

The Fullness Of Time

Galatians 4:4-7

Pastor John Miller

We'll begin at Galatians 4:4. Follow with me. Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come,"—there's our title—"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,"—there's the Christmas story. Then, he tells us why He came, "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

To set the context, it would take some time to go into depth on it, the book of Galatians was written to a group of believers that were being influenced by false teachers. Those false teachers were known as Judaizers, that means that they were telling these Gentile Christians in Galatia that in order to be a Christian, in order to be saved, they had to become Jews; and by doing that, they had to be circumcised, they had to come back under the law of God, they had to come back under the dietary laws—they basically had to be Jewish. The danger was that they were going back to law, which Christ came to deliver us from. The book of Galatians is all about that we have liberty in Christ, that Christ has set us free, "...and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." For a believer to go back under law would be to go back under bondage in the old covenant. There is no salvation in the law of God. The law was not given to save us, the law was given to show us our need of a Savior.

The whole context of this verse that we just read is now that Christ has come, and that God sent His Son, that we've been redeemed from the curse of the law through the blood of Jesus Christ. How foolish it would be, as he said, "O foolish Galatians...having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh,"—that you think you can be now made perfect in the flesh. If you're struggling with knowing whether or not you're saved, whether or not you have a right relationship with God, Galatians is a great book to study. Or, if you're wrestling with legalism—to try to perform to be right before God—Galatians certainly would set you free if you understood its message and let it grip your heart.

I wanted to lift these verses, verses 4-7, and talk about four facts about the birth of Christ or the incarnation of Christ. When we use that term "incarnation," what we mean by that is that in Christ God took on flesh, and not just physical flesh but He actually took on humanity. When we speak about the incarnation, we speak about God becoming flesh, or becoming a real or authentic human. The Bible teaches that Christ was eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, that He left heaven, came to earth, and that at Christmas we hear about this. More preachers, myself included, should be preaching on the incarnation and the virgin birth a whole lot more because that's the foundation of our faith—God coming into the world through the womb of the virgin Mary, taking on real humanity in order that He might die on the cross for our sins. So, it's perfectly fitting at Christmas that we celebrate communion. I think this is my favorite Christmas service, in the communion service, because it's the very heart of why God

sent His Son, to give His life on the cross for our sins, and we're remembering what Christ has done for us.

If you're taking notes, I want to give you four facts about the incarnation or the birth of Christ. The first is the timing of His birth. Look at it in verse 4. Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come." Have you discovered that God's timing is perfect? Sometimes we get impatient with God. We think, God, I prayed and You haven't answered. God, I'm waiting, and You haven't showed up. Maybe you're anticipating the rapture, the Second Coming, or the Lord's return, and you say, "Where is He? Why hasn't He come?" or "Why hasn't God answered my prayer to heal my parents," or "heal my mother, heal my brothers or sisters," or "heal my own body? Where are You, God? What're You doing?" As you study Scripture, you come to the firm conviction that God's timing is perfect. He's never too early, He's never too late, He's always right on time. So, learn to trust the Lord. Amen?

When it says, "...the fulness of the time," that's a fancy biblical way of saying, "At the perfect time, at just the right time, God sent His Son." You might think, Well, why if God was going to send His Son to save the world, why didn't He do that before He destroyed the world with the flood by Noah and that ark that He had him build? Why didn't He do it right after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden? Why didn't He do it right after Cain slew his brother Abel? Why didn't God send His Son a whole lot earlier? The only answer I have to that is: God's ways are not our ways, God's ways are beyond our ways, God's ways are past our finding out, and God's ways are absolutely perfect.

You might have heard it before, but let me mention some of the reasons why Bible students point out that Christ came at this perfect time in God's plan and program. The world was experiencing what was known as the Pax Romana, that means Roman peace. The whole world had been bludgeoned into submission, as we're going to see Sunday morning in Luke 2, where Caesar Augustus on the throne in Rome sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed, one man ruling the world, but there was no war going on at this time. There was peace and what we would know as a one-world government. It was the Roman world, which, by the way, I hadn't planned on mentioning this, was going to exist just before Christ comes back the second time, the world becomes one and a ruler known as the Antichrist comes to power, there's a one-world government at that time as well, and there was at this time Roman peace.

Secondly, there was what we call the Roman Roads. Anybody that's been to Israel or to Greece or to Italy has seen Roman Roads that date back all the way to the time of Christ. We should learn some lessons here in California about how to build roads that don't fall apart. I'll stop right there. You can go to this area today and still see the actual Roman Roads that were built, and the whole world was attached to Rome. There are all these roads, but it was kind of the perfect time for the messengers of the gospel, the preachers of the gospel, to make their way around the world and be able to share the good news by way of the Roman Roads.

Thirdly, there was a common language, similar to today that we have English being the universal language. In those days, after Rome conquered the world, they were speaking Latin.

Then, Alexander the Great actually Hellenized the whole world, which means that he turned them to the Greek culture and they adapted the Greek language. The Greek language, of which the New Testament was written, is a classic language and the language that God used so wonderfully to communicate the gospel and the message of Christ. There was this universal language of Greek where everyone could communicate and speak to one another.

Fourthly, and lastly, it was a time of a spiritual vacuum of darkness. Judaism had not delivered, other religions had failed, paganism had not answered man's heart cry and great need, so it was a very dark time, a great time of spiritual void. Many of these points parallel what I believe will be the end of time when we believe Christ will come back in the Second Advent. I don't know what it is, maybe the darkness of the world we live in right now, I've been more excited about Christ's Second Coming than I have His first coming this year because I believe that God will come in His perfect time and I personally have never seen the stage more set for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than I do right now. I believe Christ is coming soon, and we need to be ready.

We are being delivered by that law that Christ came to deliver in that fullness of time. God comes at His perfect time. When we get discouraged and we think Christ hasn't come yet, why? remember that we're not on the planning committee, we're on the welcoming committee. Amen? All we have to do is look for Him who will appear. It's called, "...that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The second point I want to make is the source of the birth of Christ. It's seen in the statement in verse 4. Look at it with me, "...God sent forth his Son." Make a note, this is the deity of Christ—God the Father sent God the Son. The Bible teaches that Christ came voluntarily, but He also was sent by God the Father. In this passage that we're looking at tonight, we see God the Father, we see God the Son, and we see God the Holy Spirit, so all three members of the triune Godhead were involved in man's redemption that took place by sending Christ that first Christmas.

The Father sent His only Son. Put alongside that Philippians 2, "Who, being in the form of God, thought,"—equality with God not something to hold onto, but emptied Himself, or poured Himself out—"and took upon him the form of a servant, and...became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." We need to think about Christmas is that God sent His only Son. We read about Him being, "...the only begotten Son," which is the only unique Son. I love the fact that He was sent by God the Father. Someone said, "He wrapped His love, in flesh and blood, and sent Him down to man." God, in His love and grace, sent. It all started in the heart of God.

Again, another mystery that we don't know is why God ever in His sovereign purpose and plan would allow man to sin. He gave him free will in the Garden, and he chose to disobey God. He wanted to make sure that man chose Him freely, but we know that God had all of the redemptive plan programmed out before mankind was ever created. I believe that when we get to heaven that we're going to understand things that we don't understand now. God has

revealed in His Word what we need to know, what He wants us to know, but when we get to heaven, we're going to be amazed. The Bible says, "...but then shall I know even as also I am known," to see God's masterful plan. I believe that God gets greater glory from the plan He has devised and planned than anything I could create, devise, or invent. I'm glad God hasn't listened to me before He made His plans. Greater glory to God through the fall, through redemption, and through mankind being restored back to God and adopted into God's family. We're going to see that in our text.

Who did God send? His only begotten Son. Put that alongside John 3:16, right? "For God so loved the world, that he gave,"—here the word is not "sent" but gave—"his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here's the third, write it down. I want to look at the manner of which He came or His incarnation or His birth—the timing, the source, and then the manner. Notice verse 4 again. It says He was, "...made of a woman, made under the law." This is His humanity. First we have His deity—God sent His only begotten Son, He's the eternal Son—and then God actually had Him being, "...made of a woman, made under the law." In the oldest prophecy of Christ in the Bible, going back to Genesis 3:15, it says the seed of the woman, "...shall bruise thy head,"—of the serpent. God designed that Christ would enter the world through the womb of the virgin Mary. The virgin birth of Christ is implied here. It's clearly taught in Matthew 1, in Luke 1 and 2, and all through the gospels because He took on humanity, but sinless humanity—real humanity but He was without sin. You cannot take away the virgin birth of Christ and have Christianity intact.

I want you to notice fourthly, if you're taking notes, its purpose. This is what thrills our hearts. Why did God send His only begotten Son into the world through the womb of the virgin Mary? Verses 5-7. Go back there in the text, "To redeem them that were under the law,"—condemned under the law, the Old Testament—"that we might receive the adoption of sons." That would be actually sons and daughters, by the way; so, ladies, don't be discouraged there, "Well, it's just sons." It's actually speaking about the children of God. Verse 6, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant,"—or a slave—"but a son,"—or a child of God—"and if a son,"—or child of God—"then an heir of God through Christ."

The list could be quite lengthy. Sunday night, this Christmas Eve, I'm going to talk about more reasons why Christ came, and we're going to look at Matthew 1, Jesus being called Emmanuel. I want to give you three reasons Christ came from the text, and they're right there in verses 5-7. First of all, to redeem us. I love that in verse 5. He came, "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." First of all, redemption. Redemption is one of the central themes of the entire Bible. I love the old hymn, Redeemed—how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child, and forever, I am. I gotta stop there or I'll start singing. Do you know what we're going to be singing when we get to heaven? We're going to sing, I've been, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Redemption pictured there, the imagery behind that picture, is that we were all slaves to sin, we were all slaves to sin, and the word “redeem” means to buy by paying a price. It doesn’t stop there. The word means to buy by paying a price and to take out of the market and then to set free. So, He went into the slave market, He bought us out of the slavery of sin, we became His very own, and then He set us free. It has all those ideas behind it: He bought us, He took us out, and He set us free; so we’re free in Christ through His redemption.

Someone said, referring to Christ’s birth, “That those soft little hands fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb were made so that nails might be driven through them. Those baby feet, pink and unable to walk, would one day walk a dusty hill and be nailed to a cross. That sweet infant’s head with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was formed so that someday men might force a crown of thorns upon it. That tender body, warm and soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear. Jesus was born to die.” The cost or price that He paid to buy us was His death on the cross. The Bible often uses the term, “the blood of Christ.” When it uses that term, “blood of Christ,” it’s referring to His cross, the substitutionary work on the cross of dying to buy us that we might belong to Him.

The second benefit and blessing of Christ’s incarnation, His birth at Christmas, is adoption. Look at verses 5-6. At the end of verse 5, “...that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son,”—now we have the Father sending the Son, now we have the Spirit coming forth into our hearts, so we have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—“into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” We actually become the children of God, “Daddy,” or “Papa.”

My wife and I have nine grandchildren, and I never imagined how awesome it would be to have grandchildren say, “Grandpa,” or “Grandfather,” they call me Papa, but when I hear that, I don’t know what word to even use because my heart just thrills when they call me, “Papa, Papa,” and run to me and grab a hold of me. What a blessing that is! That’s the relationship that you as a Christian have with God the Father. It was a word used for infants at a time when they would express their love for their “Papa,” their daddy, their father.

When Jesus taught us the form of prayer we call the Lord’s prayer, He said, “...pray...”—Our Abba—“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,”—so we become the children of God. This is what Christmas brings: our redemption and our adoption.

Adoption is an interesting doctrine taught in the Bible. It means that the moment you are saved as a Christian, you are placed as a full legal adult son or child of God. You don’t have to grow up, you don’t have to mature to begin to enjoy your inheritance, you are immediately a legal adult child of God and you begin to enjoy the blessings or the inheritance that are yours in Christ. How marvelous that is! Someone said, “Free from the law—oh, happy condition! Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all.” We’ve been redeemed; we’ve been adopted into God’s family.

Now, we also know, the Bible teaches, we’re born again into the family of God, so the two

concepts are we're born again or regenerated, we become the children of God, but adoption places us as full adult sons and daughters able to begin immediately to enjoy the blessings and benefits. One of them, is the next point, not only do we have redemption, adoption, but we have heirship, verse 7. "Wherefore thou art no more a servant,"—or a slave—"but a son,"—adopted into the family of God, full adult sons. The Greek word is *huios*. It means adult sons or daughters. "...and if a son, then an heir,"—there it is, verse 7—"of God through Christ." How marvelous that is!

You may not stand to inherit much in this world, but if you're a child of the King, you're going to inherit all things in heaven and all eternity. Another hymn that popped in my brain, I'm full of hymns, it goes, A tent or a cottage why should I care? They're building a palace for me over there; of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold, His coffers are full, I have riches untold. I'm a child of the King, A child of the King, With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King. How marvelous that is!

You may not have a lot in this world, but if you're a Christian, you have the inheritance that is yours. Check out, when you get a chance, Ephesians 1, you were chosen by God the Father, "...before the foundation of the world." You were forgiven and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Romans 8:17 says, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together,"—with Him. Amen?

He left heaven and came to earth so that we can become the children of God and that one day we could leave earth and go to heaven. He was born of man so that we could be born of God. He died on the cross for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life.