

12-23-12

GALATIANS 4:4,5

SON FOR SONS

(Galatians 4) – Show Santa sees you when you're sleeping. – thought about preaching on that- Galatians 4:**4,5** *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* Is it possible for you to put out of mind for a few more minutes the festivities of this week in order that we might honor Christ by meditating on the significance of His advent? As I searched this week for what I might speak upon today I came across this wonderfully brief statement from the pen of the apostle Paul which despite its brevity sums up so much of the magnificence of Christmas. It tells us several things about the birth of Jesus. Let's go thru it and see what they are.

First we read that Christ's birth came about in the fullness of time. That is an interesting phrase, but we can't be real sure what all it may mean or why 6 B.C. would have been that time. It is suggested from the context of our passage that by the time of Christ's birth the race of men had in some sense reached a maturity that would make the entrance of God into time appropriate. Others are quick to show how the time in which Christ was born was just right for a movement that would change the world and its history. It truly was a time favorable in many respects. The world domination of Rome had produced an unusual peace between nations. The Roman development of roads permitted travel in a way previously unseen. The universal usage of the Greek language allowed a book like the New Testament to have global impact. Indeed, Christ Jesus came at the time of the confluence of 3 cultures and three peoples: the Jews with their religion, the Romans with their government and the Greeks with their learning. So, there are reasons we can see why God would choose this time to send His son, but that is only speculation. What is not speculation is the fact that God did determine the time. The Almighty has a plan for his creation. He utilizes the equivalent of a cosmic day-timer. He is working off a schedule of His own making and according to God's plan the time had come to send His Son, and the time of His coming is called the fullness of time and we can be sure that what God did He did at the right time. Timing is always important. In almost everything we do that is true. It doesn't matter what you do if you do it at the wrong time it will fizzle. I remember when I was a kid winning a chance to compete in the county wide basketball free-throw competition. I was all excited about my chances of winning the big trophy and the day arrived and I went to the gym and proceeded to make 27 consecutive free-throws. Wow! I couldn't miss. I was terrific. But there was a problem. I made all those

free throws before the competition officially began and it didn't do me any good. As the story goes, when the free-throws really counted I made 14 of 25 and was easily beaten. Timing, as you see, is very important and so it was in the birth of Jesus. My timing is often rotten but God's timing is never wrong. When the time was right God sent forth His son. It was the perfect time toward which all of history had been progressing. This is **the** hour. In a sense everything else had been the opening act while Jesus is the main show. All of God's other deeds were preliminaries, but now is the hour of God's appearing. That is why the coming of Christ to be born of Mary is the hinge of history. I think it is marvelous and even a bit funny that the dating system of almost our entire world is based on the birth of Jesus. We speak of events happening in 400 B.C. i.e. "before Christ." And now it is 2012 A.D. Do you know what A.D. stands for? It means "ano domini" which is Latin for "year of our Lord." This is the 2012th year of our Lord. Our western calendars recognize the fact that Christ's coming was the hinge of history, it was the focus of everything, or as Paul puts it, "it was the fullness of time."

Look again at our verse 4ab *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son.* What happened in the fullness of time? God did something.(R) When the time came God acted. Christmas does not celebrate anything that men did. It does not honor what Mary did or the wise men or the shepherds or even some generous fella named Nicholas. Christmas commemorates the activity of God. 4ab *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son.* We see there that God sent Jesus. We did not coax him down from glory. Mary did not invite him; we did not invite him. In the incarnation God moved lovingly towards man unilaterally. And what did He do? He sent his son whose name was Jesus. Think about that for a minute. If God sent Jesus what does that tell us about Jesus? It tells us that Jesus was not created around 2000 years ago. For God to send His son that son had to already be. I don't know about you but before I was born I was nothing. I was a real nowhere man living in my nowhere land. You probably were too weren't you? I mean, we sometimes talk as if there is a big waiting room up in heaven, full of babies waiting to be assigned some parents but I don't remember that do you? When I was conceived I was created. I had no prior existence, but Jesus, it said, was already God's son and He was sent. Jesus was around long before Mary. And that is what we are told throughout the Scriptures. In prophesying of the Messiah's birth the prophet Micah, some 500 years before the time, wrote 5:2 *But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.* Ah, don't you see it? John wrote 1:1-3a *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.2 He was in the beginning with God.3 All things came*

into being through Him And when he describes what happened at Christmas John writes **14** *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* You see, Jesus, the Word of God, always was but only in the fullness of time did He take on humanity. That is how Jesus could tell his enemies that He was around before Abraham. So, you can see why Paul would write that God **sent** His son. He is sent, not created, or as the creed puts it "begotten" not made. Oh how nice it would be if everyone who celebrated Christmas would only understand the theology of Wesley's great hymn:

*Christ by highest heaven adored. Christ the everlasting **Lord**.
Late in time, behold Him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the **Godhead** see; Hail the incarnate **Deity**.
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our **Immanuel**. (which means "God with us")*

4 *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.* These two things we can address together. When it says He was born of a woman and under the law it is emphasizing those things that Christ voluntarily shares with us. He didn't come down from heaven in majesty and pomp but, just as we were, He was born of a woman. Incredible thought! God's son, born of a woman. Another hymn says "*he abhorred not the virgin's womb.*" Some people I know are too proud it would seem to even admit that they were born of a woman, that they were babies, utterly dependent on a woman. And who of us would ever choose to be so dependent again, but Jesus did. I wonder why.

It says as well that He was born under the law, meaning simply that all the commandments which we are responsible to obey he was responsible to obey as well. He who gave the law now followed it in circumcision and priestly baptism and sabbath keeping and tithing and tax-paying. I remember hearing a story about an incident that occurred in the old Soviet Union. It seems that Mikhael Gorbachev, the old Soviet Premier, was in a hurry to get somewhere so he ordered the driver of his limousine to speed it up. But the driver refused saying that it would not be right for him to break the speed limit. So Gorbachev made the driver move over and he took the wheel and really put the pedal to the medal. After a few minutes however the limo was stopped by one of the Russian patrol cars. One of the two officers approached the car and then returned. His partner asked him, "Did you give him a ticket?" The officer said, "No, the passenger is that car is much too important." "Oh really, who is it?" He said, "I don't know but Comrade Gorbachev is his chauffeur." Well, in America we wouldn't approve of that attitude. We say, "no one is above the law" and we have Watergate to prove it. But in reality Jesus was.

Jesus was above the law. He was the lawgiver Himself who voluntarily placed himself under that law. And He did it for a particular purpose.

Verse 5 gives us the purpose. Verse 5 in fact is full of purpose. It gives us two of the reasons why God sent His son. Do you know the reason why? I have learned that our world is not very good at whys. Oh, with the scientific advances of the last century we have become very good at answering the hows but we are rotten at the whys. We know how the earth can support life but we don't know why. We know more about how our bodies work but we don't know why. The bookstores are full of books to tell you how to do things but few books there are to tell you why. But *why* is the ultimate question. With all our knowledge of the how-tos we are generally an aimless, purposeless people who don't know why we are here or why we do what we do. We aren't very good at figuring out something's purpose and that is true in religion too. Most of you here could tell me how Jesus was born. You also know the wheres and the whos and the whens of Christ's birth but do you know the why? In the next few minutes let's look at why God sent His son.

We learn that God did not do it simply so we could have a nice holiday at the end of the year. The first part of verse 5 says God sent His son in order that He might redeem those who were under the law. That includes Jew and Gentile, you and me. We are all under the law and under its curse because we have broken it and unless we are rescued we will be broken by it. Now if you spend much time around church you hear the terms *Redeemer* and *redeemed* and *redeem* quite a bit. But what is it all about? What does it mean that Jesus is our Redeemer? To redeem something is to buy it, and in this case to buy it out of slavery. I have heard the story of A.J. Gordon, the great preacher of a previous generation, who ran across a young boy who had two small birds in a cage. Gordon asked the boy what he intended to do with the birds and the boy replied that he would probably give them to his cat. So the preacher offered the boy \$2 for the birds and the cage. The boy told Gordon that they were worthless birds and that he would be wasting his money but the deal was made and the next Sunday Gordon showed up in his pulpit with the two birds which he used as an illustration of redemption. What Gordon did for those birds Christ did for us. He bought us out of slavery and certain death and he set us free. The Scriptures tell us that because of our sin we are in bondage. We are slaves to sin and under the curse of it. It is not our sweetness and love that brought Jesus from glory to earth it is our sin and our resulting need because Jesus came not to congratulate us but to redeem us, to free us from sin. This is the good news that the purpose of Christ's coming is related to our sin problem. The angel told Joseph that his name was to be called Jesus. Why? Because he would save His people from their sins. And He does it by

becoming one of us, fulfilling the law and then putting to death our sin by taking it with Him to the cross. Jesus, you see, was born to die. He came He said to offer His own life as a ransom for many. That is why Ephesians 1:**7a** *In Him we have redemption through His blood.* I Peter 1:**18,19** ...*you were not redeemed with perishable things such as silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* So, God's purpose in sending His son is to free us from sin. But that's not all. He not only redeems us **from** something but He redeems us **to** something. 5 *so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* The end and aim of all that God did and does in our redemption is that we might be His children. Do you see that?! It is magnificent! Redeemed unto sonship. We are taken from being slaves to sin and we are made children of God! God's purpose was not simply that we would be delivered from the greatest evil but that we might be crowned with his choicest blessings. And what does this say about the coming of Christ into the world? It was precisely for this that He came. The son of God became man that men may become sons of God. There is a difference to be sure, between our Sonship and that of Christ's. He was and is the only begotten of the Father. We are adopted children – but I'll take that. It really doesn't get any better, because in the eyes of our loving Father, we could not be any more precious. I love the story about the two brothers who entered first grade together. I told it recently but it's worth repeating. The teacher asked their birthdays and one says, "January 1, 2005." The other says, "April 4, 2005." The teacher says, "That's impossible!" "No" the first brother explains, "one of us is adopted." "Which one?" asked the teacher. "The first brother says, "I don't know – one day I asked my dad and he kissed us both and said, "I forgot." That's how good it is to be adopted by God. He relates to us in every way as a perfect Father. And this making us into his children is the purpose behind the incarnation, behind the virgin bearing child, behind the angelic visitations. This is the purpose of Christmas. Did you know that? More importantly, have you experienced that? Has the purpose of Christmas been fulfilled in your life? You see, until you have experienced adoption into God's family you have not experienced Christmas. Not really, because the reason for the season is the sending of God's son and that Son was sent that you might be redeemed unto adoption, and I fear some of you know nothing of that personally. But it can happen for you. Listen to John 1:12. Speaking of Jesus it says **12** *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.* To anyone who receives Him, who embraces Jesus as Savior and as Master, to anyone who believes in His name this privilege is granted -to be God's child. Jesus was the only begotten son of God, but today you are

surrounded by many adopted sons and daughters of the Almighty who would love to welcome you into our family. One thing adoptive parents cannot do that God does for us is that He stamps us with the family image. Did you know that? The very next verse in Galatians 4 says **6** *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* Today we can celebrate our sending God. He sent His Spirit to fill our hearts, He sent His Son to take our shame. Your redemption and adoption, this is the why of Christmas. This is the purpose of our God. Let's give Him thanks. (Prayer)