

## Sunday Morning Service

December 20, 2020

### *When the Time is Just Right*

Text - Galatians 4:4 – 5

Congregational Reading – Galatians 4:4 - 5

#### Introduction

*"But when **the fulness 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."* (Galatians 4:4-5)

It seems that much of our time on earth is spent waiting for something to happen. I remember when I was a kid I could not wait for Christmas to come. It seemed like it took forever to finally arrive, and then when it did get there, the day would fly by and I was left with almost a feeling of emptiness. I felt the same way about summer vacation. Those months between New Year and the beginning of summer break were some of the longest months of the year. It seems like we were always waiting.

The people of Israel were waiting for what must have seemed like forever for their promised Messiah. They had gone through so much as a people, and throughout their existence they were reminded of the prophecies that someday, when the time was just right, their Saviour would come and make all things right. I bet, there were many people in Israel that secretly doubted that Jesus would ever get there, but when the time was just right, He arrived in that stable in Bethlehem. His arrival was probably not what they expected. God seldom does what we think He will do and He never seems to move on our timetable, but when things are lined up exactly as God wants them, He moves. He is never early, but He is never late either. He moves when the time is just right.

#### I. **Jesus came to the earth when the time was right (when the fulness of time was come).**

Meaning that He came when the time was just right, when everything was as it should be. God had a predetermined time to send His Son to the manger in Bethlehem. The conditions were just what they needed to be for Christ to come and be born, but ultimately also to die for the sins of the world.

What does the fulness (*pleroma*) of time mean?

##### A. **Things were very bad**

The religious system of Judaism had become completely corrupt. The people of God were going through all of the motions of religion, but their hearts were as far as could be from God. The chief priests, Pharisees and Sadducees were, for the most part, all unscrupulous. They cared far more about their power, money, and traditions than they did about loving and serving the people of God.

John Phillips discusses this idea in his commentary on Galatians. He explains that mankind had to go through different periods of miserable failure, eventually bringing them under the Mosaic Law, where they failed even more miserably. He states:

When the "fulness of the time" came, Judaism was a dead religion, a religion of rite and ritual, of form and ceremony, of tradition and crushing legalism. The Gentiles, weary to death of their own bankrupt religions, turned hopefully toward Judaism only to be repelled by Jewish hostility and hypocrisy and by its bitter exclusiveness and rigid bondage to dead forms and narrow views.<sup>1</sup>

The political system was very oppressive. The Roman Empire ruled with an iron fist, and though the nation of Israel enjoyed some religious freedom, the government was becoming increasingly impatient and intolerant of the Jewish people. Antisemitism was widespread, and was getting worse every day.

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips, J. (2009). Exploring Galatians: An Expository Commentary (Ga 4:4–5a). Kregel Publishers; WORDsearch Corp.

Things were bad, But...

### **B. But, some things were good**

The Roman Empire had brought about a world peace – the *Pax Romana*. There were no major wars taking place within the empire. There were laws in place enforced by the mighty hand of Caesar.

The Romans had developed a road system that allowed people to travel freely throughout the empire. Though Christ Himself would never stray far from Palestine, His apostles would take the gospel throughout the entire civilized world.

The Romans also had a sophisticated postal system, which would allow the written Word to be sent to distant places quickly.

The Greek language was universal. As long as the preacher could speak Greek, he could speak to just about anybody.

All of these things were in place, and allowed the message of the gospel to travel quickly and freely throughout the world.

Wiersbe said:

Historians tell us that the Roman world was in great expectation, waiting for a Deliverer, at the time when Jesus was born. The old religions were dying; the old philosophies were empty and powerless to change men's lives. Strange new mystery religions were invading the empire. Religious bankruptcy and spiritual hunger were everywhere. God was preparing the world for the arrival of His Son.<sup>2</sup>

The "fulness of time" meant that man was ready to admit that they could not accomplish salvation on their own. The schoolmaster of the Law had done its job and the students were ready to graduate. Kostenberger states: "This marked a new phase in salvation history subsequent to the period during which the law served as the primary point of reference."<sup>3</sup>

Yet, even though the world conditions were ripe, many among the people of God were basically oblivious to the fact that the Messiah that they so long awaited was actually going to come.

The Old Testament prophecies had all promised His coming. Isaiah had two very specific prophecies concerning the birth of Christ:

*"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)*

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)*

The precise location of His birth was prophesied by Micah 700 years before His birth:

*"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."  
(Micah 5:2)*

Though He came as the Bible prophesied, and when in the wisdom of God everything was ready, not everybody was ready for His coming. In fact his coming was rejected by the very people He came to redeem.

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 706). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas J.; Kellum, L. Scott; Quarles, Charles L. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Kindle Locations 3617-3623). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

*"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11)*

His first coming took the world by surprise, but it should not have taken God's people by surprise and neither should His second coming.

**II. Jesus will come back to take His Bride when the time is just right (in the dispensation of fulness of times – Ephesians 1:7 - 14).**

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **That in the dispensation of the fulness of times** he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:7-14)*

In Ephesians, Paul is emphasizing that the time would come, or be full, when God would bring together all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. This is a reference to the future Millennial reign of Christ. McGee states:

God is moving everything forward to the time when Christ will rule over all things in heaven and earth. This is the fullness, the *pleroma*, when everything is going to be brought under the rulership of Jesus Christ. The *pleroma* is like a vast receptacle into which centuries and millenniums have been falling. All that is past, present, and future is moving toward the time when every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that Jesus is Lord.<sup>4</sup>

The idea in Ephesians is that all of the events of earth are moving toward, or pouring into the time and place when *"every knee should bow... and... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:10 – 11) But, this "dispensation of the fulness of times" referred to in Ephesians is not here yet, but may be here very soon.

Jesus is coming again. First, He will come to take away His Bride, the Church, and then He will come back with His Bride to put down all who reject and oppose Him, and to set up His Kingdom, a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity on earth with Christ ruling from His throne in Jerusalem.

*"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)*

*"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

*"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

*"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last*

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<sup>4</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 223). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

*days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. ... But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ... Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."* (2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-9, 17-18)

**Jesus will come back when His Bride is ready; when the Church is complete.**

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."* (Romans 11:25)

Christ is coming back again. Though we don't know when exactly, we believe the fulness of time is coming soon and may very well be here now. It seems that all of the signs that Jesus spoke of are in place.

When the disciples asked Jesus what the signs of His coming were, He said:

*"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."*  
(Matthew 24:6-8)

It seems like the signs are all there for Christ's return, but we can't be sure about the exact day. What we can be sure about is that He will come in the fullness of time.

Another thing that I can tell you for sure is that if you are not saved, you are not ready for His second coming. The fulness of time for your salvation is today:

*"(...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"* (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Don't put off salvation.

Christian, don't put off witnessing to those you love, because you are not guaranteed an opportunity tomorrow.

## **Conclusion**

In the fulness of time – when the time was right - He came to this earth to die for the sins of the world – your sins – my sins

In the dispensation of the fulness of times, He will come back again to take us – His Bride – to Heaven.

Do you believe He is actually coming back? The Bible says He will.

Are you ready for His coming?

Are you part of His Bride – the Church?

Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

If you are saved, is there anything that He wants you to do for Him before He comes back to get you?

Note – God wants you to stay busy while you are waiting for Him to return for you – "Occupy."

This Christmas season, as we reflect on His first coming, let's not forget that He promises to come back again soon – in the fulness of time - when the time is just right.