

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B1019 – May 9, 2010 – Gentile Preparation For The King

What we're trying to do as we approach the NT is reason this way: If Jesus is the light of the world, why doesn't everyone recognize that? After all, if you turn the lights on you'd think people would recognize that. So the issue now becomes instead of unbelief judging Jesus and calling Him a carpenter or an interesting figure or saying, we're not even sure Jesus existed, the point we wanted to make is what Jesus said in John 3. The reason people respond to Jesus this way is because men love darkness, and do not come to the light lest their deeds be exposed. Men's rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a reflection on Jesus or His revelation, its clarity, its logic, or any characteristics of it. Rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a commentary on the rejecter, not the object of the rejection. So the issue doesn't come back to Jesus, it comes back to the person who disbelieves in Jesus. If you and a group of people walk into a dark room and you turn on the lights and somebody says I can't see the light, what do you say? You must be blind! Ironically, the person who objects to saying I don't believe in Jesus, after being exposed, simply does nothing except reveal his own blindness.

What we want to do is study the blindness, because in each one of the phases of the life of Christ we're going to learn something about the pathological nature of unbelief. Turn to Gal 4:4, we want to remind ourselves of the timing. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world at a certain point in time. It was not an accident. Jesus' coming was perfectly timed; His entry into the world had been planned from eternity past. And at the perfect time He injected the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a historical preparation God was taking the human race through to get to Jesus. God ordained history to flow in a certain preparatory way, God knew about the Greeks, God knew about the Romans. He said to Daniel there's going to be four kingdoms: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek and the Roman. In that fourth

kingdom, the Roman Empire, God sent forth His Son, that's the time. Gal 4:4 says why He did it that way. Verse 4, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." If you look in the context of this passage he's talking about maturing, notice verse 1 is talking about you were once children, "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. ³So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world." Or the *stoicheia*, we studied that in Col 2:8. Ancient man like modern man says the fundamental building blocks of the universe are earth, air, fire and water. Modern man says the same thing, he just calls them solid, gas, plasma and liquid, it's the exact same thing, just a level of refinement taught in chemistry class. Then he's saying, verse 8, "However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. ⁹But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things," the *stoicheia*, "to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"

So the picture is that the entire human race was enslaved and yet something was being taught. It was, if we can say this, trial by error. Teachers talk about pedagogy, and we design lesson plans and there's a pedagogical intent behind the construction of lessons, you put lesson 2 before lesson 3, there's a sequence because you've got to get down concept 2 before concept 3, concept 3 builds on 2. So there's a proper sequence of learning. Here's a Biblical philosophy of history; history is pedagogical. Under God the sequence of historical events itself is pedagogical. This is why Paul says "in the fullness of time," meaning that certain things happened in history to teach A, teach B, teach C, teach D, to ready the human race for the lesson E, the Son of God. If Christ had come at any other moment in history He would have been out of sequence.

We want to review what the historical sequence was prior to Jesus that led up and prepared men for Him. We'll deal with it in two halves, the Gentile half and the Jewish half. We'll start with the Gentile half, the pagan world and show how the pagan world was prepared for the arrival of the Son of God, and then how the Jewish world was prepared for the arrival of the Son of God.

The first thing the pagan world had to realize was that in the post-Flood world nature is not a fixed reference point, nature is not God. We have had enough background in the OT so we can proceed pretty rapidly with this, but we want to recall some elements of our background study. We want to recall the fact that God worked down through history after the Flood because you have to go back to Noah in order to get the unity of the human race. That's the point when there's no Jew and there's no Gentile. All eight people on planet earth were saved. The beginning of civilization with Noah is an analogue to the beginning of the millennial kingdom with Christ, because just as our civilization began with 100% believers, so the millennial kingdom civilization will begin with 100% believers. Just as with Noah it's an utterly new world, so the millennial kingdom will be an utterly new world. Just as Noah begins to walk out on the planet, a planet that physically has been changed to the point where if we had taken satellite imagery data of the earth before the Flood compared to satellite imagery data of the earth after the Flood; we would say they were two different planets. So it is that when the millennial kingdom comes, because of the great judgment of the Tribulation it will transform geologically and geographically and astrophysically the universe; it will appear as though the earth of the millennial kingdom is different than the one we live in today. There are great changes to it.

Noah is an important figure because he started civilization. Civilization did not gradually begin with some ape that suddenly realized he could use a stick as a tool. We don't get our anthropology from Stanley Kubrick. We get it from the Bible. Civilization began with a family of genius' who carried over the waters of the Flood prior knowledge from before the Flood. Then we said that this civilization, while technologically it rose very quickly, spiritually it decayed just as quickly. The reason was because they also carried over their sin natures and sin distorts the picture of reality, so you have a situation where truth is being suppressed, twisted and distorted and out of that comes idolatry. Out of that kind of situation God called Abraham to be a counter culture. That call was a disruption. It disrupted pagan man's agenda. That's why we called those truths disruptive. Abraham and his seed down through Israel would always be disrupting pagan man's agenda. Until Abraham there was no basis for missions. Once he's called forth there's where the first missions begin because at that point the word of God is restricted to a subset

of the human race. Before that God spoke to all men, now He speaks to one nation, the Jews. Now that the Jews are the recipients of God's word they become the missionaries to the rest of the nations. So even though we think of missions as something in the NT, actually the first missionary was Abraham.

So now there's a divergence. On one hand you have the experimental group, and that's Israel. We watch them to see what happens when God the Holy Spirit superintends to preserve truth in a nation. The other nations are the control group; God's not going to tamper with them. He's just going to let them go their own way. And I want you to see Deut 4:19. Deut 4:19 is a surprisingly intense and strong verse about what God did to the control group that came after the Flood. As they rejected the truths of the Noahic Bible, God responded to that. And he's warning Israel, lest the same thing happen to them. He says, don't you "lest you lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them," now notice this clause, "those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven." In other words, He's allowed the other nations to become idolatrous worshipers of nature. He's saying this is what naturally happens when God the Holy Spirit doesn't superintend to fight against sinful tendencies.

I want to carry that theme forward because things haven't changed. Turn to Isaiah 47:13, another one of these prophetic little comments. If you have a newer translation you'll notice the comment that is made there. Isaiah is talking about the pagans who go to astrological seers, and he says "You are wearied with your many counsels, let now the astrologers, those who prophecy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you." Now if you look at the content of verse 13, think of the mental processes, the logical process - what does an astrologer do with the patterns of the stars? He makes predictions based on correlations of the zodiac, to the movement of the stars, apparent movement to us. When they do this they're making use of the irregularities of nature. But what do you have to have to have irregularities? Regularities. Because if you don't you can't detect the irregularities.

So we have these regularities or laws of nature. The irony is whose laws are those? They're the Creator's laws. The Creator, in making those laws, does

not make them so they force Him to do what the law says. God, as Creator of the law, has the freedom to modify the law. The law, all it is, it's not really a law at all; the law is simply a mathematical description of the way God works. We've got something confused in our time with natural law.

Everybody talks about natural law, the laws of nature, and we all kind of know what we're trying to say. But we'd better be careful, because the expression, "laws of nature" or "natural law" can carry inside of it a very, very pagan idea, i.e., that these laws stand by themselves independently of God. And people like Hume and others have used this to say well then, if they stand by themselves there's no exception to them, and if there's no exception to them what happens to miracles? We have to be careful. God does not put Himself in a box with His own laws. God works this way regularly, and these astrologers pick up on irregularities. But you'll notice what God says at the end of that verse. He says let them "stand up and save you from what will come upon you." What's coming upon them? We've gone through the OT, what's the event toward the close? This is an application of the framework. Isaiah is writing when, before or after the Exile. Before the Exile, so let's think about this.

You can read passages like this and come immediately to an understanding that someone without the OT can't. Remember the framework, here's how to use it. Isaiah is writing as a prophet. When did most of these prophets write? They wrote in the time before the Exile. Why did they do that? What was the role of the prophet? The prophet was a prosecuting attorney; he brought God's case for violation of the covenant so that when the judgment came they would be interpreted properly. So when did they write? They wrote in this period of the Kingdoms in Decline. So if we read in Isaiah and we see this verse, "stand up and save you from what will come upon you," he's talking to the split kingdom of Israel and Judah, and something is going to come upon them. What's the next event? The Exile.

So the Exile was interference by God into history to chasten His own people, and it represents an unpredicted surprise effect, an irregularity. That's what God is always doing; there are unpredictable surprise effects and He's challenging the whole understructure of astrology and the whole understructure of natural law. He's saying you people, because you've watched Me do it this way the last 100 times you think in the 101st time I'm going to do it the same way? Who are you telling Me how to run My universe?

Nobody tells Me, the laws of nature don't tell Me how to run My universe. We infer the laws because we watch God work and the last hundred times this is the way He did it, but we can't say therefore God is required on the 101st time to act that way. That's his point. Go ahead He says, go talk to the astrologers, they know the regularity of nature better than anyone else, let them "stand and save you," it's a challenge; let them try to stop Me from disciplining you.

We see the same thing in Amos, another prophet, writing in the same historical time period. Just imagine what those people would do if they had 900 numbers, I bet some sharp Jewish business men would have backed that business and made a million. Amos 5:26 is a difficult one in the Hebrew to translate. If you go to different translations you'll see it's handled differently. This is a case, not where the text so much is different, this is really frankly hard because of the vocabulary and the way the Hebrew is. My translation says, "You will carry along Sikkuth your king and Kiyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves." Think again of God the Creator-creature distinction. Why does he add the last clause in that verse? "which you made for yourselves." What is true of every pagan deity? They're man made. It's interesting; the skeptics will often say to you as a Christian, oh God is just a figment of your imagination. All idols are figments of the imagination. That God the Creator is, however, is not; we're made in His image, He isn't made in ours so it's reverse.

But notice in verse 26 that the people in this period of time were going crazy into astrology. What do you see after 3,000 years have elapsed since this passage, 2,500 -3,000 years? What are we doing today? Going to astrology. It's interesting, with all the talk of the Mayan's and their calendar that mysteriously stops in December 2012 and we interpret that to mean it's the end of the world. That discovery that people are so enamored with that Hollywood made a multi-million dollar movie about and all it is is ancient pagan astrology. The historical backdrop for all that stuff comes from this post-Flood distortion. The Mayan's are one of the groups that came out of Ham. They worshipped the stars. What's changed today? We have cars, they had chariots. We have computers to calculate astrological events, they had maps to calculate astrological events. The thought processes today are identical to the thought processes then. What are those thought processes? Once again, those thought processes lie at the root of the paganization of civilization. It's not new. Homosexuality, astrology, sins of violence, these are

not new; they are part and parcel of pagan civilization that warped Noah's once great enterprise. All of this to say that God let them be drawn away to worship the creation.

Turn to Acts 14; we want to look at two of Paul's evangelistic sermons to Gentiles, and if you look at the way he introduces the gospel to a pagan society, you'll see how he comes on. It's not the sales pitch approach that we are counseled to follow in the church growth movements today. Notice Acts 14:16, "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways." Who permitted all the nations to go their own ways? God did. What is he talking about? The same thing Deut 4:19 was. God allowed the nations to float along in their own private versions of paganism, "to go their own ways." Then Paul adds, he says in verse 17, "and yet He did not leave Himself without witness," what does that mean? That means that all nations had revelation of God. Can they come before the final judgment seat of history and plead ignorance? No. Verse 17 must be balanced with verse 16, though God allows the civilization to paganize and self-destruct, but it does not follow thereby that He left Himself without witness. They still had the witness of God. Paul recommends, in verse 15, that we "preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these "vain things..." stupid, vain production-less things "to the living God," notice the word "living," it's a sarcastic reference. What does it imply about their gods? They're dead, they don't act, they don't talk, and they don't do anything.

Acts 17:30, again Paul is talking to a Gentile group of people, and again notice what he targets in his gospel presentation. He's doing something that you'll notice we've mentioned several times. Remember we talked about strategic envelopment, this is what the non-Christian likes to do to us. Here we are, we're a believer, and he says you people are just weak and you need God, blah blah blah. So what the unbeliever does, he strategically tries to encircle us with his world view, and explain our belief in terms of his, psychology or something. And by explaining us in terms of his view, he thinks that he has neutralized our whole gospel presentation, because he's explained it away, and he's enveloped it. What we have to learn to do better is when we talk to them we have to turn that around and envelop them in our frame of reference.

That's what Paul is doing here in Acts 17. He says I know your background people, I walked around your city, I saw your worship. Don't come to me and give me all kinds of excuses for not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have no excuse for not believing in Jesus Christ. Look at verse 26, "and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' ²⁹"Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." In other words, is he holding them responsible? He's talking about what they produce? And he's saying you're made in God's image and you know you are. Look at what he says there in verse 28. He cites one of their poets. He says don't tell me, don't come up to me and tell me and tell me you don't know God exists and God made us in His image. Do you see what he's doing? He's wiping out the pagan theme of neutrality. You're not neutral. If you were neutral your poets couldn't write what they wrote. So Paul says, you do know, you show very clearly that you know. So don't give me this line.

Now verse 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to all men everywhere that they should repent." The implication of verse 30 is that before Christ he didn't do that, so now there's an urgency to the gospel that all mankind repent. What Paul is saying is again that God did not challenge this paganization directly until this point. He let it go and let it go and let it go. They drifted into worshipping idols, they drifted into worshipping the stars, it's all nature worship. For many centuries pagan man looked to the stars as determining the future, shaping future history. That's the background so when we come to see how the Lord Jesus Christ conducts His ministry we'll understand why He does what He does. That's the first thing, the first thing just to encapsulize it, *man tried to find in nature a sufficient object for worship.*

The second thing, when this played out was that *man turned from worshipping nature to worshipping man.* This is more background behind the preparations God was making in the Gentile world for injecting His Son into history. We said that in 586BC, in that time of the Exile you had a change;

the pagan world was changed. You had the rise of seven world religions in just 50 years that was unheard of in the history of the world. Suddenly you have a whole cluster of religions: Zoroastrianism, the reform movement in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, all those religions started within 50 years of each other right near the Exile. Is that an accident? Or is there some historical catalyst to that? What was true of all those religions? What was new about Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, etc. that was not true before? What was true basically of all these religions is they are ethics-centered, all man-centered. Instead of worshiping nature and the gods, they now quite flagrantly and openly deal with questions of who man is and man's right rules and wrong rules. Confucius said I don't know what's going on in heaven, but I'll tell you how to live on earth. That is ultimately the emphasis. They're all ethical, man-centered religions.

Another thing spawned at this time is Greek Philosophy and this is preparatory. We want to say a little something about philosophy beginning. Human thought became more rationalistic, and I have this great quote by F. E. Peters, considered by Greek scholars to be one of the experts in Hellenic thought. I think it's very important we look at this quote. This is during the third of the four kingdoms of Daniel. "The rationalistic premise operative in much of Greek thought and life...was, at root, the belief," and here you want to remember this - this is F. E. Peters talking now, the guy who is a specialist in this culture, underlying it was "the belief that unaided human reason was an adequate instrument for both understanding and action. Very few Greeks... denied the existence of the gods...; what the rationalist premise did suggest was that the operation of these gods was unnecessary for the acquisition of either truth by intellect or good by will." That's autonomous man.

Van Til, we quote him because here's a guy who's taking the Greeks and interpreting them Biblically, he's not just taking raw facts, he's interpreting those facts Biblically, a very godly procedure. He says: "It is taken for granted that the Greeks may fairly be compared to children who begin to wonder about things around them." (That's what you usually get in the textbook, but notice the "but," watch this). Here Van Til is going to correct wrong thinking. "But this comparison would be fair only if [the pagan notion of history] were true. The comparison" look at the word, presupposes, "presupposes that the human race was for the first time emerging into self-consciousness in the

person of the Greeks. [It] takes for granted that the human race had never been in close contact with a God who was closer to them than the universe. [It] takes for granted that the physical facts would naturally be knowable first, and that if God is to be known He must be known later.”

See what Van Til is saying? He’s exposing the root of pagan thought. He’s untying the knot that pagans have used to tie us down. And what I’m trying to show is that we’re not the one’s tied in a knot; it’s the unbeliever that’s tied in a knot. They often accuse us of having a knowing problem. Let me explain something that happened here with the Greeks. This had to happen before Christ came because the Lord Jesus Christ is going to say to Nicodemus, stop marveling at this stuff. Who has the real knowing problem? The unbeliever likes to think that we Christians are the ones that have the knowing problem. Well, how can you prove God exists? This is the thing you get thrown at you all the time. What we’re going to show is that unless Christianity is true you can’t know anything. Here’s why. The Christian position is built on the Creator. The Creator has two things: He has His plan and He has providence. Everyone clear on what the difference is? God has, from eternity past, a plan that includes every molecule and every action of every molecule in history, for all time and for all space. So everything has a place in the plan of God. It is a perfectly rational plan. Then God shows us His plan as He unrolls it in history. That’s called providence, the outworking of the plan. Now the plan of God is the basis for logic and reason in the Christian world view. Our logic and our reasoning machine works only because God’s plan is there first, and it’s rational. If God’s plan wasn’t there first and it wasn’t rational, the logic machine would never work. So the logic and reason of man is dependent upon the plan of God. Our experience, and the facts, and how they fit together are under the providence of God. It’s the providence of God that gives us experience; it’s the providence of God that gives us the facts. So the facts and experience come out of the providence of God, just as man’s reason and his logic come out of the plan of God.

Now you come down to this poor guy, here’s Mr. Pagan. Let’s ask him what the basis of his reason and logic is, and the basis of his experience and facts. Now you see he’s got a little problem. We see the Emperor had no clothes, because here the pagan is with his finite reasoning...finite reasoning, what do we mean finite reasoning? It’s limited. What does he inevitably do every time he opens his mouth? He’s using reason and logic, he’s making absolutes.

Now here is a wonder; a finite reasoner using reason and logic, making absolutes? Every time he says ought, true, right, wrong, he's referring to a standard, he's talking about absolutes. Now how can you talk about absolutes if you're a finite reasoner living in a world with no plan? I can talk about absolutes as a finite reasoner because I know the Creator has a plan and the plan has absolutes in it. I've got a basis, the unbeliever doesn't have a basis, he's hanging in thin air here, yak, yak, yak about reason and logic, right and wrong, but he doesn't have any foundation for his reason and logic, right and wrong. It's a serious problem; he's building a glass house without a foundation. He talks about facts that just happen, experiences that just happen, they come out of a dark void, and underneath it all you have what, Chance.

But here's the final problem. Just as we said the unbeliever has this problem of good and evil that maintains itself forever, look what he's got here. Now he's got a war going on between his left side and his right side. On his left side he's wants reason and logic to hold so badly he posits a Deterministic universe. On the right side he gets facts and experiences that just jump about and happen by sheer Chance. You can't have both of these principles. They are at war with one another. His Determinism underlying his logic machine is at war with his experience coming out of Chance. He can't get the two together. That's always been the dilemma of humanist thought. You can't make a sentence, you can't make a predicate. If you say this animal is a cow, you're predicating. Now think of what I just said: this animal is a cow. Included in that sentence is the fact that the universe is a stable place so I have stable categories and that I can classify and I can know exactly there is this category called cows. Does that presuppose that I know every cow? No. But somehow up here in my logic machine I've got a category, a class distinction called "cows." That's my logic. There's my finite reasoning going about making classification. But then the subject of the sentence is "this animal." This animal called a cow walked in front of me. Now how do I know that tomorrow when this animal walks in front of me it's still going to be a cow? How do I know it isn't going to be transmutating into some other thing? How do I know tomorrow my whole scheme of classification isn't going to be blown away? Suppose tomorrow it walks up and it's half way between a cow and a horse? Now what happened to all my nice categories? They're wiped out. In paganism I can't ever be sure, I can't tell one thing from another thing

because I'm a finite observer experiencing it. In fact, in paganism I can't even distinguish myself from the cow-horse thing.

My point in saying all this is to show you that the Greeks went through all this stuff I just took you through, all this Q & A about knowing, and they had to do that before the Lord Jesus Christ came into history. Why? Because if they hadn't, people could still say, well, yes, there's Jesus but still there's another possible answer. But the fact is that the Greeks already tried every other possible answer. Aristotle and Plato already knew what I just told you, this isn't something I dreamed up. You can go read all about it. This is something that's been true since Plato's day. This was known, all this was known. This is why Alfred North Whitehead said that all of western thought is a footnote to Plato. Even Whitehead, a pagan saw that Plato tried every configuration of autonomous thought centuries before Christ. They all failed. Then Christ comes with the answer.

Now the Greek adventure led to the rise of Rome, the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2. In Rome we said the contribution of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece all meld. They come together into one mighty military organization. The city and kingdom of Rome became supreme over all of life. Here you can see the supremacy of the state over all in this quote. This is the legend of the founding of Rome. What Rushdoony is getting at is that while this is a legend it has a ring of truth to it. Look at the beginning of Rome and ask yourself, did Rome grow out of family or did family grow out of Rome? "Two boys, abandoned twins, set out to find a city. Romulus plowed a furrow as the first wall around the planned city, with the trench as the moat, and the overturned earth as the wall. His brother, Remus, expressed his contempt for the wall and moat by leaping across them into the City, whereupon Romulus killed him at once, declaring, 'So perish all who ever cross my walls!' Rome thus began, first, with two boys abandoned by their family, and, second, with the murder of a brother as its first sacrifice. The priority of the City to the family is emphatically set forth. But this is not all. Third, the first citizens were not members of a common family or clan but neighboring shepherds, outlaws, and stateless people. The City made them Romans, not ties of family or of blood. Fourth, and he goes on to describe the first Roman assault, an assault on the family. Rome began as a city and then created the Roman people and the Roman family. Contrast that to Israel. What defined Israel?

Families and blood. What defined Rome? An artificial contrivance of political will. So we have the State as ultimate, taking the place of God Himself.

So in that kind of a milieu, we want to get a feel for what the talk on the street was like in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. We've got to understand, (part of understanding the NT is understanding what the street people were talking about) what was in the gossip circles, what was being discussed in the market place, what were the ideas that threatened, dominated or intrigued the people to whom the gospel was first preached?

By the time of Jesus' birth Roman power had reached a peak. People were increasingly disillusioned with man's solutions to the practical and theoretical questions of life. Confidence in classical philosophy was waning. Think of it, in the 6th century when Plato and Aristotle were making their impact the population of Athens was booming. By the time Paul gets to Athens Petronius wrote that it was easier to find a god than a man. People had given up on the answers of Greek Philosophy. Masses of people sought answers in the numerous cults throughout the Empire. That's a thing you may have crossed over in your NT studies, the thing that was very prevalent in Corinth, the mystery cults. The background of the term mystery in the NT is these mystery cults. Large numbers of people were flocking to them because they were looking for answers. Since Jewish OT Scripture continued to circulate throughout the Roman Empire, it's Messianic hope, not unexpectedly influenced Gentile pagan writers. For example, Tacitus, the Roman author, wrote, "look at this quote, remember the guy who is talking is a Roman, he's a literate Roman, and he's commenting from a Roman Gentile point of view, but look what he says: "The majority were deeply impressed with a persuasion that was contained in the ancient writings of the priests that it would come to pass that at that very time, that the East would renew its strength and they that should go forth from Judea should be rulers of the world." I wonder where he got that from. The Jews should go forth to rule. People speculate where he got it. Isn't it interesting? Does that perhaps give us a better insight into why Herod acted the way he did when he heard that a King of the Jews was born? Why did he immediately go into a policy of genocide to get rid of that boy? This wasn't just a man that had his screws loose. There was more to it than just a nut; this idea was prevalent and feared.

Another quote, this one from Suetonius, another Roman writer, says: “A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East that it was fated for the empire of the world at that time to devolve on someone who should go forth from Judah. This prediction referred to a Roman emperor, as the event showed, but the Jews applying to themselves broke into rebellion,” speaking of a later rebellion happening. Notice that first sentence. What does that tell you about the men and women in the street? “A persuasion had long prevailed through all the East that it was fated for the empire of the world at that time,” which would have been the Roman Empire, “to devolve on someone who should go forth from Judah.” Does this give you a little insight as to why the priests were very alarmed about Jesus’ claim to be King? You see, Jesus was like a torch, and He was walking around and everybody had spilled gas around. That’s why we’ve got to understand this response that Christ got, a panic response. I mean, bureaucrats went into a frenzy over this guy. They were afraid of the consequences of His Kingly claim. This could upset the peace. If you study these sources you realize this was the background of what was going on, a very volatile environment politically.

And it was into a world in which all these solutions had already been tried that Christ stepped and entered this world in that “fullness of time.” They had tried nature worship, they had tried human worship, worship of the human intellect, they had tried state worship, they had tried everything and finally after all this was tried then Jesus Christ comes to give the answer. There’s no question that the timing here is so historically perfect that any denial that he is the answer leaves you totally without any hope of any answer. That’s why the only alternative to Jesus Christ today is just physical or spiritual suicide. If I were a pagan and I really thought through the answers paganism has offered I’d kill myself. You say, now don’t get radical. This isn’t radical. There’s nothing to paganism. It’s vanity. They have no answers and they have no hope for one.

So the categories were all there in the first century. The Gentiles were prepared and the stage was set for difficult questions like, how can Jesus Christ be God and man...The categories for comprehending that in human thought were prepared, the fullness of time had come.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2010

