

A Season of Appointments: The Appointed Time

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 December 2023

Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open up to Galatians, Galatians 4. We'll be there. We'll be in Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians today as we look at the appointed time.

It has been quite a month, as I've mentioned. Personally, yes, and I suppose for you as well. For some folks, it's been a month of anticipation, especially for kids.

Anticipating this time that we call Christmas and the times of celebrations and parties and get-togethers and eggnog and cookies and whatever else may be anticipated at this time, this time of excitement and joy and stress, certainly, and celebration.

It is that time of year that brings all these emotions and brings all these experiences together. And it is a blessing when you come through it, and especially when you have the proper focus, as we seek to do here at First Baptist.

It is the time of Advent, and what we've had this morning with Chase and Dennis lighting the four candles and giving a review of what we've gone over.

[1 : 24] In the four weeks leading up to Christmas, we have lit a candle for preparation, which is for us to get ready for the coming of the Son of God on Christmas.

We lit a candle of love for us to know the love of God. This time of year is not just about a baby born in Bethlehem, but it's about the love that God expresses through that sending and that giving, which we'll talk about today.

The third candle of joy, that we can experience the joy of God because of the love of God. And then today, the fourth candle, God's gift, His Son, Jesus, that we are to receive that gift that He freely offers.

And one of the exciting aspects, I mentioned this this morning before the adult Sunday school got out of hand with good in prayer.

I mentioned just how exciting this study has been for me as we've talked about the Advent being a season of appointments and how I've been able to dig deep in Scripture.

[2 : 42] And one of the exciting things that I've learned, and I don't want to say learned, but just refocused on and was brought to, is how God planned Christmas from the very beginning of time.

Something that maybe we don't think about or we don't consider is the fact that Christmas and what it stands for was planned by God before anything was ever made or created.

In Ephesians 1, verse 4, says God the Father chose us in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, before anything was laid, before there was any earth and trees and anything.

We were already thought of and chosen in Christ. As you look through the history in the Old Testament, and this could take us weeks and weeks and weeks to do, and I'm going to try to do this in five minutes.

[3 : 53] You look at Genesis 1, and you see that all things are created by God. He creates all things in six days, and in Genesis 1, verse 31, He looks at all of His creation, and He says it is very good.

It's very good. There was no sin. There was no death. There was no suffering. There was nothing bad. There was no evil in the world.

at the time of His creative activity. But then you turn to Genesis 3, and you have Adam and Eve who rebel against God.

They rebel against God. They disobey. They are given a command of expectation to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One. Can you imagine asking somebody to just obey one rule and one expectation and have them do it?

If you have kids, you know that's not even possible. Give one. That's just one. Pick anyone, right? No. They only had one, and they still rebelled against God, did what He told them explicitly not to do.

[5 : 01] But yet in the midst of that, in Genesis 3, 15, we have the first gospel. We have the first proclamation of hope given to mankind, that even though Adam and Eve sinned, and they rebelled against God, and they would be cast out of the garden, God gave hope in the midst of judgment.

God gave hope in the midst of hopelessness. In Genesis 3, 15, in making His proclamation, His judgment, in talking to the serpent, Satan at the time, He will say, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. A simple phrase, and one that, you know, some people might think, oh, you gotta really, you know, really dig into that to see the hope, but it's there.

That there would be offspring of the woman that is contentious with Satan himself, and that Satan would bruise the heel. You know, a mere bruise, a short-lived pain, but he would bruise the serpent's head.

He would crush the head of the serpent in a death blow. And ultimately, when you extrapolate that through the prophecies in Scripture and the life of Christ, we see that is what happened on the cross.

[6 : 26] When Jesus went to the cross and He died, that was a temporary pain. It was a big pain. It was a big deal. It was a sacrifice, but three days later, He rose again.

And it was through that rising that Jesus had the death blow on Satan, where He showed that Christ has the authority over sin, death, and the grave.

He has the authority to forgive sin and grant life. And that first, the first kernel of hope in the Old Testament is found in the very beginning, right after rebellion against God takes place.

So from Genesis 3.15, we go to Genesis 12. To give you an idea, that's about a 2,000-year gap. So for about 2,000 years, there was that Genesis 3.15 proclamation, and then not much of anything else.

I mean, there was communion with God and people seeking to obey, and there was sin that grew rampant. There was a flood. That's kind of a big deal. You know, all these things that do happen and take place.

[7 : 36] But you get to Genesis 12, where God builds off of that Genesis 3.15 promise. And in Genesis 12, God chose Abraham and his descendants to be the lineage to the Messiah.

Abraham and his descendants would be the lineage through which this promised hope would come. And in Genesis 26, God affirms his promises to Isaac, a son of Abraham.

And then in Genesis 28, he affirms his promises to Jacob, a son of Isaac. And so we see that. So that's why, you know, the Hebrew scriptures emphasize so much the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they are the three, the patriarchs of Israel, through whom God affirms the promise of the hope, the one to come, who would deal the death blow to Satan and would give victory and hope.

So going from Genesis 28 now to 2 Samuel 7, you have about a thousand-year gap. Now, they're not just numbers to throw out there and be like, oh, wow, you know, a thousand years is a long time.

Two thousand years is a very long time. You know, so in the course of human history, this is a lot of time taking place. Three thousand years from Genesis 3.15 to 2 Samuel 7.

[8 : 52] And in 2 Samuel 7, God chooses King David as the royal line through whom the Messiah, that hope from Genesis 3.15, would be born.

Then go fast forward now 300 years from that time period, and you get to this time of what we've looked at the last several weeks, a season of appointments.

And you have in the book of Isaiah, the appointed prophet being prophesied and being told about. And we know from Matthew and Luke, and we know from the Gospels that that appointed prophet is John the Baptist.

So we're talking, you know, 3,300 years after sin, entering the world, and God promising hope and a deliverer. Now he's talking in Isaiah about an appointed prophet.

Isaiah was written, by the way, 700 years before Jesus would be born. 700 years before John the Baptist would be born. So we're talking, God doesn't deal in, like, our timing, right?

[9 : 54] If you've been on social media at all this week, and you're part of the whole, you know, power loss, people have no patience for inconvenience. People have no patience for answers to come.

And I stopped looking because I felt like every day or every day it was someone new or something else coming out. Well, you know, complaining about this. CMP's not here yet, and this, that, and the other, and BreezeLine, and whatever.

And oh, you know, woe is me because I don't have my electricity and my internet. And I need to have it yesterday. No, and I get it. You know, it is frustrating when you go a few days without power, without electricity.

I understand. I'm not saying that it's not a, you know, it's not a frustrating experience. But to hear people talk, it's like it's the end of the world. Can you imagine being in the, in the shoes of a Jewish individual who's been waiting for the Messiah, the promise that God made thousands of years before, and he's still reminding them through the prophets, oh, by the way, there's something coming.

He's coming. He'll be here soon. Really? Soon? 2,000, 3,000 years? Is that soon? Jesus said after he died and rose again, he would be coming back soon.

[11 : 07] Oh, I'm coming quickly. It's been 2,000 years. So God's quickly and our quickly don't really align, right? And that's what we're, that's what you see as you go through the Old Testament.

So you got the appointed prophet in Isaiah. You know, John says, you know, is pointed to John the Baptist who would be born 700 years later. You have the appointed family. The virgin shall be with child, right?

And you shall call his name Emmanuel. We're talking about Mary. We're talking about Mary and Joseph, that family that Jesus would be born into. 700 years before he would be born, prophesied about, and God tells him, hey, look for this.

This is coming. You have the appointed place in Bethlehem in Micah 5, 2. Again, about 700 years. Micah and Isaiah wrote around the same time, maybe about a 30-year difference.

About 700 years before he would be born, where he would be born. And so God, 700 years beforehand, about the time that they're in the Assyrian exile and the Babylonian exile, and he's saying, look, here's what's going to happen.

[12 : 11] Somebody's going to come and make a proclamation, and I'm going to send the Messiah through a virgin who's going to give birth in Bethlehem. And they had waited for 700 years for the appointed time to finally come.

And then what we're going to see tonight, he has appointed proclaimers who are to take this message and this truth about the birth of this baby, the Messiah Jesus, and go and proclaim it to the world, starting in Bethlehem, the night in which he was born.

And go until December 24th, 2023 for us. We'll look at that later. So 700 years later, so those appointments are made, those prophecies are made.

700 years later, Luke 1, Mary's told by the angel Gabriel about being the mother of the Messiah. So about 4,000 years of history pass from Genesis 3.15, that proclamation of a deliverer until the birth of Jesus.

When we get to Galatians 4, Galatians 4 calls this the fullness of time, the appointed time in which Jesus was sent into the world. So let's read Galatians 4, verses 1 through 5.

[13 : 35] Galatians 4, 1. Paul writing, I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave.

Though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way, we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

There are three truths that help us understand the purpose of Christmas in these five verses. First truth is that we are naturally slaves of the world.

He says that in verse 3. In the same way, we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of this world. Paul is using in this chapter, and we're jumping in in the, I don't like jumping in in the midst of context, in the midst of a book without really extrapolating on it.

[14:57] But I feel to do that would give, put too much time on our time together. But Paul is using an illustration here of the sending of Jesus and being the fullness of time.

And he's using it as it relates to the heir of a household. And the heir has people in charge of him. Right?

So a kid born in the household has people in charge of him. He has guardians over him, which is no, which Paul says is no different than a slave with a master.

And he was making that connection. He was talking about the heir of the house. They don't get to just, you know, they're the heir of the house, but it doesn't mean they get to rule the roost. Right? They have to be under law and guardianship and authority until a certain time that is determined by their father.

And so the heir has people in charge of them until a date determined by the father, the appointed time, if you will, that we're going to be talking about today. See, in the Jewish world, a young man was instructed for 11 years in the things of God.

[16:09] He was led to the place where he understood how to live as a man. He understood the law of God. He understood the word of God, ultimately. He understood the responsibilities of society and community.

He understood what his job was going to be when he became a man. Like, not job as in trade, as in like, what he was expected to do as a man in society.

The first Sabbath, after his 12th birthday, the young man was taken to the synagogue where he became what is known as a son of the law, or what we say is bar mitzvah. Bar mitzvah, that's what it means, son of the law.

Bat mitzvah is a daughter of the law. And at that point, at that time, that event and ceremony, the son is no longer the son of his father or mother.

He is now obligated to God. His authority is the law of God. Now, that's not to say he's not to do and obey and listen to his parents because we know that one of the Ten Commandments is honor your father and mother.

[17:20] So we know in this culture there's going to be honor basically from the cradle to the grave. There's going to be care and concern by a child for their parents.

So just because they come to this time of the bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah where they're no longer going to be directly under the authority of the father and mother but they're being placed under the direct authority of God and his word, it doesn't mean that now all of a sudden everything just goes out the door.

You don't need to listen to mom, don't need to clean your room, those types of things.

Unfortunately, some thoughts like that invade our Western society here in America where we think that once you become a quote unquote adult that rules don't apply to you, you don't need to listen anymore.

That is never God's intention from beginning to end in Scripture. But rather you are to honor your parents as well as live in obedience to his word.

So at this bar mitzvah basically his father is yielding him up to personal responsibility to obey the law of God. At that point, that child is expected to do what is right.

[18:39] And at that, they become an adult in Jewish culture. Think about that if we had moved, you know, our adulthood in America to 13.

You know, we say 18 is an adult. With some of the people, you know, they're 35 and still not an adult. And I'm not talking about me. And I'm not looking at Eric and whatever his age is.

But that's, unfortunately, the society we live in, we don't actually train our children to, or we don't have that expectation of training our children to be adults and to have responsibility.

Well, that's another, that's another sermon for another day. So the reality of the situation is that the child is under authority until the day their father determines they no longer need it.

That they no longer need the direct authority of guardians over them. And Paul likens that to slavery. In Romans 6, 16, Paul writing to the church at Rome, he says, Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness.

[19:58] He makes the, he's making the comparison here. He's saying, look, the error is to be obedient to the guardians, the authority in his house that have put over him, his mom and dad, until a certain time.

And he's saying that when you present yourselves as slaves to somebody or something, you become, you become slaves of that, that thing you are obeying. And there's only two options, either of sin or of obedience which leads to righteousness.

Those are the only two things you can be slaves of as it relates to what Paul is talking about here. And what he's, in the case that he's making both in Romans and here in Galatians is that we are slaves.

We all are slaves. And the question that we need to answer is who then is our master? Turn with me to Ephesians.

So go from Galatians, the next book over to the right, Ephesians. See, I'm not making you travel too far here in Scripture. Merry Christmas.

[21 : 02] This is my present to you. So Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. Paul writes, Paul writing to believers in Ephesus.

And the believers, they formerly walked according to the world. If you remember in Galatians 4, he was saying that we were slaves to the elementary principles of the world.

So when you're a non-believer, that's what you're walking, according to the world. When you're a non-believer, you follow Satan, the prince of the power of the air, who is Satan, who works in the sons of disobedience.

And that's who follow him. That's who his offspring is, according to Galatians 3.15. The offspring of Satan is the sons of disobedience. When we were without Christ and we were not saved, we lived according to the passions of our flesh.

Whatever makes us feel good and right, that's what we were seeking to do and follow. But now that we are in Christ, that is no longer about us, but about him. So you're either a slave to sin or you're a slave to righteousness.

[22 : 44] We carried out the desires of the body and the mind. We were children of wrath. That is the natural state of man apart from Jesus. You are a child of wrath.

You are a son of disobedience. You are living in contention with God. And then Ephesians 2.4, it's not part of it, but I feel like I can't just leave you there, you know, hanging in despair.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. believers have hope because we have the love and mercy and grace of God poured upon us through Jesus Christ.

So, without Christ, you are an enemy of God. That's, we've all been there. We're all slaves of the world.

[23 : 53] Jesus made no bones about it when he was speaking to the religious leaders. in John 8.44, he says, you are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

He didn't sugarcoat it. He said, this is the reality. You do not love God. You are not obedient to the law. You are not sons of righteousness.

You are of your father, the devil. We are, in and of ourselves, slaves to the elementary principles of the world. Sin is our master and the devil is our father.

That's truth one. That naturally, we are slaves of the world. Truth number two from Galatians 4 is that Jesus was sent at the appointed time.

He was sent at the appointed time. So just like the air is under guardians until the time determined by the father, so we are slaves to the world until the time determined by our heavenly father.

[25 : 02] God the father set a time where we would be delivered from the master of sin. And the son was sent into the world. He was not created. He is the eternally existent one.

When you study and read about Jesus, John 1 verses 1 and 2, in the beginning was the word. That name, the word, that title, the word, that's talking about Jesus.

We don't have time to get into a deep study in John 1. I'd love to do that too. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

He was eternally existent. He is God. John 17, 5, Jesus praying, his high priestly prayer and he says, and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Jesus understood and knew who he is. He is God who had glory with the Father before the world existed. And unlike every other human birth, Christmas is not a beginning.

[26 : 11] The birth of Jesus is not a beginning but it's a becoming. Jesus did not begin in Bethlehem. He came from outside the created realm into our world to bring God's long-promised rescue, to be a fulfillment of Genesis 3.15 and the myriad of other prophecies throughout the Old Testament.

As I mentioned before, this was determined before the foundation of the world. in Acts 2.23 says, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. That time on the day of Pentecost, Peter was telling them, said, look, what you guys carried out in killing Jesus, this was determined by God before the world even began.

This was God's intention from the very beginning. Revelation 13.8, so we're talking about the end times and we're talking about the beast and those who will worship and all who dwell on earth will worship the beast.

Everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. God's plan for salvation has always been from the very beginning and even before our beginning.

[27 : 36] God knew it. He looked down the corridors of time, he knows the beginning from the end and he saw and he knew that his creation would rebel in the garden.

He knew sin was going to enter in and he knew there needed to be a plan and that plan was to send the son at the appointed time. If we had, if one of us kind of put ourselves in charge, the question gets asked and I think it's a fair question but it's also a question we need to realize comes from a human perspective.

Well, if God knew they were going to sin, why did he create them? Well, what a human perspective on that because if we knew that our project was going to fail, we wouldn't start it in the first place, would we?

But God shows that he's above that. He's greater even than our sin and he can redeem that. There is no sin, there is no point in life, you can be so low that you can be so hopeless that God cannot redeem you.

The story of redemption is such a beautiful story and it's something that just, you have to, to be exposed to it all at once is overwhelming and to try to comprehend it, you can't fully understand that we are finite people.

[28 : 58] So God appointed a time even before men sinned in the garden when he would send the Son into the world to redeem it. We see in Galatians 4, verse 4, it says that he would be sent forth born of a woman.

though the Son is God, the emphasis here is on his humanity through which he identifies with his creation and reveals the glory of God.

John 1, 14, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth.

Let that sink in for a moment. That verse, we have seen his glory, glories of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth. That's who Jesus is, full of grace and full of truth.

It's important to recognize that our God became like us so that he could save us. But even in that, we cannot fully grasp it. I cannot pretend to stand here and say, I fully understand this.

[30 : 28] The doctrine of God becoming man. It is one that kind of blows your mind when you think about it too much. Like Martin Luther said, the mystery of the humanity of Christ that he sunk himself into our flesh is beyond all human understanding.

We cannot fully grasp and understand it because we are finite and God is infinite. Galatians 4.4 also says that he would be born under the law.

In order to be like us, Jesus needed to be subjected in the same way that we are. Thus, he was raised under the authority of the Jewish law to be exposed to the possibility of sin.

I'm going to leave that there. The possibility of sin. You get these, you know, you go to Bible colleges, you get these crazy, crazy questions.

Well, could Jesus have sinned? And then you've got freshmen who stay up like half the night trying to debate and, you know, answer this question because we're going to solve all the world's problems in our first night of Bible college.

[31 : 36] At least that was my first night when I was at Word of Life. We stayed up half the night debating things and it was ridiculous. Now that I look back on it, could Jesus have sinned?

Well, we know Hebrews 4.15. We do not have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. So I'll leave that question, could he have sinned? I'll leave that to anyone who really wants to debate that. I'll just share with you what Scripture says is that he was tempted in every way we are yet without sin.

I want to read Philippians 2 verses 6-11. This section of Scripture is known as the condescension and exaltation of Christ.

Not condensation, the condescension. I was just thinking of condensation because I really wish we had a white Christmas this year.

[32 : 41] Philippians 2, 6-11, the condescension of Christ and his exaltation. who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

He lowered himself, condescended himself from heaven to earth so that he might live in obedience to the point of dying for us on the cross.

He was sent at the appointed time. And finally, the third truth, truth number three, is that we are supernaturally sons and heirs.

We are naturally slaves to the world, but we are supernaturally made sons and heirs of God. It's through the divine redeeming work of Christ that we receive adoption as sons.

[34 : 12] That's verse 5 in Galatians 4. That Jesus was sent to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. And I'll continue in verse 6. And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Sin is no longer our master, but God is. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are slaves to righteousness, according to Romans chapter 6, verses 17 and 18, where Paul writes, but thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

In Acts 13, verses 38 and 39, let it be known to you, therefore, brothers, that through this man, Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Jesus makes man free from being a slave to sin, and calls him into the family of God through adoption as sons of God and heirs of God.

And no mere man could have made this possible. We're told in Romans 3, 23 that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There was no man that could do the job.

[35 : 51] And that's why 2 Corinthians 5, 21 says, for our sake, God the Father made God the Son to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Even though the Son lived a sinless life and he went to the cross, sin was placed on him for our behalf, for our good. Ladies and gentlemen, God knew before he created all things that he would have to redeem all things.

He knew that Adam and Eve would rebel in the garden. He knew that he would send the Son into the world through the family line of Abraham and David. He knew the Son would have to die a substitutionary death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

And yet, knowing all that, God appointed a prophet in John the Baptist to turn the people back to God in preparation for the Messiah. God appointed a family in Mary and Joseph to be God fearing example and raise Jesus according to the law.

God appointed a place in Bethlehem that was a small town with great significance in Jewish history for Jesus to be born. God appointed a time to carry out the process of redemption through the death of Jesus on the cross.

[37 : 07] In Acts 17, verses 30 and 31, now he, God, the Father, commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Romans 10, 9 tells us if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

This is a season of appointments for our good and for the glory of God. And this is an opportunity for you now if you do not know Christ, if you have not called on him for salvation to do so.

We were talking this morning in Sunday school about divine appointments that God gives us. Opportunities would come across people and we come across things that point us back to Jesus or allows us to point people to him.

And I'm telling you right now this is a divine appointment for you. I don't know where you're at. I don't know where your heart's at. I don't know where your head's at. I don't know what you're going through, but I do know this.

[38 : 18] Is that you are not too far gone, too far low, too far hopeless, too far in sin that God cannot redeem you and where God does not want to bring you into his family.

He sent his son at an appointed time that we might be made sons and heirs of God through adoption. Call on him.

Now is the day of salvation. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you for the depth that goes into Christmas.

Lord, we enjoy the time together with family and friends. We enjoy parties. We enjoy celebration.

We especially love to put the emphasis on Jesus, who's the reason for the season.

But Lord, there's so much more, so much that we don't fully know or comprehend and understand.

Lord, so much that we won't know and understand. But Father, we know this, that you sent your son to die on the cross for our sins.

[39 : 23] And Lord, you are calling, you are commanding everyone everywhere to repent, to turn to you for salvation, to call on Jesus for salvation.

Lord, I pray for anyone here who does not know you. Lord, I pray that today would be the day of salvation. Today would be the day that they humble themselves and call on you, knowing that in and of themselves they are slaves of the world, they are sons of the devil.

And Lord, you call us into light, into righteousness. I pray they would take that step today. Convict us and lead us. Give us discernment and wisdom, I pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.