



It's God's Time

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Luke 2:1-7, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

In this message let me share with you about Jesus. Two thousand years ago if they had newspapers in Palestine, you might read something like this in big bold dark print: "Romans Raise New Taxes!" Or: "A Census is about to happen!" Everybody was fretting over the new tax. These Caesars, Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar! They just can never get enough money! All throughout the then known world moaning could probably be heard about the high taxes that were about to get even higher!

On that same day, what do you suppose the headlines were in all the cosmic newspapers out there in the Universe? What do you suppose the major news story was on that same day two thousand years

ago? I can just picture the headlines, bright glowing headlines in big print in twenty million glorious colors, shimmering:

"RESCUE PLAN BEGINS! HUMANS TO BE RESCUED BY BABY!"

It wouldn't be operation Desert Storm, but it would be something like this:

"JESUS, THE SAVIOR of the WORLD WAS BORN TODAY!"

You see, we completely missed it. Heaven was cognizant of what was going on. All throughout the universe, I can picture that singing and praising the Lord could be heard. "God is going to intervene in human affairs. Intervention has started today, the Baby was born. Isn't that great news!?"

The Universe had good news: the world had bad news. On the same day, we missed the boat. Nobody hardly caught it as to what was going on. If we were alive on that day, how many of us would have had a clue as to what Heaven's agenda really was? The best event in the world left most clueless. If we were alive on that day most of us would not even know. Rescue was happening. Restoration was beginning. Redemption was in the process. And for most, all that was really thought about were taxes.

Let's read this story **Luke 2:1 - 4**, **"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)"**

Now, why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? Did they live in Bethlehem? No. Wouldn't it have been more convenient to be born in your home town? That is sort of an ideal situation. All of you mother's out there: You never want to have to give birth when you're on vacation, do you? If you're away from home you'd like for all the family to be there. You'd like for your support base to be there. This didn't seem to make much sense, did it. It didn't seem to be the ideal time. But I want you to consider this morning six things that confirm that God's timing was ideal.

First of all, they had a UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE. Do you realize that the language of the whole Mediterranean basin, the fertile crescent of that day, pretty well was Greek. Alexander the Great gave the Greek language to that area of the world and for the first time since the tower of Babel, everybody spoke the same language in that area pretty well. And they were able to communicate through the same language. What that meant was the knowledge of Jesus Christ would be easier to spread because you simply have one language to deal with. And in fact, I have here in my hand a Greek New Testament. This would not have been possible without Alexander the Great or somebody like him because he gave us the universal Greek language which covered that whole area. And so we have the New Testament written in Greek. That's a blessing. Today we don't even think anything about it. Today we can read the New Testament in English and the Old Testament in English. And in those days it for the most part Greek. How different things would have been had Jesus been born five hundred years sooner. Or, what if Jesus had been born today? The book of Hebrew would have been written in Hebrew. The book of Romans would have been written in Italian. The books of Galatians and Ephesians would be written in Turkish. Isn't it a blessing that we have the New Testament in just one language? Greek is enough.

The **second** thing that confirms that God's timing was ideal: the fact that THERE WAS GOOD TRANSPORTATION. It all starts in Bethlehem and it spreads from there because of a good transportation system. The Roman Empire had built a fantastic road system, almost tailor-made. Have you ever thought about this? Tailor-made for the Gospel missionaries to go out and spread the Gospel of Jesus on these roads. Do you begin to see that everything is set up and in place for the message and proclamation of Jesus Christ to go forth speedily? It's wonderful! It's perfect timing.

Look at Paul's missionary journeys. He goes to all these different places by ship. A lot of it was walking on Roman roads, but also ships. The Romans had a ship at every port. They operated like water-taxis. It was all set up for the spread of the gospel. God's timing is always best.

The **third** fact that confirms that God's timing was ideal is found in Second Corinthians. GOD'S PROPHECY CLOCK WAS ABOUT TO STRIKE. You always hope that when the alarm clock goes off that it will wake you up. Well, God's alarm clock was going off. Daniel's great prophecy found in Chapter 9: 24-27 prophesied hundreds of years before that the Messiah would come, be baptized and crucified. Right down to the exact hour of fulfillment. God's prophecy clock was going off. Let's look at **2 Corinthians 6:2**. It says: **“(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”** The time was right. God's timing was perfect. The clock was striking. Jesus was born on schedule.

The **fourth** fact that confirms that God's timing was ideal . THE JEWS HAD BEEN SCATTERED EVERYWHERE. The dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile had taken place. Before Jesus birth, the Jewish people were scattered throughout the Roman kingdom. There were synagogues all over. Remember when Paul would go to a certain area he would look up the synagogue and go there and start preaching, start teaching. This was an ideal setup. Each of those pockets of God-believing Jews became a fertile seed bed for the gospel of Jesus to take root and grow. Had Jesus been born earlier this favorable climate would not have existed.

The **fifth** fact that confirms that God's timing was ideal . There was A LEGAL LOOPHOLE THAT BENEFITTED THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY. Did you know Romans required everybody in the empire to acknowledge that Caesar was God. The Jews said, "No way. We can't do that." So, there was all kinds of bloodshed and civil strife until finally the Romans granted a legal loophole so that the Jews could be exempt from that requirement.

Now, listen how this all fits together. While that loophole was in operation, until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the Romans could not see that Christians were a separate religion. So, we were grandfathered in. We were not persecuted any more than the Jews were. We (Christians) came under that same loophole and we were allowed to spread. It was an ideal time. We were classified in the same pot with Jews. God's timing allowed a window of thirty five years there where we could spread the Gospel message without too many roadblocks or problems. That's amazing!

Come with me to **Acts 17** in your Bible. Here we will find the sixth fact that confirms that God's timing was ideal. THE FIELDS WERE ALREADY PLOWED! Now you think about that. The Gospel is going to be sown by the apostle Paul, Peter, by Timothy, by all kinds of these people. And before you sow something, you need to plow the field. I will tell you that the fields were already plowed. Greek thinkers

like Aristotle and Plato had questioned everything while at the same time providing few answers. People had more inquiring minds than they did before Jesus was born. And if you look at **Acts 17**, you can see what happens. **Acts 17:23**. Paul came on the scene. He came to a new area and he saw there an altar. And verse 23 says that that altar was erected to the "unknown god." Do you see inquisitive they were? They had a god for everything. "Now, let's make one for the one that we don't even know about." Obviously, the thought process was wrong but their minds were open enough to accept additional light. The seed of the gospel could be planted. And it would spread. God's timing was exactly right. When you look at the events of Jesus' birth from a strictly human perspective it would seem that God made five mistakes:

1st Mistake: The timing could not have been worse for Joseph and Mary as we will see in the next few verses. Caesar's Census threw a monkey wrench in their life. Ever had your plans spoiled? How did you feel? Out of control? Cheated? Helpless? If life has you spinning and you are barely hanging on then listen afresh to the story of Jesus untimely birth.

2nd Mistake: MARY WAS STILL SINGLE. "How can I be the mother of God and be single? To have a child now is not very intelligent." Mary must have thought this was an awful time to be expecting. Look at Luke 2:5. Speaking of Joseph, He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. Did you get that? She was pledged to be married to him. They were not married yet. She was expecting. Mary was Pregnant! The trouble was that she was not married yet.

This was not the right time for her to have a child. This child would be born out of wedlock. So, this would be an illegitimate child. Well, let me correct that. No child is illegitimate. Every child is legitimate. Every child has the right to be here because the child is here. The only illegitimate ones are the parents, illicit parents, some immoral parents. She is pregnant without a husband. Is this good timing? It doesn't seem like it, does it. Not from the human perspective. Actually, Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit.

3rd Mistake: Maybe God made a mistake by choosing THE WRONG LOCATION. Come to Luke 2:6. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born. Here they were, unmarried, and away from home, in a strange community, with no support system. You want your parents to be there. You want the help from aunts and uncles. They didn't have hospitals in those days. They wanted their sisters to be there. They didn't have any of that. They were away from home. Bethlehem was a strange town to them. Probably Mary had never been there in all her life. People did not travel very far in those days. Strangers gazed at the poor pregnant girl. And she was young. Never be away from the home, especially at a time when your first born is coming. Mary was uprooted from her home.

I would like you to compare that with Jesus. Remember we are not looking at this strictly, for now, from a human perspective. Views from a human perspective one could conclude that Jesus was also uprooted from His home. Jesus was born away from His support team. Jesus was born away from His Father, away from the angels, away from everything He had known up in heaven. Jesus was born into this cruel cold dark dank world. Not very good circumstances, from a human perspective. And that brings us to number four.

4th Mistake: THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE BAD. In fact, they were broke. They didn't have any money. You should always have some money when your child comes into the world, because you have to care for that child. They always seem to wait until you have a wrong schedule, or something is just not

right. Jesus was born under bad conditions, especially for Mary and Joseph. They didn't have any money because they had to save that money to pay that new tax. Caesar would be after them. It took money, and this was their firstborn. If only the Baby could wait until they could get married. The circumstances weren't right. From a human perspective.

Jesus was also broke. Jesus was born as a baby. He didn't have any money when He entered this world. He was penniless. In fact, He was wrapped in cloths or rags. He was helpless. He was disconnected from the celestial golden streets, crowns, from all of the beautiful things of heaven, and from His Father's vast resources. He was reduced to a helpless penniless baby wrapped in rags. From a human perspective - a desperate situation. Number five. Here's another reason God's timing could have been wrong.

5th Mistake: THE ACCOMMODATIONS WERE INADEQUATE. There weren't any accommodations. "Why would God send us here?" Let's look at **Luke 2:7**. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Had they tried to contact the inn? Yes, they said there was no room there. Obviously they had gone to the inn.

I was born in a Hospital. Were you? Jesus did not even have the luxury of being born in His house, or a neighbor's house, or even in a motel. Jesus was born in a barn or a cave. What is a manger? It is nothing more than a cattle feeding trough. That's all it is. Where the cows are, I would consider that a barn. It may have been a cave barn. And every barn that I've ever been in there are spiders making cobwebs. Look at the ceiling above where the cows eat, where they make your milk that you drink. There's cobwebs up there. There are spiders that live there. There are mice that live in barns. It's dirty, it's crude, it's an inadequate place. And that's exactly where Jesus was born. A desperate situation - from a human perspective. How Mary and Joseph must have missed home.

On the other hand, Jesus was away from home, too. Jesus was not in heaven. They were not the only ones missing home. Jesus also left His perfect, bright, rich, peaceful home in the heavens to descend down to this place. It is a major step from the golden palaces of heaven to the feeding trough of a cattle barn. That's just what Jesus did to save us. Ah, I love my Savior. What a Savior we have! But Jesus was willing to step out of His heavenly environment into our Earthly Environment that we might some day live in His Heavenly Environment. Praise God for Jesus. Can you love a Saviour who descended so that we can ascend?

From a human perspective Mary and Joseph could have had many obvious reasons for questioning God. Probably many times you have said, "Lord, why is this happening to me? My wife wants to divorce me. What's the matter with her? My husband is leaving me. What's the matter with him? Why am I going bankrupt at this time. Why has this disease come up on me at this time? Why?!" We question God. "Is there not way out of this?" Sometimes we can't understand.

And for us to understand all that God is doing is impossible here. But when you get to heaven you see the completed picture. You can praise God! You can rejoice in knowing that everything that you have had to go through was exactly what was needed. Ours is not to understand but to submit and accept God's plan. David had it right when he said in **Psalm 31:15**, "**My times are in thy hand.**" Our life is in God's hands, only if we place it there. And He's in charge. He's in charge of you. You have bad things happening in your life, but God is in charge. You're in His hands. In His hands you are safe.

I want to tell you one thing that Christmas did. Christmas opened His hands that we may hold on to those big hands, enter His heart and have our hearts of stone changed to hearts of flesh. Christmas is more than a Baby being born in a manger. Christmas is a Baby being born in your heart. One of the grand meanings of Christmas is that even though we may not understand all the timings and our headlines may be dark, God's headlines are bright. And if you can just trust God, everything is going to work out all right. Our exciting portion of this is to trust in Jesus, to accept Him as our Saviour. I wonder, have you accepted Bethlehem's Baby in your life? Have you? Would you be willing to stand for Jesus right now and give your heart to Jesus?