

Advent

“God is Fixing This”

Galatians 4:4-5

In the days following the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, CA various public figures took to social media to send “thoughts and prayers” to those impacted by the violence. There were swift responses from others criticizing the offerings of prayer as insufficient or even foolish. The *New York Daily News*, a paper with one of the largest circulations in the nation, responded with a front page declaring “God Isn’t Fixing This”.



It is understandable why an unbeliever or cynic would respond with such incredulity. The eyes of unbelief look upon a world filled with violence, hatred, and increasing chaos and conclude that God, if he exists at all, has absented himself from this mess of a world. “If God were hearing our prayers, if he cared at all,” they reason, “then he would be fixing this.”

During the season of Advent we recognize what unbelievers refuse to see: that God is indeed “fixing this.” We recognize that by “sending forth His Son” at just the right time, God began the work of redeeming what has been lost and ruined by our sin. By the dying and rising of Jesus, God is reconciling sinners to himself and preparing the creation to be made new. It is true that God’s work is rarely, if ever, according to our preferred timetable. But God is never late. With each new day he is giving sight to the blind and opening hard hearts. Every day God is adding to the vast number of those who can finally see that he is in fact fixing this.

Main Idea: Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus God is reconciling sinners to himself, adopting them as sons, and fitting them for a redeemed creation.

1. God’s Perfect Timing

“But when the fullness of time had come...” (vs. 4a)

- “the fullness of time” = the time set by the Father
- “Fullness” is translated from the Greek *pleroma*. This clause loosely corresponds to “the date set by the Father” (vs. 2). It refers to that moment in redemptive history when God deemed it appropriate to initiate his redemptive purposes by sending his Son into the world.
- There is no way for us to know the mind of God in the matter of his timing. However, there are certainly many features of the first century which made the advent of Christ opportune. In his gospel account Luke locates the birth of Christ during the reign of Caesar Augustus (Lk 2:1-4). Rome had reached the zenith of its power. Roads connected the known world like never before. Travel and communication was safer and more efficient than ever before because of the *Pax Romana*. Augustus, wanting an accounting of the inhabitants of his empire decreed that all citizens should return to their hometown. This, of course ensured that the Christ would be born in the City of David. There is also an irony to Jesus’ birth during the reign of Augustus. It was Augustus more than any of his predecessors who established the pattern of emperor worship. In fact the title “Savior of the World” had come to be attached to Augustus.

2. God's Divine Son

"God sent forth his Son..." (vs. 4b)

- The clause suggests the pre-existence of the Son. Prior to his birth to Mary in Bethlehem, Jesus was "sent forth" by the Father. The "sending formula" has become a favored way for Paul to present the redemptive work of Christ. This same formula is also found in John's writings.
- John 3:16; 1 John 4:9; Rom. 8:1-17

3. God's Surprising Method

"Born of a woman..." (vs. 4c)

- The word translated "born" in this and the following clause is *genominon*. Combined with the previous clause it is made all the more clear that Jesus existed prior to his being born. God sent his Son to be born. With a strict economy of words, Paul asserts the divinity of Christ and his humble incarnation.
- Christ's humanity may be analogous to the world's greatest symphony orchestra playing a simple lullaby. All the pieces of the great orchestra are present but its full glory and greatness is veiled for a time by the choice to play a very simple song (Phil. 2:5-11).

4. God's Necessary Condition

"Born under the law..." (vs. 4d)

- This is a reference to God's moral law summed up in the Ten Commandments. This was the law to which Jesus, a Jew, was obligated. The gospel accounts portray Jesus as nothing less than a faithful Jew carefully observing all which the law required.
- God's moral law represents his holiness and perfect righteousness. God's expectation for his human creatures has always been perfect obedience. Being just God would not offer a standard which accommodated sin. The repeated testimony of the Old Testament is that Israel was unwilling and unable to keep perfectly all that God required. And this presented a dilemma: how can sinful people be justified before a Holy God?
- The condition for the coming of Jesus was his perfect obedience. Where mankind failed, Jesus would succeed. He never once failed to do all that the law required thus being our righteous representative. Not only that, Jesus paid the law's requirement for our failure (Gal. 3:13).

5. God's Gracious Purpose

Paul describes a two-fold purpose to God's sending his Son into the world.

a) "...to redeem those who were under the law..." (vs. 5a)

- Here Paul refers specifically to the atonement Jesus accomplished on the cross.

b) "...so that we might receive adoption as sons." (vs. 5b)

- Literally – "that we might receive sonship." Christ's atoning death gives believers the status of sons. It is a fixed legal status.
- A redeemed people, the adopted sons of God, will ultimately not be at home in an unredeemed world. This is why the Christian hope is not based solely on human redemption but on the redemption of the creation that was "subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:18-25).