

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages
Sermon Notes — “Right on Time” — Galatians 4:4

- A. Introduction: a short story

- B. God Chose to Live with us – I _____
 - 1. one purpose: to R _____ those under the Law (1 John 4:19, Romans 5:8)
 - 2. another purpose: to be the V _____ representation of the I _____ God (John 1:14, 1:18)
 - 3. the manifestation of the W _____ of God in His plan of salvation (Titus 1:1–3, 1 Peter 1:18–20, Acts 2:23)

- C. God Prepares the Way for the Incarnation
 - 1. God establishes earthly E _____ to suit His plans (Daniel 2:21)
 - 2. Assyrian & Babylonian exiles (Psalm 19:7, Isaiah 46:11); notes:

 - 3. Medean & Persian Empire; notes:

 - 4. Greek Empire; notes:

 - 5. Roman Empire; (side item, Acts 15:10); notes:

- D. God’s Preparation
 - 1. Political preparation, notes:

 - 2. Cultural preparation, (Acts 17:21); notes:

 - 3. Spiritual preparation (Hebrews 10:8–10); notes:

- E. God’s Timing
 - 1. On being late, (2 Peter 3:9); notes:

 - 2. With individuals, (Romans 8:28, Romans 5:3–5); notes:

A. Introduction — He Lived Among Them — by Soren Kierkegaard —{2}.

Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish theologian of another century tells a story of a prince who wanted to find a maiden suitable to be his queen. One day while running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section. As he glanced out the windows of the carriage his eyes fell upon a beautiful peasant maiden. During the ensuing days he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love. But he had a problem. How would he seek her hand?

He could order her to marry him. But even a prince wants his bride to marry him freely and voluntarily and not through coercion. He could put on his most splendid uniform and drive up to her front door in a carriage drawn by six horses. But if he did this he would never be certain that the maiden loved him or was simply overwhelmed with all of the splendour. As you might have guessed, the prince came up with another solution. He would give up his kingly robe. He moved, into the village, entering not with a crown but in the garb of a peasant. He lived among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and talked their language. In time the maiden grew to love him for who he was and because he had first loved her.

B. God Chose to Live with Us — “Immanuel”

1. that is a very simple story that illustrates, albeit imperfectly, our text of this morning:
 - a. Galatians 4:4 (NAS): “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,” which goes on in verse 5 to say, “in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”
 - b. it was God who first loved us, 1 John 4:19 (NAS): “We love, because He first loved us.”
 - c. it was God who took the initiative to woo us to Himself, Romans 5:8 (NAS): “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - d. and it was God who, through the incarnation,
 - (A) chose to enter this world in the Person of the Son
 - (B) He came and lived amongst us
 - (C) in order to carry out the process of redemption, as we just read: “... that He might redeem those who were under the Law ...”
 - (D) a redemption that brought us into relationship with our God and Creator, also as we just read: “that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

- e. we will not be dwelling on this aspect, that the purpose of the incarnation was for our salvation — but just because we do not, make sure that you do not let it be forgotten
2. nor, will be concentrating upon an equally important aspect of the incarnation, which you should also keep in your memory — that God the Son was born as Jesus, the Christ
 - a. to be a visible representation of the invisible God, Who was to show us the glory, grace and truth of God
 - b. John 1: 14 (NAS): “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
 - c. and in like manner authoritatively to teach us of God
 - d. John 1:18 (NAS): “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.”
 3. no, this morning, let us look at the incarnation as the visible manifestation of the wisdom of God in His plan of salvation
 - a. that this wasn't a haphazard event into which God had been pushed by the failure of Israel under the Law
 - b. no, this was part of God's plan in eternity, being carried out in time, according to the counsels of His will
 - c. which is why we read as our Scripture reading this morning those passages from Isaiah chapters 42, 44 and 46
 - d. Paul instructed Titus in this truth in 1:1–3 (NIV): “¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness — ² a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.” — to which we add
 - e. 1 Peter 1:18–20 (NAS): “¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*. ²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” — that is, all Christ's redemptive work, was known, was settled, was determined, in the halls of eternity before this world ever came into being
 - f. and this is corroborated by the statement in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:23 (NAS): “*this Man, delivered*

up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.”

4. so let us look at some ways in which God prepared for this moment in time that we call the incarnation, when God chose to dwell as man with man, of “Immanuel” — “God with us” — and I should acknowledge that for some of my points, I am indebted to sermons by a number of pastors
 - a. Rev. J. David Hoke of New Horizons Community Church in Voorhees, New Jersey ^{—{3}}.
 - b. Rev. Ken D. Trivette, Temple Baptist Church Chattanooga Tennessee ^{—{4}}.
 - c. Rev. G. Robinson, Grace Baptist Temple, Bloomington, Indiana ^{—{5}}. including my title!

C. God Prepares the Way for the Incarnation

1. first, some general comments
 - a. we could, of course, look at the various prophecies of the coming Messiah — somewhere about 200 distinct ones — but that we could barely begin in our time today; so we will take those as a given part of God’s preparation
 - b. but there is a principle which we find stated in the book of Daniel 2:21 (NAS): Daniel speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, “[And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding.](#)”
 - c. so we must understand that it is God who establishes all earthly empires in accordance with His eternal purposes
 - d. so, let us just briefly trace some of the ways God did this
2. The Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles
 - a. when we read through the historical books of the Old Testament, we discover that God’s chosen people,
 - b. though blessed in every way, and having been given a law,
 - c. which unlike that of the surrounding nations, could be described by the Psalmist (19:7, AV) in these glowing terms: “[The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.](#)”
 - d. yet they wandered away, and departed from, and rebelled against God, so that both as individuals and as a nation, they broke every commandment (as Dave Coulter has been showing us in our study of the book of Jeremiah)

- e. so God brought first the Assyrian and then the Babylonian nations against them to take them tribe by tribe into exile — as He warned in the verse we read from Isaiah 46:11 (NAS): “Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, surely I will do it.”
- f. it was at this time that the Jewish synagogues were formed

3. The Kingdom of Medea and Persia

- a. if we had continued on in our reading from Isaiah 44, then in verse 28 we would have read (continuing to the first verse of the next chapter): “²⁸ *It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.'* And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’^{45:1} Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him, And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:”
- b. while the Jews were still in exile, God brought this to pass
- c. thus, the remnant returned to the Promised land under Nehemiah & Ezra, sickened with idolatry from that time on
- d. but there was still a need for purification of worship which had one result that Ezra the scribe gathered together the canon of Scripture that now constitute our Old Testament

4. The Greek Empire

- a. Alexander and his armies swept across the nations making up the Persian empire conquering them in a few years
- b. with this conquest, the Greek culture spread
 - (A) this included a tolerance of many points of view and an easy adoption of foreign gods into the Greek pantheon
 - (B) which is why the Athenians in Acts 17:18 thought that Paul was proclaiming two new foreign gods who were called “Jesus” and “Resurrection” (or Anastasis)
- c. and with it the Greek language
 - (A) being the language of education
 - (B) but also the language of commerce
 - (C) so that, much like English is today, it became the second language for most of the people of that

world

- (D) the old testament was translated into Greek in what is known as the Septuagint version
- d. but some of Alexander's successors desecrated the temple and some of the Jewish leaders sought alliance with a rising power in the Mediterranean arena: Rome

5. The Roman Empire

- a. bit by bit succeeded the Greek, taking over its territories
- b. so that at its greatest extent it stretched from Spain to India, from North Africa to Britain
- c. spreading a rule of law, building the famous Roman roads, whereby trade and travel could be carried on in relative safety throughout this territory
- d. but, for the Jews, a strong ally became an oppressive ruler with a couple of results
 - (A) on the part of the Jewish rulers
 - (1) they became more concerned with holding on to their remaining powers than in truly seeking God
 - (2) that their religion became more and more a set of legalistic and inflexible rules and traditions
 - (B) so that the Jewish populace
 - (1) felt much as Peter expresses about the legalists in Acts 15:10 (NAS): *"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"*
 - (2) and there was a great expectation of the Messiah who would deliver the nation from Rome's power

D. God's preparations

1. lets take all that information and summarize the ways in which God had prepared the way for the coming of His Son to earth
2. Political preparation
 - a. the Roman empire, its rule of law and its roads, allowed the gospel to spread with relative freedom across its world
 - b. little did Augustus Caesar know that his census was just a part of God's plan for Jesus birth to be in Bethlehem!

c. with those, who were Roman citizens such as Paul, having even greater privilege and freedom in this way

3. Cultural preparation

- a. the almost universal use of Greek gave a single language by which the gospel could be proclaimed
- b. Greek was also the language in which the Old Testament was available and then the New was written
 - (A) spoken by gentiles as well as Greek speaking Jews
 - (B) the basis of instruction of God's church
- c. and a general readiness of many to learn new things (as in Acts 17:21 (NAS): "(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)").

4. Spiritual preparation

- a. the Jewish synagogues became a natural place for the gospel message to be taken first and also a pattern for the worship of the early church
- b. the spiritual hunger of the gentiles was evident in their seeking and pursuing of every form of religion — you find the religions of the east being accepted into Greece and Rome so that the message of Christianity had ready hearers
- c. the bankruptcy of Jewish legalism — and its inadequacy before God — left a spiritual hunger among the Jews
- d. so it was time for the Son of God to enter the world, even as described in Hebrews 10:8–10 (NAS): "⁸ After saying above, 'sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure *in them*' (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹ then He said, 'behold, I have come to do Thy will.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."
- e. and, for the Jews and proselytes, the Messianic expectation

E. God's Timing

1. on being late

- a. you will have noticed that this is a Christmas message, but a careful look at the calendar will show that it's a day late

- b. there are a number of humorous remarks that have been made about baptists and being late:
 - (A) one is that the reason that the Lord will not reveal the time of His return is that the baptists would be late
 - (B) or that baptists believe in justification regeneration, sanctification and procrastination
 - c. but, God is never late! ... *"He is not slack concerning His promise"* (2 Peter 3:9)
 - d. *"But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,"* (Galatians 4:4 NAS)
2. what God does with nations to achieve His plans and purposes that He also does with individuals — and, again, His timing is always perfect
- a. Romans 8:28 (NAS): *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*
 - b. what is God doing in your life to achieve His plans and purposes in you? what is He going to accomplish in you and through you in the coming year?
 - c. God used many tools in history to bring everything into place so that at just right on time Jesus the Son of God could be born in that stable in Bethlehem and begin the life that would lead to the cross and provide salvation for us
 - d. what tools will God use on you this year?
 - (A) perhaps He is still gently calling you to accept the salvation for which He paid so dearly but provides freely to you — how long will you resist that Call?
 - (B) perhaps He is teaching you for your next step forward in your Christian life
 - (C) those steps may be painful for the moment, but each forwards God's plan, as the following paraphrase of Romans 5:3-5 (NLT) explains: *"³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us — they help us learn to endure. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. ⁵ And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."*
3. may each one of you go forward into 2005 with confidence in God, knowing that you have given to Him your life in which to work out His most perfect plans and purposes

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by "Holwick" followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. "He Lived Among Them" from Rev. Brett Blair's Illustrations, Holwick illustrations #19229
3. "In His Time" by Rev. J. David Hoke, 10-12-1995, Holwick sermons #2654
4. "The Moment of His Birth" by Rev. Ken D. Trivette, Holwick sermons #4211
5. "Right on Time" and "Wonder of His Birth" by Rev. G. Robinson, (January 1992?) Holwick sermons #12072 & 12073