

CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO PAUL Gal 4:4-5

Int: This may not be a text the average Christian would pick for a Christmas reading, but it is Paul's story of Christmas. In it is a word about

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS "the fullness of time"

Sometimes it seems to take years for Christmas to get here. For the first Christmas it really did take ages. The first hint of Christmas came in Eden (Gen 3:15) but centuries later it had not yet come. Why? Paul answered the question. It was not yet the right time! It was in the "fulness of time," i.e. when all things were ready, Christmas came.

It was the fulness of time politically, socially, culturally, economically and religiously. Not a moment late or soon but right on time Christmas came.

PERSON OF CHRISTMAS "God sent forth his Son"

Here is much in few words. The phrase implies that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was not his beginning. If God "sent" him, the Son was before he was sent!

It also implies the Son was more than just a divine messenger. In the first century "sent" (*apostello*) meant delegated with full authority. Jesus came with the full authority of God! How is that possible? Because God's Son is God the Son!! Jesus is not a minor god, an angel, a prophet or the most godly man who ever lived. He is the Almighty Son sent out of eternity into this world of men.

The person of Christmas is not Santa but the Son, not Kris Kringle but Christ!

PLAN OF CHRISTMAS "Born of woman (and) under the law"

In the Greek text the word is "becoming," not "born."

First, the Son of God *became the son of a woman*. Paul probably used the phrase of the virgin birth of Jesus. In eternity as Son of God he had no mother; on earth as son of Mary he had no father. No man was involved in his birth!

Second, the Lawgiver *became under the law*. The Son put himself under the demands of the law, obeying it so perfectly that no sharp-eyed accuser could find sin in him. But in a more important sense, he put himself under the penalty of the law. He lifted the burden of broken law from sinners to his own shoulders and paid sin's debt on a certain cross wedged into the rocks outside Jerusalem in the chilling winds of an April morning in the Eighteenth Year of the Emperor Tiberius. For Paul. For me. For you.

PURPOSES OF CHRISTMAS "So that he might redeem...we might receive"

Why did the Son come? To *rescue*. To "redeem" means to "buy back" original property. Sin enslaved men. He came to free those slaves.

He came also to *restore*. To adopt meant to take a person not a part of the family and place him in the family as a full member. "Receive" is literally "receive back," suggesting that it involves restoring a believer to the place mankind originally held in God's family before losing it through sin!

"Might" indicates potential action. He came to make both redemption and adoption possible but neither Christmas gift works automatically. A person must take Christ to be set free and to be placed as a child in the Father's family!

Con: Claim God's Christmas gifts as your own! Do it today!