

An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim Watson
Series- The Characters Of Christmas #4
“God Is Right On Time”

Do you know people who are chronically late? (Please do not point at them right now in this service!) Do you know people who are always late? They are rarely on time for anything. It has been said of that person, "*They will be late for their own funeral.*" I don't know if the deceased will be late for their own funeral, but I do know I was late for a graveside funeral service I was conducting. I was late to conduct the graveside service because I was at the wrong cemetery!! That is not a good thing.

But do you know people who are always late? They are rarely on time. They're tardy for almost everything. Have you ever felt God was late? Have you experienced a time in your life where you felt as if God was not on time? I'm sure those were the feelings of the Jewish people who lived in Jesus' time. Think about it, the Jews had waited about 400 years between the last words of the Old Testament until the time of Jesus with the beginning of the New Testament.

The Jews had anxiously waited about 400 years for the Messiah to be born. You could almost hear the people of Israel asking, "What is taking God so long? Why hasn't He sent us a Messiah? Maybe God has forgotten us? That's why He's running late." Isn't it encouraging to know that the God we worship and serve today, the one whose birth that we will celebrate in a few days, is right on time? The Apostle Paul echoes this thought in Galatians 4:4-5.

Would you look in your Bible to the New Testament Book of Galatians? Galatians 4:4-5. The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in the church at Galatia, and reminded them the God they served had a great sense of timing. He reminded them God is on a timetable, but his timetable isn't always our timetable.

Our message is entitled, "God is Right on Time." This is the fourth message in our Christmas sermon series.

In Galatians 4:4-5 in the New International Version, the Bible says, *4"But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons."*

In Galatians 4:4-5 in the Living Bible, it reads: *4"But when the right time came, the time God decided on, He sent His Son, born of a woman, born as a Jew, 5 to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law so that He could adopt us as His very own sons."*

If the meaning of this text could be summed up in one sentence, it would be this: **God is right on time.**

Verse 4 contains the key phrase of our text, "In the fullness of time", "When the time was right", "When the time had fully come."

From a human perspective, Paul was saying to the Galatians, the time had come for Mary's pregnancy to end. It was time for Mary to give birth. That's from a human perspective, when the time had fully come. But from a spiritual perspective, God had prepared everything to come together at just the right time.

God had planned and prepared the birth of Jesus Christ to take place at this specific time in human history. We see God's timing and how the stage of history was laid out for the coming of Jesus. Notice the preparations God made for the coming of Jesus at this specific moment in history.

1. **God prepared the language of the world.** It was Alexander the Great, who lived from 356 BC to 323 BC, (he died very young; at the age of 32) who brought the Greek language to most of the known world.

Greek is one of the richest and most expressive languages that human history has ever known. For example, we have one word for love in the English language.... and we can say, "I love my spouse, but also, I love pizza." Same word, but radically different meanings. Whereas in the Greek language, there are four different words for the word love. For example, there's agape love, which is Godlike or perfect .love. There is phileo love, which is friendship love.

There is eros love, and that is a, an erotic love between a husband and wife in the context of marriage. There is a storge love, which is a familial love within the family context. It's the love between a parent and a child. Is it any coincidence that the Greek language was the predominant language at the same time Jesus came, and that much of the New Testament was written in this Greek language? God prepared the language of the world.

2. **God prepared the thinking of the world.** About 600 years before Jesus Christ was born, Greek philosophy reached its highest point with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The result of all the philosophical ideas of these great teachers was skepticism and uneasiness. People had lots of questions about the meaning of life, but no one seemed to have any answers.

At just the right time, when men and women were searching and longing for truth, Jesus came on the scene to answer these questions about life. For example, the Apostle Paul, in the Book of Acts, goes to Mars Hill and he preaches to the Greeks in Athens. He goes and he challenges the thinking of the world and speaks to the Greeks in a way they would understand the gospel. So God prepared the thinking of the world.

3. **God prepared the education of the world.** Great universities were built during the Roman Empire. It was quite common for scholars to travel and give lectures in

the cities of the Roman Empire. The doors were wide open for people like the Apostle Paul to travel and speak and tell people about the message of Christianity. God prepared the education of the world.

4. **God prepared the Roman Empire.** The Roman Empire, the kingdom in which Jesus was born, was strong and advanced and cutting edge in many ways.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "All roads lead to Rome"? The Romans were smart enough to develop highways and roads. It would be equivalent to our interstate system, that stretched to all the known world. When Jesus and his disciples began to scatter out and proclaim the gospel, there were excellent roads already prepared for them so they could go anywhere in the known world and share the gospel. Again, we must ask, are all of these things a coincidence?

The language, the thinking, the education, the infrastructure of the Roman Empire? Absolutely not. We see in all of these historical events God's great sense of timing.

As we come to our text in Galatians chapter 4 verse 4, the Bible says, *"But when the time had fully come," in the fullness of time," when the time was just right,"*

The Apostle Paul Writes:

- I. **"God sent his son."** (v.4) I want you to notice that these words point us to the deity of Jesus Christ.

That is, Jesus was God's son. Jesus was God. Jesus said it like this in John 10:30. "I and the Father are one." Jesus said in John 14: 9, "If you have seen me, you have seen God the Father." These verses tell us that Jesus Christ wasn't just a good man, a moral leader, or an interesting Bible teacher. In fact, he was and is the son of the living God. Jesus is God.

We must remember Christmas is not about what people have done, it is not about human accomplishments.

Christmas is certainly not about who has the most lights in their yard or the tallest tree or what church has the best Christmas cantata. Christmas is about what God has done. Christmas is about the most important event to take place in human history, God sending his son. Literally the God of the universe entering this world in the form of a baby to live and walk in our shoes, to become one of us.

Say what you wish to say: Happy Holidays, Season's Greetings, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy Trails. But at the end of the day, it is still Merry Christmas, because this time of the year, we are celebrating Jesus Christ, the king of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

But not only was Jesus God, but we see:

II. **He was born of a woman.** (v.4) In verse four, Paul reminded his readers of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Jesus clothed himself in the garment of humanity. God literally took upon Himself all the limitations, all the frailties of a human being. Being born of a woman, Jesus would grow up like other children. He got tired, He needed rest, He needed sleep, He needed food. Can you imagine Mary telling Jesus when He was going through the terrible twos, "Jesus, you're cranky, you need a nap"? In God's timing, He would come to this earth in the form of a baby and put on our skin and become one of us.

So God sent His son. Jesus was God, this points us to His deity. Jesus was born of a woman, Jesus was also man, this points us to His humanity. And then in verse four, in the fullness of time, when the time was just right, God sent His son born of a woman and then:

III. **The scripture says, "Born under the law."** The law Paul is referring to is The Law of Moses, primarily the Pentateuch, the first five books of The Old Testament.

The Law of God started out as something good. The Law of Moses created a sense of moral responsibility among the Jewish people. It gave them a baseline as to what was right and what was wrong. The Law of Moses gave moral direction, it set boundaries beyond which people should not go. Paul says in Galatians 3:24 that The Old Testament Law was like a guardian, it was like a tutor, a school master, to lead people to faith in God and eventually point them to faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

At the heart of the law were the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, which are the highest moral codes the world has ever known. But with the passage of time, The Old Testament law evolved into something not so good. The law eventually became a manual for do's and don'ts. It became a book of rules and regulations on how to wash your hands before a meal and how far you can and cannot walk on the Sabbath. Rather than leading people to God, the law boxed people in, leaving them little room for freedom.

And so here in Galatians 4:5, Paul states that the reason that Christ came into the world at the time, notice in verse five, "He," (Jesus), "came into the world to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons or receive the adoption of sons and daughters."

IV. **Christ came to redeem those under the law.**

To redeem those under the law. The word redemption or redeem was a term taken from slavery in Paul's day. When a slave was set free, he was redeemed, the price had been paid for that slave's freedom, for his redemption. Paul told the the Galatian Christians God sent His son into the world at the exact right time so that we

could be set free, that we could be redeemed from The Old Testament law.

You might ask, "Why did people need to be set free from The Old Testament law?" Remember, in the Mishnah, in the Jewish rabbi's interpretation, for example, there were over 600 laws. The law started out as something good, but because men messed it up by adding their opinions and their interpretations as to what the law meant, as to what you could and could not do, it eventually enslaved people.

It was used at times by the religious leaders as a spiritual billy club to abuse and hurt people. And so the law enslaved people. That's why in verse five Paul uses the term redemption, that Jesus came to set us free.

The Law of Moses made the people slaves in two ways.

A.) **It caused them to be prideful.** At times, success in keeping the law was easy. It's easy to keep rules and regulations, don't do this, don't do that. You can keep all the rules and regulations because that is outward behavior. That's easy. But the people of The Old Testament found it hard to love people who were unlovable, they found it hard to love their enemies, they found it difficult to forgive people who had wronged them. This is why so much of Jesus' teachings on loving your enemies and forgiving those who have hurt you, these are all inward qualities....

So the people who kept all the rules of the law were tempted to become proud and critical, judgmental, and unforgiving.

The Law of Moses enslaved people by:

A. **It caused them to be prideful.**

B. **The Law Enslaved People in their Guilt.** The Apostle Paul acknowledged in his writings the law had awakened sin in the hearts

of the people. The law helped them to realize they were sinners, and yet the law could not forgive the guilt it created.

At times, God's people were instinctively left with all these feelings of guilt, but they had no way to deal with this guilt on a regular basis. Yes, there was the Day of Atonement, but that was once a year, a once-a-year event where they were forgiven for their sins. Paul says in verse 5 that God sent Jesus into this world at just the right time to redeem us, literally to set us free from spiritual pride and from that moral guilt that the law had created.

The salvation of God is grace-given. It is a gift from our loving Heavenly Father. So when we receive the ultimate Christmas gift, the gift of God's son, Jesus Christ, Paul says in verse 5, we become God's adopted children.

Verse 5 says Christ came into this world so:

V.) **We can receive the full rights of adoption as sons and daughters of the King.** When we choose to make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, when we choose to follow Jesus, we become a member of God's family.

Although we are adopted into God's family, we receive all the rights and privileges of being the child of God as if we were his family from the very beginning. Sometimes we hear people say, "Well, you know, we're all God's children," but that's not all the way accurate. Not everyone is a child of God. It is accurate to say we're all God's creation, not everyone is a child of God.

According to the Bible, you become a child of God through adoption, and you are adopted into God's family by receiving his son, Jesus, that he sent to die for you on the cross.

Application

You might say, "Pastor, how does all of this apply to me on this Sunday before Christmas? What does this have to do with me?" This God who entered human history at just the right time, this God who

holds your life in the palm of his hand says to you, "You can trust me. My timing is perfect timing." Maybe you're dealing with a situation at your job where you're saying, "Why is God taking so long?" You're facing a situation in your family where you're saying, "God, why aren't you doing something about that person in my family?" Maybe you're confronting a situation in another area of your life where you're saying, "Maybe God has forgotten about me and He's not hearing my prayers." I want you to be encouraged today.

God has not forgotten about you. He is working according to His timetable, and quite frankly, I wish His timetable matched my timetable.

If He can bring the Savior of the world into this world at just the right time, He can and will work in your situation at just the right time.

Many years ago, we used to sing a simple chorus that has great theology, and the chorus says,

"In His time, in His time. He makes all things beautiful in His time. Lord, please show me every day as you're teaching me your way, that you do just what you say in your time."

You may not realize it, but you're not here this morning by chance or accident or by coincidence.

You are here today because of God's perfect timing. Some of you think you're here today because it's the Christmas season and church seems like the place to be, or you're here just so you can be with family, or someone invited you. For some of you, God orchestrated events in your life so that right here, right now today in this place, you could make Jesus Christ, the Christ of Christmas, your Lord and Savior.

What must I do to be adopted into God's family? How can I become a child of God? Well, let me explain quite simply.

To be saved, to be redeemed, to be set free,

1. **Understand God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.** John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son for you." John 10:10 says, "The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy, but I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly." God loves you and wants you to have a wonderful quality of life on this earth.

But we have a problem, and the problem is:

2. **We are sinful and we are separated from a holy God.** And apart from God, we cannot know His love and we cannot experience the abundant life and the plan that He has for our lives because we are sinful. The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23, "**All** of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible tells us in Romans 6:23 that our sin separates us from this holy God, and the wages of sin is **death**.

That's not only physical but spiritual death and separation from a holy God.

So what's the solution?

3. **Jesus Christ, God's son, is God's only provision for our sinfulness.** Through a personal relationship with Jesus, we can know and experience God's love, God's plan for our lives. Jesus died for our sins. Romans chapter five, verse eight says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But Christ did not stay dead.

The Bible says He arose from the grave and because He arose from the grave and He's alive today, He is the only way to God. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I'm the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." What must we do? How do we respond?

4. **We must individually receive Christ as Lord and Savior to experience God's love and His plan for our lives.** John 1:12 says it like this, "As many as received Him," (that is received Jesus,) "to them He," (that is God,) "gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in His name." You can receive Jesus right now!