

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*”⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Introduction

Do you ever get the feeling that Christmas came too soon? Maybe you’ve had this feeling when you look back at the cards that weren’t sent, the cookies that weren’t baked, the cleaning and decorating that didn’t get done, the presents that weren’t purchased, given or sent. As a result you felt that Christmas came too soon. However, God’s word reminds us ***“Christmas Came at Just the Right Time.”***

The Fullness Of Time

December 25th - we call this Christmas. But we really don’t know the exact date of Christmas. The present date was established in the fourth century. The fact is, however, Christmas came at just the right time in God’s way of seeing things.

We don’t know all the things God took into account in deciding when the first Christmas would be. But Scripture indicates that the time for the Savior’s coming was just right because all the Old Testament prophecies that God wanted people to have, had been given. Also necessary elements for fulfillment of these prophecies were in place. Then there was also the *Pax Romana* in the Roman Empire. This time of peace, together with a universal language - the common Greek - and a good system of roads by which the Gospel would spread, made the timing of the first Christmas just right.

Childhood

Then, as Paul alluded to, this is the time for the Old Testament period to come to an end. Paul compares the Old Testament times to a childhood. In childhood, while a child generally is loved, that child doesn’t have much freedom. He/she is told when to eat, what to eat, when to sleep, where to sleep, what to wear, how to act, where to go and not to go, what to do and not do. He or she may have money but not the freedom to spend it. There is discipline and punishment.

Paul’s point is that similar to childhood, in the Old Testament times God’s law dictated almost every aspect of life for God’s people. There was not much freedom for them. God had good reason for this. His Old Testament people couldn’t handle much freedom. God’s law showed them their need for him and his mercy. God’s law separated his people from the unbelieving people around them. God’s law system, with gospel symbols such as the sacrificial system and the Sabbath day, pointed people to the coming Savior. But at the same time it kept God’s people as kids.

Freedom

With the coming of Christ, “*born under law,*” came the end of childhood for God’s Church on earth. While there would still be moral principles by which God would show us our sins, curb our sinful nature, and guide our Christian living, in Christ, God would fulfill all the ceremonies of his law and give his people freedom to serve him in many ways. As Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, “*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.*”

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ (2:16,17)." Christmas, from God's perspective came at just the right time. Now his people would have freedom and maturity to serve him and spread the gospel in ways the Old Testament law system probably would not have allowed.

Now you may be sitting in your seat about ready to daydream and thinking, "So big deal!" It is a big deal. If you and I were still under the Old Testament legal system, many of us here today would not be here because we would be ceremonially unclean - couples who had sex in the last couple of days, women for whom it is that time of the month, women who recently had babies, those who have been in contact with the dead. All males would have to be circumcised. Sometime, somewhere in our worship we would have to incorporate the sacrifice of animals. Imagine bringing your sheep, doves, calves or lambs. Picture us slaughtering them and sprinkling the blood on the altar. All adult males would be required to journey to Jerusalem three times a year. Imagine the cost and inconvenience. If you think that being a believer now is a challenge, just think of what it must have been like in the Old Testament times. If you think that carrying out the Church's mission of making disciples is a challenge now, think of what it would be if we were operating in the Old Testament system.

Freed From Sin's Curse

Folks, Christ freed you from these things and much more." *When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.*" As we so heard on Christmas day in the beautiful Christmas Gospel, the Word - God's Son, true God from eternity, co-creator of the universe - by the power of the Holy Spirit, took on human nature in the womb of Mary. He was born and born under law. He came to fulfill that law so that his Church, his people, would no longer be children. This meant removing the spiritual handcuffs of the Old Testament law. But this included fulfilling the law's demand for holiness and redeeming us from the law's curse for sin.

God's Law

God's law says, *"Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy (Lev 19:1)."* Without Christ, are you holy? God's law says, *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."* We're all born with sin and this by itself puts us under God's curse and makes us do, say and think things also deserving God's curse. Sin, if not dealt with, prohibits a person being a part of the family of God. Christ came to redeem, that it is buy back from sin's slavery and curse. Jesus came to pay the price for the right for us to be God's children.

Adoption

Those who have gone through the adoption process in recent times know that it can be very expensive – over \$40,000 for a domestic adoption. Adoption involves not only money, but also a lot of action. God's Son came at just the right time to do and pay everything necessary for us to have the adoption as God's children.

The life of the little Jesus that was spared when the angel directed Joseph and Mary to take Jesus and flee to Egypt, would be the life of the big Jesus who refused to flee his enemies when they sought his life. The Holy Child of Bethlehem would be the hideous-looking body loaded with sin and dying on a place called Golgotha some 33 years later. The sin God's Son carried, was not his own, but ours. If God were not such a merciful God, we should be there - suffering, dying, damned. As a result of Christ's being in our place, Paul could write, *"Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom 10:4)."* We are no longer under the law's curse. We are forgiven. We are free to be children of God.

Sons Of God

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal3:26).” Through Christ, God has given us the right to be his children. By his Holy Spirit working through his word, God has given us the power to be his children. God gave us faith. So as believers we are children of God. but according to Paul, we are more than simply children, we are sons of God. Paul makes this distinction four times - *“sons.”* I realize there is the possibility that Paul is using the term figuratively as we often teach in our circles, to mean children. I also realize that in saying this someone might misunderstand me to be discriminating against girls. I am not.

In the Letter to the Galatians Paul knew that these people were familiar with the rights of sons as laid out in the Old Testament. For example, when a father died, his estate was divided among the sons with the eldest getting a double portion and his brothers a single portion. The eldest son became the leader of the clan. Daughters were cared for until their marriage, but they got nothing unless there were no brothers. The same thing was true among the Greeks. Add to that the fact that sons were valued more than daughters when it came to heavy work and war. To a woman living in such a social environment, to hear that through Christ, in the kingdom of God, she received the full rights of sons, this was novel. It was exciting! The same would be true for servant and slaves. In the verses preceding our text Paul wrote, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (3:28).”* The point is, unlike the ancient inheritance laws, all believers, whether sons or daughters, have equal blessing as God’s children.

Rights Of Sons

What are some of those blessings? Paul answers, *“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba,’ Father.”* Not only did God the Holy Spirit give us faith, he has given the right to call God our Father. This means that we can pray the Lord’s Prayer with confidence. We may look to God as a Father who will help his children in the way and the time that God sees as right - when we’re troubled; when tempted; when in need. Even when we’ve sinned, we know that God our Father, in view of Jesus, has compassion on us and forgives us.

Paul also added, *“Since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”* An heir inherits. The ultimate inheritance is eternal life. Keep that in mind when you’re struggling with pain and problems. You have eternal life - keep that in mind when you’re thinking that maybe Christianity isn’t worth the struggle; keep it in mind when if you’re a going through mid-life crisis thinking, “What have I to show for my life?” Keep it in mind when you’re facing death and you’re thinking “What next?” *“Since you are a son, God has also made you and heir.”* God made this possible by seeing to it that Christmas came at just the right time. Amen.