

The Fullness of Times

Galatians 4:1-7

I. The PREPARATION of His Coming (vss. 1-3).

A. There was RELIGIOUS Preparation.

1. The first major effect of Babylonian Captivity is that it returned the Jews to monotheism.
2. The second major effect of the Babylonian Captivity is that the canon of Old Testament Scripture was completed under Ezra.
3. A third major effect of the Babylonian Captivity was that the Jewish synagogue came into being. Until that time, the Jews had worshiped at the Temple in Jerusalem.

B. There was CULTURAL Preparation.

1. In 350 B.C., there arose a man by the name of Alexander. He was the son of the Macedonian King, Philip. We know him as Alexander the Great. He conquered the entire known world in twelve years.
2. Under Alexander's influence, the world became Greek in culture, philosophy, institutions, art, drama, literature, architecture, thought and language. Greek was spread so widely that the ordinary people become very familiar with a style of Greek known as Koine, or common Greek. It became an international language.
3. This was very important because in 280 B.C., the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. This is called the Septuagint. The stage was set for the preaching of the Gospel.

C. There was POLITICAL Preparation.

1. By the time Jesus was born, Rome ruled the world.
2. God determined those who would ascend to power in the Roman Empire.
3. Because of his edict requiring all of the people to return to their place of origin and be taxed and counted, a pregnant woman and her husband made a historic journey to Bethlehem.

D. There was SPIRITUAL Preparation.

1. Look back with me to 3:22-25.
2. Verse 22 says, "the Scripture has confined all under sin," that is by reading the Bible we all know that we are sinners. V.23 says that "before faith came we were kept under guard by the law." Before Jesus came, people tried to keep all God's OT laws. Guess what? They couldn't do it. It was impossible. God designed it that way. V.24 says "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ." In other words, because we realize keeping the law can't save us, we know we need a Savior... Jesus!
3. In 4:1, Paul uses a slightly different analogy. He speaks of an "heir" who is a "child." In fact, he says that such an "heir... does not differ at all from a slave" even though he is "master of all." Why? Because he is "under guardians and stewards," tutors who make him study, who point out his faults, and punish his mistakes
4. However, this only lasts for a while, "until the time appointed by the father."
5. Verse 3 says, "we were children... in bondage under the elements of the world."
6. Now look at v.4. We were "in bondage" until "the fullness of the time had come."
7. God's timing means that we are no longer under the law.

II. The PURPOSE of His Coming (vss. 4-5).

A. Jesus came to FULFILL (v.4).

1. Jesus came in the "fullness" of time to fulfill the work of the Lord.
2. God "sent forth His Son." The Creator of the all was carried about in a woman's womb.
3. He was "born of a woman." This speaks of His humanity.
4. Jesus was "born under the law." Jesus was born under that "tutor," that "guardian."
5. Jesus had more in mind in His coming to this Earth than giving us a holiday.

B. Jesus came to REDEEM (v.5a).

1. Most people think that God will accept them on the basis of their good works.
2. Guess what? No one is that good. Isa. 64:6 says, "All our righteousnesses ...filthy rags."
3. We were under the law, but could not keep the Law.
4. That offer of eternal life still stands today.

C. Jesus came to ADOPT (v.5b).

1. This verse teaches, "that we might receive adoption as sons."
2. Thus "adoption" means "the placing of a son."
3. When you came to Jesus, when you were saved, God adopted you into His family forever, if we remain faithful to Him.
4. Friends, Christmas means I've been adopted!

III. The PRIVILEGE of His Coming (vss. 6-7).

A. We are no longer SLAVES but SONS.

1. V.6 says, "because you are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.
2. Because we are not slaves, because we have God's Spirit indwelling our hearts we cry out "Abba Father!"
3. What does "Abba" mean? The word is a tender expression of Father.

B. We are not just SONS but HEIRS.

1. V.7 continues. It follows a sense of logic, "if [you are] a son, then [you are] an heir of God through Christ." If "through Christ" you have become "a son" then it makes sense as "a son" that you are also an "heir."
2. An "heir" inherits the wealth of his father.
3. **Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him] in order that we may also be glorified with [Him.] (NASB)

Almost 2,000 years ago, there came a night when "the fullness of the time" had come. The angels appeared over the portals of heaven in expectancy. The plan of God through the ages was beginning to unfold. It would be only moments before they announced to the shepherds, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12). Thus when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. Unable to contain heaven's joy any longer, the angels would explode with the cry of jubilation, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men." The fullness of time had come. Maybe it has come in your life today.