

The Fullness of Time **Galatians 4:1-7**

Have any of you ever been late for something? I suppose all of us know what it's like to be late once in awhile. I remember a wonderful Christian couple in Atlanta who were always late. You have heard of people who liked to be fashionably late. These dear people were punctually late. You could almost set your watch by them. No matter what time the service was supposed to begin, you could count on them being exactly five minutes late.

God is always on time. He is never too early. He is never too late. One day a news reporter asked Roger Maris who for years held the major league record for home runs in a season what his secret was to hitting 61 home runs in a season.

Do you know what he said? He didn't talk about strength or bat speed. He said that the key to hitting home runs was "split second timing." If you half to hit the baseball at just the right time!

God's timing is always perfect. When Joseph and Mary rode into Bethlehem that night some 2,000 years ago, the time was just right for the Savior to be born. First of all it was...

1. A Perfect Time

Look again at verse 4. Paul writes, "*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.*"

Notice verse 4 says that Jesus was born "*in the fullness of the time.*" What does that mean? Does this mean that there was only one time in all of history when all things were perfectly in order for the coming of Christ? Does this mean that there was no other time when Christ could have come and fulfilled the plan of God for our salvation? I believe that is precisely what Paul is saying here in verse 4. The bible says that Jesus was born at the perfect time.

The word "*fullness*" is from the Greek **pleroma**, (*play'-ro-mah*) which means *completion*. What Paul is saying here is that when all of the preparation for the fulfillment of God's plan for our salvation was complete, at just the right time Christ was born.

When "*God sent forth His Son*" the time was right religiously. Greek philosophy and Roman idolatry had resulted in empty lives and hungry hearts. Even the religion of the Jews had become little more than empty, dead ritualism. It was a very dark time spiritually, much like it is today. People were looking for something spiritually that was real. They were looking for something that would bring meaning to their life; something that would give them the peace, the joy and the hope they were so desperate for. That is why it was perfect time for Christ to be born.

It was also the right time politically for Christ to be born. Two-thousand years ago Rome was the world's great super power. Among the many accomplishments of the Roman Empire was the construction of a paved road system that spanned more than 50,000 miles. It was said that a man could start traveling on a Roman road in northwest Africa, travel around the entire Mediterranean Sea, and end up in Rome without ever leaving a Roman road. This expansive system of roads made it possible to quickly spread the good news of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Furthermore, when Jesus was born, Caesar was sitting upon the throne of the Roman Empire. In Luke 2 the bible tells us at the time of Christ's birth, "*There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.*" Caesar's imperial decree required all Jews in the land of Israel to travel to their ancestral homes to pay their taxes.

Because of that decree a young couple from Northern Galilee by the name of Mary and Joseph were forced to travel to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born.

When God sent forth His Son it was the right time religiously, it was the right time politically, and it was the right time culturally. When Jesus was born the Greek language had become an international language. It was the language spoken throughout the vast Roman Empire. Jesus Christ came into this world at just the right time in history when the good news of the gospel could be written in the Greek language and scattered to the far corners of the earth.

In the fullness of the time, when the time was just right religiously, politically, and culturally, God sent forth His Son. Jesus was born at the perfect time.

Not only was it a perfect time, it was also...

2. A Prophesied Time

The Old Testament is very specific regarding whom the Savior would be, and where and how he would be born. In the book of Genesis we are told that the Savior would be born the seed of a woman and a descendant of the man Abraham. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that the Savior would be a descendant of Abraham's son, Isaac, not Ishmael (Gen. 17; 21). More specifically, that He would be a descendant of Isaac's son, Jacob, not Esau (Gen. 28; 35:10-12; Num. 24:17). More specifically, that he would be a descendant of Jacob's son Judah. More specifically, that he would be a descendant of the family of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-5). More specifically, that he would be a descendant of Jesse's youngest son David, who became the King of Israel (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4).

Turn to Matthew chapter 1 with me and see how all of these prophecies were fulfilled in the birth of Christ. Look at verse 1. *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king"* (Matthew 1:1-6a). Notice this genealogical record runs all the way down to verse 16 which says, *"And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ."*

Isn't that incredible? That all of these prophecies regarding the lineage of the Messiah made centuries before the birth of Christ would all be fulfilled in a moment in time is just incredible. It gets better than that. In Micah 5:2 there is a prophecy that says the Savior would be born in a very specific place. *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2). According to the Word of God, the Savior would not be born in a palace in Jerusalem as one might expect but in the tiny village of Bethlehem.

Turn to Luke chapter 2 with me. I want you to see how, in the fullness of the time, this wonderful word of prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. *"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered."*

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:1-7).

If that isn't amazing enough the prophet Isaiah tells us that the Savior would be born in a uniquely miraculous way. He would be born of a virgin. *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).* In the gospel of Luke chapter 1 we see the fulfillment of this amazing prophecy. Luke 1:26 says, *“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus” (Luke 1:26-31).*

Jesus was born at a perfect time. He was born at a prophesied time. And then he was born at...

3. A Prepared Time

Before time began there was a plan in the heart of God for the redemption of mankind.

In the fullness of time God created the heavens and the earth and every living thing upon the earth and God looked upon his creation and saw that it was good.

In the fullness of time God made man in his own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. God looked upon his crowning creation and said that it was very good.

In the fullness of time that old serpent, the devil, beguiled Adam and Eve and persuaded them to eat of the forbidden fruit. The moment those once pure lips tasted of the forbidden fruit sin entered the blood stream of humanity and by sin came death.

In the fullness of time God made a promise to man that he would one day send a Savior to restore what was destroyed in the Garden of Eden, to redeem man from the curse of sin.

In the fullness of time God made a covenant with a man by the name of Abraham that he would make of him a great nation and in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

In the fullness of time God raised up a great nation of people from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In the fullness of time Jacob pronounced a blessing upon his son Judah that the Lord would raise up a king from his tribe.

In the fullness of time God spoke to an Israelite king of the tribe of Judah by the name of David and promised him that from his descendants there would one day come a great king whose kingdom would never end.

In the fullness of time God performed a miracle in the life of an ordinary priest whose name was Zacharias. His wife, though barren and well-along in years, conceived and bore Zacharias a son in his old age. The child was called John.

In the fullness of time John became God's prophet, proclaiming a message of repentance and preparing the way for the Messiah.

In the fullness of time an angel of the Lord appeared to a young Jewish girl named Mary saying, *“Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive a child by the Holy Spirit, a son whose name shall be Jesus...for he will save his people from their sins.”*

In the fullness of time a Roman Emperor by the name Caesar Augustus decreed that all citizens of the empire register for the census in the place of their family’s origin.

In the fullness of time Joseph and Mary left their humble home in Nazareth to make an arduous journey to Bethlehem, their ancestral home, to be registered for the census. While they were there Mary gave birth to a son and laid him in a manger. And they called His name Jesus, Savior.

In the fullness of time, at just the right time, God sent His Son into this world. Jesus was born at a perfect time. He was born at a prophesied time. He was born at a prepared time. And finally, Jesus was born at...

4. A Purposeful Time

Why did God send His only begotten Son into this world? Look at verse 5. The Word of God tells us that in the fullness of the time God sent forth His Son *“To redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Galatians 4:5).

First of all, Christ came to redeem us. The Law is the standard of righteousness that God demands of all men. The problem is that no man can meet the standard. Instead of saving us, it condemns us. Not because the Law is flawed, but because we are fallen. Not because the Law is imperfect, but because we are inadequate. The difference between what God demands and what we can deliver is a debt, a debt of sin that must be satisfied before there can be forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with the God who created us. And that’s why God sent His Son into this world.

Notice that Paul tells us that Christ came *“to redeem those who were under the Law.”* The Greek word that is translated *“redeemed”* here is the word **exagorazo**, (*ex-ag-or-ad'-zo*) which literally means *to buy back*, or *to pay a ransom*. When Jesus died on the cross, he purchased our pardon. His precious blood was the price for our redemption.

Christ came to redeem us. Secondly, Christ came that we might be adopted into the family of God. Paul goes on to say in verse 5 that God sent His Son to this world to redeem us *“that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying istout, “Abba! Father!”* (Galatians 4:5b-6). Jesus came not only to forgive us of our sins, but to make us children of God.

Are you a child of God? You say, “Well of course I’m a child of God. I was raised in a Christian home. My parents were godly people who took me to church nearly every Sunday.” That’s wonderful, but are you a child of God? You say, “Absolutely I’m a child of God. I remember joining the church many years ago and being baptized. I’ve been active in church most of my life. I’ve been a Sunday school teacher and a VBS worker. I’ve handed out bulletins for worship and provided snacks for the youth. Why I’ve even worked in the nursery when it wasn’t even my turn.” That’s commendable, but are you a child of God?

The bible says *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12, 13).

Having a godly heritage is a real blessing, but you don't become a member of God's family because you were raised in a Christian home. Being a faithful, active member of a local New Testament church is something every Christian ought to be, but being a member of the church doesn't necessarily mean you are a member of God's family.

God's desire for you is to become His child and the only way for you to become His child is to turn from your sins and trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

I want you to notice something else. Our text also says that in Christ we are not only children of God, we are heirs of God. Look at verse 7. *"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"* (Galatians 4:7). When we accept God's gracious gift of salvation in Christ we become heirs of the Kingdom. We are promised an inheritance.

What is our inheritance in Christ? Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (Jn. 10:10). We are heirs of the abundant life in Christ right now. Listen folks, we don't have to wait until we die to enjoy our inheritance in Jesus Christ. It's ours to enjoy right now! The Word of God says in Ephesians 1:3 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."*

The great thing about our inheritance in Christ is that we get to enjoy it now and later. Not only can we experience the abundant life Jesus promised right now, some day when this life is over we are going to inherit a home in heaven. Jesus said, *"In my Father's house are many mansions. I'm going back to my Father to prepare one for you."*

In our recent study of the book of Revelation we considered the incomparable, almost unimaginable beauty of heaven. It's really going to be something! But beloved, I want to remind that there is much more to our eternal inheritance than streets of gold, gates of pearl, and mansions of splendor. What is going to make heaven so heavenly is the presence of Jesus. To be able to look upon our Savior's face and live in his holy presence every day for all eternity is going to be glory indeed.

When the fullness of the time had come, at just the right time, God sent forth His Son to redeem us from our sins and make us His children in Christ. **(Choir will sing "It Happened Here" at this point. Go to choir slide and begin music immediately!)**

The Bible says "now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation." Is the Lord speaking to your heart right now?

I would like to ask everyone to bow your heads in prayer with me right now. If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior I am going to invite to pray with me right now.

"Dear Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that you died for my sins on the cross and rose again from the grave. Please forgive my sins. Dear Jesus, come into my heart and be the Lord and Savior of my life."