

We think about the (Persian) empire that came into being by the destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. and proceeded to establish a system of government which should have furnished sufficient amount of influence to hold together that empire stretching across the vast continent. And yet Alexander the Great we know came to the throne and succeeded in worshipping whipping together the peoples of Greece, who had heretofore shown no remarkable unity. He established an idea an ideal that struck fire. And though Alexander died young, before the empire was really unified, he left his empire to his (four generals) who soon reduced it to four and then to three parts. And by the end of the fourth century, it would seem that the ideal world empire had come to an end.

This however was not to be. A new power had risen in the West which after it had overcome its only western rival Carthage on the northern coast of Africa.

The (Roman rule) extended over enough of the world in Jesus' day that it could be called the Whole World. Luke 2:1 The Romans were able to give to the world that unity and strength of government which was necessary for peace and for rapid spread of the gospel. If Jesus Christ had come into the world 100 years either side of the actual time of his advent, the story from the historian's point of view

TABERNACLED WITH US

"And the word OF Christ became flesh, human incarnate, and tabernacled ^{signified} his tent of flesh, lived a while among us, and we actually saw his glory, his honor his majesty, such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father full of grace, favor, ^{love} love, kindness, and of truth."

See 40:5

I. Fulness of Time

If you were going to launch a (world wide movement) when would you do it? You would probably wait until the political factors were just right. The ideal time would be when there was no war and when communication was easy to all parts of the world. You would wait until the cultural factors were right. You would desire a minimum language barrier. You would look for ease in spreading of ideas. And if the moment you happened to launch happened to be a religious moment you would feel that even the religious scene needed to be prepared.

In the letter to (Galatians) Paul says, "But when the time had fully come!" or as the (King James) version says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons."

(Galatians 4:4)

In other words, Paul is saying that the advent of Christ occurred at that moment of history that could be described as the fulness of time. Jesus himself suggested that the fulness of time had come when he began his public ministry, in Mark 1:15 he said, "The time is fulfilled."

When we think of the fulness of time and the significance of it, we think how God works in history. God is the Lord of history, these sayings are so commonplace that we overlook the truth. For centuries God had been preparing the world for the advent of the Redeemer. Without ever being aware of it, Nations moved off the scene fulfilling their part in determining this. Paul in Acts 17:24-26 talked to them about the nation Israel and told them that it was very

clearly on the pages of old testament history that Israel was not the only nation in which God was active or through which God was bringing past his purpose. His prophets made it clear indeed.

All the nations of the world were involved and we can see how Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Persia, all of these played their part in the divine story.

There was political preparation, instead of thinking of the Biblical world as spreading over part of three continents.

You think of it geographically, and according to culture

because of the mountains that extended across the northern portion of the Alps, and the desert stretches across the southern portion, plus the sea on the eastern portion. Communication between those parts of Europe, Asia and Africa that bordered on the Mediterranean was far less difficult than communications to the remaining parts of any of the continents. This single area is the Bible world. Yet, it is still true that there are three distinct parts of the Bible world. Those of Asia, The Europeans, and the Egyptians. Although the Egyptians were of great importance to the early part of the Old Testament history, by the time of the last century before Christ Egypt was no longer of primary importance.

It is possible to trace the shift of power first from the semitic peoples in Asia to the non Semitic peoples of Asia and those in Europe. The night Babylon fell, before the forces of Cyrus, the great, we see a great empire coming to an end. When Darius III was conquered by Alexander the Great, the world empires of the Asiatic people came to an end and the world empires of the Europeans began.

The rise of world empires is undoubtedly part of the political preparation employed in the idea of the fulness of time.

As a matter of fact some estimates of the number of Jews who seized the opportunity are as low as ten per cent. Those who remained in exile made a new home for themselves.

Several things happened to the Jewish people in the dispersion. For one thing they developed the world view. They long had been associated their God merely with the land of Palestine. By the rivers of Babylon they had wept because they had thought they could not sing the Lord's song in a foreign land. But now they had come to realize that the world was the Lord's. They not only could sing the Lord's song in a foreign land, they could even translate the song into foreign languages.

The reason why the Greek translations were important can be explained by the fact that the Jewish people were undergoing consciously or unconsciously a process, if they were not all participating in the games of the stadium, some indeed going so far as to have a visible sign of circumcision removed and when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, Hebrew words that had narrow meanings were oftentimes translated by Greek words that had broader meanings. And our words are an intricate part of our culture.

Another feature of the dispersion was the development of the synagogue to serve as a partial substitute for the latter to take the place of the temple at Jerusalem.

would have been far different. The Roman empire in some way had learned to balance central power and authority, the rights of individuals and the rights of the state.

We would not suggest that there were no problems. In order to maintain peace, the Roman empire had a standing army of a quarter million men. True the citizen army maintained by conscription had been replaced by a professional army. But arm forces are expensive and taxes were imposed in the form of customs, excise, inheritance, and sales taxes, usually collected by men who bought the office as a profession and then charged what they could get. Once every 14 years a census or poll tax was levied. These things were a source of annoyance and occasional riot. But in all it was a time of peace and prosperity.

The cultural preparation, the empire which had preceded that of Alexander the Great were dead. Babylon or Persia

Alexander wanted to establish all over his empire centers of great culture, libraries that would have great writings, theatres that would present Greek drama and music. We know that the library in Alexandria, Egypt possessed more than 500 thousand volumes and this was not the only library in the empire. For when it caught fire, Anthony gave to Cleopatra 200 thousand volumes from the library as a

replacement. It was Alexander's ideal also that a common language should unite the empire and of course that would be Greek. One of the most dramatic ways in which Alexander attempted to put into effect his ideal was a mass wedding ceremony held in Susa one of the capitals of the Medo-Persian Empire where Alexander and his Generals and ten thousand of his soldiers attempted to symbolize the marriage of Europe and Asia by taking Persian wives. Alexander took with him scholars, historians, geographers, and botanists, he built a fleet of ships and he explored the coast of the Persian Gulf and he had other ideas that were considerably in advance of the day in which he lived.

When the Roman Empire achieved supremacy it is fortunate or we prefer to say, providential there was no spirit that was contrary at that time of the ideals to replace the Greek language and to change the development of Greek culture.

To expect the world to adopt a second universal language would be impossible and so the Greek continued to be the language of the Empire for several centuries. Their art is largely Greek art. We know that she was a power but a sense of human value can cause trouble. When a slave or an ex-slave suddenly realizes ~~that~~ this, I too am a man, he can cause all sorts of difficulty for those who want to be

masters. Slavery was a great problem in the Roman empire. It had been estimated that one third to one half of the entire population were slaves. Life was cheap. The master who was displeased with the way a slave served a table could throw him to the fish. A mistress could permanently disfigure a servant whom she caught brushing her hair. Emperors might send hundreds even thousands of slaves into the arena to engage in mass slaughter just for entertainment. But others were thinking about these things if human life has value how can it be destroyed so easily? When life is cheap, immorality is rampant. In particular immorality of a sexual nature is encouraged when human beings are insignificant. Roman writers have left us full, frank, and disgusting accounts of their days.

There is a nobler side, even in fallen man, for which we ought to thank God. They did not always come up with the right answers, but they were making interesting suggestions as philosophers.

The religious preparation was also interesting to the fulness of time. There were years of experience for the Jewish people. At the beginning of the 6th century B.C. they had been carried from Judah to Babylon in captivity. In 538 B.C. Cyrus the Great had granted to them the opportunity of returning to their land. Not all Jews however, returned

whom has none. He who has food, let him do likewise. If the kingdom of God is here, it is time to begin living like members of the family of God." (Tax collectors) said, what shall we do? John said, John did not say leave your jobs, he said, collect no more than is appointed you. The (soldiers) asked him what shall we do? How many times this verse has been overlooked, by well meaning Christians who seek to force non violence on the world. John did not say, go get out of the army, you cannot be a member of the kingdom and bear arms, no rather he said, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." Luke 3:12-14

I imagine Herod asked him one day what must I do? It is clear that John told him, for later Herod had a guilty conscience. Herod had been responsible for the imprisonment and death of John because John told him what to do. "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Matt 14:1-12

When the kingdom comes, it is time to set out lives in order for the coming of the kingdom means the coming of judgment.

The third part of his message was repent. The word as everyone knows means to turn around, change your attitude. They can do ~~nothing~~ nothing except turn around a change of attitude, God can help you. Repent, the thing you are doing

While Jews lived in the land of Palestine, it was possible for them to fulfill the law and the annual feast, when because of distance they could no longer fulfilled, the synagogue provided means of religious expression. It does not need to be argued that the preachers of the gospel found their first stepping stones into the Gentile world in the synagogues scattered throughout that world.

We could devote some time to the development of the Messianic expectation among the Jews. Nor was it a sense of expectation limited to the Jews. There was in the Gentile world a sense of dissatisfaction with existing religions and the Greeks had climbed high and found no Gods upon the mountains. The Latin people had looked to their powerful kings and all over the Gentile world they were turning. This then is the fulness of time. God had prepared his world and it was ready.

II. John the Baptist

Jesus once said "Among those born of woman, none is greater than John." We know much about Paul, and others. We know but a little about John the Baptist. John is a link between the old and the new testament. Jesus accepted this link. We see that the story of John's birth was startling.

When the angel told Zacharias about this son to be born in Luke 1:5. We know that he was born into a priestly family. Zacharias was in the temple ministering and carrying out his work and the spirit spoke to him and the child was to be filled with the holy Spirit. He was to bring joy and gladness, not only to the family, but to all the people as well.

One day John left the wilderness to go to preach to the sinful world. Luke gives us the details of it, of this man who went out to preach. John's message was a striking one, and he had many points, there are some that are noteworthy as we think of Jesus' tabernacling among us that we should cite.

First, the kingdom is here, to the Jews the hope of the kingdom was not merely the discretion of theological schools and perhaps to be preached by fanatical preachers. It had become the very reason of existence. How long they had hoped. A thousand years, two thousand, they had hoped after the deliverance by Moses who lead them out of Egypt and they had endured the hardness in the wilderness, They had hoped that their Christ would come. They had hoped that their King, David, would be the one.

And they often inquired of those who should come if they were the Messiah. When Elijah arrived and when John arrived

they were questioning as to whom he was. And John cried and said I'm a voice in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord.

Just a voice, but what a voice, and what a message. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. If I could tell you today that the kingdom of heaven is here and all our troubles are over, all fear of war, all hate, and class struggle, all famine and sickness, and death are forever ended, I would feel that I had the greatest privilege given to man. But it is not that easy.

The Jews had figured that when the kingdom came all Jews would be blessed and all Gentiles would be put where they belonged. The prophet had tried to teach the people of God better than that. They tried to show them that judgment begins at the house of God and that the root must be laid at the root, and they protested against this by saying we are children of Abraham. Now the New Testament says the same thing to us who are Christians. Judgment must begin with the House of God. We who have had the revelation must clearly be certainly to be judged most severely.

With such a stern message it is only logical that people should ask what should we do? Listen to what John tells us them, he does not say, do this or that or the other. Rather he says, "He who has two goats, let him share with him

was interested in (nature) and the things about him. It was a poor home sometimes I feel that probably they suffered a little poverty. Some of the stories that Jesus told at different times. There would come a time when he should learn to read. Perhaps he was sent to the synagogue. He loved the world of nature, he loved the (birds), the flowers, the sea, the fishermen, the , the clouds, the storms, the wind, and there we know that perhaps he learned the carpenter's trade. He learned to work with his hands, I'm sure. Jesus could tramp up and down the hills of Palestine with the best of men. He knew the scriptures, he knew how to pray, he knew the religious festivals, he knew the sabbath.

But one day when John the Baptist had been baptizing for possibly six months and people were stirred to excitement, Jesus went from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of John. When John saw Jesus he protested, I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me? Matt 3:14 Did John know Jesus? John says, I myself did not know him. John 1:31. What was it then that made John protest, I think it was the clean appearance of one who had never sinned. At any rate Jesus said, "Let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." He

that cannot stand before judgment must go. You will have to make up your mind to do things in God's way if you want to live in God's kingdom, you must have your repentance publicly declared. Take your stand in the world for God and his kingdom, bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

John won many followers and they loved him. Some of them became Jesus's first disciples.

III. Mary

When the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to Nazareth to greet Mary with the words, "thou are highly favored" Luke 1:28, Elizabeth greeted her with the words "blessed are you among women" Or it could be translated, you are the happiest of all women. Luke 1:42. We know that Mary was to be (channel) through which our blessed Redeemer was to come. We know that Joseph cooperated with God in this and he knew that God had spoken to Mary and that had told him. And we know that Mary gave birth to a little boy and her body had been at the tabernacle, and she was his tender mother. She probably taught him and carried for him in those early years and taught him to pray. She did an excellent job in bringing up Jesus. Joseph no doubt made his contribution to his early years.

And we know that there was a time for the example that Jesus set when he was 12 years of age going to Jerusalem found his way into the temple. And he astounded his parents by his knowledge of what he should do. We know that Mary was highly favored and we know that she stood by the cross.

IV. Jesus the Son of Man *Isa. 40:5*

As in our text tells us that he came and tabernacled among us. The Christian church has always been faced with the problem of the (nature) of Jesus Christ. Is he God or is he man? Or is he perhaps something else? We know that there are four main points, he is truly God, he is truly man, these two natures are not separated, but are truly one person. Yet, these two natures are merged into one but remain without confusion.

He laid aside the glory which he had with the father and became fashioned as a man and yet these natures are perfectly united in one person.

Sometimes the churches stress one of these natures. Sometimes the other. Many times we need to think about him as a human and yet never forget that he was divine in all of his ways. One of Jesus favorite names for himself was Son of Man. What did it mean? The Son of Man was to

come from heaven to take over the rule of the Messiah.

The Messiah had come in the form of human flesh.

The birth of Jesus Christ occurred in an unusual way. We know that both Mary and Joseph were disturbed at the announcement of his birth in Matt. 1:18, "by the holy Spirit Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin, he was born of the virgin Mary."

But when we have said that, we must remember that Jesus was born just as any other child, once he was conceived, the process was the normal life processes. Mary carried the child as all mothers do and gave birth to him. Jesus was born in Bethlehem due to the census, a poll tax, that required Joseph to appear in his ancestral town. We do not know the year, and we do not know the day. The events were sufficient to lead wise men from the east and the king wanted to kill the babies born in Bethlehem. The event of one day changed the calendar of the world to read, Before Christ and in the year of our Lord.

Jesus grew up in Galilee, Nazareth. There were other children in the home, four brothers are named, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, there were also sisters, at least two. Some think Paul meant at least three. Matt 13:55. He lived a normal childhood life and we know that he certainly

judgment, men then cringe from it. Men sometimes think of judgment as the final act. The actual fall to end the drama. God is a good judge who discriminates between the good and bad, between that which is of value, and that which is without value. He judges his churches, he prunes away that which is bad, in order that the good may grow and develop to better.

There are these who seem to think that heaven is going to be just a junk yard and that God is interested only in collecting a few rotten lives. But, dear friends, listen heaven is a place made up of saved sinners, and we truly must pass God's judgment before we arrive there.

Jesus tabernacled among us and today Christ is on the throne and in his great commission Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto me" Matt. 28:18. We know that John said, "I was in the Spirit and lo, a throne stood in heaven and with one seated on the throne and I saw in the right hand of him that was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals. And I saw a angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals?" And behold a throne and five living creatures

wanted to take his place with you and me. There was to be nothing to separate him from the people he came to save.

Following his baptism, he testified, John testified that he saw a dove descending upon Jesus as a sign.

Immediately Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4:1-13. He was tempted in exactly the same way that you and I must face them. We get our ideas of sin hopelessly confused at times. We know that the great battle ground of sin is the human will. It is not the temptation that is in sin but what we will do under temptation. It is not even the deed but what we will do in the face of temptation. I do not believe that Jesus' temptations ended at that time, because he says, In every respect he has been tempted as we are yet without sinning, Hebrews 4:15. On the last night of his life in the garden of Gethsemane, I believe that he was tempted.

But we know that Jesus went on his way and he gathered disciples around about him. And he looked to the heavenly Father even on the last night of his life.

V. Triumphant Christ

We see that Jesus was triumphant, "Lo I am with you always, till the close of the age" And I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me and lo, and on turning I saw

seven ^{golden} lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man." Rev. 1:12-13. John fell as one dead before the vision. But the speaker who identified himself as the one who died and is alive for ever more explains the symbolism. Christ stands in the midst of his churches triumphantly, he still tabernacles among us.

Too often we seem to have an idea that Jesus has gone to heaven where he is seated on the right hand of God and whence someday he shall return to earth. Meantime we are left to run things in our own wisdom and strength. Now it is true that Jesus has returned to heaven and maintains a throne for us, but it is also true that he is coming again. But it is not true that he has left us alone in the meantime. He had sent one like unto himself who has all the power of the Godhead. Who remains with us and in us during all this age. And these too are completely identified that we can speak either of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ.

The Lord Jesus once said, "I will build my church." In the book of Acts we see him building his church, working in such men as Stephen, Barnabas, and Paul, but that was only the beginning. The book of Acts, as many have noted, has no true ending, and in a sense we might say that Christ is still building his church.

The first seven churches in Revelation, the church of Ephesus, Jesus tells John to write to these as a messenger. I know your works, those works are spoken by one who holds the seven stars. The stars are the angels or messengers, the lampstands are seen as the churches. It's a beautiful he knows their toil, their patience, their endurance with false teachers. He knows every detail of every life of every church. This is a frightening thought.

For he knows the face and patience and love and good works. He also knows the unbelief, the lack of vitality, and luke warmth, he stands in the midst of the lampstands and holds the stars in his right hand. He is also the one out of whose mouth issues the two-edged sword. Rev. 1:16,

The church at Ephesus was a church of toil and patience, but it was a church that had abandoned its love. It had at first. That is a terrible thing to have to say to a church, or to any individual. It indicates a lack of judgment when you abandoned what formerly you loved it means poor judgment in leaving it. Some men do not like the idea of judgment and quite often the preacher hears the objection of sermons on the subject. I think that is because of a faulty notion of what judgment is. When we say he is a man of good judgment, no one sudders. But when we say God is a God of

and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne and they sang a new song." Rev. 4:2, 5:1&2,6,7, 9,10.

In the (beautiful language) of Revelation, John says "I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for a husband and I heard a great voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling of God is with men, he will dwell with them and they shall be his people. And God himself will be with them." Rev. 21:2-3

This (beautiful city) our attempt to describe it fails us. The limitation of language is tremendous as we look at it the walls of Jasper, gates of pearl, city of gold with streets of pure gold, high and wide and mighty, a river flowing from the throne nourishing a tree of life along the banks. There is no need of artificial means of light because the Lord God is the light. Some men find it hard to get a picture like this of heaven. But this is because we're trying to visualize in our minds what we have never seen with our eyes. Perhaps the language is more symbolic than we think. Perhaps John has lost the words in trying to record the glories of the Holy City.

But it is God's city. (Abraham) set out to find this city

whose builder and maker is God. There is no temple in the city. We know the temple was a heap of rubbish and people were wondering how they would worship without a temple. There is no need for the temple is the God, the Almighty, and the Lamb. 21,22. There will be no unholiness there. There will be no unholy things. There will be a multitude of redeemed sinners who have been washed from their sins. Nothing unclean will enter. Rev. 21:27.

Sickness or in death will never be present in the Holy City. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain any more for the former things have passed away. Rev. 21:4. When Jesus brought Lazarus back from the grave Lazarus returned to this world of sickness and sorrow and death. But this is not so in the city of God. No cripple children will limp down the streets to tear the heart strings of mothers and fathers. No love ones will waste away with suffering and disease, there will be no institutions crowded with men and women who suffer from mental and nervous disorder. No heartbroken husbands and fathers who lay away a wife or newborn baby. There'll be no drunken drivers on the streets, no gangsters to lurk in the shadows. Yes, the gates will never have to be closed.

No bombs will destroy the city. No air raid sirens. And the tree of life will be forehealing in the nations.

But before this is possible there must be a final judgment to come. Today is still the day of grace. "The spirit and the brides say come, let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev 22:17. Jesus Christ came and tabernacled among us in the flesh, and now he is upon the throne, but still he longs to tabernacle in your life through the Holy Spirit.

END