

The Fullness of Time

Galatians 4:4—7

Introduction

Wait for it ... The recipe tells you how hot to set the oven and how long it takes to bake the cake. But, when the timer goes off, what do you do? You stick a toothpick in it to see if it's done. The recipe says, "bake for 30 minutes at 350°." It was in the oven at 350° for a half hour. What's there to check? Baking would be so much easier if things worked out in real life like they were supposed to on paper. The fullness of time isn't about time per se. It means "when everything was ready", "an opportune time."

A Time Appointed by God

This was an opportune time because it was a time appointed by God. The Plan of Salvation wasn't an afterthought with God. Before creation, God had ordained this course of action, this time. Why did God create man if He knew man was going to fall and cause all this trouble? God created out of love and His great love is unexplainable. It's a mystery we cannot fathom.

Appointed for the Rise & Fall

When Simeon saw the Baby Jesus at the temple, he said that the Boy was *appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel (Luke 2:34)*. Mary said it this way, "*He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate (Luke 1:52)*". Jesus says, "*The last will be first, and the first last (Matthew 20:16)*". The difference is faith. Those with faith in Jesus will be exalted with Him. Those without faith in Jesus will be debased to spend eternity away from Him in hell.

Appointed as a Sign

The Boy is also *appointed for a sign that is opposed ... so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:34-35)*. This refers to His crucifixion, as Simeon tells Mary *that a sword will pierce [her] soul also (v. 35)*. The cross is the great divider. There were no casual bystanders at the foot of the cross. One is either for Jesus or against Him. At the cross, the hearts of all people are revealed for what they are. We are all fallen sinners under a holy God. The question is, "Where do we go from here?"

Born Under the Law

Paul says, *Christ was born under the Law to save those who were under the Law (Galatians 4:4—5)*. What does it mean that he was *born under the Law*?

Time of Purification

Under the Law, a woman was *unclean for seven days after giving birth to a male child*. On the *eighth day, the boy is to be circumcised (Leviticus 12:1—3)*. That's why we celebrate the Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus tonight. The woman *remains unclean for another thirty-three days*. At the *end of the fortieth day, she makes an offering in the temple and is pronounced clean by the priest (v. 4, 6—8)*. Since Jesus was the first-born, He was also redeemed according to the Law at this time (*Exodus 13:1—2*). The time had come under the Law.

Born to Redeem

Simeon wasn't the only one at the temple who was excited to see Jesus. The prophetess Anna was *waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38)*. She saw this in Jesus. Because He was born under the Law and lived a perfect life under the Law and died a perfect death under the Law, He redeems all of us who are under the curse of the Law.

Waiting – Simeon & Anna

As we mentioned, Anna and Simeon were waiting. Simeon for the *consolation of Israel (v. 25)* and Anna for the *redemption of Jerusalem (v. 38)*. But these are the same thing. They both refer to salvation. *“My eyes have seen Your Salvation” (v. 30)*, says Simeon in the Nunc Dimittis. They had been waiting for salvation for many years. But now, the fullness of time has come. Salvation has come into the world in the Baby Jesus.

The Time Is Full

In a way, we are like Simeon and Anna, waiting for the Second Coming of Christ. But we also, like Simeon and Anna, have witnessed His coming and have seen His salvation. We witness His salvation every time we receive His body and blood. So, while we do await the completion of His salvation, we live in the presence of His salvation. Christ is here! Salvation is here! **THE FULLNESS OF TIME** has come!

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
