

# The Fullness of Time – Christmas Eve Message

We have spoken for 2 weeks about Time...today is the eve of the celebration of one of the most important times in human history.

## 1. The Fullness of Time

a. **Galatians 4:4-5:** *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

i. **Fullness** – the Greek word is Pleroma, which means that “not one thing is left out.” Filled to the utter possibility of fullness.

ii. **It is as if the phrase reads, “This was the exact moment in time, when nothing is left out of the sequence of events necessary for God to send forth His Son.”**

b. Now sometimes when we use the word “time,” we are referring to a very special moment.

i. You see, I might have a time table for certain things in my life.

ii. But God also has a time table.

iii. The emphasis in this verse is upon God whose sending of Christ is not a “last ditch effort” but part of God's gracious plan from the beginning.

iv. It is the culmination of His time table.

## c. God's Timing with Joseph and Mary.

i. I wonder if Joseph felt that the timing was all wrong when he heard of Mary's pregnancy

1. The timing was wrong. They were not married.

2. The timing was wrong. He never slept with her.

3. The timing was wrong. All of his plans for their future, their plans together, broken apart.

4. No matter what she might have said, there was no other rational explanation than another man had slept with her and he had to think, and think quickly.

5. He still loved her, cared for her, but could not go ahead with the marriage.

6. He decided, the scripture tells us, to divorce her quietly, not to put her to shame -- and then, at that very moment, an angel came *and said that God was in this time, in this very moment that seemed so absent of God, in which the timing seemed all wrong, that God somehow was in the midst of this moment, this seemingly “wrong timing.”*

a. Have you ever had a moment in time like that? When it seemed like the “wrong time” for things to happen.

i. Perhaps you have been the victim of some bad timing as of late...

ii. A bill arrived at the wrong time

iii. You lost a job when you needed it most.

iv. You got sick or you had to cancel plans.

b. Where is God in moments like these?

i. The same place He was during the events of Nazareth and Bethlehem.

ii. God was in the same place He was when Mary and Joseph found out that they would have to go to Bethlehem from Nazareth to comply with a Roman edict to register for a stupid census. . A trip that they couldn't afford to make and a trip that wasn't that wise because Mary was nine months pregnant..

iii. God was in the same place when Mary had to have her baby and there wasn't any room at the hotel.

c. Those moments were His to bring Glory to His Name and to take a crisis and turn it into a miracle.

- d. He can do the same with your crisis, with the events and circumstances that feel like they are in such bad timing.
- e. God is in your moment, He is in your crisis. There is a fullness of time even for you for Him to show Himself.
- 7. God has a timetable that isn't the same as ours.
  - a. We can join his timetable and experience the peace that comes from seeking Him or we can fight against Him and try to make things work the way we want them to.
- ii. One of the incredible things about Christmas is that it tells us that Jesus came to this earth at just the right time. There were no coincidences. There was no mistake.
  - 1. The stable, the no room at the inn, the journey to Bethlehem, no accidents.
  - 2. All these little things would prove someday to be symbols of God's timetable.
- d. **God's Timing with World Conditions.** The world was prepared perfectly for Christ's birth in several ways. It was prepared...
  - i. CULTURALLY.
    - 1. 350 years before the time that Jesus was born, Alexander the Great conquered the entire known world in just 12 years. Because of Alexander's influence, the world became Greek in culture and art and drama and architecture and language.
      - a. The Greek language has been said to be the most precise language of any language ever to have existed.
      - b. The Greek language was the language of the New Testament
  - ii. POLITICALLY.
    - 1. About a hundred years before Jesus was born, the Romans conquered what was left of the Greek Empire.
      - a. One king was Caesar Augustus. He issued an edict that called for a census that all the world would be taxed.
        - i. This census required for people to go to their home town, which forced Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem where Jesus was born.
  - iii. RELIGIOUSLY.
    - 1. Over 500 years before Jesus was born, the Jewish people were taken captive by the Babylonians
    - 2. Eventually some of the Jews returned to the land--but Palestine was eventually conquered by the Romans about 75 years before Christ was born.
      - a. The local ruler, Herod, joined hands with the Roman government and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.
      - b. It was a magnificent building where sacrifices were offered again on a regular basis.
      - c. The picture of those sacrifices provided the ideal backdrop for the teaching of Jesus that He would have to "die for the sin of the people."
- 2. **Galatians 4:4-5:** *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*
- 3. Prophecies – This was a perfect, fullness of time!
  - a. **The bible contains over 300 prophecies that spoke of the first advent of Jesus Christ and were fulfilled by Him.**

- i. Josh McDowell, writer of “Evidence that Demands a Verdict” explains that for just 8 of these prophecies were fulfilled by one person, the odds of a person doing so would be 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. The incredible impossibility of that is demonstrated by an example.
  - ii. Suppose I took 1 quarter and marked it and put it into a bag along with 100 quarters and then blindfolded you and asked you to pick it out on your first try.
    1. That would be 10 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> power if you could do it.
  - iii. Suppose you took the state of Texas and spread silver dollars two feet deep across the whole state, then marked just one of them and buried it somewhere in the state. Then, if I blindfold you and had to pick just one silver dollar, your chances of getting the marked one on your first try would be one in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power!
  - iv. Now Jesus didn’t just fulfill 8 prophecies, he fulfilled over 300 of them!
  - v. Let me just show a few of them to you now.
- b. Prophecies fulfilled
- i. Micah 5:2 God eliminated all of the cities of the world and said that the Messiah would be born in a town with a population of less than 1000, a town called **Bethlehem**.
    1. *“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.”*
    2. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, but by “coincidence” due to the demands of the Census, traveled to their historical home town of Bethlehem. Mary was pregnant and Jesus was born there.
      - a. It should make the song, “O little town of Bethlehem” take on new meaning.
  - ii. Five Old Testament passages state that the Messiah would appear when **the Temple of Jerusalem was still standing**. (Ps. 118:26, Dan. 9:26, Zech. 11:13, Haggai 2:7-9)
    1. This is important because the Temple as it stood in Jesus day had only been standing for about 70 years and was destroyed in 70 a.d.
  - iii. Another prophecy dating from 1012 BC (Psalm 22:6-18, Zech 12:10) predicts that the **Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced**.
    1. This prophecy described crucifixion 800 years before the Romans began to practice it.
  - iv. **The Messiah would be born of a virgin** (Isaiah 7:14)
    1. Way back in Genesis, after the fall, a Messianic prophecy was given by God to Eve. *“I will put enmity between your seed and her seed.”* Genesis 3:15
      - a. Most of us would understand that to mean offspring.
      - b. The implications of that prophecy would shake the world!
    2. Isaiah gave a prophecy some 800 years before Christ’s birth, that said that a virgin (young girl) would have a child. Why would that be so remarkable as a sign if it were only a “young girl?” It wouldn’t be. It would be very remarkable though if she had a child without intimacy with a man.
      - a. *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (or God with us).”* (Is. 7:14)
    3. In Luke 1:43-35, the angel pronounces to Mary that she will have a child and her reply is, *“How can this be since I am a virgin?”* And the angel answered and said to her, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the Holy offspring shall be called the son of God.”*
    4. Think for a moment how would it be possible for one to have a child without a father’s intervention?

- a. Until a few decades ago, we would have all said, “IMPOSSIBLE!” (unless by a miracle).
  - b. But now we have seen Dolly the Sheep who was created from her own egg without a father and know that these things are possible.
  - c. And in Mary’s case, the Holy Spirit caused her pregnancy in such a way that did not require a human father.
5. **Why is a virgin birth so important?**
- a. The Jews believed that the sin-nature of Adam was passed down from one generation to the next when couples made children, in other words, the sin nature was passed down through the man’s donation to the scheme of things.
    - i. His seed was the carrier of the sin nature.
    - ii. But if we go back to Genesis 3:15, we find a promise, that someday the literal seed of the woman would spell the defeat of the devil.
    - iii. God was the Father of Jesus the Christ. The genes of Abraham and David were passed on through Mary, but not Adam’s sin.

#### 4. Deity of Christ

- a. That last verse also said, he would be called Immanuel, “God with Us”
  - i. Imagine Isaiah’s wonder as he recorded that word from God.
  - ii. He had to be in awe and wonder what that would mean.
  - iii. Would God really clothe Himself with human flesh and visit man, or was it only going to be an expression?
- b. Qualities of the redeemer:
  - i. Perfect, sinless man.
  - ii. Fully man, fully God, come in the flesh of man.
  - iii. So a sacrifice that could satisfy the demands of justice for the perfect redemption of mankind.
- c. Jesus Himself claimed to be God. This is the reason He was crucified.
  - i. He was found guilty of blasphemy.
  - ii. After his resurrection, he allowed his disciples to “worship him.”
  - iii. He equated Himself with God when he said, “I and the Father are One.”
- d. Only God could provide the sacrifice, the perfect atonement for which perfect justice demanded.
- e. The principle reason that Jesus came into our world was...
  - i. Not to teach a bunch of really profound sayings.
  - ii. Not to provide a great example of love.
  - iii. Not to do a bunch of miracles.
  - iv. Even though he did those things, they were not the purpose for which he came and took on human flesh and lived and died.
- f. Jesus leaves no doubt as to the purpose of why he came.
  - i. In his own words he says,
    - 1. *“I have come to seek and to save what was lost”* (Luke 19:10).
    - 2. *“I have come to call not the righteous but sinners”* (Mt. 9:13)
    - 3. *“I have come not to condemn the world but to save it.”* (Jn 12:47)
  - ii. *‘It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners’* (! Tim 1:15)
  - iii. **Jesus came to save sinners.** That is you and me.
- g. **Jesus came to finish what God had started in Creation.**
  - i. Note this: Gen 2:1 *“thus the heavens and earth were finished, and the host of them, and God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day from all His work which he had made.”*

- ii. Contrast that with Jesus' final words on the cross which were, "It is finished" (Jn 20:30).
- iii. He came to complete and fulfill the work which was begun at creation, to bring you and I and any who would, into an eternal relationship with God the Father.
- iv. This is the true miracle of Christmas.
  - 1. That God would so love the world that He would have planned our redemption from the foundation of the world. He saw you and me and knew us by name. He sent Jesus not as a king to rule, but as a child to suffer and grow and experience life just as you and I have to. He knew loss, he knew pain. But he also knew why He was here. He came for you and I.

5. Let's pray.

- a. Lord God, you sent your son in the fullness of time. He was slain from before the foundation of the world, because You knew we would need a savior and your cosmic plan has our names written in your book.
- b. You desire a relationship with us. O God, why do we refuse you? Why do we resist you and your love? I pray that if there be anyone who is resisting you today, that they would surrender to your love and discover your plan for their life today!
- c. And for those who are struggling with the timing of difficulties in their lives, I pray that they would be able to see your timing is perfect, and your plan is perfect. Give them the faith they will need to endure and trust you in the middle of their crisis.
- d. In Jesus Name amen.