

I. Introduction:

- A. All of us know what it is to be late – late for an appointment; late for work; late for church.
1. Some of us know it more intimately than others.
 - a. There are cultures where it is expected that people should be late.
 - b. Some people have linked the words "*fashionable*" and "*late*" into some kind of ungodly marriage.
 2. It appears that some Baptists have made tardiness a part of their theology.
 3. If you look at their doctrinal statements you'll find chapters on: Justification, regeneration, sanctification, and procrastination.
 4. There was once a family which was always late for church.
 - a. One day the pastor confronted the father, "What's your excuse this time."
 - b. The man said, "We had two visitors staying over night kids, making nine at our house, but we set the alarm for seven."
 5. I've read that one reason why the Lord refuses to reveal the time of His second coming is that a great many Baptists would be deliberately late.
- B. We know what it is to be late, and most of us know what it is to have deadlines – points of time at which tasks had to be completed.
1. Are you familiar with the history of the term "*deadline*"?
 2. According to Merriam Webster, it began perhaps with the notorious Civil War prison camp Andersonville.
 - a. There was a trench dug around the camp with the dirt thrown up on the outside creating a sort of breastwork.
 - b. It was unofficially called the "*deadline*," and any prisoner who crossed that line was instantly shot dead.
 - c. Over the following decades journalists started using the term in regard to the time when their articles were due.
 3. There are hundreds of occasions in our lives when there are things that must be performed by a certain time or it is just too late and there is no point in doing it at all.
 4. There is often a right time and a wrong time.
 5. We've all heard and used expressions like "*in the nick of time*."
 - a. Sometime around about the 1580s the phrase "*in the nick*" or "*in the very nick*" began to be used for any critical moment – the exact instant at which something had to take place.
 - b. In the 16th century a nick was a narrow and precise marker, so that if something was in the nick it was precisely where it should be.
- C. Just as we have timetables, so does the Lord.
1. Sometimes in our foolishness these two timetables don't match.
 - a. Many times, we want God to act, and act right now.
 - b. But in God's wisdom, He chooses to "*delay*" – at least in our estimation.
 2. But fact is: God is never late.
 - a. He who created this universe from nothing, who sees the end from beginning....
 - b. He who is, in Himself, all wisdom and knowledge...
 - c. Works all things out perfectly at the right time.
 - d. It may **not** be "*in OUR time*," but it is always the right time and "*in HIS time*."
- D. For example, the eternal Son of God came to this earth at just the right time – in the nick of time.
1. In our scripture, we are told that "*when fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son*."
 2. When we stop and think about it, that is an amazing statement.
 3. Doesn't this mean that there was one moment in time when all things were perfectly in line for the incarnation of God's Son?
 4. Doesn't it say that there was no other time when Christ could have come?
 5. I believe that is precisely what it is saying.

- E. This should be important to us because just as Christ came at the perfect time, so God still continues to work at just the right time – *“in the nick of time.”*
1. In fact, perhaps **today** is perfect time in your life for God to move in some special way.
 - a. Perhaps the problem you are facing today, God desires to solve for you.
 - b. Perhaps the answers you have been seeking, the Holy Spirit desires to give you today.
 - c. Perhaps God is telling you that now is the time for you to surrender to Him.
 2. If so, then respond to Him today, and He will meet you – just in the nick of time.
- F. This scripture helps us to see just how perfectly God works out His plan in human time.
1. It will also reveal, by implication, just how perfectly He works His plan in us.
 2. His timing is perfect, and His plan for your life is wonderful indeed.

II. Think about the PREPARATION for the Saviour's Introduction.

A. *“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.”*

1. Throughout the Old Testament there were many prophecies about the coming of the Messiah.
2. Prophecies concerning the **manner of His birth** – that He would be born of a virgin.
3. Prophecies concerning the **place of His birth** – that He would be born in Bethlehem.
4. And we see these prophecies being fulfilled as Jesus was born that glorious night.
5. Just as there will be a **perfect time** for His **second advent**, there was a perfect time for His **first advent**.
6. God had put all things together to prepare for the incarnation and for beginning of the preaching of the Gospel.

B. For example, there was a **RELIGIOUS preparation** for His coming.

1. Throughout the Old Testament, God had been dealing with His chosen people, Israel.
2. It would be through them that the Messiah would come.
3. But Israel was always straying from the Lord.
4. They refused to simply worship Him alone, and they were always following after the gods of the peoples around them. Over and over, God judged Israel for her idolatry.
5. And finally, we see the culmination of that judgment in the Babylonian captivity.
6. God finally allowed the entire nation to be conquered and taken from their homes.
7. Yet one of the interesting effects of the Babylonian captivity was that after that point, the Jewish people were always monotheistic – they forever ceased to worship of idols.
 - a. During that captivity, the Jews came in contact with the Persians.
 - b. The Persians were Zoroastrians, and unlike most other nations, they monotheists.
8. Somehow, it seems that the Jews through their captivity were delivered from following after the idols of the pagan nations around them.

C. A second important effect of the captivity was that the canon of the Old Testament Scripture was gathered together.

1. For the first time, the body of the Old Testament was pulled together into a single volume so to speak.
2. This paved the way for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.
3. When the Apostles came on the scene they had a body of scriptures to share with the nation and with any Gentiles who were willing to listen.

D. A third major effect of the Babylonian captivity was that of the Jewish synagogue.

1. In captivity there was no longer a temple and so the Jews developed smaller meeting places, not to replace temple, but as teaching sites to maintain their faith.
2. After Israel's return from Babylon, the synagogues remained and grew up where ever the Jews resided.
3. When the preaching of Gospel began, there were hundreds of meeting places around the Mediterranean world filled with a few eager minds ready to hear.

- E. There was also a **CULTURAL preparation** for Jesus' coming.
1. In 350 B.C., there arose a man named Alexander, the son of the Macedonian King, Philip.
 2. We know him as Alexander the Great.
 3. He conquered the known world in twelve short years.
 4. And because of Alexander's influence, the western world became Greek in culture, philosophy, institutions, art, drama, literature, architecture, thought and language.
 5. The Greek language was spread to such an extent that ordinary people everywhere could understand a style of Greek known as "*Koine*," or common Greek.
 6. This was very important because in 280 B.C., the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek.
 7. We call that volume the "*Septuagint*."
 8. So people throughout the Mediterranean world had a language and the scriptures in a language they could understand.
- F. And so, we see that the stage was set for the preaching of the Gospel.
1. Linguistically and culturally, the lines of communication were opened between God and much of the world
 2. The time was right. In "*the fulness of time*." Everything fell into place "*just in the nick of time*."
- G. And then, there was a **POLITICAL preparation** for Christ's coming as well.
1. By the time of Christ's incarnation, the Romans had conquered just about everyone.
 2. Just as it was prophesied, the Greeks defeated the Persians, and the Romans overcame the Greeks.
 3. In their conquering process, the Romans built roads that would link their entire empire.
 4. They also suppressed crime and instituted a universal Roman peace – at the point of their sword.
- H. Of course, God determined who would ascend to power in the Roman Empire.
1. And at the coming of Christ, Caesar Augustus was in the Emperor.
 2. Little did he know that when he called for a census of his empire, he was in fact doing God's will.
 3. His egotistic edict required all the world to return to their place of their family origin and to be counted.
 4. A certain pregnant lady & her husband were forced made an historic journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.
 5. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was guided by the sovereign providence of God to the place prophesied in the Old Testament where Christ would be born.
- I. Our Scripture tells us that Jesus came, born of a woman, at just the right time.
1. "*In the fullness of time*," God sent His Son into this world.
 2. If God could do that for the world, He could certainly do that for you.
 3. He can – and does – work in your life at just the right time.
 4. Trust Him in your situation; rest in His timing; know that He does all things well.

III. Now, think about the **PURPOSE** of this perfect timing.

- A. "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"
1. There was more to that night in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago than a mere babe in a manger.
 2. God had a great purpose for Christ's coming.
 3. Jehovah had planned this event before the Earth was formed.
 4. Now the time was right. And Christ came.
- B. He came, first of all, to redeem His chosen people.
1. Many have heard it so often that they have lost the joy in hearing it again.
 2. Humanity had been under the Law, and thus we were condemned because through that law.
 - a. Neither Jew nor Gentile had been able to keep God's law.
 - b. Our own lives testify to the fact that we cannot be righteous in ourselves.

3. So Christ Jesus came. He bore our humanity in his flesh.
 - a. And through the will of the Father, He bore the iniquity of His elected people.
 - b. And He died on the Cross in the place of those He intended to save.
 - c. Because of that death, He provided forgiveness and salvation for His people.
 - d. He cleansed them and set them free from sin and the law of sin and death.
 - e. Jesus came to redeem us – to buy us back – and to make us His own.
- C. In Christ's coming God made an offer – or at the very least He illustrated that offer.
1. Humanly speaking we have one of two choices:
 - a. Either we can choose to live our lives in our own strength and power...
 - b. Taking our chances that we can live righteously enough to earn our way to Heaven.
 - c. Or we can accept God's offer of salvation by faith in finished work of His Son.
 2. The Scriptures teach us that unless our righteousness is perfect, we have no hope of inheriting the Kingdom of God.
 3. If we keep the whole Law and stumble in one point, the Scripture declares that we become a lawbreakers.
 4. In fact, it proves that we are by nature lawbreakers.
 - a. It only takes one rotten egg to spoil the omelet.
 - b. It only takes a little sin to prove that we are sinners.
 5. God is holy, and as the holy God of the universe, any sin is abhorrent to Him.
 6. If we reject the way of Christ, we will be eternally condemned.
 7. It will be a condemnation we deserve.
 8. As we stand before the all-holy God, we will all have to proclaim, *"Guilty as charged."*
- D. But in choosing Christ we are given the privilege to stand before God, holy and righteous and justified;
1. Not because of anything we did, but because of the perfect work of Christ.
 2. Our sin is placed to His account, and we stand in His righteousness.
 3. He came to redeem His chosen people.
- E. Then furthermore, He came to adopt us, which takes redemption to a higher level.
1. The Gospel *"good news"* contains the great news that believers become God's children.
 2. The word *"adopt"* comes from two Greek words, *"thesia,"* which means *"placing,"* and *"huios,"* which means *"son."*
 3. By that word *"adoption"* we understand that when we come to Christ, a child has been placed into the family of God by the declaration of God.
 4. Christ came not only to forgive us of our sins, but to place us into His family.
- F. God's plan for His elect, from the moment of that election, has been to adopt those people into His family.
1. Now, we who have believed in Christ, have been made His children.
 2. And we can hold our heads up high because of who our Father is.
 3. There is great dignity in being a child of God.
 4. We need to understand the dignity of the believer in the doctrine of adoption.

IV. Something else contained in this scripture is of our PRIVILEGE.

- A. *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*
1. *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*
 2. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*
 3. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."*
- B. Christ came to fulfill His plan for the world, and for some of us.
1. His plan was to redeem us and to adopt us.

2. And through that adoption we gain certain privileges – privileges of sonship.
3. Here in our text it says that we are no longer slaves, but sons.
4. We have been taken from our former orphaned condition and placed into His family.
5. We no longer must serve the lusts of the flesh, the whims of the devil, or the pressures of our peers.
6. We have been set free from all forms of slavery.

C. It is a terrible thing to be in bondage.

1. But that is precisely the condition of all of us without Jesus Christ.
 - a. We're in bondage to our own desires; We're in bondage to the habit-patterns of the past.
 - b. We're in bondage to the devil himself.
2. But the sovereign work of God has done away with all of that.
3. *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."*
4. Now we are set free because of the work of Christ on the Cross.
5. We have received the Holy Spirit into our hearts.
 - a. It is that Spirit who cries within us, *"Abba! Father!"*
 - b. And the Holy Spirit communes with our spirit and testifies that we are God's children.

D. But not only are we sons, we are heirs of God.

1. Through Christ we become beneficiaries of the Kingdom of God.
2. Again, we see our dignity as Christians. As a Christian, you are a son, a daughter, a child of the King.
 - a. You are a recipient of the Holy Spirit. You are an heir of the Kingdom.
 - b. You are no longer a slave, but are born again to reign and rule with Christ.
3. Our reign with Christ is not just a future event, though it is that. It begins in the here and now.
 - a. As **Romans 5:17** says, *"For if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."*
 - b. We are indeed heirs of the abundant life in Christ.

E. These are some of the privileges we have as children of God.

1. This is what the first coming of Christ provided for us.
 - a. At the right time, God sent forth His Son.
 - b. And He can be trusted to do things in our lives at the right time, as well.
2. We are His children, His heirs.
3. And He is leading us to reign with Him in eternity. But also to rule in victory in this life.
4. This is what Jesus' incarnation has done for us.

F. Almost 2,000 years ago, there came a night when the fullness of time had come.

1. The angels peered over the portals of heaven in expectancy.
2. The plan of God through the ages was beginning to unfold, like a beautiful blossom.
3. It would be only moments before the angels announced to the shepherds: *"For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."*
4. Thus, when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.
5. Unable to contain Heaven's joy any longer, the angels would explode with jubilation.
6. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."*
7. The fullness of time had come. And it will come again.

G. Are you ready for more of that perfect will of God?

1. Are you looking past the babe in the manger to the Saviour on the Cross?
2. Can you look beyond the cross to the coming King?
3. Is the Lord Jesus Christ your Lord and Saviour?