

INTRODUCTION.

THIS YEAR IN OUR CHRISTMAS MESSAGE, ~ we're going to explore ~ Paul's statement ~ ¶¶

▶▶ about Jesus' birth ~ to the churches in Galatia.

▶▶ Specifically, ~ Gal. 4:4-7.

▶▶ We'll look carefully, ~ and rather briefly I might add, ~ at the apostle's declaration.

BEFORE WE DIG IN TO THE DETAILS, ~ OBSERVE TWO SIGNIFICANT WORDS IN VS 4.

BUT GOD.

▶▶ Before. ⇔⇔ Ephesians.

▷▷ After recounting our pre-Christian life.

↳↳ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

▶▶ Paul has the same idea here in his statement about Jesus birth.

▷▷ Helpless ~ and subservient ~ to the Law ~ and to those spiritual forces that are opposed to God.

↳↳ But God intervened. ¶¶ 1/12

▷▷ Titus 3:4-7 (NIV).

↳↳ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

BUT GOD. ⇨⇨ These are wonderful words. ⇨⇨ Why?

▶▶ Because ~ they show ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that the entry of the Christian message through Jesus' first coming ~ is at the same time ~ the turning point of history.

▶▶ Apart from these words, ~ life offers ~ no future hope ~ for any person.

▶▶ Humankind is ~ lost, ~ separated from Christ, ~ without hope, ~ and ~ without God.

▶▶ But God ~ has intervened in a way ~ that brings ~ final and complete ~ salvation.

▷▷ Author of Heb. tells us ~ After making purification for sins, ~ [Jesus] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

↳↳ This signifies ~ that the work was complete.

↳↳ Earthly priests ~ would stand and keep offering sacrifices.

↳↳ Their work ~ was never finished.

↳↳ Jesus' sacrifice ~ was final and complete. ⇨⇨ It is finished. ¶¶ 2/12

OK, ~ LET'S DIG IN TO ~ GAL. 4:4-7, ~ AND SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH PAUL.

1<sup>st</sup>, ~ PAUL TALKS ABOUT THE TIMING OF JESUS' COMING.

(VS 4) BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME HAD COME.

▶▶ A variety of meanings has been suggested ~ by various commentators ~ for the phrase, ~ **fullness of time.**

▷▷ The Roman empire had ~ brought peace ~ and a road system that made travel more convenient. ⇨⇨ **And widespread use of the Greek language ~ simplified communication.**

▶▶ Whatever meaning we conclude fits best, ~ the main thing to remember ~ is this.

▷▷ Paul's emphasis ~ is on a time ~ designated by God ~ as appropriate ~ for sending his Son, ~ ↴↴

↳↳ in order ~ to assure humans' deliverance ~ from helplessness and subservience ~ ↴↴

→→ to the Law ~ & ~ to those spiritual forces ~ that are opposed to God.

THE GREEK CAN BE TRANSLATED A NUMBER OF WAYS.

▶▶ E.g., ~ **But when the appropriate time had come.**

▷▷ Or, **But when the set time had fully come.** ⇨⇨ **Or, But when the right time came.**

▶▶ And again, ~ the emphasis ~ is on a time ~ designated by God ~ ↴↴

▷▷ as appropriate ~ for sending his Son. ↴↴ 3/12

## WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND.

▶▶ God carefully planned ~ the moment ~ of the incarnation.

▷▷ Plan already in place ~ when Adam & Eve sinned.

↪↪ Gen. 3:15, ~ I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

▶▶ And ~ God guided all of history ~ to that moment.

▷▷ Nothing ~ was left to chance.

▶▶ And God is still guiding history . . . .

(VS 4) NEXT, PAUL TELLS US THAT ~ GOD SENT HIS SON.

## HERE'S A VERY SIGNIFICANT POINT ABOUT THIS SENDING.

▶▶ It was not asked for.

▷▷ Adam & Eve . . . .

▷▷ In Rom., ~ there is no one who seeks God.

▷▷ Later in Rom., ~ God's enemies.

▷▷ In Col., ~ unsaved, ~ were alienated from & hostile in mind toward God. ↴↴ 4/12

▶▶ The gift of God's Son ~ was given voluntarily.

▷▷ John writes, ~ This is real love ~ not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

▷▷ The love relationship was initiated by God.

↪↪ People had nothing to do with it. ⇔⇔ How could we?

→→ All of us ~ were totally dead to God, ~ dead in trespasses and sins.

↪↪ He loved us even though we were totally unworthy of his love.

(VS 4) THEN PAUL NOTES ~ THE DEITY AND HUMANITY ~ OF JESUS.

GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF WOMAN.

▶▶ Over and over, ~ the Scriptures declare ~ the deity and humanity ~ of Jesus.

▶▶ Is. 9:6 ~ "For to us a child is born ~ [hum, ~ 100%], ~ to us a son is given ~ [deity, ~ 100%]."

▶▶ Is. 7:14 ~ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son ~ [humanity], ~ and shall call his name Immanuel ~ [Means God is with us]."

▶▶ As Christmas hymn . . . ~ 77

▷▷ Veiled in flesh the God-head see ~ Hail the incarnate deity ~ 77

↪↪ Pleased as man with men to dwell ~ Jesus, ~ our Emmanuel. 77 5/12

## CONTRARY TO THE POPULAR OPINION HELD BY MUCH OF THE WORLD, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ Jesus did not have His beginning in Bethlehem.

▶▶ At Bethlehem ~ God the Son ~ took on a human nature.

▷▷ But He has been around ~ for all eternity.

▷▷ Jn. 1:1, ~ "In the beginning was the Word ~ [i.e., ~ at creation, ~ the Word already existed], ~ and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

▷▷ Jn. 1:14, ~ "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

▷▷ Jn. 8:58, ~ "Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

## JESUS IS ~ BOTH FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN ~ IN ONE PERSON.

▶▶ Now, ~ this is a great mystery.

▷▷ How God ~ who is infinite ~ and finite humanity ~ ¶¶

↳↳ can be united in one single Person ~ is totally ~ beyond our understanding

▶▶ But, ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ let's rejoice ~ ¶¶

▷▷ because through this mystery ~ God provided our salvation.

(VS 4) PAUL GOES ON IN THE PASSAGE ~ AND NOTES THAT JESUS ~ WAS SUBJECT TO the law. ¶¶ 6/12

## BORN UNDER THE LAW.

▶▶ Jesus was 100% human.

▶▶ Thus, ~ he voluntarily subjected himself ~ to the structured universe ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that he had created ~ and that had been marred by human rebellion.

▶▶ More significantly, ~ Jesus lived as a Jew, ~ subject ~ to God's revealed law.

▶▶ Yet, ~ while no other human being has been able to perfectly fulfill God's law, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Jesus kept it completely.

▶▶ Thus, ~ Jesus could be the perfect sacrifice.

▷▷ Why? ⇔⇔ Because, ~ although fully human, ~ he never sinned.

▷▷ And a sinless sacrifice was required to free us from sin.

▶▶ His death ~ bought freedom for us who were enslaved to sin, ~ offering us ~ ¶¶

▷▷ redemption and adoption into God's family, ~ which we'll talk about next.

SUBSEQUENTLY, ~ PAUL NOTES THAT ~ THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S FIRST COMING ~ was twofold.

(VS 5 {NRSV}) In order to redeem those who were under the law, ~ so that we might receive adoption as children. ¶¶ 7/12

## THE 1<sup>st</sup> PURPOSE OF JESUS' FIRST COMING, ~ was to redeem those who were under the law.

▶▶ This comes from the context ~ ¶¶

△△ of the slave market, ~ where a slave could be set free ~ by the payment ~ of the redemption price.

↪↪ And that ~ is what Jesus did for us.

→→ Enslaved to sin. ⇔⇔ Paid redemption price.

## AND PETER TELLS US WHAT THAT PRICE WAS.

▶▶ In his first epistle, ~ he says that we know ~ that God ~ ¶¶

△△ paid a ransom to save us from the empty life we inherited from our ancestors.

▶▶ And it was not paid ~ with mere gold or silver, ~ which lose their value.

▶▶ It was the precious blood of Christ, ~ the sinless, ~ spotless ~ Lamb of God (cf. NLT).

▶▶ Jesus set people free from bondage ~ to sin and the law ~ by his redemptive death on the cross.

## THE 2<sup>nd</sup> PURPOSE ~ OF JESUS' FIRST COMING WAS ~ TO ADOPT US.

▶▶ **Adoption** ~ was used ~ of those who believe in Christ and are accepted by God as God's children ~ with full rights.

↪↪ And Paul uses it this way here. ¶¶ 8/12



PAUL'S POINT HERE ~ IS THIS.

▶▶ Jesus gives ~ all people who trust in him ~ the full status ~ of God's beloved children.

▷▷ Jn. 1:12, ~ But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

MY . . . , ~ WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN, ~ WITH FULL RIGHTS.

▶▶ In his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle, ~ John puts it this way. ⇔⇔ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

▶▶ And in Romans, ~ Paul declares ~ The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit ~ that we are God's children.

NOW, ~ AS NOTED, ~ WE ARE AT PRESENT, ~ FULL-FLEDGED CHILDREN OF GOD.

▶▶ But there is a final stage ~ of our adoption ~ that is still future.

▶▶ Paul explains this in Rom. 8:23 (LEB).

▷▷ Not only this, ~ but we ourselves also, ~ having the first fruits of the Spirit, ~ even we ourselves ~ groan within ourselves ~ 77

↳↳ while we await eagerly our adoption ~ [talking about the final stage], ~ 77

→→ [the final stage of our adoption:] ~ the redemption of our body.

▷▷ Final stage ←← our resurrection when we receive our new bodies. 77 9/12

NOW, ~ IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ~ TO UNDERSTAND ~ THE FOLLOWING.

(VS 5 {NRSV}) THIS IS ~ NOT ~ some automatic process or universal salvation ~ that Paul is talking about.

▶▶ People ~ are not ~ automatically redeemed and adopted.

▶▶ What it does mean ~ is this.

▷▷ The barrier ~ between humans and God ~ created by sin ~ has been removed ~ by Jesus' sacrificial death, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ so that ~ the way is open for sinners to come to Him.

▶▶ Jn. 3:16 points this out quite well.

▷▷ For God so loved the world, ~ that he gave his only Son ~ [God's gracious provision], ~ that whoever ~ [universal provision, ~ i.e., ~ available to all].

▷▷ But one has to believe in Jesus ~ i.e., ~ to apply God's gracious provision to him/herself: ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

▶▶ And we've already read what John says.

▷▷ But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

LET'S MOVE ON TO THE FINAL 2 VERSES THIS A.M., ~ ~ VSS 6-7. ¶¶ 10/12

HERE PAUL NOTES ~ 2 ~ OF THE PRIVILEGES ~ OF BEING CHILDREN OF GOD.

1<sup>st</sup> PRIVILEGE MENTIONED: ~~ THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELLS BELIEVERS.

▶▶ Fulfillment of promise made by Jesus ~~ Jn. 14:16-17.

▷▷ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

▶▶ God the Holy Spirit ~ is a gift from God the Father ~ to all believers ~ when they become children of God.

▷▷ At the moment of conversion ~ ¶¶

↳↳ God the Holy Spirit gives us new life and indwells us.

▶▶ He empowers us to lead holy lives.

▶▶ He gives us understanding of Scripture.

▶▶ His dwelling within us ~ is the guarantee that God will complete ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the good work that He has begun in us ~ and ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that we will receive our inheritance and glorification.

▶▶ And ~ a whole host of other things as well. ¶¶ 11/12

(VSS 6-7) AND THE 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIVILEGE OF BEING CHILDREN OF GOD THAT PAUL MENTIONS.

▶▶Believers ~ are heirs of God.

▶▶Paul says in Rom. 8:17, ~ we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."

▶▶And what will Jesus inherit?

▷▷Everything.

↪↪Heb. 1:2 tells us that the Father has appointed Jesus "heir of all things."

▶▶You know, ~ we may not have much in this life.

▷▷But in eternity my . . . , ~ we're going to end up with everything.

### GOOD NEWS.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 12/12