

In the Fullness of Time

Gal 4:4-5

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In an article a few years ago a man gave his idea of a perfect world. He said, "In a perfect world you would feel as good at 60 as you did at 17. And you would be as smart at 60 as you thought you were at 17."

"In a perfect world professional basketball & baseball & football players would be complaining because schoolteachers were signing multi-million dollar contracts. In a perfect world potato chips would have calories, but if eaten with dip, the calories would be neutralized." That's his idea of a perfect world.

I could think of a few other things. Ice cream that's good for lowering cholesterol? Books that you could touch and the words would be telepathically transferred into your brain. Steaks that reduced Cholesterol in your arteries. Pumpkin pies that you eat in order to prevent cancer?

Lazy Boy recliners that toned your muscles like weight lifting and trimmed your waistline like aerobics training. Cheese cake that melts the pounds off? Notice a food theme running through here? The Holiday season brings that out in me.

For many Believer's Christmas is the most perfect season of the year. The chill in the air, the lights, the joy of gift giving, the extended season of Carols, the great food, and relaxed time with family.

But it is also a time when we focus our thoughts on what the world should be. We talk about peace on earth, about generosity & giving. We think of children snuggled safely in their beds, with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads. And we wonder why the magic of the Christmas season can't last all year long.

Why is Christmas the Most Perfect Time of year?

Galatians 4:4-5 ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

In those two verses we find 3 truths that combine to make Christmas the perfect season of year: **The Right Time**, **The Perfect Savior**, and **The Best Gifts**.

It was at Exactly **the Right Time**
But when the time had fully come

Timing is Everything.

I remember when Laurie and I first met 15 years ago at North Dallas Athletic club. We both worked out and enjoyed staying physically fit. Three years later we married in May of 94, so for her birthday that year I got the Great idea of buying her lots of workout equipment. Gloves, ankle weights, a stepper, workout videos. ☺

You ladies know what's coming don't you? Look at the guys, their clueless! Just like I was until that Mack Truck rolled over me.

You see little did I know that workout gear really says, “You’re Fat!” “I don’t like the way you look!” “Get in shape will you!”

Silly me, I thought it said, “since we both enjoy working out, let me provide you with a plethora of toys for one of your favorite past-times.”

Wrong! NOT!

Fast forward 9 years. “You may think I’m a little dense having been rejected once for this stupid idea, but ten years later I tried it again. It’s our tenth anniversary and we’d just joined 24 hour fitness in Allen, so I put together a workout bag full of gym goodies.

Laurie’s response? She loved them!

The first year in marriage it said one thing, the 10th year, with a little relational credit built up, it said something totally different. Timing is everything!

God has perfect timing. He is never late. He’s also never early.

When the time had fully come refers to the completion of the period of preparation in God’s sovereign timetable of redemption.

Christ’s birth at Bethlehem was not an accident; it was an appointment. It was the moment which God had ordained for Messiah’s coming.

The time was Right Religiously.

During the Babylonian captivity, Israel once and for all forsook the worship of other gods. During the Exile they developed synagogues, which they used as places of worship, as schools, and as courts.

After their return from Exile, Ezra and others completed the Old Testament canon. The Jews translated the Old Testament into Greek which is known as the Septuagint, and they established synagogues throughout the known world, so when pioneer evangelists like Paul came to a new town, his gospel beachhead was the synagogue, where the Word of the true God and His Messiah were read every Sabbath.

The time was Right Culturally.

Alexander the Great had conquered the world. With him came Greek culture, Greek philosophy, & the Greek language.

Greek was the language of the 1st Century, the language of the common people.

Pilate wrote an inscription over the cross of Jesus: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” And he wrote it in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Everybody knew a little Greek, like English today.

Greek was the universal language just right for the recording of the New Testament.

The time was Right Politically.

Alexander the Great died just before his 33rd birthday. Civil war broke out & the Greek empire began to crumble. The Greeks were supplanted by the Romans.

Rome instituted the *pax Romana*, providing economic and political stability. Roman

brought peace throughout her empire and built a system of roads that made land travel quicker and safer than ever before.

No need for Passports, no fear of going into enemy territory, no fear of wars to avoid. The Lord's disciples would be free to travel the world with the Gospel.

A Roman by the name of Octavius came into power. So impressive was he that the Roman Senate decided to make him their ruler. But they didn't like the word "king," so they chose the word "Augustus,"

Luke picks up his pen & writes, **Luke 2:1, 3** **In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world....³ And everyone went to his own town to register.**

God used a pagan dictator & a pagan government & a pagan decree to make sure that Mary & Joseph made the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem so that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem as the prophets had foretold.

Finally, The Time was Right Prophetically

The Jews were expectant, eagerly awaiting their Messiah. Listen to Daniel's prophecy concerning the timing of the Messiah's coming.

Daniel 9:24-26 **“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.²⁵ “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.²⁶ After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off....**

Each 7 represents 7 years. Multiply 7 times 7, & you get 49 years. Multiply 62 times 7, & you get 434 years. Add those two & you come up with 483 years.

Daniel prophesies that it will be 483 years from the command to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the Messiah, is cut off and killed.

Two renowned scholars have shown that from the time Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, recorded in Neh 2:1-8, until the time that Jesus was crucified was exactly 483 years.

According to Dr. Harold Hoehner of DTS, March 30th, AD 33 is the exact day on which Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on an donkey, exactly as Zech 9:9 prophesied Zion's King would come.

Our Lord didn't allow this fulfillment of prophecy to go unmarked. He emphasized the timing of His Triumphal Entry by saying, as He wept over Jerusalem:

Luke 19:42-44 **... “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.”**

The time was right **religiously, culturally, politically & prophetically**.

Guided by a sovereign God, historical events worked in harmony to prepare for the predecided moment of Jesus' arrival on earth.

2 Kings 19:25 “**‘Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, ...**

God is intentional with His actions. He both plans them and ordains them, then at just the right time He brings them to pass.

God put a lot of thought, planning and preparation into the first Christmas, and that inspires and motivates me to be intentional and purposeful in how I Celebrate Christmas this Holiday Season.

Celebrate Christmas with Intentionality!

At just the **right time**, God gave us **The Perfect Savior**.

4:4 **God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law ...**

Jesus is the perfect savior because He's

Fully Divine

When Paul says **God sent his Son,**

He's not talking about Jesus being sent from the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, but about God sending His Son from heaven.

Gen. 22 tells the story of God asking Abraham to offering his son Isaac, on the alter as a burnt offering to Him.

Abraham obeys God and sets out on a journey with his son Isaac to the mountain God directed him to sacrifice his son on. Along the way,

Genesis 22:7-13 **Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.**

Abraham takes his son Isaac and ties him up, lays him on the alter, raises the knife to plunge into his heart, and God stops Him, saying, now I know you truly love me. Then Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in the thicket for the sacrifice.

I want to draw your attention to verse 8 where it reads . **“God ‘himself’ will provide the lamb ...”**

What's interesting about this verse is that the Hebrew can also be translated **“God will provide ‘himself’ the lamb ...”**

In fact about half the English versions render it that way, and I believe that is what God intended. In other words, God will provide **Himself** as the sacrifice that He requires.

God will not only provide the Lamb to be sacrificed, but **He Himself** will be that Lamb.

Christmas is the celebration of an invasion, when God invaded earth. Jesus didn't start in a stable. What we're celebrating is not the beginning of Jesus Christ. What we're celebrating is His incarnation, the day **John 1:14** ¹⁴ **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

God sent his Son not just from the manger to the cross, but all the way from heaven to earth. In sending Jesus, God did not send a substitute or a surrogate. He came Himself.

Jesus is the perfect Savior not only because He's fully Divine, but also because He's

Fully Human
born of a woman,

Paul's primary emphasis in Galatians 4, isn't on the uniqueness of Jesus conception, but rather His full participation in the human condition.

Gen. 3:15 said that the Redeemer would be of "**the woman's seed**" and Jesus fulfilled that.

He was born like us, the way we were all born. The Bible says He grew like we did – physically, spiritually, socially. He had the same needs, the same drives, the same desires, the same problems, the same pressures in life.

He experienced real pain. There were times when Jesus was lonely, times when Jesus was tired and fatigued. There were times when He was under pressure, times when He was disappointed, misunderstood, times when people didn't treat Him right and He was criticized. He understands all that.

Hebrews 4:15 **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.**

We have a Savior who not only understands our humanity, but He shares it as well.

Fact is, that in order to save us, Jesus Christ had to be in one person both divine and human, *divine* in order to give his sacrifice infinite value; and *human* because, since it was man who sinned it's also man who must bear the penalty for sin.

Jesus also had to earn the right to redeem us, and so He became

Fully Accountable
born under law,

The Jews had the written Law of God. The Jewish leaders counted over 600 commands in the first five books of the Bible.

Don't drink this, don't eat that. Don't covet your neighbor's wife, even if she looks better than yours. Don't covet your neighbor's husband, even if he makes more money than yours.

The Gentiles according to **Romans 2:15** **the requirements of the law ... written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness....** To that fact.

Like every other man, Jesus was born under law. Like every other Jew, He was under obligation to obey and be judged by conformity to God's written Law in the Old Testament.

From his circumcision eight days after his birth to his celebration of Passover with his disciples just before his death, every detail of Jesus' life was under the direction of the law.

But unlike any other person, He satisfied the requirements of that law by living in perfect obedience to it. And because He lived in perfect obedience, He was able to **redeem** all others **who were under the Law** but *not* obedient to it, provided they had saving faith in Him.

As Paul explains in **Romans 8:3-4** **For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us,**

Jesus was born under the law, lived under the law, and died under the penalty of the law, which we broke, and in paying our penalty, He delivered us from any claims which the law had against us.

This Christmas Celebrate Jesus, the God-Man. He's the one who makes this season the perfect time of year, not the food, the gifts, getting all the cool stuff, the College Bowl and Pro playoff games, nor is it the time off of school and work.

It's the Christ that makes Christmas the perfect season of the year!
The **Right Time**, the **Perfect Savior**, and now we come to
The Best Gifts of Christmas.

According to the [Neiman Marcus Christmas Catalogue](#), the perfect gifts for Christmas 2006 include:

- \$5-\$7K luxury pet homes,
- or maybe you desire the \$40K 7 foot skyscraper made from # 2 pencils,
- or how about this \$40k two-seater zero emission electric Twicken Commuter Vehicle,
- or maybe this \$140K Limited Edition BMW convertible better suits your taste,
- or this years most perfect gift might be the \$1.7 Million Virgin Galactic charter space flight.

As cool as those gifts are, they pale in comparison to the gifts God has provided us through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:5 **to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.**

The first **Best Gift** of Christmas is,

Redemption Paul says,
to redeem those under law,

To “**redeem**” means “to buy back.” “**Redemption**” was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave. Through His life, Jesus demonstrated His unique eligibility to be our Redeemer. Through His death, Jesus paid the price to release us from slavery to sin, Satan and the curse of the law.

When Christ redeemed “**those under law**,” he did not redeem the Jews alone. His death set people free from bondage to any law or religious system.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,”

Jesus took upon Himself the curse the law required in order to set Believers free of that curse. By putting the chains on himself, he takes them off us.”

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

He removed our curse by taking our curse as he suffered, and bled, and died on the cross.

The picture of **Redemption** is inherently negative—we are redeemed *from* the curse of the law, *from* the slave market of sin, *from* the clutches of Satan.

So Paul now flips the coin and shares the positive side of God’s best gift to us through Christ’s sacrificial suffering and death.

We’re **redeemed**, so **that we might receive the full rights of sons**.

The Greek word translated “**full rights of sons**” in the NIV is, literally **Adoption**.

Adoption isn’t something we earn; it’s something we receive. It’s not a feat one achieves, but rather a gift one accepts.

The adopter is the one who does all the work. Laurie & I know this personally. We went through a two year International adoption process. We began the paper work in Sept of 2003 and brought our twin boys home from Russia in Oct of 2005.

In adoption the parents are the active ones. Laurie & I made the call and filled out 16 hours of paper-work. We endured the interviews, the counseling sessions and paid the fees. We made the two trips to Russia. Our two boys didn’t do anything. They brought nothing to the table, nor were we expecting them to.

In fact, could you imagine us going to our adoption agency three years ago and saying, “We’d like to adopt two little kids. Preferably one little girl, we’ll call her Anna Kournakova and one little boy, for now we’ll call him Serge Ferdeoff, but first we want to know a few things.

Do they have the talent to be professional tennis & Hockey players? Do they he have money for college tuition? Can they prepare their own meals and sew their own clothes? Do they have a ride to school every morning and clothes to wear every day?

No agency would stand for such talk. You don’t adopt orphans because of what they have or can do for you; you adopt them because of what you want to give them.”

The same is true with God. He didn't adopt us because of what we have, who we are, or what we could do for Him. He doesn't adopt us because of our wit, wallet, or personal wealth. He adopts us because of what He wants to give us, a name, a family and a home.

Natasha was our Russian case-worker and translator who took us into the orphanage to meet our two boys. I remember the day we met her on the ride over to orphanage # 2 in St. Petersburg. She said our boys haven't been told that we're here, but they'll be so happy when we get there.

She said she'd seen them almost weekly for the last 2 years. Every time she brought parents to meet their future child, our boys would ask her, sometimes with tears in their eyes, "Where's our parents, Natasha? When are you going to bring us a mom & dad?"

Natasha was as excited as we were that day, because she knew the power of the life-changing message she was bringing to little Valery & Vladimir. She was alive with anticipation and excitement because she got to tell those two little orphan boys that someone wants to adopt them, give them a name, a family and a home!

In the ancient Roman world, when a son was adopted, he was in all legal respects equal with those born into the family. He had the same name, the same inheritance, the same position and the same rights as the natural-born children.

God sent his Son, who by his divine nature was the Son of God, in order that we, who are not his children by nature, might be his children by adoption and thus *receive the full rights of sons*.

We're given the same name, the same inheritance, the same position and the same rights as the one who is Son of God by virtue of his divine nature.

How does this adoption take place? How does it become legally binding?

Galatians 3:26 (NIV) says we become **... sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,**

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ? Have you believed on the Son of God who died on Calvary's Cross to redeem you?

If so you're now God's child by adoption, with all the rights of Sonship that Jesus has.

And what God's given to us, we get the privilege of giving to others. We get to go into the orphanages of this lost world and share the life-changing message that God sent His Son, to pay for our sins, so we could be Redeemed. We get to tell the fatherless orphans that there's a Heavenly Father who wants to adopt them, give them a name, a family, and a home.

Seize opportunities and Salt conversations to Celebrate Christmas, sharing His best gifts of Redemption and Adoption with the lost orphans God places in your path.

Conclusion:

Because Jesus is the Son of God, he is able to give the position and rights of his sonship to sinful people. Because he became fully human, he is able to represent and redeem all humankind. And because he rendered perfect obedience to God and bore the curse of God against the disobedient, he is able *to redeem those under law*, setting us free from both the obligation and the curse of the law.

The miracle of Christmas is not on 34th Street. It's in Bethlehem.
Christmas comes at exactly the **Right Time**, with the **Perfect Savior** and the **Best Gifts**.

So Celebrate Christmas with thoughtful planning and preparation. Celebrate Jesus the Christmas Savior. And Celebrate Christmas as you seize opportunities and salt conversations by introducing unsaved orphans to a heavenly Father who wants to adopt them, give them a name, a family and a home.

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