

Stories of Christmas

In the Fullness of Time

Galatians 4:4-5

Opening

Gathering: Give an example of a time when you waited impatiently for something and then found that the wait was justified by perfect timing when it was realized.

Today's Focus: God sent His Son, Jesus the Messiah, to save the world at the perfect point in human history and will send Him again in His perfect timing.

Key Verses: *But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Galatians 4:4-5*

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6

Opening Prayer

Lesson

The Beginning of Time (*Genesis 1:1*)

What is the first thing we know about God's eternal plan?

Genesis 1:1 = From our perspective, all started when God created the heavens and the earth

Was this also the beginning of God?

Psalm 93:2 = No, He has always existed – timeless, eternal, in eternity, no beginning & no end

Why did God create the world and all that we know?

Revelation 4:11 = It was His will – He created an object for His love

Ants for the Ant Farm (*Genesis 1-2*)

Did He create the heavens and the earth to show off His creative power and handiwork?

Isaiah 45:18 = No He formed it to be inhabited

What inhabitant did God plan to love so much that He created this wonderful home?

Genesis 1:27-28 = Mankind – He placed man as the crown of His creation

How did God show His love for man from the very beginning?

Genesis 2:8-9 = He blessed man by creating a home for him – the Garden of Delight (Eden)

How did He further show His love to this object of His love?

Genesis 2:16-17 = Gave him freedom – within limits

In His Presence (*Genesis 3:8*)

What kind of relationship did God intend to have with mankind?

Genesis 3:8a = A personal relationship in His presence

How did man respond to God's love, blessings and intentions?

Isaiah 59:2 = He rejected God's plan and separated himself from God's presence by sin

How did man's sin interfere with God's intention of keeping us in His presence?

Ezra 9:15 = God is righteous and we are full of guilt, unable to live in His righteous presence

Did God change His mind about giving this creature so much freedom?

Acts 14:16-17 = No, He left man to his desires, but continued to show His love to him

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Restored to His Presence (*2 Corinthians 5:15-21*)

Would God just accept this rejection and separation of what He created to be loved?

Isaiah 43:6-7 = No, He would call back His children from the ends of the earth

How long would it take God to restore His children to His presence?

Hosea 6:2 = Three days

How would God restore His children in 3 days?

Matthew 16:21 = He would send a Savior (Messiah, Christ) to die and rise after 3 days

How would the death and resurrection of the Christ reconcile God's children to Him?

2 Corinthians 5:15-21 = He traded our sinfulness for His righteousness to bring us back to Him

The Reconciler (*John 1*)

How could a mere human reconcile man to God by dying and rising? = The Savior was fully God

Colossians 1:15-20 = *God was pleased to have all His fullness* come in the form of a man

How long after man's rejection did it take for God to select this Savior?

1 Peter 1:20 = *He was chosen before the creation of the world*

How involved was this Savior with the world that He would later save? = He was with God, He was God

John 1:1-3, 10-14 = The world was created through Him, but didn't recognize or receive Him

How do we know that God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us?

1 John 1:1 = Witnesses who heard, saw & touched Him (who was from the beginning) told us

Feed Them Only What They Can Chew (*Hebrews 5:11-14*)

Did God keep His plan of salvation a secret or did He tell mankind?

Isaiah 46:10, 12-13 = He made it known from the beginning

How long after man's rejection did it take God to begin to reveal His plan of salvation?

Genesis 3:9-11, 15 = He promised to send a Savior immediately after the first sin

Why did God reveal only a tiny part of His plan at this time?

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 = The people weren't ready nor able to understand it

What was needed before God could more fully reveal His plan?

Hebrews 5:11-14 = They needed to learn about their need for righteousness

Cleansed Man? (*Genesis 6-11*)

How did God point out in the early history of man that our sin separates us from His presence?

Genesis 6:5-7 = He cleansed the world of man's great wickedness through a flood

How did God use this opportunity to reveal that He has a plan for reconciling man to Himself?

Genesis 9:7-11 = He established a covenant with the remnant

Did this lesson of judgment and promise of a plan lead men to seek a relationship with God?

Genesis 11:4 = No, looked to themselves in pride and rejected God's command to fill the earth

A Light to the Gentiles (*Isaiah 42:6*)

How would God get man to hear His calls of reconciliation in order to reveal more of His plan?

Genesis 12:1-3 = He chose a man through whom He'd reveal Himself, His will, plan & salvation

Why do we have so many stories about the descendants of Abraham in the Bible?

Isaiah 42:6 = Jews are to be a light to the Gentiles – Reveal God to the world

Why is the Old Testament an important part of a Christian's Bible?

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (John 20:31) = Makes us *wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*

We see God, His plan and our need for salvation through the history (His Story) of the Jews

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What About Us Gentiles? (*Romans 1-3*)

Why do we have stories of God punishing Israel for being sinful and evil?

1 Corinthians 10:6-11 (1-13) = Examples and warnings to us of how not to live

Did God just give up on the Gentiles and focus His attention on the Jews?

Romans 1:18-21 (18-23) = He gave them plenty of proof of His existence & they rejected Him

How did God respond to their rejection of Him?

Romans 1:28, 32 (24-32) = He let them reject Him and do what they wanted

Was it more difficult for non-Jews to be faithful since they didn't have the law?

Romans 2:12-15 (1-29) = No, God wrote the law on their hearts

So, did God give us the stories of the Jews so we would know how to live righteously?

Romans 3:9-11, 20 (1-31) = No, they instead humble us by showing us our sin

What and When (*1 Peter 1:10-12*)

Why was it important for God to reveal Himself to the world through a people like the Jews?

Isaiah 40:3-5 = It prepared the way for the Savior to be revealed and the world to see Him

What special way did God prepare the world to receive the Savior?

Isaiah 7:13-14 = He sent prophets who foretold details of the Savior

Did God tell them exactly when the Savior would be sent?

Daniel 9:25 (24-26) = Yes, a number of times in a number of ways

Did the prophets understand what God prophesied through them and when the Savior would come?

1 Peter 1:10-12 = No, although they longed to understand who, what, when and how

The Fullness of Time (*Galatians 4:4-5*)

For what was God waiting before He would send the Savior?

Galatians 4:4-5 = For the time to fully come

Did God have a specific time set for the Savior or was He waiting for things to be as good as possible?

Titus 1:2-3 = He had appointed a time even before the beginning of time

Why did God have a specific time set for sending the Savior instead of sending Him right away?

1 Timothy 2:5-6 = It had to be the proper time, the world needed to be ready to receive Him

What was a key element of the timing for sending the Savior?

Luke 24:46-47 = The world situation had to support the spread and acceptance of the gospel

Greek Preparations = Removed barriers of national borders, culture and language

What human activity would interfere with the spread of the gospel? = Politics

Matthew 24:6-7 = Warfare between nations and kingdoms would restrict and detract

333 BC - Alexander the Great conquered Persia and united most of the world into one empire

How would human prejudices interfere with the spread of the gospel? = Culture

Genesis 43:32 = Cultural barriers would keep people from interacting to each other

Hellenism - Greek way of life was imposed throughout the Greek empire

Even if people got along and accepted each other, what else would restrict the spread of the gospel?

Genesis 11:6-9 = People spoke different languages and couldn't understand each other

Greek - The Greek language was made the common language throughout the empire

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Roman Preparations = Internal peace, safety / security, good roads

What problem could restrict the spread of the gospel even when a nation had no external threats?

1 Kings 16:21-22 = Power struggles within the nation

Roman Unity - The Roman democracy was strong and minimized power struggles

What else was important in the empire for the gospel to spread easily?

Judges 19:22-25 = A lack of safety and security would limit the gospel

Pax Romana - People lived in unprecedented security under the Roman Peace

What would be physically needed for the gospel to spread throughout the world?

Numbers 22:24-26 = Poor pathways would make travel difficult

Roman Roads - The Romans built a heavy network of good roads to aid army responsiveness

Jewish Preparations

What have we said was a key reason that God called the Israelites?

Isaiah 49:6 = To reveal Himself to the world through them – they were a light to the Gentiles

What was one way that God made Himself known through the Israelites?

2 Kings 17:6 = Israelites who were exiled or went elsewhere took the Word of God with them

How did Jewish concerns especially prepare for the coming of the Messiah?

Luke 2:25-26 = Jews longed for the coming of the Messiah

Mankind Preparations

How did the religions of the Greeks and Romans make mankind especially ready for the gospel?

Acts 17:22-23 = Many gods and philosophy led to great spiritual confusion

How did the free spirit of the Greeks and Romans make mankind especially ready for the gospel?

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 = The Roman way of life was filled with moral corruption

How did confusion and corruption of the Greeks and Romans make mankind ready for the gospel?

Luke 18:2-8 = People longed and searched for decency, justice and truth

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. xxx

x

2. xxx

x

3. xxx

x

4. xxx

x

5. xxx

x

Next Week - *God Promises John to Zechariah* (Luke 1:1-25)