INTRODUCTION "But when the fullness of the time was come."

Here is a pregnant phrase indeed. It needs to be digested and assimilated. The "but" (δὲ de) is a dramatic shift from the previous section on the law. Christ has come into history. The verb (νῦν elthe) is aorist and points to the crisis of His break-through into human history. A specific time has come.

The "fullness of the time" (πλήρωσις τοῦ χρόνου pleroma tou chronou) means that the whole pre-Messiah period was completed. The reference is backed to the phrase "the time appointed of the Father" (v. 2). The word "fullness" is habitually passive and refers to the full complement of time. It speaks of the predetermined purpose of God as being worked out stage by stage (cf. Mark 1:15; Eph. 1:10; 3:20). The whole world was ripe for His coming. The preparation of O.T. prophecies, the prevalence of the Greek language and culture, and the spread of the Roman Empire with its pax Romana. God's fixed time correlated with the ripe season!

COMMISION "God sent forth His Son."

The order here is the same as in other parts of the Bible (cf. John 3:16). One would have expected "Father" with "Son," but "God" (Θεός Theos) is used instead. This shows that God has a Son! It is a relationship and not a progeny.

The verb has a double prefix and is the aorist tense (ἐξελθεῖσαν eltheisen exapasteilen). His break into history was climactic. The prefixed prepositions speak of the Son's source and His departure from the Father. The verb by itself may not suggest pre-existence, but that doctrine is surely taught elsewhere in the Scriptures (Isa. 9:6; Col. 1:15). Hence, His eternal Sonship (Psa. 2) and His essential deity are supported here.

The very kernel of the Christmas story is told in these few words. It is a remarkable statement and gives the truth of what Christmas really is to God.

PROVISION "Made of a woman."

The verb "made" (προέκυψεν genomenon) is the same which is used with great significance elsewhere of our Lord (Jn 1:14; Phil. 2:7). It means "to come into a new state of being." Its earliest use in Greek writings is with reference to physical birth. In the N.T., however, there are two other places where it means "to be born" (cf. John 8:58; Rom. 1:3).

"Woman" (ἐκ γυναικός ek gunaikos) declares the method of His incarnation and attests His perfect humanity. There is a latent suggestion that His humanity was free from the taint of sin's consequence at the Fall. Our Lord did not come through the normal process of human generation, but was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Admittedly, the virgin birth of Christ is not necessarily involved in the statements here, but the exclusive reference to His mother harmonizes with the records in the Gospels (Mat. 1 and Lk 3, cf Gen. 3:15).

CONDITION "Made under the law."

This phrase points to Christ's relation to the Jewish nation and notes that His was a Jewish birth. The previous phrase showed that He is related to the whole human race through a human birth. Incidentally, the same Greek verb "made" (προέκυψεν genomenon) is used here again.

The "law" is quite obviously the 613 laws of Moses as found in the Torah (Pentateuch or five books of Moses). The man-made distinctions of that law into ceremonial and moral has no divine sanction whatsoever. To leave the one and conform to the other is senseless. The Bible teaches that the law is a unity (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). That the Mosaic law is meant here in its entirety is clear (Lk 2:21-24).

Our Lord "fulfilled the law" in the sense that He met its full demands (Mt. 5:17; Ro. 15:8). The truth of the matter is that He alone could do this. The Bible never says explicitly that He kept the law. That would be an understatement of His holy character, hence it is more to the truth that He "did always those things which please the Father" (Jn 5:30; Heb. 10:7).

INTENTION "To redeem them which were under the law."

The verb "redeem" (ἐξακομοιεύεται exakeomoioura) means to "buy out", is used earlier by Paul (3:13) and expresses purpose. The idea of purchase is patent to the meaning. The whole import of this is the Cross work of Christ. It has nothing to do with His life work. It was His death which was vicarious and substitutionary for us (1 Pet. 2:24). This is why the Word is so careful to make a distinction between His life and death (MK 10:45).

The redemption mentioned here is toward the Jews who are under the law (cf. Ex. 20). It should be carefully noted that since it was necessary for the Jews to be redeemed from under the law, how much more must the Gentiles not allow themselves to be brought under it when they become believers on Him Who died to accomplish redemption from it! Christ's death secures for the believer a once for all freedom from the curse of the law (3:13) and also from the bondage of the law (4:3). God help both Jews and Gentiles who are in the Body of Christ to see this truth (Ro. 6:14). Watch for legalizers who denude the work of Christ from its fantastic accomplishments!

ANTICIPATION "We might receive the adoption of sons."

The "we" refers to both Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Christ (Eph. 2). The use of the aorist in the verb (ἐξακομοιεύεται exakeomoioura) shows that it is a settled fact once and for all! The grammatical construction avers purpose.

Now the word "adoption" (ὁικονομὴν genomenon) is only used by Paul in the N.T. (Ro. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5). Here it means "sonship conferred." It comes from a compound of two words; son and the verb to place. Hence, the place and condition of a son is given to one to whom it does not belong by natural descent. It stresses that believers have the position of privilege and responsibility attached to an adult son. This spiritual adoption give us independence from tutors and governors (Law, 4:1-3) and brings to us the liberty of a full-grown man. Since we get this the moment we believe, there is no childhood experience recognized for the born again believer. The final placing as exalted mature sons awaits the redemption of the body when Christ comes at the Rapture (Ro. 8:23).

Conclusion Oh, if only you could come to grips with the true meaning of Christmas and its connection with you personally. The glory of it all would make you bow before Him anew and give Him the praise due His holy and adorable Name. What does this text really mean to your precious soul? Let it be known to God and to all the world! Amen.