

Week of August 26-Sept 1

## **RIGHT ON TIME**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Galatians 4

J.R.R. Tolkien. He was a gifted Christian fantasy writer whose work, the Lord of the Rings, was turned into a blockbuster movie trilogy that earned over 2.9 billion dollars. That implies a lot of folks are Lord of the Rings (LOTR) fans. For any of those fans reading this devotional, you no doubt remember the initial conversation that transpired between the hobbit, Frodo, and Gandalf. It takes place early in the first movie of the trilogy (The Fellowship of the Ring) right after the opening introduction by Galadriel. Frodo hears Gandalf humming and singing as he heads towards the Shire. Frodo runs up to the carriage and declares, "You're late." To which, Gandalf responds, "A wizard is never late, Frodo Baggins. Nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to."

Never late. Nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to. While for Gandalf this may have been an excuse to explain away his delay, it actually summarizes quite well Paul's thoughts about the coming of Jesus Christ to planet earth. Notice what he says: "*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...*" or as the Today's English Version puts it, "*But when the right time finally came.*"

So, what was right about the time when Jesus came? Although we can't explore this in depth in this devotional, we can review a number of key considerations.

- ★ A stable government – Rome conquered much of the then known world, established a system of laws, governmental structures, roads, bridges, and trade routes across her empire and was even able to maintain a 200 year peace (the Pax Romana); all of which allowed for the spread of the gospel with relative ease across the far reaches of the empire.
- ★ A common language – because of Alexander the Great's conquest, Greek was the language of the day and the gospel could be understood by millions
- ★ A bankrupt culture and spiritual climate – the old Roman gods were losing their appeal and depravity was prevalent leaving an opening for a new faith that promised a relationship with the true and living God that could lead to healthy relationships and godly, self-controlled living
- ★ The dispersion of the Jews – synagogues that taught the truth of one God and his moral precepts were spread throughout the Roman empire and provided a natural teaching base for outreach
- ★ The prophecy by Daniel predicting the coming of the Messiah 483 years in the future

These five factors, and others besides, coalesced, to mark the right time for the coming of Jesus the Savior. With his coming, he redeemed those under law, so "*that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" As God's children, those rights include receiving the Holy Spirit and becoming an heir of God to all that he has planned for us.

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Have you ever grumbled because you thought God was late only to discover after the fact that he arrived right on time? Commit to memory Galatians 4:4-5 and ask the Lord to teach you to trust his timing instead of yours.

**Take-a-way:** *God is never late. Nor is he early. He arrives right on time... precisely when He means to!*