

## But When Came The Fullness Of The Time!

What a year it has been. Another year of such tremendous uncertainty. Another year of masks, lockdowns, politicians using these things for political point scoring. The loss of jobs and livelihoods. Handouts, fear mongering, border closures and sadly many deaths, due to this God-sent virus! And I say God sent, without hesitation despite what many throughout Christendom may say. The reason is, that if God is the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe, and the eternal Sovereign of all things therein, (which He is) then there is no part throughout all of His earthly and celestial creation that is beyond His reach, and out of His theocratic jurisdiction and control. Because, if "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever," which again **He is** (Hebrews 13-8), this is how it has been throughout all biblical and indeed all human history.

All things happen for His Sovereign plan and purses! When the oceans and seas surge and the storms rage. When the tidal waves heave over lands swallowing up homes and farms and people's lives. When wars ravage nations even taking whole generations with them. When crops grow tall and strong in the fields but also shrivel from droughts, and are belted down by hail or washed away by floods. When economies prosper or are decimated by famine or pestilence. And when governments rule with integrity, honour and dignity or, are covered with corruption.

Even over all of these things, God reigns and rules now! As when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, what man intends for evil, God destines for good. Yes, all of humanity dwells in the midst of this great tribulation, (that because of sin and sinners which we all are) yes the great tribulation, that this life is! And although the names of the storms and the diseases and the pestilence may change. As man becomes more technologically and humanly advanced in all of these things. But also, including his depravity, his perverseness, arrogance and vanity. In reality nothing has changed!

This shouldn't surprise us. "There is nothing new under the sun," the Bible tells us. And if it were not for God's plan and purpose and promise to the contrary, I have no doubt that many floods would have wiped out many generations even whole worlds, between Noah's day and our own!

So if nothing changes what is it all for? The inherent evil of a humanity that once a year celebrates a man dressed up in a red suit and fake beard, with the image of a baby in in a barn upon some straw, while giving gifts to one another. While also worshipping the new god, (the climate changed god) which is sweeping across the world. Yes, a humanity which seeks to save the trees and yet murders its own children by the hundreds of millions every year. 'Oh, let's save the whales and the trees and the animals, but you can murder your child in the womb and euthanize your parents'.

So what is the point of it all? What is this life of turmoil all about? Well, Galatians 4:4-5 And I'm taking it directly from the Greek. "But when came the fullness of the time, sent forth God, the Son of him. Coming into being of a woman, born under the law in order that the ones under the law he might redeem. In order that the adoption of sons we might receive." Yes, "But when came the fullness of the time."

Some weeks ago I heard John MacArthur speaking on these verses in relation to the Lord's Supper. And the phrase "But when came the fullness of the time," was sown deep within my soul, and I felt the need to share it with you in the light of God's promise, that the Lord, our Redeemer would come. And win the victory over sin and hell. And that victory of course would begin with Jesus' birth! That time each year which even an evil idolatrous world, refers to as Christmas! Speaking of our Lord's

appearing Paul writes. "But when came the fullness of the time." You see as often as I have read these words over the years, to be honest, I have never really paid them much attention. What do they really mean? When time had reached its end? When time was full? When time was finished?

But to really understand the significance of them, we need to return to the very reason for His coming. When that coming was first announced, ordained and promised in Genesis chapter 3 by God! Friends, you all know the account. And I use the word *account* intentionally. I never used the word story when referring to biblical truth, because story, (even if not intended) seems to convey some kind of make believe.

But yes you all know the account. Adam is given headship and authority by God, even having the responsibility of naming all the animals. He is also the head of his household, meaning his wife Eve. But he casts that authority aside, not constraining Eve's decision to eat of the forbidden fruit. And actually gives his approval, by acquiescing to her decision when she offers him some, and he also eats. Genesis 3:13: "Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this you have done?"

Friends can you see? Something had been broken at that very moment and could never be fixed. Could never be repaired. This act had cosmic implications. No ordinary means could ever solve this breakdown. Something extraordinary, something supernatural, was going to have to take place! But firstly, they were consequences for this deception and this break in trust. Even the breaking of this first covenant so to speak, between God and humanity. Genesis 3:14-15: "So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above the livestock and all the wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I'll put enmity between you and the and the woman, and between your seed and hers, he will crush your head and you will bruise his heel."

Now are those who will tell us that the serpent was a snake. But this doesn't ring true: why would God say you will crawl on your belly, if that were already the case? No, it does seem that "the serpent" was indeed a different kind of creature! But the great tragedy of humanity's broken relationship with God through our parents had come into being. For there to be any hope, for mankind to be restored to a right relationship with their Creator, something supernatural was going to have to take place.

Beloved, as is God's great love for His chosen one's His children, that even before the punishment is declared by God for this rebellion, He proclaims the cure for that 'eterminal' disease of sin, which had now entered into our DNA! "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and hers."

Now we need to understand, the seed of Satan are all of humanity who worship things and deities, other than God. And we need also to understand, that "the seed of the woman," is singular. Speaking of none other than Christ Himself! "He will crush your head and you will bruise his heel." And of course this would all take place at the cross. Yes Satan "would bruise the heel" of the Lord at the cross. But His rising to life, would bring about the "crushing of the serpent's head." And as we all know with any venomous snake, the danger is in the head. Cut off their head, and the danger is gone.

Dear friends, we cannot look at the birth of the Lord without seeing, without considering, the Cross! That's what the unsaved world loves to do. Yes they love the idea of a child on some straw, but the reason for His coming, they reject! So since the fall in the garden of Eden we have this sweep of some 4000 years of human history. The rising and falling of kingdoms. Powers that be, coming and going. At one time even all of humanity wiped out by God's Own Hand through His flood, but for one

family. Yes as it was in the garden of Eden, so too with Noah and his family. Because of Jesus, in the midst of God's wrath and judgement, mercy is found! While societies, even whole nations, coming and going rising and falling. Some which have endured for millennia even existing today. While others are gone forever. Yes 4000 years! Had God somehow forgotten His promise? His covenant with Adam's line? Even that word which He had sworn and ratified by His own holy unchangeable nature in Genesis 12, 15 and 17? Galatians 4:4-5 "But when came the fullness of the time sent forth God the Son of him. Born of a woman under the law, in order that the ones under the law he might redeem. In order that the adoption as sons, we might receive." Yes, "But when came the fullness of the time." Not the fullness of time, but "the fullness of the time." That time that God Himself had set in eternity past. Which He had set, when He would send His Son to pay the ransom needed to redeem His adopted children! Yes "in order that the adoption as sons we might receive."

Brothers and sisters, there is no guru-like, super spiritual pilgrimage, (which some claim to be on in their search of God) implied here. No. Salvation is the gift that we have only through Jesus. A gift is never earned.

And that is what Paul is reiterating here in saying "in order that the adoption as sons we might receive." Beloved, we need always to remember that we are adopted into Christ's family. Our inheritance of heavens glories with God are bestowed upon us. We own nothing by birth. And earn nothing in this life, but hell! Yes, "But when came the fullness of the time. God sent his Son coming into being, (born) of a woman."

Now I don't care who you are, how Learned or how intelligent you are. If you can spend time really pondering this truth, even this eternal misery, that the Creator of the entire universe, that One "who was and is and is to come," was carried by a woman in the womb and was born as a defenceless child. And yet He still maintained all of His eternal power, His glory and authority as an infant, putting aside none of His eternal deity, (but having two natures perfectly existing together, fully man and fully God coexisting in this child).

If you can really ponder this, and not be dumb-struck by the majesty, the mystery, and the reality of it all, and then remember that this all took place for you. If you are not dumb struck and brought to your knees in reverence and praise. May I respectfully suggest that you need to revisit the depth, the breath, the length and the height of these words. "But when came the fullness of the time."

In John 1:1-5 we read: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it." And also John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." Literally, it is "He tabernacled." Pointing back to that movable tent during the Exodus, even into Solomon's time which was called the Tabernacle. In effect the temple, where God would meet with His people.

But when Jesus came, "He tabernacled among us" John writes, because that shadow of the Tabernacle pointed to Him the true temple. As in Revelation chapter 21 John looks for the temple in the holy city, but there is none to be found. Because God and Jesus *are* the temple! Remember His words, "destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days," when Speaking of His Body? Yes, "He made his dwelling, (he tabernacled) among us we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the father, full of grace and truth."

God became man for the sake of, and for the saving of His people! Luke 2 verse 6: "While they were there the time came for the baby to be born." Yes, the time came. The fullness of the time, of God's

plan had come. The appointed time. The exact time within the history of humanity had come for God to redeem his people. And this must begin with the birth of his son as a man. Luke 27: "She gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a Manger because there was no room for them in the end.

Friends, have you ever thought about the absurdity of it all from a purely Pagan perspective? Christmas, the worldly view of it and what it has become, yes have you ever thought about the absolute absurdity of it all. Of what so much of the world does at this time every year? Oh, I don't mean trees and presents and credit card debts. Meals with family and red friends, people eating too much, drinking too much and spending too much. Humanity will always find some excuse to do those kinds of things.

And of course, celebrating with family and friends around a meal, while having appreciation for one another is a good thing. It is indeed a blessing. Not the excess, but those things in moderation are a blessing. But the venerating of some child once a year, (and I speak respectfully here Lord), but yes the venerating of some child once a year who may as well be the son of the local produce owner beggars belief. Because that is about as much of an interest that they really have in that child, let alone in the child grown up to be the God man who would deliver souls from hell, in the fullness of the time really. It is really absurd. It really is in effect an idolatrous obscenity in the sight of God. A blasphemous idolatry.

Why do they do it? What is it that they think they will gain? Is it just an excuse for a few days off or is there something which is buried deep within their souls? Even the very knowledge of the existence of God?

That is what Romans 1:21 tells us: "For although they knew God, they know the glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." But yes friends, the world loves the idea of the child on a bed of straw. And they want to keep Him there as that child. Because then they are never confronted with, and are forced to deal with, the 33 year old Jesus Christ. Who fed the 5000. Stilled the storm. Walked on water. Made the blind see and the death hear. The lame walk. Drove demons out of people. Hung upon a cross to set His people free from hell, and when he had finished his mission, he said, (after first crying out "Father why hast thou forsaken me) but yes when He had finished His mission He said, "It Is Finished." That Jesus, the world does not want to know!!

But nevertheless, let us continue in Luke's account of this wondrous day. Chapter 2:8-9 "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." From the Greek it translates as, "and an angel of the Lord came upon them." He didn't appear as some kind of ghostly apparition, no. He "came upon them" in the glory and power of God. To announce, that "the fullness of the time had come."

It is interesting friends, that like a child on some straw, people love to talk about angels. Even cherub like creatures that flit around doing good, sprinkling fairy dust wherever they go. And there are many deluded and deceived people who claim they see the angels; they talk with them eat with them have fellowship with them. They have even written books about their inside knowledge about the angels. Well what rubbish! When we see the appearances of God's mighty celestial messengers in the scriptures people are terrified! Zechariah was gripped with fear. Balaam fell with his face to the ground in fear of his life, at the mighty angel with his sword drawn. Gideon after realising that he had seen the Angel of the Lord, was terrified so the Lord said, "fear not, you are not going to die."

Yes “the angel came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified.” (Literally “they feared greatly in fear.”)

O Beloved, when we stand in the presence of God's celestial army, His holy angels, in the presence of such purity and holiness as with Saul upon the road to Damascus when seeing the Lord Himself, we cannot but help be thrown to the ground in fear. Because they dwell in the presence of the Almighty, and yet we still live in these bodies of flesh! “Who are you Lord?” Saul cried out. “But the angel said to them, fear not, for behold I proclaimed to you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. Because was born to you today a Saviour who is Christ the Lord in the city of David.”

Yes be not afraid. “Fear ye not and behold.” The word “behold” means to drink this thing in. Let this permeate the whole of your being. The One that has been promised for thousands of years, the One that Israel has waited for. The Deliverer, the Redeemer, the King of kings and Lord of lords “this day is born to you.” O friends, just imagine, in the blackness of the fields at night, yes in the pitch black darkness but for their campfires, the Power of Lord in the person of His mighty messenger appears and envelops you. “Fear not. For I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. Because was born to you today in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.” Yes the one that you have waited for, longed for, prayed for; He is here. The Redeemer has come! What must have run through their minds. Can this really be happening? It must be. Surely this can only come from God. But why to us? Out here in the fields? Surely the Messiah, the King, must be heralded in the city. We are but lowly shepherds!

But think of it dear friends. Abraham was a shepherd. Moses was a Prince and a shepherd. David was a shepherd and a king. And he wrote Psalm 23:1 “the Lord is my shepherd.” Jesus came contrary to all worldly wisdom. He would win the victory for His Kingdom by the pouring out of His Own Blood! How fitting it is brothers and sisters, that the Shepherd of kings, and indeed of all people, should be heralded first to a few lowly shepherds, in the fields at night. Not with pomp and pageantry for all to see, but to only a few. To whom the glory of God was revealed! To me it speaks powerfully and clearly of the personal Saviour. He comes to us where we are each one of us, and meets us in the field of our life, and in essence declares to us; I AM Come. I AM He whom you have heard of. “Fear ye not.” For I have come to seek and save the lost!

Yes friends what a picture it creates. The power and glory of God had come upon the shepherds. V12 “This will be sign to you (or here is confirmation) you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And if this were not enough to take the very breath from their lungs, v 13-14 “suddenly a great company (a multitude of a heavenly army in Greek) appeared praising God and saying; Glory to God in the highest places, and upon earth peace to men upon whom his favour rests.”

Beloved, we can't possibly even begin to imagine this scene. The night sky bursting with the light, with the Glory, of God not only with one, that in itself brought fear into the hearts of the shepherds, but a “great multitude,” literally a great army of God's celestial warrior messengers. What must it have sounded like? What must it have looked like? I guess all the books in the world couldn't do justice to such a scene. But as impressive as that scene was, the message which they brought, was the all-important reason for their coming. Because “was born to you today in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.” Yes, but when came the fullness of the time.”

Brothers and sisters, as Alan mentioned at prayer meeting when he and Gary and I were discussing these things, there is but one more “fullness of the time” to come. And that is Jesus` return. Not a baby on some straw, not a man upon a cross. But the King of kings and Lord of lords. Before whom

“every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! To the glory of God the Father. Amen!” Yes “then shall come the fullness of the time.”

Let's pray!