

After telling us that he was “*set apart for the gospel of God,*” the apostle Paul began explaining that Gospel to us last week. The first thing he told us was that the Old Testament Scriptures proclaimed this Gospel, this Good News, throughout the long ages of human history prior to Christ’s coming to earth that first Christmas.

Now, in verse 3, the apostle narrows in on a specific promise God made “*through His prophets in the holy Scripture*” – His Gospel promise to David, king of Israel.¹ One of the reasons He is sent to earth in the womb of the virgin is to receive “*the throne of His father David*” so that He can “*reign...forever*” over a Kingdom that “*will have no end*” (Luke 1:32,33).

The One God has proclaimed in the Good News through His servants the prophets in the Old Testament His Son, His chosen King!

1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 1:3 concerning His Son, Who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh...

Good News: God Always Points Us to His Son God’s Son

- The order here is important: He is God’s Son prior to His being born of David’s seed.² He is not a descendant

¹ Remember one Old Testament promise we looked at last week: “*How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’*” (Isaiah 52:7). Notice the elements present here! The Gospel (“*good news*”) about God, Who is King over His people (“*Your God reigns!*”).
² Baptist preacher Hercules Collins (1646-1702) teaches it this way in his *Orthodox Catechism* (1680): Q.34. What do you believe when you say He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin

of David adopted by God to be His son. He was previously (eternally) the Son of God, Who added Davidic humanity to His eternal divinity at His conception in the womb of the virgin Mary.³

- Paul will later make some important applications to our lives based on the eternal Son of God becoming a human being:
 - Truly Christian giving finds its foundation in the descending of the Son of God to earth. Paul urges the Corinthians to be like the Macedonians, who gave to support Judean believers even though they themselves were very poor. The Macedonians “*begged...with much urging*” for the opportunity to give to a cause that didn’t help them personally or help their congregations grow. They gave because of “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich*” (2 Corinthians 8:1-9). Do you financially support ministry/missions? Is it joyful (2 Corinthians 9:7)? Is your giving done in full reliance on the provisional grace of God (9:8-11)? Is it motivated by the prospect of God receiving thanksgiving by others who cannot give back to you or benefit you (9:12-15)?

Mary? A. That the Son of God, Who is and continues true and everlasting God, took the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, through the working of the Holy Spirit, that He might be the true Seed of David, like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted.

³ Jesus Christ is fully God (“*His Son*”) and fully man (“*born of a descendant of David according to the flesh*”). This reality is also given witness by the apostle: READ John 1:1,2,14,18.

- Being unified in thought and purpose, regarding other believers as more important than ourselves, looking out for their interests, and doing all things “*without grumbling or disputing*” (Philippians 2:1-4,14) should be a reality in the life of believers because Christ eternally “*existed in the form of God,*” yet “*emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men...being found in appearance as a man*” (Philippians 2:5-11). Do your relationships (particularly with other believers) reflect the humility of the eternal Son of God being “*born...according to the flesh*”?
- The doctrine that the eternal God became human is very practical for our lives!

He Is Fully God

- The Son is fully God, and all that being God means according to the Bible. He’s not half-god, didn’t evolve into being god, wasn’t turned into a god, and wasn’t created as a god. He is eternally God, one with the Father and Holy Spirit.
- John’s Gospel begins with this famous affirmation that the Son is God: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). This “*Word,*” the Lord Jesus Christ, is said later in that same chapter to be “*the Son of God*” (1:34). The Son is not the Father (they are distinct Persons), but He is still one God with Him (John 10:30; 17:11,21).
- The Son is one with the Father in work, resurrection life-giving power, judgment, honor, authority (John 5:17-30). When Jesus says, “*I and the Father are one,*” the “*Jews picked up stones...to stone Him*” (John 10:30,31). Why? “*...because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God*” (10:33). They

adhered to the confession of the Bible that there is only one God.⁴ They failed, however, to see that in this one true God there is a plurality eventually revealed to be three eternal Persons – the Trinity, Who is three Persons but one God.

- The Son “*is the radiance of [God’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature*” (1:3). This isn’t a limiting statement, for the writer of Hebrews goes on to record that “*of the Son [God] says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’*” (1:8, quoting Psalm 45:6). God the Father calls His Son “*God*”!

Christmas!

Born of the Seed of David

- Jesus was not made to be God’s “*Son.*” He was always God’s Son from eternity. He was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (1599 Geneva Bible). He was not made the Son of God. That is what He always was.⁵ He was made human, specifically, “*of the seed of David according to the flesh.*”
- Jesus is conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit, not the seed of any man (Matthew 1:18,20,21; Luke 1:30-35). However,

⁴ Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; Isaiah 44:6,8; 45:5,6; Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5. The doctrine of the Trinity does not deny, but affirms the biblical witness that there is only one true God.

⁵ This is the legend of the original “Santa Claus.” Nicholas, (A.D. 270-343), bishop of Myra (modern-day Turkey), at the First Council of Nicea, became so enraged at the heretic Arius that he punched him in the face. Arius taught that Jesus was a creation, that there was a time when “he was not” (that Jesus did not exist). This contradicted the scriptural witness that Jesus, the Son of God, eternally existed. This heresy makes Jesus less than fully God (modern-day Jehovah’s Witnesses hold to this false teaching). So Santa Claus punched the heretic who lied about Jesus.

Mary’s eventual marriage to Joseph, a man “of the descendants of David” (Luke 1:27), made Jesus legally part of David’s lineage.⁶

According to the Flesh

- Paul will later remind us that God is burdened for the salvation of the “Israelites...from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:4,5).⁷ Paul is burdened for them because the Savior-God came into the world through them, but, as John says, “He came to His own, but those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).
- God the Son becoming human (“born...according to the flesh”) is vital to our redemption and salvation: READ Galatians 4:4-7; Hebrews 2:14,15,17,18; 4:15.

Why David Matters

God’s Covenant Promise to David

- God calls the peoples of the world to bow down before His anointed Son-King.⁸ Jesus is “far above all rule

⁶ The first verse of the New Testament draws attention to this fundamental theology point, calling our attention to “Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David” (Matthew 1:1). The genealogies of Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38 may not be the most exciting reading, but they tell of a profound reality: God’s working through the great men of the Old Testament (like David) to bring His Son into the world.

⁷ Israelites/Jews are lost apart from Christ, regardless of their ancestry. They are lost without Christ, even if “they have a zeal for God” (Romans 10:1-4). This is why Paul had “great sorrow and unceasing grief in [his] heart” (9:2), and why his “prayer to God for them [was] for their salvation” (10:1).

⁸ O. Palmer Robertson, calling Psalm 2 one of the “two poetic pillars” of the whole book of Psalms, says, “from a redemptive historical perspective, the Lord’s covenant with David provides the essential

and authority and power and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21), and is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5). This is what it means that He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

- The New Testament from beginning to end draws attention to Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God to David.⁹

Our King

- “The Content...of the Gospel...is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and now appointed to be King and Lord of all things” (Martin Luther, 1552).
- Paul applies this Isaiah quote about a Davidic ruler (Jesse was David’s father) Who rules not just the Jews, but all the peoples: “There shall come the root of Jesse, and He Who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope” (Romans 11:12, quoting the Greek translation of Isaiah 11:10).

Obedience to the King

theological framework for understanding the Psalms. Climaxing the covenants made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses is God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:4-17). According to Psalm 2, the nations rage ‘against the LORD and against his Messiah (Ps. 2:2),’ but the Lord has established his messianic king in Zion his holy hill. The decree of Yahweh says, ‘You are my Son’ in accordance with the precise wording of the Davidic covenant (Ps. 2:7; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). The nations, the ends of the earth, will be his possession...Yahweh rules over heaven and earth from eternity and throughout all time. Eventually, Messiah’s kingship must merge with Yahweh’s kingship so that the kingdoms of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, are one. This...permeates the theology of the Psalter...it also explains how the kingship of Jesus the Messiah could merge so perfectly with God’s kingship over the world” (*The Flow of the Psalms*, pgs. 13-15).

⁹ Matthew 1:1; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; Luke 1:27,32,69; 2:4; 3:23-31; Acts 2:30; 13:22,23,32,34; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 5:5; 22:16.

- True faith in the King (“*descendant of David*”) produces obedience to that King. Paul speaks of this obedience throughout his letter to the Romans:
 - “...*have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake*” (1:5).
 - “...*I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles*” (15:18). This same obedience is spoken of in 16:25,26.
 - Unbelievers from among the Jews are called “*those who are disobedient in Judea*” (15:31).
- This is a theme in the rest of the New Testament, as well:
 - READ Matthew 28:18-20. We pay so much attention to the “*baptizing*” part of this command, but this is only the beginning! Making disciples means teaching and obedience to the One Who has been given “*all authority.*”
 - Every week at the Lord’s Supper Table we proclaim the new covenant in Christ’s blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). One of the promises of this new covenant to God’s people is that God “*will put [His] law within them and on their heart [He] shall write it*” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
 - “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*” (John 3:36). John describes the opposite of belief as disobedience because faith and obedience are inseparably linked together.¹⁰

¹⁰ For example, READ John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 2:3; 3:22; 5:2,3; Revelation 12:17; 14:12.

- “*You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?*” (Galatians 3:1; 5:7). In that letter Paul defines “*truth*” as “*the truth of the Gospel*” (2:5,14). The Gospel is a reality that requires obedience!
- The resurrected Jesus has been “*seated...at [God’s] right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion*” (Ephesians 1:20,21). He is King of kings. READ Ephesians 2:10. We are God’s “*workmanship, created in*” this heavenly King “*for good works.*”
- Paul speaks of his awareness of the Thessalonians’ “*work of faith*” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Faith produces works in obedience to the commands of Scripture. In his next letter to them, he says he is praying that “*God will...fulfill every desire for...the work of faith with power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).¹¹
- This is what is called “Gospel obedience.” We do not obey the Law to be saved, but are saved so that we have the ability to obey (by the power of the Holy Spirit).¹²

¹¹ Paul speaks of Christ’s judgment against “*those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

¹² READ James 2:8-26. James’ discussion of “*faith without works is dead*” begins with our “*fulfilling the royal law.*” Any obedience by believers is connected to the authority of Jesus the King (seated forever now on David’s throne), the Royal of “*the royal law.*” James’ discussion does not contradict what we’ll see in Romans 4. When Paul speaks of “*the one who does not work, but believes in Him Who justifies*” (4:5), he is answering the question, “how are we ‘ungodly’ (4:5) declared righteous, or justified, before a holy God?” James is answering the question, “what does the life of someone who is truly justified by faith look like?”