Middle East. We have moved from the Suez, from Sinai, from Lebanon, from Kuwait. We've moved now to the Gaza Strip. We've moved to Jericho. There remains yet the West Bank to discuss. And then there remains the undiscussable Jerusalem. And in the undiscussable, there remains the Temple Mount.

Zachariah chapter 12 makes very clear that the ultimate crisis was not over Suez.

The ultimate crisis is not over the Gaza Strip or Jericho, not even over the bulk of the West Bank. The bulk of the crisis is going to be over Jerusalem and over the Temple Mount and going to involve Islam and Judaism and Christianity and the United Nations. Because the United Nations now is being brought into all of these things, whether in Yugoslavia, whether in Somalia, for the first time it is realized that with one superpower, the United Nations becomes the arbiter. And the superpower is the one that cooperates. It is not the United Nations that is simply the forum for arguing between two superpowers. That's gone. This day looks back at an event, the coming of Messiah to introduce the Kingdom of God to the Church and to introduce the Church in the world. It looks forward to the day of the Lord and to that whole day of the Lord when Jesus Christ, the Lord, is going to reign over the nation.

It looks forward to a series of critical events to take place before and during that period.

These events will ultimately center on Jerusalem. They will affect the nations politically and religiously. It will touch raw religious nerds because there are Jews who want to introduce the Law of Moses on the Temple Mount, not merely prayer. There are Jews who don't want the Law of Moses

and ceremonies other than prayer introduced. There are Christians who regard that this should be an open city with Christians dominating. There are Muslims who think it should be an Islamic city.

What I am seeing here interestingly is that gradually from the periphery, events are moving closer and closer, but there by no means there yet.

They're just moving away from the Suez and the Sinai and the Lebanon and the Gulf of Persia, Kuwait. They're moving toward the land that was anciently called Canaan.

And yet every once in a while, just as 1967 was a quick flash struggle in the Middle East, the world then continued its focus on Vietnam. We are likely to see some very serious problems continuing in distant areas of the world that distract us and delay any significant United Nations fought over the Middle East. Because most surely, as South Vietnam and North Vietnam became a critical area, there is no question that North and South Korea are headed for some kind of political and military decision-making. We do not know how far that will go, but you can be very sure that neither China nor Japan nor Korea nor the United States, and for that matter, not even the Soviet Union, can look at that point and not be concerned.

So this day should tell us, with the blowing of the shofar, that we should take a look in the Bible about the day of the Lord, and we should take note that there are numerous crises that are going to be in the world at that time, but the one that is going to precipitate the coming of Christ to restore the kingdom of God, because God's governance was offered in the Garden of Eden, and that governance is going to be restored to this world when Jesus Christ returns.

It's time we took note of what keeps events from fully focusing in the Middle East. You know, if the Middle East were the only problem, the United Nations could debate and debate and we could bring a conclusion to that, but there are so many other problems in the world that there isn't going to be, in my judgment, any international crisis over Jerusalem until after this millennium is over, which is at the end of the year 2000, not the beginning of the year 2000, because it started with the year 1, not the year 0, at least historians count being used. And there are many other problems that yet must be resolved. In any case, Mr. Arafat did not want to die. He's getting older without having made some concrete steps forward, and the Israelis were simply tired of having to do nothing while having to do something, nothing politically to resolve the problem while having to do something every day to try to keep some semblance of peace. But now there at least is the possibility of working with the government among the Palestinians instead of having every cooperative Arab treated as a traitor. Now at least the Palestinians can be seen as willing to work out some amicable solution to some areas in the Middle East. And this is of course a remarkable step forward that is going to lead to that unsolvable problem until the coming of Jesus to Christ. This Sabbath that is to follow is the interim Sabbath. The next Sabbath is the day of atonement. Something should be briefly said because not every one of you might have the background.

You should read the booklet on the holy days and at least be prepared to know there will probably be sermon material this coming Sabbath on the matter of fasting for the day of atonement and how to and who perhaps should not for certain medical reasons. All these have been understood for centuries in the Jewish community. Anyway, I counted a privilege to be able to speak to you on this beginning of the civil year. I had the unusual opportunity, quite unexpected, acidic Jewish friend who is anything but acidic in some of his practices, who also is interested in Buddhism as many Jews in Southern California are.

Gave me a call yesterday and we had lunch and we discussed the significance of all these events that have just transpired and are now transpiring in the Middle East in terms of this new year.

I think you should pay some post attention to the state of mind because you know this work has worked significantly yet to be done in the Islamic world and in Israel and the state of affairs as it was simply made even some things we were able to do 15 years ago, not possible.

It was more thinkable to do work in the Middle East in 1967, which is why Herbert W. Armstrong then was essentially at the London airport when that war broke out because he was planning to make a radio broadcast in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. So now with what is taking place, we may well anticipate an interim period in which it will be possible to do things that we now cannot immediately foresee. So I suggest that those of you who have always wanted to do things by being prepared in advance, you should brush up on your Hebrew and Arabic as well as some other languages that may be your port.

If we ask you to go and you don't know them, we will have to ask somebody else. Now they know French and they know English, but they don't know French and English in many cases well enough and it always helps to be prepared. Have a wonderful year ahead in terms of your finances, in terms of your health, because this is a turning point certainly on the world scene in terms of events in the Middle East in which this day highlights these prophetic things.