

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (NIV 84)

Theme: Christmas—God’s plan revealed.

1. To send the God-man.
2. To redeem sinners.

Even the best, most well thought-out plans don’t always work. At times, they fail. A few months ago you thought of the perfect gift, you found it at the store, it was within your price range, you bought it and wrapped it up. But as it turns out someone else had bought the person the exact same thing. Plan failed. Maybe you have been planning on going somewhere for Christmas, but a big storm came up, or one of the kids got sick. Plan failed. You had a big meal elaborate meal planned for Christmas and everything was going according to plan—until dogs broke into your home and stole your turkey. Plan failed. Even the most well thought-out plans fail at times—except God’s plan of salvation. That plan is revealed today on the day of Jesus’ birth. His plan was to send the God-man, Jesus Christ who would redeem us.

But that wasn’t God’s original plan. No that plan was to create a perfect world and man to inhabit that perfect world. So he created male and female in his own image and likeness. That is the image of the perfect and holy God. That means that we were created perfect and holy. We were completely in tune with God—we knew his entire will.

But we lost that image of God. The devil came in the form of a serpent. He led Adam and Eve to doubt God’s Word and his love for them. And this unbelief led them to eat the forbidden fruit. Sin entered the world. No longer did we were perfect and holy. No longer were we in tune with God. And we didn’t know his will either.

So now we are nothing but sinners. We are nothing but horrible miserable sinners who can’t do anything pleasing to God. We are constantly going against his will and failing to obey his commands. And Jesus says in John 8, **I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.** By nature sin is our master, it controls us, we can do nothing but sin. And if we are slaves to sin, then we are slaves to fear.

Fear of death and condemnation. Fear that are sins will be counted against us and we’ll have to face God’s wrath and punishment. A slave isn’t considered a full member of the family. He is a piece of property—not an heir. He isn’t going to receive an inheritance from his owner when he dies. And we are slaves to sin, not members of God’s family. By nature each and every one of us, following after Adam and Eve, are no longer children of God, but slaves to sin. We won’t receive an inheritance from God because we lost his image and are no longer his children.

So God came up with a plan. And to be sure, he had this plan in place before he ever needed to implement it, before there was ever sin in the world. He announced this plan to Adam and Eve while they were still in the garden when he that one of Eve’s offspring would crush Satan’s head. Throughout the years through his prophets he would give more and more insight into his plan. He would be born of a virgin, he would suffer and die as he took all our sins upon himself, his body wouldn’t see decay, and so on. But they only had bits and pieces, the full picture was not yet revealed.

And then, when the timing was just right, God revealed his plan and put it into action by sending his Son into the world. As we read, **when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman.** What made the timing just right? There are a number of possible reasons. Many point to is the *pax romana*—the peace of Rome. When Jesus was on the earth there was relatively little war going on in the world. This, combined with the Roman structure of government and the road system put in place by then, helped the gospel spread quicker and wider. All the prophecies had been given, the people waited, and then about 2000 years ago, the timing was just right.

And God sent his Son into the world. And not just his Son. He is the eternal son of God. He is God himself. Jesus was present and active in the creation of the world. He is the almighty Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He came into the world. Born of a virgin—God and man.

That was part of God’s perfect plan. And it had to be. Jesus has to be both God and man in order for him to be our Savior. As man Jesus is able to serve as our substitute—to suffer and die in our place. As God is able to live a perfect life, to shed his blood for us, and to give us his perfect life; As we read in Psalm 47, **No man can redeem the life of**

another or give to God a ransom for him. It wouldn't be a big deal for God to keep his law perfectly, it wouldn't have been a big deal for man to die. If Jesus isn't God he couldn't have paid for our sins; if Jesus isn't man he couldn't have served as our substitute. So God's eternal plan was to send a Savior who is both God and man. And who that little baby was and still is!

And what exactly did this little baby do to save us? Paul says he was **born under the law.** This is God we are talking about. God made himself subject to his own laws. These were the laws that govern mankind—his creation. But as he took on flesh he also made himself obey the laws he made for mankind to follow. God then had to love his neighbor as himself, he was to not give false testimony, or steal, and so on. But he was also to obey the ceremonial laws. He was to worship God on the Sabbath and refrain from work as everyone else. That's right, in his human nature, God offered sacrifices to God, he learned and studied God's Word, and he obeyed the Sabbath. But it wasn't just to his own laws that Jesus put himself under; he also made himself subject to the laws of men. So God had to follow man-made laws of those whom he created. Laws about taxes, laws about associating with women, rules that Joseph and Mary set up for him to follow as a young boy—all the laws of the Jews, the Romans, and his parents Christ had to follow and obey. And why would God do this? So that he could keep these laws perfectly for us since we could not. And since God demands that we be perfect Jesus did it for us. Not once did he sin. Not once did he fail to follow a law, rule, command, or obligation. So that he could give his perfect life to us! And for what purpose did Christ do this? **To redeem those under law.** This refers to us who were under the curse of the law. Christ redeemed us, that is to purchase us, to buy us back. Through his suffering and death on the cross Christ paid the price for our sins and he purchased us back for God. Paul is talking about Christ when he says, **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.** By shedding his blood on the cross Christ paid the price for our sins and has won for us forgiveness. It was God's plan for Christ to do this—to suffer and die for us. To take our sins upon himself and shed his blood for his enemies. When a slave was in a marketplace a potential owner would have to pay a

certain price for him. And then he was free to do with the slave whatever he wanted including setting him free. Christ paid the price for us; he purchased and won us through his blood. And then he set us free from sin, death, and condemnation!

That is the purpose of God's plan in sending his son—to pay for our sins. And what is the result? Not only are our sins removed, but we are also welcomed back into God's family. He adopts us as if we were his very own. And then we receive **the full rights of sons.** That is, we are no longer slaves, but we are now his heirs. Through faith in Christ we are God's children and receive all that he has won for us. As Paul points out in Romans 8, **If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.** As heirs of God forgiveness of sins is ours, we have new life now, and we'll have a perfect life with our Savior forever.

Some plans—even the most well thought-out plans, fail. But not God's plan. From eternity it was his plan to save you by sending his Son into the world. It was his plan to bring you to faith through the gospel so that you could receive the forgiveness he graciously gives you. Today on Christmas God's reveals his plan to us. God came to earth to save you. Amen.