

## When the Time Was Ripe

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: Galatians 4:1- 7

Purpose: In the fullness of God's time, Jesus Christ came. Not too early, and not too late. In God's timetable He sent His Son to redeem us from our sin.

Have you ever been out to eat and the waiter or waitress comes to you and asks you that all popular question: "How do you want it cooked?" Some of you might like your steak rare; others may want it medium well, while others like me want it **WELL DONE**.



When it comes to other food items, we want our pork, chicken or turkey – **WELL DONE**. No one enjoys eating a half-cooked and mushy pancake. There is no pleasure in eating a green watermelon, a green banana, or an unripe apple or grape.

When infants are born before completion of the normal gestation period they are described as "premature." As a consequence, they may be underdeveloped in size and have other lingering medical issues because they were not "full term."





We may not have considered Galatians 4:4 as a verse to be used at Christmas, but it is just that in the best sense of the word. The verse says, “*When the fullness of the time was come God sent forth His Son...*” which describes a situation in the centuries of mankind when God felt that the time was “full term” or just right to send his Son into the world. The word “fullness” can also mean “pregnant,” or “When the time was pregnant.”

Christmas speaks of a pregnant young woman. Christmas speaks of incarnation, the time the eternal God came in human flesh to visit and to minister to his people. The Book of Galatians is a treatise on freedom from the Mosaic Law which had many specific duties as well as restraints. The Apostle Paul showed how children raised under that law, though children of God in a sense, were no better than slaves, for they were still subject to the tutors and governors appointed over them.

Mankind needed more than the Mosaic Law to experience true freedom. It was at this time that God chose to come to earth in the person of Jesus.

*“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.” (4:4)*

For a few moments this morning, let us look at this verse of the incarnation of Jesus Christ more closely.

## I. THE TIME OF JESUS’ COMING.

*“When the fullness of time was come.” (4:4)*

There was a particular time which God chose. This was the time he presented himself to the world in physical flesh in the person of Jesus.



### A. WHY DID GOD SEND HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME?

Why was the time ripe? Why was it not in the time of Noah, Abraham, Moses, or of David? Why was He not sent in the time of Socrates or Plato? Why was His coming not in the time of Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, or Columbus? Why was His coming not in this century?

This verse (Galatians 4:4) discounts any idea that mankind is the victim of timeless fate, of accident, or of non-direction. The Hebrews believed that God is the Creator and controller of the affairs of men. They believed that nothing could happen which was not God’s doing, either directly or indirectly, whether through angels or men. They believed that God had a time for everything and that everything happened in His time.

This verse shows clearly how God is in charge and that His purpose is behind it all. History is moving through its various cycles to God’s intended conclusion. And there is a purpose behind these movements, whether nations intend it to be or not, for God will use whom He wishes and act when He pleases. Even wicked nations have been used in

God's plan to bring His chosen people under control, as he did with Nebuchadnezzar in subduing the nation of Israel.

Those of us who live in God's world must get in rhythm with this movement of time or be completely left behind.

## B. WHY WAS THE TIME FULL OR RIPE?

### 1. Because of the preparation of the ages.

If Jesus had come earlier, He would have found the conditions would have not been not ready for His arrival. In life, I have learned there is a right time and sequence for doing things.



- Concrete should be poured only after a form has been constructed to receive and shape it. It would be total waste just to pour it out on the ground.
- Seeds are not planted until the soil has been prepared. Birds would eat the seeds or they would not be rooted in the soil.
- Cakes are not placed in the oven until all the ingredients have been added and properly mixed and the oven is preheated.

Over the centuries things have happened in the affairs of men and in the eternity of God. The Book of Ecclesiastes speaks of a time and season for each thing in life.



- There was the time of creation.
- There was the time for the call of Abraham.
- There was the period of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

- There was the time of the giving of the Law through Moses.
- There was the time when the Hebrews' moved into Canaan.
- There was the time of the establishment and rule of the monarchy over Israel.
- There was the time of the prophets foretelling God's plans for the world.
- There were numerous prophetic pronouncements that one day a Messiah would come.
- There was the time when Jesus came into the world.
- There was the time for the beginning of the Messianic age.
- There will be a time for the second coming of Jesus and his absolute rule over the earth.

Over all of these centuries of time, the plan has been unfolding slowly – like seconds, minutes, and hours in the beat of the clock. One is joined to the other until time is concluded and God's ultimate will is completed.

### 2. The time was ripe because of the needs of mankind.

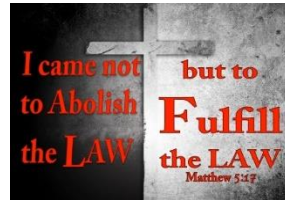
The time was ripe because of the unfolding of human need. Man had sinned and had expressed rebellion toward God, alienating himself and bringing condemnation upon humanity. God made His move to condition and prepare the human race for his plan of redemption.



If Jesus had come earlier, the time would not have been ripe. The Law was needed to help mankind know through God's word, teaching of one God, prescribing how men should live, and setting forth the animal sacrifices in the Temple which foreshadowed the coming of Jesus and His sacrifice.

These preliminary stages were like scaffolding, necessary for the raising of a structure, but not needed once the building has been completed.

### 3. The time was ripe because of the provisions found in Christ.



Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 (NIV), *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

Jesus' way was being made ready.

- Jesus came to fulfill the needs of men.
- Jesus fulfilled the expectations of prophecy and the requirements of the Law.
- Jesus fulfilled the Messianic promises.
- Jesus fulfilled the spiritual needs of mankind.

*"When the fullness of time was come."* (4:4)

This is an aorist form of the verb, which means something has happened with the influence continuing on and on into the present and future.

A person can pull an apple from the tree before it is ripe, break a hatching egg before it is ready, take a half-baked cake from the oven, or induce a premature birth, but the results will be bad or less than desirable.

No power in all the earth could have caused a premature coming of the Messiah. There was nothing premature about God's clothing himself in human flesh. It took place *"... in the fullness of time,"* when *"God sent forth His Son."*

## II. THE AGENT OF HIS COMING.

*"God sent forth His Son."* (4:4) The cause of it all is God. It was God who *"sent forth His Son."*



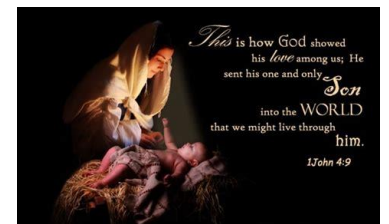
John 1:1-4 (NIV) says:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men."*

Jesus came from his preexistent and eternal habitations in heaven.

John 1:14

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*



Col. 1:15-17,

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or authorities all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”*

Phil. 2:6-8 – *“Who, though He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”*

In John 10:30 (NIV) – Jesus said, *“I and the Father are one,”* and in John 14:9 (NIV) Jesus said, *“Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.”*

In a real sense Jesus was not Joseph’s son, and not even Mary’s, but the Son of God.



It is a gross misunderstanding to think of Mary as the "mother of God." It is true, she was the mother of the physical Jesus, but not the mother of the eternal Spirit, the divine Christ, the preexistent Messiah: who took on human flesh and became a man.

So, *“God sent forth His son.”* The message behind it all is that God loves all mankind.

A father may send his son on a mission to make demands, to pronounce judgements, but not so with Jesus. Jesus came to express the love of God, but wicked men still took Him and killed Him.

John describes Jesus’ mission (3:17), *“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”*



This verse indicates that God was in firm control of the happenings in His universe. The centuries of mankind, in unrecorded and recorded history have been times in the hands of God. Slowly, ever so slowly have been those ages unfolding in the experiences of men. And yet, in God's plan those days all fit together. Those centuries of God saw his purpose being developed, until all was ready. And the *“Word was made flesh.”* – *“A Savior is born who is Emmanuel, God with us.”*

### III. THE PERSON OF HIS COMING.

*“God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law.”* (4:4)

Some men one day looked at a colony of ants busily going about their affairs. One man said he would like to know what they were thinking about or attempting to do. The other said that the only way he could do that would be for him to become an ant and be one of them in what they were doing.

## A. JESUS WAS BORN AS A BABE.

He was not born as a grown man but as a babe, having to grow in mind and body and spirit. (Luke 2)



Jesus came into this world in the usual way. He was “*born of a woman.*” In using this phrase, the author was talking about the humanity of Jesus, being born like each one of us. He had an earthly body subject to the same pains and temptations as ours, yet He lived without sin. This already pre-existent Christ left His eternal habitation, and took on this temporal flesh. The Jewish nation rejected this kind of Messiah, so that Jesus became a scandal to them. Paul spoke of this in I Corinthians 1:23 (NIV), saying. “*But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...*”

## B. JESUS WAS BORN "UNDER THE LAW.

Jesus was raised under the Torah's rules. He came up under the yoke of the Jewish Law, with all of its customs, wearing the phylacteries, the prayer fringes, observing the ceremonial washing of hands at mealtime, giving thanks at meals, set prayer times, bringing His tithe and offerings, observing the animal sacrifices, and obeying the Ten Commandments.



And it is through this Son who entered in where we live, where our purpose in life and our redemption for eternity hinges. This is the touchstone between the eternal God and mortal man. Unless we accept and receive Jesus, this divine person representing God's visitation with men, we can never fully share in God and His provisions.

## IV. JESUS' PURPOSE IN COMING.

*"To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* (4:5)

The purpose suggested here is twofold.

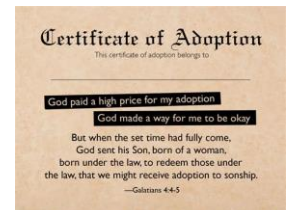
### A. TO REDEEM

Jesus came and through His life, death, and resurrection, freed men from the slavery to the law, so that they could be adopted as the Sons of God.

### B. ADOPTION ESTABLISHES ONE AS AN EQUAL IN A FAMILY

In adoption we are made the children of God, so that we can say, “*Abba*” father. This was almost like saying “*daddy.*” Through redemption, Jesus sets us free from the restraints of the law and the penalty of sin. In His own body He has broken the grip which sin places upon mankind, for all who will repent and believe.

The world had not known of God as this kind of Father until Jesus came. Even today, many people do not realize that God is this kind of loving God. But the whole message is that God has visited His people, loving them to the point of giving His Son to redeem and to adopt us into God's family.



*“But when the fullness of the time was come God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (4:4-5)*

This was when the time was ripe.

The way we become adopted into the family of God is by receiving the Son that God sent ... Will you repent and believe?



Maybe the time is ripe for you to make that decision today.  
Receive the Son and live!

**LET US PRAY**