
“The Promised Christ”

ROMANS 1:2-4

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Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

The Gospel of God was **promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures**. Long ago the prophets desired to see the fulfillment of that which the Spirit placed upon their hearts. They longed to see their Messiah.

THE GOSPEL IS THE FULFILLMENT TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:10-12

In Romans 3:21 and 16:26 Paul again refers to prophetic writings to deliberately link His gospel message to the Old Testament. The Gospel not in contradiction to the Old Testament, but rather fulfills it. The Old Testament is about God making a promise and helping us see the need for it. The New Testament is about God fulfilling the promise and inviting us to receive it freely. It just didn't fulfill the promise the way Jews and Gentiles thought it would. It defied their expectations and still does. No one who has not been born again can comprehend that a holy God would step into the shoes of sinful men and take their punishment upon Himself. It doesn't compute, that's why we're saved by grace, through faith.

Paul uses the term **holy Scriptures** only here in all of his thirteen letters. I think He wants to set his argument on a firm foundation. And although people may have lost confidence in God's Word today, it doesn't make it any less valid. You may have heard the saying, "God said, I believe it, that settles it." Well, there's one too many clauses in that statement. It would be better stated, "God said it, that settles it." You're believing it is irrelevant to it's veracity. It's God's Word and it's true whether you believe it or not. That's an important message today in a world of relativism.

In verse 3 Paul says the Gospel that is about God and from God, which was promised long ago, was **concerning His Son**. The Gospel is the Good News that God sent His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should have eternal life. This plan to send His Son was prepared before the creation of the world. Jesus was God's plan A. He created us knowing He would have to dispatch His Son who would come to die for us.

DESCENDED FROM DAVID

Jesus **was descended from David according to the flesh**. In others words, as relates his flesh, He is the son of David. The Greek here is *ek spermatos*, which means from the very seed of David. Paul is emphasizing the full humanity of Jesus. He was a man. He wasn't pretending, masquerading, putting on a show. He was literally born as Paul told the Galatians, "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.” Galatians 4:5

We know from Matthew and Luke’s account of Jesus’ life that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that his mother Mary was a virgin. However, both Joseph, his step-father so to speak, and Mary were of the lineage of David. Both lines come together at David. So whether we’re talking about the bloodline or the claim to the throne, Jesus could appeal to His ancestor King David through either Mary or Joseph. He is the Davidic Messiah.

This is part of what Paul means when he refers to promises made in the Scriptures. For example, God promised David in 2 Samuel 7:16, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” Forever is a long time! It cannot possibly mean established by mere human kings. After all, there is currently no human king over Israel. David’s throne sits vacant **according to the flesh**. But according to the flesh does not tell the whole story, does it?

DECLARED TO BE THE SON OF GOD

Verse 4 gives us the rest of the story... Jesus was descended from David according to the flesh **and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead,**

He was declared to be the Son of God does not mean He became God’s Son. Paul is not telling the reader that Jesus’ status changed from not the Son of God to Son of God. The first principle of biblical exegesis is let the scripture interpret scripture. So, when one verse seems confusing, go to the scriptures that speak more clearly on the subject and let them guide your study.

In this case, the question is what does it mean He **was declared the Son of God**? Did He become the Son of God at the resurrection? What does the rest of the New Testament teach about Jesus, the Son of God?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-2, 14

The author of Hebrews opened the letter, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” Hebrews 1:1-2

Listen to the very words of Jesus, Himself, in John 6:38-40, ““For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:38-40

So not only was Jesus the Son of God before creation, He was the Creative power of creation!

WE MUST AVOID HERESIES

This can be confusing, and we have to be careful with this because heresy leads people astray. And there is no shortage of heresy, or false teaching, surrounding the deity of Christ. One such heresy that arises from this text is called adoptionism. Adoptionism claims that Jesus was a very faithful man and God blessed him by making Him the Son of God after the resurrection.

There’s a major problem with that, though. The problem is that means before the crucifixion, Jesus would not have been God and if Jesus wasn’t God when He hung on the cross to atone for your sin, He would be unqualified to take away your sins and you would still be indebted to God with a debt you could never repay.

If Jesus was not both fully God and fully man, His death on the cross would be meaningless. Adoptionism, which was developed by a man named Arian in the 4th century AD, teaches that Jesus became God’s Son at the resurrection, or was “adopted” as God’s Son because Jesus was a most faithful man. This heresy is also

called Arianism. If you really get down to it, Mormon and Jehovah's Witness doctrine is basically Arianism. They believe that Jesus was created by God rather than existing eternally as God.

What is concerning is that according to a recent poll by Ligonier ministries, "65 percent of evangelicals say that Jesus "is the first and greatest being created by God." They imagine they are giving Jesus a compliment with that. But they're undermining the entire Gospel instead. Jesus was not created by God. He IS God and stepped into the human form in space and time in order to reconcile sinners to a holy God.

Needless to say, this is not what Paul is teaching. Rather, Paul is saying that Jesus' **resurrection from the dead** declared, proved, or evidenced **in power**, or powerfully, convincingly that Jesus Christ always was and is the Son of God. He is not just a godly teacher, nor even just a wonder-working man, He is God in the flesh. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

If you're serious-minded person, you must want to know for sure that the man you're invited to put your faith in, and along with your faith all you hope of life after death, is the real deal. You want to know for sure that God accepts the terms and conditions of your faith. How can you know that? You can know that because God raised Jesus from the dead. It was the **resurrection from the dead** that proved Jesus was really who He claimed to be and could do what He claimed to do, namely forgive sins, grant eternal life, and give the right to be adopted into the family of God.

I want to point out that in this opening salutation there is already so much doctrine. We have the deity of Christ, the supremacy of Christ, and we have the Trinity. When Paul says the **Spirit of holiness**, that was a typical Hebrew way of referring to the Holy Spirit. So, you have God (who is the Father of), the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. Our God is One God in three persons who dwell in perfect unity and always have, always will.

THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

The Gospel of God concerns the Son of God, **Jesus Christ our Lord**. The Gospel is about Jesus. The Gospel is the message that God loves His creation so much He is willing to send His only Son and His Son loves us and loves the Father so much that He's willing to make the greatest condescension of all time, no one has gone lower in status than **Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Jesus Christ is not His formal name. Actually, that would be Jesus of Nazareth. No, Jesus Christ means Jesus *the* Christ. Christ is Greek for "anointed one," just as Messiah in Hebrew. When Paul calls Jesus the Christ, He is telling us that the Jesus He preaches, the Jesus the Gospel of God is concerned with is the Christ, promised in the Holy Scriptures, He is the long awaited Messiah, Savior of all who believe.

Brother, friend, Savior, teacher, Rabbi, all of these accurately describe who Jesus is. But no title better describes Him than **Lord**. In a day when Caesar claimed to be Lord, to acknowledge Jesus as Lord was to acknowledge greater power and authority than Caesar. Paul tells us in Romans 13 that all governing authorities are given to us by God and since Jesus is God the Son, and since He was raised in power and seated at God's right hand, it is absolutely right to assert that Jesus has greater authority than even Caesar.

If you were a Roman citizen, it might cost your life to acknowledge that, though. This brings new meaning to "confess that Jesus is Lord" in Romans 10 doesn't it? For us, it just rolls off the tongue. But would you be willing to say Jesus is Lord if it meant losing your life? That's the intensity with which Paul wrote this letter and specifically that command, "Confess Jesus is Lord." It might be sort of scary to imagine the cost of declaring Jesus is Lord in this life. But what should be of far greater concern is not doing it.

When Jesus had completed the task of making sacrifice for sin and ascended to Heaven, He was seated at the right hand of God in infinite power and authority. I'm fond of the term imperium – total power over all there is.

He was given the name above all names, the only name by which man is saved. It will be before His throne that every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord. Whether you confess that He is Lord today or not, one day every single person will confess that He is Lord on that day.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the Holy Spirit in power is the only declaration we need to know that Jesus is Lord.