

2:1

there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

*Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, born under the law.*

Just at the right time. God's timing is always perfect. My father-in-law and my mother-in-law who are both here, my father-in-law and I have been talking much about God's timing and how perfect it absolutely is in every way. I want you to think about the kind of trouble, if we could say it for lack of a better term, that our Lord went through to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus, he prepared the Roman world. The Roman world. Now, I'll make you a deal, folks, I will not be distracted by the squawking if you won't be. I'm not bothered by children. Something tells me that Jesus likes them a lot so we can work with no issues with children, can't we? It will be all right.

1. The Roman world was prepared for the coming of Jesus. A universal citizenship was called a kingdom, an empire, made up of little things throughout the kingdom known as *ekklesias* where little city councils would meet and declare judgments within every little city. The Roman world was ready for a Jewish Savior.

**Efficient movement** The Roman's roads, one of them named in the book of Acts is the Appian Way. There was no way in the world that anybody could get through the world at any time in the world as quick as in the time of Christ. It was the ancient world's Autobahn. And it was ready for some first century apostles that three decades after the Lord's birth would go here and yon from the west to the east as far as these spice trails of India with Thomas and as far west. We hear of Joseph of Arimathea in Britain and what were they doing but they were taking the Gospel to the world and how could they do it so quickly? Because *at the right time, God sent forth his Son.*

The Roman world had plenty of temples. Pagan gods everywhere. There was no shortage of so-called god-men. All the way back to Babylon, people were saying that gods had intercourse. The problem is that every one of those offspring, everyone from Nimrod at Babylon forward, died and stayed dead. The Roman world was ready for a God-man that would live and then live again and then never die.

2. Then there are the Greeks. The Greek language was the first universal language was found in the entire world, to the best of my knowledge it's found in the first century in that thing called Koine or common Greek where you would not need a translator to preach the Gospel in most any part of the known world and you would not need a translator for the Scriptures in any part of the known world. If there was ever a time when it was perfect in the Greco-Roman world for a Savior of the world, it was at this time.

Then there are the philosophers: Aristotle and Plato and the rest. They set the stage for us to know the true wisdom of God, Jesus Christ. Paul says we were prepared.

3. I find that the Lord is preparing for the coming of his Son in the Jewish world. I mean, think about everything that was already set in place. They had a capital city: Jerusalem. We know that church history spawned from Jerusalem. The history of theophanies where would show up in the flesh, not just in the burning bush (Exodus 3) but as far back as God at the tent of Abraham (Genesis 18). God was setting the table. God was setting the time. God was preparing the world for the coming of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. A Messianic hope. They had been hoping for Jesus; they had been hoping for a Messiah for years. An ethical system known as the Ten Commandments. A Scripture; they already had an Old Testament. They were certainly ready for another word from God. They were prepared for such a thing. Then there is this thing known as a meta-narrative, the big story, Genesis 3:15 where God starts preparing the world for someone that would come and crush the serpent's head. If ever there was a time that was perfect for the coming of the Son of God, it was at the right time. Galatians 4:4, "When God sent forth his Son," born of a woman, "made of a woman, born under the law," the only one known as the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ.

Then there is this authority structure where you would go into every city where there was a Jewish population, if there were ten or more males, there was a synagogue. In every city there was a synagogue. In every city there was a representation of the monotheism that the Jews practiced. So we were ready for the

coming of Christ who would set up his church and want all churches to be in all cities of the world from the rising of the sun to the setting down of the same. The sun would never set on Jesus Christ.

What a perfect time for the Son of God to come to our world—the Roman world, the Greek world, the Jewish world. How about great feasts and great signs? Surely, the world was ready for the Lord's Supper because it already knew the Jewish world did of a Passover. It was already ready for baptism because it already knew what circumcision was about. If there was ever a time when the world was prepared for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was the right time and the right time was when he came.

Conquering. They had heard in their Old Testament, the Jews did, of a conquering man by the name of Joshua and that Joshua of the Old Testament is the same Hebrew word as the Hebrew word for Jesus, Yeshua, and so they already had a great hero named Jesus and they were prepared for another one and so here came another one. So in the last half of Matthew 1, we have Jesus preparing others. Now, if you think about Joseph, we have him being talked about in verse 19 as a just man and I love this just man because Matthew only uses that term "just" for one other person in the entire Gospel by aid of the Holy Spirit, it is Jesus. Jesus and Joseph, the only two described as "just" in the entire Gospel. Who is this Joseph? What a great pedigree he has. Let's see here: adulterers and adulteresses, swindlers and liars, deceivers and deceitful, Moabites, Canaanites, Hittites, all in his pedigree.

I mean, I read as far back as Genesis 23 and I find Abraham buying a field to bury his loved one, his wife, from the Hittites and right here in chapter 1, verse 6 of Matthew, you have, "Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias." How did a Hittite make it into Jesus' genealogy, but there he is, Uriah the Hittite. I'm not saying he was one of Jesus' great grandfathers. No, it's much dirtier than that. No, no, no, no, David stole his wife and she was in Jesus' genealogy.

From the highest of palaces to the lowest of curses, it seems, this Jesus comes and I would say "what is God thinking?" I mean, after all, it's been 400 years. Surely there was a right time before that and in Galatians 4 Paul assures us, "No, it's not true. There was no better time than this."

What about **an honorable upbringing for Joseph**? You say, "Well, how do you know he's honorable." Because he had every lawful right to have his espoused wife stoned and yet angels are coming to him three times in dreams and we heard about that and so I won't tarry there.

4. But how **about Jerusalem**? Look at chapter 2, verse 1, "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." They came from the east and they came to Jerusalem and you know what happens in the next several verses, King Herod is there and King Herod is the king of the Jews and King Herod has had many, many, many, many adulterous relationships and so probably there were many sons of Herod and many of them expecting to be the king of the Jews and that wasn't good enough. No, now we need some strangers coming to town and saying, "We're looking for the new king."

Jerusalem is being prepared. It has been prepared. It was prepared back when God was cursing Israel because of the sin of David and God says to David, "What would you like? Pick one of the three things that I could do to you. You can run from your enemies for three months or you can..." and he gives him three choices, "or I could plague you for three days." And David said, "I'd rather fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men." After 70,000 Jews are killed, he sees a flaming sword over by the threshing floor of Araunah in the last chapter of 2 Samuel and guess where that is? It is Mount Moriah and we find if we go all the way back to Genesis 22, we have Abraham offering Isaac on Mount Moriah. So Abraham offers Issac or almost offers Isaac (James 2:21-24) at Mount Moriah. They built a temple there. Jerusalem is being prepared.

5. For hundreds of years Jerusalem is being prepared and **the Herods** are being prepared. Who is Herod? Herod is the offspring of one man we might know as Esau for Herod and the Herodians were Idumeans and that is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word "Edom." All of a sudden, we have Genesis 26 happening where Esau is wanting to kill Jacob. You have Herod trying to kill Jesus.

**Oh, who is doing all this preparation?** It is God.

6. He sends forth his Son at the right time and he has been preparing **Egypt** for 1,500 years, 1,500 years before this very account. God says to Moses, "Israel is my firstborn. You go tell Pharaoh that I will kill his firstborn if

he does not allow my firstborn to leave Egypt." And you know the story. Pharaoh's firstborn did die and that was a wonderful picture, a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, the firstborn who had to die for God's people to go free from bondage. God wrote the whole book, the whole story. It was all prepared by the Lord God and Egypt was ready. What sweet irony it is for God to chase his Son and his Son's mother and his Son's earthly father back to Egypt. When I say "earthly father," I don't mean that Joseph begot him for you can see at the end of the genealogy in 1:16, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Jesus was virgin conceived.

So all of a sudden, my dear friends, we have evidence that God has been preparing the whole world for the arrival of his Son and we learn, once again, that God is never late. What an encouragement. We learn that God visits his people in the darkest of times. I find it so odd that the angels didn't, I don't know, make the daytime visit but no, we had to have Jesus born in the evening. God still appears to his people in the darkness. He is continually poking into our worlds uninvited.

I always enjoy people who say God is the perfect gentleman who will never come into your life unless invited. Really? Ask the Apostle Paul if that's true. I found that the Lord does not always wait for invitations. He is not the perfect gentleman. When he decides you're his, he's kicking your front door open and sitting on your couch and drinking the milk out of your fridge. He is doing it with or without your permission and he proved it right here when he showed up on a dark night somewhere in God's blessed Promised Land that he has been preparing for years and years and years. So why did he create Egypt? So he could send his Son to Egypt and bear truth to the fact that, "My Son is coming out of Egypt again."

And after Herod is dead in Matthew 2, we find the firstborn coming back out of Egypt and so **God has prepared Esau for Jesus. God prepared Egypt for Jesus. God prepared Jerusalem for Jesus. God prepared the Roman world for Jesus. God prepared the Greeks for Jesus. God prepared the Jews for Jesus.**

7. God prepared **angels** for such a time as this. I do not find the angels bearing any kind of witness in anyone's life before Joseph's dream for the last 400 years at least. What have they been doing? God has been preparing them.

*Matthew 2:2 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen **his star** in the east, and are come to worship him. 3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.*

8. God prepared **the stars**. Apparently the star disappeared from the view of the wise men. And then you might see, please, in verse 9, "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Well, I have good reason to believe it was a star. When the star disappeared, it probably disappeared below the horizon and when it says that it stood over where the child was, it was probably appearing on the horizon, from their perspective, above the place where Jesus was. Right down there. Do none of them live on the horizon? Of course they do, but wait a minute, that's not crazy enough. No, no, no, God has been preparing that star and for 4,000 years by that time. That star has been traveling in its constellation and that constellation has been moving in its galaxy and that galaxy has been moving around the universe. For thousands of years God has been preparing a star and he kicked the stars on the fourth day and got them moving like a big clock and they didn't stop until this time and right at the right time, the star stood over where the Christ child was. At the right time.

8. **Mary** was prepared. She did not stay a virgin on accident. God gave her a set of parents and a culture and protected her. She was a woman of virtue and you hear me well, that did not happen on accident. Measured steps were taken. People seemed unreasonable and unreal but along with God preparing something as vast as a world empire, he prepared something as minute as a little teenage girl in Nazareth because God is in the details.

9. The **wise men** were prepared. Nothing is in here on accident. I want you to look at chapter 1 and verse 11. "And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon." Why did he

put that in there? If you were a Jew reading this, you would know that Jechonias was the last king or Zedekiah in the Old Testament. You would not need Matthew to tell you, "and they were taken away at this time to Babylon." Matthew is helping us connect some dots here between chapter 1:11 "they were carried away to Babylon," and 2:1, "here comes some wise men from the east."

Now listen, here's what I believe had to happen for some wise men to be prepared. Where did Zedekiah go as a defeated king of Judah? Babylon. Isn't that strange? They took him back east. A conquering king of the Babylonians came back and took him east. Now, I cannot be assured of much in this text in regards to this but hear me when I tell you that I do not believe that Matthew left it up to guesswork for us to know from where these wise men came. What is not clear from the text is how many there were, but what I think is a smidgen clearer is where they came from. I believe they came from Babylon.

**Summary:** You see, God is preparing everything for the way of his Son. His Son was Plan A, not Plan B. "Oh, the Jews didn't work out, those silly people. The sacrifices weren't working. I guess I'll send my Son." No, at 605 BC when the Babylonians came west and captured Zedekiah the king, I want you to know that the Babylonians were there because God put them there. Everything in our life, the untied shoes, the skinned knees and the job promotions are all from the Lord. "I don't like that." Well, when you're on the top of the mountain, you'll give credit to the Lord because that's what Christian people do. We do spiritual things. When we get raises at the job, we say, "God did it." When we get skinned knees, we say, "Why did God allow such a thing to happen?" And I want you to know, every bit of it was put in place to make big news of the Son of God.

Don't you know that the Lord could have made the Jews hold off a little bit longer until the Persians were in charge? No, he wanted them coming from Babylon. Don't you know he could have made the Jews be taken away during the Assyrian Empire? Nope, he doesn't want them coming from the northeast, he wants them coming from the east and God is preparing some wise men. Now, what is the result? The result is that because of the wise men coming to our great King Jesus Christ, really the end of the story is in Revelation 5 when you and I who have been redeemed of very kindred, tribe, people and nation come bowing before our King in the great throne room and what are we doing but casting our crowns before the Lord? We are wise because we believe on Christ. Not because we made an intelligent decision to believe on Jesus. Not because we're smarter. Not because we're Americans but because God made the Gospel the center of history. Those before it looked forward, those after it looked behind and we're all benefiterers of such a thing known as the Gospel. Starting with Christ, the wisdom of God, "the *Logos* was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glories of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth and of this grace we have all received and grace for grace" (John 1:14-16). And why are we before his throne at the end of time saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain?" Probably because we have believed on the blood of that Son who died for us and so our response is like that of Mary's when she receives news that she is pregnant with the Son of God. She said, in Luke 1

*My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden. From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed for he that is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name and his mercy is on all of them that fear him from generation to generation. And he has shown his strength with his arm and with his might he has cast down the mighty. He has exalted the lowly and cast down the mighty from their thrones. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and the full he has sent away empty.*

That is the response of people that know what beggarly people they are and they are saved because God gave them perfect faith to believe (as much as people can with imperfection) on a Christ who came from a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross in their place for every sin, and took away our sins. The Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, slain and slaughtered, raised again the third day for our justification, interceding for us at the right hand of the Most High God, soon to return so that we, the wise, can offer our gifts before him.