

The Sixth Century Axial Period (Part 2)

God's Involvement Through Prophets

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On the Last Great Day I got into a sermon that I was not able to finish. It is one I have given before, and I am going to give part of it again this day. I am purposely doing this because it is still somewhat fresh in our minds, and I am going to continue what I was doing because I only got about two-thirds of the way through. I was giving it on the history of the prophets and the characteristics of them, and was going to eventually work my way into the Sixth Century Axial Period—as it is called by at least one historian—and we will get into that today.

We first established that a prophet is the sign in Exodus as one who speaks for or in behalf of another, and usually that “another” is a higher-ranking personality. He is sent, representing another, and bearing a message. Using diplomatic language, he can easily be said to be an ambassador of that person and that person’s nation.

Using the description given in Exodus 7, God placed Moses as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron was Moses’ prophet. God gave a message to Moses, who in turn gave the same message to Aaron, and Aaron gave that message to Pharaoh; thus, in that hierarchy, Moses was God’s prophet, and Aaron was Moses’ prophet. Now Moses was also God to Pharaoh in that he executed the will of God.

We saw through the example of Elijah in his relationship with Ahab that prophets typically stir things up in the culture they are sent to. They say disturbing things, and that is their responsibility. They are rarely popular with those they are sent to, and very frequently martyred. Jesus stated at one point, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets.”

Prophets cannot be identified with great accuracy by the number of miracles they perform. Elijah and Elisha did spectacular and many miracles, but John the Baptist did none. Rather, God shows us that they are identified by their message, and their message will always be in harmony with the messages of previous prophets even when they are breaking new doctrinal aground, and their message will always, always urge those receiving the message to keep *all* of God’s commandments.

A prophet does not have the same function as a priest. As a generality, priests approach God in behalf of the people by means of ritual ceremony. The prophet’s function is *from* God as His representative to the people, usually urging people to repent and keep God’s commandments; thus both groups were important to God’s purpose, but the general flow of the function moved in opposite directions.

Now using Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Amos as our pattern, it becomes clear that God’s prophets give clear evidence that they are sent from God. Biblical history tends to show God’s prophets arose during the period of time preceding when He was about to do something violently painful, such as with Amos, by sending him to Israel about 40 years before the Assyrian invasion and scattering of the northern ten tribes. When that occurred, Israel—the northern ten tribes—essentially disappeared from the view of historians. They are around. They settled in eventually to northwest Europe and the other Israelitish countries, including the United States of America, but historians refuse to accept the information that is given as to where these people migrated.

He did something a little bit differently with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel who were raised up immediately before the violent action God warned of through the previous prophet. They remained with the Jews in some capacity during the attacks against them, and right on through their captivity at the hands of the Babylonians.

Jeremiah remained in the area of Jerusalem even when Jerusalem was overrun by the Babylonians. But on the other hand, Ezekiel went west with the Jews in their captivity, and he remained there and apparently was killed by his fellow Jews at some time during their stay there. In either case, God was offering a merciful turning away from violence and captivity, whether it was 40, 50, or even 100 years before that violence ever took place, or even *during* the captivity and the violence itself. God was still there with them, begging them, challenging them to change their ways and return to Him.

We are going to go to Amos 3 again because I want to go through that in a little bit more detail because prophecy is both practical and positive. It is not all gloom and doom. Most prophecy begins negatively, but ends positively. This is because God is confident that what He prophesied is going to accomplish His end which is always eventually good, but much of the thrust of Amos is an education for catastrophe. I really, in a sense, relate to this book. We are not going to go through a great deal of it, but if there is a book in the Bible that seems to be written to modern-day United States of America, it is Amos.

The prophet Amos followed Elijah about 90 to 100 years later. He was a Jew sent by God to the ten northern tribes to announce to them their doom. His occupation was as a goat-herder, and apparently an arborist of some kind with sycamore or sycamine trees. Despite those unlikely professions for a modern prophet, commentators are very impressed by his very professional skill as an orator by his nailing of Israel to the wall, so to speak, regarding their sin and soon-coming devastation as a nation.

I said a bit earlier that prophecy usually ends positively with strong hope for redemption. However, in the book of Amos this is not quite so. In this case, the end is positive in a very slim, vague, far-off in terms of time. Amos gives strong indication that their doom is *certain* even though it is 40 years into the future. He gives very strong impression that God will not relent. In one place he directly tells them—"Prepare to meet your God! You've had it!" It is so strong!

But in chapter 5 of Amos is a lamentation regarding Israel's death as a nation. Israel's sins had continued to mount horribly since Elijah. They had become very wealthy, self-indulgent, even oppressive in their wealth, and yet they are still trying to walk a tightrope between God and Baal through behaving like a worshipper of Baal, but doing it in the name of the Lord.

The Israelites had devalued their election by God as children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, into the non-moral doctrine that somehow they were God's favorite—His pet, so to speak—and thus they were protected, and the recipients of many allowances, entitlements which required of them no responsibility in return. They were just there to receive the bountiful benefits of God—the God of Abraham—while they lifted up and oppressed one another in business and social life. It is no wonder that Amos, upon seeing that, just about blew his stack.

Overall, Amos shows that the God he serves is the Ruler of all nations, and He is calling Israel into account. He does not leave the other nations out. If you are familiar with the book at all, the first two chapters deal with other nations, and it is only toward the end of the second chapter that God gets to Israel. He is calling all nations into account, but Israel especially, at this time.

Amos begins by showing two things that provide a basis for what he is going to say, and these begin to appear right in the first three chapters.

The first thing is that he never directly mentions the covenant, but he does show that God and Israel have a special relationship. Amos quotes God, saying to Israel, “You only have I known,” indicating a very close relationship, as in marriage. The closeness comes from sharing the experiences of life together as though they *were* married, and Israel had backslid in meeting their responsibility in this marriage covenant.

The second thing is that Amos makes sure that the Israelites understand that his words carry authority, and therefore they had better heed because his words are not idle. He does this through the opening to chapter 3 and through a series of challenging questions that can be answered logically only one way.

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

That is very clear. God shows a relationship with Israel that is somewhat different from what He has with other nations, and He is going to call them into account. To whom much is given, the much more is required, and this is sort of a foundation of why God, through Amos, is saying that they are doomed. He expected more from them. They have let Him down terribly within their relationship.

Amos 3:3-7 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it? Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

I think that what He revealed to Amos was that Israel is doomed.

I have several points here. I will go through them again.

Point A: People traveling in the same direction toward the same destination at the time would hardly meet except by appointment. Amos has been sent by appointment, and he does not speak promiscuously. The utterances of the prophet began with God to whom they must give account.

In another sense here, the people traveling together are God and Israel. Remember, they are married. This was an appointment that was made, and now Israel has gone her own way. That is warning number one.

Point B: Lions do not roar unless they have taken prey. In this case, he is implying that God is stalking them. “Prepare to meet your God! God isn’t making a lot of noise yet, but He is nonetheless on your tail.” That is what Amos is saying.

Lions do not want to scare their intended prey away, and just because God has not previously roared does not mean that He is not judging. Amos is announcing, in God's behalf, their doom. The lion is on their tail.

Point C: You cannot snare a bird unless a trap is set. Someone has to build the trap and something has to cause the trap to spring. Amos is inferring here cause and effect. Sin brings a warning, and they are trapped; and then follows punishment.

Point D: The alarms go off, and then people take notice. He is reminding them that God is involved in His creation. He is managing it, governing it, and the calamity would not come if they were not deserving of it. Their doom is coming. Amos is the trumpet.

Point E: It is illogical to think that God would punish without first warning His people. This is an addendum to the trumpet. It is an aspect of His mercy. Amos was caused, inspired to speak by God, and that is where the authority for his word comes from, and he is the one sounding the alarm.

Israel must learn that the great privileges within their relationship with God must not be abused, or they will bring great penalties. Israel's sin was departing from God, which in turn produced great moral corruption and covetousness, which in turn produced great disregard for the simple duties we owe to God and to our neighbors.

The book of Amos clearly states this major responsibility as a prophet to those who have made the covenant with God.

We are going to stop right there with Amos. That is enough for him because I want to get on to John the Baptist once again. I want to explain this about John the Baptist hopefully more clearly regarding what Jesus and John said regarding his office, but first a better background as to why I look into this more thoroughly.

When the Church of the Great God began, I stated in both a sermon and then a Bible study that I did not believe that Herbert Armstrong was the Elijah. When I finally announced that, it was not just off the top of my head. I had been thinking about it for a couple of years. So when I made that announcement, we lost a number of people fellowshiping with us at that time. My thinking began with what I considered to be a presumptuous hypocrisy regarding some in the Worldwide Church of God ministry claiming that Herbert Armstrong was "the Elijah to come." I do not recall Herbert Armstrong ever claiming that himself, but others *did* claim it. At least Herbert Armstrong never claimed it in my presence. If he claimed it, I did not hear it personally.

Now some others had previously speculated that Herbert Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong were the Two Witnesses similar to Zerubbabel and Joshua of the book of Zechariah. It was well known that people identifying themselves as one of the Two Witnesses showed up on the Ambassador College campus, I guess fairly often, at least from time to time, and when that occurred they were promptly escorted off campus by the security personnel. Now making such claims as some in the Worldwide Church of God were making is presumptuous and flat-out wrong, and here we were doing exactly what the world does with all these people claiming they were one of the Two Witnesses, or both of them for that matter.

Now prior to the appearance of John and Jesus, some Jews were looking for the arrival of both Elijah and the Messiah. Their view regarding Elijah had an interesting base to it, and that is, they believed, as many do to this day, that since Elijah was taken off to heaven in this fiery chariot, that he never died, and that he was going to show up alive and well just before the return of the Messiah despite the fact that at that time he would have been pretty close to 900 years old if he had lived all of that time, wherever it was that he went. You can get from that the idea that (these people who believed that Elijah himself was coming), they believed in going off to heaven, because that is what the Scripture says. It was not until three or four chapters later that Jesus said that nobody went up to heaven except the Son of Man who came down from heaven. And so Elijah was not there. Elijah died just like everybody else did. They lived their life, and they died, and Elijah died. Now, from that point we can see that the Jews in their belief were wrong from the get-go.

Let us go to the book of Luke, chapter 1 where a prophecy says:

Luke 1:15-17 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

An angel, Gabriel, prophesies of John's work. The subject here is John, not Jesus. Gabriel states four things: (1) John's work would be great (meaning sizeable and effective). (2) He prophesies that John would be used to turn many in Israel to the Lord. (3) That John will act in the spirit and power of Elijah, and (4) He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

I wonder if you notice something else there. We might get back to this a little bit later. John had the Holy Spirit from the womb. You know from that we are dealing here with a really unusual person. So four major works would be accomplished through him, and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb, and be a person of unusually superb overall character, especially self-control and devotion to the responsibility given him. This is picked up through the description that he would be a Nazarite, that he would not drink wine all of his days. Other things are added to this. What he subsisted on was very meager food than you and I would be eating, and in addition to that we find that he was unusually clothed—in skins. There is no mention whatever of him ever living in a house. It seems as though he was a man of the field, a really unusual personality.

I give you that because I want you to understand that we are not dealing, in a sense, with a normal human being who was born into a normal family. He was born into a good family. No doubt about that at all, but he was unusually gifted by God.

In Deuteronomy 18, God warns us that if a prophecy of a man speaking in the name of the Lord does not come to pass, then the prophet is not from God, and therefore we are to ignore that man and his prophecy. I bring this up, because who prophesied of John? It was an angel. I do not know how many people were given prophecies at the hand of an angel. There are others I am sure, but again, we are dealing with someone really unusual here among human beings.

Turn now to John 1. Some men came from Jerusalem to question John the Baptist, and it says this:

John 1:19-23 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” [the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15] And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

So John the Baptist denied that he was Christ, and he denied that he was Elijah. However, he did affirm that he was fulfilling Isaiah 40:3 as a messenger preparing the way for the Messiah, which he identified the very next day as “the Lamb of God.” However, he was wrong on one count. Jesus positively identified him as Elijah. He was not the Elijah that prophesied before Israel fell. He was John the Baptist. He was a distinctly different personality, but he did have the same kind of devoted zealous spirit as the original Elijah had.

Now we are going to go to Matthew 11. Jesus is speaking.

Matthew 11:11-15 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Let us evaluate this just a bit. John had borne witness that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Lamb of God. That is in John 1. Now in this context Jesus is bearing witness of John and what he performed in his responsibility toward God. I want you to notice the praise that Jesus—God in the flesh—heaps on this man. No one who has ever been born by natural means was greater than John the Baptist. That is awesome! The statement leaves the possibility that there were some on the same level—maybe an Abraham, we will say—but nobody was greater than John the Baptist. In fact, of the commentaries I looked in, they generally tended to say flat-out he was the greatest. Not greater in comparative, but greatest in superlative than any other human being in terms of the way he lived his life and fulfilled his responsibilities to God.

Jesus meant exactly what He said. John was greater than the Elijah that these people so revered. This huge, unsolicited compliment coming from our Creator leaves no possibility that John did not fulfill every aspect of the things prophesied of him by Gabriel (remember John 1:17) that he fulfilled it to a level satisfactory to God’s judgment of him, and he therefore also filled what Malachi prophesied of Elijah.

Matthew 17:10-13 And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was Elijah. He *fulfilled* Malachi 4. These verses must be seen in light of the Transfiguration, which precedes it there in chapter 17. The Transfiguration forecasts the resurrected Christ in His Kingdom, and that was on the mind of the disciples who asked the question, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

The question in verse 10 was asked because the disciples did not understand how Jesus could be put to death in an environment restored to peace and justice by Elijah, that is John the Baptist.

I had heard this when we were in the Worldwide Church of God. What the disciples did not understand was the scope of the restoration that is given in Malachi 4. They *assumed* that because truth would be restored, people would respond, and righteousness and peace would be restored. But the people did *not* respond, because that was not God’s will. He simply allowed the people to make their own decision, and the only people who responded to the truth restored by John the Baptist were those God specifically called into the church.

Brethren, God is running everything. The majority of the people rejected the truth and killed the Messiah, and they did this despite the preaching of the truth by John and Jesus. We are disciples. We have to make an adjustment. There is no way that Jesus would give a compliment like He gave to John the Baptist if he failed in carrying out the message that is given of him in Malachi 4. He *did* it! He did it to the extent God wanted. I will give you one more clue regarding that in just a little bit.

Verse 11 then is a statement by Jesus agreeing with the interpretation of the scribes concerning Malachi 4. He is saying that the scribes were correct in their interpretation—that is, that Elijah *did* come first—that is, John the Baptist. However, in the scribes’ mind, their grasp of what was really going on was wrong, regarding the Jews’ recent history. And how do we know that? It is in verse 12. It begins with “But ...” That is an adversative. For what Jesus is doing in verse 12 is expanding upon and correcting the scribes’ misunderstanding.

They thought for sure that Elijah was going to set up the Kingdom, and Jesus (the Messiah) would just float in and take over. Wrong! God’s plan had a lot more years and events to unwind. So Elijah *did* come—that is, John the Baptist—and they rejected the truth he preached, and he was put to death. Jesus then added that they were going to do the same thing to Him that they did to John.

And then verse 13 is a confirmation that the disciples understood. They got it. They understood Jesus correctly concerning the Elijah—that is, the John the Baptist connection—so the conclusion has to be that Malachi 4 is a fulfilled prophecy. Nothing that Jesus said here can be construed as saying that there will yet be another Elijah to come before Christ’s second coming. I will tell you why.

Since the time of Jesus and John the Baptist, the New Testament has been added and is now available to man, and thus the restored truth Jesus and John preached is available, and the church is now doing the same basic job John the Baptist did. The church is doing it. The church is restoring the true way, revealing the true God, preaching the certainty of Scripture. So now we find a collective body of individuals representing God, revealing God’s will to the world.

You may have to think that through, but the key is to understand that Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was *the* Elijah, and that he fulfilled Malachi 4 to the tee. He fulfilled it so well, that in Jesus’ judgment, there was nobody greater than him. So all those things regarding the prophecies about John the Baptist have been fulfilled.

The Bible's prophets, with few exceptions, have come in bunches. We are now going to deal with close to a 100-year period that began in about 620 BC and contains the prophets Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Haggai. Their lives preceded and spanned the most tumultuous period in man's history that is now called, at least by one fairly famous historian, "the Axial Period." He calls it that because history seemingly did a flip-flop, and when it did, the world was a far different place than it was 100 years before.

The word "axial" is derived from axis. An axis is something on which something turns. Perhaps some historian invented the word axial, and the word "axial" means "having the characteristics" of an axis. Here we are talking about a period of time that has the characteristics of an axis. Now understanding what happened in the Sixth Century BC gives sense to history and to many, many prophecies, and thus it greatly adds to our understanding of what we are facing in this age.

There is a reason why we understand it, and that is because God has revealed to the church the truth regarding duality—that things that happened before have a small fulfillment, and they are typical of what is going to occur later on. God was very much involved through His prophets during this period of time, and so understanding this period of time is very important to us as a type of what we are beginning to live into right now.

I am going to be quoting fairly extensively from a history book titled, *The Origin and Goal of History*. It was authored by Karl Jaspers, and the quotes I am going to give come from the German edition. Karl Jaspers was a German. Actually, he was trained as a psychiatrist, schooled as a psychiatrist, but he switched later in life to philosophy. He died in February of 1969. This first quote comes from page 1 of this book. I do not know whether you are going to be able to do very much with these quotes, but I want you to concentrate on what I am going to read to you because they are significant.

It would seem that the axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 BC, in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 BC. It is there (about 500 BC) that we meet with the most deep cut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today (mankind and his present civilizations) came into being. For short, we may style this the Axial Period. (p. 1)

Roughly the center of it is 500 BC. If you are going in the backward direction, that takes you into the late 600 BC.

It might seem as though I were out to prove the events of the Axial Period as a direct intervention on the part of the Deity, without openly saying so.

Jaspers was probably afraid to say it because he was agnostic. But he did say it. He put it in his book—"... a direct intervention on the part of the Deity." But he did not believe in the Deity. He was unsure about the Deity, but he said, "Man, there were some strange things happening in that period of time." And so the fact is that there *was* divine intervention, and the historical evidence is so overwhelming that even Jaspers has to mention the obvious appearance of it.

The Axial Period is in the nature of a miracle in so far as no really adequate explanation of it is possible within limits of our present knowledge. (p. 18)

By that he means there is no *human* explanation of it. But you see, there is an explanation, because God was involved, and He put the record in the Bible. Notice Jaspers says between 800 and 200 BC,

centering on 500 BC. That period of time encompasses all of the writing prophets from Isaiah to Malachi. That is when they all wrote.

Isaiah is the key prophet at the beginning. He is very interested in a dominating Gentile power. Who were they? The Assyrians. What Isaiah is doing is beginning to trumpet the warning of “the times of the Gentiles.” Assyria is first of the Gentile powers, but not the most influential of the Gentile powers. But it is Jeremiah (to a greater extent) and Daniel (to a lesser extent) who were the key prophets during the midst of this period in the 6th Century BC.

I want you to turn with me to Jeremiah 1, and I want you to see how God, just like He did with John the Baptist, equipped Jeremiah to do this job. Richard said in his sermonette that Jeremiah was a young man when he began, and indeed he was ["Doing Hard Things"]. Let us pick it up in verse 4.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; [Here is a man especially prepared.] before you were born I sanctified you; [I set you apart;] I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” [Nations is plural.] Then said I: [By the time this occurred Jeremiah was born and he was probably a teenager.] “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

That, as we are going to see in a moment, was really an *assignment*. To me it would be enough to make a teenager turn gray if he had any idea of what he was going to get into.

Let us turn to Jeremiah 25 and let us look at what God sent him to do.

Jeremiah 25:15-17 For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: “Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.” Then I took the cup from the LORD’s hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the LORD had sent me:

As we read through this, I want you to think: How did Jeremiah get to all of these nations? Did he walk? Did he have a party of people with him? Verse 18 tells the first place he went.

Jeremiah 25:18 Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day.

Are the Jews a curse to the entire world? They are. That is the way they treat them.

Jeremiah 25:19-32 Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people; all the mixed multitude, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); [I think within the context we have to understand that each one of those cities had a king, a ruler, a mayor we might call him. He had to go to each one.] Edom, Moab, and the people of

Ammon; all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastlands which are across the sea; Dedan, Tema, Buoaz, [which are in Turkey, in Asia Minor today] and all who are in the farthest corners; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes; [Today we think the Medes are up in Russia. Did he go up there? Probably not. Probably the Medes, as they were anciently, seem to be around Iran and Iraq; more Iraq than Iran.] all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. Also the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. [Sheshach is a code name for Babylon.] “Therefore you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.”’ And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “You shall certainly drink! For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? Should you go unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth,”’ says the LORD of hosts.’ “Therefore prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: The Lord will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will give a shout, as those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise will come to the ends of the earth—for the Lord has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword,’ says the Lord.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth.

Now remember, Jeremiah lived in that 6th century BC that runs from 500 BC up to roughly 620 or so years BC. And so what Jeremiah is to do is to take this cup, tell them they must drink, which is the same as saying, “You will suffer the consequences of what you’ve done.” Jeremiah was the “axial” man prepared by God as His spokesman, and Jeremiah’s administration reached out and embraced the nations and the kingdoms of the world. His special commission involved the totality of what we now call “the Western world.” That is where most of these people had drifted, had emigrated, and Jeremiah was authorized, commanded, to prophesy to the then-existing civilizations. Cultural and social structures which had existed since the Flood are to disappear from view. Did you hear what I said? They are to disappear from view.

Now does Jaspers observe anything about Jeremiah’s time? Did God mean what Jaspers said on page 5? What he said on page 5 was: “It was an age of simultaneous destruction and creation.” From page 6: “During this period of time the thousands of years-old ancient civilizations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period when it melts them down, assimilates them, or causes them to sink from view.”

Where did they go? They disappeared, because God set Jeremiah over those nations to pronounce His judgments. The Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Midianites, the Phoenicians, the Ammonites, and the Moabites dissolve from view, and new nations rise as powers to take their place.

Remember that Jeremiah, it is said in Jeremiah 1, was not only to tear down, but to build and to plant. Whom do we see begin to arise as these nations disappear from view? We see Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, China, and India. The nations of Europe and Russia begin their ascent to greatness.

Do you realize that in the same 6th Century period lived Pythagoras, Confucius, Lao-Tze, Buddha, Zoroaster, Numa in Rome, Thales the Greek astronomer, and just shortly after that Herodotus—the father of history; Hippocrates, the father of medicine also lived. Jaspers adds on page 5: “Mighty empires, made by conquest, arose almost simultaneously in China, in India, and in the West.”

As these other nations disappeared, up comes China, up comes India, and nations in the West. Continuing Jaspers’ quote on page 5: “Everywhere the first outcome of the collapse of the ancient order was an order of technological and organizational planning.”

On page 8 Jaspers says, “It cannot possibly be an accident that six hundred years before Christ, Zarathustra in Persia, Buddha in India, Confucius in China, the prophets in Israel, King Numa in Rome and the first philosophers in Hellas made their appearance pretty well simultaneously as reformers of the national religion.”

What was taking place? Again, we will let Jaspers say.

Page 2: “In this age were born the fundamental categories within which we still think today, and the beginnings of the world religion, by which human beings still live, were created. The step into universality (one-worldism, Catholicism) was taken in every sense.”

What we might say here is that the first steps taken toward the Beast were taken in the Sixth Century BC.

Page 18: Jaspers asks: “If the Axial Period gains an importance with the degree to which we immerse ourselves in it, the question arises: Is this period, or its creation, the yardstick for all that follows?”

The answer for that is a resounding “Yes,” and it is right in the Bible in the book of Daniel, chapter 2.

Daniel 2:28-36 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart. “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

I think that we will stop there because I want to get the answer to the question—“Is this period, or its creation, the yardstick for all that follows?” The answer is undoubtedly yes. Babylon became the head of gold—the fountainhead of all new civilizations. The New World—*our* world—the present

world standing socially, politically, economically, philosophically, and theologically all came into being in that one century. The New Testament reconfirms this by calling our present civilization “Mystery Babylon”—not “Mystery Persia,” “Mystery Greece,” “Mystery Rome,” or “Mystery America.” Babylon is the yardstick for this world we live in, and God’s prophets were trumpeting its birth long before it occurred, and it was born. Luke 21:24 confirms this.

Luke 21:24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until **the times of the Gentiles** are fulfilled. [emphasis ours]

The New World is “the times of the Gentiles.” It was ushered in in the Sixth Century BC, and the Babylonian image has influenced the world since that world arose

One thing you have to understand is, though Babylon has influenced and has given its character to the times, it has not always been Gentiles that have dominated, especially the last 300 years. These last 300 years have seen the rise and domination of the Israelitish nations, but even though Israel dominated, we did it with a Babylonian bent: Babylonian religion, Babylonian banking system, Babylonian on and on, but it *is* here in the United States of America.

Let us go to Habakkuk. From here we are going to jump all the way to the 21st Century.

Habakkuk 1:5 “Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.

I will tell you what is going to happen. God is going to reverse what He did in the 6th Century BC. There is coming another Axial Period and the Kingdom of God is going to be ushered in.

Habakkuk 1:6-7 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.

This particular Babylon is an end-time Babylon—“the Beast,” but God is going to turn things upside down.

Habakkuk 3:2 O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

That is quite an appeal there.

Let us go back to Jeremiah 25 again because I just want to remind us of something that ties this into the end-time.

Jeremiah 25:26 All kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. Also the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

I think I have given you enough for this day. But it all works out well, and the reason it works out well is because of what God is going to do. Last of all He sets Babylon, as it should be, completely destroyed, and the Kingdom of God is brought in, and we are going to look forward to and live through another Axial Period, and it is going to be tumultuous, I kid you not! That is why it says in Habakkuk—"If I would tell you, you would not even believe it." It is going to be so tumultuous—a time that has never been before. As bad as that one in the 6th Century BC was, this one is going to be far worse, and Jeremiah himself says that in Jeremiah 31. We can look forward to it. It is going to happen, but God is with us, and He will provide for us as we move through that period of time.