48-04-01-The Fullness of Christmastime
Christmas, prophecy, culture, Incarnation
Gal 4:4-5
The Christ of Christmas fulfills the universal longings of humanity.

INTRODUCTION: (Mat 1:18-25 for the Scripture Reading)
–“It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” became a hit song in 1963. It’s still enjoyed today, because many still think this is a wonderful time of the year.
–Christmastime is wonderful, although some may think “Xmas means Xasperations, Xhaustion, Xchanges, Xtravangant Xhibitions, Xcessive Xcitement. and Xtemporaneous Xcuses...” Even as Christians, we can get caught up in a whirlwind of Christmas stress, neglecting to prepare our hearts to quietly contemplate the wonder of Christ’s birth.
–Christmastime isn’t just for wrapping presents. This present year is being wrapped up. The newborn of last New Year’s Day is a senior now, full of days and ready to pass his torch to a new infant. There’s a fullness or ripeness to Christmastime. Each year it stirs up our inner longing for the true fullness only Christ can bring. Only HOM.idea.
–The 1st Christmas brought that fullness—Gal 4:4-5 (ESV), But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. What made the time ripe? This “fullness of time” came during...

I. The Spread of Hellenistic Culture (a delight in Greek ideals)
A. The Greeks emphasized a search for wisdom (in their philosophy):
1. [3 quotes by Socrates: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” / “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” / “I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance.”] Taken together these ideas say one thing: “We haven’t arrived yet! We’re still in the learning process!”
2. Greece brought a fullness of what human philosophy could offer, but it came up short: its fullness needed fulfillment.
B. The Greeks emphasized the human struggle (esp. in their drama):
1. [A famous professor, Elizabeth Vandiver, said the Greek Tragedy was a lasting contribution to the artistic exploration of the human condition.] That exploration continues today, whenever the film industry makes a good drama that probes into the struggle between good and evil.
2. [3 quotes by Greek playwright Euripides: “Short is the joy that guilty pleasure brings.” / “I know indeed what evil I intend to do, but stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury, fury that brings upon mortals the greatest...
only through external force, not by changing people’s hearts....)

TRANS: Rome gave people a chance to stop and take a breath of fresh air, but God let that breath become the wind of His Holy Spirit. Peace in the Empire made the time ripe for the Prince of Peace to come. His conquest would be one of individual hearts. He would conquer people by His wonderful love.... Finally, this “fullness of time” was in...

III. The Spread of Jewish Culture (Synagogues were everywhere!)
A. The Pax Romana effected Palestine.... Jews started moving all over the Mediterranean, taking their Jewish faith with them.
B. This exodus from Palestine effectively spread an OT knowledge of God throughout the Empire. Many Gentile converts to Judaism—in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost—got to hear God’s Word spoken in their own language, when the Holy Spirit came.
C. The time was ripe! The Gentiles knew their gods didn’t fulfill the longings of the human soul. Jews spoke about a morally holy God Jehovah who cared for people and planned to send a Messiah. The Gentile world was ready for a God like that, and for His Messiah!

CONCLUSION:
–When these 3 great cultures were intermingled, “the fullness of time had come.” To the Jewish people, born under the Law, “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” Synagogues are still everywhere, but far outnumbered by the churches of Him who said, “I will build my church.”
–Back then, it was “the fullness of time,” and it still is. Human hearts have not changed. Even if blind to the heart’s real desires, people still long for the happiness and joys of human wholeness that God intended. They long for “the peace that passes understanding.” What they really need to find is a living relationship with the kind of loving God who wants to be our Father. These longings—universally felt by humanity down through the ages—are only brought to fulfillment by receiving the Christ of Christmas.